

## COMMENTARY / CULTURE

*The incredible idiom and the mighty metaphor!*

Terry Howard

Okay class (eh, electorate), whip out your pen, paper (and blood pressure monitor). Today we're going to talk about the medicinal benefits of an idiom and a metaphor, both in the context of nerve-wracking reactions to recent mid-term elections.

Here, allow me to set the stage.

You see, my patience had worn thin. I had a hard time waiting for the elections to end. If I could offer a one-word description of the deluge of negative ads, partisan finger pointing, outright lies, cowardice, election denials, etc., "disgust" would be that word.

But interestingly, where once my reaction was more likely than not to be one of disgust, these days it's actually one of uncontrollable laughter. I guess you can say that I've evolved.

Stay with me, please.

Which takes us first the word "idiom," a particular idiom here - "to cut off your nose to spite your face" - meaning not do something out of spite that could end up causing more harm to oneself than to the person with whom he/she is angry.

Now that takes us next to the word "metaphor," a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object

or action to which it is not applicable. For the purpose of this narrative here's a metaphor... "Laughter is the best medicine!"

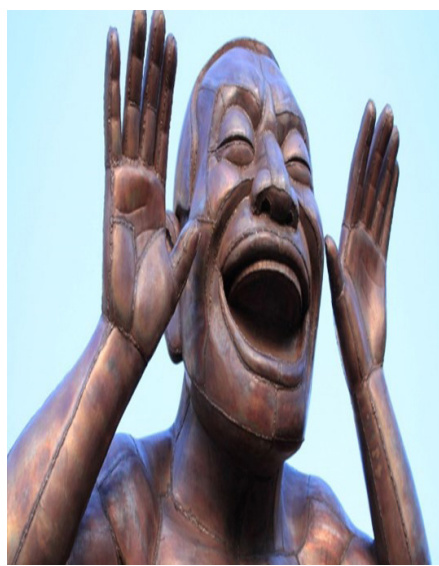
You see, in response to all the vitriol and shenanigans leading up to the recent elections, setting aside my disgust, my ability to roll over in side-splitting laughter - as in, "Oh my, can you believe what that clown just said?" was my saving grace.

Okay, I confess to having been entertained by much of the hilarity, the buffoonery, the stunts, and the clown shows. But inarguably, there are frequent faces in the news - no need to cite them here - that evoke laughter even before they open their mouths and let loose the bull. Where once these clowns made me cuss, nowadays they make me cackle. They're the ones who provide fodder for late night TV hosts, cartoonists, and satirists. They're ready-made for side-splitting caricature.

Look, like everyone I longed for preferred outcomes in both local and national elections but decided to prepare myself mentally for whatever the outcome. So as what's been my usual response to eminent uncertainty and probable disappointment, I retreated to history - for me, literary history - for solace and prophetic insights that could soften the impact of my anticipated "post-election blues."

So I turned off the news, ignored the polls and spent an afternoon retrieving words of wisdom from James Baldwin, William Shakespeare, William Faulkner, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and others for words of wisdom. But somehow I landed on quotes by Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde. Others aside, I needed comedic relief and insights and Oscar Wilde was the right person at the right time.

Now as you scroll down this list of his quotes, associate the names of politicians (or someone else you know) with the quote. Feel free to nod and chuckle, guffaw if you need to, or let loose a litany



of "amens" as you go down the list. Here goes:

"The public is wonderfully tolerant. It will forgive everything except genius."

"Some people cause happiness wherever they go, others whenever they go!"

"It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you place the blame."

"There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about and that is not being talked about."

"The truth is rarely pure and never simple."

"There are only two kinds of people who are really fascinating: people who know absolutely everything and people who know absolutely nothing."

"Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation."

"Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future."

"Experience is merely the name men gave to their mistakes."

"Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and

he will tell you the truth."

"True friends will stab you in the front."

"I think God, in creating man, somewhat overestimated his ability."

Okay now class (or electorate), let's do a quick health check after you have laughed at a few of these quotes.

Can you honestly say that you experienced a good laugh? If no, I extend my thoughts and prayers. If yes, guess what? Your overall health may have improved. Here's why:

Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain. A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response and can increase and then decrease your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good feeling.

Laughter can stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress. Over the long term, laughter can improve your immune system, ease pain, increase personal satisfaction and sharply improve your mood.

Now here's the kicker - A hearty laugh can help you gain new friends and ward off the malcontents, the purveyors of negativism, the gloom and doom crowd, the people who, wrote Oscar Wilde, "cause happiness whenever they go!"

© Terry Howard is an award-winning writer and storyteller. He is also a contributing writer with the Chattanooga News Chronicle, The American Diversity Report, The Douglas County Sentinel, Blackmarket.com, co-founder of the "26 Tiny Paint Brushes" writers' guild, recipient of the 2019 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award and 3rd place winner of the 2022 Georgia Press Award

*Choose THANKS LIVING, Not Just the Day of THANKSGIVING*

By Robin Smith

The fourth Thursday of November is just about here. Have you made your Thanksgiving menu yet? Do you have the guests confirmed and the grocery lists made for the spread and the cheer?

