

Peaceful Transfer of Power
Posted On:December 31, 1969

When President Washington stepped down from power after two terms in office, King George III was astonished. "Nobody voluntarily gives up power!" he noted. Certainly nobody had done such a thing in thousands of years of history, with one exception: the Roman general, Cincinnatus, who had been given a temporary dictatorship at a dangerous time. When the emergency ended with Rome prevailing, Cincinnatus resigned his power and went back to his farm. There is no doubt that George Washington knew of that event, and emulated it.

Then, when John Adams and Thomas Jefferson competed in the next election and Adams won, Jefferson was gracious about it. The next election was Jefferson's to win. Adams stepped down and Jefferson took office. That behavior set the tone for every election in the United States, the gold standard for democracies around the world, until now.

Elections in which winners take power and losers graciously step down is hard wired into our culture. Being a "good sport" is the gold standard of athletic games. In the 19th century in Britain (and emulated in the US), schoolboys learned to play hard and shake hands after the competition

American school children learn very early to compete, to vote, and to accept majority rule with grace. Sore losers are not admired, until now, with a president who sees that he will lose the popular vote, but will fight tooth and claw to resist the expected graceful exit. If he cannot win legitimately, he will cheat, with the help of spineless Republicans and amused Russians. His party (the Cult of Trump) has attempted to prevent as many Black and Brown citizens from voting as possible, through intimidation, removal of convenient polling places, propaganda against voting by mail, internet conspiracy theories aimed at such voters, and even demanding poll taxes of former felons whose voting rights had been returned by law.

We saw Trump's playbook during the 2016 election, when he didn't expect to win, so he belled that the "election was rigged!" He wanted his followers to believe this lie so that he could then retreat to private life and create a new moneymaker out of a Trump news network based on resentment and conspiracy theories.

To his surprise he did win the election, and at first he was like a dog that found a dinosaur bone! What to do with it? No more complaints about the election having been rigged because that would have contradicted the validity of his win. Yes, he did win because of the manipulated Electoral College results, but lost the popular vote (the real vote) by several million votes. He has lied about that loss ever since, claiming that he really won that vote too "if thousands of illegal aliens had not voted fraudulently."

Now he is up against a real loss this time, and he cannot bear it. His scowling face shows this, as he lies about the validity of mail-in voting, necessitated this year because of the danger of contacting the Coronavirus if crowds vote in person.

Not caring about the health or even death of his own mindless followers, he holds rallies that endanger his audiences, crammed together in large numbers, often indoors, few wearing masks. He mocks those who believe the medical authorities and follow the rules, yet keeps his own distance on stage from his audiences. He admitted to a reporter who asked if he himself feared getting the virus. He assured her that he had no fear. He even signaled to her to keep back when she neared him. He also said during a cabinet meeting that the virus had its good side: he no longer had to shake hands with his "disgusting" fans.

He says that he does not agree to a peaceful transfer of power unless he wins. Losing will prove that the election was rigged. He has hinted that his avid followers might go into the streets fully armed.

The Federal Marshalls and Secret Service are prepared to pack him up and march him out of the White House, hopefully into the arms of law enforcement waiting for him.

685 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of "How Do You Know That? Contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.

