

## Normalcy and its enemies

By Mike Gonzalez

A very American, and very conservative, word may soon find its way back into the political lexicon: normalcy. Its return is required by the times we live in. You can't beat something with nothing, and so when people ask, "What is your answer to woke?" the reply may become simply, "normalcy."

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis used it to great effect in his second [inaugural address](#) on Jan. 3, as he spoke about the woke embrace of "faddish ideology at the expense of enduring principle":

This bizarre but prevalent ideology that permeates these policy of measures purports to act in the name of justice for the marginalized, but it frowns upon American institutions. It rejects merit and achievement, and it advocates identity essentialism. We reject this woke ideology. We seek normalcy, not philosophical lunacy. We will not allow reality, facts, and truth to become optional. We will never surrender to the woke mob. Florida is where woke goes to die.

A former speechwriter myself, I inquired among those close to DeSantis who wrote the address, and was told that he wrote it himself. So it wasn't a history major toiling away in anonymity in Tallahassee who revived normalcy, but the governor who just won reelection by 20 points.

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There are, of course, non-political uses of the word. Southwest Airlines, when it canceled thousands of Christmas-time flights just when people needed them most, put out [a statement](#) that said “we are eager to return to a state of normalcy.” Following Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin’s collapse on the field earlier this month, the Wall Street Journal [headlined](#) a think piece with “A Somber NFL Searches for Normalcy.”

But that only underscores how normalcy now has separated itself from the more conventional, and older, normality. It now means “normality after chaos.”

That is, after all, how the term came into vogue. It was during Warren G. Harding’s 1920 campaign that the word was revived, with his slogan, “A Return to Normalcy.”

Prior to that, *normality* had been, well, more normal. [Grammarist](#) says that “*Normality* is centuries older, though, and many English authorities consider it the superior form, for what that’s worth.” The reason “normalcy” clangs is that “Nouns ending in *-cy* usually come from adjectives ending in *-t*—for example, *pregnancy* from *pregnant*, *complacency* from *complacent*, *hesitancy* from *hesitant*—while adjectives ending in *-l* usually take the *-ity* suffix. *Normalcy* is unique in flouting this convention.”

It worked for Harding. After eight years of Woodrow Wilson’s relentless progressivism, which came with a feral type of anti-constitutionalism, the Republican Harding won, resoundingly, with 60 percent of the vote.

Matthew Continetti, in his 2022 masterpiece on the Conservative Movement, [The Right](#), says that “Normalcy meant nation-building at home.” In his inaugural address, Harding promised to reduce social tensions, writes Continetti. Pledged Harding: “Our supreme task is the resumption of our onward, normal way.”

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Progressivism faded for the next 10 years of normalcy under Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover. “The critics of ‘normalcy’ were isolated and dyspeptic,” writes Continetti. Normalcy ruled supreme until the election of 1932, when Hoover was blamed for the Great Depression and lost to FDR.

But what was it about 1920 that made normalcy so attractive? Writing almost 100 years later, the political commentator Jonah [Goldberg observed](#) that “Harding wasn’t just tapping into the unpopularity of the First World War; he also spoke to Americans’ worries about the widespread domestic turmoil and tumult of the Progressive Era. Race riots, labor violence, anarchist terror bombings, the Red Scare, Prohibition, widespread censorship, political oppression, and mass arrests were also on voters’ minds.”

Sound familiar?

For several years now we have come through a period of intense domestic turmoil, with political violence by both side—though much, much more widespread, and of much longer duration, by the left. Censorship today reigns supreme, especially in universities. Racial and sexual characteristics, which are immutable, have meanwhile become battlefields. So DeSantis, famous for now repeating often that the Sunshine State is where “woke goes to die,” is returning to a return to normalcy.

The woke would insist, of course, that this “normalcy” is oppressive and was created by the rich and powerful to retain their wealth and privileges. Normalcy is “white supremacy” and “systemic racism,” and needs to be dismantled.

It will be up to those pledging a return to normal times to explain that what is normal is not written by man, weak or powerful, but by God -- or, if you will, nature. As William Blackstone, the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher who so influenced the Founders, [put it](#), “no

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human laws are of any validity if contrary” to the laws of nature. Men cannot become pregnant. Minors cannot [consent](#) to the amputation of healthy body parts. These things flouts human nature.

Normalcy, after chaos based on the denial of nature, would be rooted in that.