

The Donald and a Joe

HA!Man (Francois le Roux) | 21 July 2024

I spent the day in the sun at the beach with my Joke en my Mira and Joke's parents and sisters and Mira's cousins and the sand and the salt water and the mini waves of the Northern side and forgot about the world and came back home in Bruges and worked on a promo video until the time i decided it is time to go sleep and then did the wrong thing: to open the news. And there it was. Biden pulled out of the race. And now i cry and now i am writing and will have a late night against my good senses. But this is a moment, forgive me oh Time. Yes, i cry. Yes, all you bullies and strongmen: tears, that is salty water from my eyes, the water that once made life possible. And still.

What a saga the last weeks. How we all (OK, not ALL) are spellbound yet again by the American drama, not only because it is the world's leading country and affects us all, but because America does drama all the time. Too much of it. And Donald Trump is drama supreme.

And my tears are for him too. The difference between Biden and Trump: Biden is where he always wanted to be: in politics. And now he is bowing out. Why? because politics is bigger than him. The country, the people, more than him. Yes, he did shrink over the last days. He did become all too human in fighting against the odds, showing his wounds and regrets. Biting bitterly even. But in the end (THE END), he honours politics for what it is: the heart of society. And he won't stand in the way of that heart keeping beating.

Trump is not where he wants to be. Trump is a genius showman, an actor. Had he gone to Hollywood as his dream was, had The Apprentice taken him further along that route, he would have found himself where he needed to be. And he would have been able to bow out too, when his time had come. For one's cup is filled when you are where you want to be. But politics to him, is only a vehicle to show himself. And as his cup will never be filled there (for politics is not show business - even if it comes close to that in America), he cannot and will not bow out. For he is blindly looking for his self worth in the wrong place.

In the process, he has effectively turned the Republican Party into a show-biz business. Trump is all about narrative, and the performance of that narrative. Not about conveying a truth or any sort of conviction, but to gain the applause of his crowd. He is doing the same in the business world. He is not happy making money. But he is happy emblazoning his name in gold on big buildings. He is happy to turn buildings in to showcases of himself. Money buys him the propos he needs for his gilded stage.

The reason why Trump succeeds (to some extent) in business and in politics, is that he is, indeed, a master actor, even though, in these wrong contexts, borders on being a conman. So, just as his own cup of happiness is never filled there, so is he never quite, really, successful there. A big part of his success, is the show of being a success, even if he has to lie about it. And that is essentially the basis of all the legal cases against him: his lying and his manipulation of others to lie on his behalf. In his book, "The Art of the Deal", he essentially tells us that as long as you throw a

good show, truth comes second. And because of his genius as an actor, he absolutely believes in his ability to make a good deal, for a deal to him, is a situation where the other party applauds his performance in the end.

Biden's bowing out moves me deeply. Here is a man how bit the dust in life, who was purified by pain and loss, who knew what it takes to get the political job done. And his four years in the presidency were truly one of the most productive in the US's history, in spite of country's peak bipolarity. He knows what vulnerability is and means. And it is that knowing that made it possible for him to eventually put his ambition and his momentum of successful leadership aside for the sake of the bigger whole. Biden knows how to cry.

Trump was almost killed the other day. And I, for one, held my breath. Would this brush with death turn something within him? It did. For a few days it did. Many commented on how close he came to looking vulnerable, even tearful. Had he a proper stage to express that vulnerability, we would have been able to witness a genius performance, we would have been moved and be changed by him. And for 20 minutes during his convention speech, he did use the political stage as an artistic one. And we were truly taken by it. But like Peter, he suddenly saw the waves of the political drama around him, the need to gain the presidency to stay out of jail, the adulation that now expressedly turned him into a saint, and he sank into the waters of his false self again, where his lies have become his truth. And the truly sad thing about all of this is the many people he takes along with him on this cul-de-sac.

He has inspired many, also good people that i know, to lie to themselves. Many, who, with their intuition and good senses still intact, once knew that this man was not where he belongs, that his moral compass was astray, that he was bending himself to any wind that would serve his own image. That he was a braggart and a bully. In this way, one particularly outspoken critic of his, has now become his running mate. I have seen how people got swept along with the show, placed all their valuables on this crooked carriage, hoping for the best. Conservatism in America itself took this gamble on the casino man. Whether he becomes president again or not, this will not turn out well. A sweet lie is addictive. And it is very hard to switch back to integrity and a healthy sense of one's limitations.

Biden is no genius. And geniuses do not belong in politics. Trump is one. You can admire him for what he did manage within the political arena as a complete outsider, just like you can admire a 10 year old boy that manages to drive a big bus. But to employ that boy as the local school's bus driver, that is not on. Not only do you rob him from his childhood, it will most probably also lead to a bad accident.

I view Trump as a fellow artist. In social terms, us artists are 10-year olds. Leave us to dream up visions, to play and create and infuse others with our fountainous energies. But don't put us behind the driving wheel of society. I have said this over and over again, but look at the worst leaders ever, and you'll find artists there: Mao the poet, Stalin the poet, Hitler the painter, Trump the actor. Of course it is not a golden rule, but the more gifted the artist within is, the worse the political outcome seems to be.

Once i had political ambitions myself. Once i was dejected for not being chosen as the head boy in school. I also thought of myself as a little father in our house after my real father passed away. (And perhaps i am still too much into politics for my artistic good). But all of that came crashing down - early on, luckily. Only in

vulnerability was i able to feel what i really wanted to do, and that was music. In politics, i would have been over-ambitious, i would have been a little tyrant - too sensitive to relax within a crowd, too convinced of my own views to make the necessary compromises.

That is why i admire true politicians, for i am not one of them. Biden, Merkel, Ramaphosa.. Obama? No. Mandela? No. They were both too good with words and too clever. They made tremendous contributions and Obama could stir me deeply with his speeches. And Mandela, of course, he was the master of the human spirit. But politics? Politics brings the gut and the head together in the heart. Ideology and passion only goes so far. Leadership is something else. It is that continuous balancing point that sense where the whole is, then gives it direction. It's main currency is not power. Its main currency is trust. Trust, action, responsibility.

Currently, we do not have much of those in the world. But even just a little, can make a huge difference. May the leading country in the world choose a real leader in November. The less glamorous, the better. For the line between glamour and horror, is too fine.

And I must sleep. And do what makes me truly happy.