

Will the Election Unite Us?

During times of crisis, it's important to state the obvious. So here goes: We were a polarized, deeply divided nation before this election – and anyone who thinks things will get better now that it's over should stay away from sharp objects and not be allowed to ride a bicycle without training wheels.

Now that Joe Biden has been declared the winner (Yes, I know ... there are still court cases – *that likely will go nowhere*) hard core supporters of the current president won't see Biden's election as legitimate. Someone, someplace, probably in the middle of the night when no one was looking, must have cheated. Or else, how could Donald Trump have lost?

Besides, didn't President Trump tell us, over and over, that the only way he could lose was if the election was rigged? Yes, my friends, that's exactly what he said.

And if Trump had won, do we think Biden supporters would have accepted such a victory ... when all those supposedly honest journalists told us Joe would win in a runaway? How could Joe have lost, they would have said, when all those "scientific" polls run by "brilliant" statistical analysts said he'd win in a landslide?

Both sides are dug in, entrenched, seemingly immovable. And an election that for days was a cliffhanger ... one that was shrouded in allegations of fraud ... won't do anything to bring us together.

Over the past four years, Trump has been called (at times true and at times slanderously false) a white supremacist, a Russian tool, a chronic liar, accused of assaulting more than a few women, alleged to have paid off a porn star to keep her quiet, supposedly was exposed as a rich businessman who paid next to nothing in taxes – and was impeached!

As for Biden, he's been accused of allowing his son to peddle the family name to make millions, some of which allegedly may have been siphoned off to Joe himself.

And what was the result of all those accusations? Americans who hated Trump before he was elected still hate him now, and those who loved him before he became president love him (even more) after four years in office. And those who want Biden in, and Trump out, don't seem to care that he might be in business, even indirectly through his family, with foreign entities that might call on him for favors once he's in the Oval Office.

You'd have every reason to conclude that nothing really matters in our highly partisan, polarized culture.

A friend once suggested that we set up a system in which liberals live in blue states and conservatives live in red states. That way, he figured, we'd get along – with our like-minded friends ... and we wouldn't have to be bothered mingling with people we disagree with.

It's a crazy idea, of course. Except that, when you think about it, that's exactly how a lot of the media operate.

If you play left field, you can go to CNN or MSNBC or read the feverish Trump-bashing columns in the New York Times and feel right at home. No need to be exposed to opinions you don't want to hear and read. And if you're a Trump-loving conservative, then Sean Hannity, Laura Ingraham and Rush Limbaugh are safe-zones where you'll hear ideas you already believe and won't be exposed to some dreaded alternative viewpoint – sort of like what you find on liberal college campuses, where the cupcakes can go to "safe places" where their brains won't be polluted with inconvenient ideas.

You think journalists might be humbled by how wrong they got this election? Sorry I asked, forgive me. After all, these are the same partisans who never apologized for telling us that

Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin were joined at the hip and on a mission to destabilize America. If they didn't say "Boy, we sure got that one wrong," it's not likely that these pundits are going to apologize for misleading their readers and listeners into believing that Joe Biden would coast to victory about ten minutes after the polls closed.

Some Americans want honest journalism, and some want to hear only what they want to hear. Too many news outlets, especially those on cable TV, have decided that validating the biases of the audience is the better business model. It may be, but it's lousy journalism.

As I've noted before, Donald Trump is guilty of many things but he's not the one killing journalism. Journalists are doing a pretty good job of that all by themselves.

As for the election, barring some impossible turn of events, Joe Biden will be our next president. And so we should pay heed to what he says. And he's telling us that he'll unite the country. He's telling us, channeling Barack Obama, that there are no blue states or red states, only the United States. It's a nice sentiment – but platitudes, I suspect, will have the same chance of tearing down the walls that divide us as any of us would have if we fired ping pong balls to bring down a battleship.