

Jerry Hanson: America is strongest when all have a voice

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Trump's presidential campaign declared our country has become a dumping ground for undesirable foreigners. Trump called immigrants here without legal authority "not humans, They're animals."

Since then, Trump has found new words to label not just immigrants but those he dislikes. "LOW IQ" has become his common slur for women, Black and brown and Hispanic people. Those who find fault with his policies or offer criticism are said to be suffering from "Trump Derangement Syndrome."

Dissent by Trump's detractors is met with claims that they are "lunatics, demented, crazy mentally deranged, sick people" who should be institutionalized or criminally locked up. Disparaging people, even well-known public figures, is the dictator's trick to minimize them, to make them small in the eyes of the country.

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This strategy is as old as our nation. Its purpose is to divide people and turn them against one another. It allows Trump followers to see "others" as alien and question their right to be here at all.

Trump demeans Democrats and denigrates those who question his actions and executive orders. Our founders designed our Constitution to protect "we the people's" freedoms and liberty, not an elected official's hurt feelings.

When a President suggests speaking against him should be prosecuted, our system of justice and our Democracy is in danger. America has always been a diverse

republic embracing not only every color and creed but also unbridled dissent.

A Democracy means people will disagree openly, loudly and angrily. Different perspectives are how we prevent a consolidation of power from becoming tyrannical abuse. When Trump calls those who voice disagreement criminals, he is telling us that only certain voices in America are legitimate.

We must refuse to treat dissent as treason and diversity as a threat. We must refuse to go along with a leader who normalizes hate and exclusion. America is strongest when it gives voice to people to speak out rather than insist some must sit silent.

Freedom of speech is not a flaw in our America—it is the core and reflection of America.

Hanson, of Elkhorn, is a member of the Walworth County Democratic Party.