

Minorities and Marginality in American Foundations

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## Foreword

Dr. Bernard C. Watson, retired as President and Chief Executive Officer of William Penn Foundation at the end of 1993.

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I am honored that you have selected me as the third James A. Joseph lecturer, following two distinguished colleagues. The aim of the lecture series, as indeed of the Association of Black Foundation Executives, is to focus attention on the long tradition of Black philanthropy --a fascinating story still too little known --and on current African-American concerns which might be addressed through philanthropy. As I reviewed the earlier lectures, I noted with interest that one of my predecessors had chosen to remind us of our rich heritage of community benevolence through mutual aid societies, fraternal organizations, and churches. The other, speaking in the aftermath of the riots in Los Angeles, spoke of the enormous challenge they represented to the realization of the American dream --"a dream of community, of people not only making it, but making it together." Jim Joseph and Frank Thomas gave us much to think about, concerning both the past and the future.

Today's lecture is in a sense a farewell address. As most of you know, I will be leaving the William Penn Foundation at the end of 1993. My retirement was publicly announced almost two years ago, and for a number of months I have been considering my own experience in the world of philanthropy and, more generally, the development of this largely 20th century and largely American phenomenon. The thoughts that I share with you today represent some of my reflections on the role of African-Americans in foundations, the special contributions which they can make and the particular challenges they face as relative newcomers to positions of influence and power.

The history of American foundations can be understood only in the context of late 19th- and early 20th-century national history: rugged individualism and enormous industrial success, on one hand; reformist enthusiasm and economic uncertainties, on the other. Yet organized philanthropy remains one of the least known, although most pervasive of the invisible financial networks in the United States. Despite the investigations led by Congressman Patman in 1961 and the passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1969 limiting foundation activities, charitable giving --particularly as practiced by the largest foundations --has remained fundamentally unchanged. Except for such prohibitions as those against lobbying or undue administrative costs, they have been left free to operate with remarkable freedom, subject mainly to the whims or wisdom of their respective trustees.

The concept of benevolent giving for the relief of needy individuals or for the public good has ancient roots in many parts of the world. Certainly, philanthropy did not begin in 1911, when the Carnegie Corporation was founded, nor in 1913, when the Rockefeller Foundation was established. And indeed the sum of the combined grants of all our foundations (\$8.33 billion in 1992) and corporations or corporate foundations (\$6.1 billion in 1992) is far exceeded by the annual total of contributions by individuals for religion, health, education and other social causes (\$101.83 billion in 1992). Nevertheless, the focus of my remarks is foundations --which have enough similarities so that they are recognizable entities and yet which are amazingly different in their history, their organization and governance, and their track record.

Waldemar Nielsen, perhaps the most astute long-term observer of this sector of society, offered this pithy summary of foundations:

As a group, they are institutions like no others, operating in their own unique degree of abstraction from external pressures and controls, according to their own largely self-imposed rules. They are private, and yet their activities cut across a broad spectrum of public concerns and public issues. They are the only important power centers in American life not controlled by market forces, electoral constituencies, bodies of members, or even formally established canons of conduct, all of which give them their extraordinary flexibility and potential influence. Yet they remain little known and even less understood, shrouded in mystery, inspiring in some the highest hopes and expectations and in others dark fears and resentments. By some they are seen as the Hope of the Future, our Secret Weapon for progress; by others as our Fifth Column; and by still others as our invisible Fourth Branch of Government.

There are numerous explanations for why individuals and families created foundations, a form of public largesse uniquely American both in magnitude and form. Often cited are the

American tradition of voluntarism, suspicion of government's motives or efficiency, a family tradition of giving, or religious principles. On the other hand, John Steinbeck believed that philanthropy fed the huge egos of those who gave and made them feel superior to and larger than the receiver. He argued that most philanthropists spent two-thirds of their time acquiring the fortune and one-third giving it back --both kinds of activity designed to reinforce the donor's sense of superiority. Louis Auchincloss suggested that charity was the ultimate form of conspicuous consumption.

