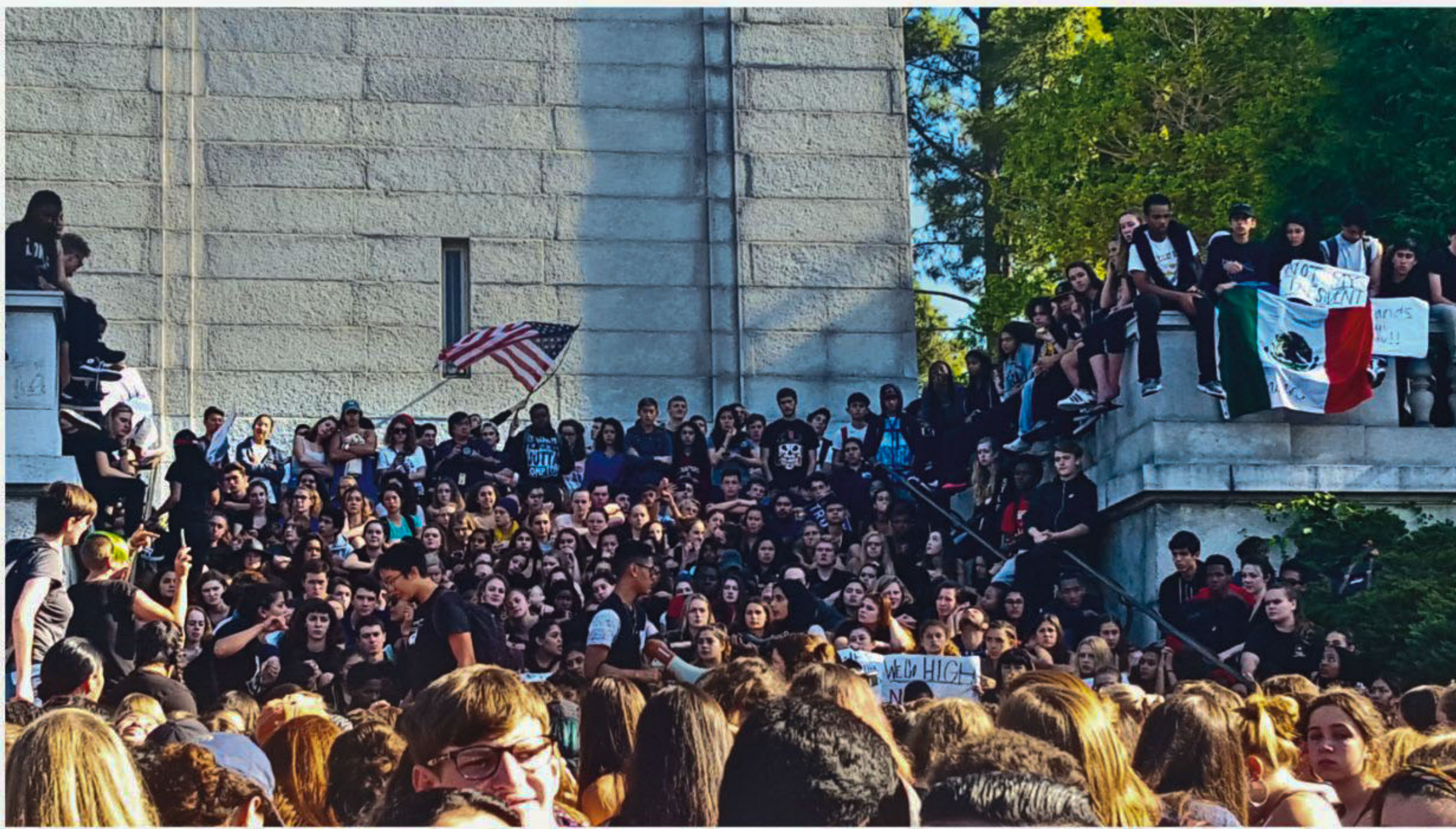


It was nearly midnight when we finally conceded to the fact that Donald Trump is the President-elect of the United States. My friends – from Michigan to Ohio to Southern California – wore the expression of defeated knights at the end of a grand battle. They watched as their country voted for a sexist, racist and xenophobist to represent them for the next four years. This comes as a strong blow, especially after the U.S. has witnessed eight years under an African-American president and could have elected its first female president.

I come from a country where elections are frequently rigged. The incumbent party's political goons take over polling centers, snatch cameras from journalists and we anticipate results we had accurately predicted without any bigdata analytics. The most recent U.S. election – in that vein – seems oddly familiar. No cameras needed to be snatched because the mainstream media willingly provided billions of hours of free advertising to Trump's campaign, feeding to the growing entertainment culture of the West. No amount of data was able to predict the



OPINION

TRUMP'S AMERICA 101 FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD

SABHANAZ RASHID DIYA

PHOTOS: COURTESY

outcome of the election, irrespective of how close and conservative their estimates were. No political goon ended up in a fist fight – the opposition won in a perfectly fair election.

