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OPINION | COMMENTARY

Forget the Media Caricature. Here's What I Believe

I support U.S. generosity, decentralized power, evidence-based science, and open discourse.

By Rebekah Mercer

Feb. 14, 2018 6:58 p.m. ET

Over the past 18 months, I have been the subject of intense speculation and public scrutiny, in large part because of the philanthropic investments of the Mercer Family Foundation and the political contributions made by my father and me. I don't seek attention for myself and much prefer to keep a low profile. But my natural reluctance to speak with reporters has left me vulnerable to the media's sensational fantasies.

Some have recklessly described me as supporting toxic ideologies such as racism and anti-Semitism. More recently I have been accused of being "anti-science." These absurd smears have inspired a few gullible, but vicious, characters to make credible death threats against my family and me.

Last month a writer for the Financial Times suggested mysteriously that my "political goals are something she has never publicly defined." In broad strokes this is what I believe:

I believe in a kind and generous United States, where the hungry are fed, the sick are cared for, and the homeless are sheltered. All American citizens deserve equality and fairness before the law. All people should be treated with dignity and compassion. I support a United States that welcomes immigrants and refugees to apply for entry and ultimately citizenship. I reject as venomous and ignorant any discrimination based on race, gender, creed, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

As a federalist, I believe that power should be decentralized, with those wielding it

closely accountable to the people they serve. There is obviously a role for the federal government. But I support a framework within which citizens from smaller political entities—states, counties, cities, towns and so on—can determine the majority of the laws that will govern them. Society's problems will never be solved by expensive, ineffective and inflexible federal programs.



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I am deeply committed to research and the scientific method. I have degrees from Stanford in biology, mathematics, and operations research and engineering economic systems. I believe that genuine scientific discovery flourishes only in an atmosphere of dispassionate, open-minded inquiry, with

research evaluated according to neutral, evidence-based criteria. I oppose politicized science, in which researchers cannot study certain subjects—or even ask certain questions—for fear of career-ending backlash and persecution.

These beliefs shape my philanthropy and my political activity. I support ideas and policies, not individual politicians as people. The only thing I ask of the politicians I back is that they be true to the promises that they made to their constituents during their campaigns.

I supported Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign because he promised to tackle entrenched corruption on both sides of the aisle. I continue to support President Trump, which does not mean I agree with every position he has taken or every thought he has tweeted. I remain hopeful that he will continue striving to fulfill his campaign promises.

I own a minority stake in Breitbart News (where I have no editorial authority) because I believe it adds an important journalistic voice to the American conversation. Stephen Bannon, its former chairman, took Breitbart in the wrong direction. Now that Mr. Bannon has resigned, Breitbart has the opportunity to refine its message and expand

its influence.

I have chosen to involve myself with important policy issues, and with some of the institutions that discuss them, because I am, first and foremost, a mother. I am raising my children to be humble, productive citizens who will treat all people with dignity, respect and empathy. I want them to accept personal responsibility and to be aware that they alone will have to answer for their choices and actions. I hope that my children will show stoicism and perseverance through adversity, as well as an ability to think for themselves and challenge conventional wisdom when necessary.

I also hope that they will embrace debate as a vital part of human progress. I am devoted to protecting individual rights to ensure that my children will mature in a country where they cannot be persecuted or imprisoned or have their livelihoods destroyed because of their thoughts and beliefs.

This country was founded on the principle of open discourse. Intellectual diversity and vigorous, reasoned debate have been fundamental to America's success, making us the freest, most prosperous and most innovative society in human history. But we have lost our way. As my family and I know firsthand, America is now a society that threatens, pillories, and harms those who dare to question the status quo.

But questioning the status quo is more important now than ever. America's future depends on it.

Ms. Mercer is president of the New York-based Mercer Family Foundation.

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