

Wandering around in Wonderland

Jane Lindell Hughes, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Where we are in today's world brings to mind Lewis Carroll's 1865 *Alice in Wonderland* allegory, with the White Rabbit leading Alice down the rabbit hole to a strange fantasy land that is nothing like the world she knew. One could say Americans went down the rabbit hole and were led into a dystopian world with the COVID era. Although we are almost four years into the COVID saga, the destruction of faith in our government institutions has persisted. Once vaunted bureaucracies like the CDC, DOJ, CIA, FBI, NIH, and DHS were exposed as perpetrators of tyranny.

Reassurance that the COVID shots were "safe and effective" without proof that they were, while mandating them anyway, was coupled with destructive, unconstitutional, and tragically ineffective public health measures never before used for other viral illnesses like influenza. Americans began to wake up to the Wonderland they inhabited as the truth has slowly trickled out. Alice could return to her undisturbed world, but our children and many adults were stuck in the rabbit hole of lost learning, businesses unable to survive the "lockdowns," and lost wages.

As we wander out of the COVID dystopia, an important election looms, and we are racing into another chapter. The day before the Trump/Biden debate, those surrounding President Biden, with the able assistance of what is euphemistically called "mainstream media" (MSM), assured Americans that President Biden was a political powerhouse, active and fit for the demands of the office. After the debate, during which Americans of all stripes could see with their own eyes that the President was mentally compromised, the deceit of the MSM and those with direct knowledge of his dementia was laid bare. Americans realized that someone else had been running the Executive Branch, leaving Americans who care about legitimate governance to wonder who exactly was and is running the government.

Why were the American people deceived? Don't we have a system of checks and balances and a succession contingency if a president becomes unable to function at full capacity? Why wasn't this protocol followed? People rightfully wondered what would happen next as the President insisted he was continuing his run for a second term while major party players were urging him to withdraw from the race.

Every day became a new source of wonder. It was announced that President Biden got COVID despite many booster shots, and he disappeared for five days. With the Republican Convention approaching, and no vice-presidential candidate announced, there was an assassination attempt on Donald Trump. The ensuing review of security measures could only be described as beyond belief, spawning multiple theories as to why there was abject disregard for Trump's safety and culminating in the resignation of the Director of the Secret Service, purportedly a friend of Jill Biden.

The raging debate about Joe Biden's physical and mental capacity continued. The Hur report was cited with the conclusion that President Biden is a slow and forgetful man who would not be convicted by a jury because of that frailty. No action was taken by Congress. Others continued to insist that he was as "sharp as a tack." Suddenly, there appeared on the Biden "X" feed a copy of a written statement from the President announcing his withdrawal

from the race, endorsing Kamala Harris as the candidate, but not resigning. More speculation arose about who wrote the letter, as the signature was determined by many speculators to be bogus, and the stationery was not letterhead. Wouldn't the President make that sort of announcement in the Oval Office in person if he were fit to continue as President but deciding not to run for a second term?

Munching on one side of the narrative mushroom made one believe Biden had a "bad night" at the debate but continued to be fit to be President and run for a second term. Munching on the other side led one to believe that the man they saw in the debate was not fit to run for a second term or to continue the charade of running the country. We are still left to wonder whom to believe, what institutions do we still trust, and whether we are at the tipping point as a nation at which a common American culture as most people experienced it is forever down the rabbit hole. Have we already been divided and conquered?

A quick perusal of just the attention-grabbing headlines in the first sections of the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* on any given day is an exercise that millions of Americans have decided is not worth the discomfort. The vast difference in how any topic is reported on and headlined on MSNBC versus Fox News is recognized by everyone of any political persuasion. If we wonder why we are a country divided, we need look no further than the news sources we select. This is a direct condemnation of journalism. Opinion is welcome when identified as such, but the hidden persuader of slanted journalism is vile. Without conscious effort to get varied information sources, Americans are in parallel Wonderlands wondering how anyone could hold the beliefs of "the other side."

These divides and confusions are well described by French political scientist Oliver Roy in his book *The Crisis of Culture*, reviewed by Tunku Varadarajan in the *Wall Street Journal*.¹ Roy, who is described as a man of the old-fashioned, realist, moderate European Left, rejects the woke agenda and the globalized economy, which he feels has resulted in "anchorless human beings." He notes that all the Judeo-Christian West suffers from what he calls "the erasure of shared implicit understanding." He believes we have become "archipelago societies" in which all cultures are subcultures jostling for influence and attention. "The West has ceased to be a place of cultural confidence. It is no longer secure in its values and sense of self."

This analysis sounds a lot like Alice in her Wonderland adventures. However, unlike Alice, we are not going to suddenly awaken and realize with relief that this rabbit hole was only a dream.

Jane Lindell Hughes, M.D., F.A.C.S., is an ophthalmologist in San Antonio, Texas, and serves as president of AAPS.

REFERENCE

1. Varadarajan T. An era of radical transformations. *Wall St J*, Jul 11, 2024. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/arts-culture/books/the-crisis-of-culture-review-an-era-of-radical-transformations-48852771>. Accessed Aug 14, 2024.