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What to Expect in Trump's America

“The big backlash going on in Portland cannot be unexpected.”

– President Trump, Tweet

President Trump is extending his narrative from Make Me Great Again to Law & Order and protecting suburban women from low renters. Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden wants to focus the narrative on the coronavirus pandemic and the economic downturn, both of which he can conquer without turning the country socialist. Black Lives Matter wants to focus the narrative on getting the cops to stop unloading their guns in black bodies. Medical science wants to find a vaccine and convince people who don't trust science or the government but only Donald Trump to take it. Elsewhere, some Americans are hoping their passports will work to get them to Canada until the election is over, say, two months after the ballot count, or when Trump actually leaves office. Maybe that's just me.

This is part of what's going on now in Trump's America.

Will Trump get away with vanishing the virus from voters' minds, or will Biden nail him with total incompetence plus obstruction in attempts to stop this pandemic? Will Biden also nail Trump with exacerbating the economic downturn by such incompetence and obstruction in regard to stopping the pandemic? Will Trump convince voters that a Biden presidency will drive the U.S. economy into a failed socialist state like Argentina? Will voters see Trump supporters as protectors and defenders of law and order in Portland and

Kenosha, or as militant, right wing mobs/militias of racist white supremacists whose anger is fueled by the president they love?

Regarding the last question, what seems to be the case is that right wing militia groups see themselves defending lives and property, and, more deeply, defending an order, their kind of order, endangered by a Deep State set to oust Trump. What that order may be in terms of race, religion, ideology, class, gender, sexual preference and so on is both very clear and not clear at the same time, although you can't go wrong in saying that all the factions of the present Democratic Party are outside the order within which Trump supporters imagine themselves.

This expansive divide is itself the result of a very scary societal falling apart, which, if the Anthropocene history doesn't end, should keep the Edward Gibbons of the future fully occupied.

A Right-wing ideological order of an Ayn Rand, Libertarian, Tea Party order of things is part but not all of that order, imagined as under attack and in need of defense to the death, that has now created an imagined community lying outside party affiliations, just as Trump does. I mean that there's an irrational, conspiratorial aspect making its way from the lower depths of the American cultural Id to the top. See Q'Anon as well as Trump's Fox interview with Laura Ingraham. Or any Trump tweet.

Rather than aligning himself fully with the Republican Party, Trump has aligned himself to this community loaded with maddening afflictions, a condition that goes beyond what Richard Hofstadter described in "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." What we see now that was not there to be observed in 1964 when that essay was written, in the wake of JFK's assassination, is all the instability and deep, ontological foundering filling our post-truth, postmodern American mass psyche.

A sense of a commonly understood and shared foundation — if of course you leave out, as the Founding Fathers did, everyone Biden is now depending on — has almost suddenly become a bottomless chess board upon which we are all making our moves, which we presume in our arrogance to call personal choices.

We are not sure then what former integrity and stability, sanity, competence and light Biden will bring us back to when so many are now protesting with great passion those "good, old days." Biden promises to bring "everybody's life back to normal," which of

course will be a post-Trump/post-pandemic normal, and so not anything normal but what we've never seen before.

Thus, a sense of order and stability depends on what order one found oneself in our severely segregated class and race America. Given, however, how clear in some minds is the disorder Trump has created, it is enough for Biden to define his proposed order as "Anything but what Trump has given us." We shall soon see whether that works.

As yet we don't know what order the Trump supporters who rallied in Portland are promoting or what order the counter-protestors at that rally are offering in its place beyond asserting that black lives matter. They haven't and they should but how to make that happen in Trump's America is the nut to crack. We can say that both order/reality frames accuse the other of disruption on the edge of lawless chaos. There's also that latent Evil name calling that haunts the American psyche and draws evangelicals to Trumps' camp.

The Trump supporters spurred on by Trump see a war with the State inevitable, some willing to wait and others anxious to speed it up. This faction will not stand for the destruction of their state, of their country, and their citizens, to paraphrase the head of the American Patriot Council. What is here envisioned is chaos across the U.S. and an Antifa takeover causing people to feel unsafe, to paraphrase the Council's leader. They are armed and ready to defend the proper order of the country, which, as I say, is an order that more clearly knows what disorder and evil and destruction of property are than what order they are fighting for. They are wrapped in a mythos of an America that never was that nevertheless can be recreated for them only by Donald Trump, a poor choice as he is certifiable delusional.

