



Minnesota Character Council

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Greetings,

America at its best has been a quilt of many colors, rich in the great diversity that has made us vibrant, prosperous and a beacon of hope to our friends around the world.

The weave of that quilt is unraveling; we are pulling ourselves apart. The signs of this unraveling are all around us. They take the form of toxic postings on social media, uncivil, even hateful, discourse from political leaders, physical brutality and the expression of prejudice taken to new levels. Too many of us have acted angry and fearful, enclosed within one camp or another, ready to believe the worst of those we consider our adversaries.

If the shredding of the American quilt continues, our Democracy, and even our Nation, will self-destruct. It has happened before to other nations.

There is a solution. We are not fated to follow the current path. The solution is in each of us.

What has made America a shining beacon of hope has been “we the people.” But that ideal depends on the vision and courage of each person who is a part of “The People.” That high character of individuals has been the finest aspect of the American experiment in ordered liberty. For that reason, there needs to be a rededication to, and a celebration of, the idea of character as the path forward.

Our finest values need to be at the heart of our recovery. Every sector and every person can help. All religious faiths, for example, must help provide the needed rededication to character. Most recently, Pope Francis has shined a light on the direction we need to take.

When the country was drifting into civil war, Abraham Lincoln said: “If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it.”

When that war had been won, the Union preserved and the slaves freed, Lincoln rightly advised: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, ... to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

To really know the past and clearly see into the future takes the right sort of character. To have malice towards none and give charity to all takes exemplary character. To be firm when we are in the right and to finish our work well and proudly takes good character.

Today Americans are suffering from a character deficit.

Once we acknowledge our shortcoming we can grow in personal resilience and become better people.

As a house divided, we approach the 2020 elections just as we did the elections of 1860. As was said long ago: They that “troubleth their own house” shall inherit the wind and “where there is no vision the people perish.”

Our way forward is not to beseech our elites to grow up, show moral courage, and actually lead, rather it is for us “to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us.”

The Minnesota Character Council came together to encourage all of us to advocate for high character in our schools and communities that our citizens may never fall short in their resolve to be wise and just and to care for one another.

We believe that good character – in citizens, entrepreneurs, educators, politicians, public officials, police:

- a worthy personal achievement. A person of good character is trustworthy, responsible, and highly valued.
- the result of common-sense social and emotional development and consists of: healthy self-awareness; mature self-management; insightful social awareness; confidence to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with others; responsible decision making.
- drives us down the road to success and happiness when bad character leads us towards difficulty and sadness. Good character gives us a strong spirit and impressive confidence, the ability to take the worst of life in stride.

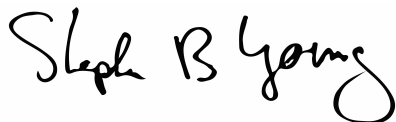
We ask that you join hands and hearts with us to promote excellence in our persons and dedication in our citizenship.

We will be publishing a newsletter with updates and suggestions for promoting the goodness of character among our children and with our peers. We also stand ready to support our schools with resources for the formation of good character in our students.

Please consider seriously giving this effort some of your time, talents and treasure.

As George Washington with humility requested: “Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest may repair.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steph B Young". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Stephen B. Young, Chair
Minnesota Character Council