

Hmm
DAILY

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Colleen Foley, Minnesota



Photo by Jennifer Foley

by Lori Teresa Yearwood

FOR THE FIRST time in four years, 64-year-old Colleen Foley of Minnesota got a great night's sleep—"ten solid hours," the Minnesota resident said, relief flooding into her voice.

That was November 7, the day major media organizations announced the results of the presidential election. Joe Biden had won 290 electoral votes and become the new president-elect. Donald Trump had won 217 electoral votes. Though Georgia and North Carolina's results had not been settled, [Biden's win](#) was official, the Associated Press announced.

Four days later, Foley's calm had all but evaporated, as Trump refused to concede the election.

Now the articles Foley is reading feature national newspaper columnists wondering about what had been previously inconceivable to Foley: Would Trump try to appoint electors to ignore the election results and vote for Trump instead?

"My couple of days of thinking, 'Biden's got this,' have gone away," Foley said. "Because now, though I'm confident Biden won the vote, I know that Trump is going to create hell on earth for us—it's going to be complete and total chaos.

Foley, a retired insurance liability claims specialist, is back to waking up throughout the night, pacing through her home and scrolling through her phone for newspaper accounts about the threat to democracy in this country and rising COVID -19 infections and deaths.

"I try to be careful," Foley said. "I always mask up. I'm not as worried about myself but I'm worried about my stepmom, who is 81 and living in assisted living."

There have been more than 242,000 deaths and 10 million reported COVID-19 cases in the United States since the start of the world-wide pandemic in March, according to an [online graphic](#) that is produced and updated by the New York Times and that Foley tracks daily.

Foley lives in a tidy, one-story, three bedroom home in a suburb about 20 minutes away from Minneapolis. She surrounds herself with ways to enjoy life. There's a water fountain on a deck filled with begonias and impatiens that bloom in the spring; she has five rescue dogs, two cats and a 30-year-old Arabian horse, Sticky, who she boards at a barn.

Every day, she works out at a fitness center, and six days a week, she visits Sticky at the barn. These activities bring tranquility while she engages in them, she told me. But within a few hours later, the anxiety about the fate of the country returns.

"Last night I didn't sleep well at all," Foley said on November 11. "I tried to go to bed early and get some good rest but I ended up doomscrolling on my phone. I probably got a block of about five hours of good sleep—the rest was just getting up and down. I should have smoked some weed."

Instead, she obsessed about the potential of a civil war in America.

"I don't know what form it will take on in these modern times," Foley said. "But the people who are backing this crazy lunatic aren't backing down either. I'm just confounded by what is happening in this country."

For the first time in her life, Foley, a woman who supports strict gun control laws, is considering buying a pistol.

"I was talking to my sister the other day and we were like: 'Do we need to get a gun?,' Foley said.

"I mean, did you ever think that we would be here today? It's bizarre to think that we may have to fight against our own fellow countrymen."

Foley's chronic insomnia started in 2016, the day Donald Trump was inaugurated, she said.

"On the first day Trump took office, my daughter went to school and some of the other kids were asking her: 'When are you going to get back on the boat?' " Foley said.

Foley adopted her daughter, Emily Foley at 13 months, from China, raising the toddler single handedly while working full time—always vigilant about her child's mental and physical well being in a country known for its history of racism.

So when Foley heard Trump speak demeaningly about immigrants—before as well as after the election—Foley's anxiety skyrocketed. She reassured her daughter that she had the necessary paperwork to stay in the country—that she was, indeed, safe.

But then came the Unite the Right rally in 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the killing by a white supremacist of a woman who was counterprotesting there. From Foley's perspective, Trump made "a call to arms for the supremacists," saying that there were "very fine people on both sides."

Shortly after that, Foley booked an appointment with a psychiatrist for prescription medicine to help her sleep, she said.

"I would fall asleep and have these lengthy, horrible nightmares," Foley said. "I would go to bed early but easily stay up until 3 or 4 a.m."

Foley has protested and marched against the Trump administration three times: once in a women's march in St. Paul, once at an immigration rally in Minneapolis and again at an anti-gun rally in St. Paul. Still, the original dosage for her sleeping

medication needed to be doubled before it began to touch the helplessness and uncertainty that she felt, Foley said.

“I would like to be able to wean myself off them slowly as things become more stable,” Foley said. “Hopefully that will happen when Trump is gone and Biden can wrap his arms around the severe COVID pandemic and try to unite the country, because we are so divided right now.”



Lori Teresa Yearwood. Photo: Cass Studios of Salt Lake City

Lori Teresa Yearwood's work can be found at loriyearwood.com

