

To endorse or not endorse? That is the question

by [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

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This morning, I couldn't wait to open the *New York Times* to find out how the Republican debate went with Donald Trump out of the picture. Who would shine in his absence? What was the general tenor? Cordial or bombastic? Dignified or scrappy? I don't watch the debates on television. I don't have cable and I doubt I have the stomach to watch for that long, but I love reading the recaps.

Of course, Trump scares me, because it seems that making money is his only motivating factor. I have nightmares of waking up in eight years to an entire country that looks like the Las Vegas strip—with all the glitter, entertainment, and women who can't make a living if their body parts sag. Trump Towers will dominate every landscape, the rich will get even richer (though that seems mind-blowingly impossible), while the rest of us are gleefully "FIRED!"

Then on the other end of the spectrum, we have Bernie Sanders, a democratic socialist. I never thought that a democratic socialist would have a chance in our country, but I suppose that's what happens when income inequity gets as bad as it is now. Though I agree with his policies the most, I know people who worked with him, and I'm not impressed with his administrative abilities. But I'm glad he's running. My daughter is excited about him and she hopes that younger generations will get him elected, and feel their political muscle a bit.

I like the pressure cooker and the the distilled ideas. I like that (apart from Trump), people have to think about their policies and present their vision. We know that there is a strong system of checks and balances, so the president is not always able to enact them. We realize that presidents think about re-election, so they are not always as bold. But on the campaign trail, they can elevate our thinking. People begin to think about bigger issues like immigration, discrimination, education, poverty, the environment, and peacemaking. They can begin to imagine a way out of no way.

As a pastor, I try not to explicitly endorse particular candidates or parties. I did one time when Obama was running, and there was this general sense that Christians only voted Republican. I try to be careful on Facebook. I did let something slip on Twitter. It's hard. With social media, this is becoming increasingly difficult, as the door creaks opens more to reveal the private lives of pastors. In general, I have liberal political beliefs that I don't mind talking about, but I also believe in the separation of church and state, and it seems like it's a bad idea for the church to get into the endorsement game.

But there's the other argument. If we never let our voice be heard in partnership with powerful people, can we become a force for justice, mercy, and peace? And what happens when we only protest, but we never support? Does that cause us to have some sort of political dysmorphia delusion?

So how do you handle it? Do you endorse or support particular candidates or parties?