

POLITICS AS USUAL: Hello, 2017!

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Happy 2017 everyone.

2016 is finally over and I, for one, would like to say a hearty good riddance! It was a horrible year - or as the Queen would say, an Annus Horribilis. Disasters, war, famine, brutality both casual and premeditated, our daily news feeds were dominated by tragedy of every magnitude.

It got so bad that one occasion I actually took a time out from reading the paper or watching CNN. Most notably on November 9 when I could no longer bear to acknowledge the reality of what was transpiring. To prod your memory, that was the day after an (albeit) imperfect candidate was 'beaten' by an arguably abominable one to become leader of the free world. Lord help us.

2016 saw the rise of the supposed 'angry' man as manifested by the wins of both Brexit and Trump and the fears of a political pandemic that will spread like a virulent virus across the globe. Personally, I think the global political situation is far more complex than a simple case of an apparent loss of political sanity. But yes, I do agree that things are bad. Certainly, if Trumps cabinet picks are any indication of what is to come in terms of political decision-making there are indeed some very worrying signs that we are in for a very bumpy ride over the new few years.

But I don't want to dwell on the negative. I am weary of the worrying. I'd like to face this New Year with some hope. I'd like to focus on what I'd like to see more of, and what I'd like to see less of (starting of course with my propensity of employing the annoying lazy literary habit of ending sentences in prepositions...)

So, for 2017, I have just three wishes. First, I would like to see more regular folks stepping forward to run for local office and less folks who are ex-lawyers and academics. Government is supposed to be for the people and by the people. So, it should be representative of the people; not just in terms of gender and geography but in terms of experience and education. Good decision-making at the local level is practical, not political and certainly not academic. So, I'd like to see more small businessmen and fewer CEOs, more policemen and firemen, and fewer career politicians step forward.

Second, I would like to see more true leaders and far fewer panderers. The political realm at every level is populated by panderers. Folks who say whatever it takes to get noticed, to get votes. Folks who live by focus-group tested verbiage instead of heartfelt, meaningful initiatives. We need leaders with vision, with ideas, not ego-driven wannabes who care more about the title than the job. If someone can't demonstrate what they will do for you, instead of them, then don't give them your vote.

And finally, I would like to see more fortitude and less waffling from the folks who occupy elected office. Stop worrying about whether something will play well and just make a decision. You're there to do the best job you can, for the folks who put you in that seat in the first place. Hanging onto it should not be the primary consideration let alone the only consideration. Yes, doing the right thing may not win you re-election. So be it.

And that's it. A few small wishes for a brand New Year.

To all my readers, I want to thank you for reading my column each week. I hope you and your family have a healthy, happy New Year. All the best for 2017!