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Jerry Hanson: We have lost our way

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My parents were part of the “greatest generation.” They brought about world peace, made America the envy of the world, and made our economic and social systems both fair and prosperous. A huge and secure middle class emerged . Incomes rose in line with productivity. America became “the shining city on the hill” as we looked out for one another and even other disadvantaged countries around the world.

My generation has become the generation of greed, in which we look out for our own interests and care nothing for those who have been left behind. The result is that we have turned back the clock on economic progress, making workers powerless and making big business and CEO’s all powerful. The super rich now set the rules and the middle class has been undermined and dismantled.

We looked the other way as millionaires and billionaires waged a war against working people. This class war by the privileged and most powerful in our society has resulted in chronic insecurities, diminished hopes and a sense of having been mistreated and plundered. We are no longer a nation in which “were all in this together.” In the face of a global pandemic that is killing us at an alarming rate we insist on our individual right not to care about or for one another.

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Without a vaccine there are two basic ways to stop Covid-19. One involves masking, social distancing, restrictions on movement and assembly, as well as aggressive testing to interrupt its transmission. The second is potentially effective but horrible to consider: “just wait until enough people catch the disease” [herd immunity].

The plan is to allow the virus to keep spreading by not employing national testing, contract tracing and no national pandemic policy. Eventually so many people will have been infected and become immune, as long as they survive, that the outbreak will fizzle out on its own as the germ finds it harder and harder to find a susceptible host.

Nearly three-quarters of the population would have to be infected [immune] before herd immunity kicks in. This would require upwards of 215 million Americans to become infected and anywhere between 2.1 to 6.4 million Americans die.

For those infected nearly 100 kinds of lingering symptoms and physical damage have been catalogued ranging from scarred lungs, chronic heart damage, kidney failure, blurry vision, memory loss, debilitating fatigue, hand tremors and loss of taste and smell.

President Trump says: “an immune mentality” will lead Covid-19 to just go away. Unfortunately the costs to most Americans will be disastrous. We have lost our way.

Since Trump took office the image of the United States has suffered around the globe. A new Pew Research survey among many key allies and partners highlights the decline. In several countries, the share of the public with a favorable view of the U.S. is as low as it has been in 20 years.

In the United Kingdom, our closest ally, only 41% express a favorable opinion of the U.S. In France, just 31% see us positively. Germany rates the U.S. only 26% favorably. Even Japan, Canada and Australia have fallen from ratings of 70% to below 41%.

Part of the decline results from how the United States has handled the coronavirus pandemic. Of the 13 countries surveyed, a median of only 15% feel the U.S. has done a good job of dealing with the outbreak. These same countries believe the World Health Organization and the European Union have done a good job. They believe China has handled the pandemic poorly but still better than the U.S. response.

The 13 countries have little confidence in President Trump’s ability to do the” right thing” in world affairs. He received a median rating of only 16%. The Trump initiative to put America first has left America alone.

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There's no more proof needed that we've lost our way than within an hour and a half of Supreme Court Justice Ginsberg's death the policy adopted in 2016 to prevent a sitting president from naming a successor during an election year was completely reversed.

We cannot and must not try to erase the past because it does not fit the present.

A people that values its privileges above its principles, soon loses both. [Dwight D, Eisenhower].

We have lost our way.

–Hanson, of Elkhorn, is a member of the Walworth County Democratic Party.