

## Missing the Point – “Loyalty Pledge”? To whom or what exactly?

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Screenshot by the author of the GOP.com official picture of Ronna McDaniel, Chairwoman of the RNC.

It used to be that registration, for the first time, as a Republican or Democrat was a fundamental right of passage. What were your parents? How were you raised by them, politically speaking? Who was running for President and what were the major issues when you were first becoming politically aware? What did your family talk about around the dinner table?

The two party system assured competition for the Presidency and other offices at various levels of government. That was a good thing. Maybe even more importantly, the parties were representative of the capitalist economy that makes our democracy possible. The Democrats represented labor and were the more liberal, people-minded party. The Republicans were the relatively conservative, business-oriented alternative. It all made sense. Unfortunately, one of those two parties has lost its way and, in the process, taken all the fun out of politics.

Regrettably, the Republican Party is no longer the champion of conservative points of view. It is still technically the opposition, but now in the worst sense of the term, without any ideas or programs of its own. Today, its leadership is known mostly for lying to itself and its constituents to stay in power. The party that used to stand for business is now intellectually and ethically bankrupt. Whether you agree or disagree with conservatism, it is, at the very least, an honest and noble pursuit. Regrettably, all the Republican leadership stands for today is the right wingish defense of a predominantly white America that the party clearly feels is slipping away. And they're correct. It is slipping away, but that's a good thing for all of us. It is, after all, how we started as the land of the free a couple of centuries ago.

Talk about missing the point of having a political party. The Republican leadership has no point to make and none that you can believe even if they made one.

For those of you who, like me, have always taken our democracy and the personal freedoms that go with it for granted, the past few years, decades really, have been a bucket of cold water in our collective faces.

For me, it started with the success of state legislatures, more so in Republican states than Democratic, that managed to restructure voting districts so that their party's candidates could more easily defeat those of the other party – often at the expense of minority constituent representation. The party membership may not be racist, but the Party sure acts like it is.

The result of all this gerrymandering was to give one party a degree of power – over the making of law and appointments – that is much greater than their membership could otherwise justify.

It's ironic that these efforts to seize and maintain political power are happening at the same time the country is becoming *more* liberal. It's happening when levels of general acceptance and opportunities, not just for people of color, but for people who are different for whatever reasons, including race, but also gender preferences and national origin.

How's that possible? Well, I think it's the way minds change and how prejudice and the organizations that support it die. As movements dissipate over time, the remaining core becomes increasingly fervent. The hard core committed members of any group are always the last to leave. The fewer who are left, the more dramatic their efforts to maintain their personal status quo.

In a world where things weren't going their way, the Republican right became – and is still becoming – an increasingly fringe element, more interested in surviving, in staying in power, than in doing their jobs. Less and less interested in broad-based

collaborative efforts that respect the majority will of their constituents. More and more focused on doing whatever it takes to avoid the inevitable.

And then a miracle happened, the negative kind, in the form of Donald Trump. As his luck would have it, he tapped into the concerns of a relative minority of workaday citizens and elected officials who believe that the America that looks and thinks like they do is somehow being threatened by those who don't. He became the political leader of this core element and, when other circumstances broke his way, was elected President. He's not the impetus of the movement so much as he is the product of it. He's riding the crest of their wave on its way to crashing on the beach.

Trump doesn't have supporters in the traditional meaning of the concept. He has followers, in the way leaders of cults manifest their authority. So loyal are they that they believe his misrepresentations and outright lies over obvious reality. So committed are they that some of them would attempt a violent, constitutionally illegal overturning of a national election.

Donald Trump is a wannabee dictator. As dumb as he is nuts, he cares only about himself and not even about his followers whom he uses to his personal advantage for moral support and money. Do you think I'm kidding about his wanting to be a dictator? Why do you think he would advocate what amounts to [doing away with the Civil Service](#)? Well, it's because everyone in government would then be hired by him and his cronies and would continue to work for our government only as long as they do what he wants. Doing away with Civil Service replaces loyalty to the Constitution with loyalty to him, personally. Add to that Trump's demonstrated disrespect for legitimate elections and [his intent to direct the Justice Department to go after his political enemies](#). By "enemies," he means anyone who criticizes him and hurts his feelings. So, what does all that tell you about his nature and intentions?

And now, once again, the RNC (Republican National Committee) is demanding that candidates for President sign a loyalty pledge to the effect that they will support the Republican nominee, *no matter who that turns out to be*. If they don't, they won't be allowed to participate in Republican-sponsored primary election debates. Unlike the general election debates between the major party nominees that are sponsored by the non-profit, bipartisan [Commission on Presidential Debates](#), primary election debates are sponsored by the political parties. The RNC's chief supporter of this loyalty pledge is RNC Chairperson and Trump groupie [Ronna McDaniel](#). It's her/his party now, but not for very much longer.

If ever there was a single symbol of everything that's wrong with the Republican Party, this loyalty pledge is it.

Trump and DeSantis use mocking and contentious language to attack each other. All the other candidates, focusing on Trump who has a substantial lead in the polls, are pointing to his indictments and saying other things about the former President that, if

true, would disqualify him. Only in the bizarro world of today's Republican Party would anyone like Donald be running for President, let alone leading the pack.

If you believe that the candidates' characterizations of Donald Trump are accurate and sincerely held, well then, Mr. Trump is not qualified to be President. Period. Put another way, any other honest candidate who is a champion of our Constitution and democracy, regardless of that candidate's party affiliation, is more qualified. Losing candidates for the Republican Party's nomination should support that other candidate because that's what's best for our country. I'll say that again... *"Because that's what's better for our country."*

So Republican Candidate 1 asserts that Candidate 2 cannot, under any circumstances, be President of the United States. Sincerely believes that. Unless Candidate 2 is nominated?! In what alternative universe that that make any sense?

For the candidate who believes that Trump is not qualified to be President to pledge to support him just because he's the party's nominee is tantamount to the Republican Party demanding loyalty to it over and above the Constitution and country. It's not only illogical, it's idiotic. Much worse, it's un-American.

To deny a candidate who sincerely believes, and for good reason, that an opponent is not qualified to be President access to a public forum is prejudicial in the extreme. Not only is the party demanding fealty to itself over Constitution and country, it's suppressing the airing of critical speech without which the entire primary process a joke. Without the integrity of critical speech, what's the point of the debate? Debates are, by definition, about the airing of arguments. To a great extent, the RNC is attempting to pre-determine the content of the debates it sponsors to assure the results of the nominating process. What are these people afraid of? Heaven forbid they should play fair and accidentally nominate someone who not only wins the general election, but strives to make America a better place for all of us to live and work.

This is what the Republican Party has become, at least in so far as the party's leadership is concerned. Any hint, any whiff of sentiment to the effect that that the leadership of the Republican Party cares about our country is nothing more than gross pretense. Like dying stars in the heavens that puff up and out before they implode, the current Republican Party leadership, Trump himself included, has over-played its game and is well on its way to political oblivion.

The only pledge that matters is the oath the President takes when he or she is inaugurated. To *"support and defend the Constitution of the United States... without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion..."*

-Les Cohen

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