

Dear friends,

This letter could be called, *A Plea For Moderation*. This is my third attempt to write on this subject since the ascendance of Trump, and the first two never made it into general circulation, because I could tell from the reactions from a smaller group of readers that it wasn't hitting the notes I was going for. Somehow it kept coming up flat.

It's easy for me to blame this reaction on the perception of others. If the quality of the writing is the same, and the truths it reveals are as true and relevant today as they were years ago, then it isn't ridiculous to conclude that the problem is the way people receive their information in a vacuum. That explains some of it.

But what good does it do me to bemoan this situation even if the conclusion is accurate? There may still be some use in trying to shed some light on how our perception has changed, and how that change is a part of the problem, and I will attempt to do that briefly. First I want to dig deeper in this attempt to convey a better understanding of where we're at, how it affects our sense of blame, our self perception and the perception of others, so I ask people to consider the often applied labels of *racist* versus *elitist*.

Before I do that, I go back to an example from a letter I wrote some years ago on this subject of extremes. The example is a person driving some moderate speed on the highway, say 70-or-so mph in a 65, in the passing lane and passing slower traffic, when an oversized pickup truck drives up at a high rate of speed and gets within a few feet of the first car's bumper. It feels like a belligerent act, bordering on threatening, and if you spend enough time on the road, then you've probably experienced this very situation. Even without American or Confederate flags, or buxom female silhouettes on the mud flaps, I can surmise that this guy is likely to have either voted for Donald Trump or not voted at all because he doesn't like any of them or believes that his vote won't make a difference. Maybe he even voted for Gary Johnson, but the likelihood that he voted for Hillary Clinton is likely in the less-than-5% range. Some would certainly bristle at the notion of my jumping to this conclusion, though I'm not concluding who this man voted for but commenting on the likelihood of who he voted for based on the limited knowledge available. I believe a person of average sensibility can see reasonable truth in this conclusion. And please note that while I clearly believe this guy can be described as a jackass, that belief stems not from who he's likely to have voted for and entirely from the unkind way he's driving in this example.

The counter example is a guy driving a disheveled-looking prius on the same highway, and you drive up behind him going the same seventy miles per hour, only he's driving 60. And he's making no effort to pass the guy that he's driving right beside as the cars line up behind him. Maybe you move up behind him, or signal, or try to be patient, but you see him look at you in his rearview, and his eyelids never raise more than halfway as he gives you a bland look that says, *you're just going to have to wait your turn*. He's making himself the speed police for you and others, even though the signs on the highway medians specifically say, "slower traffic keep right." You can similarly draw the conclusion that this person is much more likely to have voted

for Hillary Clinton or Jill Stein than Trump, if he bothered to vote at all. And the conclusion I'm intending that you draw is that the opposite of a jackass isn't a good guy but likely just another jackass on the opposite end of the spectrum. But it is worth noting that while people who might call themselves conservatives tend to find this applying assumptions to character reasonable, my experience is that a much-higher proportion of liberals are offended by the assessment.

Going back to racist versus elitist, we all have some idea what it means to be racist, even if some of us cast wider nets with our definition than others. We all get that a person who is pro-segregation, whether talking about making America great again or otherwise, is racist. I'm not attempting to define racism, but in my mind, everything comes down to loving your neighbor as yourself and endeavoring to do unto others as you would have done to you. Given that, one expression of racism is when a person feels anger or resentment toward people of a particular race for actions that don't engender the same resentment when applied to their own race. At least that provides an opportunity for an apples to apples comparison. For instance, in my son's basketball league there was a black kid, a good player, who handled the ball often, played aggressively, and took by far the most shots on our team. Witnessing this, a woman whom I otherwise respect got visibly angry about it and expressed her feeling on the matter loudly and repeatedly. Her belief that this boy was a "ball hog" wasn't without justification. Yet the next year, when my son played on a team with a white kid, also a good player, who took the ball even more, played even more aggressively, and took an even higher percentage of the shots, she said nothing. Her seeing a white kid playing like that just didn't make the same negative impression.