One can only speculate on the intentions and motives of those who decided to allocate portions of their wealth for philanthropic purposes, but certainly legal and financial considerations have played an important role in the decisions to create foundations. Transferring stock provided a way to retain control, even if indirectly, of the family company and ensure that it would pass to the next generation. And although tax policy has changed over the years, the incentive of avoiding taxes by donating assets to a charitable foundation cannot be overlooked. One student of philanthropy has noted that "the largest growth of the field took place during the late 1940s and the 1950s, when tax rates were at their peak."

According to Neilsen's account, Ford and MacArthur had no identifiable charitable purpose in mind when they created their foundations. About one-third of the initial donors had specific objectives --Kaiser in prepaid health plans; Richard Mellon in urban redevelopment; Mott in the community school concept; Paul Mellon in the humanities; Kellogg in children's welfare; and Robert Wood Johnson in health care systems --but most were parochial in their interest, limiting giving to institutions in their immediate vicinity. Many foundations wound up supporting worthy institutions such as the colleges and universities the donors had attended, health and medical institutions with which they were associated, and other causes that they, their families and their friends knew and cared about.

At least two donors (Alfred Sloan and Joseph Pew) were motivated by ideological rather than social concerns. Only a tiny number had in mind what Nielsen calls "scientific philanthropy," getting at the causes of social ills rather than merely ameliorating the symptoms. Rockefeller and Carnegie were rare among philanthropists because they wanted to leverage their gifts by influencing patterns of government spending.

From the beginning, foundations have been closely associated with the wealthy families that created them and with America's corporate establishment from which they derived their wealth. Among those who established the largest foundations, there were no African-Americans, Hispanics, or Asians; no Italians or Poles; and only a few Roman Catholics (e.g., Hilton) and Jews (Ben Weingart and more recently Walter Annenberg). The overwhelming majority of philanthropists were white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

Those who amassed fortunes and established foundations, particularly in the earlier years of this century, tended to be familiar with one another. They met at dancing lessons, boarding schools, and Ivy League colleges; they intermarried, joined the same clubs, and spent their vacations at the same resorts in Maine or the Adirondacks. As a result, the ideas

they shared --capitalism, noblesse oblige, patriotism, among others --were far more likely to be reinforced than challenged. Inevitably, their view of the world, and particularly of potential beneficiaries, influenced their decisions on how to use their money.

Obviously, the beliefs and attitudes of every human being are shaped by the family, class, and society into which an individual is born, the kind of education received, and the experiences encountered. Those with great wealth, however, took it for granted that their beliefs were correct and that they were (or ought to be) shared by everyone. Did not their worldly success vindicate the truth of their point of view? Even when they had the best of intentions, they were almost incapable of recognizing their own limitations or acknowledging the merits of other perspectives. History is full of examples of "objective" scientists who, because of the bias of a particular mindset, posed the wrong questions, limited their data, and drew erroneous conclusions --a phenomenon which historian Arthur Lovejoy referred to as "metaphysical pathos."

From the outset, the governing bodies of foundations have tended to reflect the patterns and outlooks of well-to-do families and the leaders of the great corporations. Trustees were selected from among family members, close family friends, business colleagues, and reliable retainers. Until very recently, little attention was paid to women, minorities, or those from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and although progress has been made, it is still modest.

Staffing patterns were not appreciably different. College presidents or executives from the family company (possibly retired persons or amiable souls who were unlikely to rise further in the corporate hierarchy) were often selected to head foundations. Like the trustees, they were almost always well educated white males. Only recently have there been changes, usually in highly visible foundations such as Ford, MacArthur, Pew, Cleveland, or the William Penn Foundation, which now have minorities or women in the top or second position. All but one of these appointments have been made in the past 12 years.

Only a few years ago, one commentator described the irony of the situation this way:

Almost by definition, philanthropy...targets the poor and disadvantaged for a large proportion of its activities. In Chicago, as in the nation's other large cities, the poor and disadvantaged are primarily people of color and women. Yet in Chicago --as in the nation's other large cities --the vast majority of those in charge of the giving are white males; virtually none of the actual donors have experienced the life of those who will benefit from the donations.

