

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/4

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My Experience The Vice President's Press Box

This piece was only made possible by WORT 89.8 fm radio, so this is a dedication to them.

Madison, Wisconsin's Veterans Memorial Coliseum (formerly known as Dane County Coliseum), is the centerpiece of the Alliant Energy Center Campus and has 10,231-seats. A little more than an hour before Vice-President Harris was scheduled to take the stage about half of the seats were filled. Traffic was a challenge, but the Coliseum was steadily filling up. The Coliseum is a giant dome with acoustics that seemed made for this event. The base was loud enough I could feel it in my ribs. I arrived probably an hour and some change before everyone else, over this time a blonde man performed multiple microphone checks, maybe 4 times in 30 minutes. At this time most of the members of the press were focused on their computers and phones.

Looking into the crowd, there were women representing many cultures, I saw everything from women in hijabs, to tank tops. From blonde frizzy hair and corn crows and a significant number in blue shirts within the crowd. I spoke to a pair of 12-year-old girls, adorable young girls, one of which/whom was reading a book I read a long time ago, about how she knew Kamala and was excited to learn more. I also talked to a forty something year old woman who proudly told me her now ninety something year old father used to babysit Kamala when she was young.



There is much to take in: thirty minutes before the event a few pre gifted hundred bracelets lit up in red, white, and blue; The camera on my cell phone can't not capture the image under the massive overhead lights. Maybe you saw them on tv, because there were three rows of some of the most military looking cameras pointing right at the stage. The stage, is dead center in the middle of the giant round dome, the red chairs that outline the edge of the dome make a giant concrete pit where people can stare up at the speakers.

The excitement was building, there was a wave, or what might have been a wave, had more people participated on my side of the press box. The other side of the Coliseum, enjoyed notably better participation.



While I am writing this paragraph, "We're Up All Night to Get Lucky" is rumbling over the sound system and the same blonde boy voice checking is now calling to see participants dance moves in the crowd. The lights have once a bright white, are now flashing in bright neon colors. It feels almost like a rave the waves in the crowd, once a small ripple, built to an impressive size. I am not a fan of loud music, I have a blinding headache but I do have a ripple of excitement, my eyes keep catching onto bright neon green shirts that read 'kamala is brat'. Between the vibrations and excitement, it is hard to type, I'm sure I am missing a few keys I will have to proofread this later.

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After standing up to get a better look from the mole box, I am back typing, currently it is Pitbull's "Fireball" which cannot help but think it is an interesting choice. Looking around, I noticed quite a few "Union Voter" shirts, seemingly they mostly showed together. However, if there were any open seats before there I do not see many now.

The Union Voters are a small part of an interesting conglomeration of people representing all demographics. It appears that white women make up the majority and older white men another large segment, yet all minorities were well represented, but I have to say, the LGBTQ+ folks yelled the loudest when they were called upon to make some noise.

During the writing of this paragraph I am no longer at the event and I am now speaking in past tense, I could not get to my computer, and even if I could have, I wouldn't have. I've never felt energy like I did at the rally. I have been to political events, protests, and I've been to parties and raves. Yet, I have never felt any kind of energy like I did at the rally. Not positive, not negative, it wasn't anger, or joy, or hate or love, or even intoxication, it was much more, it was "hope" now, Kamalas campaign uses that quite a bit, and when politicians say things I rarely believe them, but hope is what I was promised, and hope is what I received.

Polls and my own experience tell me that lots of progressives have reservations about Ms. Harris, some who endorse her did not seem enthusiastic about it. Even in Madison, Wisconsin, a progressive strong hold, it was clear to see that as the rally progressed that people were no longer thinking Ms. Harris was the lesser of two evils, but rather they saw her in a new light, she came across as someone who could build coalitions in a divided country. Maybe even make it so that politics was sharing opinions rather than insults, her commercials about representing all of the people seemed no matter their party felt like something that could become the truth.

Women's health care is an issue Ms. Harris has put front and center in this election and for good reason. She made it personal when speaking about Amber Thurman. Amber was a kind, beautiful, medical student with a young child. Sadly, Amber Thurman died shortly after an abortion. She needed a post abortion care procedure. Doctors watched and waited as infection spread through Amber's body and stood by as her organs began to fail. Not because they could not help her, but because they feared being prosecuted. Hearing that story, imagining watching a woman die, because doctors fear prosecution... no longer did we have to imagine women being denied medical care because medical professionals fearing up to a decade in prison would be influenced by fear. Amber dies from delayed medical care as a direct result of Georgia's anti-abortion laws. Her mother is forced to bury her daughter before her time, Amber's son, now motherless, becomes a son, of the people, and a symbol of what is at stake in this election..

As Vice President Harris recounted the circumstances surrounding Amber's death, I heard not one sound from the filled to capacity Coliseum, it was amazing, about 10,000 people, so quiet that I could hear a door open and close on the other side of the massive Coliseum. I noticed a young woman holding her child tighter and tighter as VP Harris recounted the circumstances of Amber's death, she appeared on the verge of tears.

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I cannot say whether she cried or not, as the lights as bright as they were made it hard to tell. I can say the sympathy for the Amber Thurman's motherless son led to a silence that can only be described as deafening. In that silence, it was clear that Amber's untimely death while preventable in medicine it was inevitable as a direct result of Georgia's laws. VP Harris made clear that Amber is not a number on the board, and that she wants preventable deaths to be prevented.

VP Harris shared of message of hope and inclusion. Hope and inclusion are praiseworthy goals no matter your political affiliation. Regardless of your party affiliation, religion, race, creed, socioeconomic status, sharing hope and inclusion is a good thing. It does not hurt to listen to someone else's point of view, it is great if they are interested in your point of view. Including people with different ideas does not mean you are agreeing with them, it means that even if they are diametrically opposed to your position, you can talk and learn from each other. You can find the things you agree on and not just hope to accomplish, you can work together to make our Country a better place. But there comes a point where you must make people uncomfortable, now is a time to show that hope. More then ever before.