

That Tired “Level Playing Field” Argument

-Ryan Evans

Am I so atypical? I wouldn't have thought so, given the fact that I grew up in a fairly normal household in a bland suburban neighborhood. There was very little of interest in my formative years. Yet, today I feel like an atypical freak.

Why?

Because I believe that there are consequences to my actions; rather, let me rephrase that to say that I believe in owning the consequences of my actions and hope to learn from them to avoid making the wrong decisions in the future.

Sounds pretty normal though, doesn't it? Those of you reading this are probably scratching your heads and going “duh!” because, well, after all it's just common sense that I speak of. Sure, fine, most people recognize that there are consequences to actions. But...

How many people actually choose to own those consequences and learn from them? it was common practice in decades past. It was even common practice in my generation (although I may have been one of the final age groups to fit into this). I'm talking about the kids who were spanked when they were bad. They were grounded. They didn't have TV. They went to bed without dinner. They had to do chores. They sat in the corner. They had their mouths washed out with soap... Need I go on?

Any number of these things are more likely to warrant a visit from child services than teach children to own their poor choices these days.

But the sick are bleeding and the disease seems to be a contagious one. It infects the weak.

We are not only breeding irresponsible horrors of children, we are also infecting adults who are too weak to exhibit any strength of conviction or character. People who see that it's easier to shift the burden of responsibility to another than it is to admit that you might possibly make a wrong decision from time to time. After all, isn't it easier to claim that you're perfect and it's just an imperfect world that screws up your charmed existence once in a while?

So where does this tie into the “level playing field” argument?

Ah, I’m glad you ask!

Ask yourself what happens when these infected and sick individuals get into positions of power (i.e. government)? You got it. They try and spread their illness. Think of it as a virus that is working vigorously to infect its host. These people do everything in their power to remove responsibility from those under them. They coddle the people and lull them into a bizarre sense of invulnerability from their actions.

But there is a problem to this manner of existence; namely that bad things still happen. Choices beget consequences and those problems do not just disappear. So the surrogate mothers (those coddling government types) step in and work to displace, hide, downplay or just plain bury those consequences in the sand. After all, a happy sheltered person is more likely to vote to keep you in office than one who is to be inconvenienced with their own responsibility, right?

So the problems (consequences) get shifted around and generally end up impacting those people who had nothing to do with it. But it’s only fair, isn’t it? Apparently the consensus among those who value no responsibility over moral fortitude is that it’s better to shift the burden of consequences to the shoulders of those who didn’t make that choice and lessen the burden by distributing it. I guess they see it as only fair to forcibly hurt everybody evenly than to allow individuals (or individual municipalities) to suffer the consequences of their own actions on their own.

But let’s put this in a context that easier to understand.

- City A chooses to enact a smoking ban to protect the nonsmokers from the burden of responsibility that is necessary to make the choice as to whether or not one is exposed to secondhand smoke or not.
- City B benefits from this, as they don’t ban smoking. City A now faces a problem, as their choice has led to a consequence that they don’t want to deal with.
- County A sees this and steps in. They ban smoking in the county to protect City A from the burden of responsibility. Now City A and City B both suffer, but City A is exonerated from their choices.
- County B now benefits while County A sags.
- The state now steps in to “level the playing field” between the counties and bans smoking in the state. County A is now exonerated from the burden of their decision while the other counties suffer loss.

See how easy that works? It's a cascading disease. The virus spreads like a plague and the only people who benefit from it are those who never have to admit that they might have made a wrong choice.. And since nobody was forced to contend with the burden of consequence, nobody learned anything from the experience. In fact, the one thing that came from the whole thing was the sense of invulnerability in the fact that it doesn't matter what you do because somebody will always come in and ensure that you don't have to face any negatives if you make the wrong choice.

So we must now ask ourselves an important question: How much more can we take?

Those rare few of us who apparently possess the courage and strength of character to not only shoulder our own choices and the consequences that may follow, but will allow others to do the same seem to be the ones who continually take the hits for this. Over and over we get punished so that others can remain free from responsibility. Sadly, we are not afforded the luxury to complain. See, being harmed by the actions of another has become acceptable practice while falling victim to one's own self has become one thing that cannot be. So we are forced to simply sit quietly and take it.

Because, well, after all, it's only fair... And fair is what nets us that level playing field.