

ASK UNCLE ED

Dear Uncle Ed,

I feel very, very badly for the people who are very scared for their way of life. From what I'm understanding, [Trump is] only really wanting illegal immigrants that have committed crimes to be deported, which I agree with. I feel bad for the lesbian and gay and transsexual community that fear for their way of life. From what I understand, he says he's not going to mess with that.

Somebody called me a racist because I did vote for Trump. Hold on, you don't know me. Doesn't that make you a racist by calling me a racist when you don't know me? I'm looking for a brighter future for me and my children, and honestly I felt l like our country was kind of at risk if we did elect Hillary.**

Signed, K.H. in AL

Dear K.H.

Uncle Ed is glad to see you acknowledge that lots of people are likely to be harmed by the election of Trump. As to immigrants, you are right to be careful in stating Trump's position, because he has several. As to his position on the LGBT community, again, you may be quite right. Who knows?

But you seem to think the only issue is what Trump thinks. That's just not true. Trump was elected as a Republican, and now the federal government is controlled by Republicans. As a group, they have repeatedly promised to get rid of immigrants, as did Trump mostly, and have relentlessly opposed decent treatment of immigrants who live here and their children born here or brought here. They support laws and

rules treating the LGBT community as second class citizens.

You didn't mention the risks facing African-Americans, who are already mistreated by the police, and treated unequally in education, safety and hiring. Trump calls himself the "law and order" candidate, which is Republican-speak for even more aggressive policing and mistreatment of Black communities.

You are offended that someone called you a racist. Uncle Ed is glad you don't want to be thought of as a racist. But, here's the thing. Your vote empowered known racists like Steven Bannon, Trump's campaign manager and now a policy adviser in the White House. The Republican party will do its best to hurt immigrants, the LGBT community, and people whose religion or lack of religion they don't approve, not to mention Blacks and Latinos.

Uncle Ed doesn't know what's in your heart. Uncle Ed doesn't care. Uncle Ed cares about how you act. If you vote for a racist, if your vote empowers racists, then there is no functional difference between you and the most rabid KKK member in terms of the political outcomes for the outgroups. You are operationally a racist.

The most that can be said is that you are willing to accept racism if it makes your life better. That's how you defend your vote. You claim just you want a brighter future for yourself and your children. As you put it: "...our country was kind of at risk if we did elect Hillary." Again, what makes you different from self-acknowledged racists?

What about all the other minorities who will be harmed directly by installing racists in the White House and racism in Congress? You are willing to sacrifice all of them and their children. You are willing to deny them their claims to equal dignity and equal rights in whole or in part.

Equal dignity and equal rights are a crucial part of what it means to be an American. The

Declaration of Independence says that all of us are entitled to equal dignity. The 14th Amendment to the Constitution says that all of us have equal rights under law. Those ideas, however imperfectly we have lived up to it, are the heart of our democracy.

Now, thanks in part to you, we are governed by a party that flatly doesn't believe in that kind of equality. They are perfectly willing to ignore some or all the rights and interests of vast numbers of Americans. the LGBT community, women, Muslims, and who knows, maybe even white male coastal elites like Uncle Ed. They don't think we are real Americans. They expect those despised groups to follow all their laws, to respect their politicians, and to pay taxes, but they do not intend to treat us equally in rights or dignity.

You violated a core American principle. It was thoughtless of you to act this way. Uncle Ed wishes you hadn't. Calling you a racist seems like a mild reproof when you consider the likely consequences for millions of your fellow citizens. Uncle Ed hopes you continue to think about people other than yourself in the future, and refuse to vote for any politician whose first principle is to deny any of us our rights as Americans to equal dignity, and to be treated equally by our government.

* This is perhaps the first of an occasional series. I've been trying to figure out how to respond directly to the stated reasons people give to explain their vote for Trump. It's mostly a way for me to justify my own position. I've been debating whether to post this, but today I saw the movie *HIdden Figures*, which helped me make up my mind.

Lefties, liberals, coastal elites, all of us are constantly told we need to understand and sympathize with the concerns of Trump voters. Trump voters are never told they must work to understand and sympathize with people who voted for the Democrat. In fact, Trump voters are told

that liberals are their enemies, that we hate them and want to hurt them. Of course, they don't read my posts, and I know I won't ever persuade anyone that they made a terrible mistake. But I do wish they were forced to think about why those they believe are The Other might be so angry.

** This is quoted from this New York Times article.