



An Open Letter to Our Fellow American Citizens

We stand at the crossroads.

Over the next several years, the noble sentiments and ideas that gave birth to the United States will either be repudiated or reaffirmed. The fateful choice before us will result either in the death of a grand hope or a recommitment to an extraordinary political experiment whose full flowering we have yet to realize. The choice will involve either contempt and despair or gratitude and the self-respect worthy of a free people who know long labors lie before them and who proceed with hope toward a dignified future.

In the name of justice and equality, those animated by contempt and despair seek to destroy longstanding but fragile American institutions through which justice and equality can be secured. Destruction of these imperfect but necessary institutions will not hasten the advent of justice and equality but rather accelerate our collapse into barbarism and degradation.

Groups of Americans who today advocate endless racial contempt, who systematically distort our history for political gain, who scapegoat and silence whole groups of citizens, who brazenly justify and advocate violence and the destruction of property invite us not to justice and equality but to an ugly future whose only certainty is fear.

In the face of this threat, the American institutions we must now reaffirm are these:

- **Free speech.** Too many of our media outlets have become shameful caricatures intent on purveying one-sided narratives rather than on wrestling with difficult issues about which reasonable citizens will disagree. They inflame rather than inform. They contort public debate rather than contribute to it. Rather than defend freedom of speech and association, they have become instruments of a despicable “cancel culture,” bereft of forgiveness and intolerant of opposing views.
- **Representative government.** Our Constitution establishes a democratic republic. Our elected representatives are tasked with making laws for the common good. If citizens are dissatisfied with the results, they must elect different representatives rather than take the law into their own hands. Abandoning representative government does not hasten equality; it invites tyranny. “Defunding” (as opposed to intelligently reforming) the police, who uphold the laws our political representatives make, does not hasten justice; it invites anarchy and abandons the most vulnerable to the worst depredations.

- **Federalism.** Our country is diverse. We cannot produce a unity amidst diversity by forcing all citizens to fit the singular mold that politically correct speech imposes. A diverse polity can exist only within the framework of federalism, which allows true pluralism to thrive.
- **Market commerce.** The United States was conceived as a middle-class commercial republic in which entrepreneurial citizens can succeed and fail—then succeed again. This arrangement, however imperfect, has produced remarkable prosperity and lifted millions out of poverty. Naïve calls for state control of industry and the abolition of private property, if implemented, will return us to the nightmare that hundreds of millions endured in the last century. The middle class and those who wish to join it are threatened today by two additional obstacles: crony capitalism, which concentrates wealth in fewer and fewer hands, and woke capitalism, by which the political left extorts corporate support for social justice causes, thus deflecting entrepreneurial energy away from the important task of producing truly useful products and services. Policymakers and concerned citizens must emphatically resist these trends and instead promote avenues to help the poor join the middle class.
- **Education.** The necessary task of preparing the next generation to preserve and expand our inheritance has been replaced by the morally bankrupt task of repudiating those figures and accomplishments of our past which do not pass ideological purity tests. Rather than learn the difficult moral lesson that amidst the imperfections of the human heart there are noble longings for goodness, truth, and beauty, our young people are taught that *any* imperfection repudiates those noble longings. By this we teach our children to search out and honor grievances rather than greatness. This is not education; it is indoctrination, and its result is to make life small, petty, and hopeless.
- **Family.** An affirmation of the traditional family—the belief that men and women should be encouraged to marry and have sons and daughters—cannot be thought a crime. Civilization perishes unless such unions are encouraged. The noble longing for a plural society, in which not all are cast in the same mold, must not be realized by belittling the family. Strong families headed by married couples have been the key to success in black America ever since slavery was abolished a century and a half ago, and this remains the key today for all Americans.
- **Religion.** Civilization is fragile. If religious institutions and beliefs are marginalized and mocked, the indispensable civilizational supports for a free and decent life will quickly vanish. In a plural society like America, people are free to pursue their own paths to truth. But a truly plural society cannot abide the deliberate attempt to undermine, and even destroy, churches and synagogues. A pluralism that denies the legitimacy of religious faith and practice will not produce a “diverse” America; it will, instead, produce a tyrannical America in which the freedom of conscience is lost, the inherent dignity of the individual is denied, and the strongest support for just and moral living is erased. As Alexis de Tocqueville noted, despotism can do without religious faith, but freedom cannot.

Those who attack these American institutions insist that their foundations have been corrupt from the beginning. They insist that racism, injustice, and oppression are inextricably linked to our national identity, and therefore everything born of the American experiment is tainted by sin. In

their revolutionary fervor, they wish to sweep aside everything identified with our history and establish a new social and political order on novel and untainted foundations. They show no humility or self-restraint. They display limitless contempt for opposing views. They sympathize with vile tyrannies, disdain the rule of law, attack market commerce, hide behind the privilege their university indoctrination has authorized, excoriate the family, and attack those very religious traditions which have produced a moral horizon transcending tribalism and given rise to the concern for justice and equality for all. Their philosophy of pure negation cannot sustain a political order that affirms liberty, human dignity, and moral and civic equality, rightly and humanely understood.

This crisis is acute, and the hour is late. Like our forebears, we aim both to conserve and reform our institutions in light of enduring principles of justice. That is the task of self-governing people who know they live in an imperfect world and yet are not deterred by its challenges.

We invite all citizens of good will to join us so that together we can strive for liberty and justice for all.

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* Affiliations are for identification purposes only.