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**Trump’s voters**

Media pundits and others have been deeply perplexed as to why so many Americans in this election – 70 million in fact – nonetheless voted for Trump.

But it’s not all that difficult to understand. There are 3 major explanations: One economic. One health. And the third, and most important, a matter of culture and racism manipulated by clever politicians for the past quarter century at least.

The first explanation – economics – is that the red states (Trump’s base) did not ‘suffer’ as much economically from the recession as have (and are) the blue states and big urban areas. The red states shut down only in part and for just a couple weeks then quickly reopened as early as May. A few hot spots in New Orleans and Florida were quickly contained. By reopening quickly they economically minimized the negative effects of the shutdowns and quarantines. They would eventually pay the price in health terms for early reopening, but they clearly chose to trade off later health problems for early economic gains. At the same time they quickly reopened, the red pro-Trump states still received the economic benefits of the March-April Cares Act bailout that pumped more than a $trillion into the economy benefitting households directly–i.e. this was the $670 billion in small business PPP grants, the $350 billion in extra unemployment benefits, the $1,200 checks, and other direct spending on hospitals and health providers. The Trump states got their full share of the bailout, even if they didn’t need it as much after having reopened early. Finally, if Trump supporters lived in the farm belt sector of Red State America, they additionally got $70B more in direct subsidies and payments from Trump that was designed to placate the farm belt during Trump’s disastrous China trade war. That’s 3 main sources of added income the red states as a general rule received that the blue states, coasts, big cities elsewhere did not get. In short the economic impact of this recession was therefore far less severe in the geographic areas of the greatest concentration of Trump’s political support.

Second, Covid did not negatively impact the red states as much as it did the blue states and major urban areas of America – at least not until late in Sept-Oct after which much voting had already begun and political positions had hardened. And then when Covid did hit the red states late, it impacted relatively more the larger cities and not as much initially in the small towns and rural areas of Trump’s red states. Covid’s impact economically was therefore relatively worse in big urban areas, especially in the coasts.

But even more important than these relative economic and health effects, the continued support that exists for Trump in his base of red states – i.e. in the small town, rural, small business, and religious right areas – is grounded in the ‘ethnic’ composition of his mostly White European heritage followers who are fearful ‘their’ white culture is being overwhelmed by the growing numbers and diversity of people of color in America.

This fear is the foundation of his – and their – white nationalism which is really a form of racism. So too is their anti-immigration. It is anti-immigration directed against people of color–whether Latinos, Blacks, Muslims or whomever. White European heritage, small town, rural, evangelical, small business ‘heartland’ of the south & midwest America sees ‘their America’ disappearing or at least having to share more equally with people of color America. The latter are now almost equal in population to White Europeans but are not equal politically or economically. They are knocking on the door and want in. They want their equal share.

But clever politicians have convinced White European America that it’s a zero sum game: what people of color America may get will be only at their expense! Sharing is not possible. Trump and others, who are manipulating this fear and discontent for their own political careers, have convinced them that it’s an ‘Us vs. Them’ zero sum game. That way those with wealth and real power redirect discontent from their four decades of obscene wealth accumulation at the expense of everyone else, white or non-white Americans. Whipping up and redirecting discontent into identity and racial identity themes means the super well off won’t have to share with either White European or non-White European people of color.

Pit the one against the other, while they–those of wealth and power–continue to ‘pick the pockets’ of both. That was, and remains, Trump’s strategy in a nutshell. It’s also the strategy of his wealthy backers. It’s the age old American ruling class racism ‘shell game’. Just now in the form of ‘old wine in new bottles’, as they saying goes. ‘America First’ means in effect White America of his political base comes first. Trump and financial backers and power brokers – like the Adelsons, Mercers, Singers and their allies – have convinced White European America in the heartland to be fearful and oppose equality for Americans of color elsewhere. That’s why Trump sounds very much like a ‘White Nationalist’, and even at times as pro-fascist because that’s the message of the far right as well. His theme of ‘Make America Great Again’ is really, when translated, make White European America safe again and stop the hoards of people of color taking ‘their America’ from them.

Excerpted: ‘How Could 70 Million Still Have Voted for Trump?’

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