

One Voter's Personal Opinion . . .

BY JOHN C. GREGORY JR.

Please allow me to share my personal opinion on a subject about which I feel very strongly. I note this is not an “editorial.” It is not the opinion of the editorial board of this magazine, the leadership of the Philadelphia Bar Association or even the Association itself. It is but one man’s humble opinion.

I have voluntarily served on the editorial board of *The Philadelphia Lawyer* magazine for many years. In that time, I have taken my turn when asked to serve as the magazine’s editor-in-chief. Basically, this means I run the monthly editorial board meetings where we choose the content for the next publication. The editor-in-chief is also afforded the opportunity to write a piece we call “From the Editor.” Traditionally, this piece can be on any subject of the editor’s choosing and is printed without the review or approval of the editorial board. It is not intended to be an editorial, per se, nor the voice or opinion of the Association. That role is reserved for the Chancellor and the Board of Governors. I wanted to make these roles clear so there was no way you, the reader, could possibly misinterpret this, my 14th “From the Editor” piece, as representing the view or opinion of the Association. I am entirely and solely responsible for the views and opinions that follow.

Accordingly, I beseech all good patriots of sound conscience, who possess even an ounce of self-respect, to reach deep down to the core of our shared belief system as Americans and demand this president resign his position to save the country from the inevitable battles ahead over his abuse of power, neglect of the rule of law and aggressive disdain for our democratic process.

The attorney general can characterize the findings of the Mueller report any way he wants. The fact is the report provides ample evidence of a president who actively undermined our

democracy and relied upon the unlawful influence of our enemy to win election.

Moreover, for the attorney general, without a statutory basis, to proclaim this president did not obstruct justice, despite the Mueller report being inconclusive on the subject, is unconscionable and thinly veiled politics. We should all get to appoint our prosecutor!

I think history will not look favorably upon this attorney general’s actions relative to the evidence produced by the Mueller report.

Indeed, our Founding Fathers provided the tools for the removal from office of persons who commit high crimes and misdemeanors. I, personally, feel the president’s multiple examples of obvious lack of capacity, self-dealing and fabrication of the truth should be enough to commence impeachment proceedings. How else will we really ever know? The special counsel was not charged with the investigation of these factors. That said, while the definition and proof of these crimes may be the subject of debate, there can be little debate that this president will not survive the plethora of investigations and court proceedings pending in multiple jurisdictions. The country would be better served by his resignation.

To date, he has already suffered the personal embarrassment of having his “charitable foundation” closed, with fines and penalties, due to its illegal actions. Were he not the sitting president, which under some interpretations shields him from certain criminal liability, he would certainly be under indictment in the Southern District of New York, as he has been named as a co-conspirator in one or more cases pending there for tax evasion and campaign law violations. Meanwhile, there can be little doubt that Congress will continue to investigate obstruction of justice claims and violations of the emoluments



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clause. How can we, as a country, ignore such blatant disrespect for our laws and way of life? I call upon my fellow citizens' Better Angels not to wait for Congress to act before demanding this president's resignation.

I know that this piece is not going to please many of my conservative friends. In fact, I expect I might even suffer some form of retaliation for expressing my opinion. Oh, well, Mr. President, welcome to MY bully pulpit!

As mentioned in previous columns, I am a card-carrying Republican, and have been since the mid-1980s. I just cannot stand by and watch this president carelessly and thoughtlessly destroy the presidency as an institution. It does not take a trained observer to note with alarm his often rambling, incoherent dissertations - like a punch-drunk Fidel Castro - on subjects about which he obviously knows nothing. He shrivels from any personal affront in a Nixonesque paranoia, which borrows language from his various fanciful conspiracy theories, to blame a "deep state" for his problems. We deserve more than to be subject to the tweets of a soulless individual who hides, like the bully he is, behind this short-form paradigm with random, often inarticulate, misspelled nonsense. Is this not evidence enough that he is unfit to serve?

If someone had told you there would come a day when a president would ignore his or her own intelligence officers and proclaim national emergencies where there is no evidence of same, when the country is not at war and

where the Congress has already acted against the president's wishes, it would have been considered unfathomable. If someone said there would come a day when a president would refuse to divulge the content of direct discussions with the president of Russia to his own cabinet ... order the translator for that meeting to destroy the notes ... and fire the director of the FBI, considering the obviously odd attitude of the president toward our most concerning enemy, no one would have believed it. It surely must be the subject of some far-fetched Tom Clancy-like fiction.

These are the facts. To my mind, however, it goes beyond that. It goes to this man's very demeanor. No president in history has unabashedly lied more to the American people than this one, and he continues to do so, apparently in the hope his audience does not know the truth, or can be convinced his "alternative facts" are true. We as a people should not stand for a president who lies to us even once ... let alone over 8,000 times in just over 800 days in office. No parent would stand for such behavior by a child, nor should we from our president.

