

POLITICS AS USUAL: Vegas, Baby!

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Election Day is November 8 (or 28 if you believe one candidate?) and the US presidential race is thankfully nearing its ignominious end. And I think we can all agree that it is none too soon.

Since the beginning of primary season, it was clear that this was going to be no ordinary race. Candidates ? or most often their surrogates ? have always hurled invectives at their opponents. That's pretty much par for the course. But this time out, that name calling has gone to extremes. Little Marco. Crooked Hillary. Crazy Bernie. We watched as nasty nicknames and crazy accusations against primary opponents in both the Democrat and Republican races became commonplace.

But we've also been witness to hacked emails and the Russians, vulgar tabloid tv outtakes, conspiracy theories about rigged elections, reporters getting death threats for reporting, lurid accusations of a variety of sexual improprieties and on and on it goes. When have you ever seen a race like this? I haven't seen anything like it. And neither have the talking heads on CNN, MSNBC, CBS, or any news program for that matter. They've shaken their heads in disbelief so much that they've done permanent damage to their necks.

But, even with all that has gone before, the last two weeks in particular have been brutal. Unless you've been living under a rock, you will know about the tapes, and the groping allegations, and the wikileaks. The campaign had gone so low that pundits are running out of adjectives to describe just how low it has gotten. The fact that a US presidential debate ? on national television with fully 85 million people watching - included a question about whether a candidate tweeted out encouragement to supporters to check out a sex tape is proof positive that the race has devolved into something that the worst of reality TV could only aspire to. It is appalling.

The debates thus far, such as they are, have made the situation worse, not better. Instead of affording the campaigns the opportunity to lay out their economic, strategic, security, health care plans ? you know, the plans that outline what they will actually do to make Americans safer physically and financially, it gave the voting public the opportunity to witness name calling, stunts, sniffing, obfuscation, flat out lies, character assassination, alleged drug use, murders (okay, I made that one up, but you get my point). In other words, an episode of Jerry Springer.

And there's still one more to go! The third and final debate is being held this Wednesday in Vegas and is being moderated by Chris Wallace. From Fox News. Yes, Fox News. The network that brings you Sean Hannity and Bill O'Reilly. Need I say more?

I have watched every minute of all the debates from the primaries to the presidential debates. I find the whole thing to be absolutely fascinating. And what could be better than being there? Well, nothing.

So, I have taken some vacation time and am going down to Vegas to watch the debate. I fully expect it to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

And yes, I know it is an open carry state so I will keep my opinions to myself?until I am back home, of course! I am sure I will have an interesting column or two on the whole adventure. It certainly won't be Politics as Usual.