

4th Annual STUDENT VOICES PROJECT

Our fourth annual Student Voices Project brought in letters from 290 middle and high school students from 15 schools and educational venues in seven different U.S. states and two foreign countries. We selected 30 honorees whose submissions are featured here. This year we asked students to write a letter to the next president of the United States suggesting what they think he should focus on during his first year.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE NEXT PRESIDENT

of the United States
suggesting what you think
he should focus on
during his first year.

Dear Mr. Trump,

Congratulations on being elected president. The teens of Friends Meeting of Washington welcome you to Washington, D.C.

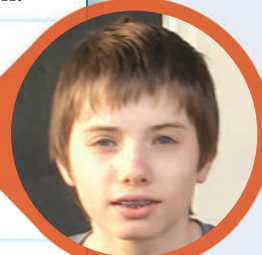
We're Quakers. For a religious group known for its silent worship, we're a pretty outspoken bunch. We advocate, we organize, we vote, we speak the truth, and when necessary, we protest. We may worship in silence, but we live our values loudly. We want to share with you our hopes and fears for your presidency:

- We're fearful that you will widen the wealth gap, making decisions that favor the one percent and hurt everyone else.
- We're fearful that you'll target certain ethnic and religious groups with unfair detainment and deportation.
- We're fearful that you'll destabilize our relations with other countries.
- We hope that you'll keep the lives of citizens and immigrants in mind as you govern.
- We hope that you'll treat all socioeconomic classes equally.
- We hope that you'll work for the good of America and not just for your personal gain.

As you take on your new role as president, we will hold you in the Light and hope that, as president, you will recognize that of God in everyone.

Sincerely,

*Greyson Acquaviva, Grade 11, The Howard Gardner School;
Anna Avanesyan, Grade 10, Sidwell Friends School;
Charlie Melchior-Fisher, Grade 9, School Without Walls;
and Preston Melchior-Fisher, Grade 9, School Without Walls*



Photos courtesy of the students

Dear President of the United States,

Incredibly, this is not the first letter I have written to a president. In the first grade my entire class was given the task to write a letter to the president of the United States. I don't remember what I wrote in that letter; all I remember is how amazed I was that we actually got a letter back! The fact that the person elected to the highest office would send a letter back to a bunch of first graders at a small Quaker school in Pennsylvania was astonishing to me. I think it says something about our country that even the smallest of voices were recognized. That is something I would like for you to address. I believe that every voice should be heard, but some are silenced by society. As the next president, you should help to give everyone, rich or poor, a chance to voice their opinions.

To tell you a little bit about myself, I am a first-generation American whose parents come from Venezuela. I know many people who felt deeply silenced and offended by many of the comments you made during your campaign. You cannot continue to silence minorities and women because that is not what this great country stands for. I am also a student who has attended a Quaker school for ten years and the most important value I have learned from this school is to see the Light in everyone. Basically, this means that you should try to see the best parts of all people, instead of just seeing their worst. Not every immigrant or Muslim is bad. The vast majority of them have the Light of God within them; you should strive to see that. I would hope that as president you would help others to see that of God in other people too. That is what a good president would look like to me.

Best of luck,

Daniela Uribe, Grade 9, Westtown School



Quaker Students' Reading List for President Trump

Many of the students responded to this prompt idea in their letters: "Recommend a book that you think the president should read and explain why." Look out for their book recommendations for President Trump on the following pages and see the whole list at FriendsJournal.org/studentvoices2017.

Dear Mr. Trump,

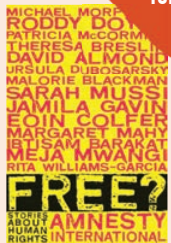
The America I envision is an America where all people are treated equally. It is an America where no matter how you look or how you identify, you will be accepted. It is an America that is respected and valued as a country. I am afraid that the America you want to create is not the country that the American people want. For centuries, people have fought for their rights, and now more than ever, we need a president that will provide rights and equality for every group. I am worried that all of the progress we have made will come plummeting back on us. But I believe that you can change this. From your campaign, many hate groups have popped up, and the country is scared for the future. If you and your staff change your views about groups of people like Muslims and women and the LGBTQ community, we can move closer to having a world where all people are treated equally and with respect. All of these groups make up an important part of America, and we need to fight for their rights, not ignore them and their needs. Every person deserves a chance and the right to have that chance. Entire groups should not be judged by the horrible actions of a few.

Sincerely, your fellow American,

Kyle Witter, Grade 6, Westtown School



**Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump**



**Free?
Stories
about
Human
Rights**

*Edited by Amnesty International
(2010)*

- “Every story represents a human right from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As President of the United States, one of your jobs is to protect the rights of others. Even though we have these human rights, many people around the world are still denied some of these rights.”

Nora Krantz, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School

- “This book is important in these times when plenty of people aren’t being treated fairly. These facts and stories are very important to know as president, and they will help you to understand people’s problems all around the world.”

Catie Allen, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School

- “The stories really stuck with me; some were sad, but they each had a meaningful lesson. No matter your race, nationality, religion, or age, you should read this book. We all have to learn how to be accepting, and how to appreciate differences and similarities.”

Sydney Mann, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School

Dear President Trump,

I attend a Quaker school where Quaker values and ideas such as simplicity, silence, integrity, and community are infused into our daily lives. These ideas were established by George Fox in the 1600s, and adopted and implemented by the founder of our state of Pennsylvania and Penn Charter itself, William Penn.

