

Danielle Allen
Cambridge, MA

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Dear David and Mike,

I write to tender my resignation as a contributing columnist to the *Washington Post*. I do this with a heavy heart. I have loved my time writing for the *Post* and working with all the wonderful people at *Post Opinions*. This has been one of the best experiences of my professional life.

I first began writing for the *Post* during the 2007-08 presidential election year. My affiliation began because I was frustrated that mainstream journalists weren't covering the disinformation about Obama (the "Obama is a Muslim" rumor and the birth certificate issue) even though this disinformation was driving poll numbers. I tracked down the sources of the "Obama is a Muslim" rumors, and the *Post* did a story about it (on the style pages!). In this way, we broke open the ban on covering disinformation and misinformation and started to help people face the new era in which we now live.

Of course, one of the most important figures driving re-circulation of those rumors at that time was Donald Trump. Although I was already back then concerned about the power of misinformation and disinformation, never did I imagine that our society would prove so weak against its force, and in face of one of its most persistent purveyors.

I consider the decision by Mr. Bezos to pull the *Washington Post* out of the business of writing presidential endorsements to be a shameful capitulation to misinformation. In this world of misinformation and disinformation, we need bracingly clear examples of well-reasoned arguments. The idea that this is a decision "in support of our readers' ability to make up their own minds" is laughable, and condescending. In what way does a well-reasoned argument limit anyone else's ability to make up their own minds? To the contrary, the right implicit statement at the end of every argument is precisely the statement with which Aristotle ended his *Art of Rhetoric*, "I have spoken, you have heard, now judge." The best support for your reader's ability to make up their own minds is presentation of the best arguments. Even when the editorial page makes good arguments, people will still make up their own minds! Imagine that!

To abdicate the responsibility to communicate a standard for good judgment on hard questions is to abandon this country's culture to degradation at a point of extreme vulnerability. It is akin to a good teacher walking out of the classroom during a teacher shortage.

Independence has been lost with this decision, not gained. I depart because I treasured that independence.

Yours sincerely,



Danielle

CC: Will Lewis