

I woke up a patriot...but at day's end I became a threat to the “very soul of this country”?!



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By Raphael Benaroya

I woke up on September 1, 2022, as an American patriot and an advocate of democracy, with deep respect for the U.S. Constitution and the rule of law. I was an advocate for liberty, freedom, and human rights. I was a productive contributor to economic growth in America, paying my fair share of taxes on my hard-earned income. I had spent time, toil, and treasure over many years to support fellow Americans and our national security.

But by nightfall, the President of the United States, in a speech delivered in Philadelphia, labeled me as an enemy.

My belief in democracy was questioned. I was told that I do “not respect the Constitution” and that I “fan the flames of political violence.” I was identified as a “threat to our personal rights, to the pursuit of justice, to the rule of law, to the very soul of this country.”

The President went on to say that I lack “good manners,” that I “embrace anger,” and that I see only “carnage and darkness and despair.” To top it off, my President called me a conspiracy theorist and a semi-fascist.

Really, Mr. President? Me?

Let me tell you about myself, sir. I am a 75-year-old grandfather of Spanish heritage. I entered this country legally with \$300 in my pocket. To attend college, I had to learn English and pay foreign student tuition, which at the time was more than double what a resident paid. I did not receive any family support, government handouts, or student loans. I afforded my education by working at night and during school breaks.

I earned an engineering degree with distinction, followed by a graduate degree in business. I started my career as a trainee in a large corporation and within a few years rose to lead multinational enterprises.

Then, at great personal financial risk, I went out on my own to acquire companies. I led a highly leveraged turnaround that soon achieved a public stock market listing and employed thousands of people.

I, like so many others, lived the American dream. I believed in America as a land of opportunity—that with dedication, hard work, sacrifice, a little luck, and more hard work, anything is possible. I believed in personal initiative, never expecting handouts or loan forgiveness from the government. I always believed that America is strong, fair, just, secure, and wise. I loved our unwavering democracy—a beacon for the entire world. I was deeply grateful for America’s values. I believed in the very soul of America.

Still, I was castigated by the President of United States, just for my political affiliation (which I share with roughly half of the U.S. voting population).

So here, then, just for the record, is my “extremist” agenda. Here is what I wish for America:

- A stronger economy, with lower inflation and rapid economic growth.
- Energy independence.
- Law and order applied equitably and equally, in line with our Constitution, and law enforcement that is not weaponized against political opponents.
- Freedom for everyone to speak their minds, without what they think and say being dictated, and without fear of retribution for expressing an opinion.
- Schools that educate, not indoctrinate, our children.
- Military superiority that inspires respect or strikes fear in our adversaries.
- Border security.
- Foreign policy that earns the trust of our allies.
- Benevolence and care for the less fortunate.
- Trust in and respect for all our branches of government.
- Government that is smaller and less intrusive.

- A government that does not leave Americans behind in terrorist hands in foreign lands, and does not allow rogue regimes to develop nuclear weapons aimed at us and our allies.
- Climate science that is less political, and climate policy that is more scientific.

I was offended by your words, Mr. President. But when I woke up the morning after your speech—and in spite of it—I was still a patriot. I love our republic. I continue to be an optimist who sees bright days ahead for our country: one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all. God bless America.

Mr. Benaroya is an American businessman and philanthropist who has been active in national security matters for over 30 years.