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Coming out in a letter is a good option for people who express themselves best in writing. Writing can also help you organize and present your thoughts without distractions, lip-locking nerves, an overload of emotion or interruption from your family members. These suggestions can help you write a coming out letter to family or friends. Don't be short on words. A letter is a great way to purge emotions and express your feelings at the same time. Let your thoughts flow freely. Try freestyle writing, where you write without stopping for a certain length of time. Then reorganize your thoughts to make them more coherent. Forget about the rules. Your coming out letter isn't a term paper, and there is no standard format to follow. Organize your thoughts without dwelling on spelling, grammar, or structure. Write about the past, present and future. In your letter, express how being in the closet has made you feel and what it means for you to come out. Talk about your vision for the future and how important it is to have their support. Don't make assumptions. You know your family best and may anticipate a certain reaction, but they may surprise you. Keep in mind that each member of your family may process the information differently. So, in your letter, be sure to express yourself without attacking. Dispel myths. Your letter is a great place to educate your family and friends. Clear up any myths, stereotypes or misconceptions they may have about LGBTQ people. Follow up. Writing a letter is a very personal way of communicating. However, you should follow-up and have a face-to-face discussion with your relatives. Reinforce your thoughts. During your face-to-face time, reiterate the thoughts and feelings expressed in your letter. Make a bulleted version of your letter and keep it on hand. That way you can reference it just in case you freeze during your person-to-person talks. Facts on Business Letters Types of Sales Letters in Business... Difference Between Business Letters... Written Communication Tools The Qualities of Effective Business... Types of Written Business Communication How to Write a Copy Platform Product Communication Strategy Debit Note vs. Invoice How to Write a Business Letter... What Is the Statement of Intent? How to Write a Proposal Letter... How to Write Any Type of Circular... How to Write a Letter Promoting... What Is a Side Heading in a Letter? Types of Request Letters Pop culture is about the new, the young, and, especially these days, the numbingly synthetic. (Britney, anyone?) So the craftsmanship of Hatch Show Print feels like a breath of fresh air. This 123-year-old operation in Nashville, Tennessee once produced album covers and posters for Patsy Cline and Hank Williams — and now works for the Beastie Boys, Pearl Jam, and Bruce Springsteen. Manager Jim Sherraden employs letterpress technology from the 15th century, equipment from the 1940s, and young staffers who hand-crank and print the colors one at a time. The result radiates authenticity. "It's a very tactile poster," says Sherraden. "You can't get this look on a computer." Hatch is a historic landmark (it attracts about 25,000 visitors a year) and a lively business. Because of its vast archives, designers borrow from the past when creating a new poster. When Sherraden made a poster for a Springsteen performance on the acoustic "Ghost of Tom Joad" tour, he used an image of a car from a 1939 ad for Peco Gasoline. Springsteen was so pleased by the fusion of past and present that when he and the E Street Band released the hard-rocking Live in New York City CD, he looked to Hatch to design the cover. This time, Sherraden took stars from old Elvis Presley posters and fonts from a venerable African-American printing company in Nashville that had gone out of business. Not all of Hatch's clients are performers. Posters have advertised wrestling matches, dance contests, and whole-hog sausage (in which, apparently, "The hams and shoulders make the difference"). Hatch has also worked with Jack Daniels and Nike. Still, Sherraden holds a special reverence for musicians, all of whom, regardless of stature, pay the same price. "I look at Hatch as a stone wall in the southern countryside," Sherraden says. "We'll always be here for the entertainers, whether they're on their way up or down in their careers. Everyone gets treated equally." Visit Hatch online (www.hatchshowprint.com/hatch). They're badly written, open to doubt, and fundamentally unnecessary. Shutterstock / The Atlantic Last month, I was asked to sign the "Letter on Justice and Open Debate," now published in Harper's with the signatures of 153 journalists and academics, including contributors to The Atlantic. The letter warned of "ideological conformity" and "illiberalism" in liberal institutions, and it noted a tendency to confront dissenting opinions not with debate but by going after the job of the dissident, or even by going after the job of those who merely note the existence of the dissent. We all have limits; some topics are beneath our dignity to debate. The signers argued that you should keep that category of the undebatable as small as possible, and not add to it whenever you form an opinion. Perhaps because I spend a lot of time listening to people with crazy opinions, I am sympathetic to the view that the only way to live a healthy intellectual life is to expose oneself constantly to weird or detestable opinions. But I never sign petitions or open letters. I told the letter's organizers that if I have something to say, I will write my own damn letter. Open letters are terrible, and you should never write one or sign one. Yascha Mounk: Stop firing the innocent Here are reasons why the genre of open letters should die: They are badly written. Open letters tend to be composed inclusively, so as many people as possible will sign them. They can bear no traces of their individual authors, and the easiest way to scrub those traces is to write in a numbing, anonymized style, free of idiosyncrasy and wit. (If you seek idiosyncrasy and wit, read the articles that my Atlantic colleagues who signed the letter write under their own names.) This process deadens the language, and the result in the case of the Harper's letter is a graveyard of prose, without a single