Biden's experience with normal was built from 1973 to 2009, serving as a Senator from Delaware and then as Obama's Vice-President from 2009 to 2016. Though what order Trump supporters are fighting for and what order Biden wants to recuperate are hazy at best, we know that a middle class democracy with an anxious-free mobility from working class to middle class went down a slippery slope from Reagan to the triumph of neoliberalism until it reached our present plutarchy, power and wealth in the hands of about 20% of the population.

That same roughly 20%, the top 1% whose wealth compounds like a glacial avalanche, plus the professional/meritocratic/gentrified class that serves them and enjoys, for

instance, during this pandemic, working at home or in a retreat or on a yacht, are anxious to return to the norm they enjoyed.

Such an obscene plutocratic situation should not be 80% of the population's desire to see return. But, of course, it has never left. That order of gross inequities has been since the 2016 election clearly and patiently explained by, among many others cast out of Trump's America, Bernie Sanders, whose redressing politics are judicious and not rabidly declamatory, so very far from advocating "Eat the Rich!"

This disordered state of inequities in an ostensible electoral democracy launched not in privilege but ironically in egalitarianism has fueled angry, rabidly declamatory revolt. Rather than that revolt attaching itself to Sanders' and Warrens' critiques, mindful critiques, it has devolved into blind, passionate attacks looking for evil causes and evil actors. It shouldn't be a surprise that a culture more at home in the hyperreal of spin and spectacle should prefer the mindless rants of a megalomaniac, a stock character in the hyperreal, to studying Sanders' arguments.

Trump the reality-TV star always had a better shot of corralling the blind and angry than Bernie Sanders, who has always addressed the problems and offered remedies rather than find a populist pitch designed to reach a populace discarded by Market Rule yet uncritical of this machinery, or its advocates. Sustained belief in equal opportunity, fair play and level playing fields arranged by Market Rule when the reverse of all that for so many is clearly the case is a Mad Hatter sort of belief.

Dreaming of winning while being driven by hyper-capitalism toward the same conditions of Fanon's wretched of the Earth is, among so many absurdities, a refutation of William James' discourse on survival instincts as well as an amazing display of Stage 4 false consciousness. The American masses are like no other masses anyone seeking to rouse the same to a consciousness of the plight they are in has ever theorized. It is this complicity, affiliation and affinity to what and who has eroded the well-being of working- and middle-class populace that truly boggles the mind.

Two roads diverged in the country at the moment three families owned more wealth than the bottom half of the country, an assertion made repeatedly by Bernie Sanders and fact checked by PolitiFact as true.

One road was the one taken by Sanders who was propelled by that astounding wealth divide fact down that road, the one leading to his detailed study of what has led us to this.

One imagines that everyone sharing the plight of the bottom 80% would be similarly activated and would therefore jump on Sanders' bandwagon and go down that road. That only has not happened in the case of the Trump supporters, who are clearly enraged and looking to retaliate, but it hasn't happened in the Democratic Party.

There are dark affiliations and affinities shared by Republicans and Democrats existing because they share the top 20%. Whether or not this very influential 20% wants to return to the norm Biden proposes or continue with Trump who offers them **his** norm is not clear, though they would prefer the charisma of Reagan in their cut the taxes of the rich leader to the gaucherie of cut the taxes of the rich Trump. There's a point at which gaucherie and even clear signs of dark delusions don't hold up against dividends rising, taxes falling.

Polls will not uncover the vote of a dividend recipient, Democrat or Republican, with "woke" liberal cred. The rich inevitably become Pecksniffs, an especial need in a professed democracy that is only hypocritically democratic. Given all this, what we expect may not be at all like what we will get. See 2016 Presidential election.

Bernie's stress on economic disparity caused by a financialized capitalism driving the cart of politics is not a forceful plank in Biden's strategy to beat Trump. Economics is reduced in Biden's plank to its collapse during the pandemic not expanded to the broad assault Sanders, Warren, AOC and friends in the House make and urge Biden to make.

Biden does not reach out to suburban women with an anti-capitalist message but rather joins with them in deploring how awful a human Trump is and how he, Biden, will bring us back to a cordiality that he supposes Trump has threatened. True enough, as they say, but suburban women are as reluctant to say goodbye to tax "relief" to their investments as are the wealthy everywhere. Trump has awfully frightening orange hair and orange face and his tweets are nasty but he's a friend to your dividends, an attitude that crosses party and geographical lines.

