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AN OPEN LETTER TO JOE BIDEN

 Michael Moore · 3 days ago · 9 min read

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Dear President-Elect Biden:

First of all, congratulations! YOU did it. WE did it! You stopped the madness. A grateful nation — and myself — are in a state of joy, hope and relief. Thank you for that! We are all eager to join with you to repair the damage done to our country — and to eliminate that about our society and our politics which gave us Donald Trump in the first place.

Mr. President-Elect, I first met you at the Democratic National Convention in Boston in 2004. It was clear to me from our talk that day that you were not the politician I remembered from the 1990s. On that day in Boston, we were by then over a year into the Iraq War, a war you voted for. My “Fahrenheit 9/11” had just come out and you wanted to let me know that you were aware of the folly you had been sucked into. It seemed to me that you were doing a lot of soul searching and you wanted to hear my thoughts. To be honest, I was distracted by how perfect your teeth were, and I wondered, could you really be from the working class? By the end of our talk I was convinced there was something that was quite real and very good about you, though perhaps somewhat buried inside. Would it ever come out so the public could see it? As I reflect today on it — and you — I am sincerely hoping that you will indeed govern as a president who’s from the working class. You — one of us — in the White House. That’s how it should feel. Your actions, if bold, and brave, will make that true.

You are also our second Catholic president. I believe you are a person of faith. You and I were taught the same lessons in Catholic school: to love our neighbor, even our enemy; to create a world where everyone regardless of status or station has a seat at the table, and everyone gets a slice of the pie; a world where “the rich man will have a harder time getting into heaven than a camel will have getting through the eye of the needle.” We were taught that we will be judged by how we treat the least amongst us. Do I have that right? Are these not the moral, foundational principles of the coming Biden presidency?

I was so moved by your victory speech Saturday night when you told the immigrants and the children of immigrants that the Dreamers no longer had to live in fear. That Muslims were once again welcomed into our country. That the world could breathe a sigh of relief because we were going to let the planet Earth itself breathe and have some relief. And you told the teachers of America that starting January 20th, “one of your own will be living in the White House.” That just felt instantly good.

So if I may, I’d like to suggest a few things that might make your presidency one of the best this country has ever had. You and I may have our political differences (you like Amtrak trains, I’d like to ride a bullet train from New York to LA in 10 hours! 🤗), but I know that you and I — and tens of millions of others — all want and believe in the same basic things:

- Health Care is a human right and every American must be covered;
- Everyone must be paid a living wage and all of us must work to eliminate poverty and rebuild our broken middle class;
- The massive and growing gulf between the ultra rich and everyone else must be narrowed — and the wealthy must go back to paying the taxes they should pay;
- Women must be paid the same as men, and no man or government has the right to tell them what they can do or not do with their bodies.

So here’s my two cents:

1. You are right to make containing Covid-19 Job #1. Had Trump won, I’m guessing up to a million people in the next year or so would have died from him ignoring this virus. Yesterday you named your Covid task force of doctors and scientists and you are putting them to work. We don’t have a second to lose. Thank you for this.

2. As soon as you can, please provide much more unemployment relief for the jobless, stimulus checks for all, help for small businesses, and the creation of jobs we desperately need.

3. Millions have lost their health insurance because our system ties one’s health coverage to their employer. What happens when the employer, like now, is suddenly gone, or the boss wakes up one morning and decides these employees’ health benefits are too costly and must be cut? BOOM! Millions of families suddenly have no health insurance. This is nuts. You MUST create a health system like every other industrial democracy — one backed by the government, not by the whims of the boss where you work or the pandemic that has shut him or her down. This is just plain common sense.

4. I see various people trying to take credit for your victory — and using their personal agendas to push you away from the progressive Left and toward the cowardly center which believes that the best way to beat Republicans is to just be a more easily-digestible version of Republicans. They think because Trump got 70 million votes the Democrats should reject Black Lives Matter, AOC, and anything that vaguely sounds like socialism — at a time when the majority of our citizens under the age of 35, according to most polls, prefer the idea of democratic socialism over the greed of modern-day capitalism. Why risk losing them? We need to listen to and understand why they feel this way. They’ve been saddled with crushing student debt and we’ve handed them a planet in the middle of its 6th extinction event as their future. You and Barack introduced them to the benefits of democratic socialism by letting them stay on their parents health insurance until they’re 26! The result: They just set a record by coming out and voting for you in the largest youth numbers ever.

But you know all this. And you also know how you won these razor-thin victories in the final five states as we nervously watched the final ballots come in from Black Philly, Black Detroit, Black Atlanta, Black Flint. Out west, it was Latinx and Navajo voters who delivered Nevada and Arizona to you. In your speech on Saturday you acknowledged it. And never in our history have I heard a President-elect single out the Black community and thank them “for having my back. And I promise you, I will have your back!” Black and brown and indigenous peoples, plus a landslide of women and young adult voters made this happen. Wow. I absolutely know you’ll keep that promise.

