

AN OPEN LETTER TO SOME OF MY FRIENDS:

Dear friend,

We have been friends for a long time. Sometimes, we have disagreed about issues both large and small. I suppose I could classify you as politically conservative, while I am definitely a liberal. That hasn't stopped us from being friends. I'm not sure why the situation in the country has changed to such a degree that it is quite unlikely that we could carry on a conversation that would end with our good feelings toward one another intact.

I could say—and be, I think, partly right—that social media has something to do with it. I do not participate in any kind of a social media forum, partly because, if what others tell me is correct, Facebook, Twitter, and other sites excel in allowing their users to post messages that they would never express if they were face to face with their “friends.”

The other reason for my avoiding social media is that, to be very blunt, I have a life. I have work to do, pleasures to experience, responsibilities to keep on my mind. Useless chatter with others whose faces are hidden to me seems like a needless way for us to incite each other into making comments that we'd never make if we were face to face.

What I write in these essays for our website is nothing more or less than I would say to any friend, including you, personally.

Donald Trump's Presidency has been an unmitigated disaster for our country. Any nonpartisan fact checker can make an almost unending list of the falsehoods this man has put forth to the American people and the world. Some of them are minor and of no importance to anyone. Others, such as his denial of climate change and his ongoing war against environmental regulations will have far reaching and serious consequences for the future. His denigration of women, his attacks on anyone who does not agree with him, and his dismissal even of a brilliant, committed young woman, a teenager, who is trying to alert the world to the climate crisis that is not “on the horizon,” but is “already here” —these are all trademarks of Donald Trump.

Conservatives like to brag that the economy is in wonderful shape. Perhaps that is true for those at the top, those who are busy with their corporate investments. It is not true for people trying to make a living for a family on jobs that do not provide health insurance, more than minimum wage, or good working conditions. And, the economy isn't so great for us in the farming community, either. Our livestock prices are lower than they have been for several years, and what we buy costs more and more.

But, we are not complaining about that. What we are protesting is the executive branch of government exceeding its power instead of acknowledging the equal powers of the legislative and judicial branches. When Trump says that “Article Two gives me the power to do anything,” he has obviously never read the Constitution of the United States. He apparently believes that his election gave him the right to take over the entire government if he so desires. Is that why he has fired so many career employees in various departments of the government? Is it why he now even is attempting to direct the activities of the United States Supreme Court, saying that two liberal judges should “recuse

themselves” from any cases involving Trump? Is this why he has pardoned several people who had been convicted of crimes of corruption? Is this why he tried to purchase Greenland? Is this the reason he is attempting to interfere in court cases involving his friends? And, is it the basis for his driving of a repressive immigration policy, especially regarding people from countries that are not lily white? Is it the reason he will not bring forth his tax records for all of us to see? The basis for his continuing to make money, including charging exorbitant fees to the Secret Service for what they need to protect him when he is on his own property? And is that why Trump has cozied up to the most brutal dictators in the world?

I could go on and on, and I think you must know that. I know you are an intelligent person, so I know that what this man has done cannot possibly have escaped your notice. So, what is the reason you are supporting this behavior? Is it because Trump now says he opposes abortion, something you can be pretty sure that he has no interest in whatever? Is it because someone who obviously is using you tells you that he is protecting your right to carry an assault weapon?

I would really like to hear your reasons. Would we find common ground? With the descent into incivility that has taken over the country, with the rhetoric of hate that has prevailed in this administration, I worry that the things we agree on are now buried so deeply in mistrust that we will never be able to excavate them and bring them to light again. And, I am sorry about that. Your friend, Betsy