

# The Delray Democrat

## Makeover versus Takeover<sup>1</sup>

*Michele Gitu*

You hear a lot of things if you take the time to move in different circles of humanity.

This “Boomer”, being somewhat new to the political scene related to Democrats in Palm Beach County, has watched a serious drama play out from the Gillum race in 2018 to the wrestling match for power and control of the DEC meeting last month. Deeply divided is perhaps an understatement depending on your perspective regarding what was decided in the last national election. Closer to home, mostly we all can agree that as Florida Democrats we have faced a pernicious dissembling across a broad front of social and economic issues sponsored and promoted by the Republican leadership. So, the beat goes on to the detriment not of the rich and famous but to working families, the indigent elderly, and to the bewilderment of those betwixt and between silent, voiceless, in the shadows.

There is a hunger for “Change”. It began as a rising tide, and if we remain unresponsive it threatens to engulf us with the force and power of a tsunami. Personally, this centrist lifelong Democrat would rather yield to it than fight against it. May I suggest that the reason some of my agemates cling to a certain political modus operandi is simply because it’s a known entity, well-practiced, safe and familiar. However, a reality check would confirm that the old ways simply aren’t working with the efficiency needed to confront the challenges of this day, place, and time. Be ye Republican or Democrat, I don’t care how you define the word “Woke.” I define it as a state of growing awareness. I don’t believe that the term was ever meant to be racialized. Some will always seize a seeming opportunity to demean and divide. I think it is completely natural for young people to latch onto the word and affix their own meaning. After all, language is constantly evolving to meet the moment. Therefore, I ask why has this term generated such angst and vitriol? Could it be that “Woke” is sculpted from “Change.” Is there an undercurrent of fear of an impact that cannot be predicted, circumscribed, or controlled not having been fully demystified in the lexicon of today? You see control is a factor that has been neatly worked out in the old, safe, and familiar ways of operating within a political culture. A makeover only looks like a takeover when marginalization is the clandestine intent.

I submit that recognition of what seems to be afoot is presently a foregone conclusion. Those who would content themselves with the notion that they can trot out a mannequin outfitted in the same albeit newly refurbished suit and convince the waiting reviewers that they are witness to “haute couture” are deluding themselves. Those bones have been picked clean. There’s nothing left that hasn’t been said a thousand times at least. Maybe it’s time to let the target population tell their story. For sure it is past time that we listen, that we open our hearts and minds to their struggles. But sympathy can never be enough when it is action that is needed. The reality of our current situation is that our party is slowly losing its footing. As our values become less the imperative

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<sup>1</sup> *The Delray Democrat*, January 2023, page 3.

and more the idle banter of yesteryear, our tent presents as questionable, less inclusive, less hospitable, and no longer the refuge and haven for those seeking justice, opportunity, and the absence of bias.

Not all habits are bad. Some are a disciplined approach to attacking a problem or issue. Assuming we can make a habit of being “present” even in the minority when our constituent base needs backup, we build credibility. It will take teams and a ton of teamwork, but it has been done other places, so why not here? If Florida is a nexus for right wing politicians, it is incumbent upon us, their opposition, to show the strength and resolve to stand up for those who haven’t the resources to do so for themselves. A true ally is where they need to be when they need to be there, in other words “present” consistently. Developing trends do not favor Democrats. However, when we concentrate our focus on mitigating their impact with preparation and a countervailing perspective that supports our coalitions, we show readiness to engage as opposed to “no call no show”. With an unremitting laser focus on community, their issues, their relationship with governance, allowing their leaders to fully embody the role by adapting policy and process to the cues we receive from them, not just publicly, but in the boardrooms behind the scenes, we have the possibility of crafting a message that needs no words. It is the action taken that shapes the reality that resonates with the people. Scars can heal and a tarnished image may be repaired, if we put the work in, and if we work cooperatively together toward an established common goal.

The doubters might ask if it’s worth it, worth it to stick our necks out, to take a chance on something that’s never been done in quite the manner proposed. If we want to win elections, it’s high time we change what has proven not to work . . .