

THE PURPLE MANIFESTO

A POLITICAL MARRIAGE OF OPPOSITES

BY NICOLE DAEDONE

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

- Abraham Lincoln

To be clear, I was so blue that Obama’s face was the wallpaper on my phone throughout most of his two-term administration. I was checkbox blue. If the agenda was Democratic, I scarcely needed to read further. You had my vote. I put my weight on the side of the scale for justice. I marched for equality, reform, and overall, compassion.

My blue-bleeding heart ached to see the ignorance of inequity, short-sightedness of consumption, and the bullying done by the big institutions. At times, I was F-you-blue, marching wild in the streets, writing exuberant missives in my political communications courses. Noam Chomsky and Angela Davis were on my altar.

They say this life is moving from the Fool card to the World card in the Tarot deck. The blind faith that begins the journey transforms to wisdom that might look almost the same, only entirely different. The moment when you discover that your heroic parents are fallible, but you still love them and can survive without their superhero support. Or that the American Dream may have some flaws in the plot line, but it’s still the country we choose to live in.

It's disillusionment **without bitterness**. To free oneself from all delusions that innocence would maintain. To go from childish demands to becoming an adult who can offer care, even enough to care about boring things like the budget. When idealism meets execution, it can be a very difficult conversation. But to change the world and stay true to your ideals, that's the conversation to have—through tears, anger, and whatever other feelings we may have about it.

That was the conversation candidates like Marianne Williamson invited us to have in 2016, but when she didn't do it according to the party line, the Democrats turned on her like hyenas. "Fox News is nicer to me than the lefties," she marveled in a "hot mic" moment. In that same year, the hostile response of the party elites to the grassroots underdog Bernie Sanders pointed to the rigor mortis in the party we once associated with the idealist youth vote. These were subtle admissions that the Democratic party had sold out to the Mara of Establishment.

Again and again, I watched my party refuse to heed the message MLK had left for us: "you can't drive hate out of peoples hearts with hatred"—only with love."

The ways and means I associated with the Regan-era right became adopted by the left. The condescension, cheating, crusader media driven by a religious zeal—only the new religion was "Anti". Anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-Trump. But "Anti" is not a platform.

That blue-bleeding heart of mine wept as I watched the politicians I rested my hopes on transform into blue-splaining, blue-lighting, blue-cisstic bullies. No, we *could* tell Biden was not in his right mind, even when every media outlet declared he was. The incongruity between what we could see and what we were told left us as bewildered as Ingrid Bergman in Gaslight.

They believed their authority could carry the command but that was the last straw of a whole list of directives we had followed. They'd told us to root out the "apologists" who dare say men aren't evil, "perpetrators" who dared say women have agency, "white supremacists" who did not want to live in self-loathing (or believe that it was helpful), "transphobes" who queried about what would happen to the unique plight of women—pregnancy, menstruation, our feminine form— if bodies that did not face those realities were to take on the identity of those who did.

Perhaps it was battle fatigue from the glacial pace of change in the face of so much pain that had Blue settle for the quick fix tricks, shaming those who don't see it your way and are unwilling to submit to the hazing required to get into the club.

I remember a Democratic party from before the "tolerance paradox" was used to justify hatred. Before we singled out "you" to exclude from our melting pot because you're white or Christian or male, or straight. In the hierarchy of victimization, these were the pariahs. The inclusion I fought for was not just for the marginalized. Now the Democrats feel like an exclusive party with a line at the velvet ropes.

I watched genuinely pure-hearted people get infected with the Blue Plague, forced to live in a plastic bubble, too fragile for the germs of everyday life. More reality tv than real reality, it's become a bad episode of *The Real Housewives of the Bicoastal Bubble*. But now that bubble has burst and the main characters are left manically finger-pointing at anyone other than themselves.

Because Trump won. Decisively.

And the Senate has gone red.

And now the House is painted redder by the day.

