

Trump made us all losers. 7 ways to recalibrate

By Wayne Visser

My open letter to the losers from Trump's Presidential re-election - within and beyond the US

On 10 November 2016, I wrote an "Open Letter to Young People on Donald Trump's Election as President". Today, exactly 8 years later, I feel compelled to write another letter, since Trump has once again been voted into office—by more than 80 million people. This time, however, I don't want to address the letter specifically to young people (after all, many young people voted for Trump), but rather to all the "losers" from the US elections, young and old, liberal and conservative, American and international.

So who are these losers? Most obviously, countless Americans who worked tirelessly to oppose Trumpism and voted for Kamala Harris or another candidate. But the net of losers must be cast much wider. The losers include migrants and minorities likely to face more discrimination, the Ukrainians and Palestinians, citizens at home and abroad soon to be hit by Trump's tariffs, communities that will suffer from more severe climate impacts, not to mention millions of advocates for climate action, social equity and nature protection. I'm sure you can compile your own losers list.

To the losers, one and all, let's take this as a moment for reflection. Here are my 7 ways to recalibrate:

1. **Understanding.** It's too easy to dismiss, disparage and demonise Trump and his supporters. But they represent a growing group of people – not only in America but around the world – who feel ignored, left behind and threatened. Partly, this is an economic story. In many countries, real wages for the middle classes have not grown for decades; jobs are shifting out of traditional sectors; and globalisation has brought more competition, migration and offshoring.
2. **Sensemaking.** There is also a cultural story. The so-called woke agenda is a step too far, too fast and too frightening for many people. It challenges their sense of identity and values. We don't have to agree with this for it to be true. There is a psychological story too. In times of great uncertainty or perceived danger, people instinctively "go tribal". To feel secure, they seek out others like themselves. And they follow "strong men" – leaders who simplify the world for them, who promise, like superheroes, that they can right all the wrongs in the world.
3. **Listening.** The lesson for us losers is that it is time to stop ridiculing and ranting and to start listening and learning. We have to understand the fears and aspirations that are motivating the global shift to the conservative political right. And we need to come up with better answers to their questions, better solutions to their problems. This is a lesson in humility. Rather than distancing and

dehumanising those who don't agree with us, we must look for common ground and find common humanity.

4. **Strategising.** If this all sounds too much like giving up on the causes we believe in so passionately, or compromising the values that we hold dear, nothing could be further from the truth. The goal has not changed. We want a better future where human rights are upheld, inequalities narrow, the economy rapidly decarbonises and nature is protected and restored. But we have to be smarter in the way we pursue this mission. We have to be more strategic and less impatient, more collaborative and less righteous.
5. **Storytelling.** Don't get me wrong, we are still called to be vocal and active champions for what we believe in. There is nothing inevitable about progress. But we also need to change tactics. Trying to scare or shame others into changing doesn't work anymore, if it ever did. We need a more positive agenda. We need a more compelling narrative. The new story must be about opportunities and inclusion, not risks and exclusion; about investment and returns, not costs and losses; about innovation and progress, not compliance and penalties.
6. **Connecting.** Above all, for us losers, this is a time for resilience and rejuvenation. We are playing the long game, and will need our health and strength to continue. It is a time for solidarity and sharing. We are building a movement, and will need to reach out, connect and stand with each other. It is a time for healing and hope. We may be hurting now, but we know that hope is rooted in action, and that the future is all to play for. We will face setbacks and disappointments, but we will always find and create opportunities for positive change.
7. **Leading.** Finally, we need to take back our power. That starts with giving up the false notion that individual leaders at the top of bureaucratic hierarchies are all powerful. In any complex system—be it government or business, society or the economy—power is always distributed. We are all leaders, because no one controls the system and everyone influences it. Others may seem more influential, but when we are connected, even the smallest actions, taken together, can have outsized impacts and lead to positive tipping points. We are the hope we are hoping for.

Source:

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