

## **Dissent is Patriotic**

*Letter to the Editor, Brunswick Beacon, July 14, 2021*

I am writing in response to The Brunswick Beacon editorial published July 8, "When did love of country become passé?" The editorial made a limp attempt at weaponizing patriotism. It is absolutely fine to wave the American flag, but that should never be confused with patriotism to the country. Patriotism is not the exclusive property of any one group. Showing real devotion to this country takes more than waving a flag and snarling at someone who doesn't. It starts with understanding what this nation is supposed to be about.

Thomas Jefferson called dissent the highest form of patriotism. Why, then, when this most respected member of our founders reminds us of our obligation to evaluate moral principles against institutional action (or inaction), are we so fast to condemn calls for change? Or why are those who seek peace and equality attacked as unpatriotic when bringing to light inequitable policies and hypocritical attitudes?

True patriots don't hate the government of the United States. They're proud of their country and know the government is a tool to help us solve problems together. They may not like everything it does, and they justifiably worry when special interests gain too much power over it. But true patriots work to improve our government, not destroy it.

Finally, patriots don't pander to divisiveness. They don't fuel racist or religious or ethnic divisions. They aren't homophobic or sexist or racist.

So what is real patriotism? I believe that real patriotism comes from the heart and is always voluntary. It is a feeling of loyalty that comes with certain conditions. Those conditions being that our nation is serving ALL of our interests and when that isn't the case, dissent is also very patriotic.

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