

Trump, Clinton symptoms of a disease

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BY ANTONY DAVIES & JAMES R. HARRIGAN | Saturday, Sept. 24, 2016, 5:18 p.m.

Presidential elections bring out the worst in the American people, who every four years manage to forget everything they know about human nature. In their forgetfulness, they line up behind either of two candidates for the highest office in the land and somehow overlook every flaw those candidates possess.

Those flaws are legion in 2016, but the true believers on both sides seem to be blind to them. Where rational people see Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump as raw opportunists, partisans manage to see only saviors.

They are crazy.

That partisans cannot see the folly in this is unfathomable. While no candidate for the office of president has ever lived up to his supporters' hype, these two might be the most flawed candidates in American history. And it was our two-party electoral process — from the self-nominated candidates, to the primary voters who fell for them, to the parties that catered to the most unseemly of their members — that served these candidates to us on the platter we deserved.

Hillary Clinton is so scandal prone that most people, if they thought about it for even a minute, would not want her living next door, much less serving as president. From the moment her husband took office in 1993, she has been almost continuously embroiled in one scandal after another, including (but by no means limited to) the so-called travelgate fiasco, the Whitewater real-estate scandal, the Norman Hsu campaign-contribution scandal, Benghazi, the use of an unsecured email server as secretary of State and now the appearance that she is using the Clinton Foundation as her personal pay-to-play ATM. You get the picture.

Hillary is possibly the most scandal-prone American political figure of the past 50 years. Yet there are those who are utterly convinced that all of the accusations lodged against her are baseless.

All of them? Really?

Not to be outdone, we have Trump supporters who are at least as willing to overlook the obvious truth as are the Hillary aficionados.

They forget that Trump wasn't even a Republican until he decided to run for president. He has no experience whatsoever in governing. His experience in business is largely one of failure. And when he isn't holding fast to socioeconomic policies, like keeping out foreigners, which are bereft of both social and economic principle, he is abandoning those policies to gain an uptick in the polls.

A candidate with flawed principles can at least be respected for sticking to those principles. But Trump appears to be driven less by principle than by appetite.

Yet Trump, Clinton and their apologists are only symptoms. They aren't the disease. The disease is the rest of us who know that neither candidate is qualified to serve as president — yet will grudgingly vote for one of them anyway. The disease is the rest of us who will not vote as a form of protest at precisely the time when a protest vote is most needed. The disease is the rest of us who refuse to consider seriously candidates other than those the two major parties have served up for us.

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