

Saying Goodbye to Yesterday, Shaking Hands with Tomorrow

Most people I know have either read or seen *Gone with the Wind*. One of the underlying themes of that story, alluded to in the title, is the disappearance of the Old South, its economy and way of life destroyed, and often erased, by the Civil War and Reconstruction. That terrible conflict freed the slaves, but the following years of the Jim Crow era kept their descendants beaten down for almost a century more. It also left a huge part of the United States in poverty and ruin, rendering the South an impoverished, oddball stepsister to the rest of the nation.

That defeat gave rise to a fierce nostalgia among Southerners, sentiments that lasted well past the deaths of veterans who had survived the war and its aftermath. Vestiges of that regional pride exist even today.

I suspect that many of us, both conservatives and liberals, can sympathize on some level with such attachments to the past. We look back to the time of our childhood, or perhaps to some decade when life struck us as especially glorious, and rue the loss of what seems a better chapter in our nation's story. Certainly the rapid changes brought by the 21st century in technology, the culture, and what were once counted as societal norms have left many Americans feeling as if they've survived a hurricane, with so many of the things they treasured or took for granted swept away by whirlwind and flood.

Our country's present turmoil—political hatred, sexual depravity, cancel culture, and wokeism—causes many Americans to pine for “the good old days” when the public square was a cleaner, saner place. Unfortunately, clocks don't run backwards, and the mistakes and absurdities of the last two

decades can't be deleted with a magic wand.

But while we can't reverse the march of time, we still possess the power to change the direction of that march.

To do so, we must first put away the deep sighs of reminiscence and the sad yearning for a revival of the past, and instead turn our eyes to the future and what we wish to make of it. Do we envision that future as some sort of bleak hellhole of oppressive government and lack of liberty? Or do we see it instead as a shining upland of prosperity, freedom, and morality restored?

The vision we choose matters tremendously. If we see the future as a dark place where the few dictate to the many and the rule of law is dead, we are giving sustenance to our enemies. If instead we wish for the old American ideals to hold sway, then we have already begun to equip ourselves with the weapons that will help bring about this result.

And here's the good news: some Americans have already undertaken this restoration.

There's a blowback, for example, building against Marxist wokeism. Disney has [lost the trust and respect of parents](#) for its sexualization of children's movies, and families are voting with their feet, walking away from Mickey Mouse & Crew. [Enlistments in the military have plummeted](#), in part from the indoctrination in critical theory demanded of recruits and the policy of forced COVID vaccines.

The political battles in D.C., particularly the war waged against Donald Trump by some politicians and federal agencies, have also had an upside. They've torn the mask from government overreach—some bureaucrats and officials are quite open now in their contempt for the American people and their lust for power. The result? More Americans than ever are aware of these insidious attacks on our legal and political systems.

The realm of education, at least on the elementary and secondary levels, should give us special hope for the future. Begun during COVID, [the migration from government schools](#) to private academies, parochial schools, and homeschooling continues, an exodus fed by parents disgusted with masks, closures, teacher unions, critical theory, radical sex education, and falling test scores. Meanwhile, parents whose children have remained in government schools are demanding changes from school boards and administrators.

The past is gone, but the principles, the machinery, and the millennia-old culture that so long sustained it remain. These riches may be buried in the rubble, but they are there, waiting to be dug out, refurbished, and again put to use. And some folks are already working with metaphorical picks and shovels toward that rehabilitation.

Let's roll up our sleeves, stand together with these people and our neighbors, friends, and families in whatever way we can, no matter how small, and get busy building a bright future.

—

Image Credit: Pexels