

Revisionist History

So we are now facing fierce debate, demonstrations and rioting provoked by high emotion on the tearing down of statues and monuments and the renaming of buildings and edifices to reflect our current sensibilities on what we now perceive to have been our forebears' malfeasances and maledictions.

There appears to be the contention that we can change history by wiping out any evidence of such malfeasances and maledictions. This view pays fealty to the abysmal and abiding ignorance and fickleness of public opinion on almost any aspect of our lives that you may choose to examine. That is like smoothing out a bumpy road; it may improve tomorrow's travel but it does nothing at all for yesterday's ride. The short-term "intelligence" on this is that the smoothness of the road today will make us forget just how bumpy it was yesterday.

Yesterday is history. Let us learn from it. Sweeping it under the rug serves no purpose whatever and is, in fact, counter-productive to warranting that yesterday's mistakes are not repeated. I do not mean here that all historical actions need be lionized just because they came to pass, but nor should they, nor their lessons, be forgotten.

You know the old wisdom -- "Once bit, twice shy!", or "A smart person won't touch a hot stove twice."

The pendulum swings, and each arc is illuminated by the sensibilities of its time and circumstances. Ought we dispense with the powerful positive symbolism of, say, the crucifix, as did not Christianity at one time at least tolerate, if not condone, and in fact promote, the horrors of "the Inquisition"? And have we not yet learned how hatred, greed and xenophobia repeat themselves in such events as the Holocaust and Holodomor and in today's isolationist and white supremacy factions?

Rewriting history is not a solution; learning from it is.