

"Presidential Qualities"

Essay

William E. Gramley

The logo for Silver Arts, featuring the words "Silver Arts" in a stylized, cursive script. The word "Silver" is written in a dark, textured font, while "Arts" is in a lighter, more fluid script. A horizontal line with a textured, brush-like appearance underlines the text.

Artist's Name: William Gramley
Title of Entry: "Presidential Qualities"
Category: Literary Arts
Sub-Category: Essay
Piedmont Plus Senior Games

Presidential Qualities

I have paid fairly close attention to the demeanor and actions of President Donald Trump during his first year in office, 2017. I have kept a file of clippings related to Mr. Trump and I have read many of the columns and letters-to-the-editor about him both favorable and unfavorable printed in *The Winston-Salem Journal* and a few other periodicals. While I have been both a Republican and a Democrat in my life, my main concern at this point in time is about the qualities of this President.

I have also written two letters-to-the-editor of the *Journal* in 2017 because a couple of his actions struck a sour note with me. I didn't like the way the President used a National Prayer Breakfast to say we ought to pray for Arnold Schwarzenegger because he wasn't doing as good a job with a certain TV program as he had done when he was the star of it. To bring this topic up at a prayer breakfast did not seem appropriate to me and sounded like an effort to aggrandize himself. That isn't what prayer is about, especially when I think about the time Jesus noted how a certain Pharisee touted his own greatness compared to a lowly publican. The prayer for mercy uttered at a distance from the Temple by the publican was heard by God and the man went home justified whereas the demeaning comments of the Pharisee were a misuse of prayer. In addition, Mr. Trump has touted his unique knowledge or relationship toward many subjects and topics. He said, among other grandiose statements such things as, "Nobody loves the Bible better than me," and, "There's nobody that respects women more than I do." (Actually if he read the Bible, he would note that God's truth challenges greed, power, and idolatry, but I suspect he would probably say that it, too, is fake news. And, so far as women are concerned, he has been a sexual predator of women and often disrespects them.) I think Mr. Trump is **egotistical**.

In my second letter I objected to the way the President lambasted some professional athletes because they chose to kneel or in some way disregard the usual hand-over-heart standing posture that people take when the National Anthem is played before games. He called one of the protesters “a son of a bitch.” I believe citizens of all classifications have a right to protest faults in our country because it usually takes protests to bring about changes for the better. I think of Rosa Parks who refused to sit in the back of the bus when the laws of that era really were meant to keep the races separate and unequal. These athletes were continuing the effort to change police tactics when at times blacks are shot when such actions were not necessary. They, and other protesters, believe that “black lives matter.” President Trump's reaction to these signs representing the ongoing struggle to make America just seemed like an effort to curtail protest and the civil rights that our Constitution permits. I believe he is **intolerant.**

Conditions in America may not be as terrifying as the situation was in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s when Dietrick Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church in the Barmen Declaration spoke out against what Hitler was doing that ultimately led to the persecution, imprisonment, and execution of millions of Jews, gypsies, and handicapped persons. And we may not live with the terrors and harsh restrictions of Apartheid that put Nelson Mandela in prison because he protested this system. The belief that the white or Aryan race is superior to other races was behind both these forms of terrorism in Germany and South Africa. Eventually, by war in one case and by grass roots organization and protests in the other, those policies and practices were ended. But President Trump in the aftermath of the march in Charlottesville, VA where neo-Nazies and White Supremacists showed how violent and hateful they are, failed to condemn those groups. His support of Hispanic-hater sheriff Arpaio of Arizona (whose illegalities he commuted) and the sexually abusive and court-order defying U.S. Senate

candidate Joe Moore of Alabama makes me conclude that Mr. Trump is a **racist**.

Quite often President Trump attacks those who question his actions and his Executive Orders. Rather than say that he disagrees with those who oppose his decisions and present reasons why he takes the stands he takes, he makes personal attacks or derogatory snipes about them. He has consistently claimed that most reports and views that question his decisions are “fake news.” He uses Twitter almost daily to attack his opponents. His barbs do not enhance him and the office he holds, and **his method and manners exude hatred**.

Related to this is the fact that the President simply tells lies, beginning with the statement that the crowd at his inauguration was the largest ever. A fact-checking organization reported late in 2017 that something over 350 of his statements during the year were false, which requires the public to stay awake and leads to a lack of trust in him and in anything he says. His usual rebuttle is to bounce the truth away from himself and to point out what others have done rather than correct his statements. I can't recall any heart-felt apology he has offered for his words or deeds. This refusal to be honest is certainly a negative quality in a President. **He lacks integrity.**

Some people praise Mr. Trump for his shoot-from-the-hip spirit, his maverick style in which he unilaterally decides to withdraw the United States from international treaties and other friendly forms of cooperation. He clearly does not follow traditional patterns of Presidential decorum for the most part and truly believes he can do whatever he wants to do without restrictions. Some aspects of his life and routine really don't matter, but his habit of “firing” people as he did earlier on a TV program has continued into his Presidency. **He is often childish and petulant.**

When I look at him, I never see him smile. He apparently never laughs, at least not in public, and he has a rather defensive look and he is quite ready to denounce leaders of his own party, federal judges, or leaders of other nations, even those who have been traditional allies of the United States. He acts like a bully and has pushed at least one prominent person out of his way so that he could be front and center for a photo opportunity. He likes to be the focal point. Once he had his Cabinet take turns going around the room and testify to how much they like serving him. (I thought of that well-known hymn, "How Great Thou Art," when he did this, although I think that hymn was intended for Someone else.) **He is clearly narcissistic.**

Another thing that bothers me about Mr. Trump is the way he announces what the punishment ought to be for some persons who have been accused of a crime. He seems to be taking over the role of the judicial branch of our government. To do such a thing is to move our country closer to an autocracy and away from democracy which is, by the way, a government by the people and for the people, as Abraham Lincoln once put it. And I am one of those people who believes that freedom of speech and assembly and freedom of the press are absolutes.

I have read the views of some writers and journalists who like and support Mr. Trump. I even corresponded with one of them and said that I think the morality of a President is extremely basic and important. This writer responded that he personally ignores the character of the President and simply supports his policies and accomplishments. That's all that matters. Some of the other supporters make a similar point. And, while they didn't say it, I think they meant that he may be a scamp, but he is their scamp.

In summary, I believe Mr. Trump has dismantled the respect and dignity and honor that

the office of President of the United States of America has long held. The qualities that he has displayed during his first year in office reflect the nature of his soul, and because he is always in the spotlight, his attitude and his demeanor do not bode well for the future of the people and the decency and compassion of the nation's reputation that he was elected to represent and serve.