pungent phrase or sentence worthy of quotation. Humor is especially forbidden. Martin Amis signed the letter, but I have read enough Amis to know he would never have written that letter if he thought that on some literary Judgment Day he would be called before God to answer alone for its style. They are open to doubt. What should we think of a letter signed by Martin Amis that could not possibly have been written by Martin Amis? I suppose one interpretation is "Amis must really believe this stuff, if he is willing to suppress his gag reflex over a cliché like all too common or we are already paying the price." Another, more hostile interpretation is that the signers—the ones considered politically respectable, at least—couldn't possibly believe this stuff. So they must have been tricked into signing the letter, and others manipulated them into it for nefarious purposes. Emily VanDerWerff suggests that the letter contains "many dog whistles toward anti-trans positions," and that these hateful messages were inaudible to many signers (with the exception, among others, of J. K. Rowling, who has recently become a hated figure among trans activists, and Jesse Singal, who wrote a cover story on trans issues for this magazine). Others note as a clue of sorts the presence of Bari Weiss, who as a Columbia undergraduate campaigned against professors such as Joseph Massad, who has compared Israeli Jews to Nazis. Surely these liberal lions would not have signed the letter if they had known that a faux-liberal like Weiss was signing it too? The suggestion that dozens of liberals "got played" by a few supposedly illiberal tricksters is ridiculous to me. They all read and signed the same letter. Still, the signers had to spend their time defending the letter against the sins of some of its other signers, and entertaining speculation about the supposed gullibility of others—instead of promoting its substance. They aren't necessary. In 1931, after Albert Einstein's theory of relativity became famous, a pamphlet was published with the title "100 Authors Against Einstein." Einstein replied, "Why a hundred? If they were right, one would have been enough." One of the greatest pleasures of writing for the public is the pleasure of being right, and watching your readers resist you before they realize you are right. The smaller the minority in which the writer finds herself, the greater the pleasure in watching the audience slowly relent and join her. Many writers on the Harper's list know this pleasure. But the longer the list, the less the pleasure—and at some point, a writer has to wonder why she would bother to sign as one name among dozens, when she could instead reap the much greater rewards of solitary righteousness. To be right should be enough. Read: A deeply provincial view of free speech They look cowardly—even when they are not. One reason to forgo the pleasure of a solitary righteous stand is safety in numbers. If you are one name among many, and the other names include Salman Rushdie, Katha Pollitt, and Margaret Atwood, how wrong could you be? Open letters mean the most when their signers accept risk by signing. Few of the signers of the Harper's letter risked much, and some who did take on risk were not aware of the risk, and caved, comically, upon realizing the risk they had accepted. The most ignored open letters and petitions are the ones that require nothing of the signers—no time, no effort, no risk of reputation or of life. That is why no one particularly cares about the counter-letter that circulated in response to the Harper's letter. No one who signed that counter-letter is in danger of anything but congratulations from the fellow leftists who signed it. I assume the signers will receive the usual deluge of email sewage from random hate-filled losers, but don't we all? (Readers regularly email to invite me to fellate or kill myself. I welcome the correspondence. If it takes more effort for them to find my email address and compose a message than it does for me to read the message and click the trash-can icon, I win.) I would hate to cheapen a good point by making it in unison with 150 other people. Whatever safety their numbers gave me would not be worth it. They are contagious. If you sign one open letter, others show up at your door. One reason I am writing this jeremiad against open letters is to stand, like a heavily armed St. Louis attorney on the porch of my metaphorical domicile, and warn those clutching petitions and letters to get off my lawn. One cannot endorse every worthy cause. I can name dozens that I hope someone, somewhere, is pursuing monomaniacally. But my own manias are plenty, and I can wish others well without joining them. Sign one open letter, though, and your failure to sign the next one will be interpreted as opposition. Read: The intimate, political power of the open letter Finally, I can think of one good reason to sign open letters—which is to demonstrate to others that they are not alone. The Harper's writers allege that a silent poison is permeating liberal institutions, spreading undetected like a carbon-monoxide leak at magazines, newspapers, and universities. That poison is the belief that getting your enemies to shut their mouth is a victory for you. I associate this delusion with the right, and to see it seep into the left is disturbing. You want your enemies constantly probing your defenses, exposing your weaknesses, and reminding you to reinforce them. The traditional arrangement of liberalism has recognized this value, and presumptively encouraged rancorous debate for the good of all. This arrangement is also more fun. All great universities and magazines (with the exception of The Atlantic, which is a sea of tranquility) employ colleagues who hate one another's guts and remind one another of that hatred constantly. Many of these institutions have leaned left for so long that the reasons for this arrangement have been forgotten. The Harper's letter at least tells those who remember the arrangement, and those who would defend it, that they have allies ready to join them in that defense. One way to encourage them is to write your name at the bottom of a letter. A better way is to write a letter of your own. That is what you are reading now.

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