

## Bitter Clingers and the Abandoned Working Class

*The Left sees people who work for a living as the enemy*

By Steven J. Allen

**Summary:** This issue, in Part 2 of our look at Donald Trump and the politics of working-class Americans, we discuss how Barack Obama and his allies laid the foundation for the Trump movement with their contempt for blue-collar workers and others whom unions were meant to serve.

In 2016, the mood of working-class voters has been likened to that of citizenry rising up against privileged elites, marching through the streets with torches and pitchforks. The roots of this blue-collar revolt go back to long before Trump announced his 2016 candidacy.

Speaking to a group of wealthy supporters in California on April 6, 2008, U.S. Sen. Barack Obama insisted that it was bitterness, rather than logic and intelligence, that led the working class to “cling” to beliefs that he and his backers considered outmoded.

. . . [E]verybody just ascribes it to ‘white working-class don’t wanna work—don’t wanna vote for the black guy.’ That’s—there were intimations of that in an article in the Sunday *New York Times* today—kind of implies that it’s sort of a race thing. Here’s how it is: In a lot of these communities in big industrial states like Ohio and Pennsylvania, people have been beaten down so long, and they feel so betrayed by government, and when they hear a pitch that is premised on not being cynical about government, then a part of them just doesn’t buy it. And when it’s delivered by—it’s true that when it’s delivered by a 46-year-old black man named Barack Obama, then that adds another layer of skepticism [audience laughter]. . . .



Examples from the racist hate campaign being conducted against Trump supporters.

But the truth is, is that, our challenge is to get people persuaded that we can make progress when there’s not evidence of that in their daily lives. You go into some of these small towns in Pennsylvania, and like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing’s replaced them. And they fell through the Clinton administration, and the Bush administration, and each successive administration has said that somehow these communities are gonna regenerate and they have not. And it’s not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren’t like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.

Mayhill Fowler of the *Huffington Post* noted that, “when he spoke to a group of

his wealthier Golden State backers at a San Francisco fund-raiser last Sunday, Barack Obama took a shot at explaining the yawning cultural gap that separates a Turkey-foot [Pennsylvania] from a Marin County [California]. . . . [Obama] described blue collar Pennsylvanians with a series of what in the eyes of Californians might be considered pure negatives: guns, clinging to religion, antipathy, xenophobia.”

Obama’s “bitter clinger” comments,

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as they became known, reminded some people of comments by John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic nominee for president and, today, U.S. secretary of state. In 2006, Kerry suggested that members of America's all-volunteer military ended up in the armed forces because they were too stupid or couldn't do better for themselves: "You know, education, if you make the most of it, you study hard, you do your homework, and you make an effort to be smart, uh, you can do well. If you don't, you get stuck in Iraq."

By 2011, Obama re-election strategists planned to abandon working-class voters, except for those susceptible to a racial appeal. (The Left, in its political calculations, separates voters into categories of "white" and "non-white"/"people of color." It is "white" working-class voters whom the Obama campaign deliberately abandoned.) Veteran political reporter and liberal commentator Thomas Edsall wrote in the *New York Times*:

For decades, Democrats have suffered continuous and increasingly severe losses among white voters. But preparations by Democratic operatives for the 2012 election make it clear for the first time that the party will explicitly abandon the white working class.

All pretense of trying to win a majority of the white working class has been effectively jettisoned in favor of cementing a center-left coalition made up, on the one hand, of voters who have gotten ahead on the basis of educational attainment—profes-

sors, artists, designers, editors, human resources managers, lawyers, librarians, social workers, teachers and therapists—and a second, substantial constituency of lower-income voters who are disproportionately African-American and Hispanic.

Following up on Edsall's story, the U.K. *Guardian* reported:

President Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign will be the first in modern political history to abandon white working-class voters, strategists claim. For decades, Democrats have been losing more and more blue collar whites. Their alienation helped lead to the massive Republican wave in 2010, when the GOP wooed 30 percent more of them than the Democrats could. . . . The Obama campaign has not explicitly announced this strategy. However, strategists point to it as the likely path of the president's victory, given demographic data from previous elections. Since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Democrats have relied on white working-class voters as a key part of the population that carried them to victory.

After the 2014 election, in which 64 percent of "white" voters without college degrees favored Republicans, liberal analyst Ronald Brownstein said of such voters: "You're talking about people who are deeply alienated from American life, both culturally and economically."

