

My Christmas Wish: A Day of Sanity



By Alex Berezow — December 8, 2017

These days having a conversation about politics and the state of our nation often devolves into an ideological pitched battle of wills. That's why this year my Christmas wish is for 24-hours of argument-free discourse.



Credit: Jeff Weese/Wikipedia [1]

I met a friend at a coffee shop in Seattle today. We covered a lot of ground in the short time we had together -- politics, the state of our nation, the state of our city.

We don't see eye-to-eye on many issues. But what we have in common is a respect for each others' intelligence and intentions. We also share a desire for truth rather than ideology to prevail. By doing our best to rely on facts and to acknowledge our own sources of bias, we can have productive conversations despite our disagreements.

After my friend left, an elderly gentleman approached me and said (paraphrased), "I overheard you talking about politics. You both listened to each other and responded. That's not usual for this city, where it's bash, bash."

It's not just Seattle; it's all of America. That's why my Christmas wish this year is for one day of sanity.

Illegitimi non carborundum

Because it's my job to defend good science and debunk junk, I regularly interact with all sorts of

political partisans and peddlers of pseudoscience.

This year alone, I've had to [bust Vandana Shiva's myth](#) [2] that Monsanto caused farmers to commit suicide; explain why [anti-fracking protesters are unwitting accomplices to Vladimir Putin](#) [3]; [defend science from a partisan takeover by the March for Science](#) [4]; [defend the environment from environmental activists](#) [5] who vandalize it; [debunk a conspiracy theory](#) [6] promoted by UC Berkeley psychologist and "Wi-Fi truther" Joel Moskowitz that the State of California is hiding evidence that cell phones cause cancer; and [rebuke the New York Times](#) [7] for flat-out lying about glyphosate.

All of that was just through March. Though I'm quite pleased to be paid to talk about science, the truth is that "fighting the good fight" wears one down. Most people don't have careers in which being [insulted, mocked, and libeled](#) [8] is a routine part of the job. Such near-daily treatment has a way of shaking a person's faith in humanity.

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Back to my Christmas wish: A single day of sanity. What do I mean by that? I mean a day in which:

People love truth more than ideology.

People who disagree still treat each other with respect.

People stop believing everything they read on the internet.

People accept science and data, even if it challenges deeply held convictions.

Journalists check their facts before they publish something.

Everybody turns off Twitter, perhaps the worst form of communication ever invented.

In other words, I'm wishing for a day in which Americans embrace civility, intellectualism, and community -- the [three things that are sorely lacking from social media](#) [9] and the 24/7 news cycle that has so poisoned our culture. For just one day, let's ignore the faux outrage *du jour*.

Just One Day?

Why am I wishing just for one day of sanity? Because if we can achieve one day, we can achieve two. And that's a good start toward repairing the rifts in our society.

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas#/media/File:Nativity_tree2011.jpg

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/01/07/vandana-shivas-myth-busted-monsanto-didnt-cause-farmer-suicides-india-10696>

[3] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/01/09/fracking-protesters-are-putin-puppets-10707>

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- [5] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/02/22/standing-rock-and-dakota-access-why-do-environmentalists-vandalize-environment-10891>
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