We too easily forget the past.

(Continued from page 4)

burning, as the black man and woman, trapped in the city ghetto, the crumbling housing projects, the inner-city school and the unemployment line, expired in frustration and rage. After reading the news, we want children understand the importance of civil rights, desegregation and affirmative action, and that we still have a long way to go? And then there was Richard Nixon. Will we remember what it meant when our president abused his power, lied in a disinformation campaign, said one thing and did another? Ronald Reagan refused to answer those questions. It’s as if he’s just recently come out of a political and cultural hibernation.

For if he were to look back at those years through which he seems to have slept, he would ask: Who were those long-haired college students who burned their draft notices and marched in protest for peace, who participated in Acid Tests and Love-ins? Who were those college students who burned their draft notices and died at the hands of the National Guard? And who were those who would have us rewrite our own history, and thus change our political and cultural future? 

... ... 

We are about to embark on the seventh year of our new lives, but the past six years haven’t really been a new beginning, only a facial attempt to return to the 1950s. It has been more than ten years since the United States has openly been at war. The impact of that war has faded. We are content that our government increase its military spending and increasingly interfere in the affairs of foreign governments. Young urban professionals with their short, styled haircuts are in vogue. The 1950s, after all, hardly comprised a golden age. The United States and the Soviet Union were involved in a Cold War, while McCarthy led his inquisition. Teenagers were smoking and drinking and taking drugs behind closed doors. White supremacy was lynching blacks and tying them to trees. Young women were dying from botched, illegal abortions. Reagan’s version of the 1950s, then, is like the bastard colorization of a black-and-white film. There are no peaceful gold ages. Moving in vicious and upheaving cycles, history’s images are far too stark and gritty for anyone to allow for such monochromy.

As revisionists, we also leave behind the significance of events. History insists on repeating itself. And then there was Richard Nixon. Will we remember what it meant when our president abused his power, lied in a disinformation campaign, said one thing and did another? Ronald Reagan refused to answer those questions. It’s as if he’s just recently come out of a political and cultural hibernation. 

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