

Donald Trump Must Still Earn Our Vote

Recently, I've begun to receive a steady drumbeat of emails, phone calls and social media hits from close friends, vague acquaintances and complete strangers demanding, with increasing ferocity, that I "get on board" and support Donald Trump for president.

The argument goes something like this: We the people (meaning a plurality of Republican Primary voters) have spoken. Donald Trump is the going to be the Republican nominee, so you need to shut up, stop asking questions about Trump's principles, set aside your qualms and get with the program, otherwise Hillary Clinton is going to be the next president.

I know this is going to come as a shock to some people, but Hillary Clinton doesn't scare me—and neither does Donald Trump.

My family stood against the tyranny of kings and popes, followed their conscience and preached the gospel when doing so meant fire and the stake.

And I'm supposed to be afraid of Hillary Clinton? Or give up my principles and good conscience to vote for Donald Trump?

Perhaps fighting tyrants and being rebels is genetically encoded in some people, certainly country-class Americans have a surfeit of that trait, and my family is no exception to that.

From the Pequot War, to the American Revolution, to the American Civil War, through both World Wars, and now to the war Islam has declared on us, we've fought for our liberty and the right to live in America as free men under God's laws.

During the American Revolution one of my ancestors served in the Pennsylvania artillery, switched to the Navy and came back to the Pennsylvania artillery to finish out the war to liberate his country.

During the Civil War one of our family stood with George Thomas at Chickamauga and another officered a unit of the newly formed United States Colored Infantry. My distant cousin James D. Mann graduated from West Point and, serving as a Lieutenant in the US 7th Cavalry, was killed in the Drexel Mission Fight during the great Sioux Uprising of 1890.

My Grandfather braved gas attacks on the Western Front in World War I, my Dad trained as a paratrooper anticipating a near suicidal parachute drop as part of the planned invasion of Japan in World War II, and my nephew recently completed artillery school at Ft. Sill.

We've been generals and privates in America's armies and ship's carpenters and captains in the United States Navy; our dead lie in honored glory in graves from Arlington National Cemetery to unmarked places in the trackless wastes of the Pacific.

And I'm supposed to hand that legacy over to a man who says of our military, "I'm a leader, I've always been a leader. I've never had any problem leading people. If I say do it, they're going to do it ... "?

As free men, we've never followed self-styled "leaders," but we've crushed America's enemies from King Phillip to King George III to the Nazis. We broke the chains of slavery for millions in the Civil War and we've defeated every "ism" that threatened our freedom of conscience.

And I'm supposed to be afraid of Hillary Clinton? Or blindly follow Donald Trump?

I've been to nine of the past 10 Republican National

Conventions; I've worked for and with some of Donald Trump's biggest supporters (Sarah Palin) and some of Trump's biggest detractors (Bill Kristol).

And for the record, I know some key members of the Trump campaign team, and I'm sure the idea of giving one's support to eternal principles, rather than a politician who can advance one's self-interest, is seen as a quaint anachronism—if not a big joke—by cynical political professionals such as they.

As for the idea that loyalty to the Republican Party demands that I support Mr. Trump, I need only look at two 19th century cards in my desk. One shows a slate of elected officials in my home town, including several of my ancestors who were elected that year as Whigs. The other, dated four years later, shows they were all re-elected as Republicans.

Members of my family attended the first Republican National Convention in 1856. John DeFreese, my uncle many greats back, served as Secretary of the 1864 Republican National Convention that re-nominated Abraham Lincoln; he served in the Lincoln administration and was one of the Radical Republicans who precipitated the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson.

In more recent times, my mother was an alternate to the 1976 Republican National Convention that defeated Ronald Reagan, and an alternate to the 1980 Republican National Convention that nominated him.

Believe me, no one is more disappointed in the present state of the Republican Party than I am.

But America's greatest leaders, from William Bradford, to George Washington, to Abraham Lincoln, to Ronald Reagan have asked for our support—and they freely received it because they shared our principles, not because they made the false claim of party loyalty against our good conscience.

Political parties—and their candidates—gain our loyalty and support only insofar as they share and advance the principles that have guided my family for generations; freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and the protection of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

And you, Mr. Trump, have yet to meet that test.

Lest Trump supporters dismiss this commentary as a screed from a member of the hated “establishment” let me assure you that, whether you define me in or out of the establishment, I’m most certainly not alone.

And be assured that millions of other country class citizens, *whose votes Donald Trump must have to win the White House*, share my views, and you don’t have to have a long family history in this country to believe that political parties and their candidates are worthy of support only insofar as they represent one’s principles and values.

I’ve been told the same thing by a friend whose grandparents walked out of Russia during the Revolution of 1917 because they were convinced that America was the only place where Jews could worship freely and safely, and by another friend whose family arrived here in the 1960s after they lost everything in the Communist takeover of Cuba.

They are closer than I am to the lesson that when politics becomes divorced from principle and government power for its own sake becomes a politician’s goal, then the liberty of all people of conscience is in peril.

I know Hillary Clinton does not share my values, and I know she is a menace to constitutional liberty; what I don’t know is whether or not Donald Trump is a menace as well.

I didn’t support Donald Trump in the Republican Primaries, but neither do I wish him any ill. I simply say, on behalf of this one country class family, show us you share our values and

that you will join us in defending the verities of the Declaration of Independence and the promise of the Preamble to Constitution and we are with you—fail to do that and we will fight you *and* Hillary Clinton just as hard as we have fought the countless other threats that history has presented to our liberty. {eoa}

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