

COMMENTARY

DEBATE TEAM

What should be Kennedy's next move?



Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. speaks during the Libertarian National Convention on May 24 at the Washington Hilton. JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

Democrats should want RFK Jr. on their ticket

By Josh Mazer

As the curtain falls on the yearslong deception that President Joe Biden is of sound mind and body, the obvious question many are asking is: What else have we been lied to about? I can think of one very important and unfortunate example. That is the unfair and unhinged depiction of independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

The Kennedy campaign's internal polling shows he leads Trump in a head-to-head race, and FiveThirtyEight's polling averages show Kennedy has higher favorability ratings. He is frequently polling in double digits nationally. With the upheaval in the presidential contests, Democrats and all Americans should be paying attention to these astounding facts. It's time to nominate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for president on the Democratic ticket.

Admittedly, there are obstacles to overcome, mainly because we are not getting the truth about Kennedy from our mainstream sources. The institutions that gaslighted the world for years about Biden's mental acuity desperately want you to believe that Kennedy is unfit for office. Since our mainstream sources either ignore or denigrate Kennedy, let me share a few facts about him you might not be reading anywhere else.

Kennedy is an experienced complex chemical exposure attorney who has taken on some of the smartest and most powerful corporations in the world. He was lauded as a hero for the environment by Time magazine. He helped found and guide Waterkeeper Alliance, an institution near and dear to many Marylanders. He has been a champion of all people for decades. His work in environmentalism alone is a testament to his career in the public interest and his concern for the human race globally. He is anti-war and pro-family and worker, centered in his faith and guided by a moral compass that allows

no compromises. As a recovering addict, he empathizes with families struggling with substance abuse and hopelessness. His platform is one of hope over fear. Listen to him on a long-form podcast, such as his recent appearance on Joe Rogan's show, and you too will understand why so many people are working so hard to get him elected.

To neutralize Kennedy, Democrats have smeared him as an anti-science con artist, which is rich coming from the people who pushed for six-feet social distancing, told us COVID-19 vaccines would stop transmission and shut down schools in the name of public health. Kennedy is a rising star because he is one of the very few who is willing to speak truth to their lies.

Kennedy has always been the smartest person in any room I have seen him in. His real appeal is the absolute terror shown by those who oppose him. Many of the talking heads warning every waking minute that another Trump term would be the end of democracy would likely prefer Trump to be president over Kennedy. The implications of that are dark indeed.

This is a historical moment, in which the future of our republic may be in the balance. I support the anti-censorship, pro-science, enlightened and compassionate views and positions articulated by Kennedy in his platform over that of any other candidates. When voters educate themselves with facts, the caricature of Kennedy created by the media melts away. I urge the Democratic Party to come to its collective senses. Put Kennedy at the top of the 2024 presidential ballot. He would be the only Democrat who can beat Trump.

Josh Mazer (josh@kennedymd.org) is Maryland state director for the Robert F. Kennedy Jr. campaign. The views expressed in this article are his own and do not reflect the position of the campaign.

RFK Jr. must heed family legacy and endorse Harris

By Margaret Dwight

Dear Robert F. Kennedy Jr., on my father's dresser, there were two photographs — your uncle's, and your father's. The photograph of President John F. Kennedy was the memorial photo that my father received in thanks for his letter of condolences to the president's widow. The second photograph captured your father speaking to the crowd in Indianapolis the night Rev. Martin Luther King was assassinated, April 4, 1968. As a child, I assumed we only displayed photographs of our family members. It was Miss Lax, my first-grade teacher, who told me that President and Senator Kennedy were not my uncles, despite my protestations to the contrary. For the first six years of my life, we were family, Mr. Kennedy.

In the finest tradition of your family, you are giving your time, energy, heart and soul to your candidacy, continuing the legacy of service so magnificently modeled by your uncles, cousins, mother, father and siblings. Your energy, passion and conviction are present in so much of what you do and say in your speeches. It reminded me of your father and his campaign in 1968.

I re-read your father's speech, watched the video of him in front of anguished men, women and children, and marveled at his grace. His words must have been succor for those who came to hear a campaign speech and instead received news that their spiritual leader was dead. For the first time since his brother's death, your father, in an act of ultimate empathy, shared with the crowd that he too knew the pain, anger, agony and despair of losing a loved one to a white man's bullet. Senator Kennedy's sacrifice and willingness to bear his soul and his sorrow to help the crowd in their shock and distress was one of those rare examples of a mere human reaching the heights of the divine. It was not an accident of history that Indianapolis was one of the few American cities that did

not erupt into riots and death after King's assassination. Your father's words quelled the crowd's desire for revenge, retaliation and mutual destruction between whites and blacks.

