

No matter what you ask of her, Steph knows who to call and how to get the job done and done well. That includes everything from hanging animal mounts in my front office, such as a huge buffalo or bison head, which couldn't have been an easy proposition, but she figured out how to get it done. Now there is even a drone suspended from the ceiling in our conference room.

While Stephanie has always excelled at her job, she has also helped those around her succeed. She has an eye for recognizing talent. For example, when she worked for Senator Kasten of Wisconsin, she hired a young man by the name of PAUL RYAN as an intern. Of course, today he is Speaker of the House. Stephanie has always been able to see the potential in people, and that is a great example. She has always worked very hard to help them to succeed. She has been a mentor and a surrogate mother to many staffers, not only in my office but in other offices and throughout her tenure working at the Senate.

I want to thank her husband Gordon and her children Nick and Leigh for supporting Stephanie during all those late nights and long weeks throughout her career.

Stephanie is truly a unique individual and an irreplaceable member of my team. I keep pleading for her not to retire, but so far it hasn't worked. I am not giving up, though. She is truly somebody who cannot be replaced.

While we will miss Steph, we are grateful for the positive impact she has had on so many lives with her amazing influence for good in the Senate. We thank her for her service to our country, and we wish her the best as she begins this new chapter in her life. We are so appreciative to have had Steph as part of our team, and we will truly miss her.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BANNON APPOINTMENT

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to address the President-elect's selection of Stephen Bannon, a divisive figure and former head of the alt-right Web site Breitbart to serve as Chief Strategist and Senior Counsel to the President.

In the early hours of November 9, after it became clear that he had offi-

cially won the race for the White House, President-Elect Trump appeared before his supporters to deliver a victory speech. He said, "Now it's time for America to bind the wounds of division. . . . To all Republicans and Democrats and independents across this Nation, I say it is time for us to come together as one united people."

After a long and contentious campaign, it seemed to me that the President-elect implicitly acknowledged that some of the rhetoric he had used during the race had alienated and offended many of our communities. He said, "I pledge to every citizen of our land that I will be the President for all Americans."

It is no secret that I did not support President-Elect Trump during the campaign, but despite the fact that I disagreed passionately with our President-elect about the best way to approach many if not most of the challenges facing our Nation, I truly believe that there are places where we can find some common ground. We both understand the need to rebuild our Nation's crumbling infrastructure and to send Americans back to work repairing our roads, bridges, and schools. Both President-Elect Trump and I support closing the carried interest loophole, which allows private equity and hedge fund managers to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. These are issues on which I look forward to working with the next administration, so one can understand why I was encouraged by President-Elect Trump's call for unity. Once an election is over and the heat of the campaign has subsided, the American people expect our leaders to come together to find common cause and get to work solving our Nation's problems.

I was disappointed when, just a few days later, I learned that the President-elect had selected former Trump campaign CEO Stephen Bannon to serve as his Chief Strategist and Senior Counsel, a position the President-elect described as an "equal partner" to his incoming White House Chief of Staff.

The selection of Mr. Bannon to serve at the very highest level of our government does not signal a willingness to set aside our differences and embrace unity—far from it. Before Mr. Bannon joined the Trump campaign, where he was widely credited as the chief architect of its most corrosive tactics, Mr. Bannon was the executive chairman of Breitbart News.

Breitbart News, for those who are not familiar with it, is a conservative Web site founded by the late Andrew Breitbart. Even from its inception, Breitbart was a bastion of far-right ideology whose writers and editorial editors unapologetically courted controversy. But the site took a darker turn shortly after Mr. Bannon took it over in 2012.

"I think anger is a good thing," Mr. Bannon is quoted as telling a gathering of conservative activists, and it shows. Mr. Bannon guided Breitbart away

from more mainstream conservative opinion to instead traffic in an ideology of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, and anti-Semitism. Even a former Breitbart editor, who has lamented the site's hard shift to the extreme right, described its comment section as "turning into a cesspool for white supremacist mememakers."

This Senator thinks it is important for the public to understand exactly how Mr. Bannon's Breitbart describes its fellow citizens. Here are just a few articles that Breitbart published under Mr. Bannon's direction.

"Gabby Giffords: The Gun Control Movement's Human Shield." Included in this article is the line, "Giffords is their human shield—the gun control representative who could do and say what she wanted without facing any real pressure to prove her claims were true."

