

My Turn: What Joe Biden being elected means to me

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This year's presidential election has been incredibly stressful and controversial. Some would consider it the most important election in our lifetimes. The turnout has given hope to so many people in this country. People who are struggling during the pandemic, people who see the violence against Black Americans and know that we need a change, and people who understand that climate change is an issue that needs fixing.

Things are looking a little bit brighter now that they know the person who will be in charge of this country wants to make a real change. On an individual level as someone who is biracial and has a stutter, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris winning the election is exceptionally important to me for many reasons. If Joe Biden can have a stutter and become the president of the United States and if Kamala Harris can overcome the deep-rooted racism and sexism in our country, it means I can do anything.

The first significant influence of Joe Biden's victory is that it shows fluent speakers how capable people who stutter are. In my experience, people often show ignorance towards things they don't understand. They think that if someone stutters, it means they're stupid or inept and should be treated that way. What those people don't understand is that we're not stupid, we're just living with a disability. Joe Biden's performance in debates and speeches show that. Having a stutterer leading our country should teach the world to respect people with speech disabilities. I hope Biden's presidency will be an opportunity for people to learn some empathy towards those who are different from them.

When I used to do speech therapy, my therapists would show me all these celebrities who stuttered and "overcame" it. They would tell me I could be like them if I tried hard enough. While this gives hope to a lot of kids like me, I knew deep down I would never be one of those people who just "got over it." I started to resent their stories more than I was inspired by them. In my opinion, Biden's story is more empowering than the success narratives of other celebrities. He tells the public that with years of working hard at it, he's learned how to manage it almost completely. He tells the public that he still finds himself losing that control he's built and stutters every once in a while. Just having someone who understands and has lived through your struggle let you know that things can get easier if you try means a lot. If someone who stutters can be president, I can make that phone call I've been worrying about. I can do that presentation in front of the class. Joe Biden getting elected tells people like me not to let their speech impediments hold them back.

As someone who is biracial, Kamala Harris being chosen as vice president has a huge impact. Joe Biden knew his privilege as a straight, white man and wanted to give an opportunity to someone with less privilege. We still have such a long way to go to see more people of color in positions of power, which is why Kamala Harris being the next vice president is such a big deal. Not too long ago, our country took a big step in electing a Black man as president, and there was so much hate and stigma from the public around him. A lot of people think a woman

president isn't something our country is ready for. Having a female vice president is one step closer to proving them wrong. On top of that, our first female vice president is a woman of color. This is already motivating mixed-race and Black girls by giving them a chance to see themselves in government positions like the one Kamala Harris is entering into. It teaches them to be proud of their identities, of their skin and their hair. Little girls of every race can look at Kamala Harris and realize that they could be in her position someday and be inspired by it.

I hope this provided some insight into how this year's election results have affected me as someone who is biracial and has a stutter. During Barack Obama's presidency, young Black men in high school responded very positively to having a role model in such a powerful position. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are already having a similar effect on young people who share their social identities. Having them lead the country will show both people who are in those minorities and people that aren't to not let their identities hold them back. Biden and Harris have promised to make direct, necessary change when they're in office. They're going to make changes that affect not only individual people, but the whole country by taking actions to stop the climate crisis and making health-care a right. Maybe I'll run for office someday. Maybe I won't. But today, I know that there's no limit to my capabilities and I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.

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