What saintly magnanimity would push a top 20% away from a man, egocentric and unstable as he is, who will not redistribute their winnings toward one that is being pushed to do so?

Biden's task is to convince the top 20%, in both parties, that he will not redistribute wealth and at the same time convince the rising socialists among the Democratic Party

that he will do so with all deliberate, judicious speed, or, at least fast enough to keep them in the Democratic Party.

Privilege, now shared regardless of political affiliation, once possessed is neither easily taken away or shared. The top 20%, whose discourse fills our practices and institutions to a controlling degree, cross party lines but share a fear of consequences resulting from a Trump loss in the election. In the same fashion that Republican fear to cross Trump because he is ruthless in his revenge, the invested class may fear what Trump's anger would do to their investments. The man will churn up chaos as a sop to his own vanity, rather like Poseidon will churn the waves into chaos in revenge.

That fear of what such injured vanity will do is not attached to a Biden loss, although there will be much weeping and gnashing of teeth among the Winner class who can shed tears as easily as the poor, tears and laments costing them nothing. Of course, a Biden loss is another reason to hope a U.S. passport will get you into Canada.

There is real fear that a Trump loss will be more of a danger to business stability than will a Biden loss. The fears Democrats have if Trump wins another term are all fears not shared by Wall Street, who will not mourn a sure end to free, universal health care, or continued fossil fuel production, or cuts in entitlements, or no Federal minimum wage or tuition free university. And so much more that fills the Democrat platform. How much Biden will be moved toward the economic plans of Sanders and Warren may not be an unknown the invested class, Democrat and Republican, will be willing to make.

Trump, however, offers no surprises when it comes to threats to profits to shareholders. He threatens everyone but these, convinced as they are that their investments can get along with a collapse of a Constitutional democracy, Congressional check and oversight, a national and not globalized economy, an expanding national debt, and, of course, autocratic rule.

It's, say, Elizabeth Warren as Treasury Secretary whom they need to be protected against. Biden may or may not offer that protection. The Warren Sanders faction are going outside the Republocrat complicity, although speaking from within it is shackling, how much so we shall see. The independence that Norman Thomas and Eugene Debs had to broadcast their views came from outside the Republocrat harness. How much voice will a President Biden give them?

Of course, it's both sad and tragic that the force of this entrenched, privileged 20% is not recognized by the Trump supporters, preferring to latch onto the 3%, supposedly mirroring the 3% of American colonists who fought the British.

That rush of misguided patriotism will wash away to some extent when Trump goes but more certainly because their passion has no thought foundation, something disastrous in a culture where yesterday's social media posts are relegated to the dust of a short-term cultural memory. Determinations driven by passions and not reason, or by reasons not brought within the operations zone of legislature and law, get caught in the whirlwind of social media posts, calls to arms that flash and die, reasoning that takes too long in a media of crushing actions, of hyperreal influencing that never reaches maturity.

Regardless of the righteousness of responses to racial injustices, assaults and murders that are at the level of staunching the bleeding first before legislative deliberation happens, the worldwide protests under the banner of Black Lives Matter are now playing into the hands of Trump. As righteous response, Black Lives Matter protests have reached the point that the passions of its protests cannot remain detached from the crucial Trump/Biden game to the death we are now playing.

Thus far, Black Lives Matter has had its own focus, purposefully detached from both fears of the 20% or the 3%, although the 3% are presently on the rally rampage following Black Lives Matter's own multi-dimensioned protests after the murder of George Floyd. The protests continue, as does incomprehensible murder of blacks, the latest being the shooting of a black man, Jacob Blake, seven times in the back, and along with the protests there's been looting, destruction of property, and murder, actions Trump works hard to attach to those who are protesting the violence they have endured. There has not been a call to meet violence with violence by Black Lives Matter.

It is possible to say that the Trump supporters who take to the streets protesting the BLM's protestors have illusions that they are defending a past greatness stolen from them by the Devil, or, when personified, maybe Obama, maybe Hillary, maybe Biden. It is also possible to say that some Democrats are revulsed by the way Trump has personalized the soul of America as equitable with his own soul, pace Plato. Some are moving to make the country brown, gay, politically correct and woke. Others, led by Bernie, want to turn the hideous capitalism that created a Trump into a social democracy where political equality

emerges from economic equality. But now to the forefront of all this, BLM is out to make racists aware that they are racists, whether they know it or not.