Last August, the British newsmagazine *The Economist* predicted that Trump's non-ideological approach would "cap Mr. Trump's numbers, leaving him with a base of relatively uneducated supporters who don't have much disposable income, are relatively unlikely to volunteer on his behalf, and who may not even show up at the polls on primary day." (At other times, members of the journalistic elite have taken the opposite tack, depicting the objects of their hatred as members of a mindless horde, dangerous because they take orders without question. For example, Michael Weisskopf of the *Washington Post*, in a February 1, 1993 news story about the "fundamentalist leaders" of what he insultingly called the "religious right," declared

that the persons who followed those leaders were "largely poor, uneducated and easy to command." The *Post* later admitted there was "no factual basis" for the claim.)

*Salon* contributing writer Heather Digby Parton wrote in December: "When Donald Trump says he will make America great again, what they [Trump supporters] hear is that Donald Trump will make America white again." (The characterization of Trump supporters as racists brings to mind the fact that Tea Party members, citizens upset about taxes, spending, and Big Government, were depicted as—in the words of columnist Charles Krauthammer—"a mob of angry white yahoos disguising their antipathy to a black president by cleverly speaking in economic terms.")

Henry Olsen of the Ethics and Public Policy Center wrote in *National Review*:

Thanks to Donald Trump, American elites are finally paying attention to blue-collar, white America. They do not like what they see.

Racist. Bigoted. Irrational. Angry. How many times have you read or heard one or more of these words used to describe Trump's followers? Whether they are the academic, media, and entertainment elites of the Left or the political and business elites of the Right, America's self-appointed best and brightest uniformly view the passions unleashed by Trump as the modern-day equivalent of a medieval peasants' revolt. And, like their medieval forebears, they mean to crush it.

### Elites and their inferiors

The GOP's failure to address the conditions of the "white" working class is the main reason for Trump's rise, Henry Olsen told the *Washington Post*. "They've been ignoring the economic pressures that have been placed on the native born, low-skilled person for the last 15-20 years. . . . Trump walks into this and says, 'I'm an American first, I'm a conservative second. . . . We need to give the people who have been shafted for the last 15 years a leg up.'"

Why have Republican leaders failed on that score? Perhaps because, over the past few decades, the elites of both parties have lost touch with "regular" Americans.

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**Editor:** Steven J. Allen

**Publisher:** Scott Walter

**Address:** 1513 16th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-1480

**Phone:** (202) 483-6900

**E-mail:** [sallen@CapitalResearch.org](mailto:sallen@CapitalResearch.org)

**Website:** [CapitalResearch.org](http://CapitalResearch.org)

**Labor Watch** is published by Capital Research Center, a non-partisan education and research organization classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity. Reprints are available for \$2.50 prepaid to Capital Research Center.

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Angelo Codevilla, professor emeritus of international relations at Boston University, described the situation this way: “America is now ruled by a uniformly educated class of persons that occupies the commanding heights of the bureaucracy, of the judiciary, education, the media, and of large corporations, and that wields political power through the Democratic Party. Its control of access to prestige, power, privilege, and wealth exerts a gravitational pull that has made the Republican Party’s elites into its satellites.”

In an op-ed in the February 12 *Wall Street Journal*, Charles Murray discussed the American version of egalitarianism—the traditional idea that, while some people might have more money than others, they weren’t intrinsically “better” people. But now, members of the elite think they’re smarter, more sophisticated, more tolerant, more moral than those ignorant folks who work with their hands or never received a college degree. Murray:

Historically, one of the most widely acknowledged aspects of American exceptionalism was our lack of class consciousness. Even Marx and Engels recognized it. This was egalitarianism American style. Yes, America had rich people and poor people, but that didn’t mean that the rich were better than anyone else.

Successful Americans stubbornly refused to accept the mantle of an upper class, typically presenting themselves to their fellow countrymen as regular guys. And they usually were, in the sense that most of them had grown up in modest circumstances, or even in poverty, and carried the habits and standards of their youths into their successful later lives.

America also retained a high degree of social and cultural heterogeneity in its communities. Tocqueville wrote of America in the 1830s as a place where “the more opulent citizens take great care not to stand aloof from the people.” That continued well into the 20th century, even in America’s elite neighborhoods. In the 1960 census, the median income along Philadelphia’s Main Line was just \$90,000 in today’s

dollars. In Boston’s Brookline, it was \$75,000; on New York’s Upper East Side, just \$60,000. At a typical dinner party in those neighborhoods, many guests would have had no more than a high-school diploma. . . . In 2016, a dinner party in those same elite neighborhoods consists almost wholly of people with college degrees, even advanced degrees. They are much more uniformly affluent. The current median family incomes for the Main Line, Brookline and the Upper East Side are about \$150,000, \$151,000 and \$203,000, respectively.