I would like to share with you two quotes that I find inspiring and empowering. The first was written by William Penn, and is currently our school motto: “Good instruction is better than riches.” This quote truly resonates with me as a student at a Quaker school and a daughter of two parents who deeply value education and an awareness of the outside world. Both my school and family strongly emphasize and reiterate the idea that a good education is far more useful and important than wealth. Therefore, Mr. President, I urge you to look past your empire of business and riches, and ask yourself this question: Has my existence and importance as a human being emanated and developed from money, or good education and bettering of the mind?

The second quote I would like to share with you was said and taught by George Fox: “that of God in everyone.” In other words, there is good in everyone, and no one is superior to another—no matter race, gender, faith, orientation, or status. Whether you are Islamic or Christian, black or white, we all have one characteristic in common—we are human beings. Thus all people are equal and should be given equal opportunity to express themselves.

These quotes are two examples of Quaker teachings that I ask you to process and consider when leading our country. All that said, I have a few pieces of final advice for you: Be kind. Build bridges, not walls. Rather than tearing others down, build others up. And remember, love *always* trumps hate.

Sincerely,

Brinlea La Barge, Grade 10, William Penn Charter School

Dear President,

An important issue that should be recognized is college education. Approximately 82 percent of Americans say they cannot afford the price of college tuition. This means every year a large amount of kids are not going to college based on something they cannot specifically control. It could only be imagined that many athletes depend on their sports for getting into college. In addition, unless a student has a 3.7 GPA or better, the chances of getting a substantial amount of academic scholarship money are slim to none. This leaves many people around the country at a disadvantage. When kids go to college and become more educated, the unemployment rate decreases. It can also make an impact on the amount of homeless or poor who are in their circumstances because they did not have the opportunity to go to college. Making tuition prices lower opens up the door for many young students aspiring to further their education and pursue a future career. This issue should be looked at as extremely significant because in reality the country is educating possible future leaders.

Leiya Stuart, Grade 9, Westtown School





Dear Mr. Trump,

Since you are in power, I think you can help change some things that are adversely affecting my community and our connected future. I'm extremely worried about climate change. You've mentioned that you don't believe in climate change and plan to promote fossil fuels.

Fossil fuels are not only bad for our environment, but our continued reliance on this is dangerous. Currently, for every dollar we spend on renewable energy, six dollars are spent on fossil fuel. In addition, the increased use of fracking plates in the earth filled with oil has very bad effects. Oklahoma has had up to three minor earthquakes a day because of this. Also, when an oil pipeline cracks, the companies that are making a profit selling this fuel don't pay for the repairs! Instead they make the government pay which means that the money the government is using is coming out of our taxes which should not be used to fix oil pipes. The oil leaks also ruin the land and the water in the surrounding area, and the companies that cause the damage are often unwilling to pay for the cleanup. I found a quote by French politician Christine Lagarde that sums up what I am trying to say. She says, "We are subsidizing the very behavior that is destroying our planet." I want you to take this point into consideration.

I know that you are concerned about increasing employment in the country. Renewable energy like solar power and wind power can be reused, and spreading this type of energy across the country could also be a good source of employment. If I were the president, I would retrain the people who have lost their jobs in the coal industry to work in the solar and wind power industry. This way you fix employment and can also help reduce climate change, two huge problems in America.

I admire how you congratulated Hillary Clinton, and now I am congratulating you. I hope you make the right decisions for our country, especially for the children like me.

Sincerely,

Rimil Ghosh, Grade 6, Greene Street Friends School

Dear President Donald Trump,

I am a student in this country that you now represent and I want to tell you a few things. I am a Quaker student at a Friends school. I am an African American girl who was born in the San Francisco Bay area and raised in the city of Philadelphia. I have never lived outside of a city until I came to a boarding school in the suburbs this past September. As I have lived in several different communities, I have found that acceptance is key and welcoming change is how people can be happy. Teaching one another our different ways is how communities can improve each individual's life. This may sound like hippy talk to you, and it might be, but true peace and compassion is what the world and our government should be striving for (as your job is essentially to create a better quality of living for all of your citizens).

Tangible problems in my community are scarce because I have always lived in predominately privileged communities, but one issue is the need for better education and the eradication of ignorance. I think there needs to be more work done in our own country, for and about our own people. I know you have some issues with ignorance, but in an age of information, that is a choice and can be solved. As a nation and a community, quite frankly, we have failed to support and uplift our people in ways that do not hurt another group on the backend. I ask you to be kind to *all* of our people and work with us all to make the world a realistically better place for everyone.

Sincerely,

Zora Carroll, Grade 9, Westtown School



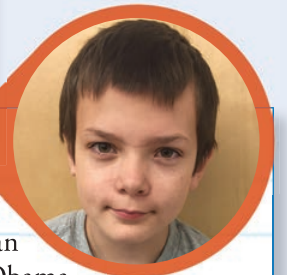
Dear Donald Trump,

When I found out you were president, to say the least, I was worried. After having countless conversations and doing extensive research, I am still confused about your priorities and whether you are making your executive decisions with the right intentions. I have many fears and concerns including women's rights, climate change, equality, and more. The world is constantly changing and progressing but without proper leadership, it will be very easy for our country to stumble even further behind some of the leading nations, and that is my main concern. Currently, I feel we, as a whole, lie in the middle of most-accepting and least-accepting in regard to how women, the LGBTQ+ community, POC (people of color), and immigrants, especially Muslims, are treated in this country.