A person doesn't have to be pro-segregation or believe that it's OK for the law to favor some racial groups over others to be racist. Being angry with people of one race for a behavior or expression and not feeling the same toward people of a different race for the same behavior is racism. One observation that I can make is that many so-called conservatives bristle at the notion of being called racist because they voted for Donald Trump because they perceive that others are casting them in a negative light for their beliefs. Obviously some Trump supporters aren't racist by any definition, but, as above, some simply might not believe that the label applies to them. It can be a case where they hear the term racist and jump to the conclusion that the labeler believes them to be pro-segregation or an avowed hater of another race. It may be that they don't realize they express latent anger toward other races, and if they do they don't consider that to be racist, and if they do recognize it as hateful, they see their hate as justified. Perhaps they perceive that people of the other race would treat, or have treated, them the same when the tables are turned. Obviously this ignores a great deal of history, but it's a stretch to suggest that a woman at a basketball game who has been raised a certain way should have to consider that bigger history when she experiences a negative emotion. And it's not anyone's place to give her a history lesson for feeling the way she does. It very much bothered me to hear her anger expressed in that manner, partly because I perceived racism in it, but we have to set limits on ourselves when it comes to how we attempt to limit what other people say or what they think or believe. We have to limit our own inclinations to tell others how to feel. We can try to mitigate the situation with words if we have the courage to do so and believe that using those words will have an impact that's more positive than negative, but we shouldn't simply use another person's beliefs as an

excuse to shut them down or shut them out. As I point out in any case, people, up and down the political spectrum, universally understand that racism is perceived to be negative.

So how does the term *elitist* compare? Conservatives frame it as a negative, and more moderate news sources refer to it in vaguely negative tones, yet liberals don't seem to bristle at the label, and many don't find it the least bit offensive. The first definition that pops up in a general on-line search is, "the advocacy or existence of an elite as a dominating element in a system or society." While that seems clear enough to me, liberals generally don't seem to find it insulting or disparaging.

I believe the solution here is to provide some examples that a majority of conservatives and some more politically moderate individuals would consider to be examples of elitist thinking that they also consider to be negative traits. There was a radio advertisement last month supporting a conference here in Ohio that ended with the phrase, "report abuse, physical or verbal." I found it deeply offensive that anyone would make a blanket statement encouraging someone to involve the police in the personal relationship of others for a situation the witnessing viewer isn't likely to be involved with. When I mentioned it to conservative leaning friends at the time, they responded with an enthusiastic, *I KNOW!* They perceive this to be a perfect example of liberal overreaching, involving the state in people's personal lives and telling people how they should behave and how they should think. This is what is meant by elitist.

A notice popped up on Facebook on our Clintonville Block Watch website where people report crime, and a man reported that a driver was *flying through their neighborhood, came within inches of hitting him and his daughter, and when he asked the guy to slow down, driver flipped him off and yelled f-k off before flying around the corner.* He was subsequently encouraged by multiple respondents, some posting hate-face emojis, to act violently including keeping a brick handy to throw through the driver's window. Having lived in Clintonville for the past twenty years, I've had liberal types yell at me to slow down, sometimes quite angrily, when I was driving at or below the speed limit. My opinion is that in none of these occasions have they had the right to treat me with hostility. In an unrelated story, an extremely liberal-esque neighbor approached me maybe eight years ago with an unofficial petition to try to get speed bumps installed at the entrance to our neighborhood *because people come flying through there.* In sixteen years I can't say that I've seen anyone going as fast as 35, and I'm guessing the city agrees, because they've put speed gaugers up and then taken them back down several times over the years. Fortunately no speed bumps have been installed. If the speed bumps held people to 25 I might be OK with that, but with many of them if you hit it at 15 your car scrapes cement and can be damaged. Anyhow, when I saw the Facebook post it gave me pause as to the witness's version of events and the fact that it was inciting such anger and calls to violence. My initial response to the post was only to say that it was irresponsible for those commenting to call for violence, that it would just make things worse. Then a guy wrote back a fairly angry response to me that finished with, *you can't go too far in protecting children.* That statement beautifully sums up elitist liberal thinking. And when I responded that *this is exactly the kind of thinking that pushes people to vote for Trump,* he responded with a snide, *Looks like you have it all figured out, Bob.* Then the

website host interjected that they don't tolerate political commentary, and I was booted from the site. My guess (not having access to the site) is that the other guy, and the people encouraging rock throwing, were not similarly excommunicated, and I think it as likely that most of the others posting walked away thinking, *We showed that A-hole Trump supporter*. The sad irony is that I very actively encouraged support for Hillary Clinton, whom I don't personally care for at all, and took time on a very busy day to drive an employee to her polling location when she told me that she would have voted for Hillary Clinton but didn't get a chance to vote. That pretty much sums up how seriously I took the clear and present danger of a Trump presidency. But the liberals in question treated me with inhospitable derision because I don't think or write or believe the way they do; the way they're self conditioned to expect. That sums up *liberal elitism* pretty well.

