



An Open letter to the President to...Make America Honorable Again

Dear Mr. President:

The executive order banning persons from seven Muslim dominant countries not only violates a 1965 anti-discrimination law but violates their

rights to Due Process and Equal Protection guaranteed by the United States Constitution, a matter to be fully litigated in the Federal courts. If this ban is enacted on the basis of religious discrimination even though you gave preference to Syrian Christians, it may be a prologue to you imposing the same limitations on the Faith Communities in this nation on impulse. I am categorically for inclusion in the “salad bowl” of pluralistic America which is no longer a “melting pot.” Any form of ignorance, discrimination and prejudice are the blood supply of racism. Dissent makes democracy necessary in any democratic republic.

Please pardon the format of this open letter to you as you experience your first ten (10) days in office. I am bound by conscience not to congratulate you on your ascendancy to the White House since most Americans did not vote for you. Your presidency is the consequence of a broken system that is badly in need of repair because it does not fairly represent the voice of the people in a republic with a democratic ideal. Let’s get passed the banter to my real concern. I am writing as a preacher of the Gospel, a trained theologian-ethicist and leader within the largest Holiness-Pentecostal denomination in the nation. I spent close to two decades as a teacher of ethics with a focus on Faith and Politics for nearly two decades at several prominent seminaries. I studied at Morehouse College, Crozer Theological Seminary with a Ph. D (1979) from Emory University Candler Graduate School of Theology in ethics and society

In the academies I was taught that wisdom is the use of good judgment combined with the ability to raise the right questions, which derives from the Socratic approach to gaining knowledge. It appears that you have done the opposite throughout your campaign and into the presidency by providing the solution before the question. Your promise to “*Make America Great Again*” is based on a false premise. As a history major at Morehouse College I went back to make sure that the historical narrative was correct and tried to find a timeline to coincide with your theme.

Did you mean that for the last eight years of the Obama presidency, America lost its greatness? Are you a victim of a romanticized view of history that erroneously informed us that Columbus discovered a land inhabited by Native Americans who were eventually decimated by war and disease? Was America great when at the behest of the Portuguese who initiated the transatlantic slave trade via the trans-Saharan network over 9 million Africans were forcefully transported to the Americas between 1505 and 1870 as greed was matched with righteousness? Was America great during its infancy when slaves in cruel chains disembarked at Jamestown, Virginia without knowing the 450 years of bondage that awaited them? Did the World Wars make us great combined with multiple unfinished wars and massive loss of human life? Did America become great during the Civil Rights struggle with the loss of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. et.al whose blood stained sidewalks and flowed in rivers and as racism appear to be on steroids at the beginning of your presidency. I redundantly ask when was America great?

Did any of your aides tell you that the “Make America Great Again” hash tag may be close to a false arrogance grounded in a pseudo-nationalism in a global world where what happens in the far reaches of another continent can have serious implications for what we are about in this land. The “Great Again” hash tag is from the handbooks of fallen regimes that resemble a Banana Republic. Such an ideology diminishes other nations and people groups (including Muslims) who can bring value to the global roundtable and hopefully make the world honorable again.

As a people we are too informed to live by “*alternative facts*” (the code word for lies created and manufactured on impulse). It appeared that something was amiss when we noticed that before Air Force One could lift off you began moving at a frenzied pace signing executive orders. The ancient sage of wisdom admonished us in **Proverbs 29: 12** “*If a ruler listens to lies [KJV] false suggestions [MLV] all his officials will be wicked...will have wicked aides on his staff.*” Informed political theorists tell us that the president as the nation’s chief executive must govern more through skilled political leadership rather than through the assertion of constitutional prerogatives and directives spewed on impulse like a robot. The attempt to dismantle Obamacare for Trump-care at the whisk of a pen may prove to be more complicated than Congress can envision because of the harm that may come to millions and especially the poor. **Proverbs 29: 14-[MLV]** “*A Ruler who is fair to the poor shall have a long reign.*”

Reinhold Niebuhr, a native American neo-orthodox theologian, advisor to several presidents, frequently spoke about the pride of nations and the looming crisis in Western civilization. That it is the “*will to power*” that gets humankind

in trouble. He admonished us that “*group pride is merely an aspect of the pride and arrogance of individuals.*” That “*the contest of power, then is the heart of political life.*” [see **Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics**- ed. H.R. Davis & Robert C. Good, Scribners] If nationhood is built upon truth it has a firm foundation. For “*we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*” is from the ancient word of truth. We are bound by Scripture to resist anything that is built on a falsehood unless we are willing to risk ultimate consequences. Anything or any person or nation whose ideology is built on a lie will in due time receive a funeral notice from the Almighty God and it is a matter of time. I am obligated to engage in prophetic protest.

