

Thank you Donald! (Part one)



By Nate Smelle

By the date of this newspaper's publication, it will have been 2,933 days since now infamous Access Hollywood tape was released. For those of you unfamiliar with what these tapes contain, take a break from reading this column for a moment and search online for 'Donald Trump's Grab 'em by the transcripts.' Nonetheless, Trump's 'locker room talk', as he called it, is now ancient history, and does not need to be regurgitated word for word on the page again at this point. So, if somehow you've managed to make it this far without knowing what the Republican Party's number one choice for president in 2024 said on the bus that had most 'expert' political analysts prematurely proclaiming the end of then candidate Trump's political career, fire up that Google machine and enjoy an unfortunately not very unique display of what should have been a huge red flag for Americans before they voted a known con man into the highest office of the so called 'free' world. In light of all of the misery this embarrassing example of a 'leader' has caused for Americans and freedom loving people worldwide, before tightening my bib and inhaling my Thanksgiving dinner this past weekend, I decided to take a few moments to reflect on what it is about this former U.S. president that I am actually genuinely thankful for. As I sat there hungrily anticipating the feast set out before me, I found myself at a loss for words of gratitude when I thought of the irreparable damage this convicted felon and rapist has done since he slithered onto the world stage eight years ago. Since he first announced he was running for president on June 16, 2015, Trump has been whining about how his country is 'broken' while falsely claiming that only he could save it. By pointing a finger at immigrants, and blaming all of his shortcomings on anyone who does not profess their loyalty to his brand of corporate fascism, he has proven time and time again that he will stop at nothing to regain control of the government he attempted to illegally overthrow on Jan. 6, 2021. 'How can I be thankful for anything this traitorous creep has done?' I questioned myself, as I reminisced about his revolting quest to seize power by normalizing hatred of one another. Sure the very nature of democratic politics is inherently adversarial, however Trump has made it 'acceptable', at least for those still drunk on his Kool-Aid, to label anyone who looks or thinks differently than he does as 'enemies of the state.' As bullies and fascists always do, Trump has threatened anyone who opposes him with violence. In the name of 'freedom' he has promised that if reelected, he will imprison late night talk show hosts and comedians that have spoken out against him, and punish members of the media who have reported facts that reveal his incompetence and/or sinister intent. Thinking about all Trump has done to divide people and make enemies of one another, I was suddenly reminded of an old Buddhist saying that I stumbled upon while studying eastern philosophies at Brock University some 20 years ago. I remember being stopped in my tracks by the words of the Buddha being scrawled on the blackboard by our professor as I walked in the class that day: 'Your enemy can be your greatest teacher.' Like all of the most influential aphorisms, this simple sentence has haunted me until this day. Initially, when contemplating the extremes to which one would have to go 'embracing Nazism, fascism, and/or any extremist political philosophy that demands the violent oppression of those who values peaceful cooperation over a politics of division' I struggled to understand how an 'enemy' so ignorant could teach me anything worth learning. Now, a couple of decades later, thanks to Donald Trump's relentless

assault on truth and our critical ability to discern what is in the best interest of the common good, we have gained precious insight into how insatiable greed, and the depths to which those who possess it will sink in order to maintain their privilege and power over others. In the beginning, as a Canadian journalist I decided to start covering American politics because I saw it as a sort of experiment which I could analyze from the perspective of a relatively objective observer. Soon after setting out on this exploratory adventure, I started to realize how delusional my approach to this endeavour truly was in the spring of 2018 when I began noticing homemade "Make Canada Great Again" signs popping up throughout the Bancroft area. Still, considering there were only a couple of these signs polluting our local landscape, I wrote them off as indicators of a very small but relatively harmless faction of Canadians brainwashed by Trump's hateful cult of personality. However, another red flag was raised locally in the wake of Trump's failed insurrection at the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 6, 2021, when a few more of these signs started showing up throughout North Hastings. At this point it became clear to me that this fringe element was growing in terms of its size and capacity to negatively impact the political landscape in Canada. It was just about a year later, as the misnamed "Freedom" convoy invaded Canada's national capital waving "Trump 2020" and "Make America Great Again" flags, that the mainstream media began paying attention to the influence of Trumpism on Canadian voters. With the 2024 U.S. election on Nov. 5 fast approaching, and the 2025 federal election in Canada appearing on the not too distant horizon, it is a good time to take a hard look at the lessons we have learned from the MAGA cult leader and aspiring tyrant since his daily doses of ignorance and hatred took over the daily news cycle. As much as I would like to say that in less than three weeks if the majority of national polls in the U.S. are correct we will be rid of the world's greatest con man, history has shown us that win or lose, Trump, and Trumpism, will not go away that easily. Even if he is again rejected by a record number of Americans more than 81 million in 2020 we cannot expect him or anyone who proudly and publicly professes their desire to be a dictator for a day to suddenly discover a respect for the peaceful transfer of power. So, in the interest of preserving our democracy in Canada and the U.S., on this Thanksgiving Day I raise a glass to humanity's "greatest teacher", to express my sincere gratitude for showing us your trump card in 2021; and, for reminding us why fascism is not an option when building the road to peace.