

LETTING GO OF 2021

It's been a rough few weeks in so many ways, on top of a really rough year.

We've reached the limits of patience, fortitude, and resources in so many ways. In part because of the pandemic and manufactured barriers created by disinformation and willful destruction, in part because of frustration with systems damaged over time by those who refused to believe in cooperative, collaborative, collective effort, and in part because time simply has its way with us, we've experienced pain and loss over and over again.

I've lost several heroes I looked up to in a handful of weeks – feminist author bell hooks, writer Joan Didion, attorney Sarah Weddington, and now actor/comedian Betty White, all gone ahead to higher ground.

With former senator Harry Reid's passing we've lost a fighter who taught so many younger Democrats how be effective.

The Trash Talk crowd here lost someone who surely entertained them many times since the 1980s with former coach and commentator John Madden's death.

There are so many more brilliant people to whom we've had to say goodbye, including many of the 822,914 COVID-19 dead. It just plain hurts.

Making resolutions seems wholly useless against this barrage of loss.

~ ~ ~

Author and journalist Elizabeth Gilbert wrote about making your own ceremony for ending the year. Her tone in 2014 when she wrote this post was so hopeful; it seems surreal now, looking back, to think we were all so glib about embracing the future.

We've had a trial by fire since then, a long conflagration which has torched all our

illusions. What political monstrousness didn't destroy a pandemic and time have finished.

And in some cases, literal incineration thanks to the mounting climate emergency.

Gilbert's suggestion seems fitting, then, to say goodbye to this year with flames – write down things we want to get rid of with end of this year, write down the things we ask into our lives in the year ahead, and then burn these wishes, tossing the ashes into water to both release the past and summon the future.

Perhaps you won't need the symbolism and the ritual of ceremony, but the exercise is still worthwhile to take measure of what we're leaving and consider what lies ahead.

What will you let go of with the ending of this year and the passing of yet more of our figureheads?

What will you welcome at the stroke of midnight and the coming dawn of the new year?

~ ~ ~


Scottish poet Robert Burns is credited with writing the traditional song, Auld Lang Syne, which will be sung this evening where people meet in spite of the pandemic.

But Burns did little of the writing; he collected older bits and pieces of traditional Scots' songs and molded them into the tune we know now.

One of the earlier versions based on the older verses was published in a Scottish newspaper in 1711 by James Watson.

I'm very fond of one old verse in particular, which rings clearest this evening for me:

My Heart is ravisht with delight,
when thee I think upon;
All Grief and Sorrow takes the flight,
and speedily is gone;
The bright resemblance of thy Face,
so fills this, Heart of mine;



That Force nor Fate can me displease,
for Old long syne.

For Old long syne my Jo,
for Old long syne,
That thou canst never once reflect,
On Old long syne.

Goodbye and farewell, 2021. Hello and welcome,
2022.

Best wishes to you all for a better year ahead.