**THE ANXIETY OF AN ELECTION**  
*By Jason Jones*

UNITED STATES—I have never had this level of anxiety waiting for the results of a presidential election for as long as I can remember. I have been actively voting, and I mean actively on a local, state and national scale since I turned 18. I was one of those people who couldn’t wait to have the opportunity to vote and I used that weapon as I call it to have my voice heard.

With that said, nothing annoys me more than hearing about people who are in their mid-20s, their 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, heck some people in their 70s, who have never cast a ballot or vote in my life. People of such magnitude boil my blood. Don’t talk to me, just don’t even speak a word to me because I cannot fathom or try to grasp why you think it’s NOT important to vote. I just don’t understand it, but I guess when some people have the privilege of NOT voting, they don’t have to vote.

With that said the 2020 Presidential Election was a biggie. It was an hour and a half to 2 hours or so when I mean when I went to the polls at 7:30 a.m. it was a long line. I hadn’t seen a line that long at my polling station since 2008 when Barack Obama made history becoming the first African-American to become President of the United States of America. So that was a cue for me that it would be a long election night. Yeah, I knew plenty of people who decided to cast their ballot absentee or by mail-in, not just me.

I know we’re in a pandemic, but I have always been someone who wanted to cast my ballot in person considering my grandparents, and their parents were NOT given the opportunity to actually vote. It’s hard to fathom that this country had to have not one, but two constitutional amendments. First, the 15th Amendment that first gave individuals who had been denied the right to vote because of the color of their skin, the opportunity to vote without suppression. Then years later, the 19th Amendment was passed that allowed women the right to vote. Yeah, I am still trying to wrap my mind around the fact that amendments had to be passed to allow PEOPLE the right to vote. It is indeed ugly that we had to go through so much.

With that said, Election Night was one that left me on pins and needles. I feel like as Americans we have always, and I mean always known who the next President of the United States would be by the time the night was upon us. I mean there was another time, back in 2000 when Al Gore battled George W. Bush, where Bush edged out a victory winning Florida and winning the 270 votes in the Electoral College.

I knew it would not be a quick night because there were so many people who case absentee and mail-in ballots. Those ballots are valid those are American voters speaking to the public, and as long as those votes were postmarked by the deadline that was initiated by the law they should be counted plain and simple, you can’t tamper with votes or it raises a question of the legitimacy of American democracy. States that have typically been red stayed red, states that have been predominately blue stayed blue.

With that said there was a slight surprise in Arizona going BLUE for the first time in 24 years, followed by Wisconsin being called for Joe Biden mid-Wednesday afternoon. Yes, a lot about that was questioned. States that were predominantly blue won by Donald Trump had flipped to the Democrats favor. However, Florida which for reasons I can never fathom, had people on edge, and ultimately was a victory for Republicans and President Trump.

We might not know the winner of this election for a few days, perhaps a few weeks depending on the legal challenges that could unravel in the coming days with such close races like Nevada, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Michigan and Nevada is neck-and-neck right now, with Pennsylvania leaning in Trump’s favor, but there are mail-in ballots that still have to be counted.

Lawyers have gotten involved, ballots are being questioned and it just adds to the level of anxiety and stress so many Americans have already had to deal with when it comes to this particular job. It sucks, it really sucks, but all I can say to ensure the American public is that you’re Demorcrat, Republican, an Independent or you have no party affiliation, win or lose, you will survive. We cannot always win, and if you lose you lose, take the loss gracefully, nothing funny business has transpired and hope for the best the next time around. When it comes to politics the power ALWAYS and I mean ALWAYS shifts, no one party or individual stays in power forever.

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**NOT OVERSPENDING ON CHRISTMAS GIFTS**  
*By Trevor Roberts*

UNITED STATES—Halloween is now behind us and the next big holiday where money will be spent, Christmas is fast upon us. With that said, I started Christmas shopping a bit early this year as a result of the pandemic. I got a lot of silly gifts for family at really solid prices, prices that I never thought possible and because of that I think I might have over bough and we’re only in the first week of November people. Unlike last year, where I did a bit more spending than I imagined, I have no plans to do it this year.