It was gratifying to learn from Dr. Emmett Carson's recent study, *Diversity and Equity among Foundation Grantmakers*, that there has been notable improvement in the composition of foundation staffs. He reports that, although Hispanics and Asians are

slightly underrepresented in comparison with their respective group's percentage of the general population, African-Americans are somewhat overrepresented (13.9 percent on staff compared with 12 percent of the population), while women constitute a clear majority. As Dr. Carson points out, there are other questions which need to be examined, but in the meantime, these positive statistics indicate "a significant achievement in which foundations, given their history, should take some pride."

This achievement, however, simply underlines the special responsibility that accrues to minority group members who have gained access: to bring to their organizations the minority perspective. Such an obligation is inevitable. It may not be fair, it may not be just, and it is more complicated now than ever because of the increasing diversity of the nation's population and the growing acrimony between and among ethnic and racial groups. But minority foundation officers, in addition to their regular duties, should make known a different point of view, a different perspective, an angle formed by the prism of their special experience of marginality. There are risks associated with this role: at best, of being called a sorehead or a whiner, tagged as a professional minority or the advocate of special interests. At worst, it may mean placing one's job in jeopardy.

Having said that, I would like to suggest some ways in which ABFE members --and others --can make their special contributions to the philanthropic enterprise. For instance, we can help foundations to understand and deal appropriately with the new faces and new voices in American society. The quickly changing demographic patterns in the United States suggest that by the middle of the next century, the various minority groups will together constitute a majority. In fact, this is already the case in California for the population under age 18. We have seen the consequences of these changes in new intergroup tensions: Cuban-Americans versus African-Americans in Miami, Korean-Americans versus African-Americans in Philadelphia, Southeast Asians versus white Americans in Texas, and multiethnic, multiracial antagonisms in Los Angeles and in Washington, D.C. At least 21 bills concerning immigration have been introduced in the California State Legislature. By definition, we are "different," and we can therefore speak from the inside about both the pride and the pain of experiencing difference. That difference, both in perspective and experience, led me to entitle my latest book, *Essays from the Underside*. I am haunted by two recent events: The plaintive question, a plea really, of Rodney King asking: "Can we all get along?" And the more recent spectacle of Professor Lani Guinier's nomination and the subsequent withdrawal of that nomination for Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. I am haunted because Rodney King asked the seminal question for our country, perhaps indeed for our world. Professor Guinier's situation points up not only the clash of ideologies and differences in perspective, but more importantly, the difficulty of understanding and respecting difference if the opportunity to be heard is denied. It is difficult if not impossible to achieve clarity in the absence of facts, knowledge and context.

The issues are complex and not easily resolved, yet some believe that we can achieve a perfect society informed by totally harmonious values. Sir Isaiah Berlin, one of the most respected political philosophers of our day, described this hope as

...the belief that somewhere, in the past or in the future,

in divine revelation or in the mind of an individual thinker, in the pronouncements of history or science, or in the simple heart of an uncorrupted good man, there is a final solution. This ancient faith rests on the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail one another.

Instead, he suggests,

[t]he world that we encounter in ordinary experience is one in which we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realization of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifices of others... If, as I believe, the ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other, then the possibility of conflict --and of tragedy -- can never be wholly eliminated from human life, either personal or social. The necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition.

As this nation enters the next century, tough choices must be made, as Sir Isaiah points out:

The extent of a man's or a people's liberty to choose to live as they desire must be weighed against the claims of many other values of which equality, or justice, or happiness, or security, or public order are perhaps the most obvious examples... That we cannot have everything is a necessary, not a contingent truth.

A recent article in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* (3/23/93) points up the need for the kind of sensitivity which minority group members can bring. Although the number of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. population has doubled in recent years, there has been no appreciable change in foundation giving toward this group. Perhaps, as the article suggested, philanthropists like other Americans have been captivated by the common, if ill-founded, assumption that Asian-Americans constitute an undifferentiated "model minority" which needs no attention or assistance. Ronald Takaki's excellent *Strangers from a Different Shore* should be required reading for many Americans.

In addition to offering a more informed perspective on some of the current problems which plague cities in every part of the country, perhaps we can also suggest new ways of responding to them, not least the apparently novel idea of asking those directly involved, not only what their problems and priorities are, but what they see as possible solutions.

