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What Republicans for Trump Are Telling Me

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Even though I left the GOP 20 years ago — let's just say I learned Republicans are less committed to individual liberty than they claim to be — I have continued to work for or with Republicans on health care reform. Now that some of the friends I have made along the way are endorsing Donald Trump, I'm learning even more.

For one thing, my Republican friends are telling me they don't much value the idea of treating everyone with equal dignity. Trump's divisive and degrading behavior toward women, Muslims, Mexicans, the handicapped, and others should disqualify someone from power. How hard is it to disavow the Klan?

My Trumpkin friends are also telling me they don't much care for free speech. Trump makes no secret of his desire to use the power of presidency to silence his critics, a power that his Democratic successors would also wield. (Assuming he allows successors.)

Yes, Hillary Clinton would restrict speech by making it harder for her opponents to organize to engage in politics. But Trump wants to change libel laws in a way that would expose everyone — even his supporters — to lawsuits for criticizing him or anyone else.

These Republicans are telling me they don't much care about civility or American lives. Trump relishes and encourages people to use violence against his critics. His enthusiasm for torture and for murdering women and children would lead our enemies to respond in turn.

The man advocated murdering women and children. Some of my Republican friends are telling me they can vote for a man like that.

They are also signaling they will vote for someone who doesn't have much regard for American soldiers. Trump thinks U.S. soldiers would carry out his orders to torture and murder. (No, he hasn't repudiated those claims.)

I had no idea some Republicans care so little about keeping their homes. Trump enthusiastically supports allowing the government to take people's houses to give the land to private developers. Like Donald Trump.

I knew that Republicans didn't care a whole lot about health care reform. But I'm surprised they're willing to support someone who says "I like the mandate" that ObamaCare imposed, that socialized medicine works just swell, that he wants government to "take care of everybody," and that he would keep other central provisions of ObamaCare.

Good ol' partisanship would stop Hillary Clinton from expanding ObamaCare even a little. A faux opponent like Trump could co-opt congressional Republicans to expand it a lot.

These erstwhile conservatives are telling me they don't care about the unborn nearly as much as they pretend they do. Trump was pro-choice until about five minutes ago. Pro-lifers may be many things, but since when are they *this* gullible?

And they can't claim they doing it for the judges, either. Some swooned when Trump released a list of judges he *might* use to *guide* his nomination decisions. They seem to forget this is a man who prizes deals, and judicial nominations may be the biggest bargaining chip he's got.

Give the man his due. Trump is so good at deals, his judges list bought the allegiance of lots of Republicans without committing Trump to anything.

The Trumpkins are also telling me they don't know what a fascist looks like, or if they do, they don't fear fascism as much as I do. I don't know if Trump will bring fascism to the United States. I do know he is what a fascist looks like at this stage of the process.

Most stunning is how many conservatives don't even appear to care about conservative principles or policy. This man runs as fast as he can from any policy discussion. Oh, but he's a conservative. Trust him.

Or even the Republican party. Trump is dismantling the coalition that every Republican president since Ronald Reagan rode to the White House. The GOP would be in a better place after four years of motivated resistance to Hillary Clinton (the press would be fairly critical of her administration) than it would 20 years after Trump turned the GOP into a nativist, nationalist party — particularly if a third-party candidate increases turnout among conservatives who will vote Republican in congressional races.

I get why Republicans are telling themselves they can steer a man who believes himself to be beinfallible. It is painful to think your cause is about to suffer a huge setback, and there's nothing you can do about it. But the die is cast. You know conservatives have lost — badly — when Hillary Clinton is actually the more conservative candidate in the race. Yet Trumpkins are rolling the dice on the devil they don't know, in the hope that he will sprout a halo.

Two more things Republicans recently taught me.

First, some Republican officeholders — the #NeverTrump crowd — care more about freedom and equal dignity for all than they care about holding onto power. I find that inspiring.

Second, in my experience, conservatives who work in think tanks or journalism are more likely to disavow Trump than equally conservative congressional staffers or political operatives. This suggests to me many staffers and operatives are afraid to break with or embarrass their weak-

kneed bosses, clients, or family members who have already endorsed Trump. In other words, some conservative politicians have the courage of their convictions, and some staffers don't.

Here's hoping Trump will only teach me happy lessons from this point.

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