

Bad Politics in the United States

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

There seems to be no limit to how low the Republicans can sink. They seem to be trying to outdo each other in bigotry, thereby increasing their appeal. Donald Trump has stated that Muslims should be prevented from immigrating to the United States. Marco Rubio, the junior senator from Florida whose campaign is on life support as of this writing, has pushed for closing mosques in the country. Former Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson has gone so far as to say that a Muslim should not be President.

However, compared to Trump, these other Republican politicians are mere amateurs. Trump knows how to go the extra mile. Why just demonize Muslims? Trump disses women, calls Mexicans rapists, leads rallies that attract KKK members in which Black protesters are beaten up, first denied knowing anything about White supremacist David Duke before reluctantly distancing himself from him, etc. No wonder Trump is leading in the polls. Those other Republican slackers might have to step up their bigotry game if they expect to hang with the big dog.

According to a George Barna Poll, Trump is especially popular among voters that identify as Christians. Catholics voted for him in large numbers to help him win the Michigan primary.

However, as some pundits have observed, conservative and reactionary Christians do not necessarily identify with Trump because they see him as one of them. Rather, many of them see him as a strongman that will protect them from secularists, godless liberals and other alleged riffraff.

Ironically, what could be the Republicans' undoing is the Muslim vote. As quietly as it is kept, there are about 2 million Muslim voters in the U.S. Moreover, like Latinos and unlike African Americans, they do not vote as a monolithic group. On the contrary, the Muslim vote was crucial to George W. Bush's presidential victory in 2000. (This should not be surprising. Many Muslims embrace the "traditional family values" and other ideas of conservative Christians.) Sadly, however, the

following year, anti-American terrorists attacked America and a new wave of Islamophobia, fueled largely by Republicans, swept the nation.

Because of the Republicans' Islamophobic abuse, many Muslims are abandoning the Republican Party in droves. Muslims that remain complain that Trump is making their recruiting efforts extremely difficult.

African Americans are much easier to read. While Trump seems to throw *everybody* under the bus, Hillary Clinton has only thrown Black people under the bus when she desperately tried to win her race against Obama in 2008. She shamelessly appealed to "real" Americans, aka White people, to save her in a losing cause.

Yet there never should have been any doubt that most African American voters would support her in future political efforts, despite the fact that some said they could never do so again. African Americans have had a long love affair with the Clintons. Moreover, just as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, African Americans will vote Democratic; and all democratic candidates know this.

Republicans ought to be ashamed that someone like Trump could be the frontrunner. Yet they are energized. What started out as a freak show now appears to be a one-horse race.

Many people have compared Trump to Hitler. However, these kinds of claims are very problematic. After all, many progressives believed Ronald Reagan and the Bushes were like Hitler. This, though, was just overblown rhetoric, just as it is overblown rhetoric when conservatives compare Obama to Hitler.

Still, this presidential campaign is different from the others. Many people, including reporters, are *scared* at Trump's rallies. Some believe that Trump encourages violence at his gatherings. He certainly uses the same kind of incendiary rhetoric that Hitler used, and some say his rallies seem reminiscent of those that were held during the days leading up to the heyday of Nazi Germany.

It sometimes seems that the Republicans are intent upon destroying themselves. They have been ridiculously anti-intellectual, if not always anti-scientific. Many of them were willing to place the cartoonish Sarah Palin one heartbeat from the

Presidency. They proudly elected George W. Bush, malapropisms and all. Now they are eager to elect someone who could not possibly keep many of the outlandish promises he makes.

This is a sad day for America. Richard Dawkins often marvels at how a nation with some of the smartest people in the world can continuously elect un-intelligent people to lead them. One reason is because many people are led more by emotion and feelings of desperation than by reason. These are the kinds of people that give demagogues reason to dream. These are the kinds of people that make democracy tenuous.