Following the Los Angeles riots --one of the first multiracial, multiethnic riots in this country; the majority of those arrested were not African-Americans --there was an outpouring of emergency aid, but not nearly enough for longterm rebuilding. The excuse given by some philanthropists and foundations was that they didn't know what to do --so they did nothing! The Irvine Foundation, however, hired a consultant to visit affected neighborhoods and find out what local groups and individuals thought were the most urgent problems.

Many of us are personally or professionally acquainted with the depression and despair which characterize many urban areas --what Professor Cornel West in his new book, *Race Matters*, calls "the nihilistic threat to Black America." But we also know something about survival in the face of apparently overwhelming disadvantages and handicaps. How can our own experience be used to open the eyes of foundation boards and staffs and make their work more effective?

And if we encounter the covert suggestion that the poor are responsible for their plight or are not doing enough to help themselves, it is not enough to call this blaming the victim. It might also be useful to draw attention to what happens to people in the wake of such natural disasters as Hurricane Andrew. The pace of rebuilding in south Florida has been exceedingly slow because of bureaucratic delays, the lack of strong community organizations, and the disinterest of those not affected. But a major problem is also said to be the victims' overwhelming sense of discouragement and apathy. One is tempted to inquire whether the fact that most of them are white explains why they are still receiving enormous sympathy and help, rather than being blamed for their continued misfortunes. Other examples can easily be found.

Finally, I believe that minority staff members can help sensitize their foundations to the possibility of empowerment rather than charity, of taking the risk of funding small and emerging minority organizations. Traditionally, foundations have supported organizations which not only provide appropriate services (i.e. in accordance with foundation priorities) but which are likely to do so efficiently and well. The size and duration of grants are generally related to the resources and financial stability of the grantees. Smaller, newer organizations with limited budgets, often located in an impoverished Asian, Hispanic or African-American community, usually receive smaller grants for shorter periods of time .

Traditional philanthropy operates according to self-defined goals of charity for the poor and the promotion of high culture. Charity is extremely gratifying for those who engage in it, as evidenced by the symbiotic link between art and its patrons. But what makes traditional grantmaking easy --gratification --is precisely what makes empowerment as a strategy for grantmaking so difficult. Building capacity among powerless people requires the creation of alternative sites of decision-making, validation, and power. In the abstract, these issues may not seem to be troubling, but in the real world, they frequently involve choices between well-run institutions that are known and loved, and weak, emerging organizations about which foundation boards and staff have little knowledge and with which they have even less contact. Empowerment is threatening because it is messy. When



people have the capacity to act for themselves, they frequently do --and not necessarily in ways that people who have acted for them anticipate or welcome.

Although members of minority groups are now found in greater numbers on foundation staffs, their mere presence is no guarantee that foundations will be more openminded or more willing to take risks. Philanthropy is dangerous work because being in a position to influence the distribution of money can corrupt one's sense of perspective. It is all too easy to assume that access to wealth conveys intellectual and moral superiority, and more than one foundation executive or program officer has confused the excessive deference and obsequious behavior of potential grantees with his or her own personal brilliance and insight. (I could recite for you many humorous, cynical, and infuriating incidents from my tenure at the William Penn Foundation.) The arrogance to which such an attitude leads will diminish objectivity, balance, and even common sense. And it will certainly blunt, if not destroy, the most valuable and necessary contribution which can be made by minority staff members to the work of foundations: seeing grantmaking and reality through a different prism; serving as representatives for the disenfranchised, interpreters for the inarticulate, advocates for new and potentially risky approaches to grantmaking. It is important to remember, however, that we are not all-knowing, that there are gaps in our understanding and knowledge. Like the rest of those in philanthropy, we are also ignorant. I use the term ignorance in the sense it was used in a 1984 speech by J. Irwin Miller who quoted Artemus Ward as saying, "Ignorance ain't so much what you don't know, as it is what you do know that ain't so." Or as William Saroyan said several decades later, "I'm ignorant. I used to be angry about this, but thirty years ago I began to see the intelligence of this. It is all right to be ignorant just so you know it."

