



ANCHOR CHANGE

A Birthday Letter to America

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Dear America,

When I was thirteen, I read enough books to earn twenty entries in the Green Bay library's reading contest. There were a lot of prizes. I put all of the entries into one: a tour of the local newspaper, the Green Bay Press Gazette, with the political cartoonist Joe Heller. I won. At the end of the tour, Heller asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. I said a journalist. He walked me over to an editor's desk, and I left with a job writing a teen section for a real newspaper.

I've thought about that a lot lately, because of what it took. I had to want it badly enough to put every chip on one square. I had to ask for what I wanted, and someone had to be willing to make an introduction. That's the deal America has run on for 250 years: some ambition, some luck, and somebody who opens a door.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband and asked him to remember the ladies. He didn't, not really. She wrote anyway. She had no vote, no platform, no way to be heard except a letter to a man who might listen. That letter is one of the most famous documents of the founding era, and she wrote it because she had something to say and used the only channel available to her.

Here's what strikes me at 250: the channels multiplied. That's the whole story of my career, and it's the part I'd most want somebody in 2076 to understand about this moment.

I spent 25 years at the collision of technology and politics — building the Republican Party's first digital operation, then running global elections policy at Facebook through some of the hardest years anyone has had in that seat. I've watched the internet do real damage. I've sat in rooms where we made impossible tradeoffs with pain on either side, and I've lived with the ones we got wrong. I'm not writing to tell you it's all fine.

But I've also watched something Abigail Adams would have recognized immediately. A woman who would never have gotten past a gatekeeper now has an audience. A kid in a town of 100,000 doesn't have to win a raffle to reach an editor. She just publishes. The people who were never going to be handed the room built their own. That has been, on balance, one of the most

genuinely American things I've ever gotten to watch happen — the expansion of who gets to speak, and who gets to build.

Which brings me to what I'm actually seeing right now, and why I'm hopeful.

More and more Americans are building their own work. Portfolio careers, businesses of one, second and third acts. I did it myself in 2021, when I left the company that had been my identity for a decade and started Anchor Change with no map. Nearly every job I've had, I had to create — the door wasn't there, so I built one. And what I keep finding is that I'm not unusual. I'm early.

People are reinventing themselves because they have to, and then discovering that they get to design a life that actually fits: room for the community, the family, the caregiving, the volunteering, the thing they always wanted to try. Single, married, kids, no kids, 25 or 65. Reinvention is not a modern coping mechanism. It's the oldest American habit we have. This country has done it roughly every generation for 250 years.

And underneath all of it — every new platform, every new tool, every technology that was supposed to replace the last thing — the through-line hasn't moved. It's still people wanting to be heard by other people. That's what Abigail Adams wanted. It's what I wanted at thirteen. The medium keeps changing. The want doesn't.

So here's what I'd say to America on its birthday, and to whoever opens this in 2076.

The thing worth protecting isn't any particular technology. It's choice. We choose who leads us. We choose what we build and who we build it with. We choose what to believe and who to believe it from. That's the actual American invention — not the tools, the agency.

And I know how tempting it is to hand that over. The choices are overwhelming. There's always someone willing to make them for you, and it is genuinely easier to let them. Every hard thing I've watched go wrong in my field started with people deciding the decision belonged to somebody else.

It doesn't. It never has. Democracy isn't something we watch from the sidelines. It's something we build, brick by imperfect brick.

Two hundred and fifty years in, we're still a country of people who put all twenty entries on the one thing they actually want. I hope that's still true in 2076. I'd bet on it.

Happy birthday.