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Why Kamala Harris' joyfulness is so empowering

So many people have been struck by how joyful the Harris-Walz campaign is, particularly compared to the current Republican ticket and, really, many political tickets to come before it. The joy is rooted in Kamala Harris's thousand-watt smile, and her propensity to laugh. Trump tried to make fun of the laughing, dubbing her "Laffin' Kamala" and "Cackling Co-Pilot Kamala" (before he moved on to the of course much more explainable "Kamabla," lol). He makes fun of it because it's what makes her powerful.

Kamala's laugh is the source of her strength, that she can be authentic. And because she feels free to be authentic, I feel I can be authentic too, in more and more public spaces.

I'm of an age where I remember women going into the workforce in thrall to John Molloy's "Dress For Success," which basically said women should wear a suit and tie at work like men in order to succeed. Women's suits were different from men's in that they had a skirt instead of pants (of course), the hideous crossover bow-tie that substituted for the male long tie, a mid-heel pump (closed-toe), perhaps a tasteful watch. I was once waiting for an interview with other female soon-to-be lawyers, all wearing a version of the same navy-blue suit, and somebody said, "We look like a convention of flight attendants."

And you didn't laugh too much at work, because that could be seen as "frivolous" or "feminine." God forbid. You could be seen as "not serious about your job."

We were desperate to fit in, to be "allowed" to work. We hid who we really were.

Newsflash, it turns out that being made to deny your own authenticity and squelch your own individuality makes a woman not as powerful as she could be. When you don't feel free to be yourself, you spend a tremendous amount of energy creating and maintaining that false self – energy that could have gone into creating and offering new ideas, fighting for your own advancement, or doing your job with your whole heart. Censoring yourself becomes a habit.

Because part of your job is, literally, pretending to be someone you're not.

Laughing when you feel like it is a power tool. It means you're relaxed, because you know you're the most powerful person in the room. Nothing to worry about. Whose jokes do we always laugh at? The boss's jokes.

Be that boss yourself.

What an incredible liberation, to feel now that you can laugh. That you can both have the freedom to advance in your career, even at the highest levels, and have the freedom to be authentic.

Thank you, Kamala. Keep on laughing, all the way – not to the bank, but to the White House.

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