

A new year brings cause for a timely celebration

President Ronald Reagan, in his farewell address in January 1989, defined his vision of the “shining city upon a hill,” drawing on the biblical underpinnings of the phrase that would serve as the finest example of American exceptionalism, the inherent quality that sets us apart as a great nation.

“In my mind it was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, windswept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity,” said Reagan, a two-term president who earned the title as the “Great Communicator” during his time in office. “And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here.”

He then took notice of a growing divide in the nation, challenging political leaders and the citizenry to do better.

“We were taught, very directly, what it means to be an American,” Reagan said in his final address from the Oval Office. “And we absorbed, almost in the air, a love of country and an appreciation of its institutions. If you didn’t get these things from your family, you got them from the neighborhood . . . Or you could get a sense of patriotism from school. And if all else failed, you could get a sense of patriotism from the popular culture.”

In closing, he urged everyone to recognize that we need to do “a better job of getting across that America” stands for freedom – “freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of enterprise. And freedom is special and rare. It’s fragile; it needs protection.”

In his inaugural address at the U.S. Capitol little more than a week later,

Reagan’s successor, President George H.W. Bush would carry the theme a step further with a message that seems particularly pertinent today.

“We meet on democracy’s front porch, a good place to talk as neighbors and as friends,” said President Bush on January 20, 1989. “For this is a day when our nation is made whole, when our differences, for a moment, are suspended.”

If only it was so, for it was just two years ago that the Capitol – the citadel of democracy – was under siege, attacked by a violent mob determined to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

The January 6, 2021 insurrection left a lasting stain on our country, one caused in large part by a would-be American autocrat unwilling to accept the rule of law.

His leading role in the orchestrated attack on the Capitol has been well-documented, first by the House of Representatives when on January 13, 2021 it adopted an article of impeachment for “incitement of an insurrection.”

His culpability was confirmed by the House select committee on the January 6 attack, which recently presented a comprehensive 845-page report highlighting in exhaustive detail his deadly attempt to derail democracy itself. The report represented the bipartisan committee’s investigative work over the past 18 months, spelled out graphically during a series of televised hearings last summer.

In addition to expressing our gratitude to those members of Congress who voted for his impeachment shortly after the insurrection took place, we also should celebrate the efforts of the January 6 committee who late last month called on



the Justice Department to bring criminal charges against the former president and several of his allies for attempting to subvert the election process.

Fortunately, there is a majority in Congress who have the courage and conviction to stand tall against attempts to put democracy on the chopping block, repudiating groups who have expressed contempt for our personal freedoms and the very right to cast a vote that will be counted.

Ironically, those extremists who wallow in the political fringe should be in a celebratory mood as well this week. They were given their moment in the political sun thanks to the peaceful transfer of power from one party to another in the House of Representatives, perhaps offering them a chance to rediscover the principles that have guided us for more than two centuries.

Instead, what we have witnessed over the past week, in the pitched battle for Speaker of the House, is that Congressional Republicans are incapable of a peaceful transfer of power to

A new year brings cause for a timely celebration

themselves. The result has been nothing more than a shameful display of public posturing for the love of chaos, which figures to escalate in the months ahead as they promote their self-interests while engaging in a fresh round of political vendettas.

In short, what we are seeing now is a continuation of the disgraced Trump era where meaningful policy discussions took a back seat to name-calling and narcissism, further sowing the seeds of democracy's destruction.

The first order of business for the new Primerus™ Foundation is to change this political narrative, promoting the importance of honesty and integrity among the public officials charged with addressing our most pressing problems. Otherwise, we will be left in a quandary of how America can lead the world if we continue to "send in the clowns" to run the show.

Similarly, the Primerus™ Foundation aims to offer a positive response to what is happening on the world stage, where the likes of unhinged dictators in Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea deal in nuclear brinkmanship, threatening the very existence of civilized society.

Which can bring us back to the departing words of President Reagan as he prepared to leave office.

"As long as we remember our first principles and believe in ourselves, the future will always be ours," he proclaimed.

His words, prophetic as they may be, should serve as our reminder to hold tight to the truth, especially when it comes under assault by forces bent on destroying basic human dignity.

Best regards,

Jack Buchanan, President