An open letter to those who fear monger:

Hey folks, how’s it going?

I’ll be the first one to say this: not everybody who voted for Trump is a racist. That is a broad assumption about a population that gets very little honest press. When I mean honest press, that refers to the average Trump voter—not Neo-Nazi’s, not the wealthy exploiting a very egotistical man and certainly not politically inept politicians.

Because that’s what will define this presidency: political ineptitude. Not just from Trump or his motley crew of circus performers, but rather those who took advantage of the situation; seeing a man who has no political skill take one of the most powerful offices in the world.

I don’t think I’ve kept my feelings very hidden on the situation. To me, this country is our rights and our freedoms. Adding “moralistic” value anything can be a bit of a stick of dynamite in the pond—thinly veiling a healthcare bill that eliminates coverage of 20 million lower- and middle-class Americans while enriching the already wealthy is about as underhanded as politics can get.

I’m reminded of what Jon Stewart said post-election on *CBS This Morning* with Charlie Rose:

“…there are guys in my neighborhood that I love, that I respect, that I think have incredible qualities, who are not afraid of Mexicans, and not afraid of Muslims, and not afraid of blacks. They’re afraid of their insurance premiums. In the liberal community, you hate this idea of creating people as a monolith. Don’t look at Muslims as a monolith. They are the individuals and it would be ignorance. But everybody who voted for Trump is a monolith, is a racist. That hypocrisy is also real in our country.”

This is how we become divided. It’s not through division of high moral rhetoric or “an act of mercy”—as described by Speaker of the House Paul Ryan in regards to the proposed healthcare plan—that will separate us, but rather the image we paint of each other.

Policy is key to discuss and fight when it is not in the interest of the common person. Fighting immigration bans that simply do not make sense need to be fought. Universal healthcare needs to be strived towards, as that is one of the hallmark policies of any developed nation. It won’t be any of that which fundamentally creates strife.

It will be our inability to put ourselves in others’ situations that will be the downfall. Simply having a conflicting opinion is not reason enough to hate or shut down one’s voice. That’s the thing about free speech: it is a double-edged sword. I see the experiment of democracy truly breaking down when we choose to yell at each other through a webcam, with the desire of being heard without caring to hear.

It’s the lack of mutual respect and a lack of empathy for other viewpoints that serves a devastating blow. Sure, there are unalienable rights we must defend in the 21st century, but simply ignoring the opposing side of an issue is not only ignorant, but irresponsible. Why simply drown out a contentious opinion while the holders of that opinion gain support and resentment?

This is all theoretical thought, but one of the biggest issues of 21st century is humanizing people despite technology’s often dehumanizing qualities. Better yet, taking time to experience an issue rather than judge via a keyboard—as in seeing a story on Facebook and getting offended right away, rather than investigating multiple viewpoints, truly caring to understand human rationale.

The saddest thing is that many politicians and news outlets recognize this political strife. Rather than coming through with sensible rhetoric, they will just hop on the tornado while their contingency seemingly tears itself apart. But, you have to remember:

“There is nothing to fear but fear itself.”

Franklin Roosevelt said this nearly 80 years ago in the face of political, economic and social turmoil. Many things have changed since then an unrelenting optimism is a defining trait of our culture. We may still be getting used to tolerance, but we are slowly but surely getting better. Don’t let the instigators of fear and hate change that.

Best wishes,

Brayden.