

The Requisite of Respect in a Running a Righteous Society

As the time-tested adage goes, "bigger is better." Such a quote marvelously captures why the world functions as it does. Over the course of generations, our forebears stumbled upon the principle of synergy: the productive output of a cooperative community vastly exceeds the sums of the outputs of each of the community's members. As such, as a simple glance at a window would indicate, humanity, instead of occupying seven billion distinct islands, lives in a greater clump: *society*. If each human was a node, *society* would encompass not only the nodes, but also the diverse collection of lines which links the nodes. All together, these connecting lines are pivotal in forming a cohesive unit, society, out of its many smaller components. Social relationships; as represented by these links, can be strong and positive, bonding otherwise disparate nodes to form brilliant constellations. Unfortunately, as with all things in life, these connections can also be weak and negative, causing disruption at the deepest trenches of society. Nevertheless, a virtue can navigate society to the former, pleasant scenario: respect.

From my experiences, I have noticed that many "disrespectful" people are particularly self-centered. During my toddler years, if something was not to my liking, I would sob as if Armageddon was the day after. However, as I matured, I came to the profound realization that the universe was not centered around me, and I began to factor in the vast array of sentiments of others before making decisions. Following the Golden Rule, if I empathized with others' feelings, the world miraculously became a welcoming place. Unfortunately, people are prone to lapses in this courteous mentality. In a dangerous, self-perpetuating cycle, people experiencing

these lapses see no point in broadcasting a respectful attitude, which, in turn, causes society to be hostile to them, spurring even greater discontent in these people. Such a brutish thought is a virus, which spreads from an infected node contagiously to the various other nodes of society, demolishing social relationships in the process, and jeopardizing the institution's functionality. However, there is an antidote to this lack of respect.

Throughout my life, I have been an avid debater, so I eagerly joined my high school's Model-UN club. By informed dialogue conducted in a detailed procedure, mock delegates representing the various nations of the world congregate to write resolutions which address global issues. After hours of practice, I donned a blazer and represented Russia at my first conference concerning the human rights of workers. Over the course of the conference, I became so engrossed with advocating for Russia's positions that I vehemently disagreed with the positions of the other delegates, viewing the conference as a zero-sum game. Such a sentiment became mutual, and, like a virulent strain, engulfed every delegate in my committee. Soon thereafter, what was intended to be a rational debate disintegrated into polarized, factionalized wrangling. This ignominious deficiency of respect resulted in no resolutions passing, a failure for society, for everyone was too obsessed with their own convictions to even provide a modicum of respect to those of others. From what I had experienced, I headed into the next conference with a sanguine attitude, determined that I could leave a positive footprint on the simulated world. Even if other delegates' positions diverged from mine, I politely expressed my hopes of a solution, engendering a mutual feeling of acceptance within us. This considerate outlook spread to the minds of these delegates, eliminating the uncooperative tendencies akin to how water extinguishes fire. As such, in this committee, *we* were successful, passing numerous

resolutions which addressed the issues we were combating. From these experiences, I grasped that optimism is the key to delivering the respect which makes society productive.

The transformative nature of respect not only applies to the episodes of everyday life, but to larger circumstances as well. In fact, during 1973, twenty-nine American Senators had moderate ideologies, a figure which had dropped to zero by 2011.¹ When factions of very disparate opinions lack respect for and ignore the considerations of the other side, efficiency is undermined. Consequently, the number of substantive laws passed by the penultimate completed session of Congress, 124, represents a whopping decline from the corresponding figure one decade prior, 210.² With fewer bills being approved, society cannot tackle its most pressing issues. Having opinions is an integral to being human, but ignoring those of others is deleterious to society; without the compromise which stems from respect, how can society progress? Governmental inefficiency has stymied solutions to many issues, and establishing respect is essential in ridding ourselves of this obstacle.

From the halls of my Model-UN committee to the halls of Capitol Hill, respect has proven to be essential for the progress of society. Put simply, if society was a vehicle, respect would be its fuel.

¹ "Moderate" ideologies refers to Senators' ideologies which fell between the most conservative Democrat Senator and the most liberal Republican Senator of a particular session of the Senate, per data collected from a Pew Research Center's study found in the article, "The polarized Congress of today has its roots in the 1970s," by Drew DeSilver.

² Here, I compare the total number of laws enacted by the recent 113th Session of Congress (2013-2014) relative to the number of laws enacted by the 108th Session of Congress (2003-2004), using data from the Pew Research Center article, "Congress still on track to be among least productive in recent history," by Drew DeSilver.

Bibliography

DeSilver, Drew. "Congress Still on Track to Be among Least Productive in Recent History." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 23 Sept. 2014, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/23/congress-still-on-track-to-be-among-least-productive-in-recent-history/.

DeSilver, Drew. "The Polarized Congress of Today Has Its Roots in the 1970s." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 12 June 2014, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/12/polarized-politics-in-congress-began-in-the-1970s-and-has-been-getting-worse-ever-since/.