

Clinton rises above dejection, secures place in history | Opinion



Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, accompanied by her husband former President Bill Clinton, pauses as she concedes the presidential election at the New Yorker Hotel on November 9, 2016 in New York City. Republican candidate Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election in the early hours of the morning in a widely unforeseen upset. (Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images *(Justin Sullivan)*)



By **Star-Ledger Guest Columnist**

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By Carl Golden

One can't help but be impressed at the manner in which Hillary Clinton has comported herself in the month since she was defeated by Donald Trump for the presidency.

While her campaign staff trades insults with their Trump campaign counterparts, blaming Clinton's loss on the Russians, WikiLeaks and the director of the FBI, she has kept her own counsel and refused to participate in the finger-pointing and the unseemly, shrill screeching of those she entrusted with her campaign.

Trump staff members could use a dose of magnanimity themselves, avoid the gloating and the gleeful reminders that everyone -- the media, the party establishment and the smug talking heads who populate network and cable television -- were all oh so wrong.

The Clinton cadre would do well to refuse to rise to the bait tossed at them by the Trump campaign. By engaging in a snide and snarky dialogue, they reflect poorly on their recent boss and come across publicly as the epitome of sore losers.

Losing an election, particularly one that was supposedly in the bag, is a disheartening and personally devastating blow. It represents a very public rejection of what one stands for; it is a clear statement that one's core principles and beliefs are, for one election cycle at least, not acceptable to voters.

Since her election night concession, Clinton has displayed dignity and class, congratulating Trump and urging the American people to unite behind him to move the country forward. While her campaign has indicated its support of a three-state recount, it did not join the effort begun by Green Party candidate Jill Stein and, in fact, conceded that any significant change in the final tallies is unlikely and overturning the outcome would be impossible.

Her staff should learn from her conduct and put an end to the recriminations and bitter accusations they've thrown at the winner.

To be sure, the campaign often descended into brutal, personal attacks -- Trump's nicknaming her "crooked Hillary" amid rally chants of "Lock her up," while Clinton portrayed Trump as "unfit" and characterized half of his supporters as "a basket of deplorables."

There were many times when the rhetoric reflected poorly on both, dragging the process through a muddy swamp from which neither emerged with clean hands.

The staffs of candidates invest months of intense labor, endure long hours that leave them exhausted, and fight off the frustrations and setbacks common to campaigns. The effort is all-consuming: Nothing else matters; family, friends, relationships are overwhelmed and cast aside by the desire -- nay, obsession -- to achieve a victory.

A loss is unthinkable. There are no silver medals awarded in this business.

When defeat intercedes and the realization sinks in that the effort to attain personal and political validation has failed, it is often replaced by bitterness. The need to lash out and strike back at others is overpowering. Resisting it is extraordinarily difficult, but giving in to it produces the kind of acrimony exhibited by some of the Clinton campaign staff.

It has been especially galling for her staff to accept an outcome they failed to envision. Many will be haunted by a loss to a thrice-married, billionaire real estate developer with no political or governmental experience, an individual who defied orthodoxy while delivering outrageous harangues against groups and individuals and promising solutions many believe are impossible to fulfill.

Clinton is aware, certainly, that mistakes were made in her campaign, that strategies were flawed, and execution of plans fell short of expectations. She has, it seems, moved past all of it, although in her private moments, it is likely she replays moments when she could have done better or acted differently.

She made history by becoming the first woman to win a major party nomination for president and, but for the unique constitutional quirk by which presidents are chosen -- Electoral College rather than popular vote -- could have become the first woman president.

Her place in the nation's history is secure -- and deservedly so.

~~Her demeanor in the face of defeat, her acceptance of the will of the voters and her steadfast urging of national unity make that place even more secure.~~

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