

The deep divide



Nov. 11, 2020 By Nate Smelle

THE AMOUNT OF NEWS that I have consumed in the last week has been literally staggering. Squeezing in just six hours of sleep in 72 hours as I watched the slow motion disintegration of Donald Trump's presidency, I could barely stand by the time it was announced on Friday morning that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris had won.

Taking in the news via multiple devices, and several news sources assessing this historic example of democracy in action from different angles, I was astounded by the level of engagement with this election. It is true that the media always obsesses over the spectacle of elections in the United States. But, for the most part one finds the usual suspects - journalists, political party members, and a relatively static pool of concerned citizens - who are actually engaged in the democratic process.

This time around, however, democracy seems to have caught the attention of a new crowd of observers ? the people.

Putting aside the former president's baseless allegations of voter fraud; and the potential chaos his temper tantrum may produce, in my opinion, the big, and arguably the biggest story with this election is the historic voter turnout. It has been reported by multiple sources that during the 2020 election, a record 161 million+ voters cast their ballots in favour of one candidate or another.

So, why the sudden increase of interest in politics?

What makes this election different than others?

The answer to these questions can be found in the numbers.

Despite the fact Biden and Harris already have enough votes to earn their place in the White House, the vote count has revealed a dangerously deep divide among the American people. With at least 76 million people on one side of this chasm, and some 71 million on the other, how to bridge this gap remains a mystery. Especially considering the hood at the helm of the lesser assembly has built his congregation on a foundation of racist ideals, greed, lies, and conspiracy theories.

While some are calling for compromise by the Democrats as the first stone to be laid in building this bridge, I am not one of them. For the past four years, we have seen the demise of our neighbour to the south thanks to a leadership comfortably numbed with their

own hypocrisy and greed. Progress will not come by continuing to walk backwards in this direction. The legacy Trump leaves behind has nothing to do with progress. It will not linger in the form of better health-care, a cleaner environment, or a more peaceful world.

Instead, the slimy residue of his presence will stick with us for some time in the empowerment his hatefulness has given to his followers. It is the same hate-based ideology putting weight on George Floyd's throat, or firing seven bullets into Jacob Blake's back. The same hate that fuelled the fires which burned the Mi'kmaq lobster facility in Middle West Pubnico, Nova Scotia to the ground. It is the same hate which defaced the United Against Racism, and Black Lives Matter signs in Hastings Highlands. The same hate which provoked some individuals to squeal their tires on the Youth Advisory Board's freshly-painted rainbow crosswalk in downtown Bancroft.

This deplorable legacy, which is now being identified by the media and academics as "Trumpism," is sadly not going away any time soon. Luckily, the change that motivates the majority of voters to elect a candidate is the change that the majority of voters consider necessary for the sake of the greater good. And, in this case, that change - the change that despite their shortcomings Biden and Harris represent - is a very different brand than the snake oil being exported from the White House since 2016.

This, for now at least, is a much needed dose of hope for a world in crisis.