

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 5.7.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
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Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 5.7.20

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I love historical documentary recreations—particularly if they are recreations of events that took place when I was alive. It was with great enthusiasm, then, that I was eager to watch **Mrs. America** and the story of the attempt to pass the ERA. I knew the tragic ending of its failure—even if its symbolic passage a few weeks ago put it over the top of states' ratifications. And yet after two or three episodes, I haven't finished the series—much to the disappointment of my life long partner and fellow former teen advocate of its passage.

I will tell you why, which I figured out [this morning](#) on my walk. What TEAM ERA didn't have was a bench coach for their lineup. A bench coach is a valuable position on any good manager's staff. In fact, it may be more important to have a good bench coach than a great manager. Watching the in-fighting and group backstabbing that went on "our side" of the fight, one realized that like the Yeshiva University Crew team that had 11 people who yelled and one who rowed, TEAM ERA was blessed with many commanders and no organized fighting divisions. Team Schlafly, on the other hand, had just the opposite—at least in the series portrayal through episode 2 or 3. She had a bench coach, not one that I admired, but one who understood his role. TEAM ERA had none.

My dad spent the last 22 years of his life as bench coach for the 4 or 5 chancellors that passed through the University of Nebraska. Situated in the office next the Chancellor's suite, my dad played a variety of roles throughout that 22-year tenure. There were chancellors who relied more on him and some who relied less—but he survived them all and left to fulfill his lifelong dream of living in Israel—where he spent the best 27 years of his life. In truth, there were a couple of these folks that didn't like my dad and my dad didn't like them. I once asked him what it was like to work for folks he didn't like and that didn't like him. And in his answer, I learned the importance of being a bench coach. He said, 'people you like are the people you get to spend your free time with, people you work for or with—it matters little if you like them or not—you do your job and you do it well.' TEAM ERA lacked a bench coach and significant dispassionate thinking related to strategy and tactics. The fact of the matter was that they lacked an understanding of who their target audience was and what their strategy for passage needed to be. (In a different post, I will perhaps address the fact that the show pits 'radical' Jewish women against 'mainstream' Christian believers. For the time being, we will just leave that necessary and significant piece in the paved parking lot that Joni sings about)

I loved Bella Abzug(zl)-although her portrayal by a woman who was the Soviet handler on “The Americans”, did cause me pause. Bella Abzug represented one of the safest Democratic seats in Congress. The Upper West Side of NY was so blue that the sky often experienced an inferiority complex. She probably never needed a bench coach and wouldn't have listened to one if she had one. She didn't need to listen to people who disagreed with her or she didn't like—because they couldn't impact her life in any significant fashion. She was her own bench coach and that never works. Building an effective team, a good manager needs a trusted bench coach. Paraphrasing my father's words, you don't need a friend you need someone who knows the game and is willing to speak truth to power. In my previous work, I literally had a BENCH of coaches—every past President with whom I met with on a quarterly basis. Some were friends, all were trusted to speak the truth. But it is in my current work that I really see the importance of a bench coach

I work in a purple district—mostly red but strong hues of blue. My boss flipped a GOP held seat that hadn't seen a Democrat in it for 20 years. Why—because she had a bench coach or coaches she trusted and that she continues to trust. And she understood that what didn't work in 2016, needed to change in order to work in 2018. She learned that you can't win elections simply by talking with people who like you or whom you like. You must wade into the forest and meet those who are not predisposed to like you and find commonality AND begin a conversation. It is why yesterday she released a letter with 47 mayors and county commissioners from CD2 supporting an initiative she is undertaking in Congress. In a very partisan moment in American politics—getting this type of support from local officials is indicative of a person who understands that organizations don't survive by rewarding your friends—but by building relationships with those you would never spend time with outside of the office. TEAM ERA never could get beyond the notion that they knew truth and everyone else was simply needing to get on board. They didn't understand the hard work and the need to not demean or denigrate those with whom they would never share a drink with at night, but whose voices mattered. They dismissed their aspirations to make choices different than their own—but who would have benefited greatly still from the ERA's passage. What is true in politics, organizations, universities or baseball teams is simply this—without a good bench coach you aren't gonna win it all. A bench coach shouldn't necessarily be a friend or someone you even like—as my dad demonstrated-- it simply needs to be someone who does their job for the good of the team. My dad would have been a great manager—he never got the chance he always wanted. But the 22 years of serving as a bench coach at UNL was a pretty good run. Morris

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