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Uncivil discourse is not good for our country

Mario T. García | Jul. 29, 2011 NCR Today

The horrific terrorist killings in Oslo, motivated by anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment by the terrorist, makes me very worried about the growing anger and hatred expressed in the United States, especially by the extreme right.

We saw something of that in the attempted assassination of the Arizona congresswoman earlier this year (although we don't know the gunman's motives, anger was in the political atmosphere of the country at the time). After that incident, everyone from right and left stated that we needed to restore civility to our politics. Unfortunately, that didn't last very long. The current debate -- if you want to call it that -- over the debt ceiling has seen very acrimonious discourse, again, especially by the Tea Party types.

I'm worried that at some point -- not in Congress, but among the rank and file -- they, like the Oslo terrorist, will cross over a boundary that will lead to irrational behavior, including violence.

Even as a historian, I can't recall such venomous statements against the President of the United States. Some on the extreme right seem to consider President Obama and the Democrats not as political opposition, but as the enemy.

Seeing your opponents as the enemy can lead to crazy actions that would be destructive of our democracy. No one has a monopoly of patriotism and of correctly interpreting what is best for our country.

The beauty of our constitutional system is that it allows for diverse views but provides a system of checks and balances that can only work through compromise.

I heard a Republican on television the other day saying that compromise for him was a dirty word. Imagine, someone in the U.S. Congress, the very epitome of a government established by the Founding Fathers based on compromise, saying something like this.

Yes, I'm worried about the temper of our political discourse right now and hope that a majority of Americans will speak out and say that this is the kind of discourse that we don't want and that is not helpful in solving the many problems we face. Respect for one another is basic to achieving progress.

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