Two weeks to the day after nine people were murdered at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, Breitbart published, "Hoist it High and Proud: The Confederate Flag Proclaims a Glorious Heritage." In the article, the writer asks: "Barack, you might just want to remind us again which state of the Union, north or south, your ancestors resided in during the traumatic years 1861–1865? Or did Kenya not have a dog in that fight?"

In "Political Correctness Protects Muslim Rape Culture," the author describes cases of sexual assault in Europe, but warns that "you won't hear much about it in U.S. mainstream media because the epidemic is a by-product of the influx into Europe of a million, mostly Muslim, migrants."

"Mexico is Sending us Colonists, Not Immigrants" is a story in which readers are warned that "Mexico sees Mexicans in the United States as strategic assets in every sense of that word. They are seen as extensions of the Mexican state and partners in Mexico's plan."

This is nasty stuff. This is vile. It comes all the way from the top, from Mr. Bannon himself. In July, Mr. Bannon wrote a piece for Breitbart, in which he accused his political opponents of a "plot to take down America" by focusing on the need to improve the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color. That was the plot to take down America.

The article opened with Mr. Bannon explicitly and baselessly linking the man responsible for shooting police officers in Dallas, TX, to the Black Lives Matter movement. Mr. Bannon wrote: "Five police officers are murdered in Dallas by a [hashtag] Black Lives Matter-type activist-turned-sniper." There is no question that the Dallas shooter was a troubled man who harbored hate in his heart, a man whom investigators determined was himself motivated by racist ideologies, but there is no evidence suggesting that the shooter was a member of Black Lives Matter, a movement born in opposition to violence and hate.

He was not an “activist-turned-sniper,” a turn of phrase Mr. Bannon crafted to suggest that two roles exist along a continuum, to suggest that it is only a matter of time before the peaceful protesters take up arms.

It is bad enough that Mr. Bannon sought to fan the flames of fear, anxiety, and turn our communities against Americans peacefully exercising their first amendment rights. Mr. Bannon’s article did not stop at impugning activists who protest officer-involved shootings. No. Mr. Bannon proceeded to cast suspicion upon an entire race. He wrote:

Here’s a thought: What if the people getting shot by the cops did things to deserve it? There are, after all, in this world, some people who are naturally aggressive and violent.

Wild conspiracy theories aside, there is a name for that kind of tactic. It is called a dog whistle. To some, such rhetoric may not appear overtly racist, and make no mistake, that is by design. Not every person who hears that kind of language understands that by saying that “some people are naturally aggressive and violent,” Mr. Bannon is suggesting that Black people—after all the ones who were shot by the police—are naturally aggressive and violent.

But to the alt-right, to those who read his Web site, Mr. Bannon’s meaning is all too clear. Now, Mr. Bannon does not always attempt to cloak his views. At times, connecting lines he draws are much clearer. In the very same article, Mr. Bannon suggested that efforts by the Obama administration to pursue gun safety measures in the wake of the Orlando shooting are nothing more than an effort to divert attention away from refugees. Never mind that refugees were not involved in the incident. Let’s all remember that the tragedy at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, a shooting in which 49 people were murdered, and 53 others were wounded, was carried out by an American-born U.S. citizen.

Nonetheless, Mr. Bannon wrote: “In the wake of Orlando, the Obama administration, with Hillary Clinton cheering it on, intoned against guns and ‘hate,’ and is now back to importing more hating Muslims.”

To suggest that members of a peaceful protest movement like Black Lives Matter were in league with a cold-blooded killer, that the sympathies of the President of the United States lie not with the victims of gun violence but instead with those who would seek to do us harm, to pit members of vulnerable communities against one another—LGBT people against refugees, peaceful protesters against the cops who rushed to shield them from gunfire—is abhorrent.

Regrettably, we have no reason to believe Mr. Bannon would not seek to deploy such tactics from the White House. After all, they featured prominently in the Trump campaign’s final television ad. In the spot, the President-elect’s voice warns that “those

who control the levers of power in Washington” and “global special interests” don’t have America’s best interests at heart.

