



GRIT WITH GRACE

Randy's Rant — #BringOrangeBack: The Stories We Will — and Should — Tell about the 2020 Presidential Election

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I love the color orange. Not everybody does, but I do. I associate orange with the color of the many sunsets I've witnessed from my hilltop home — like the one in the image above, which I took the night of Saturday, November 7, the day the world found out that Joe Biden won the 2020 Presidential election. I've been coming to this house for decades. Indeed, I spent much of my childhood here, and have many fond memories of sitting with my family on the rock ledge, looking out at the orange twilight with my father, believing him when he told me he was “the richest man in the world.”

Rich for him was not mere coins in the bank (although that certainly matters) but family, love, and contentment. I've come to associate that twilight shade with him, and with those nostalgic feelings. It's a

big part of the reason why, when I founded Aker Advisors, orange figured so heavily into its imagery, and why, when I created my Grit with Grace blog, the colors of sunsets featured prominently.

As you might imagine, the past four years have not made it particularly easy to be a fan of the color orange. In addition to his crimes against humanity and American democracy, our 45th commander-in-chief's aggressive spray-tanning suddenly made orange taboo. You could hardly breathe the word and not think of his face.

You can probably also imagine my joy when Biden was declared the winner. True to form, Donald Trump denied the results, and has decided to wage a blustery, insubstantial war of litigation on the electoral process. Like most reasonable people, I don't expect his legal offense to amount to much. I believe that, come inauguration day, Joe Biden will be peacefully sworn in, and Donald Trump will begin to recede into the annals of infamy.

This will leave us with the Herculean task of making sense of it all. In typical 2020 style, this Presidential election was unprecedented in a number of ways. It was the first pandemic Presidential election, for example, but that didn't stop a record turnout, both by gross vote total and by the percentage of eligible voters who chose to



vote. For the foreseeable future, we're going to be bombarded with stories about what it all means. I'm going to outline a few of those, and talk about what they *could* mean — but remember, the only thing we can control is what we choose to do. I'm choosing to bring orange back, to welcome that symbol of happiness, light and joy back into my life, and to recommit myself to the change I want to see in the world.

The Light

Besides the plain fact that Joe Biden won, there are a lot of reasons to look at this election result optimistically. Here are a few:

- 1. Record Turnout.** In terms of percentage of eligible voters who voted, the 2020 Presidential election is on pace to beat [every Presidential election](#) before it. Regardless of what side you're on, if you believe in democracy, that's a good thing. Voting is democracy's most important institution — the more people who vote, the more people who demonstrate their belief in democracy.
- 2. Record Vote Totals.** By amassing [more than 77 million votes](#), Joe Biden became the *most-voted-for Presidential candidate ever*. Donald Trump admittedly became number 2, but Biden's total

exceeded Trump's by more than 5 million votes.

- 3. A Woman of Color in the White House.** About damn time. I can still remember how thrilled we were when Geraldine Ferraro, in her brightly colored dresses, pearls and frosted hair, became Walter Mondale's running mate in 1984. It took this country another 36 years (and 244 years total) to put a woman in the White House, but it finally happened. Take it from Harris herself: "While I may be the first woman in this office, I won't be the last. Because every little girl watching tonight sees that this is a country of possibilities."
- 4. Truth & Empathy Prevail.** I'm not naive enough to think that Joe Biden is a perfect candidate, but I do believe that he's a man of tremendous integrity and empathy. Trump is a man of zero integrity and empathy. Especially at a time where so much depends on being able to listen to and understand people who are different from us, these values have never been more important. As I said the night on the rock ledge with tears in my eyes, admiring the startling sunset, it's time for a kinder shade of orange.



5. The Dogs are Back in Town. Say what you will, but I think the fact that Joe Biden is bringing dogs back to the White House is hugely important. Asked why he was the first President in a century not to have a dog, [Donald Trump asked](#): "How would I look walking a dog on the White House Lawn?" apparently thinking it would make him look weak, phony, who knows. In a way that's both paradoxical and — as you know, if you're a pet owner — completely logical, White House pets bring such humanity to their owners.