I have been yelled at, literally, on the *bike trail* twice because my son wasn't wearing a helmet while biking, though most of the time he is. And I've been scolded for not wearing a helmet. It would serve no good purpose for me to try to properly articulate the kind of anger that wells up in a person like me to have another man, a random stranger who doesn't know me, yell at me angrily for something that it no harm to them. It's none of their business whether I make my son wear a helmet or not. No aspect of how I raise my children is open to commentary from strangers, angry or otherwise. But this is another great example of liberal elitism.

I'll pause here to point out that when I relate these stories to conservatives, the general response is enthusiastic agreement. With liberals it's much different. Some see no offense in the actors who offended me, but others don't see these as examples that necessarily apply to liberals. By their reckoning, anyone can want you to drive slower on their street, or call the cops on a guy yelling at his girlfriend, or children, or who would yell at a person for letting their kid go without a helmet on a bike trail, or who pushes for stricter and stricter child seat regulations, or would have you arrested for smoking outside if there's a chance they might smell it.

Red light cameras are another great example. It shouldn't be a big surprise that the politicians involved here in Columbus for graft related to the red-light cameras were Democrats. Because if it's about keeping people safe, then anything goes, and you can't go too far in protecting children. It isn't a coincidence that these are all issues regarding policing the personal behavior of private citizens, and certainly it's true that there are people of every race and political belief on both sides of each of these issues. But, from the perspective of conservatives and likely a fairly large majority of moderates, these are all examples of liberal elitism. Let's face it: there are political liberals who are as racist as any racist conservative. That doesn't make the idea that Trump supporters tend toward racist completely off base. I understand that for many liberal elites it's a big taboo to label anyone in any way, but other liberals are all too happy to call Trump supporters racist. So it shouldn't come as such a shock that people generally, and conservatives specifically, are much more likely to perceive that all of the examples I've given above are issues pushed by liberals.

A related issue I've been harping on for a long time is gun control. (Please feel free to read - <http://truthsofgod.net/OnGunRightsinAmerica.pdf>, written and distributed in February, 2013) My brother, who is more of an old school union Democrat, was also verbally active last election

in supporting Clinton and opposing Trump. We had numerous discussions on the subject both before and after the election. The people he spoke with, mostly blue collar union members, were much more often expressing an intention to vote for Trump, and the number one reason verbalized was, *Hillary Clinton's going to take away our guns*. I myself have heard this many times.

While I can't recall Clinton or Obama threatening to take anyone's guns away, the liberal elite platform pushes this threat as if it's the Democratic Party's principal issue. I've received more anti-gun articles and op-ed pieces than I can count over the past several years, and despite the new and very real dangers created by the Trump presidency, the anti-gun rhetoric doesn't seem to have lessened. It seems to me that new articles from liberals sounding the rallying cry on gun control are published daily. I've always presented two counter arguments relative to the current essay: How has this issue emerged as though a new national crisis when the number of gun deaths has declined significantly since peaking in 1991, 26 years ago? The second criticism is that gun control proponents continue to use 31,000 gun deaths as their number when 17,000 of those are suicides. W.H.O. worldwide suicide statistics strongly suggest that the overall number of suicides would remain roughly consistent regardless of measures pushed by gun-control advocates, so more than half the number they are using is intentionally misleading. It's the kind of fake news from the liberal media decried by Donald Trump supporters, only it's actually fake news pushed by the liberal media.

I would imagine that some gun control advocates became angry reading that. At the risk of being flippant, I would offer the following survey as to the source of their anger on the subject, with the choices below:

A-I have personally lost loved ones to non-suicide gun violence that would have been prevented by stricter gun laws. (It happens.)

B-I want to prevent the coming global catastrophes that are possible in the near future. I believe stricter gun laws are among the most pressing issues to saving mankind and the planet.