Trump's administration paints a gloomy image on foreign policy. Although in his recent New York Times interview, Trump admitted to human connections in advancing climate change, his mission to dismantle the Paris agreement can cause ripples across the world. A US noncompliance in addition to increased industrialisation place vulnerable countries like Bangladesh in a sticky spot with growing dangers of sea level rise, high temperature and salinity intrusion. Although the Obama administration is widely criticised for its foreign policy, particularly secret drone attacks in Pakistan, a Trump control of Department of Defense will see a break in federal budget with increasing expenditure on navy and airforce to match Chinese and Russian fleets. A commitment to put the ISIS to extinction will mean haywire attacks on more civilian homes across the world with consequences worse than that set by Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush Jr.

In light of impending dangers, it is not uncommon to believe a Trump presidency will be a wakeup call for Americans, especially those who identify themselves as liberals. In days following November



8th, I found myself in rallies abhorring the President-elect's policies and beliefs. My U.S. counterparts came together in open-door meetings to speak boldly about protecting diversity and minority groups. CEOs of technology companies in Silicon Valley wrote passionate letters to their employees, committing to conserving diversity and open-mindedness in the workplace, to denounce any hate speech propagated by the new administration. These initiatives should have happened irrespective – there is no denying it had to come down to a Trump presidency to push Americans to look inwards, and contemplate their own belief systems.

For the rest of the world, a Trump presidency or Brexit leave more important lessons. It is evident our liberal bubbles are cracking with their own rainbows of intolerance. Blind nationalism is on the rise and feels threatened by globalisation – demanding careful deliberation on part of policymakers, politicians and people. There is a frame-shift to the far right, and any denial of our own incompetencies, racial or ethnic prejudices, or shaky international relations can cost us a hefty sum. The problem is no longer that of a single government; there is a shared responsibility on the common people to look inwards and reposition locally and globally. If unhindered attacks on Hindus or terrorist lockdown of Holey Artisan aren't enough banter of our justice and social systems, the future we are painting for ourselves is grim. America's wakeup call is our alarm on continuous snooze – and an opportunity to tackle a problem before it becomes too murky to filter through. It calls for fair elections, rehashing our education systems, and protecting minority groups in our country. However, it starts with an attitude shift where we learn to look into the mirror more closely before we turn around to point a finger at the world.

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HERITAGE



PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS



Ever thought of looking for stories in one of the oldest and busiest spots in Dhaka? A trip to the Sadarghat is what you need. Even though the riverside now looks frenzied and the station seems heavily disorganised, there are certain moments created at the station or by the river that one can never miss. All you need to do is reach the *ghaat* not after 6 am on a weekday morning, and watch the place transform into one of the craziest spots ever.

As a fruit trader tries to unload coconuts from a rickshaw, some of the fruits roll down the slope towards the river. Not only does the fruit seller scream for his life and run after the coconuts, other tradesmen nearby, along with the rickshaw puller run after the rolling coconuts and put them back into the sack.

A family of four sits at a makeshift shop, waiting for the next boat home. While they wait, Mohammad Shahid, the owner of the shop, whips up some paratas

like a pro, while one of the toddlers from the waiting family watch the chef at work with admiration. And there are so many more stories if you just sit and observe.

In ancient times, a city thriving by a river side or any form of water-body was always considered valuable, where historic conquers and wars would take place. Cities built near water-bodies always had access to water routes, whereby trade with other coastal cities happened. Landlocked cities, on the other hand, were limited to land routes only, where trade was concerned, not to

mention daily activities. Even today, means of inter-city transport are considered faster and cheaper on water than on land. In addition, cities by major water-bodies always had access to food, natural resources and of course, creating a network of exchange with foreign cultures. In a nutshell, these cities were always considered to be wealthy, educated, beautiful and filled with legends and stories.

Dhaka is one such city that has always been growing, discovering and exploring foreign cultures – not only population-

wise, but in terms of economy, intellect, culture, infrastructure and so much more. Built more than 400 years ago, Dhaka was built by the river Buriganga. A weekend trip to Sadarghat – a port or the river station – will showcase elements of trade, transport and also small families looking for work!

One of the largest river ports, the Sadarghat Terminal hosts more than 400 river boats which are used to transport people, goods and merchandise. The number of people who use the station crosses a lakh every single day.

Centuries ago, homes and families grew around the river Buriganga. Older members of families living in Dhaka today, sometimes reminisce about lives spent near the river as children. Today, the area is chaotic and filled with people from all over the country.

Despite all the commotion and the chaos at the station in Sadarghat, a day trip to the port is a must, especially for the adventurers, history buffs and Dhaka enthusiasts. After all, the river is the lifeblood of the city. ■

ELITA KARIM

LOOKING FOR STORIES: A MORNING IN SADARGHAT

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