This mission is an elevation of consciousness, assuming that it's a lower not higher thing to be a racist, while every other mission is something so much less and yet more reachable.

It's a noble mission to elevate consciousness, or, more humbly, to change it, more indeterminate and nebulous than LBJ's War on Poverty or Nancy Reagan's "Say No to Drugs!" because consciousness is not itself an object, a thing in the world, but the mind's realizing, a process of real-izing, of bringing reality into ourselves, therefore a shaping force of that reality frame in which we live.

Because no one lives within a realizing of self and world that is not sustaining, or beyond that, complimentary of self or supportive of a defensible image of self, racists don't see themselves in the same pejorative way Black Lives Matter do.

Trump has directed white America's fears toward their most primal release, anger and hate, and he has connected both to browns and blacks, first to browns who he declared are drug dealers, criminals, rapists coming across our borders, and now, with the continuing BLM protests following the murder of George Floyd, with blacks. Thusly, he has given the role of defending patriot to all those who were already disposed to viewing browns and blacks as threats to their own well-being, as well as outright racists who, since black African slaves were held to be soulless and only partially homo sapiens, remain angered by all black civil rights movements, including BLM.

The idea of unrestricted, unbiased equality then is perceived as un-American and the resistance to such patriotic. The history of that pathology is there to be read in any history of this country. It's this phenomenal reality that is systemic, an appearance of others as they are not and imposing upon them the distortions of racism.

It is also a pathological framing of reality that is turning the whole BLM effort to raise white consciousness on its head and use it as a weapon to beat Biden over the head. For it turns out that while consciousness changing is a deep and difficult matter, burning down buildings, rioting in the streets, duking it out with police, and looting shops you break into are really quite clear and simple matters of arrest, trial and possible imprisonment.

“These are not acts of peaceful protest but, really, domestic terror,” President Trump said on his visit to Kenosha, directing attention from what it would take to make black lives truly matter in the U.S., or as Doc Rivers put it: “We love this country. Why can’t it love us?” to the protest as violence and lawlessness.

Biden has been placed in the explanation spot for all this, a connecting of the dots between what the factions of the Democratic Party are countering Trump with to the politics developed in the aftermath of the BLM protests.

This is a difficult task because from the time Bernie Sanders in 2016 was pushed aside by BLM who dismissed his chat and replaced it with a simple “Black lives matter!” and the message that racism was structural and systemic, BLM has had little chance to move from street protests and clash demanding recognition of the status of blacks and browns in the U.S. to the cogent critique Sanders was making or with the rudiments of AOC and Ed Markey’s Green New Deal. The turbulent nature of our present order of things sucks all words and actions into the maw of its own turbulence.

ML King won legislative success but he had already connected racial injustice to a message Sanders and others are following: “Call it democracy, or call it democratic socialism, but there must be a better distribution of wealth within this country for all God’s children.” (Speech to the Negro American Labor Council, 1961). But King didn’t face the instantaneous call and mobilization of both protest and counter protest that social media has created and that turns any peaceful intentions into the ad hoc of the heated moment. BLM’s own case, its own focus, is now mixed with Trump vs. Biden, conventions, pandemic, bankruptcies, evictions, fires, floods and Trump’s barrage of tarnishing tweets.

Racism may persist in American culture after everything Bernie Sanders wants and the kind of Green New Deal Ed Cox presents in A Green New Deal and Beyond (City Lights) are achieved, if such is possible in the U.S. But it’s going to be far more difficult to oppress, exploit and violate a black or brown individual who stands equal economically to any white individual if at least some progress is made here.

The great expectation with such a change is that skin color racism can no longer be used by the Republican Party to pull voters on their side when an equal quality of education is available in a classless society. A far less great looming expectation, actually a demented one, comes out of the mouth that roars: “The more chaos and anarchy and vandalism and

violence reigns, the better it is for the very clear choice on who's best on public safety and law and order." Kellyanne Conway.

She presumes that we have all lost sight of how the man in charge, President Trump, has left our public safety in the winds of Covid-19.

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