C-Gun control is a top issue among liberals. I have read many, many well-reasoned essays and arguments supporting strict gun control, and most of the people in my circle have read the same types of papers. We all agree with one another. As our position strongly suggests, anyone who disagrees with strict gun control policies is ignorant, violence mongering or racist.

Those aren't fair choices, but I can't help believing that the third choice is the most realistically accurate for the average Second Amendment opponent. But even if I'm totally off base with this conclusion, this is how many conservative-leaning Americans see liberals and liberal elitism: as a closed off way of thinking where one opinion is enlightened and all conflicting opinions are ignorant, misguided or straight up ill intended. And the perception is that as pushers of the enlightened views, liberals will pull out all the stops concerning propriety, sticking to the facts and general notions of minding one's own business, because you can't go too far in protecting children or fighting the general ignorance of conservatives.

As I said to the left-leaning crime watch group back in September, this is what causes otherwise

ordinary people to vote for Donald Trump. Congratulations myopics, Donald Trump is now President of the United States, and he's trying his absolute damndest to turn this country into an oligarchy isolated from the rest of the world and its problems, as he said he would. But please, double down on gun control. Dig trenches around your right to tell other people what they should think, whether or not it affects your rights or the general health and long-term welfare of the planet. And blame racists for it, because it's brilliantly easy to point out those parroting our President's ignorant spew and in many cases saying and intending much worse, sometimes publicly. Of course these people voted for Donald Trump. He intentionally appealed to them. But millions of others who don't believe themselves to have ill-intentions toward others of any race also voted for Trump in part because they perceive liberal elitism to be the bigger threat to their lives and to the well being of this country. Just a small fraction of those well intended votes changed the outcome of the election. Also, drop the popular vote/electoral college argument. It isn't accomplishing anything. The laws were followed, and the result wasn't a system failure but a moral failure based on choice.

Sometimes it feels to me that so-called liberal elites react like puppets having their strings pulled, and I make this statement partly in reference to the removal of Confederate monuments. When it seems that Trump might finally be on the verge of losing support of conservative leaning moderates, liberal elitism finds a new way to tell people what to think. I turned on the television at a hotel room last Sunday. The channel was on CNN. I decided to leave it on while I worked on other things, and every talking head's main subject was the removal of Civil War Confederate monuments. As you can imagine, the universal opinion of each was that the time had come to remove the monuments (why now, exactly?), and that holding a contrary opinion amounted to ignorance.

Do you expect that I would here take the position that the morally sound arguments for keeping Confederate monuments outweigh the morally sound arguments for getting rid of them? Hopefully you know better by now, or you're still completely missing the point of this essay. I'm not suggesting that life is better because of Confederate monuments any more than I've suggested that my children are better off not wearing helmets when they ride their bicycles. But I must point out a single personal example from my childhood that relates directly. In the '80s when my dad had time off in the summer from Ford, we would travel to Georgia every year to spend a week with my grandparents, and every year we would go to the laser show at Stone Mountain. Stone Mountain is essentially a park that is itself a Civil War Memorial, and on the side of the mountain are carved the likenesses of Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis on horseback. The show would commence after dark, and colorful lasers would create animation set to music on the side of the mountain. The popular songs of the year would tend to be included, but you could always count on Georgia on My Mind performed by both Ray Charles and Willie Nelson. Then toward the end they would play Dixie, and the lasers would outline the three figures one at a time, and each would ride off into the sunset, which was followed by patriotic songs like Proud to be an American and the Star Spangled Banner. It created profound emotion in a 9-14 year old, which was likely felt by most everyone present, and there was nothing racist about it. There was nothing planting a seed to suggest that the South will rise

again. And it captured a kind of patriotism that embodied love for the state and region as well as love for the country that I don't think most northerners outside of places like New York understand. There was no hate in the experience.