I watched as the faces in full histrionics screamed and cried “Why?!?!” I watched newscasters shocked their 24-hour infomercials had been as ineffective as the pop stars hired to play political commentators. I've watched discourse descend into the blame game: Pelosi blamed Biden while specialists and analysts chide the ignorant and uneducated for “voting against their interests” and hardliners bemoaned the rise of fascism in America as if they weren't talking about their own neighbors, friends, and family.

In addition recovery that kind of blame after a disaster is called denial, and it won't help you now. What is left, dear Blue, is called “hitting bottom.” It's not pretty but if you're on your knees, you may as well pray.

Here's the prognosis: the left got drunk on powerlessness. It enshrined victimhood, blame, and a moral superiority of the marginalized. It was a revenge fantasy, the kind of iterative trauma that has the bullied kid grow up to be an abuser. We fetishized our traumas. Whether our individual childhood sob stories or the institutional traumatized identities—racial, ancestral, female, class—a hoard of voters clamoring to get into the I'll Show You How It Feels Saloon.

But gripping to these granular, rigid identities, the idea of amassing a majority could never work. Instead, we would rule by narrative, moralizing choices to dismiss anyone who would question us. But when you cancel the debate, you never confront the hypocrisy of your own position. Women's right to an abortion is sacrosanct: Her Body, Her Choice. But where does her choice and autonomy go when it comes to the vaccine? One choice was good and the other was bad and anyone who dared to question the logical gap between should prepare to be thrown out of the party.

We lost our ability to stay in the uncertainty, not knowing where exactly we'll land on an issue once we've let go of our slogans and placards and stepped into the space between our hardline positions. But that's the only place to discover your principles.

There's an old saying: conservatives circle the wagons and aim out, liberals circle the wagons and aim in. How many times I've tripped over some new sacred cow and through the backlash, had to assure my liberal friends, "Don't you understand that we're on the same team? That we want the same thing?" Democratic leaders left us standing so far out on branches so brittle that we couldn't even take a joke, let alone an actual, constructive debate.

The Blue Plague has turned heroes to cowards, terrified to say what they actually believe, so riddled with resentment they couldn't even think straight. Now lefty ladies are apparently shaving their heads and swearing off sex in a fanatical political protest. That's like refusing to drink water and expecting the other person to die of dehydration. These women are giving up their greatest means of affecting hearts and minds because they'd rather disconnect entirely than accidentally engage with a man from across the aisle. Sorry Romeo, Juliet would never stoop so low to date a Montague.

But hopefully, we are sick and tired of being sick and tired. The separation is sustained by a fragile delusion of superiority that is exhausting to maintain. If you want a resilient immune system, you have to grow up in the dirt with skinned knees and dog hair on the sofa. If you can't take criticism, much less the trolls, you'll end up a broken human and a really shitty bodhisattva.

But for the befuddled few genuinely hitting bottom and asking in earnest how to get sober from the Separation Cycle, I have good news. If you are willing to go to any lengths, there is a way. Trace back to the genuine desire that first inspired you to care, the hopes and beliefs that steered your path in politics before the frustrations, pains, and blame set in.

The original Alcoholics Anonymous guidebook was going to be called “A Way Out” and I’ve always liked that. It’s the idea that under the rubble of dreams dashed and ideals collapsed, there is a way out. The path is simple, but not easy.

It begins with an admission, not that we are powerless, but an admission of our power. By acknowledging reality for what it is and choosing to change ourselves and our behavior, we take on a stance of power far more stable than vitriol and condescension. We have the power to overcome our hatred of those who hold different viewpoints than our own. We have the power to see beyond our own propaganda. We have the power to discover and admit where we were wrong and mend our disconnections. We have the power to find common ground. We have the power to move forward with love.

There's a coalition forming.

I call us The Purple Party, the marriage of red and blue with a commitment to shared benefit all, even those we find challenging. It might just be two or three of us—who knows? Tulsi, RFK, Van Jones—the intrepid trekkers over the invisible line, in the name of love.

We do recover and that is how.



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