

Will Our Nation Grand Yet Stand? YES!

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In the Avenues of Salt Lake City, Utah, there stands an enormous sycamore tree, which has withstood every wind and winter; every drought and injury; and enjoyed every sunny summer day and spring rain for more than one hundred years.

Many of its branches are clublike from the impacts of a fungus, which thrives in the leaf nodes of sycamore trees, causing many leaves and new branches to fail, yet this grand tree has endured for decades, providing shade from the sun, places for birds to nest, squirrels to work and play, and oxygen for all to breathe.

This grand tree even stood through the winds two years ago, which caused the fall of many younger, healthier trees.

Yet at some point in this tree's life it received a wound, which severed its protective bark near its base. Another fungus was able, then, to breach this outer barrier and begin to break the bonds which built the massive, strong trunk of this tree. Each moment of each day, over months, then years, this fungus has been tearing apart the bonds which strengthened the base of this magnificent tree.

Now, a small opening near the base of this tree reveals a cavity inside, where rodents have removed the rotted wood to make nests and hide seeds. The tree's trunk has become even larger as it has struggled against this fungal invasion.

Our nation, The United States of America, like this great tree, has weathered every wind and winter; every drought and injury; and enjoyed every sunny summer day and spring rain, for centuries. Some intrusions and inward injuries have

limited the potential and success of some aspects of our grand nation. But, through all, we have stood firm and true, providing shelter, food and safety for all who reside here.

Yet, within the core of our nation there is a fungus, which is tearing apart the bonds which have been our strength through every storm and condition; the bonds of family and of neighborhood; the bonds of trust and kindness; these have been our strength; these have been our base; allowing our nation to be a place of shelter and nourishment, refuge and hope for all born upon its branches or borne to it upon the wind or water – searching for, or in need of, a new safe home.

What is this fungus which is ravaging our nation from within?

This fungus is distrust! Distrust which teaches us to fear each other; to hate each other; to hurt each other.

A fungus grows below the surface, away from light. A fungus can spread over great distances within the soil or throughout the trunk of a tree.

Occasionally, the fungus protrudes to the surface and releases spores, which are carried in air currents, sometimes for great distances, eventually landing upon soil or upon an old plant, where the cycle begins again.

What is the wind, which carries distrust from one place to another? It is lies!

Who starts these lies? It is hard to tell. Once a spore is airborne we cannot easily determine its origin. It can be done, by analyzing the direction of the wind and examining the spore, searching for a code which may match a code found elsewhere. But for most of us we only know that distrust, like a ravaging fungus, has arrived.

In nature, fungus is very important, to take apart old bonds between elements allowing those elements to be re-bonded for

other purposes; allowing the elements of an old tree trunk to be utilized by a sapling to make it's trunk, branches and leaves.

In our own lives, distrust, too, is very important. When we arrive as infants, we immediately need to determine what and who is dangerous to our survival and what and who is helpful and necessary for our survival. Hopefully, we determine that our family and their friends; our neighbors; and most strangers are safe and can be trusted. Sometimes, those we should be able to trust and rely upon, we cant. Sometimes they may be the greatest threat to our survival. In such cases, hopefully, we have found someone, somewhere, we can trust.

Interacting with people near us, we quickly learn who we can trust. Current technology has changed who we interact with. Often now, many or most of our interactions are with persons online. Our interactions with persons online are limited, so we may build bonds of trust with people whom we would never trust if we were near them in their lives offline. We tragically, sometimes, allow these artificial bonds to sever or keep us from forming critical bonds of trust with our family and with our neighbors; especially as we spend more time online and, therefore, equally less time with family and neighbors.

What often makes lies and the distrust they carry so pervasive is that, despite their origin, we hear them from a person we can otherwise trust. We can trust them with our lives; with our children, even in our absence; we can trust that fruits or vegetables they offer us from their gardens are safe for us to consume as food. So, we assume that their source of information is safe as well. Unlike the produce from their garden, the information they provide us began elsewhere. It came from a place we have not seen; from a person we have not met. The lie may have originated from someone hiding nearby or someone far away.

Who would start such a lie? Sometimes, someone, somewhere, who does not want the tree to last – someone, somewhere who will gain from its demise! Sometimes, a lie is started by someone seeking fame, fortune or followers – someone, somewhere who cares only about their own momentary gain, even at any cost to others; someone somewhere willing to topple an ancient tree for one brief glimpse at its life rings, or to carry away one last fruit from its upper branches.

Since we cannot easily determine the origin of lies; we must learn to identify them by their effect. When information we have received is causing us to break the bonds in our lives. The bonds of families, friends, neighbors and to strangers arriving in our midst. We need, then, to cease to be the wind, carrying those lies onward; breaking more bonds, rotting away the trust which allows us to thrive in families; in neighborhoods; in communities, cities and nations; the trust which allows us to travel throughout our communities and nations; across our wonderful world.

Our nation, The United States of America, can withstand any threat currently available from without. Yet, like even the greatest of trees; even the smallest of threats from within can eventually destroy the bonds which are our strength.

I have hope, that trust can and will be restored; that kindness can and will prevail; that our bonds with family and neighbors can and will be restored!

Some trees can live for thousands of years. Here in Utah, there are ancient bristle cone pines which have withstood every condition and every event; sometimes clinging alone to the craggiest of cliffs; providing shelter and nourishment, refuge and hope to all who arrived there, whether born within its branches or borne to it upon the wind – searching for, or in need of, a new safe home.

Our nation, too, can remain for thousands of years as a place

of shelter and nourishment, refuge and hope for all born upon its branches or borne to it upon the wind or water – searching for, or in need of, a new safe home.

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