I do not want a president who talks to the American people like a two-bit thug. I do not want to listen to a president who unnecessarily demeans others with slanderous playground slang. I do not want a president who compliments white supremacists and denounces Latinos as an entire ethnic group out of pure hate. I do not want a president who continues to denigrate my fellow Americans, opening fresh wounds over a century old

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Let us ring the patriotic bell of freedom once again against this tyranny ... against this effort to diminish the rule of law. Let us publicly proclaim our dissatisfaction with the hypocrisy that has resulted in inaction by a Republican Congress. Let us do what we know in our hearts is the right thing to do.

in pursuit of unjustified policies that are backed by deception and lies. His targets know no bounds: war-hero senators, entire federal circuit courts, specific federal judges, an assortment of political opponents and even the free press.

Do his so-called supporters not know that he is insulting their intelligence with every lie he tells? Can they not even track his own words to see how dishonest he really is? How can reasonably intelligent persons of ordinary honesty not see his active deceit in all of this? In anyone else, this behavior would be deemed pathological. My friends, he is not trying to sell you a condo. He is supposed to be running our country and representing all the people of the United States!

How do I come to this position?

My earliest “political” memory is the day of John F. Kennedy’s funeral. I knew it must be important when, at seven years old, I was told I could not go outside and play until it was over! I note this memory is coupled with seeing The Beatles on Ed Sullivan on the same black-and-white TV. It would not be the last time my favorite rock band, The Beatles, and my politics would meet at a crossroads.

Of course, then there was President Johnson and the vivid images of Vietnam on the evening news. Upsetting memories included laying on my parents’ bed watching the Smothers Brothers only to have the show interrupted to report the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., or not being able to concentrate on my end-of-year homework when the news came that RFK had been shot only two months later. By the time Nixon came along, I had started reading on the subject of politics. I recall reading “The Selling of the President” by Villanova graduate, Joe McGinniss. It stirred feelings that led to what I perceived as a natural inclination to question authority. By the end of eighth grade, I had organized a group of friends to skip school and take the Paoli Local into Philadelphia to attend the first Earth Day rally in Fairmount Park. “Revolution” by The Beatles was playing on the radio and I knew something was happening.

My political maturation next involved my ongoing arguments with my father during the 1972 presidential election. Of course, I took the McGovern side and my father supported Nixon. In the long run, I was right. This corresponded with my personal articulation of my more liberal politics while in high school. As president of my junior class, I took the unpopular position that there should be no junior prom queen. Imagine. The war was ongoing, Nixon was in the process of being impeached and I thought a prom queen was a bourgeois expression of sexism. That, and my ardent support for the smoking room, got me elected!

In college, when I could vote in a real election, I had only one self-respecting choice: I registered as a Socialist. A real Socialist ... not the made-up kind our current president is knocking because some high-powered public relations firm has told him it will play well with his supporters.

Quite the liberal political pedigree indeed, wouldn't you agree? I am sure there are even some of my living relatives who do not realize some of these things about my past. But, then again, as President John Adams said, “... If a person is not a liberal when he is twenty, he has no heart; if he is not a conservative when he is forty, he has no head ...” That was me. The transformation complete, I became a Reagan Republican. A staunch fiscal conservative buoyed by the promise of a bull market and strong economy.

And I remained so, until now. A special 50th Anniversary edition of The Beatles’ “White Album” has been released to great critical acclaim, and I have been awakened by the treacherous, swindling, misogynistic deviant presently in the White House. Out of the prejudice he peddles; the poverty that his policies impart; the efforts of his party to keep certain classes and races from voting; the failure to acknowledge climate change while allowing industrialists to strip away important regulations protecting our open space, endangered species and environment; and his blatant failure to listen to his intelligence advisers, it is as obvious as the president’s fake tan and heavily tinted hair that we cannot afford to wait until the next election to see this president’s term end in shame. To wait and allow him to continue to abuse his executive power in ways that impact on our very rule of law only makes us contributorily responsible for his lies and deception. Do not let him bully us and hold us hostage to his thoughtless whims and unplaced predilections.

We need to act now. I, personally, think the Philadelphia Bar Association should pass a resolution demanding the president to resign. Let us be the first bar association to do so, as Philadelphia institutions have been first in many instances, and take a stand. Let us ring the patriotic bell of freedom once again against this tyranny ... against this effort to diminish the rule of law. Let us publicly proclaim our dissatisfaction with the hypocrisy that has resulted in inaction by a Republican Congress. Let us do what we know in our hearts is the right thing to do. Now!

This piece is dedicated to the memory of Harry Lore, who served on this magazine’s Editorial Board for many years. ■

John C. Gregory Jr. is editor-in-chief of The Philadelphia Lawyer.