This Musing is all about terrorism.

That word conjures all sorts of images in our minds, doesn't it? The most common one in the modern world is the sight of the World Trade Center towers collapsing 20 years ago. It was a graphic and vivid example to everyone who saw it, just what the enemies of 'freedom' were willing to do to us.

For me, the word is couched in computer games. I play a lot of RTS games, and have since childhood. When I was a kid, I played Dark Reign, in which the tyrannical Imperium battles the heroic Freedom Guard. In the story of the game, the Imperium genetically altered the Freedom Guard, causing them all to die naturally at age 25. As a result the FG uses a unit called a Martyr, who runs up to the enemy carrying a big bomb and detonates himself. Noble, right?

Then later on I played CnC Generals. The Global Liberation Army has a unit literally named 'terrorist' who does the exact same thing. Evil, right?

How many of us think of terrorists and just think 'religious extremist willing to blow himself up to hurt us'? How many of us think of Arabic people, or Muslim people, when we consider the word? According to most of our media, terrorism is coming from the Middle East, and directed towards the United States.

But terrorism, depending on its definition, is much, much broader than what we so arrogantly 'know'.

Even the most hateful anti-Muslim would probably agree that most Muslims aren't actually terrorists. He would claim that they probably agree with what their jihadist friends are doing, and maybe even support them covertly. Still, he would probably admit that terrorists are, for the most part, an isolated group of people outside the governments of whichever country they call home. Terrorism is according to our definitions unlawful actions taken to influence governments. That's the big difference between a war and an insurgency. Wars are officially declared between states. Insurgencies have no such restrictions.

Also, that's why our president can just bomb people in whatever country he wants. He just calls it fighting an insurgency and not fighting a war, and that somehow absolves him of responsibility for all that spilled blood.

But I'm getting off topic with that. The point I'm trying to make is that terrorism is big. It's a massive, encompassing term that goes back centuries. The word got started in France in the 1790s, but the idea goes even further back. I'm sure the British would have called the rebelling Americans terrorists, if they'd known the word. The ancient Romans would have called Boudica a terrorist.

We also think that terrorists have a single agenda: to make us afraid.

While that is true, it's a simplistic way of looking at things. Terrorists don't just want to cause fear. They want to cause change. The Irish Republican Army were considered terrorists, but they didn't go around shooting Brits because they thought it was fun. Well, I'm sure some of them did, but the reason the IRA existed was to free themselves from foreign rule!

For the Irish, and the Jews in Roman times, and the ancient Britons, terrorism was all about freeing themselves. And for the Americans too.

That's not why Bin Laden blew up the twin towers. His goal was to make us afraid, but it was also to make us angry. He wanted to provoke America into declaring war on the entire Muslim population. He wanted the ensuing war to end up creating a massive Muslim state. A single nation dedicated to that one religion. With him in charge, I would assume.

His plan didn't work out that way, but he did succeed in changing us. From public sentiment about Muslims and people of Arabic descent, to the creation of a surveillance state in our country, to altering our foreign policy and immigration laws. We used his actions as an excuse... to turn into the very monster he claimed we were!

That's not why white supremacists do their rallies either. Like Bin Laden, they're not after freedom from foreigners so much as a religious state all to themselves. They want to create a Christian nation- a white Christian nation. Towards that end, they're willing to shoot people, beat them up, blow them up: whatever it takes. They probably would have blown up the White House when Obama was president, but ironically increased security after 9/11 probably had a part in stopping them from trying.

But that's the big problem with ethno-nationalism. Unlike democracy, or dare I say it socialism, ethnic and nationalist focus needs someone to hate. People who believe whites are superior to other races need to hate black people. People who believe Christians are superior need to hate Muslims. Because if they aren't always focusing the rage on one group or another, their own people might start to ask... 'why are we all so angry all the time?'

I gave up anger a long time ago. It was taking years off my life. I get how it can be useful in emergencies. It can lend you strength when you really need it. But it's like a nitro boost to a car engine. You don't want to run your car off of that stuff full-time! Actually we shouldn't be using gas at all, but that's another tangent.

Back to the constant hating. You see it in bigoted groups all the time. It's been twenty years since 9/11, and hating Muslims has become old news now. Sure, there's still that sentiment, but it also mutated slightly to hating Mexicans. Why? Well, they're taking our jobs of course. They're criminals, and lowlifes. Statistics? Why would you need statistics? I'm telling you what to think!

sigh

Then the Coronavirus started spreading, and the hate mutated right along with it. Now it's apparently ok to hate Asian people because the first cases were recorded there. Hate, hate, hate. Against whom, it doesn't matter. When, it doesn't matter. How long it will continue... apparently forever.

Ask yourself if you want to live in a society run by hatred. And before you say 'we don't', remember our last president. The alt-right elected him, and he may be gone, but they're not. They are terrorists, whether you're willing to call them that or not.

Why people fight means everything. The Irish didn't enjoy killing people to gain their freedom. Well, the majority didn't. The same was true for Boudica and her rebellion. And the French coined the term while fighting against their own tyrannical government. They fought because they had to, not because they wanted to.

Can you say the same of the alt-right? Sure, they claim that they're under threat- that they're just defending themselves, but where's the proof? How often are straight, cis, white, males killed in this country by people who aren't also those things? If you watch their tv shows and listen to their rhetoric, which sounds more likely? That there's a massive, nation-wide conspiracy meant to suppress and eventually exterminate white Christians? Or that a few people just feel powerless, and spend all their time shouting at other people to think the same as they do, so that they can feel more powerful?

Human nature can be combative, but for the most part we're not a hateful species. Most societies want to cooperate with others, or at the very least be left alone. We have to be taught to hate. We have to be trained, and conditioned, and indoctrinated in order to be angry all the time.

I don't know about you, but to me... that sounds like a truly exhausting way to live.