

A Country Almost Divided
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With Joe Biden winning the election with a popular vote surplus of at least 4.5 million people and a decisive Electoral College win, I, along with millions of my fellow citizens, gave a huge sigh of relief. When I heard that even France rang bells of celebration at the news that America had rejoined the world, I wept. Four years of daily assaults on every American institution, including disregard for truth, had taken a toll on the many of us who watched Trump's media circuses.

However, despite the size of the voting win for Biden, he did not win by what many expected to be a huge Blue Wave. Instead, a huge minority voted for Trump and did not remove from office some of the most egregious Republicans who enabled this wrecking ball. What did this tell me?

I am old enough to remember when Americans had a choice of three major TV networks that provided as factual news as possible, and people read not only their local newspapers, but also the "papers of record" (leading trusted sources of information), such as the New York Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe.

The two political parties differed on some policy issues, but were united in foreign policy, and agreed on other issues from time to time. We all trusted to common values that were norms in our society: competence, expertise of specialists, telling the truth, using respectable language in public, and compassion during times of trouble. Our elections always ended with the loser congratulating the winner and the winner pledging to reunite the country divided by an election.

This year, we have another spectacle: nearly half the population that surely must have seen the Donald Trump that I saw every day over four years, decided that they were ready for four more years of this nightmare. They obviously did not see the nightmare. Why was that?

The remarkable divide is obviously where these voters are getting their facts, "alternate facts," as one Trump apologist defined his lies. These people get their news from Fox News, not the news part, but the entertainment part that performs as a Trump Propaganda network. They believe everything that they hear on Fox, and add sauce from the conspiracy promotion industry that has overtaken sites on the Internet. Truth is entirely missing. Instead, there are many people who actually believe that the government, particularly democrats serving there, are cannibals who drink babies' blood.

They believe that Donald Trump is God's instrument, elected to defend their fundamentalist religious beliefs, a strange instrument, considering Trump's unreligious behavior (lies, adultery, cheating, and profane bombast). They are not even disturbed that Trump's outrage over losing the election has left him sulking, refusing to congratulate the winner, an act that is as old as our nation's founding values.

Democracy is an institution that requires the participation of thoughtful voters and the good behavior of its candidates for office. When a president claims that if he wins, the election was genuine and if he loses, it must be because the other side cheated. This terrible infantile behavior should be no surprise to the Republican party, which lost all backbone when Trump changed a respectable conservative party to a cult of meanness and lies.

Not all people who voted for Donald Trump were ignoramuses who believe conspiracy theories. Many were well educated, men who value the stock market more than good character. They held their noses and voted for a man who embarrassed them. But there were other life-long Republicans, men and women who believed in classical conservatism, who left the party because the party had left them. They would not vote for a Trump Party, a destructive cult. These men launched the Lincoln Project, which may be the seeds of a new political party in the future.

But the rest of the voters loved Trump's hateful rants because this gave them permission to say ugly things out loud that polite people had abandoned (ethnic and religious bigotry, scorn for women, scorn for the educated, scorn for truth). They are America's underbellies, which I will address next week.

684 words

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