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We Would Vote for People With Felonies—Well, Not All of Them

Katie Kronick, University of Baltimore

"I could never vote for a convicted felon." "Democrats should say 'convicted felon' every time they say Trump's name."

When we hear these comments, we cringe. Not because we support former President Donald Trump. But how we choose our leaders should not be about a felony conviction—it should be about character and actions. When we are unable to see anyone as more than one thing—"felon"—it harms our communities, our neighbors and robs us of potential visionary leaders.

Both of us are public defenders and law professors who have committed our careers to working with people ensnared in our imperfect criminal legal system. We have sat in windowless rooms with shackled clients discussing religion, politics, literature, and philosophy. We have consoled clients desperate to get felonies off their records because despite their hard work, they cannot get a job — all the employers see is "felon."