As a country, we have many concerns, and Muslims should not be our main concern. The Qu'ran preaches love, acceptance, and much more with kind intentions. And I would like to remind you that this country was formed on immigration; I feel that you have forgotten that. Please reflect on this quote: "Our lives begin to change the day we become silent about the things that matter." —Martin Luther King Jr.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Rauff, Grade 9, Friends Academy



Dear President Trump,

I am interested in history, and I like to play sports. I am a comedian and do good impressions of people, including you, Vladimir Putin, Obama, and Hillary. I also dressed as you for Halloween and got 7.2 pounds of candy! I am a Boy Scout of Troop 177. I live in Philadelphia with my mother, and sadly my father passed away a few months ago after a battle with ALS (thanks for doing the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge). I did like *The Apprentice* ("You're fired" is probably my new catchphrase). I have to congratulate you on your victory. I hope you are a good president, although I did favor Secretary Clinton's side of the battle. I do think you will be able to lead us through many bad things.

First of all, you're never going to build a wall. I'm sorry to say, but it's not going to happen. Mexico isn't exactly on your good side, and so they are NOT paying for a wall. If the United States were to pay for it, it would be nearly impossible due to your tax cuts. Immigration is a problem, but we need strong borders that are more man strong, not cinder-block strong.

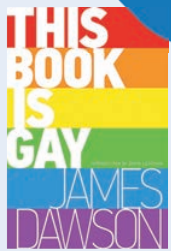
In terms of law enforcement, stop-and-frisk is an incredibly biased system. How many African Americans are stopped and frisked? A lot. How many Latinos? A lot. How many white people? Next to none. Stop-and-frisk has no good place in our law enforcement.

Regarding reproductive rights, birth control/abortion is the woman's choice, 100 percent of the time. A woman may not be ready to be a mother, and the baby may live a terrible life due to unprepared parents. It would be best to not go through that. Also you are a man; you cannot become pregnant, so why should you be against something that doesn't affect you? As for healthcare, Obamacare is good. Pro: you get many benefits that different insurance companies can't offer. Con: not the most affordable. I think we should keep Obamacare (you'll probably have to change the name). It's good, but it's got some flaws. All we need to do is make it more affordable.

Most sincerely,

Gavin McNair, Grade 6, Greene Street Friends School

Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump



*This Book Is
Gay*
By James
Dawson
(2015)

"It is a book about accepting and welcoming LGBTQ+ members and supporters, no matter what. Not to offend you, President Trump, but I think that you especially need education in this area. As a country, we need to be united and accepting no matter what. Sticking together is the best way that we can survive."

*Macy Black, Grade 9,
Westtown School*

Dear President Trump,

From first grade until halfway through the third grade, I lived in Maputo, Mozambique. In October 2013 my mom and I moved back to America because my grandfather and then stepfather had passed away suddenly and we needed to be in a place where we had support. My mom worked for the federal government as a contractor for nine years. She chose to leave her job so she could take care of herself and me. The healthcare insurance that she was offered when she left her job was too expensive. We were able to get healthcare through the Affordable Healthcare Act. My mom chose Obamacare. She only paid \$1 a month for my healthcare. We did this for ten months, which allowed her to heal. She is now back at work and has full healthcare for us from her job. Imagine all the families like mine. If you take away the healthcare, then people could get hurt and not have care, which is very risky.

If you want to get rid of Obamacare, you should put something better on the table. And you cannot take a year to make a whole new care plan. You said, "We are putting in a wonderful plan. It statutorily takes a while to get. We're going to be putting it in fairly soon. I would like to say, by the end of the year, at least the rudiments, but we should have something within the year and the following year." The American people cannot wait a year let alone until 2019 for healthcare. So please either keep Obamacare until your healthcare plan is ready or create a rustic healthcare plan and fix it over time.

Sincerely yours,

Karabelo Bowsky, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School

Dear Mr. Trump,

When I first found out that you won the election, to be honest, I felt fear. Fear that racial relations would get worst, fear that women would be looked at as lesser (more than they already are), and fear women will lose control of their own bodies. During your campaign, your words have been less than encouraging. In fact, your words have divided the country. Although I don't support your presidency or the platform you ran on, I really do hope you have the best intentions for the country and that you are successful. Please listen to the voices of all Americans, to help bring together the country during a very hard time.

Abigail Regis, Grade 9, Friends Academy



Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump



A Work in Progress

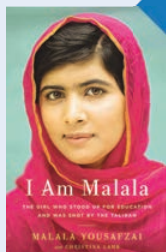
By Connor Franta (2015)

"This book is about finding yourself and accepting who you are. It talks about a 16-year-old boy's journey through his life with friends, family, and his sexuality. I think it would be eye opening for you to read and understand a gay male's life growing up and finding out who he is."

Katherine Komins, Grade 9, Westtown School



Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump



I Am Malala

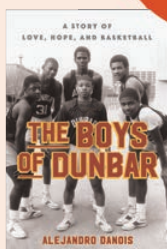
By Malala Yousafzai (2013)

"You should read this book because it lets you in on the life of a Muslim woman; it will help you see the daily struggles Muslim women face, and help you better understand the Muslim minority as well as women's rights in the Middle East. I feel very strongly about women's rights because I was born into a financially stable and educated family. I go to one of the best schools in the country and I feel that every girl should have the same opportunities and education as I do."

Evelyn Labson, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School



**Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump**



***The Boys of
Dunbar***

*By Alejandro
Danois
(2016)*

"This book takes place in the same place that the Freddie Gray incident happened in a black neighborhood in Baltimore, Md. You should read this book because having sustainable communities across the United States is important. All the police shootings and riots happen because the police cannot handle that specific unsustainable community."

***Jackson Keyser, Grade 6,
Sidwell Friends School***



Dear Donald J. Trump

Over the years there has been a hashtag: #BlackLivesMatter. Some people like to argue that all lives matter, but if that were true there would be no Black Lives Matter movement.

