



# LET'S TALK to each other

Newsday's editorial board asked what Long Islanders can do this holiday season to improve the tone of our political conversation. Here's a sampling of responses from readers.

Speak with respect, stop the name-calling, leave the hyperbole behind, don't assume that all members of a group are alike.

*Bob Blair, Sayville*

I believe everyone needs to take a step back, and rethink his or her inner self. It seems that we have gone forward so fast with technology that we have forgotten how to acknowledge people with a smile or a kind word. It is so simple to just say "Good morning" to anyone you come in contact with — in a supermarket or just taking a walk.

Let's bring back simple kindness — not just for the holidays, but always. My mother said, "Always put yourself in the other person's shoes." I remember this all the time. It's nice to be nice; it doesn't cost a penny.

*Patricia Duryea, Babylon*

Issues like race, culture and religion can be particularly difficult to discuss with those we don't know well and who have differing points of view. A big reason for such divides on Long Island is the segregated nature of our communities, racially and economically. How can I find common ground with "the other" when we don't shop, congregate or learn together? Stereotypes and ignorance are per-

Put down the cellphone. Put down the iPhone and iPads, and talk to each other. Spend at least one or two nights a week eating together as a family. We need to put God in our lives. We need peace and it begins with us.

*Joan Hagens, Amityville*

petuated. Children are not born with such stereotypes.

I propose beginning the process of coming together by organizing youth exchange programs in which students from neighboring districts with different socio-economic and/or racial makeups gather for structured reflection and dialogue to help them get to know and understand each other.

Parents could be brought in for special events in which the young people talk about their experiences. This could be a catalyst for bringing Long Islanders together.

*Frank Pomata, Patchogue*

Respect one another's opinions; agree to disagree. Accept the better choice for the best outcome, rather than for "the party." What's lacking most of all is civility, kindness and respect. Too many people are so busy being right, they don't listen, let alone consider another person's opinion or perspective.

Pray for one another, pray for peace, pray for healing from the bitterness that is gripping our nation.

We've forgotten how to share, care and support one another. Smile and be grateful for your blessings. Hold elected officials accountable for their actions so that they serve their constituents rather than their donors. Tolerate differences and celebrate our diversity. If we love our country, we should live like it!

*Luisa Farrell, Seaford*

We should all strive to be kind to one another and understand that everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion. Race, religion, gender, etc., should not matter. We are all flesh and blood on the inside. Everyone should listen to the Beatles song "All You Need Is Love." Don't give in to the hate that others have shown! Just love one another! Perhaps we should have a truce this holiday season on all issues that separate our country. Perhaps our politicians should do the same. Let us come together as a nation and try to

work together for a better United States of America!  
*Fortune Vilcko, Hicksville*

We should talk to each other as humans, not people with political axes to grind. We can dig deeper into people's beliefs by going beyond politics, asking such questions as, Do you believe all children deserve enough to eat and a good education? Do you believe corporations should market drugs that they know are unsafe? Should the government regulate the safety of cars and air travel? Should our government ensure that our food is safe and that our water is not polluted? Should only people with money get the health attention they need, or should everyone be provided with health care? Should banks and financial firms be allowed to trick you out of your money? When we get down to people's philosophies of life, we will find that we agree on much more than we disagree.

*George George, Medford*

I have never seen this country so divided. We have to start respecting other people's opinions. We have to start listening to each other, and when something is wrong, it is wrong regardless of which political party has said it. And finally, we have to accept the results of the 2016 election. Those who are unhappy with the results can change things in two years.

*Richard Corso, Oceanside*

As long as the basic American "value" is "How do we keep 'those' people out of our neighborhood, our hamlet, our town, our county, our state, our country?" we won't change the divisions of our nation. This basic "value" is ingrained in Long Island.

*Thomas Muench, Brookhaven*

We must have a dialogue with intelligence and without being antagonistic. I am sick of hearing about blue or red states. This is the United States, and don't ever forget that. Let the president do his job and get proper consideration from members of Congress, regardless of which side of the aisle they sit on.

*Bette Engel, Howard Beach*

Learn how to respect one another. Teach our young people how to be kind, caring, and considerate of one another. Keep in mind that we are one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. If we keep these few simple suggestions utmost in our mind, we will continue to be the greatest nation in this world.

*Dennis Hoffer, Holbrook*

We are one nation full of different nations. We are one culture made up of many cultures. We are people who come from people looking for freedom and have found our way in the greatest nation on the planet. We sink or swim together as a people. To quote from a person greater than me, "No religion is inferior to another, and no people is greater than another." We need to stop talking at each other, and start talking to each other.

