

Stanley McChrystal: Why Kamala Harris Has Won Me Over

By Stanley McChrystal *The New York Times* 26 September 2024

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Some Deeply Consequential Decisions Are Starkly Simple. That Is How I View Our Upcoming Presidential Election. And That Is Why I Have Already *Cast My Ballot For* **CHARACTER** — *And Voted For Vice President Kamala Harris.*

As A Citizen, Veteran And Voter, I Was Not Comfortable With Many Of The Policy Recommendations That Democrats Offered At Their Convention In Chicago Or Those Republicans Articulated In Milwaukee. My Views Tend Toward The Center Of The Political Spectrum. And Although I Have Opinions On High-Profile Issues, Like Abortion, Gun Safety And Immigration, That's Not Why I Made My Decision.

Political Narratives And Policies Matter, But They Didn't Govern My Choice. I Find It Easy To Be Attracted To, Or Repelled By, Proposals On Taxes, Education And Countless Other Issues. But I Believe That Events And Geopolitical And Economic Forces Will, Like Strong Tides, Move Policymakers Where They Ultimately Must Go. In Practice, Few Administrations Travel The Course They Campaigned On. Circumstances Change. Our President, Therefore, Must Be More Than A Policymaker Or A Malleable Reflection Of The Public's Passions. She Or He Must Lead — **AND THAT TAKES CHARACTER.**

CHARACTER IS THE ULTIMATE MEASURE OF LEADERSHIP FOR THOSE WHO SEEK THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN OUR LAND. The American Revolutionary Thomas Paine Is Said To Have Written, "Reputation Is What Men And Women Think Of Us; *Character* Is What God And Angels Know Of Us. Regardless Of What A Person Says, *Character Is Ultimately Laid Bare In His Or Her Actions.* So I Pay Close Attention

To What A Leader *Does*.

History Has Shown Us That The Office Of The Presidency Unfailingly Reveals The Occupant's **Character**. Moments Of Disappointment And Crises — Like Jimmy Carter's Acceptance Of Responsibility For The Failed 1980 Iran Hostage Rescue Mission, John F Kennedy's Navigation Of The Terrifying 13-Day Confrontation Over Soviet Missiles In Cuba And Abraham Lincoln's Courageous Issuance Of The Emancipation Proclamation — Said Little About Policy **But Much About Character**.

And We've Seen Both Sides Of The Coin: Failures Of Character, Such As Those Of Richard Nixon And His Vice President, Spiro Agnew, Dishonor And Potentially Threaten Our Republic. **Character** Will Dictate Whether We Stand By Our NATO Allies And Against Vladimir Putin's Continued Aggression. **Character** Will Dictate Whether We Have A Commander In Chief Who Honors And Respects The Men And Women Who Serve In Uniform.

Fortunately, Neither Candidate In This Pivotal Election Is Unknown To Us. We've Had Years To Watch Both Closely.

Each Of Us Must Seriously Contemplate Our Choice And Apply The Values We Hope To Find In Our President, Our Nation And Ourselves. Uncritically Accepting The Thinking Of Others Or Being Swayed By The Roar Of Social Media Crowds Is a Mistake. To Turn A Blind Eye Toward Or Make Excuses For **Weak Character** From Someone We Propose To Confer Awesome Power And Responsibility On Is To *Abrogate Our Role As Citizens*. **We Will Get — And Deserve — What We Elect.**

I've Thought Deeply About My Choice And Considered What I've Seen And Heard And What I Owe My Three Granddaughters. I've Concluded That It Isn't Political Slogans Or Cultural Tribalism; It Is The Best President My Vote Might Help Select. **SO I HAVE CAST MY VOTE FOR CHARACTER, And That VOTE IS FOR VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS.**

MS HARRIS HAS THE STRENGTH, THE TEMPERAMENT AND, IMPORTANTLY, THE VALUES TO
SERVE AS COMMANDER IN CHIEF. When She Sits Down With World Leaders Like President
Volodymyr Zelensky Of Ukraine, Representing The United States On The Global Stage, *I Have No Doubt*
That She Is Working In Our National Interest, NOT HER OWN.

I Would Urge Others To Vote As I Have. But Whatever Decision You Make, Let It Be *Thoughtfully*
Considered, Carefully Reached And Yours Alone.

WE'LL ALL HAVE TO LIVE WITH IT.

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