This all started in 2012 when Trayvon Martin was shot for looking suspicious, and his shooter (George Michael Zimmerman) was not held accountable for his actions. He was put on trial and found not guilty. In 2016, 258 black people were killed by police brutality in the United States. Thirty-nine of these people were unarmed. One of them, Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old father of five, became the 135th black person killed by police in 2016. The incident is on video, and it can clearly be seen that he simply did what the police told him to.

As a young black woman, I have been racially profiled. One particular time, after the movies, two of my black friends and I went into a store. The store employees continually asked us if we needed help and followed us around. After we left, I realized that they could have called security on us. We could have been one of the 258 people killed by police brutality.

In my opinion, not much has changed for people of color in America. Slavery, segregation, and now the reason behind Black Lives Matter, are all the same thing. We are being treated differently because of the color of our skin. Black people just want to be treated equally. There is no reason for us to be killed or even looked at differently. There is no reason for us to feel unsafe or insecure because of our skin color.

Why does the mistreatment satisfy people? Does it make these people happy to make us feel like we don't belong simply because of the color of our skin? Does what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood for mean absolutely nothing to them? We should be judged by who we are as a person, not by skin color. Unfortunately, this is not what's happening. In fact, not much has changed. So, Mr. Trump, what are you going to do about this? How are you going to help with this situation?

Sincerely,

Nyah Thomas, Grade 7, Friends Academy

Dear Mr. Trump,

Congratulations on winning the 2016 election. It was a long battle between you and Mrs. Clinton. For the next four years you will be the president of the United States of America. As you serve, here is one thing to think about: inexperienced police. Recently in our country we have had many occasions where police have had either a short temper or jumped to conclusions much too early and shot dead many citizens. This is completely unacceptable.

I believe these police are inexperienced and need better training. This training would be a test on the process of what a policeman or woman would do in order to make sure that no one is harmed. Our police are not protecting and serving anymore. They're scaring and overpowering. If we would just bring attention to this problem, we could direct our attention to other issues, such as rapid extinction of international species, climate change, terrorist threats, and poverty around the world. I believe we need to bring more attention to these police as a first priority. I do realize that all police are attempting to do their absolute best, and most do respect all people, but it's those who don't that we need to talk to.

It has officially happened. You have officially won. Now it's your turn to lead America. You, yes you, can make history by changing the environment and creating a safer community with more intelligent police. Please think about it.

Sincerely,

Carl Wagner, Grade 6, Westtown School

Dear Mr. Trump,

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I am hoping that you will dedicate your presidency to justice for all people. I hope that you use your presidential platform to give equality to all. I am asking you to stop the prejudice everywhere, so that there are no threats to justice anywhere.

One of the many injustices that I am craving for you to change is the death penalty. Our world is killing people who might not have even committed the crime they've been sentenced for. People who commit atrocious crimes can have a life sentence in prison, not be killed by the government. In 2015 alone, at least 1,634 people were executed in the world. Throughout the 1900s, 8,141 people were executed in the world. That is way too many. It is also possible that some of these people were wrongfully convicted. I believe that even the lives of deeply flawed criminals matter. I believe that everyone is here for a reason and deserves their rights.

Elie Wiesel, who fought for equality during the Holocaust, strongly stated, "There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest." I think that you, as our president, should never fail to protest and you should stand with me against injustice. I want you to stand against sexism, racism, homophobia, and every other injustice. One of the hot topics right now is the bathroom law. I want you to change this in your first year, and stand with transgendered individuals, and not fail to protest.

Eleanor Roosevelt once told America, "Justice cannot be for one side alone, but must be for both." We live in a place where justice is usually only given to one side. An example of this is the death penalty. Justice is something everyone deserves, and nobody should be forgotten.

There is a place called heaven. America is far from it. There are inequalities everywhere, and many things that you need to change. America isn't a paradise and probably never will be. With your help we can move America in the right direction. We can take what we have and use it to make America a place where everyone is treated the same, no matter who they are. If you use your power for justice, you will always be remembered.

Sincerely,

Lucy Joy Rupertus, Grade 6, Greene Street Friends School



Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump



March: Book One

By John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, illustrated by Nate Powell (2013)

- "This book is about people being treated unfairly. It would help the whole world if we all read it. We read this book in my class earlier this year, and it meant something to me. It puts you in someone else's shoes. Everybody should be treated equally."

Henry Walsh, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School

- "I think you should read this book because it is all about African American rights and it might change your perspective for the better about black people. *March* is mainly based in the past, but it applies to a lot of current day events. In 1972 all the people who believed in desegregation marched for black people's rights. On the 21st of January, 2017, women marched for their rights just like all the believers in 1972. Legal rights are very important because we all are the same on the inside and we all need the law to see that, even if the rest of us already do. I believe in women's rights, I also believe in African American rights. I think you will believe in African American rights and women's rights too after you read *March*."

Mia Palk, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School



**Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump**



**Out of
My Mind**

By Sharon
Draper
(2010)

- "Melody has cerebral palsy. Everyone at her school thinks she is not smart, but in reality she is exceptionally smart. People in the disabled community are just as smart as anyone else. After reading this book maybe you would enact policies to help the disabled community to fight injustices and inequality."

**Isabel Madauss, Grade 6,
Sidwell Friends School**

- "You have mocked a disabled reporter. This book is related because the main character has disabilities. She has cerebral palsy and can't talk, but is extremely smart. This book shows you not to judge people by the way they look."

**Baani Singh, Grade 6,
Sidwell Friends School**

- "Stereotypes and categorizing people is something we all do even without meaning to, but your words can be offensive and mean to other people. You should never judge someone by their appearance because people are not always what you think they are."

