

OUR CHOICE OF FATHERS

[NB: check the byline, thanks. /~Rayne]

Happy Father's Day to all the fathers in our community, to the fathers-by-proxy who've stood in place of missing fathers, to the mothers and others who've had to take on more than one parenting role.

Happy Father's Day to my friends who aren't parents at all – may you enjoy the convenient gender-biased hardware marketing blitz aimed at the do-it-yourself dads among us.

(I'm really going to enjoy my new power rotary multi-tool, must say. Been needing one for years and this summer I've got a lot of projects a certain father here won't touch – it's on me.)

This day offers us not only a chance to thank fathers but to think about fatherhood. It's hard to escape fathers and fathering in a patriarchal society, but perhaps this is a best reason to consider the nature of fathers.

Especially when this year's presidential election once again comes down to a choice of fathers.

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The Los Angeles Times has an excellent piece on its front page below the fold today – Biden, Trump and 2 Very Different Dads – comparing and contrasting fathers Joe Biden and Donald Trump, and their progenitors Joe Biden Sr. and Fred Trump. (Sorry – I want to share a link but LAT makes it impossible for subscribers to do so this soon after publication. As I wrote this it wasn't available on the LAT website. Article now available at LAT but the headline has changed to Biden brings up 'Dad' a lot. Trump, not so much.)

In essence the article describes a father who values dignity and a father who values

transactions.

What a distillation.

While we've already made comparisons between these two candidates at the polls in 2020, the essentials of these two men have only become more stark over the last four years.

They exemplify neatly George Lakoff's Moral Politics model of the nurturant parent and strict father which Lakoff first laid out in 1996, again in 2001 and 2016 editions, and discussed further in his 2010 text, Thinking Politics in Chapter 4, The Nation as Family. (Thinking Politics is available for free online for download as a PDF.)

It's telling that Lakoff categorizes a bifurcated diametric model as nurturant *parent* and strict *father* – patriarchy is autocratic, rejects departures from black-and-white, wrong-or-right, my-way-or-the-highway binary thinking. Do as your father orders you to do.

The nurturant parent model is inclusive, in contrast. Any gender can identify as and model nurturing. Nurturing is adaptive, because needs change with conditions though fundamental values affirming the dignity of humanity remain set.

Which parent of this nation should we choose at the polls?

I can't help think of a particular story about Trump as father, in the wake of Hunter Biden's conviction and Joe Biden's loving response.

Before the 2016 election, a classmate of Donnie Jr. recounted an episode of physical abuse they felt necessary to share with the public before voters went to the polls.

I was hanging out in a freshman dorm with some friends, next door to Donald Jr.'s room. I walked out of the room to find Donald Trump at his son's door, there to pick him up for a baseball game. There were quite a few students standing around watching, trying to

catch a glimpse of the famed real estate magnate. Don Jr. opened the door, wearing a Yankee jersey. Without saying a word, his father slapped him across the face, knocking him to the floor in front of all of his classmates. He simply said “put on a suit and meet me outside,” and closed the door.

A father willing to do this to his own namesake in front of witnesses, a father who apparently failed to assist his son whose classmate called him a “drunk,” isn’t the kind of person Americans needed in 2016 or in 2024 in the White House.

Reports surfacing only now that Trump while in the White House talked about executing persons including those who leaked information is extremely troubling. What if it had been his own family members leaking information?

If we are a nation as family, whoever the prospective leaker might be *is family* – and Trump has expressed a willingness to kill them.

Trump has already displayed openly a bent toward violence. The extrajudicial assassination of Iran’s Major General Qasem Soleimani was a demonstration of Trump using violence at the furthest reaches and beyond of his presidential powers. We have heard and read numerous examples of his incitement to violence including the attack on the capitol on January 6. What would he do to Americans at home and abroad if he was elected again?

And of course Trump has already promised retribution against his perceived enemies if he should be re-elected.

Which parent should we choose, indeed.

At least this election we still have this choice. Choose wisely.