

November 8, 2016

How'd it happen?... Ask a Frog!

(The story of this story)

- I had started Election day trying to google the email address of the historian Michael Bechloss so I could share an out-of-the-box premonition I had that someday historians would honor Trump for serving as the catalyst for flipping the national mind set from one within which we can only see “broken systems” to one that can serve as a frame for connecting people in new ways to achieve their common purposes.

- I was thinking “someday” because I figured it would take time for historians first to consider how something like this campaign could have happened.

- And then about 11pm I realized...

(1) that “someday” was *now*, and

(2) everyone was trying to figure out how it happened... who did what wrong, etc. (That’s what pundits are doing right now as I write this,) ...and, while that’s a natural response, it can blind us to why it happened. And then importantly what can be done now about it.

- So, at 11:30p last night, I started writing:

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How'd it happen?... Ask a Frog!

Today wasn’t a “revolution,” but an “evolution.” One that we missed as we focused on the campaign’s content -- the words, actions, craziness, etc.—and missed the real message hidden in its context. And it’s so deeply buried that a metaphor is required to surface it.

If you consider how our minds serve as “containers” within which we process the experiences of our daily lives, then we might learn something about what just happened from the old story of the frogs in a pot of water who weren’t aware that it was gradually getting hotter until it reached the boiling point.



With that as a possible metaphor, consider that we’re not dealing with a metal pot like the frogs’, but a mental one – a common mindset within which, for some, there was an evolving core of felt pain and pressure, noticed by others, but not seriously addressed.

Only some of them were directly feeling its “burn,” ...most others didn’t notice or ignored it. True, while some claimed they also felt a “Bern,” it was largely on an intellectual level. They helpfully made us aware of the 1% on the top controlling the wealth and getting the benefits, while popular books like the “Hillbilly Elegy” made us aware of the decline of the middle class.

But at the same time those who were actually experiencing the burn felt even more angry --betrayed by Wall Street, and frustrated with a government that didn’t seem to hear them, because if it did why weren’t they doing something about it.

Seeing “the system” as the enemy, they begin to lose hope in the future ... a hopelessness that began to transform to helplessness and powerlessness... (an intolerable psychological condition that produces a desperate search to “Just do something.” ... change it all and change it now.

...And then this election (which in the end had little to do with Trumps’ words and actions) offered a seemingly-simple way to totally get rid of that boiling mix whose burning they felt.

And they did.

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- It’s now 8:30am, 11/9/16, the next morning... and my own sense of hopelessness, helplessness and despair is now beginning to grow as I begin to think about what this could mean for the future, I realize that, just as with 9/11, I’m totally experiencing a “paradigm shift.”

What’ the 1st clue that a “paradigm” – the mental window through which we make sense of daily experience – has “shifted?” ... The unthinkable becomes thinkable. The impossible ... not only possible, but already here.

In an instant, an accepted way-of-thinking about reality is wiped away... and we have little to fall back on except our fears about what will replace it. (Something generations conditioned for “evolutionary” change have never experienced, and now we’ve gone through two of them.... (One on 9/11 and the other, today, on 11/9)

So on this first day of a “newly-perceived” world, I’m directly experiencing that “*Shift Happens*” ... and this one leaves me fearful, angry and especially sad about the “what if’s” (such as what a liberal Supreme Court might have meant for the continuation of our democracy.)

- Yet, I’m also aware of how much it was needed – desperately needed... Maybe Macbeth was right: “*If it were to be done ..., then it would be better if it were done quickly.*” But it’s going to be painful because we’re the ones who will have to live through it.

(*But wait, there’s more...*)

- Just now, amidst all the discouraging words on TV and in the press about what could have gone wrong and about what this all means for the future ... my old “Pollyanna” mindset re-surfaced and heard three *hopeful* sets of words.

--1st, from communications consultant Frank Luntz:

“This could be a very good day for democracy”

And I agree, since this was the future possibility I had hoped to share with Bechloss yesterday morning.before it became a present need.

--2nd, when an early morning pundit called for a “deep, profound autopsy” about the need to develop a new “pot” – a replacement way-of-thinking –.” My hope is we can keep it focused on the “system” in the “pot,” and not the people. Because, we’re going to be the ones in the new pot that will be feeling the “burn” - anger, fear, frustration hopelessness and helplessness. And I believe we can use the conditions that this new setting will raise for us, as catalysts to organize around the needs all us “Frogs” have in common.

--And 3rd, here’s something a friend just forwarded from Andy Shallal, the Iraqi-born owner of *Busboy and Poets*.

“I don’t usually write annoying angsty shit

But damn it, today, I need this. I need to know that America is better than this. Last night in the wee hours of the morning, I felt my soul sapped, my spirit crushed and my hope vanish. This morning I feel betrayed, violated, and angry. I am especially angry with the media, they are the true spoilers in this election. They tricked and teased us, cajoled and used us knowing all along that they are the true winners no matter who the hell gets the most electoral votes.

Today, I will cry a little (actually a lot), lick my wounds, take my time brushing my teeth and taking a shower and getting dressed. I will cancel my subscription to the Washington Post, hang out with close friends, exercise, eat well, get a massage, pick up a good book, read a good soothing poem – out loud. And I will write.

Tomorrow I will remind myself of all the accomplishments that we have fought for. Marriage equality, healthcare, prison reform, black lives matter, worker rights, transgender rights and so many more victories. I will make sure that I remember these things and swear that I will fight to uphold them. I will gather, plan and organize. I will know that I am not alone and remind myself over and over again that “to be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”
God, I love Howard Zinn.

It’s time for us to be the change we want to see in the world.

Andy Shallal

• Andy -- I’m glad we’re in the same “pot” ... and don’t cancel your Post subscription... the media (except for Fox) are not the message.

Lew Rhodes
Silver Spring, MD