

AN OPEN LETTER TO VICE PRESIDENT HARRIS:

Dear Vice President Harris,

"Someone who suggests we should, 'terminate' our Constitution should never again have the chance to stand behind the seal of the president of the United States of America, never again. Never again!" Those words, Vice President Harris, which you so oft repeated, rang in our ears louder than any of your other inspired words during your campaign. For most of your supporters, the 'We the People' who listened to them, we expect they were heard as a rallying cry to vote to save our democracy and prevent the clear and present danger to our Constitution and our liberty that your opponents bring to us. But for some of us, perhaps only a few, the part of that sentence that cried out above all others was the determined and fervent call of "Never again!" Those two words rang out more than any of the words in all of the inspiring speeches you gave during the whole of your well-fought campaign. They keep on ringing in our ears, now, as nothing has since the ringing of the Liberty Bell that long ago informed a distant tyranny from which we declared our independence on July 4, 1776, "Never again. Never again!"

For some of us, your words were far more than a rallying cry to win an election. For some of 'We the People', they were an absolute commitment to see that no one who threatened our liberty, our Constitution or our democracy, imperfect as it may be, would ever again be permitted to hold the reins of power or stand behind the seal of the President of the United States of America. We did not take that to only be a call to fight and win an election. We took it to mean, win or lose, no one who even suggested they would terminate the Constitution, would ever be allowed anywhere near the highest office in the land. For us, "Never again," means nothing less than "Never again," just as you said it, just as we believe you meant it.

But we are seriously troubled by recent events which warn that the bell of "Never again!" has a crack in it, like the one in the Liberty Bell, and may never ring again as it has on the days we heard you ringing it. What we are hearing now is that we are about to hand over the keys to the gates of our democracy and our Constitution to the very tyrants who were never again to be allowed anywhere near them. We see a "peaceful transition of power," with all the normal procedures and graces of a "smooth transition" being fully accorded to those whose sole intent is to destroy the very things they are being given. We do not hear the ring of "Never again" in any of that. We hear things like "fighting on" and "Trump-proofing" and "protecting ourselves", which can only be taken as after-the-fact emblems that "Never again" has been surrendered and may not ring for a very long and very painful time, perhaps never again.

"Madam Vice President, you argued in your own words that Donald Trump's proposals to settle the war in Ukraine are "not proposals for peace." "Instead," you argued, "they are proposals for surrender." I would ask you if you think the smooth transition and peaceful transfer of power now being undertaken by your Administration, proposals that will put Donald Trump behind the seal of the President of the United States, do not equally present us with a proposal for the surrender of America?"

We are also aware that President Biden and yourself possess the same powers, extreme as they are, that our adversaries will soon possess and intend to use against us on the day they are handed them in a few short months. For the moment, those powers, terrible as they are to contemplate, remain in the President's and your hands alone. Powers such as the Insurrection Act, martial law, the so-called 'emergency Doomsday book' and others are all there, to be used at the President's discretion. Ironically, even the right to commit illegal acts have been accorded the President by the Supreme Court and its decision on Presidential immunity in the performance of core official functions of that office. We might ask, what could be more 'core' and 'official' than those acts required to preserve our democracy and

protect and defend our Constitution from immediate threats that are now approaching the White House?

It reminds one of the night the poet Julia Ward Howe looked out from the darkened room where her children slept and gazed upon the thousands of campfires of Union soldiers who had come to Washington from every direction to encircle the Capitol and defend it against an anticipated invasion by the Confederacy. It was the night she penned the lyrics to the Battle Hymn of the Republic and those most famous of lines, "as he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free." Those lines were another 'shot heard round the world' from the shores of liberty, the second time in our history that we have been called upon to protect and defend our Constitution and the democracy that rests on its foundation. Thousands of campfires that also rang out with the cry, "Never again, never again."

