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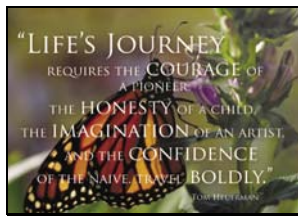
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ANGRY AMERICA

"Anyone can be angry--that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way--this is not easy." Aristotle

Opinion polls and political pundits tell us that we are angry--at the president, at Congress, at Wall Street, at the insurance industry, at the media and at each other. Do we feel a little bit angry at ourselves? After all, we created the mess our nation is in.

I've written for years about the problems of our organizations and institutions. I've quoted Robert Greenleaf (*Servant Leadership*), and his belief that the problems of the world are not the crazy, the immature, and the irresponsible but the good people who have gone to sleep. The American people went to sleep a long time ago. We, my fellow Americans, bear responsibility for America's problems and national decline. Let our anger lead us to awareness and self examination instead of blame, which is a defense against seeing our responsibility for our problems.

I support President Obama. Like many, I've been disappointed in him and upset with him. Smart, hard working, and decent, Obama's a grown-up too. His recent performances before Republicans (House Republican Retreat and the Health Care Summit) were stunning in his intellectual dominance.

As much as he wants to bring people together, he presides in an adversarial system. I want him to fight harder. I don't want him to waste time trying to win over recalcitrant Republicans who only want to destroy his Presidency. They will not change.

I want President Obama to expose Republicans, to call them out, and to hold them accountable before the American people like he did in his recent appearances with Republicans. I want Obama to

develop his ruthlessness to use alongside his compassion and to use the truth as his primary weapon.

I also want the President to get out in public more often and speak of the hard realities Americans must face and the tough decisions we must make. I want him to share his vision for the renewal of America and the middle class through education, energy transformation, and financial reform. We can handle the truth.

Despite my dissatisfaction with the president, if the election were tomorrow, I would vote for him again. Obama towers over his enemies. I hope he adapts to the challenges obstinate Republicans present for the nation.

I am angry at Democrats in Congress, especially the Senate. The president cannot count on them; they are part of the problem—not the solution. Conflict is inevitable with change and they don't have the temperaments for confrontation. They are decent, have good intentions, and are right on the issues. They are probably good law-makers.

But you cannot lead change if your fear conflict and won't stand up for what you believe in. Democrats need their "moment of authenticity" on health care where they do the right thing (pass the legislation) regardless of what happens to them politically. The times in which we live call for sacrifice for the common good.

I want Democrats in the Senate to come alive. Republicans won't work together until Democrats show they can fight.

Were the election tomorrow, I would vote for Democrats who support President Obama despite my disappointments in them. I hope I have some tougher Democratic candidates to vote for next fall.

I am angry at Republicans in Congress too. Actually I feel contempt more than anger. I don't think trying to make our nation's President fail so they can regain political power serves America well. Immoral and un-American, their "just say no" strategy when we face such great problems is wrong. They must engage in good faith. Engagement leads to energy, creativity, and new ideas. Disengagement leads to stagnation and death (or decline as a nation).

Republicans can and should have opposing ideas that reflect a deep philosophy of governing. Arguments over the role of government and the role of the marketplace are important arguments to have. But to oppose just to oppose is sinister. Let's put the central arguments on the table and hash them out with the voters.

I can only shake my head at the 30% of the American people who think Sarah Palin can be president, who spend their days being brainwashed against their self interest by Fox News and Conservative talk radio, and who mindlessly spout the garbage fed to them by these villains and charlatans.

These scary and manipulated folks have been awakened too. They are upset about the same things the rest of us feel upset about—misguided though their paranoid fear and anger are.

These people have trouble being specific about what Palin, or others like her, stands for or would do for the country or why President Obama is such a threat to the nation. They just believe because, perhaps, it gives them a voice and their lives a sense of meaning. Drill baby drill.

Don't these people realize that the people they watch, listen to, and whose views they mindlessly accept don't care about them? Don't they understand that those they worship are using them, taking their money, and have no intention of meeting their needs? They need to do a better job of picking their prophets.

Sarah Palin is not part of God's plan for America. What she and those like her can lead is an accelerated plunge into decline and mediocrity. We cannot allow the most wounded of our fellow citizens to lead the way into our collective future.

Most of all, my fellow Americans, I am frustrated with those Americans who went to sleep a long time ago and just woke up. The Americans who care, are responsible, and are filled with common sense when they are engaged.

Where have you been? It's about time you got angry.

We must understand that no hero or heroine is going to rescue us. Quick-fixes are not real. It took time to get into today's messes--it will take time to get out of them. And it will require sacrifice from each of us.

Stop asking for something for nothing. Sacrifice a little to save our planet, fix our financial mess, gain health-care for all, educate our children, and balance the budget. Ask how you can help. Figure out what you want and do what you can do to change what you don't like. Get involved and engaged. Take responsibility.

Demand that our leaders be servants of America who put the nation ahead of the next election, that they be mature adults, and that they live the values they claim loudly that they believe in. Hold leaders accountable. But don't ask them to do the impossible or things we should do for ourselves.

Republicans want President Obama to fail. Just remember: If President Obama fails due to indifference and obstructionism, all of us fail. Who is a serious alternative to this decent and gifted leader?

The Dalai Lama wrote of wise discernment. Employing this faculty "...involves constantly checking our outlook and asking ourselves whether we are being broad-minded or narrow-minded. Have we taken into account the overall situation or are we considering only specifics? Is our view short-term or long-term? Are we being short-sighted or clear-eyed? Is our motive genuinely compassionate when considered in relation to the totality of all beings? Or is our compassion limited just to our families, our friends, and those we identify with closely?"

We need, he wrote, to "think, think, think."

My fellow Americans, we feel angry. I hope your anger fuels your actions. Direct your anger in a thoughtful way. Get engaged, informed, see through the surface lies, spin, and manipulations. Contribute a few dollars to thoughtful candidates for office. Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper. Hold the immature and irresponsible accountable. And vote.

My fellow Americans, we Americans need to consciously become wiser, braver, and more mature. If we don't, our slide to mediocrity will continue to accelerate.

We need to think, think, think and be rightly angry.