I’m keeping it small, I’m keeping it simple and I’m not going to spend more than what my budget can handle people, not in 2020. So the question I should have asked myself, which I’m sure plenty of you are asking as well: how do I cut costs when it comes to spending on Xmas gifts? It starts with knowing who you are buying for. Is it a kid, a tween, a teen, a young adult, middle-aged woman or man, a grandparent, a child, a parent or a friend? Once that is clear, it is time to decide what is your budget? What can you spend, what do you want to spend.

So many of us tend to get more than more than we can afford because we want to impress or outdo other people. Stop, that is something we should not and we do not need to do. Competing with family members or desires to go above and beyond so we can show the person we purchase that gift or gifts for and we pay for it dearly with our wallets. The wallet or purse handle takes a direct hit from all those gifts we pay for and a lot of the time, those gifts come and go. I hate to say it that way, but so many people don’t think about it after they open the present.

Why tear out your hair trying to find the perfect gift? What does that even mean? Yes, it is quite ambiguous to say the least. It is impossible to find the perfect gift and who says you can place a price tag on the perfect gift. I don’t believe you can, but we’ve become more than we can afford because we want to impress or outdo others. Stop, that is something we should not and we do not need to do. Competing with family members or desires to go above and beyond so we can show the person we purchase that gift or gifts for and we pay for it dearly with our wallets. The wallet or purse handle takes a direct hit from all those gifts we pay for and a lot of the time, those gifts come and go. I hate to say it that way, but so many people don’t think about it after they open the present.

We can sit here and ignore the elephant in the room if we want, but the truth remains, many Americans put on a bit of weight as a result of the big quarantine that transpired from mid-March thru July. In some states it was even longer if you ask me. I know for one that I put on a bit of weight, even though I thought I was eating way healthier during the quarantine before it happened. Why?

Everything was closed and I was being forced to literally cook meals every single day at home, and as a result it allowed me to save plenty of money, but I found myself in this weird predicament where I thought I was not just eating healthier, but more active in terms of using the exercise equipment in my home.

I guess when you have an actual pandemic where people are NOT allowed to go anywhere where or do anything it does stifle movement even that you don’t consider as important, but they are quite important. For example, I’m someone who normally mall walks, so when you can’t walk the mall that is exercise that you are not getting or receiving. You start to think oh, I’m not eating as healthy as before, but if I’m snacking all day throughout the day that cannot be healthy in any fashion America.

Food is food, the more of it that you eat raises the probability of you gaining weight, especially if you are NOT burning those calories along the way people. Which is the tale of the hour for most Americans, as we start to gain a bit of normalcy back to our lives, but for many you still cannot dine out like you want, you cannot hit the gym, there are practices that are off limits so the notion of being as active as you wish you could be is a distant memory. Note: I said distant memory, things are still going to be active. Instead of being as active as you wish you could be.

For starters, we have to be aware of what we are placing into our bodies. Some of us indulge in the bad stuff a bit more than we care to. Even I am guilty of it, and for so many of us, it’s a direct result of the pandemic. It has created a tremendous level of stress, anxiety and pressure for so many of us; we are utilizing food as a way of dealing with our emotions. Eat because we’re hungry, eat because we’re sad, frustrated or angry.

We have to make our health a stronger focal point. We say we want to be healthy, but if we are eating out every single day, if we’re eating fatty, sugary and carb driven foods that is not going to have a positive effect on the body, it’s going to do the exact opposite America. Cravings happen and it’s impossible to eliminate them completely, but you can curb them by indulging in something a bit healthier. Instead of grabbing that candy bar, grab some carrots, some broccoli or perhaps an apple or banana instead.

In addition, just because you have a craving does NOT mean you have to eat the entire thing, eat just enough to satisfy that craving and save the rest for later. Exercise in spurs, you don’t have to push thru a 2-hour workout if the body is not up to it. Do 30 minutes in the morning, 30 minutes mid-afternoon and 30 minutes at night. It is better to be active than not to be active at all, as I say time and time again. The quarantine has impacted our lives in bigger ways than one can imagine. However, when it comes to our health, we cannot allow it to take a back seat people.