

We need a US President who can get appropriately angry

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I wholly understood Jo Biden's [demand](#) aimed at Trump last night when he said 'Will you shut up, man!' The sentiment was justified. The anger appropriate. The frustration at Trump's deliberate attempt to close down debate by breaking the agreed rules of engagement was suitable. Do not ask me to condemn Biden's outburst when it was apt. I won't.

In fact, let me go a little further. I think Biden was right to be so direct. And he was right to be forthright. This was, in fact, righteous anger, directed at two things.

The first was incompetence. Just as it is appropriate to yell at the person in serious danger to warn them of the immediate risk that they are in, so too is it appropriate to raise a voice, and express real concern when a person's incompetence creates immediate peril for others. There are moments when the able have to say 'Stop it, now' because we will all lose if you don't.

The second was that the implication that the person the anger was aimed at was not fit to hold their position. Biden make this clear. He said that Trump was 'so un-presidential'. And he was right to do so. His anger expressed a sentiment many feel. Biden has the opportunity to say it. And he could do so from a position of authority. As a Vice President with eight years experience he knows from close quarters what the job of President involves. And what he did was what those with competence sometimes have to do, and that is to call out the incompetent. That is their duty.

I have seen it said that the debate was uncivil. Biden's comment was included in the evidence that this was the case. I disagree. Trump was uncivil. We know, and expect, that. But there is no duty to tolerate that, as some suggest. The demand that we are all 'nice' all the time, which seems to now be commonplace, which demand forbids the expression of criticism, let alone anger on occasion, is deeply dangerous when faced with real risk.

That is partly because those who deliberately create risk to oppress those who they expect to always be 'nice' use that knowledge to get their way. Abuse follows, as night

does day, and that is not acceptable. The failure to speak up in such situations is an action that facilitates the abuse.

And it is also partly because this is to deny the nature of us as human beings. There is good reason why we must all learn to control anger. We cannot co-exist unless we do. But that does not mean all anger is wrong. Anger is a normal human reaction to injustice, including that created deliberately or otherwise by the malicious and the incompetent. And sometimes that anger has to be expressed to ensure that a wrong is addressed. To do otherwise would be wrong.

I don't want a US President who is perpetually angry. That serves no one. But would I like to see a US President who can identify abuse and who is angry about it and demand action to address it? Yes, I do. As I want the same in many other situations.

And for the record, I do very occasionally get angry. It's not often. But I do, usually when faced with incompetence that creates unnecessary and avoidable risk that has to be addressed. I don't apologise for that. The alternative is to facilitate the incompetence and endorse the failing. I won't do that.

And I know all the risks from getting angry. It does not make you popular. Biden can expect a backlash for not being 'nice'. But I'd remind those who want the world to be nice of the words of George Bernard Shaw who suggested that reasonable people bend themselves to the ways of the world, and unreasonable people seek to bend the world to their ways, meaning that all progress is dependent upon the existence of unreasonable people. I think he was right. If Joe Biden is a touch unreasonable thank goodness for that. It is an essential quality in a President. And sometimes a few eggshells will get broken as a result.