At the same time, images of George Soros, Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen, and Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein—all prominent Jews—flash on the screen. To those who may not know better, such an ad could seem innocuous, but, to me, its message is obvious. The ad’s anti-Semitic overtones, which draw on an old and hateful conspiracy theory about Jews controlling banks and financial markets, were obvious to me. I called it a German shepherd whistle designed to be heard in some of the darkest remaining corners of our country and our world. Politics that rely on this type of innuendo—Stephen Bannon’s brand of politics—has no place in a modern Presidential campaign, and it certainly has no place in the White House.

Let’s be clear. The use of racially charged rhetoric and innuendo is repulsive. The very purpose of deploying dog-whistle politics in the context of a campaign is to attract the support of people who harbor hateful ideologies without offending the sensibilities of more mainstream voters.

Every Member of this body should condemn rhetoric that sows the seeds of discourse. It is our obligation, not just as Senators but as Americans, to stand up to Mr. Bannon’s hateful, decisive brand of politics and reject it. We cannot change the fact that such strategy has played a role in this campaign, but moving forward, it is imperative that we not allow these corrosive tactics to become normalized. We cannot allow them to become a regular part of our politics.

If President-Elect Trump truly meant what he said during his victory speech, if he truly hopes to be President for all Americans, he will recognize that such tactics stand in the way of that goal and he will renounce them. The women and men the leader chooses to surround himself with show the public what kind of leader he will be. President-Elect Trump has a choice: Will he truly attempt to “bind the wounds of division” or will our next President seek counsel from a man who proudly traffics in hatred, half-truths, and pernicious innuendo? Will President-Elect Trump’s administration open its doors to all people or will it seek to govern from exploiting old prejudices and pitting us against one another? The campaign is over, but the wounds inflicted during a long battle remain raw. It is time to set about the work of healing them.

I urge President-Elect Trump to begin that work by surrounding himself with people equal to the task. Mr. Bannon is not one of them. He should not serve in the next administration. I call on President-Elect Trump to appeal to America’s better angels and to reject the dark politics represented by Stephen Bannon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

PRESIDENT-ELECT TRUMP

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, our Nation has gone through a difficult, bruising Presidential election. Normally, we would be making the pivot to healing those wounds, but this election has been particularly rough, and the wounds sustained during the campaign continue to haunt our Nation. Many groups of Americans across our country are frightened for the future, of being deported, of being targeted as Muslims, of resurgent racism toward African Americans, of anti-Semitism, of losing their right to marry the person they love.

Unfortunately, they have good reason to be afraid. We have seen a surge, a wave of hateful bigoted, racist, sexist attacks happening in communities across our country since the election. The divisive rhetoric and conduct of President-Elect Donald Trump’s campaign over the past year and a half is responsible for unleashing this blight on our country. He has the responsibility to turn things around, to put an end to this division, and to start the healing.

That is why, earlier today, 10 of my colleagues in the Senate joined me to send a letter to President-Elect Trump, demanding that he stand up and condemn these verbal and physical attacks occurring around this country, that he denounce his own past campaign rhetoric that gave life to so many of these acts of hate and violence, and that he exclude proponents of hatred and discrimination from the ranks of his administration, including immediately firing white supremacist Steve Bannon as his Chief Strategist.

Here is what the text of the letter says:

Mr. President-Elect:

Your campaign conduct and Electoral College victory have unleashed a wave of verbal and physical assaults against our fellow Americans. In just the last six days, the Southern Poverty Law Center has documented hundreds of acts of discrimination and violence toward many of the ethnic and social groups you attacked in your campaign. These attacks are absolutely unacceptable. We condemn them. We stand united with our fellow citizens.

Unfortunately, these acts of hate have been enabled by your campaign strategy of promoting bigotry, racism, and sexism. It is the logical consequence of your campaign attacks on and discrimination aimed at Hispanics, African Americans, veterans, immigrants, women, Muslims, Jews, and individuals with disabilities. Millions of Americans see a President-elect who has chosen to knock them down rather than to lift them up. Your conduct has empowered too many Americans to act on their darkest impulses.

This is the wrong vision for America and the wrong path for your coming Administration. We call on you to change course. We urge you, as our future President, to join us in rejecting hate and embracing respect for every ethnicity, race and gender. We urge you to join us in fighting for a nation free of discrimination, where every child has the opportunity to thrive and contribute according to his or her ability. We urge you to join us in fighting for our Constitutional vision of equality and opportunity and the vision in