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From : GARY FIELDS, ID: M05398
To : ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
Date : 12/17/2019 9:26:53 PM EST, Letter ID: 692143883
Location : 401
Housing : F4203L

Commencement Address (final)
Exchange For Change Graduation 12/10/2019
(www.exchange-for-change.org)
Gary S. Field

WRITTEN AS CLASS ASSIGNMENT

Volunteers, honored guests, graduates... the administrative staff that has made this day possible, I want to welcome you all to the Exchange for Change graduation here at ECI's "University of Adversity."

The other day I took a walk around the well manicured grounds of our "Gated Community," here in the heart of the Historic Everglades. I checked out the 12 foot high cyclone fences, topped with the 3 foot roll of razor wire. I noticed the high tech drone, likely shooting images back to the security vehicle that circled the compound. I heard the pop-pop---pop.pop.pop, and Chk-Chk- Boom! of gunfire out on the range. Then I went back to my cell and made a note in my journal... I wrote, "The perimeter is secure! If the trade wars manage to spiral out of control, we should be able to keep the locals from trying to sneak in and steal our food." :-)

Clearly that's a matter of perspective, eh? It all depends upon one's point of view. That's pretty much what I'd like to talk about this morning.... different points of view.

I'll try to do so by way of discussing a Quid Pro Quo, Echo Chambers, and and Tearing Down Walls. But don't worry, I'm not going to tap that third rail. This is not an impeachment inquiry, and no subpoenas have been issued. You're all here voluntarily... well, some of you are.:-)

As we've all learned recently, Quid Pro Quo is Latin for something for "some thing." So basically, it's an exchange. Now, aside from learning how to make babies, one of the most important events in the advancement of civilization, was man's ability to control fire. Not just because of the flame broiled T-Rex, but because it was around that fire that men began to share stories.They shared their hopes and dreams and fears. That "exchange" helped them to turn their hopes into reality, as they pursued their dreams, and together, began to conquer their fears.

An Echo Chamber, on the other hand, creates the illusion that most people believe the same things. It's a bubble where people live only with exposure to their own opinions, and people who only share the same ideas! There is so much about prison life that cannot be captured with words, but I'm here to tell you, an Echo Chamber can become even worse than a prison. Perhaps as dangerous as the dystopian society presented in Orwell's 1984, is the chilling affect upon society of today's Echo Chambers. Whole segments of society are being isolated within news bubbles and bombarded with alternative facts. Good people are being indoctrinated with hate and visions that divide us.

No matter what views you hold, flag you wave, or fox hole you've climbed into and chosen to defend, it's pretty clear amid the rising tide of anxiety, that once again we're standing on the brink as a nation. These too are times that try men's souls. But we can look back for inspiration, pray for guidance, and come up with new ideas to help us overcome some of the challenges we see each day on the Evening News. We need new ideas to fire up our imaginations. We need the hopes and dreams of a new generation. Ideas once shared around the campfire can now rocket around the world at speed of light.... but you can't shake hands with a clenched fist, and you can't share ideas with a closed mind. The inflammatory rhetoric that emerges from those echo chambers can have tragic consequences. Something has got to change! We cannot continue to build walls that divide us.

We need to tear down those walls! we need to emerge from those echo chambers!

We tear down walls when we stop trying so hard to be understood, and remember to be understanding. You already understand your own point of view, we can only grow when we try to understand someone else's.

We tear down those walls when we let down our guards and invite each other in, it's only then that we can begin to let go of the biases and stereotypes... let go of the fears that have too often divided us.

We tear down those walls when we begin to realize that our children are watching, and history will judge us!

As I look around this room, I can see that one of our greatest assets, one of our greatest strengths, is our diversity. Our numbers may not be large, but our power lies in our commitment, to make an Exchange for Change. The

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anthropologist, Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world, indeed, it is the only thing that ever has!"

Let's exchange those echo chambers for bridges of communication, and begin to build platforms for understanding.

Let's tear down those walls and exchange hate for love, doubt for trust, and fear for hope,

Let's Exchange for Change!

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