

Being American in the Trump Years

By **THE EDITORIAL BOARD** NOV. 9, 2016

The system is rigged, folks, he kept saying. But the rigging seems to have failed on Tuesday, when it made Donald Trump the president-elect, and again on Wednesday, when his rival, Hillary Clinton, and President Obama publicly congratulated him, wished him all success and pledged to get out of his way.

The peaceful transfer of power — the swift counting of votes, acceptance of results, dignity in defeat — that's the system, and these two powerful politicians, Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Obama, defended and strengthened it through their humility.

“We owe him an open mind and the chance to lead,” [Mrs. Clinton said](#). Her concession — her valedictory, with its air of the Clintons exiting the stage — was especially moving for its call to young supporters to be resilient despite inevitable failures, and for its restatement of values that were pulped by the Trump campaign: “The American dream is big enough for everyone. For people of all races, and religions, for men and women, for immigrants, for L.G.B.T. people, and people with disabilities. For everyone.”

Mr. Obama likened Mr. Trump to a teammate in a relay race, promising a smooth handoff. His words were gracious, but had a tragic dimension. He is, after all, leaving an eight-year legacy of achievements in the hands of a man determined to erase them, the same man who defamed him as an African-born Muslim who had won the presidency through fraud.

Mr. Obama, leading as ever through example, [reminded Americans](#) that democracy requires the “presumption of good faith in our fellow citizens.” What the country needs, he said, is “a sense of unity, a sense of inclusion, a respect for our institutions, our way of life, rule of law, and a respect for each other. I hope that he maintains that spirit throughout this transition.”

We Americans can be heartened by Mrs. Clinton's and Mr. Obama's decency. They were right to be gracious. Mr. Trump owes nothing to the traditional powers in his party — not the Koch brothers, not the leadership in Congress — and he may chart an independent course. We can hope against hope that he will shed his campaign persona for one befitting a nation's leader. We do so without illusions — ready to support him, without denying the many disgraceful things he did and said to get elected, the promises he may or may not keep, the falsehoods he peddled that were either delusions or lies.

It's a strange, distressing situation for citizens to be in — to acknowledge the danger of having a reckless, unqualified leader, while maintaining respect for the office he holds. But we cannot give in to fear or despondency. There is too much to be done.

There is a planet to save. The earth is in peril from a changing climate no matter how many deniers say otherwise. There may be millions of immigrants to shield from a Trump homeland-enforcement regime. State and local governments may need to step in if the federal government retreats from protecting consumers or helping

educate children. And there may be sick people to care for, should Mr. Trump dismantle the Affordable Care Act.

All Americans can help in this work, whether as activists or volunteers, or simply as neighbors who show, through reaching out to someone who looks or worships differently than they do, that they reject bigotry, misogyny and fear. Let's give Mrs. Clinton the last word, an exhortation to young people who supported her candidacy and the values it embodied. "This loss hurts, but please never stop believing that fighting for what's right is worth it," she said. "We need you to keep up these fights now and for the rest of your lives."

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/opinion/being-american-in-the-trump-years.html?ref=opinion&_r=0