

Looking back over my personal voting record since I was old enough to cast a ballot for President of the United States, I did a little “finger count” and came up with the totally personal and immaterial-to-society statistic that I have voted for six candidates that won the elections, ten who lost plus at least one protest vote, an action I don’t think makes any sense at all, but was a failing of youth. And among these Presidential votes was the election of 2000, in which it is still, in my opinion, “up in the air” concerning which candidate actually won Florida, and with it, the Presidency.

In looking back at many of these cases, although I was strongly in favor of the candidate I voted for and often bitterly disappointed in the actions of the President who was elected instead, it came down to a choice between two people and two sets of policies that might be far apart in beliefs and proposed actions, but who were, as far as we knew, two decent individuals who had the welfare of the country in mind and were not in the race for personal financial gain, revenge on opponents, or avoidance of legal action.

This election of 2024 will go down in history as something entirely different. While the previous contests showed us who the candidates were —though we sometimes had to wait years for their policies to make their influence—good or bad—fully realized, this year, we were well aware of the characters of the candidates long before November 5th. The election told us what we are as a country and who we are as a people.

This is profoundly disappointing. We had two candidates to choose from, and there could not have been a bigger contrast. One was a woman who had worked in the judicial system at a high level, had been a U.S. Senator from California, had served as vice president of the United States, and who had unblemished legal standing. The other candidate was a man who had been convicted of fraud, had been judged to have committed sexual misconduct, who had been indicted and was awaiting trial for his actions during the insurrection of January 6, 2021, and, in addition, under indictment for stealing national security documents. This same candidate, before his first election in 2016, had blatantly declared, on a video recording, that he assaulted women—that they “let you do it when you are a star.” The list could go on and on about this person’s decades long misconduct. And, this is the person the American people elected. That told me something very frightening about the citizens of this country. One does not even need to consider the untruths—many about immigrants—that he and his running mate used to intimidate and to increase support among

their Base. One need not think of the vile language, the threats of bodily harm to opponents, the filth that came out of this candidate's mouth. The fact that he is a felon convicted by a jury of his peers should have been enough.

So, it is my fellow citizens that I am unable to understand. Are they misled about the state of the economy? Are they afraid to have immigrants—the people who do a lot of necessary work in this country—living in their communities? Do they—including many women—want women to be second-class citizens? Is it still, after all these decades of hope and civil rights work, blatant racism? Is it a lack of critical thinking on the part of the electorate?

I find it impossible to answer these questions. Maybe a lot of people don't want self-government. Maybe, they really desire rule by oligarchs, by immoral criminals, by autocrats. I don't. But, I don't know what the way forward can now be.