

Courtesy of the TWILIGHT ZONE...

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I had just tuned in to the start of a recent presidential debate (after first donning my Hazmat suit).

As the candidates offered their introductory statements, something really strange happened. Their words began to swirl around in my head, almost as if someone had pressed a lever, creating a sort of whirlpool of words, round and round and round. I seemed to have suffered some sort of cranial malfunction of the mental region of my brain. How else can I explain what happened next?

"Okay," the moderator said as the camera slowly swept across the line of candidates, "next we have the young candidate from California...." The camera panned until it focused on to ... *on to ...*

I froze, my glass of strawberry Ovaltine inches from my mouth. It was *him!*

"This highway leads to the shadowy tip of reality," the man said matter-of-factly, gazing into the camera. "You're on a through route to the land of the different, the bizarre, the unexplainable.... Go as far as you like on this road. Its limits are only those of mind itself. Next stop ... *The Twilight Zone.*"

Rod Serling! It ... it was so real! (And for being dead for so long, he was really well spoken!) The "different, the bizarre, the unexplainable...." His honesty was quite refreshing.

"Mr. Serling, we're going to talk about the threat of violence, whether originating in North Korea, Russia, or the Middle East. What would you do combat the growing incidence of global violence?"

"The tools of conquest do not necessarily come with bombs and explosions and fallout."

"Could you elaborate on that?"

"There are weapons that are simply thoughts, attitudes, prejudices to be found only in the minds of men."

Wow. Right out of "Monsters are due on Maple Street," Twilight Zone episode 22. And it couldn't have been more apropos for today.

"Candidates, there have been ideas bandied about regarding anything from the blanket deportation of immigrants to the refusal to allow Muslims past our borders. Mr. Klaatu?"

Mr. Klaatu?! It ... it was the guy from "The Day the Earth Stood Still"! One of my favorite movies! Where did *he* come from? Not that I'm complaining!

"I am fearful when I see people substituting fear for reason," he said. He was dressed in that same silver jumpsuit he wore when he first stepped out of the space ship. So cool. I'd look awesome wearing one of those to work.

"Mr. Serling? Anything to add?"

"For the record, prejudices can kill, and suspicion can destroy, and the thoughtless, frightened search for a scapegoat has a fallout all of its own; for the children, and the children yet unborn."

I gulped down a slug of Ovaltine. I set the glass on the counter, thinking about what he'd just said. When our neighbors become monsters born only of our imagination, that's when we're in deep doo-doo.

The moderator moved on to another candidate, who began to deride a fellow candidate for daring to suggest a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

It was when a candidate went so far as to suggest the United States register all Muslims, that Serling interrupted:

"All the Dachaus must remain standing."

Huh? Did he just say that the German death camp, Dachau, should be kept standing? The other candidates stood like statues, their mouths agape.

"The Dachaus, the Belsens, the Buchenwalds, the Auschwitzes--all of them. They must remain standing because they are a monument to a moment in time when some men decided to turn the earth into a graveyard, into it they shoveled all of their reason, their logic, their knowledge, but worst of all their conscience. And the moment we forget this, the moment we cease to be haunted by its remembrance, then we become the grave diggers."

To think these words came from an early 1960s science fiction television series.

"Candidates, what do you propose be done to alter the tragic course you seem to agree that we, as a world, are on?"

What happened next is kind of hard to describe. The next candidate who appeared was the control voice from the Outer Limits. Strange, yes, but not so strange that it didn't fit right in with the presidential race, where strange is the new normal.

"It is said that if you move a single pebble on the beach, you set up a different pattern, and everything in the world is changed," the Control Voice said. "It can also be said that love can change the future, if it is deep enough, true enough, and selfless enough. It can prevent a war, prohibit a plague, keep the whole world... whole."

Wow. That Control Voice would be an awesome president. *President Control Voice.*

My mind was starting to clear. The words no longer swirled aimlessly, but instead held fast.

"And now for the candidates' closing statements. Mr. Serling?"

"No moral, no message, no prophetic tract: Just a simple statement of fact. For civilization to survive, the human race has to remain civilized."