

Blue Jean Nation 'Should write 'em off but can't'

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This country needs a Democratic Party that is both healthy and relevant, and a Republican Party with unchecked power will run our government into the ground and our country over a cliff.

ALTOONA, WI - I am one of those people who has every reason to write off the Democratic Party. But I can't.

I am the son of non-college educated working class people. Dairy farmers. I grew up in what is now red America. That place and that upbringing made me what I am. My values were shaped by the work my family did seven days a week from before dawn to after dusk. And by barn raisings where people came from miles away to help a "neighbor" struck by the misfortune of a tornado or fire. And by Les Sturz, who came to our aid in muddy fields to help us harvest our crops only weeks after burying his father who hung himself in a shed after learning the bank was foreclosing and their farm was going to be taken from them.

They taught me the value of hard work. But they also taught me the importance of looking out for each other, and how we are all in this together. They taught me about the common good. They taught me none of us is self made. If my accomplishments ever stand out, it's because I am standing on the shoulders of others. Of the four people who were unquestionably my most influential and impactful teachers, not a one of them had a college degree.

My dad and mom lived through the Depression and revered FDR, and that reverence made them lifelong Democratic voters. They both passed away many years ago, but while they were with us they told me so many things that now make me think they'd probably not care much for today's Democrats if they were still living. Like so many non-college educated working class people, they'd have reasons to feel today's Democrats look down on them and write them off.

Considering where I'm from and who brought me up, I should probably hate Democrats. But I can't. It's not that I don't believe they deserve the scorn directed at them. They do. It's not even that I choose not to hate because of how counterproductive hating is. It's like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die, but it also is a powerful and virtually irresistible temptation and sometimes I succumb.

The reason I can't write off Democrats the way they've written off so many in places like where I'm from is that I love my country and my country needs a Democratic Party that is both healthy and relevant. Today's is neither. I believe in checks and balances, and a Republican Party with unchecked power will run our government into the ground and our country over a cliff.

Returning the Democratic Party to health and relevance will not happen until Democrats stop regularly breaking the [first rule of politics](#) and cease insulting and disrespecting people like those who were my best teachers. And regaining health and relevance also will not happen until Democrats move beyond [identity politics](#) and stop [disregarding](#) the first law of governing: What government does needs to be done for the whole of society. Everyone pays, everyone benefits.

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