

KAMALA HARRIS AGAINST DESPAIR

As you know, I've been tracking Kamala Harris' outreach to Republicans, Liz Cheney above all, with a good deal of interest. I've spoken about why it makes sense from a demographic perspective; if Harris can attract some of Nikki Haley's voters, it could put her over the top in these 50/50 states. I've described how seeing endorsements from people like Liz Cheney and her father create a permission structure for other Republicans to take the risk of voting for Harris.

More recently, I described that events with Liz Cheney and other Republicans provide a news hook for Trump's fascism that cannot be dismissed as partisanship.

I've even observed (though perhaps only on social media) that events with Liz Cheney provide Harris a way to get out of an ethical dilemma. As Vice President, she should not discuss pending Federal cases against a criminal defendant, including the January 6 case charged against Trump. But Liz Cheney can. And Cheney happens to be an expert. In the events she did and is doing and still will do with Harris today, Cheney prosecuted the January 6 case against Donald Trump. And as she described how Trump sat, doing nothing, as his supporters attacked Congress, one of the people behind the women nodded vigorously.

But I also realized, as I watched the Michigan version of these events today, that Harris and Cheney are also modeling democracy. They are giving people – women who are my age and Cheney's age and moderator Maria Shriver's age are the primary but by no means the only target – what they want: a democracy where people talk to one another.

That is, these events, at their most ambitious, are about giving people a reason to defend

democracy.

That's something Harris said as she answered the last question in the Royal Oak event.

Shriver described several people in the audience talking about how scared they are, and she asked Harris how she copes with the stress.

Not eating gummies, Harris responded.

But then, after admitting she wakes up most nights these days, she gave an impromptu speech against despair.


Let me just speak to what people are feeling. We cannot despair. We cannot despair. You know, the nature of a democracy is such that I think there's a duality. On the one hand, there's an incredible strength when our democracy is intact. An incredible strength in what it does to protect the freedoms and rights of its people.

Oh there's great strength in that.

And, it is very fragile. It is only as strong as our willingness to fight for it. And so that's the moment we're in. And I say do not despair because in a democracy, as long as we can keep it, in our democracy, the people – every individual – has the power to make a decision about what this will be.

And so let's not feel powerless.

Let's not let the – and I get it, overwhelming nature of this all make us feel powerless. Because then we have been defeated. And that's not our character as the American people. We are not one to be defeated. We rise to a moment. And we stand on broad shoulders of people who have fought this fight before for our country. And in many ways then, let us look at the challenge that we have been presented and not be overwhelmed by it.



The baton is now in our hands, to fight for, not against, but for this country that we love. That's what we have the power to do.

So let's own that? Dare I say be joyful in what we will do in the process of owning that which is knowing that we can and will build community and coalitions and remind people that we're all in this together.

Let's not let the overwhelming nature of this strip us of our strength.

That's how I feel about this.

The entire event is worth watching.

But what the Vice President said about despair may well be the nugget of inspiration that moves us forward.