Nate Weinstock, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School

Dear President Donald Trump,

Being under 18, I had no say in the election, but I would like to mention that I would not have voted for you. You have very little care for minorities or anyone under you. My family is full of minorities, and I want them to be safe. I want my brother to be able to drive without having the fear of being pulled over and never seeing his family again. I want my uncle and aunt to be able to go to their local mosque without being harassed. I want my cousin to be able to marry whomever he wants to.

In your term as president, there are many issues that need to be addressed. A very important issue to focus on is the criminal justice system. The system is rigged. Too many people are being incarcerated, especially minorities due to the color of their skin. A way to help fix this problem would be to have police officers go through extensive training and wear body cameras at all times. Officers of the law need to be held accountable for their actions at all times. Racial profiling is terrible and should come to an end. Another issue is the problem of mass incarceration. According to Amnesty International, though the United States makes up 5 percent of the world's population, it is responsible for 22 percent of the world's prison population. This isn't right. Mass incarceration is also very expensive, and funding all those jails and prisons takes away money that could go toward education and other very useful programs. Steps need to be made to improve the country. If you really want to make America great again, make changes for the better.

Sincerely,

Nawal N'Garnim, Grade 10, Westtown School



President Trump,

The following is a letter of protest in regard to our xenophobic policies. Under the veil of the Republican primary, you openly declared that you would build a wall to prevent immigrants from Mexico from finding a home, a safe haven from the violence in their native country. You also stated that you would deport millions of undocumented immigrants who call America their home. Now I ask you: Will you separate families, snatch away the parents of a young American born in this country but whose parents were not? Will you have police enforcing the law, guns at the ready? If so, that is called fascism, which is unconstitutional and, in my mind, un-American. And what if this child's parents have no other place in the world that they can call home? If you deport them, you will likely condemn them to a life of poverty and despair, far away from the nation they call home in their hearts. I am a 13-year-old Texan and a native Spanish speaker. Under your administration, many of my friend's families would be deported, never to be seen again. I can assure you that while they may not be citizens, they are every bit as much patriotic Americans, no different from me. And in light of this, I urge you to do what is beneficial for all Americans who call this country home.

Sinceramente,

**Davis Brooks, Grade 8, Wharton Dual Language Academy,
member of Live Oak Meeting in Houston, Texas**

Dear, President Trump,

I am a dual American-Palestinian citizen currently living in Ramallah, Palestine. I wanted to write to you today to let you know that since you took office I've been disappointed in some of the controversial decisions you've made, most notably the travel ban that prevents citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States.

America has always welcomed immigrants from all over the world. About two years ago, I visited the Statue of Liberty for the first time. I can recall being at Ellis Island with my family where we looked up my great-great-grandpa's name from all those who immigrated to the United States in 1911. Mr. President, those immigrants made America great.

This is a human rights issue, and you as the president should help bring peace and equality between all people regardless of the color of their skin, race, or religion. As a Quaker school, we are taught many values. The one that affects me the most is equality. From all the news I've seen, you do not believe in or promote the principle of equality among citizens.

Mr. President, I know you have many goals you want to accomplish during your presidential term, but take this advice from a child: you'll never succeed if your goals are not just and fair!

Sincerely,

Malak Qaradeh, Grade 7, Ramallah Friends School



Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump



*The
Hunger
Games*

By Suzanne Collins (2008)

"I think you should read this book because it could possibly relate to events that could happen in the future in America. People in America can retaliate against you. They'll retaliate because they don't agree with your actions and they don't like what you are doing to our country. This is similar to how citizens of Panem retaliated against President Snow's actions in book 3, *Mockingjay*."

*Mackenzie Tyson, Grade 6,
Sidwell Friends School*



Dear Mr. President Donald J. Trump,

It's a pleasure to greet you from Costa Rica. I am writing this letter to ask you to continue to support my Costa Rican country's economy and ecotourism. Thanks to ecotourism, many Costa Rican people have a daily job for their living expenses and food for the home. My hope is that you can keep the same process as the Obama administration.

This issue may not be important to you, but it affects us; all of Latin America is waiting for your help and generosity. As a Latin person, I ask you support the immigrant families. Like everyone else we work hard to survive. It is sad to me that you want to deport as many Latinos as possible. I have family that lives in the USA, and the government has not wanted to help them, despite the fact that they have lived in the states for many years. There are many families that already have a life formed, that have nowhere to go because the United States is their home.

Mr. Trump, do not break the hearts of the children who want to be together with their parents. Consider the importance of family values and the future of the children, and help them grow by educating them without discrimination and racism. Don't construct the big wall to divide Latinos from people in the United States, no matter what their color or where we come from.

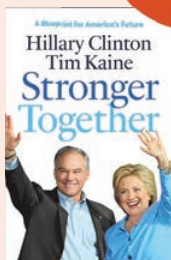
The most important thing is to be united. Together we can change the world in a good, positive way, learning to help each other, understand each other, and hear each other. If one day I wish to visit your country, I would be happy to be received with a good welcoming. For my part, I leave everything in the hands of God, wanting my voice to be heard.

Thank you for your attention and support. Sincerely,

Sara De La Torre, Grade 9, Monteverde Friends School



**Book
Recommendations
for President
Trump**



Stronger Together

By Hillary Clinton and
Tim Kaine (2016)

"This book was written by Hillary Clinton and Tim Kaine so I would suggest to read this so you can understand Hillary Clinton's perspective better, and see if you could apply some of her ideas to the United States."

