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## **As I See It: My radical treatment for 'Trump Derangement Syndrome'**

**By Paul S. Ropp**

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I've been a political junkie all my adult life, and for the past two years I've been obsessed with the narcissism, racism, ignorance, dishonesty and (especially the) popularity of Donald Trump. In late July I was briefly distracted from politics when I learned I had a bleeding tumor in the occipital lobe of my brain. It's the visual cortex in the back of the brain. For two days the looming uncertainty of brain surgery pushed President Trump out of my mind.

As I regained consciousness after surgery I felt ecstatic to realize I was still here, could still see, and still think clearly. The nurse monitoring my recovery posed four standard questions asked to all patients with neurological issues. What is your name? What day is it? Where are we? And who is the president of the United States?

I easily handled the first three but the fourth jarred my blood pressure meter as I answered intemperately, "The only good thing about the last 36 hours is that I did not spend one second thinking about Donald Trump!" Surprised by my own vehemence, I had just told a kind nurse that she had taken the worst day of my life and made it worse.

This was a quick and radical come down to reality after all the elevation of my high thoughts - on the meaning of life and death, and on the infinite value of my loved ones - before going under anesthesia. I clearly reentered the world of the living not much improved in my temperament. The surgical preparation instructions did say patients after neurosurgery are often grumpy. I say with good reason.

Fortunately, my anger over the Trump question quickly dissipated when my wife came to tell me the surgeon pronounced my surgery successful. That was great news, and I was not lucid enough at the time to think, “Isn’t it a little early to tell?” It clearly was a little early to tell, because for the next two days at regular intervals, I and all the other neurosurgery patients were asked those same four questions. I quickly learned to name the president without editorial comment.

The only other person I heard answer the presidential question was a patient who was very ill both physically and mentally and with whom I briefly shared a room. He could not walk, was obstinate and uncooperative, and berated every staff person who approached him. His response to the presidential question was simpler than mine: “Trump, the old pirate!” Despite his distressed state of mind, he still had a modicum of political insight.

Given the life-threatening and life-altering nature of brain cancer and brain surgery, the experience prompts a lot of reflection - not a bad thing. Always looking for patterns in our experience, we humans tend to underestimate the sheer randomness of life.

I’m a good example. My hostility to Mr. Trump is so deep that I began to think of my thumb-sized tumor as my Trump Tumor. It was in my visual cortex and near the parietal lobe, so affected my vision and balance - telltale signs of Trump derangement syndrome. An easy Will Shortz puzzle would be: Make an anagram changing one letter in the word “tumor” to create a synonym. Trump Tumor is obvious.

I’m not putting all the blame on Mr. Trump. My grandfather once worked as a Christian Science counselor who assured sick people their illness was a result of their distance from God and their susceptibility to evil forces. He would have recognized my Trump Tumor but would have added, “it’s not that Trump caused your tumor; it’s your response to Trump that caused your tumor.”

I have emerged from my experience with a strong need to use all my energy and strength in positive ways. In the post-surgery-ICU I saw directly how anger affected my blood pressure meter. My anti-Trump

anger was only hurting me. And all it took to realize this was removing a tumor from my brain.

Anger at the president's antics clouds our vision and plays right into his polarizing style. We need the methods of Gandhi against the British, and King against the KKK: opposition without animus. Ignore the bullying and braggadocio. A rapper might say: point out the lies but don't demonize; keep eyes on the prize.

John McCain's moving memorial services offered us a brief chance to refocus our energies in positive directions, to look for common ground, and to restore some sense of civility to our national politics. Unfortunately, the rancorous Kavanaugh confirmation battle has brought our partisan divide back to the boiling point.

It won't heal all our divisions, but it would greatly aid the healing process of grumpy semi-conscious patients coming out of brain surgery not to require them to name the current president of the United States!

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