

Two tales can serve as our inspiration to do far

Some 12 years apart, two Hollywood movies can offer some important lessons about the perils of human hubris while also providing a measure of hope that positive change is within reach.

The first film was the 1997 blockbuster, “Titanic,” which put an interesting romantic spin on the oft-told story of the 1912 sinking of the luxury steamship after it struck an iceberg on its maiden voyage across the Atlantic.

The second, the 2009 drama “Up in the Air,” also was a box-office hit, and told the fictional tale of a corporate downsizer who crisscrossed the country doling out bad news to employees caught in the vice grip of plant closings.

The one was the ultimate tragedy of the seas, a disaster that cost more than 1,500 passengers and crew members their lives. The second counted an untold number of casualties, workplace victims of a laundry list of business misfortune and mismanagement.

The underlying theme of both movies revolved around the hazards of miscalculation, of the sometimes-deadly consequences set in motion by those whose egos and shortsightedness far outstrip their sense of responsibility and smarts.

The RMS Titanic, of course, was billed as “unsinkable,” which turned out to be just one of many fatal flaws that led to its undoing. Its state-of-the-art features, accenting luxury at the expense of design safety, proved no match for a mostly submerged iceberg, which tore a 300-foot gash in the ship’s hull below the waterline. Within hours, the unsinkable was sunk, as were the hopes of the ship’s

brain trust in completing the trans-Atlantic cruise in record time.

Similarly, a quest to reach a milestone coincided with the central storyline of “Up in the Air” and its principal character, portrayed by award-winning actor George Clooney. His desire to reach the rarefied air of the 10-million-mile frequent flyer club outweighed his compassion for those caught in the crossfire of corporate downsizing, eventually sending him a pointed message about life’s unwanted baggage.

The irony of it all was particularly telling for that bearer of bad news, as he doubled as a motivational speaker, employing the analogy of “What’s in Your Backpack?” to extol the virtues of living free of burdensome relationships and material possessions.

Such a change of perspective could have lasting benefits for all of us, offering an opportunity to free ourselves from long-held political, religious, and cultural views that have been a barrier to innovative and insightful thinking when addressing the critical problems of the day. Otherwise, we are like the captain of the ill-fated Titanic, blind to the hazards ahead and with a reckless disregard for what inevitably will be a disastrous ending.

Fortunately, we have the ability to write a new script, one that highlights some of our most treasured values in terms of individual liberty, civility, honesty, dignity, equal opportunity, and respect for others.

The Primerus Foundation embodies such a purpose, channeling our collective energy and ingenuity to promote a



new pathway to political progress. It’s designed to offer a nonpartisan approach to problem-solving, where fresh ideas from people of character and conviction can serve as the model for getting things done in a constructive fashion.

To achieve that goal, we welcome your ideas and support in what could be the beginning of a transformational change in the way our governments operate. It is a time when something bold must be done to end the vicious cycle of partisan bickering. Instead of scorching the earth between us, let’s try an altogether different approach that features a willingness to find some common ground.

Best regards,
Jack Buchanan, President