

Advice from the Trenches: Trump Trouble



Dear C;

I am still in a state of shock after the election. That first day I felt disbelief, then sank into a dark depression. After listening to Hillary's concession speech, I felt comforted by her optimism and positive attitude. Then I went into a state of denial. Now I am newly filled with horror as I watch Trump's cabinet fill.

I don't know why, but this election has affected me worse than my last relationship break-up. It's like watching a political version of *Streetcar Named Desire*. The Stanleys of the world once again managed to strap poor Blanche into a straight jacket and haul her out of the picture. Got any ideas on how to cope?

Stella Stunned

Dear Stella;

I've noticed that a lot of people are taking this election upset personally. It threw us all for a loop.

I think that women have been affected in a very deep way. The female sector stood behind Hillary in far greater numbers. We were counting on her to set the stage for equality in this country. How many times have all of us worked our butts off to reach a goal we were well qualified for, only to see it snatched from us by some guy who should have been waiting five years behind us? Watching Hillary go down on that last night was like a post traumatic repeat of every disappointment and unfair loss that women and minorities have ever faced. She won the popular vote, and the bastards still wouldn't let her in.

I can't say, "Don't worry! Everything will be fine," because a cold wind of fear exhales its sour breath throughout the land even as I write. Immigrants are nervous as hell. Students are staging walk-outs; citizens have taken to the streets in a frustrated show of unity over incredulous loss.

Like you, I've gone through stages. My first attempt at optimism was this: Trump's own party is not behind him in his more extreme beliefs; he's going to be surrounded at all times by a team of advisors who will stop him from acting like a boneheaded teen with an overactive Twitter account. Alas someone did talk him out of acting on his sweeping declarations to toss Obamacare out on its nose, but now that the inner advisory circle is forming, like you, my optimism is fading. The crew he is assembling stinks of bigotry, nepotism and intolerance. Trump could simply become a more sophisticated and presidential sociopath with the very best sharp, ruthless people working for him.

However, I do know this: Elections and campaigns come and go, presidents come and go. What can be accomplished depends so much on things we do not see. Behind the scenes there is probably a vast and well-oiled machine in operation with producers who view the comings and goings of national figureheads as dispassionately as they would the casting and tossing of reality show contestants. The visible crew are, to quote Poe, "mere puppets, they, who come at go at bidding of vast formless things that shift the scenery to and fro." So perhaps having a braying donkey in the White House won't affect things as much as we fear. And let's look at the bright side — Trump can still be fired. If people continue to resist and pick apart the guy's life, they may eventually find something to impeach him with. It's a cheerful, warm thought, except it would leave us with Pence, a Christian Right who scares me almost more than Trump does.

There is one silver lining to be had. Now we know what we are dealing with. Those Trump supporters were always there, silently waiting for a charismatic leader to pull them out of the dark. There are people in this country who are so desperate for CHANGE that they are willing to take a quick detour through Hell, via Trump's hot air hand basket, to get there. Up until now, we have been a country of suppression, discontent and disenchantment. Now we are shouting out loud.

There's a lot we can't control here. But there are some things we can.

This is the time to take our future into our own hands. We can sob, bitch or snarl about the election, but that just feeds the Hate Machine. It is always better to light one candle than to curse the darkness. Tonight on the news I heard Mayor Elorza of Providence pledge allegiance with other officials across the country who have already vowed that their cities will remain sanctuaries for immigrants. Brown University made the headlines with protests. This is no time to quit. In RI, our very state motto is "Hope."

So that's my advice to you, Stella. Hope.

And enjoy the holidays.