

## Get Off Your Knees, America

Jim Murray — Chicago Daily News

LAKE TAHOE, Calif. — I was going to write to you about fun and games today—a golf match on a sylvan lake, a track meet in a municipal amphitheater.

But once again America the beautiful has taken a bullet in the groin. The country is in surgery. The Violent States of America. One bullet is mightier than one million votes.

It's not a democracy, it's a lunacy. A country that shrinks from punishing its criminals, disciplining its children, locking up its mad, is like an animal that disregards its senses. It's a lamb defending the lion's right to eat it.

We quarantine the good, the reliable, the honest. We keep a 24-hour watch on the trustworthy, but get a habeas corpus to let anarchy loose.

Freedom is being gunned down. The "right" to murder is the ultimate right in this country. Sloth is a virtue. Patriotism is a sin. Conservatism is an anachronism. God is over 30 years old. To be young is the only religion—as if it were a hard-won virtue.

**"DECENCY" IS DIRTY FEET, A SCORN FOR WORK.** "Love" is something you need penicillin for. "Love" is handing a flower to a naked young man with vermin in his hair while your mother sits home with a broken heart. You "love" strangers, not parents.

I will be severely criticized, even ridiculed for crying out. "Lousy sports writer, what does he know?" I can hear. "Who does he think he is? This is the 20th century", they will say, "not Disneyland." Well, it's getting to look more like the caveman era every day from this seat. Americans who have a podium should use it today.

I like people with curtains on the windows, not people with "pads." The next guy that calls money "bread" should be paid off in whole wheat. I'm sick of being told I should try to "understand" evil. Should a canary "understand" a cat?

These are some of the things, it seems to me, that have put blood on the walls of America. The next funeral procession will be for the republic itself. The American dream will be rolling up Pennsylvania Ave. behind the roll of drums. It will be buried in Arlington.

The Constitution was never conceived as a shield for degeneracy. You start out burning the flag and you end up burning Detroit. You do away with the death penalty for everyone but presidential candidates—and presidents. The national symbol is not the eagle, it's the catafalque.

The point of the country is fear. The rebellion is against good. Men of God become men of the mob. The National Anthem is a scream in the night. Americans can't walk in their own parks, get on their own buses. They have to cage themselves.

**GET OFF YOUR KNEES, AMERICA! PEOPLE CRY,** but it is ignored. Bare your teeth, they say, Threaten to fight back. The lion bares his teeth and the jackals slink away. A cowering animal invites attack. But America is not listening.

These are the things, it seems to me, that put a young senator, a servant of his people, to death. A young, vigorous country is immobilized by bumper stickers, slogans, neurotic students with their feet on desks they couldn't make, pulling down universities they wouldn't know how to rebuild.

It all begins with that—the deification of drifters, wastrels, poltrons—insolent guests at the gracious table of democracy.

What have the Kennedys ever done to deserve ambuscades every five years at the hands of people they ask only to serve? What apology can we offer to a noble family except to resolve to stop being ruled by our refuse, our human refuse, that is? How many good men have to die before we wrest weapons from the terrible hands of our barbarians, demand respect for our institutions, stop glorifying hate?

Our healers could not repair Bobby Kennedy. Who is going to repair America?

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