We understand, the use of such extreme powers as your offices hold are both provocative and dangerous. But also ask, can their employment at this grave time in our history be any more dangerous than what is about to befall our nation if we do not use them to prevent that awesome power from falling into the wrong hands? Is that not what is about to happen if we don't act to prevent it? Does that not call for turning the weapons of the enemy back on them before it is too late? Have we not heard directly how they plan to use those very same powers against our democracy and its people? They have not only told us so, and spelled out their agenda in documents such as Project 2025, they are deploying and employing them now, even before they legitimately have any authority to do so. We see them, restructuring both Houses of Congress to smooth and speed our transition into a fascist tyranny. We have seen their generals and they are, as they have described, like the generals of Hitler who will do the bidding of their Mad King and tyrant without question. We can see all this, and more, unfolding before our eyes—not a warning, not a 'concept of a plan', but as undeniable fact.

Writing this letter to you, Vice President Harris, gives me no comfort. Behind every word is a fearful realization that we have come to another moment in our country's history not much different than that of those few men who gathered in Philadelphia on July 4th and August 2nd, 1776 and decided that the agenda and means of tyrants could no longer be tolerated here in America, whatever the cost. Those men knew what a perilous undertaking they were committing themselves and their countrymen to take. They were aware that there were many who would not side with them and the risk that would entail in the days ahead. Knowing all that, and knowing too that this land could not fulfill its promise, could not breathe under the yolk of a tyrant like King George, they went ahead, fearful and trembling, and signed the Declaration of Independence.

It is now given for us to decide, are we to keep that independence that has cost us so much in blood and sorrow to obtain? Or, are we to give it away to tyrants who will not give it back to us, and are quite willing to plunge our nation into a new and very painful Dark Ages? Is this experiment in democracy, imperfect and so much in need of repair as it is, to come to an end at this moment? Are we to be forever known as the generation that gave it away? Is there really any other option but to say, "Never again. Never, never, never again," and mean it?

This is the saddest letter I have ever had to write. It is a fearful letter and one through which I have trembled, from beginning to end. I am but one citizen, without much importance or influence. Certainly I have little to offer concerning such weighty matters as those you and the President must now face. I'm a poet and writer by trade, using the only tools I have at my disposal to express my thoughts on these matters. If I could have thought of any other option than the one I've presented here, I would not be writing as I have. But I couldn't, and I am also a citizen. All roads seem to lead to the same destination:

Either we keep the President-elect from taking power by any means necessary, or we put the entire nation with all of its promises, fulfilled and unfulfilled, in serious jeopardy . I had hoped someone else might propose another way to protect and defend our Constitution and all that rests on that foundation. I've not heard anyone present another option, another exit from the difficulties in which we now find ourselves. There isn't much time left to decide what to do and take what measures we must.

It may seem strange that I have sent this letter to you, Madam Vice President, rather than to President Biden. He is, after all, the one in charge, and certainly showed the courage and mettle to do anything necessary to preserve this nation when he put country over party, and stepped aside to let you and a new generation of leaders carry us forward. Now he is confronted with an even weightier decision on whether we can afford to continue to use the playbook of normal procedures, 'bipartisan spirit', rational discourse and high moral ground to deal with the threats we face. Certainly the President has the character and the confidence of We the People to put those values we most cherish aside at this critical moment in our history and do what needs be done to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. But it may also be a bridge too far for him. The steel to do what must be done might be more than his personal health and well-being can manage. If that is the case, our President may again have to put country before everything else, step aside and ask you to take on this unimaginable burden. He has shown he has full confidence in you, and so do we.

I hope you have another answer in mind, I just can't see anything else to offer. It may well fall on your shoulders to take us out of this wilderness of our own making. I have addressed this letter to you as the most likely person who will be asked to take on this burden of unimaginable responsibility. My responsibility, my only intent in this letter, is to say that it is ok with us if you must use extreme measures, including the temporary suspension of the Constitution and the rule of law, or other once unthinkable actions, to fulfill your promise of "Never again,". Absent any other alternatives to preserving our democracy and a future that will protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, I see no choice.

Red slider, citizen and poet
who refuses to remain silent
November 14, 2024