**Noah Bay, Grade 6,
Westtown School**



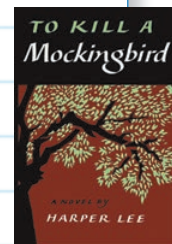
The Bible

"I recommend that you read the Bible because it is full of many scriptures that constantly say to love thy neighbor and respect one another. Given the things you said in your campaign, you clearly need some insight on love and respect. You should also do some research on William Penn, who was a Quaker who focused on love and equality; these might help to inspire you during your presidency."

Genevieve Green, Grade 10, William Penn Charter School

Dear President Trump,

America needs to be a safe place for anybody and everybody. Many people are fleeing war-torn countries to find a safe, new life in America. They dream of living somewhere free, and they deserve that. These people have escaped traumatic, life-threatening situations, and I feel it's our duty to open our arms to them and welcome them. America should be a place where everybody, including immigrants, members of the LGBT community, women, and people of different races, should be treated equally.



I would suggest that you read *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. In it, a black man is put on trial for a crime he never committed, and is found guilty, simply for the color of his skin. In the end, he ends up dead, when he was always completely innocent in the first place. The book takes place in the late 1930s, and we tend to think that we've moved past these times, that nothing like that could ever happen now. There is still injustice in this world. While the characters in the book are fictional, the subject is very, very real.

The events happening in this world today have caused many young people, like myself, to have their eyes opened and be exposed to the ugly parts of this world. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is told through the eyes of an eight-year-old girl who navigates the world alongside her eleven-year-old brother. With their father being the lawyer of the innocent black man, the two young kids are exposed to terrible injustice.

It hits them both hard, particularly her brother. It's clear that he's been shocked by the injustice of the world, and has to work hard to get his faith in humans restored. He is a character who never took much interest in seeing the real world before, but now he can't help but see what's going on right before his eyes. Angry and hurt, he is forced to grow up right then and there. This has happened to many young people, including me, just like him. We live his storyline. We want to have a voice. We are young, but we have opened our eyes and see what's going on in the world. We want to have our ideas heard.

The book is very much still important to today's events. Injustice still very much exists. We ask for your help in stopping this. I ask that you please look around at the faces of all of the people here in America today, and not see black people and white people, men and women, gay people and transgender people, but just people. We are all people.

Sincerely, a concerned citizen,

***Gillian C. Murray, Grade 7, Leaves of Learning, member of
Oxford (Ohio) Meeting***

Dear Mr. President,

As you have taken office, you have disrupted many societies throughout the world. You promise to increase our nation's borders, to accurately vet immigrants, and to make America great again, all from what people say is your hubris and excessive nationalism. Having pride in your country never is unethical, but when it becomes jingoism it affects the communities around us. When Napoleon ruled over France, he instituted a form of patriotism throughout the country. Although this gave citizens an identity and something to live for, it developed into expansionist nationalism, filling the French civilians with hubris and ultimately retracting France's reign. We are currently headed down this path. Your speeches express a great deal of patriotism, however when you speak, many people ask if history may repeat itself.

Another aspect people fear is your temperament and how effortless it is to spark an altercation with you. You denounce people on TV, and hardly listen to anyone. People think that your attitude is paltry, but I find it hypocritical. In the past century, our country had an amazing time period. We expanded votes to minorities, overcame three considerable wars, and flew to the moon. People were able to agree on basic political views and accomplish deeds that make America what it is today. However, since we conceived the idea of "liberal" and "conservative," it gave some permission to dehumanize each other. You may not like someone for their opinions; however, when we call each other "bleeding-heart liberals" or "greed-fueled conservatives," it's no better than barbarizing an ethnicity. As a result, we can barely focus on what we need to do to save our country. People are so intent on disagreeing with each other over social media like Facebook and Twitter that we are not attempting to find something Americans can agree on. During the French Revolution, France itself was going through an identity crisis. People were so busy opposing factions and killing each other that no one focused on how to secure France's government. This is repeating today. People who claim that you're a loudmouthed brute are too egotistical to consider your message because you're a "conservative fool."

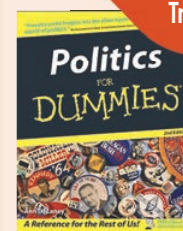
I don't feel that you deserve the objections you receive. I feel that nationalism can help America. However, for someone who promises that "America now will be heard," perhaps it's time to listen to everyone, not just your supporters. There was a time where there were such things as liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats, and people managed to cooperate to move the country forward. This message is for you and for everyone. America will never progress if we continue counterproductive bickering. You are the president of America, and you won fairly. Instead of squabbling with people on Facebook who may not necessarily agree with you, it might be time to acknowledge and work with your fellow Americans; that is what brought us the amazing success we have seen in the twentieth century.

Sincerely,

Jacob Orloff, Grade 10, Sandy Spring Friends School



Book
Recommendations
for President
Trump

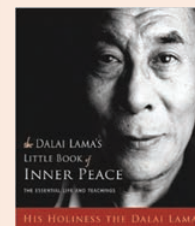


Politics for Dummies

By Ann DeLaney (2002)

"I would recommend *Politics for Dummies*. President Trump needs to actually know something about politics."

**Jackson Shumard, Grade 8,
Frankford Friends School**



The Dalai Lama's Little Book of Inner Peace

By His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2002)

"After reading the foreword, go to page 129 and think about what he has to say about short-term politics. I hope you will understand what he has to say. The entire book can be thought-provoking."

Patrick O'Rourke, Grade 6, Westtown School



**Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump**



***So Far from
the Bamboo
Grove***

By Yoko Kawashima Watkins
(1994)

"You should read this book to widen your perspective about refugees and learn about what it's like to move to a new country. This book is based on a true story which occurred during World War II. Sticking together as a family, friends, nation, city, state, or world will improve our society and stop most of our issues."

