

# The write time to ditch the tradition

*Brian Keelan - November 2020*

Despite my advancing years, I can still recall most of the historically significant events of my life: the Kennedy assassination in 1963 along with the subsequent cover-up, the Vietnam war years, the 1970 FLQ incident here in Canada, and 9/11 to name the biggies (in my opinion). Oh, and don't forget the Summit hockey series of 1972 and the fact that the 1993 Canadiens were the last Canadian team to win a Stanley Cup.

Even so, I think 2020 is a year that could actually outdo them all if things keep going in the direction they appear to be headed or at least, certain people seem bent on taking them. Right now, if everyone is not worried, they are, at the very least, concerned about the two major issues of the day.

1: COVID-19 – specifically how and when – or if – we will ever get back to a “normal” way of life.

2: The 2020 US Presidential election – specifically how and when – or if – we will ever get back to a “normal” way of life.

The US, it seems to me, has never been this polarized in its political thought: farther to the right versus way too far to the left, haves versus have-nots and, of course, there are the ever-present wills versus those nasty will-nots. There seems to be no middle road available and yet I have the feeling that the middle is where most of us really want to be. But that also seems to me to be where the racists, homophobes, gun owners, masking deniers, climate-change deniers, carbon fuel lovers and Edmonton Eskimo (now the Edmonton Football Team) fans along with the Washington Redskins (now the Washington Football Team) fans not only want to be, but actually think they are. All while those of us who actually are in the middle, feel very alone.

As a Canadian I find myself, along with just about every other Canadian I know, watching US news more than Canadian news these days and I think that's because what goes on over in the USA has such a huge influence on what happens here in Canada. That's just what you get when 35 million people live beside 340 million people. They are our best customers and they have lots of really cool stuff at great prices to sell us, plus their weather is so much better than ours, especially in the winter. But now the rising sea levels, tornadoes, hurricanes, forest fires and political climate, along with COVID-19, are keeping us at home in the great frozen north to deal with our own issues namely COVID-19 and a Prime Minister who is tolerated by his subjects as long as he keeps our cheque-book open.

These days the US and Canadian governments don't seem to be getting along very well and that is mainly because of Mr. Trump. Not that we disagree with everything he says and does, but mainly because we never know what he is going to say or do today or tweet in the wee hours of tomorrow morning. It's like we are constantly living in a situation where you know the shit is going to hit the fan, you just don't know exactly when, how much or who it's going to land on.

Sadly, Mr. Trump seems to like it that way. It reminds me of when Howard Stern first got going; you didn't tune in because you liked him, you tuned in to see what he was going to do or say next. It's a sad situation since I have always enjoyed and valued the relationship we have had with the US. We had all the same friends. We both knew who the assholes were and who our friends were. Now that is all up in the air as he makes buddy-buddy with the global assholes while throwing what's left of his ever-diminishing group of friends under the bus.

## **Michael rows the boat onto the rocks**

I have just finished listening to Michael Cohen's book, *Disloyal* on my iPhone. It's my way of multi-tasking on my bike rides. Cohen was Mr. Trump's personal lawyer for 12 years and was often referred to as “Trump's pitbull.” The Whitehouse calls the book “fan fiction,” but then they could never admit that even a little bit of it is true. They have a “deny, deny, deny” policy. Just listening to all the conversations and things Cohen says Mr. Trump said and did makes you wonder how Mr. Trump ever got where he is in the first place.

When I heard Mr. Trump claim in his latest debate that, “I am the least racist person in this room,” I wondered why Mr. Biden hadn’t referred to some of the things Mr. Cohen claimed he said in his book and said, “Oh yeah... well what about...?” But as Sylvia would say to me, “Maybe Mr. Biden was just trying to reach a little higher.”

I’d say, “Yeah. Sure. That’s it. Reach a little higher. Of course. Why didn’t I think of that?”

When Mr. Trump said that Cohen’s book is, “full of lies,” I recalled an instance in the book where Cohen told a story about how he lied to police in order to keep a “made” mafia man from getting arrested for murder and wondered how, given what Mr. Cohen just revealed, the Mafia guy wouldn’t at least be brought in for questioning for what must surely be an unsolved murder. Then I thought, “Well the guy admits he’s a liar and that he did lots of lying for Trump, why should we believe what he’s saying now?”

His book also made me recall that old Sutherland saying, “You can’t waller with the pigs and not get dirty.”

