

POLITICS AS USUAL: Tell it like it is

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

When did 'telling it like it is' become some kind of virtue? And what is it exactly that these folks are telling us anyway? Not to get all Clintonian or anything, but does anyone know what the 'is' is?

I am asking this in all seriousness because across the globe there are political contests underway in which the common selling point of many of the leading candidates is that they are decidedly not politicians; that they are real people, 'telling it like it is.'

Candidate after candidate proudly exclaims that they are not politicians, have no experience in the political world, and that that makes them the perfect candidates for a political job.

I am not clear when having no experience made you an ideal candidate for some of the most important positions in our government, but here we are. The pendulum has swung pretty far in the other direction.

And yet, I see why this is happening. Folks are furious with the status quo. Almost everything costs more and yet wages 'if you even have a job' have stayed the same. People are tired and frustrated with the powers that be who talk and talk and talk and do seemingly nothing to make our lives any better.

Rather than get answers, we get a wall of words. Bafflegab and talking in circles are indeed infuriating traits that most politicians exhibit. Watch any newscast in which a journalist asks a politician a question and you will undoubtedly witness some version of the same thing 'a whole lot of nothing; twists and turns of speech designed to give the appearance of answering a question but, in fact, doing nothing of the sort.

I don't know about you, but I often end up screaming at the talking heads on CNN, demanding that they answer the bloody question. (By virtue of my latest outburst, my CNN time has been severely restricted)

But it is frustrating to want an answer to a question and instead get obfuscation and misdirection, time and time again. So, I understand folks' desire to have someone 'tell it like it is,' but what, exactly, does that mean? Does it mean he or she tells you what you want to hear? In plain and simple sound bites? Political pablum easily digested by the teeming masses?

Or is it what one would hope it is 'straight talking? No BS. Telling you the unvarnished truth.

I dare say it is the former, not the latter. Why? Because people don't want to hear what they don't want to hear; that you 'can't handle the truth,' to quote Jack Nicholson. And they are quite successful with this tactic, of providing simplistic answers to very complex questions.

But life is not simple. We have difficult problems that will require thoughtful 'and difficult' solutions. Solutions that go beyond 140 characters. To do that, we require fully formed adults in political office, making informed decisions on our behalf.

So the 'tell it like it is' candidate may ride the huge wave of populism right now, but all waves eventually crash and then get dragged back out to sea.