*Randy Zeitlin, Levittown*

I met recently with a police chief of a town I represent in the Suffolk County Legislature. As we talked, we came to realize we each had a professional and personal connection to the horrible events of Sept. 11, 2001. We share memories of the profound unity we felt in New York after that horrific, painful day. That unity was felt throughout the country. But now look at us — Americans are at each other's throats, it seems, on every imaginable issue. We have lost our gratitude for the gift of each other's company, and for our unique freedom as Americans, to express disagreements while maintaining important relationships and moving our communities

Time to sing a favorite song.  
Let's all pray and sing along.  
Time to think of a special gift.  
Let's all put negative thoughts to sift.  
Keep our hearts as light as air.  
Keep our nation in a prayer.  
We all want peace on Earth, every day,  
every way.  
We can do it if we try.  
If we don't, hang our heads and cry.  
*MaryAnne Santora, Floral Park*

forward. So that will be my goal this holiday season — to focus on gratitude for the freedom to pursue our dreams and to maintain a civil, respectful ability to disagree and to still get along.

*Bridget Fleming, Noyack*

Start with knowledge about what is true. Some of the loudest mouths are ignorantly arguing for falsehoods. Example: Voter fraud is rampant. The data say otherwise. The point is that when you are just repeating something you heard, and you like it, you are likely to argue for it. Without knowledge, you argue from emotion. You lack data, so you scream buzzwords. It's hard to have a conversation with that approach.

If you had knowledge of the data, you might be more willing to have a conversation about what really bothers you. It might be ugly, but at least it could be honest. At least now we could have a conversation.

*Michael Macaluso, North Babylon*

It's the holiday season, and many of us are about to have more dinners and conversations with relatives than in the other 11 months combined. Instead of fighting over the usual politics and religion, we're better off discussing kitchen-table economics — critical issues like employment, health care and retirement that affect everyone 24/7/365. It sounds daunting, but talking about the problems we share and deal with every day is guaranteed to be more fruitful than arguing over the latest media-driven narratives. That's the true meaning of solidarity, which is another thing we don't talk about nearly enough. We often hear words like "hope" and "believe" this time of year. More talk about solidarity and kitchen-

It's easy. Follow the golden rule.  
Keep politics and religion off  
the table, at least for the holi-  
days. Just enjoy each other's  
company. Be kind to others.  
Life is too short.

*Lisa Bruno, Bethpage*

table economics would be welcome. So this year I'm going to bond with my younger cousins over our student loans. I wish I were kidding.

*Daniel Hinton, Baldwin*

Advocate. Listen. Respect. Those three words are the core elements of any productive conversation between opposing viewpoints. Advocate for your position using facts. Don't attack the person, rebut the idea. Teach, don't preach. Listen to what the other person is saying. Try to understand what led to his or her beliefs. Don't reject what others say without giving it consideration. Good ideas can come from anywhere. Most important, respect the other person as a person, not a label. We are more than our political beliefs. Don't demonize those who disagree with you. None of us want to destroy our country. We all have our own personal struggles, so be kind. In the end, there is more that unites us than divides us. Find that common ground, and build on it. That's the only way we can hope to find solutions to the challenges we all face as a nation.

*Douglas Vandewinckel, East Northport*

We need a time-out from politics. Political discourse needs to be kept in its own space. Sports, entertainment, culture and social activities should remain free of politics. Government is not a sport, and politics should not become a blood sport.

*Michael Zelenak, Setauket*

This is not rocket science! Return to the basics: family values. Kindness begins at home. Be polite, listen, observe. Let the other person express his or her views; you don't have to agree, but you should be respectful. Sometimes you can meet in the middle. I sometimes start the conversation with, "I do not agree with everything you said, but I do agree with" — then name a small portion and establish common ground. If you are constantly argumentative and shouting, you cannot listen. There is a quiet confidence and wisdom in silence. We can learn from those who have gone before us: Maya Angelou, Sen. John McCain, Gandhi, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. All these wise pillars had the proper tools to engage respectfully.

*Dee Palser, Valley Stream*

Stop talking politics; keep opinions to yourself. And be happy.

*Joe Pi, Syosset*

"You've Got to Be Carefully Taught" is a timely song about prejudice from the musical "South Pacific." It is more resonant now than ever. We are submerged in news by mass media with agendas. We see information that is twisted, missing or fabricated. We can come together by rejecting this nonstop flow of misinformation that warps our perceptions and causes hate and division. Follow the Ten Commandments, a great code of living, and seek the truth. Also respect your neighbor, forgive, don't be judgmental, give to charity, let war be the last resort.

*Bob Stevens, East Northport*

As a baby boomer entering my senior years, I have seen a lot. From my trials and tribulations, I have wondered whether I ever did any wrong to anyone while growing up. We each have to ask that question, because it's part of life as we learn to see the greatest gifts we all are capable of practicing, love and forgiveness. Without compassion, love will never be appreciated.

We Americans have demonstrated to the world that our way of life is the best. That's why many want to come here, to have lives with liberties and happiness as long as we all follow the rule of law. We must trust our hearts and practice being humane.

*James B. Calfa, Mastic Beach*