

# The Bandera PROPHEET

September 17, 2020

Effectively Elena

By Elena Tucker  
Special to the Prophet

I've been accused of being a boat rocker. God forbid. I get no pleasure out of seeing how far something will wiggle until it tips over. I have no desire to see folks struggling in the water, and have no desire to end up swimming if I'm meant to be in the boat.

There is no such thing (to my un-nautical knowledge) as a boat without some form of control. Oars, sails, motors, tills...heck, even 'punting the placid Thames' requires a pole. A boat without control is no boat at all. What should be an outing with quay and destination, becomes instead an exercise in helplessness. Which is why, although I have no wish to rock any boat, I am disposed to wield my oar and get somewhere.

What I'm trying to say in a roundabout way is that I'm troubled by what I imagine to be an excess of rules, but I'm not just trying to be a troublemaker. I think that somewhere along the way, America forgot that rebellion and a breaking of ranks brought this country into being. There's not much room around here for somebody who doesn't stick really close to the status quo. I'm not going to blame this on any particular group of people, but I will say that I'm a person of strong, personal religious faith who resents being told what the public litmus test of that faith ought to be.

I'm not talking about anarchy and lawlessness. I stop at stop signs and look carefully both ways. I don't run the streets unclothed. I keep my grass mowed. I pay taxes and cut my toenails and vote my conscience and park between the lines and try to be punctual for appointments...

and, most troubling of all, I pay my library fines. Rules and law are conceived with design and reason, not as stricture for the sake of structure. And I feel a certain element of public expectation.

We say we want our children to grow up to be creative, flexible, adaptable thinkers. But we bind them tighter than surgical wounds. We give them only one choice: the authoritarian choice. We want our children to be respectful, loving, compassionate adults, but the system displays a face that is anything but tolerant.

“Sir. Turn that cap around.” That’s what I heard a man bark at an otherwise unoffending young man, who, with utmost docility, turned his ball cap back around. The kid and I both knew that the ‘sir’ part of that command meant nothing resembling mutual respect. The adult was crisply, caustically enforcing a rule. Now, I understand that caps turned backward are thought to represent gang activity. But let’s think about this...what’s the point really? The point is, that caps have always been worn with the brim forward, and this style variation simply rubs some people the wrong way. I failed to wash my hair the other day and I wandered all over town with the Breadwinner’s ‘Ringling Bros’ cap turned backwards on my head. I didn’t realize this made me a hood. Because it didn’t. It was a cap. Brim backwards. On my fair, intelligent head. Big screaming deal. Is it right to judge simply by surface compliance. Is this healthy? We’d still be paying taxes to Boris Johnson for our Earl Gray if citizens had adopted this attitude a couple of centuries ago.

I figure being a teenager is hard enough without making kids wear our old balls and chains. They have their own shackles to worry about. If a kid wants to cut little slits in his new jeans so they ‘fit’ better over their sneakers...well, gee. I don’t get it. But I’ve got bigger, more serious issues I want to address. I want my kid to respect others. Not to *surface* respect them, but to profoundly respect them. I want him to *know* why he believes what he does. I want him to listen compassionately to others. I want him to stay away from emotionally, spiritually and physically harmful behavior. I want him to use his mind in increasingly deeper, clearer and better ways. I want my child to pray in a

meaningful way and remember that God made us to be people of choice. That is, people who don't pray aren't any more evil than some who do. Non-believers make a God-given choice.

I want to stand by my son as he learns to fight the big battles. I could care less about piercings that will heal closed when the time is right, or purple hair that will grow out, or jeans that will go to Goodwill, or ball caps that will turn back around the moment the fashion changes.

We want our children to be respectful. But we must respect them. We want our children to listen. But we must listen to them. We want our children to be thinkers...or do we?

Adults must model thoughtful, insightful behavior. It's not always a comfortable thing to do. It's much easier to fall into a Rules Trap that provides open and shut cases, easily enforced, easily defended, easily resolved, and no brain cells spent.

I don't propose 'No Rules.' I propose *meaningful* rules. The kind that strengthen authority rather than undermine it.

I don't want to be a boat rocker. I want to be a rower. And if somebody chooses to pick up their paddle and work against me, I should remember to applaud them.

We may go in circles for a while, but that's what democracy is all about, isn't it?