**Ayorkor Laryea, Grade 6,
Sidwell Friends School**

Dear President Donald J. Trump,

I attend a private Quaker school in Pennsylvania, but my parents are not from here. My dad is from Costa Rica, and my mom is from Trinidad and Tobago; because of this I have seen much hatred and confusion targeted toward me and my unique family. This is one of the reasons I have found a haven in the Quaker community for they are accepting of anyone and everyone. I am not here to preach to you about the importance of community and love of all people (including Black and Latino lives); I am here to hopefully open your eyes a little more. Though I am just a 14-year-old girl caught between two worlds, I would like to offer you some advice for your four years in office.

I believe that one of this country's major issues is immigration. Though many families do enter the United States illegally, there should be a process for them to correct their mistake in a faster way than is available now. I believe that instead of coming in with drugs and crime, they are coming in with hope, faith, and wonder. These were the same foundations that America had when Ellis Island was crowded with people of all cultures hoping to start a new future. Those experiences are very closely related to the situation of immigrants coming to America. This history brought us to who we are today, a melting pot of different races.

Destroying the very reason we are a unique and beautiful country will deplete us of many special and beautiful moments. By joining our unique traits and cultures, we become a country that is vibrant, colorful, and special. We should be tearing walls down, not building them up. When our ancestors arrived on the shores of this country and saw the Statue of Liberty welcoming them, they knew they had reached home. The torch represents the way to freedom, showing us the path to liberty. To me it represents using our inner light to find our way through the darkest hour. I am reaching out to you, reaching out to your light, hoping that you will see the light in others, no matter where they come from. By unifying people of all types and cultures, we will create a stronger and better America. Let us keep the parts of history that make us the unique nation we strive to be.

Sincerely,

Sahmara Cherise Spence Rogers, Grade 9, Westtown School



Dear President Trump,

I was born in Silver Spring, Maryland, but I want you to know that the people in my family are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, and they have all done great things. My father painted your hotel, and he is an immigrant. He left his home in Nicaragua, then moved to Guatemala, and then came to where I live now. Many other people that have worked for you have similar stories. If you stop immigration you're not going to have as many people to build your hotels. I wouldn't try to stop immigration if I were president; I'd try to make it easier. If you're trying to build a wall, Mexico's not going to pay for it, and because of that taxpayers are going to—that wall is going to cost billions. If undocumented immigrants bother you, make them documented. . . .

Read the rest of this letter at Friendsjournal.org/studentvoices2017.

In friendship,

Pierre Alvarez, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School

May 2017 *Friends Journal*

Dear President Trump,

I am a Quaker, and I think you should know that Quakers believe everyone is equal. People can be a different gender, age, race, or religion, but we are still people. I go to a Quaker school so this concept isn't new to me. George Fox was the founder of Quakers and a very important person in history. In England in the 1600s, Fox and other Quakers refused to tip their hats or bow to the king because they said no one is better than someone else. Right now you might be thinking this is an interesting fact, but I know you are definitely thinking, "How does this apply to me?" As the new president of the United States of America, you should know that even though you are the president, you aren't more important than other people. You should also accept how everyone thinks, even the people who don't exactly have tenderness toward you.

Quakers believe that there is good and evil inside all human beings, and each human being can choose between them. Everyone has the power to choose good over evil if they really want to. So, as the president, you should be a good role model and choose good.

Refugees are people! Both of my parents came from Iran at around my age, and they are both very successful today. My dad became a dentist, and my mom became a doctor. Today my mom works in the government in anti-drugs. Many other people were immigrants or refugees but came to the USA and did good things, so you shouldn't ban some people from coming to the USA. Quakers believe in everyone deserving a chance because we are all equal and no one should have more than another person. I trust you will help this country and keep your promise to "Make America great again!"

A million smiles,

Sarah Bagheri, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School



Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump



Lord of the Flies

By William Golding (1954)

"I have come to realize through reading this book that we need a strong leader. Please read *Lord of the Flies* and learn from the protagonist, a boy named Jack who is a tremendous leader. I hope that you can grow from reading this book."

***Benjamin Grear, Grade 9,
Westtown School***

Dear Mr. President,

Congrats, Mr. President, on your recent election! I'm sure you will do a great job! I want to thank you for giving the American people hope again. Although I live in New York, which is a state filled with intolerant people, I have and always will be a proud Republican; and along with my family, I proudly showed my support and broadcasted my hopes for you throughout the tough and grueling campaign. As a New Yorker, I and everyone who shares my view are constantly surrounded by hate from the left. I even get criticized for being a "fake" Asian, or a traitor to people of color because both of my parents are legal immigrants.

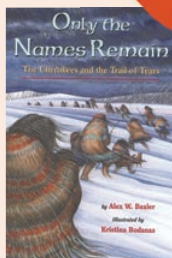
As a proud Republican and a firm believer in America first, I think we need to realize that we are not helping ourselves by taking in refugees. We aren't helping ourselves with the millions of illegal immigrants. They're taking jobs from us, and they're infiltrating our system and making taxpayers pay for them. What I don't think the left understands is how legal immigrants are usually much more qualified than someone who just hopped on a train from Mexico. If we open our country to the whole world, we'll be overwhelmed. We need to put America first, and only then will it become great again.

Hundreds of thousands of blue-collar workers in the Midwest have lost their jobs, and I know that you worked hard to bring back manufacturers to the United States. You're ending the suffering that was only worsened when Barack Obama took the oath of office. When I watched you swear to defend the Constitution on January 20 this year, I don't think I've ever been more proud to be American. You're giving us, the American people, hope again, and I know that you will make America great again!

