

The Real News

2020 PANDEMIC EDITION



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LETTER FROM THE PUB

The cover illustration was painted in March, 2020. The first lock down except for essential services had just been put into place. As a result, there was a run on essential grocery and hardware items: bleach, disinfectants, toilet paper and basic food groups.



A masked young woman in a Cotillion dress walks carrying a staff that contains a skull and an finished roll of toilet paper. At the time, it seemed to capture the mood of the country. America has a history of moving forward in the midst of a global crisis.

It was the first time in my lifetime that I experienced product shortages and empty store aisles. Panic buying drove the fear of Covid into more government restrictions and economic paralysis.



GRUMPY OLD MEN CAMPAIGN PANIC

The unusual is now the New Normal. A non-politician President who spews Twitter bombs and trolls anyone is running for re-election against an old career politician with similar family skeletons.

Donald Trump is the first elected man-baby who would rather throw a tantrum than read an intelligence briefing. He never expected to win in 2016. He never expected to run the Executive branch. In a panic, he decided to run the White House like his TV show, the Apprentice.

Joe Biden is a liberal jellyfish who constantly floats in the calm waters of incumbency only to make stinging attacks to score campaign donations and powerful allies.

Both Trump and Biden represent the worst in polarized America. They are both self-centered opportunists. They both look for a gap to push themselves to the front of the line.

Biden was a long term Senator who did not amass a deep record of innovative legislation. He was a rank and file incumbent whose only job was to get re-elected.

Trump, after four years, has accomplished little except Supreme Court appointments. His largess promises of a Border Wall and immigration reform faded away, He would have been a placeholder president like Gerald Ford but for the pandemic.

Covid-19 brought out the worst in autocrats and big public spenders. First, government officials shut down their state and local businesses. Second, fearing a voter backlash in an election year, put together trillions in direct aid and stimulus packages. While the national economy tanked and people were getting angry with home confinement, the campaigns went into hibernation on any other issue.

Every aspect of American life seems to be filtered through a political sausage grinder. Statesmen have been replaced by partisan screamers. Opinion and position is more important than facts or the Truth.

Voters are trapped in the quicksand of discord. The major candidates are not reaching out an olive branch but hitting you on the head with heavy handed stick.

The pandemic cancelled most of the primaries. The virtual conventions were boring television. The post-convention sparring has been a nasty stalemate of insults.

The first Presidential debate was a horror show. Two grumpy old men in a senior home fighting over the last stale pantry cookie. It was so unwatchable that most viewers turned out in the first half hour.

A vast majority of voters who watched part of it were upset at the lack of civility, understanding and actual factual debate on any issue. It was a na-



tional embarrassment.. It would have made rational people think about finding an alternative candidate, but third parties were never mentioned in national stories. The hook has been whether crazy Trump would be re-elected and not whether Biden would be a better president.

It is an apocalyptic sign that the candidates gibberish fails to connect with the average voter who is in the midst of a lock

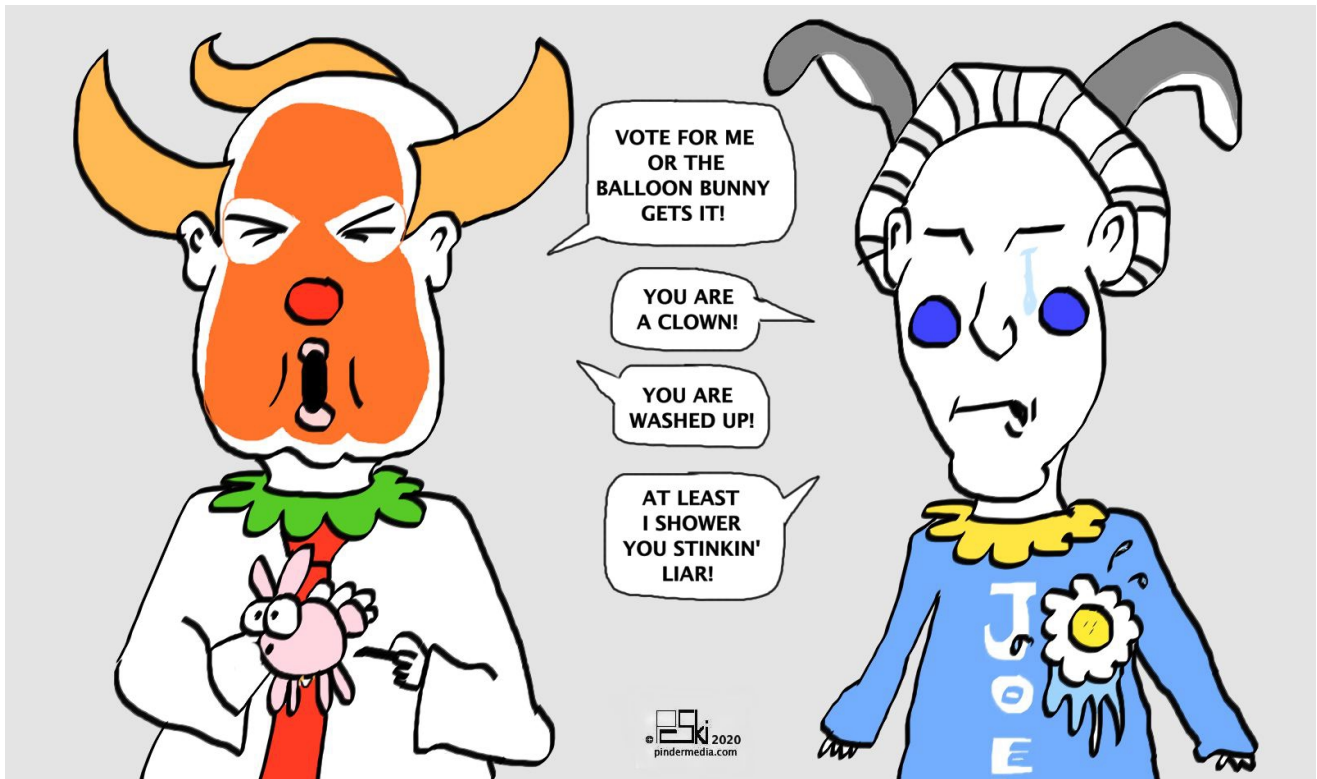
down Depression. Parents working at home are also home schooling their online children as the public education system falters. Small business owners (bars, restaurants, hair salons, etc.) that were closed for most of the year are hanging on (if at all) by a thin thread. Landlords have not been paid for months but still receive massive property tax bills to pay. Courts have stopped evictions so property owners are being squeezed into bankruptcy.

