

Budget For All Hearing

Massachusetts Legislature Wednesday July 10 2013

Presented by Mel King

As I look out at this gathering, I'm struck by the idea that there are two Americas or two Americans. And today, people's decisions and actions will tell us which of the two we are.

If you are what is sometimes called an original American, you believe in manifest destiny, which translated into the right to commit genocide. You're a believer in slavery. You believe in the ability to control with weapons. You are a believer in greed. As I ponder that American, I see in this gathering a different kind of American. Among us are the other Americans -- the Americans of the abolitionists; the Americans of the Statue of Liberty that says send me your tired and your hungry. Americans who believe in the roles the unions play to make sure that just wages are for all workers. The Americans of civil rights, women's suffrage, same-sex marriage, the grey panthers.

As I think about the Marathon bombings, the response to it was one of these Americas. People rallied. There were no questions about health insurance. Meeting human need was the only thing that mattered. It brought out the best in us. In supporting each other, at that moment, this America did not believe you retaliate with the weapons of destruction, did not believe that health insurance should be a profit-making operation instead of the kind of service that was given to the victims. The Marathon victims were harmed by more than wicked violence; they were harmed by the policies and practices of the other Americans who continue a policy of manifest destiny in their efforts to control the resources of the planet we inhabit.

We responded to the bombing because of its devastating effect on people.

But now we are dropping a different kind of bomb on people in need -- taking away the resources for childcare, for Head Start, for homes, for Medicare, for food stamps. It reflects one of the Americas vastly different from the one that responded on Patriots Day.

Why don't we know that this is also a bombing and that the devastation on families and children is insane? Our presence here says we are the Americans who believe in making sure that families, children, and the elderly are given the care, protection, and love they require. As we seek to move in the direction of this America, a "budget for all" is a beginning step.

At Fourth of July celebrations, we ask God to bless America. Shouldn't that mean we understand our role is to bless ALL Americans? But we do not bless all of us, and so it is for me hypocritical. The pledge says "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." We quote the motto, "United we stand, divided we fall." How can we celebrate the Fourth, listen to the symphony, raise the fireworks and not understand that we are not united, that we are making a mockery of all the rhetoric? How can we not ask what the Fourth of July means to ALL Americans -- not just one kind of American -- when so many are without health care and decent housing?

In a country that can find resources for weapons of destruction by using the technology of the earth, the Americans in front of me must understand the Bible verse that demands we beat our weapons into plowshares to provide food, clothing, and shelter. This America can practice the technology of the heart and know our love is the only sustainable resource.

Earthling

Dear earthling leader

Look in the mirror

See if it's you

Who cares

Who loves

Who shares

Who reaches

Who teaches

About the gifts

Of creation

Of the ear and the art in earth

Of the ear and the art in heart

So we listen

And cultivate the gifts

From earth's bounty

To share

So we listen

And cultivate the beauty

Of all earthlings

Because we care

Dear earthling leader

With open arms

Embrace the hugs of

Our earthly

love

The question being asked of the legislature is, which side are you on?

Which of the Americans are you? Which America do you want to live in?

Your decisions and actions will give us the answer.