Yes, Thanksgiving was first celebrated with Native Americans who had, in large part, taught the Pilgrims how to farm indigenous crops to sustain them and to hunt for meat and hides from animals. In 2022, our tables are filled with our favorite dishes, and we being a season of excess.

Four hundred and one years ago, the first Thanksgiving, in 1621 was a 3-day time of celebration shared among 50 Pilgrims and about 90 Wampanoag Native Americans who combined their individual harvests and stored staples. The journals of William Bradford and his best friend, Edward Winslow, captured details of the Harvest celebration that followed hardship, great loss, and forged the will of those who survived the harshness of the untamed lands of America.

Like these fifty Pilgrims, we can choose to be grateful for that which we have and the opportunities of better days ahead.

Wanting to freely practice their Christian faith, the Pilgrims journeyed to America believing their freedom would be realized in a new land. That same Christian faith would steer their hearts af-

ter a season of the loss of more than half their companions due to lack of food and illness.

Americans have learned to exist with a new virus, despite tremendous loss and the lingering political division, for the last several years. A soaring economy has soured with basic necessities of food, shelter, and almost every good or service doubling and sometimes tripling in price.

Nonetheless, the blessings of life in America continue and prove to benefit all. Skeptical?

A study published by the Foundation for Economic Education in August 2019 showed that America's poor have greater access to goods and services than many average citizens of other countries. Based on a review of international economic and demographic data by a nonpartisan think tank, "the poorest 20 percent of Americans consume more goods and services than the national averages for all people in most affluent countries. This includes the majority of countries in the prestigious Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), including its European members. In other words, if the US 'poor' were a nation, it would be one of the world's richest."

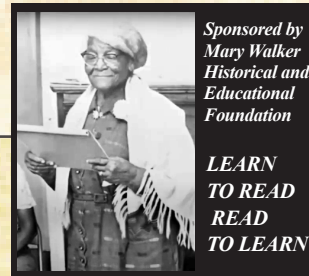
In the journal of Edward Winslow, he wrote of the first Thanksgiving, "And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from



want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty." Today, most, if forced to give an honest personal assessment, have at least something for which they can give thanks. Research from the University of Minnesota demonstrates that people who

practice the discipline of gratitude are more healthy and resilient.

As Thanksgiving approaches, give thanks...as a daily discipline each and every single day. Commit to "Thanks Living."

**This Week in African American History****JO ANN ROBINSON**

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LEARN  
TO READ  
READ  
TO LEARN

**Jo Ann Robinson organized a city bus boycott by African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 that changed the course of civil rights in America.**



After a verbally abusive encounter on a segregated city bus, Jo Ann Robinson became an advocate for equal rights for African Americans. She led a successful city bus boycott that gained national attention and the support of Martin Luther King Jr.

Born on April 17, 1912, in Culloden,

Georgia, Robinson was the twelfth child of her farmer parents, Owen Boston Gibson and Dollie Webb Gibson. Following her father's death, 6-year-old Jo Ann and her family relocated to Macon. Robinson was valedictorian of her high school graduating class and became the first college graduate of her family when she earned a bachelor's degree from Fort Valley State College in 1934.

Following her graduation from Fort Valley State, Robinson became a public-school teacher in Macon, Georgia, a position that she would hold for the next five years. Also during this time, she earned a master's degree from Atlanta University and went on to study English at New York's Columbia University. After a year, she moved to Crockett, Texas, to teach at Mary Allen College.

In 1949, Robinson moved to Montgomery to teach English at Alabama State College. She also became active in the Montgomery community, becoming a member of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, where King later served as pastor and joining the Women's Political Council, a group designed to motivate African American women to take political action.

Robinson experienced the prejudices

underlying racial segregation firsthand in the late 1940s when she was screamed at for sitting in the empty white people section of a city bus; the driver pulled over to yell at her and Robinson fled the bus, fearing that he would hit her. Disgusted by the incident, she began to mobilize against the segregated city bus system.

When Robinson became president of the WPC in 1950, she focused the organization's efforts on desegregating buses. Working with attorney Fred Gray as her adviser, she met with the then-mayor of Montgomery, William A. Gayle. The city's leadership was not interested in integrating buses, however, so Robinson conceptualized a boycott.

Following the arrest of Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955, Robinson distributed a flyer that she'd written urging for Montgomery's African Americans to boycott city buses on December 5 of that year. With the help of John Cannon, chairman of Alabama State's business department at the time, and two students, Robinson distributed more than 50,000 flyers overnight calling for the boycott.

When the boycott proved successful, the Montgomery Improvement Association, led by King, came to manage

its continuation. Subsequently, Robinson was appointed to the MIA's executive board and produced the organization's weekly newsletter at King's personal request.

For her role as a leader of the boycott, Robinson was arrested and targeted with violence; police officers threw a rock into her window and poured acid on her car. The harassment became so bad that state police were requested to guard her home. The boycott continued until December 20, 1956, when a federal district court declared segregating seating unconstitutional. The boycott also established King as a figure of national prominence and ushered in an era of nonviolent civil rights protests.

Not long after the boycott ended, Robinson resigned from her position at Alabama State College and moved on to Grambling College in Louisiana, and later to public schools in Los Angeles, California.

Robinson published a memoir entitled *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Woman Who Started It* in 1987. She died in Los Angeles on August 29, 1992.