The cascade affect of the pandemic has been to make more and more unattainable promises: to protect your health, we must imprison you in your homes; to keep the economy going, we will borrow more money; and we will give people more money to spend without a means of paying it back.

If people were worried about socialism, 2020 was the year of the Banana Republic.

UNITED IN THEIR DISGUST FROM THE FIRST DEBATE





Clowns on parade is what some foreign news organizations classified the two candidates.. Foreign leaders never took Trump serious to start. His foreign policy suck ups to dictators and sadist leaders has led to more instability in the world. Biden does not tout any foreign affairs milestones because the conservative press is trying to tie his family to economic enemy regimes.

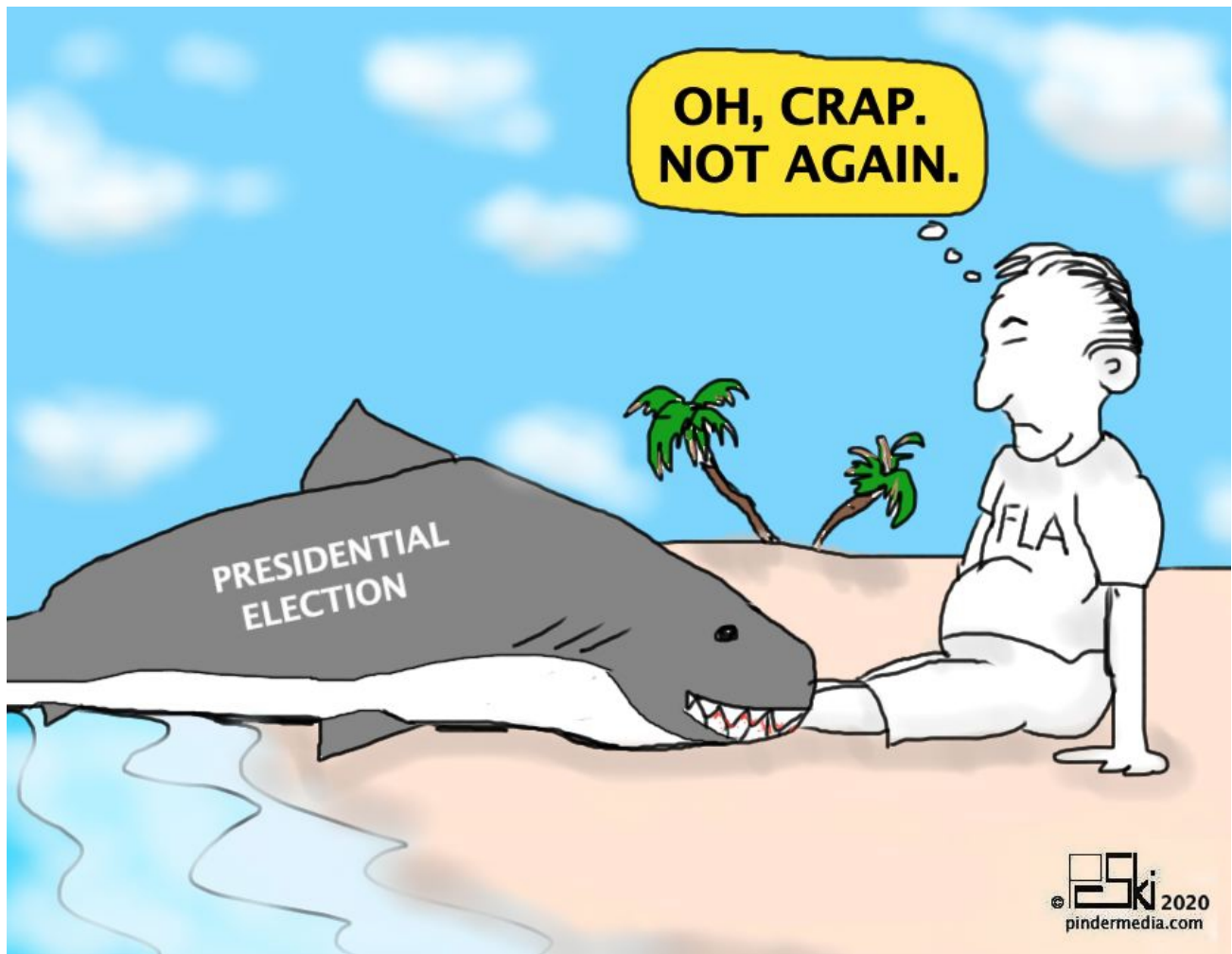
The global transportation restrictions has led to supply chain disruption. Territorial disputes were magnified in the crisis.