Mr. President I want to challenge you with three things I deem significant:

- 1. Pray for discernment.** – Discernment of truth above falsehood is crucial for survival. Jesus Christ informs us in ancient Scripture that John 8:32 [KJV] “*And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*” In the long run you cannot defeat the truth because of its resilience and ability to keep on accomplishing its mission of liberating those who desire to walk in it. The poet William Cullen Bryant poignantly stated; “*Truth crushed to earth shall rise again, the eternal years of God are hers; But error, wounded, writhes in pain, and dies among his worshipers.*” Initially I was troubled like many others over the outcome of the 2016 presidential elections. Early one morning I had a spiritual epiphany that assured me that God has something to do with the rise and demise of leaders. If this election was stolen through hacking and voter suppression and all the clever ways evil people may concoct to promote their agenda, truth will ultimately prevail. The truth “*is irritating*” but it is also “*liberating.*”
- 2. Resist institutionalized and structural evil in any form.** Bigotry like cancer must be defeated in our time. -We must resist anyone who has the makings of a tyrant and proceeds like a dictator. I am not your nemesis Mr. Trump but I am with many others prepared to oppose policies that are oppressive and dehumanizing that are ensconced within the body politic of this nation. The Women’s March on Washington that generated a global response that says to politicians that there will not be business as usual within the political establishment if the rights of women are violated and they are treated like objects and things. The broken criminal justice system must be repaired hopefully in our time lest “*justice cries in the streets.*” New paradigms in community relations must be forged with law enforcement officers so that people will once again trust the very agencies sworn to protect and serve. We must convey values that embrace honesty, courage and truth to our young so that

they will not become victimized by the troubling falsehoods they easily become addicted to on the mass media. They must be taught that respect for women is a prerequisite for self-respect.

3. Build bridges rather than walls. - The late President of my Alma Mater Morehouse College, Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays once stated that *“when we build walls to keep others out, the very walls that we build to keep others out will become prison bars to our own souls.”* These poignant words were uttered during very dark days when we were struggling against the harsh and stubborn reality of an unyielding segregated America. Within our hearts we also knew intuitively that bridges are connectors and that walls are barriers. During a recent visit to Israel we saw the devastating effects of a wall at the East Bank designed to keep Palestinians alienated and circumscribed to a particular area. We took pictures of Palestinians homes bulldozed with two (2) hour notice to vacate the property in order to build more settlements. We saw the despair on the faces of Palestinian children made captives in their own land by being labeled terrorists. We spent the night with Palestinians in the small village town of Aboud, listened to their stories, worshipped, broke bread and prayed for their future. Based on the perception of power those of us who had hoped for much more appear to be losing the cultural battle by the day because we are up against a propaganda machine unlike anything we have ever witnessed in our life time. By attrition we may lose a particular battle but we have the assurance that we will win the war. The Lamb will always overcome the lion in history.

Mr. President, I honestly believe that my love for this nation is equal. Because of the wisdom of the years I have filtered my commentary through critical loyalty. My critique is based on my love for the land of my native birth while West Africa is my continental reference. I have earned the right to be wrong occasionally. The proposed Wall in Mexico and the ban on Muslims will never keep people out because of the freedom and ingenuity of the human spirit infused with the biblical hope grounded in the fact of **Proverbs 21:1** [WEB] *“the King’s heart is in God’s hand like the watercourses...He turns it wherever He desires.”* **Let’s propose a partnership that together we can make America honorable ...Again.**

You are encouraged to follow me on The Agora web/blog at www.theagora.net (look for marketplace of ideas where truth is spoken to power and never compromised).

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