



## Political extremes are wrong on both sides of the debate

Posted: Tuesday, May 21, 2019

“Today’s far-right candidates have given new window-dressing to old racist beliefs and an implicit call for violence, pushing a pro-Christian, anti-Islam ideology,” Lori Hinnant explains in Sunday’s Daily News. “They are appealing to a demographic with no memories of where extremist beliefs once led the continent – to a world war that left almost all of Europe in rubble.”

Extremists are almost always motivated by fear. And fear is almost always based on ignorance and an ominous and ill-defined anxiety about the unknown. This is as true for staunch conservatives, who often erroneously claim the quasi-religious moral high ground, as it is for radical liberals who avow a similar entitlement based on some abstract egalitarian humanistic ideology.

Both positions are inherently flawed, primarily because their fundamental assumptions are based on the same self-serving and self-referential belief system that is, at its core, completely subjective, reprehensibly biased and lacking in any real merit – philosophical, utilitarian or otherwise.

For those who might be struggling with the big words in those last few sentences, perhaps Clint Eastwood can provide a more proletarian interpretation: “Extremism is so easy. You’ve got your position, and that’s it. It doesn’t take much thought. And when you go far enough to the right you meet the same idiots coming around from the left.”

What we desperately need in this country is more dialogue and less pontificating; more appeal to our collective welfare and less deference to arbitrary self-evident truths that are anything but. So drop the inane slogans, stop the childish name-calling, read a few history books and start doing the hard work that necessarily precedes any intelligent, meaningful and productive debate. Pointing fingers doesn’t solve problems.

Dwight D. Eisenhower got it exactly right: “Extremes to the right and to the left of any political dispute are always wrong.”

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