But the average American is frustrated by the fact that he cannot buy bleach wipes at the grocery store. Or that his grocery bill has almost doubled in cost. Or that corporate America is realizing that it may not need office space, office workers when the world has gone to telecommuting.

The police shootings and urban riots have caused more political strife. In some liberal cities, the looters were given free reign to destroy property. There was a rising level of resentment

even in poor neighborhoods that have not recovered from the pandemic or the riots. There was suddenly an undercurrent for law and order. And the strong desire to be left alone by mandates.





A record number of early voters can be seen as strong reaction to 2020. They are unhappy by the lost of control of their daily lives. Their children are unhappy with on-line education. The loss of high school sports and normal socialization with family, neighbors and friends. Some are angry that they are denied access to see their loved ones in nursing homes. They are lashing out for change.

But neither Trump or Biden offer real change. Both want the job for power and status. A history book legacy.. Fake promises as thick as fake news.

The election will not be

decided on November 3rd. It will be decided in the Courts. States that are too close to call, including Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania and North Carolina, will have mail-in vote counting after Tuesday. Vote tabulation and canvass checks to get official results may take weeks to a month.

There will be no concession speeches on Election Night. In 2016, the pollsters were burned by voters who said one thing and voted the other. The “shy” Trump voter is still present in the former union members, the small business class, those affected by the property damage riots and legal immigrants.

No matter who wins, the loser will claim the election was stolen. Foreign nationals or social media manipulations interfered with a fair election. The ground work has been laid for another four years of polarized government.

But the most important part of this election cycle is the Senate races. If the Republicans lose the Senate, a Biden presidency could have no check and balances. But in the past few decades, it is clear that the American public would rather have the certainty of a legislative stalemate to one of unchecked political power.

VEGAS

Real work got in the way from traveling to Vegas for the annual WELH reunion. Jerry Przybyz hosted Mr. Hash for the quorum.

Being 2020, we held a Saturday zoom video conference to catch up. Jerry had many off road trips for Mr. hash to see.

After discussing the current state of affairs, how the Covid restrictions had affected each of us, we did spend some time remembering our lost friends.

I really expected to be in Vegas. I had started working on test cartoons for an epic road trip into the Lost American Dream (see below). But in the new reality, expect the unexpected and roll with the punches.

It may take another full year to get back to 2019 travel. There will be a pent up demand with or without a vaccine.

We can only tip a glass to the old days.



CUBS KNOCK THEMSELVES OUT

Since winning the 2016 World Series, the Cubs have been on a slow, painful to watch, slide back into mediocrity.

The baseball genius of Theo Epstein & Co. would rebuild the farm system, sign talented players, and develop a dynasty. But during the tenure, Epstein has failed to draft and develop one quality starting pitcher. The core of young talent in 2016 have failed to improve to expectations.

Joe Maddon was the answer and then the problem. David Ross took over in a difficult short year to get the team to the playoffs where it floundered with a lack of offense. With talent devoid in the minors, and the young players nearing free agency, it seems the Cubs run

was short and bittersweet.

Owner Tom Ricketts failed to spend any money for the 2020 season. He claims huge financial losses without fans in the stands and a white elephant financial disaster Cub network launch. There is no reason to believe that Cubs will pay for expensive free agents to try to get one last Big Win in 2021.

Baseball, like other major pro sports, had lower ratings this year because of the pandemic. People working at home watching a screen for 8 hours decided to turn it off and not watch sports. There were other pressing needs to spend their savings on food rent and insurance).

The 2020 season ended with a whimper. The White sox will eclipse the Cubs in 2021.