

We Americans are losing our national soul, My View

By Victor K. Barbiero, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Mar 31, 2025

Since President Donald Trump took office this year, he has already signed nearly 100 executive orders. The president's actions to date have created chaos across America and worry across the globe.

Many of the orders are controversial, some are egregious, particularly the unprecedented, dangerous and heartless cutting of federal jobs, which have brought sadness and despair to thousands of American federal workers. The most egregious in my view is the suspension of foreign aid and the intention to eliminate the U.S. Agency for International Development.

As a retired Foreign Service officer with 21 years of service with USAID, I can make many arguments why foreign assistance and USAID should not be eliminated. Foreign assistance saves lives, eradicates disease, predicts pandemics, mitigates famine, encourages democracy, generates friendships and trust for America, financially benefits American farmers and a myriad of other U.S. private sector businesses, nongovernment organizations, and faith-based organizations, and, elevates American values across the globe.

Sadly, these objectives, outcomes and arguments do not hold water with the present administration, half of the U.S. Congress, and probably the majority of members of the Supreme Court. So ... I want to raise the discussion to a higher level.

I believe we are losing the soul of America to a political mandate anchored in the cleansing of diverse points of view. Opposition to this cleansing is being expressed in the courts, on the internet, in the streets and in the homes of America, but so far to little avail. Division and disunity within our country are growing.

We risk crossing a Rubicon of tolerance, trust, and love for one another and for others living across the world who are less fortunate, and who speak, think, feel and believe differently than we do. Once that bridge is crossed, America will become more isolated, distrusted, morally disparaged and disliked by vast swaths of the global population. Where are we heading?

I call on America to search the fabric of our collective heart to retrieve the compassion, gentleness, and charity that makes America what, and who we are. We must reset our moral compass. The America I know is a caring, loving nation that seeks to raise the stature and spirit of humanity and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are not bullies. We are not mean-spirited. We are not self-centered. We are not wicked. We are not vengeful nor wrathful. We are Americans, our unity and strength dwell in our goodness.

In the New Testament (Mathew 5:5), when giving the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke the most famous beatitude, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Not Trump, and not Elon Musk.

We cannot lose our soul.

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