But just now, in this perilous time of racial and ideological tension, now is the time to start tearing down these monuments? And we're going to say to all of these millions of people, of various races, who have shared in these experiences for the entirety of their lives that preserving a monument like this is deeply ignorant at best? How much different is this from the Taliban destroying ancient and priceless religious monuments from previous cultures considered by the Taliban to be immoral? Let me say as an aside that if you're going to blow up the face of Stone Mountain, then you'd better save some dynamite for Mount Rushmore, because it's an intentional symbol of hate. We built this symbol of American power smack dab in the middle of the wasteland that we've left to Native American tribes that we've rounded up and put on reservations. It's called the Badlands because it sucks to live there. And in 1927 it was in the backyards of people who had survived terrible massacres at the hands of Union soldiers, telling them, *we have all the power, and there's nothing you can do about it.*

I'm not suggesting that we destroy Mount Rushmore, because it doesn't represent hate to millions who have visited, loved it and stood in awe of its majesty, but that isn't even the point. Do we not have bigger, much more important issues to occupy our mouths, our thoughts and our actions? As with the gun issue, why do so many people perceive the issue of removing Confederate monuments to be so important to them right now when many of them probably hadn't devoted three thoughts to the subject in all the previous years of their lives? Liberal elitism.

What it has amounted to is the rightly-intended platform of protecting human rights at the core of liberalism being eclipsed by these wrong-headed manifestations of liberal elitism. The moon blotting out the sun is a particularly timely metaphor in this case. So what should liberals be fighting for? This isn't to suggest a particular order, but I would offer, as I have in previous letters, that the following be considered:

* Protecting basic human rights for all Americans. This includes acknowledging a basic right to work and encouraging economic development, including infra-structural improvements, to ensure that we all have a reasonable opportunity to share in prosperity. It also includes the limitation of laws to those we would happily and rightly impose on ourselves and our own children for any particular crime and that such laws be applied irrespective of race or social status, etc. This isn't to suggest that an aspirational goal shouldn't be to extend those rights to all persons, but we can not aspire to impose our laws upon the world.

* Protecting the world's living environment. Global warming, sea-level rise, ocean acidity and deforestation are among the areas that have to be addressed, and it can only be done with an agreed majority willing to pass laws that encourage a shared sacrifice. It's also an issue where we have to work with the international community and require all to act honorably on the

commitments made.

* Working with the international community to create a framework for a global population policy. This isn't with the intention of limiting the right to conceive and bear children but to ensure that such limitations never become necessary as a part of the larger goal of preventing mass, worldwide starvation and the instability that would follow.

* Ensuring that public education is fairly financed and ensures each generation at least as good an opportunity as those previous to receive a public education relative to education opportunities generally. Everyone doesn't get to go to Harvard, but everyone should have the opportunity to receive competent instruction in the basic subjects as well as participate in sports and other extracurricular activities that have been the hallmarks of a well-rounded American education. There is more wealth now than there was in previous decades, and telling parents and kids that there's no money for their kids to participate in football, softball or an after-school musical is absurd.

* Promoting campaign finance laws require the honest disclosure of financial influence as well as ensuring that money can't simply be spent to buy the vote at the cost of public ignorance. You can't ensure fair and free elections otherwise, so all the other efforts are hamstrung without it.

I'll add one to the list that's timely. Insurance premiums and medical costs continue to increase at a rate that well exceeds inflation, and it's substantially harming the middle class. Like many, I supported Obama knowing that Obamacare was his principal goal. I still support making available some level of care that can cut long-term costs and ultimately alleviate unnecessary misery for people who can't otherwise afford it. But health-care providers, medical suppliers and insurance companies have every incentive to charge as much as they can and little incentive to reduce costs. They've taken advantage of every loophole, and they knew what those loopholes would be well in advance since they helped write the bill. The Democratic Party machine has long been in the pockets of the insurance companies, but the Republicans, for all their bluster, have shown no more interest in working toward an actual solution than the Democrats, because they're also on the take. It's a massively regressive tax on the middle class, and the fact that jobs are provided in the process does not absolve the government of the malfeasance. \$18K per year for a family of four making \$100-200K is a massive expense, not even accounting for the headaches associated with having to switch doctors and plans, etc. To a millionaire \$18K is a drop in the bucket. My experience is that immigrants take the opportunity to go to their home countries for their major medical care when they can in part because our system is broken. My guess is that the top 1% takes the same advantage of such travel opportunities more than the rest of us realize. If you're a liberal then you should find this situation deeply offensive, as should everyone else not ultimately profiting from what is arguably legalized piracy. If liberals put as much energy into rightfully expressing outrage about this correctable problem, as well as the other items on my short and by no means exhaustive list, then some of the things that need to improve would begin to do so. This issue doesn't have the long-term universality of the others above, but it's timelier in the sense of addressing the problems of the now than tearing down

statues or trying to take away other people's stuff and then calling them ignorant for being angry about it.

