

Epilogue: The long road ahead

As I write this on November 12, 2020, my shoulders still ache from the tension I felt over the past week. It has only been 6 days since Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were projected to become our new president and vice-president. It was a tense week as we watched ballots being counted in the states of Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona. I was thrilled on Saturday when the announcement was finally made—Biden and Harris had won. We had friends over for champagne (with masks on), celebrating the fact that we would have a president who was already calling for unity, and the first African-American, Asian-American, woman vice-president. The good news is that 79 million voters chose a new path for our country. The bad news is that over 73 million Americans voted to give Donald Trump a second term. We remain a divided country.

As I reflect on the upheaval and chaos we have experienced in the last four years of the Trump presidency, I worry, knowing that he will remain a potent force in the politics of our country for the foreseeable future. I never imagined four years ago that we would be facing a dangerous pandemic and an economic disaster, as well as the anti-racist Black Lives Matter movement that would so deeply impact our lives. Trump's divisiveness, particularly during the election campaign, left many feeling fearful,¹ whether they supported him or not. His unwillingness to set an example by wearing a mask, even after contracting the virus himself, has likely played into the increasing numbers of COVID-19 across the US.

Winter is approaching and the numbers of people testing positive for COVID-19 in the US and Europe are increasing. Our long quarantine continues. I am hopeful, however, that the message for empathy is gaining traction. I have had many people reach out to learn more about my work, and I am working with several companies and schools as they try to bridge divides in their communities.

It is unfortunate that some political elites have chosen the politics of division, even as our country becomes more diverse. The demographic changes in our country are inevitable, but we must convince people from all backgrounds that we can be better by working together. There is a long history behind the divisions in our societies, and I explore that further in my next project, *The Roots of Racism*. What is important to remember is that change starts at the individual level. The targets of this book are the people of goodwill who want to see change in our society. I am certain that the message of radical empathy will help those who are willing to take action to change their communities.

The bigger question is, can we fight radical hate with radical empathy? We may not agree with our neighbor, but I hope our love for our communities can help us find a path to move past hate. We must start using tools and techniques, like those described in this book, to create hope and energize us for the long haul of healing the racial divisions in our societies. There is no miracle cure, and a new leader can change the tone, but it will take all of us working together to shift the tide. Each of us has the capacity to implement these strategies at every level. It can be a conversation with your neighbor, in the workplace, or in your local cafe. These tools are applicable everywhere.

I believe that our society has the potential to overcome what seems like an impenetrable wall that has been built by the long history of divisions. I wrote this book because it helped me on my path to overcoming my own biases, and I believe it is a stepping stone on the path to reconciliation. I believe that love will triumph over hate, eventually. Our country has survived dark times in the past, and as we move forward, I will do my part to use radical empathy and love on my own path to bridging racial divides.

*Enduring love is found in places unforeseen...
Unanticipated
Love works its mystery
In the countless daily rituals which move us through time
It is the way
Love works.²*