The Darkness

Not everything about this election was good, and we have a duty to examine that side, too.

- 1. An Imperiled Republican Party.** Donald Trump didn't create the xenophobia in the Republican base, he exposed it. It was already there. Being a Republican is not an inherently bad thing — I have many friends and clients who are Republicans, and we can disagree civilly. But being a racist *is* inherently bad, and it has been absolutely horrifying to see how many true racists came out of the woodwork to support Donald Trump. I suppose I have to admit that like xenophobia, sexism was already there. This has been a litmus test for the Republican party — the result ain't pretty.
- 2. Votes for Trump.** Like I said, Donald Trump received in excess of 72 million votes this election. Many key states went to Joe Biden by nerve-wrackingly slim margins. Biden is the lawful victor, but I was distraught to see how many people still stood by this narcissistic, authoritarian maniac,

after such a shameful 4 years.

- 3. Authoritarian Tactics.** Speaking of, we should remember that it's authoritarian countries — *not* democratic ones — where an administration refuses to leave office. Keeping democracy alive and functioning is an uphill battle to begin with. Having a President who speaks like and acts like a dictator jeopardizes the whole system.
- 4. Banana Republicans.** Following the election result, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, “There will be a smooth transition to a second Trump administration.” Rudy Giuliani has sold every last bit of his soul to support Donald Trump. Mike Pence has stood impotently by as Trump has wrought havoc on American democracy. The sheer number of leaders who have given in to Trump’s delusion for their own benefit says something absolutely tragic about human nature.

Follow the Light

Pundits on every conceivable side of the aisle(s) will seize on various of these and other narratives, trying to convince their viewers and constituencies that theirs is the *most true* narrative. Democrats may argue that we should be optimistic at the expense of pessimism, and Republicans will (and have) argued that the election result is actually the product of fraud and interference. In fact, top security and election officials have declared that there was “[no evidence](#)” that any voting system was compromised. Yet, as I write, Trump refused to concede the election, arguing that he has won.



In the wake of this most unprecedented election, we will do what humans always do: try to find certainty by predicting the future, which means telling ourselves stories. Stories of despair, in which the U.S. is on the brink of annihilation. Stories of hope, in which women and people of color have more reason to think they can rise to whatever heights they can imagine — racism will finally be vanquished in the U.S., white supremacists will go back into their hiding places, and healthcare will exist for all, rich or poor. We will tell true stories, and we will tell ghost stories. We will imagine the worst and hope for the best. We will tell our children — and ourselves — bedtime stories, to help all of us sleep at night.

But each story is only as true as the action that follows it up. And action is only as strong as the values that catalyze it. This is why I started by talking about orange — to me, orange is a symbol of kindness, of family coherence, of natural peace, and of a world out of time, where pettiness suffocates and empathy reigns. Regardless of what story you tell yourself to make this all seem okay, remember that, more important than the story you tell is the way you act. It's the values you hold as a human being, and the causes you apply them to as a member of society that truly matter.

Don't be swayed by pundits with stories to tell. Live in the present — like the Aker symbolism, we can reflect on the past, and envision the future, but all we really *have* is the shining present. Remind yourself that this is a time to take stock of who you are, and to recommit yourself to being *more* of that person. My goal is to bring orange back. What's yours?

Want to talk more about the implications of the 2020 Presidential election? Don't be afraid to reach out!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Randy Kaufman, formerly a corporate tax attorney and investment banker, is now a wealth advisor who prides herself on focusing on what matters most: clients' peace of mind, family dynamics, and getting *enough*, not *more*. Randy is a passionate student of impact investing, strategic philanthropy, and behavioral psychology (while not a psychologist, she occasionally plays one in the boardroom). She is dedicated to helping the underprivileged, and is a proud member of global venture fund Acumen's advisory board. A thinker, learner, and pursuer of overarching truths, she is always eager to discuss big ideas about money, and its off-and-on associate, happiness.