You'll note that conspicuously absent from my list is protecting people's right not to be offended or to hear anything that offends them. You don't have the right to limit the language and thoughts, and to some degree even the actions, of others so as not to offend you. One of the caveats of living in a free country must be that people can feel the way they feel and can express those feelings so long as they aren't harming or seeking to bring about harm to others. There will ALWAYS be people who are offended by such expressions if the expressions have any meaning at all. Sometimes they cross a line, and sometimes they don't. That's the gray area that we as a society have to take responsibility for adjudicating. We can't relieve ourselves of that burden of adjudication by creating bright-line rules and zero-tolerance policies to certain expression or actions irrespective of the circumstances for the people living in those moments. We can't simply take away people's right to go about their daily lives in whatever manner we might see as coarse or hateful or even dangerous when no one is being harmed and no one is likely to be. Liberal elitism is perceived as doing exactly this, and I clearly believe that perception to be reasonable. When you consider that this perception pushes people into the opposite margin, then you can see how it is making life in this country the world more perilous rather than less so. If you think this analysis is completely off base, then I invite you to take another look at the lost, ranting, hate mongering President that WE have elected and the rejected candidate the Democratic party nominated who could be the poster child for liberal elitism.

My hope is that this letter has laid out an alternative approach for liberals to consider. It doesn't mean that you abandon your beliefs and run jump on the Donald Trump bandwagon. It's quite the opposite of that, in fact. Those I'm most trying to reach with this letter, you are the people in the best position to refocus the talking heads of liberal elitism, and the ensuing actions that ultimately follow, on the issues that should most matter to you. Please remember here that I'm not saying that your positions on most issues are ultimately wrong. This is about picking and choosing your battles. Deny it if you insist, but many liberals I know believe that the white middle class and the Baby Boomers more specifically are being manipulated by sound but misplaced ideas of freedom and individualism, including the new belief that corporations are quasi-people entitled to First Amendment protections. These misapplied ideals enable money barons like Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin who stir up racial tension so they remain free to rape the environment and siphon off as much of the nation's treasury as possible. How can you be so confident that you aren't similarly being manipulated, given the evidence to the contrary? How can you be on the right side in the general sense and yet continue to fail so miserably, with the election of Donald Trump being but the most obvious manifestation?

There are much greater stumbling blocks to fear as we continue to work toward a better, free-er, more equitable society. Maybe next time the terrorists somehow detonate a nuclear weapon in a major city. A nationwide cry for martial law could be triggered by less. Global warming could easily end in a drought that brings about worldwide starvation and world war faster than we can deal with it. Future pandemics, inevitable in the long term, can be dealt with in the spirit of

brotherhood, of loving our neighbors as ourselves, or they can be dealt with in the spirit of every man for himself, me first, family first, country first, religion first. History has shown many times that we have the capacity to go either direction. We are at a perilous time in our history right now, both in the short term and by the measurement of the next hundreds of years. A liberal friend of mine commented that my expectations are too high as far as expecting liberals to change tactic in reaction to the Trump election; that it's only been ten months. I disagree. Throughout that time it seems to me that liberals are only doubling down on liberal elitism, and the push to tear down Confederate memorials is just one more example.

For my part I choose to do what I can, to memorialize what I can, to encourage us to see policy in terms of loving our neighbors as ourselves, to do unto others as we would have done to us, but it isn't always clear how to apply that. Defending the rights of others is a safe bet. Don't give up on those fights. But acknowledge that there's no right not to be offended. There's no right to require others to modify their behavior simply so that everyone is comfortable. Other people have the right to believe differently, and they have the right to act on those beliefs when no one is being harmed. Sometimes you just have to let some things go and concentrate on the bigger picture of what you would have for the world and why, regardless of what your chosen news sources and your like-minded friends who listen to them tell you to believe. That's why this letter is called *A Plea For Moderation* despite attempting to appeal directly to liberals. If more liberals can acknowledge liberal elitism as negatively perceived, then both extremes will become less so, and that would be a good thing.

So it is.

Bob Young