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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....LETTERS - Opinions - Letters to the Editor
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....42524

Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Undoing division: Town Meeting as a model for real
2 conversations

####END HED####

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4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Recently, a 19-year old-friend gave the best and most
6 memorable speech that my wife and I have heard in years. The
7 seasoned politicians who bookended those 12 minutes, I am sure
8 had important things to say, but they didn't quite meet the
9 moment with the clarity, compassion, and passion that young
10 man did.

11 He challenged us to look past the cultivated divisions in
12 our society as the only constructive way out of the mess we are
13 in.

14 Stoking division has been the shortcut to power and
15 wealth for a very long time. It should be no surprise that the three
16 richest people are in charge of the three biggest social media
17 platforms. Almost all of us have been snared to some degree by
18 their algorithms.

19 Over my lifetime I have watched as generations of
20 politicians have used different, more or less subtle, methods to
21 manipulate and divide us, all in an effort to win elections. In the
22 1960s, narratives relating to race and the Cold War (which got
23 quite hot in many parts of the world), were popular.

24 We are now experiencing the least-subtle attempts at
25 division (with a heavy dose of racism, of course), with sides of
26 unfettered bullying and the most completely naked corruption
27 the we have seen here. This last part will hopefully wake people
28 up to the destructive results that come from allowing ourselves to
29 be so manipulated.

30 If we're going to kick this habit, we need to find common
31 ground with all those around us. We need to look for win-win
32 solutions that sadly rarely grab the headlines but just quietly
33 solve problems.

34 Even our favorite warriors for the downtrodden in
35 Washington are more likely to keep articulating what "the
36 problem" is, without bringing forward any real win-win solutions.
37 It's as though it would be too much to have to come up a new
38 and more inspiring narrative.

39 Legislators' lies of omission are likely as prevalent in
40 D.C. as the ones that flow out of many of their mouths, rivaling
41 the flow of the Potomac. In the end, I am not sure which is more
42 destructive.

43 Our remaining traditional Town Meetings here in New
44 England are in stark contrast, where normal people have real

45 conversations about how to deal with issues that affect them and
46 their communities.

47 Regardless of whether one is completely happy with the
48 outcome, Town Meeting is a small investment of time in a
49 remarkably transparent process.

50 This is why I am deeply concerned about talk of
51 eliminating our Representatives Town Meeting. It is the one
52 elected body that manages to avoid partisan nonsense almost
53 entirely, as we help chart the path for our community for the next
54 year.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

55 The writer represents District 9 as a member of
56 Brattleboro's Representative Town Meeting.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

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####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

###BEGIN LOGLINE###

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###END LOGLINE###