

## America – Culture of Positionality

To be an American is not a position. To be an American is a stand. A stand for being all that lies at the heart of the Founding Documents. The being of being an American is no longer that stand, the world of all that was made possible by the founding fathers and mothers as expressed in that language that birthed this nation. The being of being an American has devolved from a stand, *that* stand, to a position. And there is a logic to that devolution.

The current context in which one “be’s” an American is one of “me or you”, “us or them”, “right or wrong”, “win or lose”, “have or have not”. It is a context of dualism, a condition of positionality, where I am “me as X” and you are “you as Y”. In this context, we are identified as, known as, and related to as the position that we are. In this case the position of being an American.

So we are American as the position that is, a particular and distinct position among positions. But fundamentally a position, and as such, bound by the confinements of what being a position, *any* position, dictates. We are defined as the position that it is to be an American, and then within that position, further defined as the sub-positions that we are. Are you a Democrat or a Republican, liberal or conservative? What’s your position on abortion? Your position on the environment?, etc.

We live in a world, a context, a condition, an unexamined mindset of positionality, a condition in which we are the positions we take, a context in which we exist positionally. We are masters of positionalism. We argue for the positions we are. We fight for them, we defend them, we justify them, and we kill for them. What matters in a context of positionality is that the position wins. At all cost. Period.

American isn’t a position; it was never set up that way. But in our culture of positionality, and in our unthinkingness, it has become one. We have *become* Americans-as-position, the superior people, the right people, the people who know better, the sole superpower, and in our being the position-American that we are, everyone else, everyone not *that*, becomes the “them” to our “us.”

This position of “America is Right” is at the heart of our foreign policy. We don’t *think* we’re better and right, we *are* that we are. At no time in history was this more evident that immediately following the 9/11 attacks, when in Bush’s speech, he said to the world “You’re either with us or against us.” We became once again what we already were – the “good/us” against the “evil/them”. This was already there is the background, giving

us that unexamined aspect of being an American. The flames were merely fanned by this blatant declaration of separation, which instantly instigated a global polarization in which the world was called upon to take up sides. So not only was the root cause of the attacks, the underlying condition, never explored or even considered, the response to the attacks actually perpetuated that exact condition. The cultures that hate us don't hate us for our freedom. They hate us for our blind arrogance.

What made George Bush the horrific disaster of a President that he was wasn't really all the things that others have so eloquently already pointed out, i.e his fundamental incompetence, his lack of intellectual curiosity, his delusion of having been selected to carry out a mission from God, et al, all of which is completely valid. What really made him so damaging was his language. A language of "us or them", "us vs. them", a language so blatant and defiant in its "us or you'ness," that anyone really paying attention could have easily predicted that as a result of that language, US conflicts in the world would surely escalate. Which they have.

This dualism, this polarization shows up everywhere in our culture. Black vs. white, rich vs. poor (now refined to the 1% vs. the 99%), gay vs. straight, Christian vs. Muslim, Republican vs. Democrat, etc. A condition in which people and groups identify themselves and each other as positions, positions that by design are pitted against each other. In this condition, the best one can hope for is that from time to time, "you/your position" will prevail. What goes unseen, however, is that no matter the prevailing position of the day, the inherent constraints of the condition of positionality itself is the real victor.

One of the stands of our campaign is "THIS IS MINE – ALL OF IT." This is not a campaign for yet the next new and revised position. Context is not a position, and it will certainly take a rigor and vigilance to not let it become one. And to be sure, that is predictably what it will be initially heard as. We are not saying context is right or better.

What we are offering up is the opportunity to look beyond the current expressions of the underlying positionality, and start to examine positionality itself. To explore the nature and limitations of the condition of dualism. This is the ALL OF IT that we speak of. ALL OF IT as in the current condition and all that ensues from it – THAT'S MINE. To become aware of the positionality and the logic of how it plays itself out, and in that awareness, to make way for a context that is not one of dualism, of separatism, of "me or you."

I am an American. As a contextual activist. It starts here.