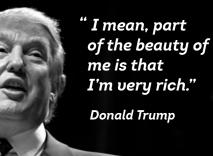
"As a nation, we began by declaring that 'all men are created equal... When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read, 'All men are created equal, except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics.' "



Abraham Lincoln

I write as an American who feels let down, even deceived - as do millions of Americans - by the politicians in Washington. It is too simple to blame this on one person, one administration. Both parties and many people are to blame over many years. For too long, we were seduced by the promise of easy answers for complicated problems.

History reminds us that when governments promise enticing favors, and fail to deliver, the people lose confidence. They become scared and seek out strong – and frequently despotic – leaders. We saw that in the Great Depression and many other moments in history. Look at Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy and Peron in Argentina. When people lose hope, they are susceptible to those who offer to think for them.

Today, in our midst, one "popular" man stands first in the polls. The more divisive and outrageous he is, the more he appeals to some people. I worry as I witness whipped-up crowds emboldening and encouraging forked-tongue hatefulness.

Mr. Trump portrays himself as someone who can do no wrong, unblemished by almost any human faults – indeed, the paragon of smartest and greatest. But his words and actions tell us who he really is – a destroyer. He says he will make us great again by solving all our problems, not with facts or well-reasoned plans but because of his "management skills."

I am a Republican, a reasonable conservative, but an American first. I am reminded that our first Republican President – and our greatest – presided over the most divisive time in our country's history. Not only was it the time of the Civil War, in which three-quarters of a million Americans died, but also the time of a thriving anti-immigrant, Know-Nothing Movement. One hundred and sixty years ago, Mr. Lincoln wrote, "When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read, 'All men are created equal, except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics.'"

I write as an immigrant, exiled from the tyranny of a dictatorship. I have served this country in our armed forces. I love this beacon of freedom and land of opportunity. My family arrived on these shores when I was just 12, bringing nothing except the willingness to work hard and a deep belief in the promise of America. We started all over. We succeeded. We helped others to succeed.

In my home, my country, I cannot stand by and accept demagoguery that would separate usrich vs. poor, minority vs. majority, red vs. blue. Our nation stands today more divided than ever.

Our mutual mission must be "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" for all. We must grow our middle class. We must give everyone reason to hope and have a realistic opportunity for The American Dream.

Surely, we are better people than to agree with this man's sound bites and raucous rallies and think the worst in us is right for this country. Our nation deserves thoughtful candidates with inspiration and ideas that speak to the best in all of us. The path of wisdom can never be by way of uncivil and shallow discussion of our greatest issues. Is there any way that Mr. Trump speaks to what Mr. Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature"? You know the answer.

We Americans are idealistic and optimistic (albeit at times shortsighted). When we are at our best, our healthy skepticism – never cynicism – contributes to a growing and always-evolving republic.

$\star \star \star$ LET US BE GUIDED BY WISDOM $\star \star \star$

- Never let fear drive us and divide us.
- Do not seek a quick fix where there isn't one.
- Never allow lies to be rewarded.
- Ask questions and be wary of easy answers.
- Accept diversity as our forefathers were themselves accepted in this new world.

Be the nation that our Founding Fathers wanted for us. Most of all, be good to one another, to all Americans. See the "hater" for what he is - an insecure, narcissistic **BULLYionaire** with a hunger to be adored.

My fellow Americans, we must do better for our beloved country and the best possible future for all Americans and generations to come.

May God bless America and all of us. Mike B. Fernandez