When your father spoke in Indianapolis to the crowd, he said, "What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness, but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer in our country, whether they be white or they be black." Your father ended this historic speech with a call to "dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and to make gentle the life of this world."

I wonder what your father would think about this moment in American history. For the first time, we have an opportunity to elect president a woman of color and for the second time to elect a woman. I think he would be thrilled and would urge all who care about this country and fear an uncertain fate if the Republican candidate is elected to stand with Vice President Kamala Harris and behind her candidacy.

Mr. Kennedy, I ask you to sacrifice your campaign, as did President Joe Biden, to help us "make gentle the life of this world." Harris needs our support, and your willingness to suspend your campaign for the greater good would be heroic, self-sacrificing and an act of courage. We need those who look to you for political guidance to witness your endorsement of Harris and follow your lead and cast their vote for her.

I hope you'll read these words and consider my invitation to join us in support of Harris. After all, at least for a few years, you and I were family.

Margaret Dwight (mbdwight50@gmail.com) is a human resources professional. She lives in Massachusetts and attended Garrison Forest School in Baltimore County.

What to do when our special needs kids face bullying

By Shari Bailey

As a parent of a special needs child, I have learned more about the challenges and joys inherent in that journey than can possibly be described. July is Disability Pride Month, and I couldn't be more proud of my twin girls, one of whom is living with a rare genetic disorder called Jacobsen syndrome. Ours has been a journey filled with love, understanding and advocating for the rights and well-being of our children, but we, along with thousands of other families with special needs children, have not been immune to bullying by people of all ages.

According to a study by UNESCO, girls with special needs in the U.S. are four times as likely to be bullied than their peers without disabilities. Bullying in the special needs community often goes unnoticed or misunderstood but has a profound impact not only on the child with

a diverse ability but also on their loved ones. It's crucial that we use Disability Pride Month to raise awareness about the impact of our words and actions on individuals with special needs and their families.

Our daughter Laila is nonverbal but can make sounds. One day she was in line with me as we waited at the checkout at a store, and she was thoroughly enjoying a toy. Laila started rejoicing in excitement, something she often does when she is overwhelmed with joy. The man in front of her in the grocery line turned around and yelled at me, "Keep that noise down!" The patron didn't realize that Laila is not capable of understanding or controlling her vocalizations.

My response could have been different, but with much poise and control I replied, "I'm sorry my daughter has offended you. Unfortunately, she is unable to comprehend if I ask her to stop.

Hopefully you understand." The gentleman rolled his eyes and turned around.

Instances like these happen far too often in the special needs community, causing emotional distress and deepening the sense of isolation for families and caregivers.

Experiences like ours are why I have embarked on a mission to educate everyone about this issue and encourage everyone to "reply with kindness."

Here are a few ways a parent or caregiver can reply with kindness when encountering bullying or insensitive remarks:

- Educate.** Instead of reacting defensively, take a moment to educate the person about the individual's condition. Explain calmly that the individual is nonverbal or has specific needs that may not be apparent at first glance. By providing information, we can foster understanding and empathy.

- Encourage empathy.** Share personal stories or experiences that highlight the challenges faced by the individual with special needs and their families. Help others see the world from a different perspective, allowing them to develop empathy and compassion.
- Spread awareness.** Use these encounters as an opportunity to raise awareness about the diverse needs of individuals with special needs. Share resources, articles or campaigns that promote inclusivity and understanding.
- Model kindness.** Respond to insensitivity with kindness. Show the person that their words or actions have hurt but respond with grace and understanding. Lead by example and demonstrate the power of empathy and compassion.
- Seek support.** Connect with support groups, online communities or local organizations that focus on the special needs

community. Share experiences, seek advice and find solace in the understanding of others who have faced similar challenges.

By responding with kindness and promoting understanding, I know we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for the special needs community and their families.

I believe in the power of education and teaching empathy. I hope you'll join me in spreading kindness and standing against bullying in the special needs community.

Remember, a single act of kindness can have a lasting impact on someone's life. Together, we can make a difference.

Shari Bailey (info@lailasgift.org) is founder and CEO of Laila's Gift, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Aberdeen that advocates for children with special needs and disabilities and their families.