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David McGrath: The world we live in today can only be blamed on Trump's hubris



President Donald Trump gestures to reporters as he walks on the South Lawn upon his arrival at the White House, Monday, Oct. 5, 2026, in Washington. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)



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When I was taking a night class at Chicago State University in pursuit of a master's degree in literature, Professor James Doppke would stride into the room at 7 p.m., his jacket and tie already removed, and slide the teacher's chair closer to the rows of desks where we were seated. There he'd sit, cross his legs, and smile, as though he'd just settled onto the studio couch of "The Tonight Show."

And he would have been a good fit on the TV set. Imagine spending an evening in conversation with William Buckley, Dick Cavett and David Letterman. Doppke seemed to embody all three, possessing Buckley's intellect, Cavett's conversational intimacy and Letterman's humor.

Among the most effective teachers I ever had, he often stated that everything in literature and in life grows out of character. Whatever happens in a novel, in Washington, D.C., or in everyday life occurs because of the good or evil, the strength or weakness of the principal's character.

And when we read the ancient Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex, he advised us to drop our notions that fate or fortune was responsible for the troubles confronting the people in the play and causing Oedipus to unknowingly kill his father and marry his own mother. He steered us, instead,

to pay attention to the words and decisions of Oedipus, which revealed him as a man who was intelligent but also arrogant, hot-tempered, violent and impulsive.

In other words, the tragic events were not the fault of gods, goddesses or oracles but of the flaws within the man himself.

My beloved professor, who died in 2023, would have relished executing a critical analysis of the tragedy of Donald Trump. That's because most of the problems we face as American citizens today are not the fault of our enemies or nature or economic cycles or fate or even us. Rather, each is the terrible price we are paying because of character defects in the man who is our president.

Trump's lifelong record of bigotry, for example, from discrimination against African Americans at his rental properties to his dismissal of Mexican immigrants as rapists and drug dealers, persists into his presidency in multiple forms: the elimination of DEI programs; maltreatment of countries with brown and black populations like Haiti and Somalia; and an aggressive deportation program that has devolved into a campaign of violent and often illegal terror by armed and masked ICE agents against our own residents.

Trump's greed has led him to prioritize personal enrichment over the welfare of American citizens as he amassed a fortune of \$1.4 billion from corporations and countries (www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/01/20/opinion/editorials/trump-wealth-crypto-graft.html) that have bought his cryptocurrency and sponsored his overseas real estate investments.

In return, he has accommodated his generous friends by repealing conservation laws that protected American health and environment

(www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2026-09-24/trump-rolled-back-regulations-for-oil-company-campaign-donors-democrats-say), removed the U.S. from the Paris agreement for mitigating climate change; and halted or impeded alternative energy initiatives, like wind and solar, thereby exacerbating the global warming ravages we see every day in the onslaught of unprecedented droughts, storms and flooding.

In his blind arrogance (conceit, narcissism, vanity, hubris — however it's called), he brags about ignoring the counsel of scientists, engineers and diplomats in favor of what his “gut” tells him, which has been life threatening for vaccine policies and medical research.

(oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-member-robert-garcia-releases-report-on-betrayal-of-maha-abandoning-americans-to-disease-the-trump-administrations-reckless-crusade-is-harming-americas-health)

What's worse, he impulsively got us mired in a long, unnecessary and expensive war with Iran, absent Congressional approval, which has led to the deaths of 19 U.S. troops that we know of and sent prices for food, groceries, gasoline and travel soaring.

Trump's obsessive, authoritarian hunger for exercising world dominance has upended a century of foreign policy as he has alienated, insulted and penalized our allies and curried favor with enemies and tyrants.

He has imposed tariffs that punish traditional nation partners and the average U.S. citizen; comforted and accommodated rivals like Russia and China in ways that prolong the Ukraine and Iran wars (egmontinstitute.be/the-trump-effect-a-longer-war-a-stronger-putin); and issued senseless, bellicose threats against Greenland and Cuba.

Finally, his documented history of deceitfulness, as detailed by Department of Justice special prosecutor Jack Smith (www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/read-the-full-special-counsel-report-on-trumps-jan-6-actions) and in the 30,573 lies told just in his first term of office, according to the Washington Post, continues to permeate everything he has said and done.

From his false claims about winning the 2020 election to his current laughable statements that inflation and grocery prices are “falling rapidly,” he has destroyed trust in government, in elected officials, in once vital institutions like the Centers for Disease Control, and in the integrity and reliability of our elections.

The motivation and psychology of Donald Trump’s character will be the topic of countless probes and diagnoses by historians. But what’s clear today is it is the prime source of the cancer that’s been spreading across the land, debilitating the morale and standard of living of Americans.

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