Jules Hudson
COUNTRY ESCAPE

With plenty looking to escape a country on the other side of the Atlantic, Jules looks at the fallout from last month's presidential election through Limey eyes

So, at long last, the most bizarre and expensive election in modern global political history is over – and the man so often dismissed as the lunatic outsider has won. Donald Trump's victory last month has caused much consternation, both in the US and around the world, alerting the Welsh Borders, let alone the Mexican borders!

For Barack Obama, the next few weeks will surely be amongst the most miserable of his two terms as President, as he prepares to hand over the keys to the famous White House to a future President who's dawning administration couldn't be more unlike that which it will replace.

As American politics goes, I don't suppose I'm alone in having taken a little more interest in its latest chapter. The unfolding and rather hapless plot line that finally offered up the two most unpopular candidates in history was way outside anything Hollywood could've conjured in its worst 'B' movie. As badly written as it was acted, the tone and content of the debate – such as it was – left much to be desired, and even more to the imagination when it came to identifying specific policies that might actually be relevant or achievable from a nation which, for so long, has cast itself as the champion of the free world.

Election after election, I'm always left dumbfounded at the length of time it takes America to find their next leader, and the obscene amounts of money spent in the process. Unlike our own system, there is, it seems, no real leader of the opposition, no obvious government in waiting, much less a single voice to challenge the incumbent President. Our own elections take just a few weeks, yet theirs take nearly 18 months and cost billions of dollars, because in effect they're starting from scratch to find nominees.

If you've ever been to the US and travelled around it, you'll know too that these are dollars many who live in the fabled 'land of the free' so desperately need. It's a nation cruelly and ever more deeply divided between the haves and the have nots.

When I first explored the US just after 9/11, I was shocked by the amount of poverty I saw, and I'd already spent a long time travelling and working throughout what we now call the developing world, in India, Nepal, the Middle East and South America. Tackling the economic and social boundaries that today divide America were at the forefront of Obama's vision for a better country, yet eight years later not much is different. Certainly not enough to dissuade most Americans not to give the plain speaking political outsider with the bar-room message of change a shot at the top job, if only just.

During the 1960s, the US was the land of invention, of sophistication and cool. It was a nation whose music, culture, TV shows and movies exported an image of confidence, a nation leading the West's defence in the Cold War whilst assuredly promoting itself as the greatest country on earth. Ringo Star once said of America, "It's like Britain, only with buttons." Laugh we may, but one of those buttons could trigger a nuclear war, and whether you would have voted for Donald or not, he's now the most divisive President-elect in history, as popular as a fart in a space suit.

George Bernard Shaw described the relationship between Britain and the US as the shared fortunes of two peoples "separated by the same language". Maybe, then, we should describe the President-elect as a Trump in a space suit and hope that, in time, he might be persuaded to put one on and blast off towards the moon. Keeping both feet on the ground is clearly a skill he's yet to master.

Good luck everybody. ✒

JULES HUDSON was born in Essex but stayed in Wales after studying archeology at Lampeter University. He has worked in television since 1996 and is a member of the *Countryfile* team, but is best-known as the leading face of *Escape To The Country*. He moved back across the Border in 2012, to Herefordshire.

You can follow Jules on Twitter @thejuleshudson, or visit his website at www.juleshudson.com