5. Please do not make the same mistake an otherwise well-meaning President Obama made in his first two years. He wanted everyone to get along. He was willing to compromise on anything. Kumbaya. The Republicans had already decided they were going to block EVERYTHING Obama proposed and that’s exactly what they did for eight long years with a discipline and a ruthlessness we should probably envy.

Don’t let this happen to you. Charge in on January 20th like FDR on steroids. You have no choice. People are dying! You need to sign executive orders and cajole, demand and shame Congress into action. And GO BIG! Eliminate the Electoral College through the National Popular Vote Act!

DONE! Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment for women! Just one more state needed! DONE! Send in the Army Corps of Engineers to Flint to replace the poisoned water pipes! DONE!!

And none of the above needs a single vote of the United States Senate! In fact, this past summer, your “Biden-Bernie” unity joint task force identified a whopping 277 policies and decisions of Trump’s that you have the legal authority to immediately reverse by executive order or presidential policy decision: <https://prospect.org/day-one-agenda/277-policies-biden-need-not-ask-permission/2>. Find that big fat black marker of his and do it!

But, yes, we also desperately need those two Georgia Senate seats to get the Biden/Harris years off to a blazing start. So let’s make that happen! All hands on deck between now and January 5th!! We will all do whatever is needed.

Friends of mine on the Left who are more cynical than I am are probably wondering why I’m sending you this letter. Haha! Well, because I saw you kiss the hood of that young grieving man at the Parkland, Florida memorial for the shooting victims of Stoneman Douglas High School.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyMa96yOeI0>

And because I saw you in New Hampshire this year while we were there working for Bernie, and you were doing a campaign stop and there was a restless five-year boy in the front row. His parents were trying to get him to settle down. You stopped and spoke to the boy. “Hey buddy,” you said in a kind but parental way, “if you can hang on and be a good boy for just a little bit, I’ll buy ya an ice cream!” The boy quieted down, you wrapped up and afterward you went over to the boy and his quieted parents and you gave the kid five bucks so his mom and dad could go get him an ice cream cone. And I thought to myself, this is the weirdest thing I’ve ever seen — and then I started to cry because I wanted so much for that piece of America to come back — goofy, kind, and focusing on what’s truly important: a goddamned ice cream cone!

I think that’s why you won. People saw what I saw with you there in New Hampshire and back in Boston on that day 16 years ago — they knew that maybe, just maybe, their lives might just get a bit better — hopefully a LOT better — with you in the White House. Maybe less of them will die from the virus, this preventable horror. Trump, of whom we knew many despicable things and thought we’d already seen how low the bar could possibly go for one human being — but we never considered him under the moniker of mass killer, terrorist or superspreader. Then you, Joe, came along and offered us a respite, a break from the insanity — “Mr. Biden, we’ll be happy if you just give us four years of ‘Not Trump!’”

But I think you can give us much more than that. What could our lives be like in four years or eight years (with a Democratic Senate to boot)? How ‘bout no one ever goes bankrupt again because they got sick? How ‘bout no one is sitting in a prison cell for possessing marijuana or actual drugs? How ‘bout every child gets to go to a great school and every neighborhood has an expanded free library open seven days a week? How ‘bout paid family medical leave so you can take care of your elderly parent and not lose your job? How ‘bout my bullet train! You and we can make all this happen. It’s not rocket science. 30+ other countries already do it.

(<https://www.amazon.com/Where-Invade-Next.../dp/B01EGW9E0U>)

They’re happier. Why not us? Where invaders promised it to them in their second sentence: “the pursuit of Happiness.” They said that’s what America would be — and it’s been a rare day when we’ve actually had a glimpse of it.

Joe, you’re the guy to fulfill the promise. I’ll help. So will my neighbors on the floor where I live. As will the woman who delivers my mail, the workers who stock the shelves of my neighborhood market, the nurse who just wrote me in tears because yesterday she watched her 22nd patient die, alone, no family allowed, from Covid. Not to mention the millions upon millions of Americans who are ready to be foot soldiers in your army of justice, equality and love. We’re all in! We don’t want to go back to the old “normal.” We want a new normal!

We want ice cream.

All my best,

Michael Moore

P.S. You know why I think you can and will do this? You picked Kamala Harris to run with you! Ranked as the most liberal senator in the U.S. Senate. A woman. A Black woman! I saw the first debate, the one where she challenged you and threw shade on your younger self. Most people (including me), if that had happened to us, we probably wouldn’t have gotten over it. You did. I’m guessing your conscience whispered to you, “well, dang, maybe she has a point.” You hold no grudges. You are a forgiving soul. But then you didn’t just forgive her — you put her on the Big Ticket! Who would do that? You did! That’s why my cautious, hopeful bet is on the good hands we’re now in — both! That’s why my hands, Kamala’s hands, and the hands of the mass millions who voted for you and will continue to rise up and fight for this new, better, post-Trump, post-pandemic America.



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