

RETURN OF THE MODERATES

Wednesday, December 23, 2009

What is the true measure of American patriotism? Is it the ability to wave an American flag at a rally? Or how about serving overseas in defense of freedom? The answer might shock you: It is the connection a citizen makes with his nation's history. That history, rife with elements of good and bad ventures, comprises the grand tale that is the United States. The devout Christian believes he has a little piece of God within him. The devout American carries the blood and toils of the past with him each and every day. And there is no one event in American history more memorable than the Civil War.

As a first semester freshman at the City College of New York (CCNY), I had the unique pleasure of meeting with and listening to Marc Egnal, esteemed historian, author, and professor at Canada's York University. He was displaying his latest work *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War* and stopped by my campus for an excerpt reading and book signing. One would think that technological issues and a small audience would be reason enough to leave the room .

But despite minor setbacks, the evening carried on fantastically and benefitted everyone that was fortunate enough to attend Egnal. With his descriptive analysis of a dark period in the annals of American history, highlighted a fundamental problem with our world today. Few Americans care to study the development of their nation and become misinformed as a result. It is of minimal concern to the common man that many of his country's founders were slave owners, so why would he find interest in the causes of the Civil War? The average person is certainly indifferent to matters of history, but Marc Egnal is not. He is the noble jihadist, the man on a crusade to cleanse our minds of inaccuracies .

Few people have a passion for seeking the truth like Mr. Egnal. It has become his mission to raise inquiry about a time period that warrants no debate in the public sphere today.

Lincoln? Oh. what a bold politician, a vehement supporter of abolitionism and African American rights! The war itself? A petty conflict over the institution of slavery. These sentiments and unfounded "theories" about an influential plan of America's history are, simply put, fantasies. It would be ideal to think of Lincoln as the "savior of the blacks" and the bloody theater as a militant referendum on slavery, but claims that pervert the truth cannot be accepted. And truth is in fact the unpopular "odd man out" -- the forgotten essence of this country that has been thrown away. We cannot think in terms of falsehoods anymore. It's about

time to set the record straight. and I appreciate the efforts of Dr. Egnal. However, he is part of a minority that has been silenced by a population that values partisanship over unity, deception over honesty

Common sense is hanging on by a thread in America, but I am optimistic that it will reemerge with a potency that we haven't yet seen, We have to appeal to the youth in this country if we are going to make any sort of progress. Most people my age don't share my passion for history or that of Mr. Egnal. It is for this reason that I fervently recommend reading *Clash of Extremes*, but that is not all that we must do if we are to reaffirm our national image Throw yourself into discussions with others. Find that deep connection all have with our nation. Attend lectures like the one I did earlier this week. There's more to these events than a slice of pizza or a bottle of Coke.

We need to start having honest conversations with one another once again, and only then can we revert to our American heritage. U.S President and American patriot John Quincy Adams once said, "Who we are is who we were." He was, at that particular time, defending a group of African slaves who were victims of injustice, decent men who were illegally imported into the country by Spaniards. Yet those words still have resonance in the modern world, for we too are victims of injustice The pure love of country that once formed the backbone of the United States is now endangered, and it is due to our sense of carelessness. I am proud to say that I have had my encounter with the past, and attending events such as Dr. Egnal's presentation will only reinforce that fervor. I now see that consciously loving one's country means knowing its full story. I encourage everyone to discover his or her story because each individual connection is equally beautiful and noble And I guarantee that the end of the journey will be worth all the means.