Even so, I do believe anywhere between some and a lot of what Cohen said. Even if only half or less of it is true, I would not only not vote for Mr. Trump, I would not get into business with him, work for him or even have lunch with him. I have an interesting question to ask a friend of mine who claims he likes Mr. Trump because of his “business” experience. “Okay then,” I would say, “let’s suppose he gave your company an order for two million dollars payable 30 days after delivery. Knowing what you know about him now, would you accept the order?”

Mr. Trump reminds me of a salesman I used to know who, when asked if a certain person’s credit was any good, replied, “I wouldn’t even take cash from that guy.”

### **Trump’s defenders say**

The economy ran hot for three years under his “leadership.” Others will argue that it was just a continuation of Obama’s economy. The Trumpians will reply that low-wage workers did better and there were more jobs available and they made more money. The Bidenites will counter that most of that wage growth was due to states and municipalities increasing the minimum wage, so it was really a push from the smaller liberal governments and not pull from the hands of Mr. Trump. They will point out that overall demand in jobs increased, particularly in the wealthier cities, so a lot of the credit should go to the invisible hand of the market which does not in my opinion get nearly enough credit. I hate to see politicians take credit for other people’s hard work and Mr. Trump certainly likes to do that. As my Uncle Jack, the world’s most dangerous salesman, used to say, “He came to do good and did well... very well.”

Trump defenders say that credit for the good market is due to Trump’s looser monetary policies and tighter borders. Sure, there is lots of humanitarian criticism on the immigration thing, but the Trumpodites like to remind us that Obama signed off on lots of inhumane policies in that regard. The detention centers went up on his watch and there were record deportations.

There is even some general, logical agreement on the fact that immigration needs to be controlled. It is a numerical issue as well as a real humanitarian issue that is caused by the fact that the population of the planet took 199,800 years to go from zero to one billion and then only 220 years to go from 1 billion to 7.7 billion and is projected to go to 9.4 billion in the next thirty years. Given those kinds of numbers you cannot avoid immigration issues. Consider the fact that 76% of the world lives in Asia and Africa – and most of those countries are run by assholes who are not doing anything to help in that regard, and thus leaving it to the smaller population countries that want to do something but can’t do it all.

We do pretty well here in the USA and Canada where we have lots of space and a small population. Other than ourselves and Australia/ New Zealand, the rest of the world does not seem like a place of opportunity especially if you live in Asia or Africa and have no 21st century in-demand skills and are controlled by governments who are simply overwhelmed by the numbers.

There is no doubt in my mind that the USA’s world-wide influence has shrunk under Mr. Trump’s presidency. They no longer matter as they once did under just about everybody before him. On the day after 9/11 they had the world in the palm of their hand and now?

### **Then there are the big, “What ifs?”**

What if this pandemic gets worse? And... what if there is a new and different pandemic? Being President (or Prime Minister) requires a person with character along with the

smarts, ability and the will to manage a large group of people fairly and honestly. Someone we can believe. I can't believe Mr. Trump has the gall to tell his citizens that the Coronavirus is under control when they are experiencing record deaths and hospitalizations which cannot simply be blamed on the fact that they are testing more people. Imagine how much smaller the deficit would be if he had acted decisively to get this thing under control right from the start and they had been able to get the economy up and running much earlier instead of having to be providing trillion-dollar stimulus packages (through debt) just so that people can pay their rent. The collateral damage is almost impossible to calculate now because this is not nearly over.

### **Stacking the Supreme Court**

Bill Maher on his show Real Time, mentioned that when Amy Cohen Barrett is approved as the new justice of the US Supreme court that will make 7 out of 9 justices that are Catholic. Now I do not consider the Catholic Church to be anywhere close to the middle of any road politically or even religiously. Maher made a good point by asking how we would feel if the Supreme Court was "stacked" with Muslims, Buddhists or heaven forbid, Californians.

Sure, all religions are free to practice here but none of them can or should become the law of the land. Having Catholics making those kinds of decisions means that they make decisions based on their beliefs, which includes their irrational fear of going to hell and the will of the majority be damned. That is definitely NOT what this system is supposed to be all about.

So, once again, here we are facing another what I like to call, Woody Allen dilemma: "More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

Amen I say.

Now these are just my opinions and those of the various people I read and listen to. I could be wrong, but I don't think they are.

Oh yes, I've got one more question: who do you think Melania will vote for?