

## Channeling Ben Franklin: Will we keep our republic and democracy on November 5th?



As you can see, I just voted. I was number 5245, so turnout of early voters here in Staunton (Virginia) is high. I walked right up to check in, and two of the five voting kiosks were free. But, after voting, a line of 7-10 had assembled to vote, and more folks were coming into City Hall to do the same. Hopefully democracy and the republic will prevail.

The striking contrast between the two closing arguments is almost unimaginable. But here we are with DJT wanting to execute Liz Cheney by firing squad and channelling not Ben Franklin or Alexander Hamilton, or Sojourner Truth or W. E. DuBois, or even (for some) Teddy Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan but Mussolini, Hitler, Putin, and Orban. Equally scary is knowing that pregnant women are dying unnecessarily because of governmental/judicial overreach on women's health and women's personal freedoms.

I share this selfie in front of a lithograph of Union Major General James B. McPherson being fatally shot at the Battle of Atlanta, because, without a Union victory there, President Lincoln's re-election as well as the fate of the Union and the enslaved were more than uncertain. But the Union did hold by winning Atlanta, and the nation was preserved with the freeing at last of millions of enslaved over whom the Civil War was fought. That was 1864. Now it is 2024. Historians are reminding us of these parallels and the all-too-obvious ones from "democratic" Germany during the 1930s. Which way will the nation choose?

Toward the promise of reaching out, talking to, respecting, and working with fellow Americans to reach compromise and get things done or the promise and promulgation of hate, division, and revenge? The promise of democracy and hope for a more perfect Union for all Americans (especially those who are left behind) or the promise of a cult-like kingship and mob-like rule? To let women be free to make their own decisions about their own health and well-being or to resemble a fundamentalist Islamic country and its restrictive treatment of young girls and women? To follow the sage advice of the Golden Rule and the ever-lasting hope of the Beatitudes or to continue the constant lying and destruction of the Golden Rule with every sentence DJT makes? To treat the military with honor and respect or denigrate those who have served, died, been captured or wounded? To hire a convicted rapist and felon to be your next employer, teacher, pastor/rabbi/imam, president or not? To rely on a president who upholds democracy and the Constitution or who pledges repeatedly to be a dictator and break the Constitution on Day 1 if elected?

I write this elegy as someone who has voted in every federal, state, and local election and primary since 1972. I was raised in a 100% Republican home and family (except for one aunt and uncle in Tennessee, believe it or not). I became independent in 1980, disappointed in both political parties for different reasons (following Vietnam and Watergate and then Iran/Contra), and ever since I have tried, to greater or lesser extent, to see points made by both sides.

Like you, I wonder how did we get here? Well, it took a lot of effort and hard work and planning on the part of many during the past half-century to flip the Republican Party upside down to the point it is unrecognizable. But on November 5th we have a chance to turn our backs on fear and division and disinformation and to aspire and work toward a better future for all Americans and not just our own self-interests.

1864. 2024. I pray with all my heart that the Blue Wall of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Omaha holds firm just as the Union soldiers held firm at an earlier Blue Wall (known as the Confederate's High Water Mark) at Gettysburg in 1863 and again at the Battle of Atlanta in 1864. May voters from coast to coast make it possible for us and the world to celebrate America's 250th anniversary in 2026 as a living democracy still striving to be a republic free from mob-like authoritarian rule. May our fellow citizens and neighbors honor our beloved USA—and the many members of our families and inner circle over the past two and a half centuries who have served in the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, and Marines—by supporting democracy and freedom and equal opportunity for all by voting for the Harris/Walz ticket.

But if you are incapable of ever voting for a Democrat under any circumstances, even in dire times like the ones we now face, then please do not vote for DJT! Instead, write in the name of a sane and competent "conservative" whom you respect and who, unlike DJT, obeys the law and the Constitution, among them Adam Kinzinger and Mike Pence, Nikki Haley and Liz Cheney.