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Guest Editorial

Emilio F. Iodice
EFIODICE@YAHOO.COM

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The President of the United States:

What Leadership Qualities and Values Do We Need in 2016 and Beyond?

**EMILIO IODICE
ROME, ITALY**

The apparatus of the most powerful country on the planet.

Every four years Americans elect a new Chief Executive. The person chosen is not just President of the United States: the position is of global leader, global decision-maker, and global visionary. The President can determine the fate of the human race. We should realize that Americans do not just elect a President, but rather an entire government.

The person selected must fulfill a number of complex and interconnected functions: Chief of State; head of the U.S. executive branch and holder of executive power; key administrator; chief diplomat; and the main architect of U.S. foreign policy. Specifically, he or she should possess those primary leadership traits and values expected of this office:

- ***Reformer*** — of our political system
- ***Spokesperson*** — to other countries.
- ***Commander-in-Chief*** — in charge of the nation's armed forces.
- ***Chief Legislator*** — the main author of public policy.
- ***Chief of Party*** — the leader of his or her political party.

It is not enough to select someone with qualities that fit our national needs when the stakes are planetary. The future of the world depends on an America that is strong, just, and fair. This is embodied in its history, traditions, and institutions. People and nations look to America to provide a model of what we all should be. They imitate our culture, examine and study our laws, and emulate our ideas and ideals. We are a lighthouse in the darkness for millions who live beyond our shores. It is a responsibility. We should embrace the task even if we are not without flaws. There is no one else on earth equipped to offer the proper vision and leadership for our world than the United States. We have no choice. If we fail, the forces of intolerance and tyranny will prevail. The election of 2016 will be one of the most important in American history. Our choice of President will affect the future of the United States and the world for the remainder of the 21st century.

Our leaders are not saints but should strive to be models of integrity. They should be expected to do the right thing even if it is not the right time. We will never solve all our problems but should work to overcome them in good faith and honesty. With proper leadership we can try to resolve the most significant issues that affect our lives — including stewardship of the earth we inhabit, — with fairness, liberty, justice, and deliberative reason. The American Presidency symbolizes these principles.

What qualities should we demand that the President of the United States have to be the leader of a world that endeavors to provide opportunities for all in an atmosphere of freedom? No one person will have them all. Even so, we should try to select someone who comes as close to the ideal without the illusion that saints sit in the Oval Office. They do not. At the same time, we cannot tolerate chronic sinners controlling this position when the nation is crying for change.

We need to have a President who will institute campaign reform, environmental reform, gun control, immigration reform, and other measures to salvage our democratic values and freedoms while furthering the cause of, and expanding, social justice. Consider:

- **Experience:** The White House is no place for trainees. We are in urgent need of a person with sound, rational, and values-based experience who can address the major political, social, and international challenges posed.
- **Communicator:** Communicating clearly and honestly to the people of America and the world is an essential ingredient of Presidential leadership.
- **Assembling a Brain Trust:** A President must bring the best and the brightest to manage the apparatus of our government. They must reflect the same values and philosophy of the Chief Executive to establish trust in the bureaucracy and with the people.
- **Character:** This may be the most important leadership value of all. It includes integrity, ethical behavior, and trustworthiness. Without these qualities, no President will earn the confidence of the electorate, the Congress, and the military and civil servants to make the essential sacrifices to confront the most pressing problems of our day.
- **Visionary:** The Chief Executive of the U.S. must project a national and global vision of where we are going and how to get there. Without a well-articulated road map, we will be directionless which will inevitably lead to tragic consequences.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** This includes Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Internal Motivation, Empathy, and Social Skills. We cannot have a President who does not possess these traits. They bespeak of an overall sense of sanity. Imagine a Commander-in-Chief who is overwrought with serious emotional problems, but who occupies a position of power, potentially controlling the fate of the world?
- **Courage and Wisdom:** Serious political decisions will require both courage and wisdom. A President must have this especially today when the issues at hand are so complex. They require courageous and wise choices that the people can understand and accept.
- **Decision Maker:** The essence of the Presidency is the ability to make critical decisions. The fate of the world will rest on the choices made by the next President of the United States.
- **Humility:** We know that leaders often have large egos. Even so, we cannot tolerate a President who is not humble especially in front of the people who elected him or her, and with respect to the stability of our democratic institutions.
- **Passionate and Energetic:** The Presidency requires enthusiasm and passion. Our greatest Presidents loved their role and this contributed to their success.
- **Flexible and Comfortable with Change:** Events happen today at lightning speed. Information travels instantly around the globe. The President must be comfortable with an era of instantly changing events and the need to make careful, yet instantaneous decisions.
- **Loves Learning:** No President can succeed without a desire to learn constantly and appreciate the need to comprehend the nuances of events and current trends. Without this quality, they cannot judge the value and accuracy of information and advice to make intelligent choices.
- **Respects Diversity:** Ours is an ever-expanding, diverse population at both the national and global levels. A President must look at diversity as a strength and not as a weakness and promote it as such.
- **Trust:** No leader can lead without the trust of followers. This is particularly so for the President. Trust is difficult to attain and is easily lost.

The process of voicing the qualities we need in a President should be from “the bottom up” and not “the top down.” Today we have the means to articulate what we feel are the traits that our top leader should have. Social media provides a new platform for all classes to communicate debate, convey, and vent feelings from the grass-roots level so those in positions of authority understand what is needed at this time in our history.

We should encourage discussion in all forms of media until it is clear that we will select and not settle for anyone but the best and brightest to be President of the United States.

Our survival is at stake. It is also at risk for those who look to us for leadership across the globe.

Emilio Iodice

American Diplomat, Writer, Educator, and Presidential Historian

Author of “A Kid from Philadelphia, Mario Lanza: The Voice of the Poets,” “Profiles in Leadership from Caesar to Modern Times,” “Sisters,” “Future Shock 2.0, The Dragon Brief 2020,” “Reflections, Stories of Love, Leadership, Courage and Passion,” and most recently 2016, “Selecting the President, the Most Important Decision You will ever Make.”

Emilio Iodice can be contacted at: efiodice@yahoo.com.