Pius Lo, Grade 9, Friends Academy



**Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump**



**Only the
Names
Remain**

By Alex W. Bealer (1996)

"It's a nonfiction book about historical Cherokees and the Trail of Tears. I think you should read this book because you can see what previous presidents have done that caused a disaster. Andrew Jackson let his own greed and others' greed get in the way of fair and right decisions and honoring treaties. Read it so you don't repeat it."

**Meredith Jenkins, Grade 6,
Live Oak Meeting attendee**

Dear Donald J. Trump,

Recently, there has been injustice toward Muslim people both in and out of the United States. Your travel ban has worsened the stereotype that the religion of Islam is associated with terrorism.

This stereotype began in 2001, when the Twin Towers collapsed because of a plane crash done on purpose. U.S. citizens have been criticizing us, saying that our God, Allah, is "Satan" or loves killing people, etc. Muslims have been shot, injured, hurt (both physically and emotionally), and have had to face loads of prejudice against them for a long time. We still do.

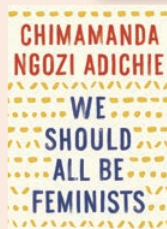
None of this is true; many of this country's people do not understand. Terrorists are not true Muslims. They use the religion as an excuse. They abuse the true meaning of being a Muslim individual. "Islam" even translates to "peace." True Muslims know that terrorists are NOT Muslim, that ISIS is NOT Muslim.

Now that you have put the travel ban in action, a ban that targets seven Muslim-dominant countries, both foreigners and Muslim American citizens are affected. Foreigners who have been waiting years to get into this country are being stopped solely because they come from one of those seven countries. Because they are Muslim. They all are innocent people just trying to have another chance at a better life. Muslim American citizens like myself have all been facing even more pressure and are being criticized everywhere we go. I have been called a terrorist, and have been told that I am associated with ISIS plenty of times. People still think I am someone with ill intentions when I am not. There are reasons why people protest against you: because you have proven to us that you are Islamophobic.

What can you do to help solve this? Arrange events where non-Muslims are educated about the Islam religion, raise awareness about all of this, talk about how we are not terrorists and that we are normal. We do not deserve this at all.

Best,

Savannah Mahmud, Grade 7, Friends Academy



Dear President Trump,

You have said some extremely bigoted things, making it difficult for me to respect you. I know a book that can help you to understand why you cannot speak the way you do. This book is a personal favorite of mine, entitled *We Should All Be Feminists*. The book was written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, an amazingly smart writer and feminist. I think you could learn several things from her writings that would prove helpful in the White House. . . . *Read the rest of this letter at Friendsjournal.org/studentvoices2017.*

Acadia Pesner, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School



Dear President Trump,

My name is Juliet Ramey-Lariviere. I am many things: I am a woman, a friend, an ally, a Chinese immigrant, and a proud member of a multiracial family. I was adopted when I was a baby, and my parents gave me a sense of security and belonging, my white parents. Despite our skin color difference, we talk like a family, we travel like a family, we argue like a family, and we comfort each other like a family.

My school community is also my family. We come from different countries, speak different languages, have different body types, vary in sexual orientation and gender identity, in economic standing, skin color, and religion. And I cannot imagine life without them, whether we believe in the same things or not.

Each of my family members is someone's brother, mother, father, sister, best friend, peer, coworker, or significant other. My family members know people on the other side of the world. We are all interconnected. As a human race we must understand and accept that we are connected, through friends, language, religion, race, and that one cannot be selective.

I am a human. I have a heart and DNA just like any other: white, black, Muslim, Native American, or Jewish. How can I ignore a person so similar to me? How can anyone? I have my own set of beliefs, you have yours, and they have theirs. I am not trying to convince you to adopt my beliefs; I am simply asking you to consider your impact on others. I do not just mean large political issues; I mean a simple bathroom sign, or a trash can full of recyclable plastic. How do these things affect the person sitting next to you? What about the person sitting across from you?

I write this letter from a place of privilege. I live in New York City, I attend an independent school, I eat every day, I am right handed and can climb stairs, I am writing this letter on my personal computer. I am recognizing my privilege; I am accepting that many of the topics in the news will not directly affect me. I am acknowledging this, but I am writing this letter to you. I believe that you are privileged, sir, please correct me if I am wrong. And while my privilege is different than yours, I am reminding both of us that we as people of privilege should, no, *must* not sit idly by. Especially while those just as vulnerable as us, just as creative and beautiful and passionate and human are suffering and scared. Please hear me, please hear them, please hear us.

In Friendship,

***Juliet Ramey-Lariviere, Grade 11, Brooklyn Friends School,
member of Fifteenth Street Meeting in New York City***



Book
Recommendation
for President
Trump



Wonder

By R.J. Palacio (2012)

• "You should read this book because it lets you feel the emotion of someone else. In the book, you see the main character (August) getting bullied which shows you how it feels to be degraded in such ways which I believe would help you explore how others feel."

***Ava Johnson,
Grade 6, Sidwell Friends
School***

• "I think it's a good book, and you should read it because it makes people feel empathetic, see things from everyone's point of view, and learn to treat people like they want to be treated. It also teaches us how to be a good friend and stand up for others. These are good qualities for a president to have for many reasons. If you read this book, it might help you be a better president."

Solveig Daniels, Grade 6, Westtown School

***Thank you to all the participants of the 4th annual Student Voices Project!
View the full list of 290 names at Friendsjournal.org/studentvoices2017.***