Waldemar Neilson, with whom this essay began, recently raised some questions for foundations which are very much to the point. Among them: "Has a kind of encapsulation --separation from direct contact with the realities of American life as experienced by the great majority of its citizens --become a pervasive problem of foundations?" And, "has a quality of timidity or withdrawal crept into foundation behavior as the national dialogue on many issues, from abortion to tax equity and affirmative action, becomes more intense and embittered?" African-Americans and other former outsiders who have now gained places in the corridors of power dare not be satisfied with their individual access and achievements or succumb to the temptation to adopt without thinking or analysis the attitudes and practices of the powerful. We have both the responsibility and the privilege of establishing lines of communication with those oppressed by poverty, anger, and despair, and in so doing to raise the "national dialogue" to anew and hopefully, more enlightened level.

As I noted earlier, this is no easy task: the representative for an unpopular point of view is frequently subject to ridicule, contempt, or outright rejection. At the risk of seeming too dramatic, I cannot help reminding you of the "noble army of martyrs" who preceded us in the struggle for the inclusion of all Americans in the realization of the American dream. If the price of speaking up for those still left out seems too high, recall Martin Luther King, Jr., who just over 30 years ago wrote his magnificent and stirring "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." To him, the counsels of conservatism and caution, however well-intentioned, were far more disheartening than personal indignities or threats to his safety. The question

is not, he said, "whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be... Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice - or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?"

It is certainly not my intention to suggest that organized philanthropy even in the period when it was the exclusive domain of white upper-class males, has not made significant contributions to increasing opportunity and to improving the general welfare --in education, health, housing, the arts. A review of the history of American foundations gives little support to the critics who view them as unmitigated evils, intent on preserving the status quo or imposing their wills on an unsuspecting public. It is equally unwise, however, to assume that they have sufficient knowledge and resources to solve any problem or that they should be expected to do so.

With a few notable exceptions, most foundations have carried out their missions with intelligence, creativity, and considerable success. They have clearly followed the mandates of the donors. But "new occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good uncouth." In the closing years of the 20th century, when this nation is in the midst of change on an unprecedented scale and in every aspect of life, we cannot afford the illusory comfort of traditional analyses and old solutions. As representatives of America's largest minority -- and, in some respects, of other Americans who have experienced marginality --we must make a new commitment to bringing to our work our special experience and different perspective. The philanthropic enterprise will almost certainly be enriched and reinvigorated; and we may even help to point the way out of some of our present dilemmas, dilemmas which affect us as a minority no less than they do the majority.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the truly exceptional experience I have enjoyed during my twelve years as president of the William Penn Foundation, one which is unique for all but a few African-Americans: I have been evaluated on my performance and nothing else. It is an experience I never expected to have in my lifetime and one that I never expect to have again.

For this, I owe a debt of gratitude to John C. Haas, who recently retired after 32 years as chairman of the William Penn Foundation board. His confidence in me and his unflinching support over the entire time that we worked together have made this experience more than fulfilling: it has been a labor of love. I consider myself fortunate to have worked with a person of not only high intelligence and superb education, but with such great compassion and uncommon courtesy. Long before I arrived at the Foundation, John and his brother, Dr. F. Otto Haas, and their wives, had already earned the respect of all who knew them for their quiet but persistent efforts to understand and address the problems of Philadelphia and the surrounding counties. Otto served as vice chairman of the board for most of my tenure.

Throughout my years as president, I have been privy to sage advice and consistent support not only from John and Otto Haas, but from numerous members of the board of directors who made valuable contributions, based upon their special perspectives and experiences, to the shaping of Foundation policies and projects. They were not afraid to take the initiative.

Our multi-million dollar Basic Human Needs program --a response to the severe cutbacks in government-funded social services in the early 1980s, which was widely emulated and for which the Foundation received much favorable publicity --was conceived by the board, rather than by the staff, and was initiated at their express instruction. Board members were willing to be educated and informed by experts, staff, and others more experienced in a particular area. The William Penn Foundation board was willing to take risks, to make mistakes, and to break new ground. This board was willing, without fear, to support organizations representing minorities, gays and lesbians, businessmen and professionals against nuclear proliferation, and organizations promoting and encouraging peace through negotiations and mediation rather than violent conflict. The board did not shy away from advocacy and public policy considerations.

