

November 7, 2022

Dear Friends of Hallie Q. Brown,

Unless you have been hiding under a rock or living on a distant planet in a galaxy far, far away, you know that tomorrow is Election Day, a day devoted to citizenship and civic duty where we exercise our right, as Americans, to elect our various officials and representatives. And if you are to believe the ads, it is the MOST IMPORTANT ELECTION OF ALL TIME!!!!

That's four exclamation points, so you know this is serious. And while much of what is said in campaign ads is hyperbole, it doesn't mean this isn't true.

Now, as a nonprofit organization, we must remain nonpartisan, we cannot support a specific political party or candidate. What we can do is advocate on behalf of issues, values and platforms when they are centered around the common good, and the needs of our society. Admittedly, it can be difficult to see that nonpartisan expression when any one particular group is so in opposition to the basic needs and rights of people, but I will leave that to you, the reader, to judge.

What I can say is that in the last six years, I have seen more energy put into defending the undefendable and excusing the inexcusable than empowering the unempowered and representing the underrepresented.

That's not right.

Now, I am not so naive as to believe that politics is simple or that a group of wealthy white men in a room writing "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal" while owning people, and marginalizing women were paragons of virtue and truth; but they did have the right core ideas, they did believe in representative government, separation of church and state, individual liberty and so forth. They just hadn't taken things far enough to include everyone.

Yet today, we have fallen behind those first Founding Fathers because instead of just leaving groups out as they did, we have active efforts to exclude those who are the most marginalized in our society by those who are supposed to be leading our country; and people on both sides of the aisle voting from a place of fear, not choice.

Fear of losing "their country."

Fear of election fraud.

Fear of crime.

Fear of losing their rights.  
Fear of Black and brown people...

Now fear, in and of itself, is not a bad thing, it can engender caution when necessary and your flight or fight response when needed. But it's what you do with that fear that makes a difference; how you reflect on it or harness it, or in the worst case scenario, how you manipulate it.

And that's what many of our elected officials have been doing of late, manipulating it because of their greatest fear: fear of losing power.

That, in and of itself, is the greatest failure of democracy on either side of the aisle: when the desire, or worse still, the need to retain power overrides the necessity to wield power responsibly and appropriately.

That is where we are today.

And when that happens, people get tired, they get disillusioned, they get lost. So lost they forget what it is they stand for, what they believe in, what's right.

They forget what it means to vote.

A vote is the singular most powerful tool afforded to every citizen in this country. It holds the power to change laws, elected officials and society as a whole. It has power in both numbers and on the individual level. But with this great power, comes great responsibility.

As we have been entrusted with this power, we are charged to use it responsibly; to not vote out of fear, but out of intention and belief. Democracy isn't about running AWAY from something, it's about running TO something: a better world.

That is why so many people fought for the right to vote, why women were willing to sacrifice so much for the Suffrage movement, why it was a center point of the Civil Rights movement, why some people even died in the name of it. Democracy isn't easy, it's hard. It's supposed to be hard; that's what makes it great. If it was easy, every country would do it.

But more than that, democracy is advanced citizenship, it is about working toward the common good, empowering everyone, and being able to agree to disagree. It is about making room for someone with beliefs so opposite of yours that you can acknowledge them, even if you don't accept or agree with them without having to resort to violence.

The people who attempted the insurrection on January 6th forgot that part.

They forgot that democracy isn't Burger King, it's not about having it "your way," but rather it's about being fair, it's about the needs of the many outweighing the needs of the few...or the one. It's about the power of your voice to exercise your voice.

So when you get up in the morning tomorrow and you're considering whether to "waste your time going to vote," I want you to remember what you're fighting for, what hangs in the balance, and why your voice is crucial. Until ALL of our elected officials do the job they are entrusted to do, it is up to you, the citizenry, to ensure there are enough of the right people in office and at the decision-making levels to ensure that a misguided mob or a narcissistic politician don't destroy our country.

The power rests in your hands, Minnesota. Tomorrow, go out and use it to make a difference.

So that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from this earth."

Respectfully,

Jonathan Palmer  
Executive Director