

Jan 21, 2025

Good Morning [REDACTED]

Yesterday's post does not assign blame for our current circumstances. Discussing the history of our past without being labeled as "woke" is challenging. My intention is not to evoke guilt but to emphasize the importance of avoiding repeating the mistakes of the past that we have forgotten due to our lack of personal experience. I acknowledge that there was an excessive over correction, resulting in widespread negative sentiment towards the term "woke" and its association with racial blame. However, it is crucial to recognize that this sentiment does not reflect the views of the majority. No one desires to make individuals feel guilty based on their racial identity.

I felt guilty for being Vietnamese American when I was younger, knowing many Americans died in Vietnam to help us. I completed two internships at Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, and Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to gain clinical experience. These centers offered free living and meals, reducing my reliance on student loans, so I chose them.

Prior to my visit, I fervently prayed that individuals would not hold me accountable for the past events that transpired. Although I was not present during those events, which occurred before my birth, I still experience a sense of guilt. Little did I know the extraordinary kindness of the Veterans I encountered. I had the privilege of meeting Veterans from World War II to the Iraq War, and their interactions with me were nothing short of remarkable. They provided me with unwavering support and encouragement. Their kindness was truly overwhelming. One Veteran expressed regret for the events that occurred in Vietnam. They acknowledged that many civilians had lost their lives, and war can bring out the worst in individuals, as exemplified by the My Lai massacre. When soldiers lose sight of their cause, they may resort to unethical behavior.

It is reasonable to assume that when individuals discuss the past, they may be assigning blame. However, this is usually not the case. The purpose of writing is to stimulate thought and evoke introspection, not to instill guilt. The best way to know that people have no ill will against us, nor do they want to play the race card, is to immerse ourselves in a setting that may seem uncomfortable. I chose to complete two of my clinical experiences at the VA Medical Center (VAMC) primarily due to cost-of-living considerations. Unbeknownst to me, this decision would profoundly alter my perspective and challenge my preconceived notion that Americans harbor negative sentiments towards me due to the Vietnam War and my ethnicity. While it is true that I have encountered only one individual who

expressed resentment towards the Vietnam War, the majority of those I have interacted with have demonstrated kindness and understanding, recognizing that war inevitably results in significant loss and suffering for all parties involved. It is futile to engage in blame-shifting, as all sides suffer profound personal consequences when witnessing war firsthand.

It is disheartening to observe the frequent invocation of the negative "wokeness" of the past decade whenever historical events are discussed. It is important to recognize that the majority of individuals, including myself, were not born during those events. We do not blame the living or the dead for what has transpired in the past.

"Man is not the enemy of man, but war itself is our enemy." -Thich Nhat Hanh

Most conversations don't involve starting wars, yet humans make everything into verbal wars. The war mentality starts wars in our heads.

Any human can see the worst in others. Turning a word that doesn't belong to us into something negative is one of the saddest things.

Your pen pal,

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