These initiatives were possible, in part, because over time an excellent staff had been assembled and was given the freedom to be professional. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to these caring and competent staff members, several of whom have been at the Foundation longer than I have. As any honest leader knows, his or her efforts will be of little avail without the backing of efficient, patient, and loyal personnel. I acknowledge also my appreciation of their work, which is often difficult, tedious, complex, and repetitious. They receive far too few of the plaudits which I have received in abundance.

On a more personal note, it is important to acknowledge that my beliefs and attitudes have, like others, been shaped by family, class, the society into which I was born, my education and my experiences. Whereas those with wealth, power and great advantages may take it for granted that their beliefs are correct and should be shared by everyone, those of us who were born and lived on the margins were shaped by other forces. Mine included a loving family consisting of a father with very little education who served with the 366th Infantry Division in France in World War I and whose contributions were acknowledged only after I contacted the Defense Department and made inquiries as to how a soldier with excellent ratings could have served in combat without receiving even a good conduct medal. The three medals my father earned were acknowledged and delivered to me more than three decades after his death. Those forces also include my mother, perhaps the smartest person I have known, who graduated from college magna cum laude at age seventeen. Married to each other all of their adult lives, they raised and educated five children. These forces include learning at an early age that to succeed in this country, African-Americans had to be better prepared, more persistent, more focused and prepared to compete on an uneven playing field.

They includes accepting the reality of having to fight for the right to fight for your country: of being prepared to struggle all of your life to achieve the equality guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and, at the same time, accepting the reality that you are an American, that you love your country; that despite obstacles, discrimination, segregation and myriad other physical and psychological assaults on your humanity, you must never succumb to hate. Anger, especially righteous anger, is an engine, a source of energy that can propel you forward in pursuit of your goals. Hate, on the other hand is a depressant, a drug that will ultimately destroy not your adversaries, your enemies, but you, the hater.

My long life has been filled with obstacles and challenges, problems and opportunities, struggle and change, success and defeats. That is life...

As I anticipate my departure from the William Penn Foundation, I leave with you the words of two heroes of our time: the late James Baldwin and Nelson Mandela. They are challenging words, more forceful than I have been able to summon up in this brief lecture. As you return to your regular activities, I hope they will trouble you and inspire you. I hope they will trouble and inspire your colleagues and peers as we all face the challenges and complexities of the next century .

Discussing America's preoccupation with race and color, in 1963 James Baldwin said:

For the sake of one's children, in order to minimize the bill they must pay, one must be careful not to take refuge in any delusion -and the value placed on the color of the skin is always and everywhere and forever a delusion. I know that what I am asking is impossible. But in our time, as in every time, the impossible is the least that we can demand... Everything now, we must assume, is in our hands; we have no right to assume otherwise. If we - and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious Blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others -do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in song by a slave, is upon us: God Gave Noah The Rainbow Sign. No More Water, The Fire Next Time!

And finally, Nelson Mandela's ringing declaration, first sounded during his 1964 trial and repeated when he was released, after 27 years, from prison in 1990:

I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against Black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. AMANDLA! POWER!

Surely these are words for all of us, for all time. If this man can celebrate and revere freedom and democracy; if he can, even today dream of all of us living in harmony, with respect for each other, despite our differences, we can at least try to make this country and all of its institutions become in greater measure what our most revered documents say we

have already become. We are one of many minorities in the U.S., clearly the largest and arguably the most aggrieved. But we are also Americans, citizens of this country, and that imposes special responsibilities. Claude Lewis, a columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* sums up what all of us should remember:

There is much work to be done in this land. And perhaps, we might begin to accomplish much of it, once we felt better about one another. We are separated by dozens of artificial barriers, including color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion and politics.

The celebration of America can become a useful tool. It can be used to help bring us together for the first time in ages.

The so-called "Evil Empire" was never the Soviet Union. All the time it has been those Americans and their organizations who promote hatred and separateness and suspicion at home and who mindlessly rollout the flag every holiday of the year. They were the evil. Indeed, we have far more to fear from one another than we ever had to fear from abroad.

I, for one, say Amen to that.