

Unplugging From Reality: Have Some of Us Lost Our Minds?

My *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* is no longer new – it was published in 1986 – most of the time my online dictionary suffices. Once in a blue moon, however, I flip open my trusty *Webster's*.

The word I was hunting this time was psychosis, which this faded red volume defines as “fundamental mental derangement (as paranoia) characterized by defective or lost contact with reality.” A psychotic is one who suffers from that disease.

When I look around me, the people I see – my neighbors across the street, the baristas in the coffee shop I visit, my children and grandchildren, my siblings, my friends near and far – all appear firmly grounded in reality. They get out of bed and go to work, attend to the rearing and education of their children, pay off their mortgages and car loans, shop at the grocery store, occasionally gather with friends, rationally discuss local and national events, and play the part of adults.

On a recent visit to Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown, the docents, store clerks, wait staff, and visitors also seemed to have a grip on reality. They did their jobs, in many cases extremely well, or, in the case of the tourists, enjoyed the sights.

Which is why the online news I read every day annoys, shocks, and occasionally either amuses or sickens me, depending on my frame of mind. The headlines often contradict my sense of reality. Let's take a look at just a few of the topics making the news right now to investigate whether the participants might fit the definition of psychosis.

In Fairfax County, Virginia, [administrators](#) have ordered

school bus drivers and “attendants” to drive their usual rounds daily, even though no students are aboard the busses, all to continue paying the bus drivers during the lockdown. School cafeteria workers also continue to receive a paycheck though they do no work. Is that decision in sync with reality? Not only are the bus drivers wasting gas, polluting the atmosphere, and clogging the highways, but they are driving without passengers.

Here’s a suggestion: Why not take all those drivers, attendants, and cafeteria personnel and put them to work weeding school grounds, stuffing envelopes in the principal’s office, or painting classrooms?

In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the police received a call from a woman who said her brother was threatening her mother with a knife. When the officer knocked on the door, a Latino man wielding a knife charged at him and chased him, and the officer shot him dead. [Black Lives Matter rioting](#) and looting followed the incident. Have those who damaged stores and stolen their neighbors’ property “lost contact with reality?” What would they have done had they been in that police officer’s position? What would they do if a maniac were attacking their mother?

For his administration’s work to bring peace to the Middle East and Croatia, Donald Trump was twice nominated earlier this month for the Nobel Peace Prize. Once upon a time Americans might have expressed their pride at such an honor, but politicians and the press have instead assailed both the Nobel nominations and Trump himself. Nancy Pelosi even called Trump’s accomplishments a [“distraction.”](#) Are these folks in touch with reality?

Now for a minor incident closer to home. This afternoon I was typing away beside the front window of my house when I saw a gentleman, age 40 or so, strolling down the empty street with his son. The houses here are anywhere from 75 to 100 yards

apart, and only a few pedestrians, joggers, dog walkers, and kids on bikes make use of these roads. Yet here came a man wearing a mask, utterly alone in the street except for his son. Is he in touch with reality?

Finally, two police officers, one of them a woman with children, were ambushed and shot in the head in Los Angeles. [Black Lives Matter protesters](#) tried to block the entrance to the hospital to which medical personnel took them and even attempted to enter the emergency room itself, while some of them stood outside the hospital shouting “I hope they ****ing die.” Are these people in touch with the reality that two human beings inside those hospital walls were fighting for their lives? Or are they psychotic?

Most of us label ourselves Democrats or Republicans, progressives or conservatives, with certain differentiations in both groups: old-time liberals, neo-conservatives, libertarians, and other colors on the spectrum. I’ve even heard of one former progressive who now calls himself as a “radical centrist.”

Yet today’s national dialogue seems driven by a tiny minority of radicals who despise our country, our Constitution, our history, and our values.

So here’s my question: Will some of our politicians and mainstream media continue to regard these protestors and rioters as legitimate? Or should they instead see many of them as criminal and political psychotics, damaged human beings who have broken with reality?

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