

ELECTION 2016

Community leaders share post-election reflections

Thoughts, anxieties and hopes after the 2016 election

by Jeff Taylor :: *qnotes* staff

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The 2016 election was historic, and was impactful for the LGBTQ community and our allies. In the national election, America had its first-ever major party female nominee running against a candidate with no previous public service.

In North Carolina, we had a governor's race that was largely a referendum on the anti-LGBTQ law House Bill 2 (HB2). At time of this writing, Gov. Pat McCrory has filed for a statewide recount, trailing by less than 10,000 votes to Democratic challenger Attorney General Roy Cooper.

Donald Trump's victory could have serious negative results for LGBTQ people, with his support of discriminatory laws like the First Amendment Defense Act (FADA), and his penchant for surrounding himself with anti-LGBTQ advisers, like Vice President-elect Mike Pence, Family Research Council senior fellow Ken Blackwell, chief strategist Steve Bannon, and Ben Carson, who Trump is considering for secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Trump also backed North Carolina in its HB2 battle, after initially voicing support for allowing transgender people to use the bathroom matching their identity. McCrory campaigned with Trump, appearing at rallies in the state.

Meanwhile, a McCrory loss could send a message that opposing LGBTQ rights can have electoral consequences, even in the South.

We wanted to know how our readers and local advocates were feeling post-election. Here are their responses.

[Ed. Note: The following quotes have not been edited for content and reflect the opinions of each person who contributed. However, they have been edited for grammar and punctuation.]



Janice Covington Allison

via Facebook

This year's elections have been strange say the least. It's my belief as an active member of the North Carolina State Democratic Party that more people overall have been involved in the election process than ever before, and as a result there is a lot of disappointment because the candidate of their choice did not make it.

I personally have seen eleven presidents elected in my lifetime, some Democrats some Republicans, some I liked and some I didn't. As a transgender woman, I find the results of the 2016 presidential race somewhat concerning to me because of the rumors about

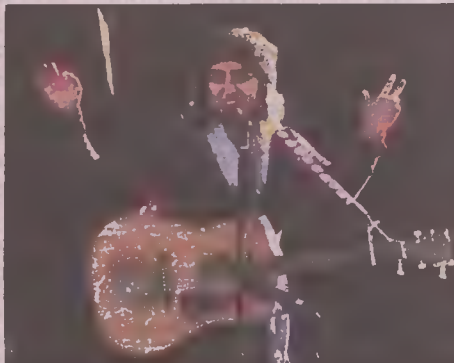
what might be taken away from me as a transgender citizen.

I must admit my main focus was on the North Carolina governor's race because of HB2 and what it has done to my community and state. We have succeeded in ousting Gov. Pat McCrory, but we are going to have to live with what he did until we can take back enough seats in the General Assembly to eliminate HB2 for good.

Even though we elected Roy Cooper as our new governor, we are still stuck with HB2 because of the Republican majority in

the North Carolina General Assembly. Here is what this means, it means that we are going to have to work harder in 2018 to gain enough seats in the North Carolina House and Senate so that we can have an effective governor, and this will lead to banishing HB2 from the laws of North Carolina forever.

Janice Covington Allison, North Carolina State Democratic Party member



Lara Americo performs at a post-election "Love Wins" rally.

Photo Credit: The Charlotte Observer, Diedra Laird

I have been fighting for transgender equality for a long time. Seeing someone like Trump being elected with a platform that has been supported by the KKK and the alt-right is devastating.

It feels like things like transphobia are so far down the list when you now have to deal with blatant xenophobia, racism and homophobia as well. I sincerely hope that I am wrong about the potential future under a Trump administration.

Lara Americo, activist, journalist and musician

What does the 2016 election mean to me? It means the silver lining I thought I saw around the clouds was really the light from a nasty thunderstorm behind the cloud.

The past few years I've seen more

advances and visibility of the transgender community than I could've ever imagined. Now all that progress we made is set to be undone and we may possibly take a step or two backwards.

With a Trump-helmed Department of Justice, it is quite likely they will drop their suit against HB2. The VA is already walking back from their promise to cover transgender surgical procedures. Will trans military personnel be able to serve openly now as promised? The Republican led House and Senate are toying with the idea of a First Amendment Defense Act which is simply a way to codify discrimination against any group as long as that group offends your religious beliefs.



Paige Dula on the set of NBC Charlotte's "Flash Point"

Photo Credit: WCNC still

direct and immediate danger to me, my family, and community. Things were already getting rough in NC for trans people thanks to HB2. Now bigots, especially violent bigots, are emboldened and ready to attack those who are different. I feel called to activism more than ever but am now almost terrified to do so.

Paige Dula, founder of Genderlines

During most of election night, I was volleying between depression and anxiety attacks. I knew God was still supreme. So I didn't have an apocalyptic reaction like many of my friends, family and colleagues. I just hoped Trump's election would invigorate all of us considered "other" to get deeply involved in change efforts. And for those who had been fully engaged, I prayed it would motivate them to explore means to take it higher.

I was greatly disappointed in the many black Americans who simply did not vote because Hillary wasn't the fresh, transforma-

tive candidate Obama was.

I was disappointed in working class white folks who voted for Obama in past elections but chose to embrace their fears, their quiet longing for white supremacy. This election wasn't ALL about race but it certainly was one of the major propellers of Trump's success.

Hillary's policy clearly benefited the white working class more, still Trumpers ignored that fact in order to elect a candidate who campaigned on reversing any progress the Obama Administration achieved.

I wonder if that 47 percent of qualified voters who abstained realize what this could mean for America: LGBT protections overturned, women criminalized for abortions, Muslims and the undocumented profiled, no increase in minimum wage, Affordable Care Act diminished, war-mongering, a president whose cabinet is comprised of white nationalists, Muslim haters, right-wing radicals and out-of-touch billionaire.

I'M STILL WITH HER.

Jermaine Nakia Lee



Jermaine Nakia Lee

We went into election night thinking that Hillary Clinton, a longtime supporter and friend to people living with HIV, would be elected. Now we're in a situation where our president-elect didn't even have an HIV policy during his campaign and has threatened to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

I think we can't take any program for granted now and we'll have to work together to fight anything that would harm the Ryan White Program, the safety net for thousands of people living with HIV that provides access to medical care and supportive services.

Debbie Warren, president and CEO of RAIN



Debbie Warren

The election has evoked fear and anger among those who opposed Trump. It is also evoking action unlike any that I have seen.

What's so important is to become empowered and know that you can make a difference in your world. During this time of seemingly great divide, we need bridge builders now more than ever.

Where can you build a bridge between hearts in your life? Let's use our emotions as fuel for positive action, welcoming what we DO want in our lives rather than focusing on what we don't want.

Jonathan Winn, owner at Breathe Refuge



Jonathan Winn giving a TEDx Talk

via YouTube screenshot