

# THE BYSTANDER —★—

## Thanks for not being Presidential

Published in the Charleston *Gazette-Mail*, March 3, 2019

People in West Virginia have earned the reputation for being nice; I notice the difference immediately when I cross the I-81 bridge from Maryland. While I understand that the majority of people in this state support the current president, I just want to thank them for not acting like him.

If bad behavior really is as contagious as some psychological studies show, then the Eastern Panhandle would prove the exception to that. If insulting, demeaning name-calling and unfounded accusations were being copied by people here, West Virginia would be as bad as Chicago---or even DC.

For example, no one has called me “low IQ” because I slid my ATM card upside down and backwards in the scanner at Sheetz. At our Home Owners Association meetings, no one has ever said to me, “that’s such a stupid question” or called me a “nasty woman” if we had a disagreement. When I was late handing in the minutes for a meeting, no one opined that I’m “dumb as a rock and lazy as hell.”

Several friends told me my headshot photo was unflattering, but didn’t called me “horse face” when they suggested I update it.

No one has ever suggested that I return to my more nubile younger years and offered me a hat saying that I should become “Great Again.” When I’m working outside in my poison-ivy-protectant biohazard suit, I have yet to hear anyone drive past yelling that I was a “crazed, lying, low-life dog, fat pig, slob, bimbo, Miss Piggy.”

When I tripped over a chair last summer and did a face-plant that gave me a classic shiner, no one made fun of me by imitating my fall and saying “she’s a disaster; she can’t make it 15 feet to her car.” No one later joked that “there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever.” And no one mocked my clumsy fall by mimicking my lack of coordination as if I was a reporter with a congenital muscular disorder.

# THE BYSTANDER —★—

When I registered my car at the DMV, no one accused me 67 times that my birth certificate was a “computer generated forgery” fabricated by myself. And not one person I’ve met here would think that the spirit of Thanksgiving should include the statement, “I’m thankful for the difference I’ve made.”

If my house had burned down after being struck by lightning, the local fire department might have ruled that with “proper management,” fire “would never happen.” They could have ordered my insurance company “to send no more money” for repairs.

I never heard anyone behind the counter at the pharmacy tell their customer, “If you need Viagra, you’re probably with the wrong girl.” And if a man said to me, “My fingers are long and beautiful as, it has been well documented, are various other parts of my body,” or made a grab at any private parts I might still have, I venture to say that most of the West Virginia men I’ve worked with so far would probably slug him on my behalf, unless I’d already taken the first swing.

I’ve never seen anyone at the Food Lion forcibly elbow their way to the front of the cashiers’ line. No one has ever posted a blatant lie on social media that I was eavesdropping on their home or tapping their phones.

The only time anyone calls me “liddle” is when I get my blood pressure taken at the Martinsburg VAMC, since the nurse usually has to swap out the man-sized cuff for a smaller one. And I’ve never heard any of their medical personnel tell a service-connected disabled veteran to cope with his chronic pain because “he knew what he signed up for.” And no one there has ever blamed the increase in Military Sexual Assault on the integration of women into the armed forces. To say “What did these geniuses expect when they put men & women together?” ignores the 2013 Pentagon survey showing that there are more male than female victims of unreported sexual assaults, and that the vast majority of those men were abused by other men.

# THE BYSTANDER —★—

No one has nicknamed me with smutty adjectives, like “total loser, untruthful slime, sneaky, crazy, low-energy, crooked, wacky, deranged, slime ball, sloppy, psycho Williams.” Perhaps the teacher supervising recess for 6<sup>th</sup> graders hears that kind of language, but that’s Middle School. These words and actions were said and done by the President of the United States, the person who gets four *Ruffles and Flourishes* and a *Hail to the Chief* when he walks into a room.

There is another psychological study that shows that good behavior can also be contagious, setting a higher standard for others to follow by example. If that is true, we should send a delegation of Berkeley County citizens 80 miles to the East, to teach this West Winger how to behave like an adult instead of a foul-mouthed adolescent. It would be more meaningful coming from people who elected him, rather than from me; I would likely be found guilty of being a Democrat, one of those “treasonous, un-American, totally unhinged, wacko angry left-wing mob, gone totally crazy” voters.

But really, I’m just an average person who values dignity, humility, and humanity, far more than having “a very, very large.....uh, brain.” And from what I’ve seen, so do most people I’ve met here in West Virginia, when they consistently treat each other with the respect that everyone deserves.