Now, members of the elite are socialized and meet their mates in colleges where, on cultural and political issues, the professors all talk the same. Elitist taste is distinct from that of working-class Americans in movies, TV, websites, books, music, coffee, alcohol, and grocery-shopping, even “the way they take care of their health, their child-rearing practices, the vacations they take.” Murray:

Another characteristic of the new upper class—and something new under the American sun—is their easy acceptance of being members of an upper class and their condescension toward ordinary Americans. Try using “redneck” in a conversation with your highly educated friends and see if it triggers any of the nervousness that accompanies other ethnic slurs. Refer to “flyover country” and consider the implications when no one asks, “What does that mean?” Or I can send you to chat with a friend in Washington, D.C., who bought a weekend place in West Virginia. He will tell you about the contempt for his new neighbors that he has encountered in the elite precincts of the nation’s capital.

Murray’s friend is Clive Crook of *Bloomberg View*, who elaborated on Murray’s point in his own column:

I’m a British immigrant, and grew up in a northern English working-class town. Taking my regional accent to Oxford University and then the British civil service, I learned a certain amount about my own class consciousness and other people’s snobbery. But

in London or Oxford from the 1970s onwards I never witnessed the naked disdain for the working class that much of America’s metropolitan elite finds permissible in 2016.

When my wife and I bought some land in West Virginia and built a house there, many friends in Washington asked why we would ever do that. Jokes about guns, banjo music, in-breeding, people without teeth and so forth often followed. These Washington friends, in case you were wondering, are good people. They’d be offended by crass, cruel jokes about any other group. They deplore prejudice and keep an eye out for unconscious bias. More than a few object to the term, “illegal immigrant.” Yet somehow they feel the white working class has it coming.

### **They deserve it**

That’s a point made frequently by commentators on the Left and among anti-Trump conservatives, who will admit that the kind of people who support Trump may be suffering, then add that they deserve what’s happening to them.

Last September, Susan Milligan, who teaches journalism (!) at Boston University, expressed the view among bigots on the Left when, in an article for *USNews.com*, she described the political climate in the GOP:

It all comes, experts say, from a sense—especially among older, white male voters—that the country they knew when they were younger is vanishing, taken over by racial, ethnic and religious minorities. Add to that social changes, such as the prevalence of women working outside the home and the expansion of rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, and older white men naturally wonder what happened to the cultural identity of their youth.

“There is kind of a panic underneath it,” says sociologist Todd Gitlin, a Columbia University professor who has written numerous books about America’s tumultuous cultural history. “This particular incarnation of the

culture wars we're talking about this year, with the building of fences and walls, is obviously accelerated by the sort of nativism that's become central to the Republican doctrine."

Gitlin, Milligan failed to mention, was once president of Students for a Democratic Society, a far-left group from which the terrorist Weather Underground Organization spun off. [For more on the Weather Underground and its connections to "mainstream" leftwing politics, see *Foundation Watch* November 2008 and *Green Watch* September 2013, among other Capital Research Center publications.]

Another article that's representative of the hate directed at Trump supporters was published March 20 in the online magazine *Salon*. (The magazine, founded in 1995, gained fame for its spirited defense of the Clinton White House regarding crimes committed to cover up Bill Clinton's abuse of women. Today, *Salon* focuses on promoting racism and other far-left causes.) David Masciotra, a journalist who teaches at the University of St. Francis, wrote:

Journalists found that in the counties where Trump is most dominant, there are large numbers of white high school dropouts, and unemployed people no longer looking for work. An alliance with the incoherent personality cult of Donald Trump's candidacy correlates strongly with failure to obtain a high school diploma, and withdrawal from the labor force. The counties also have a consistent history of voting for segregationists, and have an above average percentage of its [*sic*] residents living in mobile homes. Many conservatives, and even some kindhearted liberals, might object to the conclusions one can draw from the data as stereotyping, but the empirical evidence leaves little choice. Donald Trump's supporters confirm the stereotype against them. The candidate himself even acknowledged the veracity of the caricature of his "movement" when he made the odd and condescending claim, "I love the poorly educated." His affection for illiteracy and ignorance did not extend to himself or any of his children, all of whom have degrees from some of the best universities in the world.

The low-educated, low-income counties of Trump's America also receive large sums of public assistance. Social Security fraud—seeking disability payments for minor injuries or conditions—is so rampant that attorneys have created a cottage industry out of offering to secure services for clients willing to pay a one-time fee for long-time subsidy. Much discussion and analysis followed the revelation that for the first time in decades the life expectancy for middle-aged white men is declining. Another study shows that Trump easily wins the counties and cities where this reversal of the national trend—rising life expectancy—is happening. Scrutiny shows that much of the failure to take advantage of advancement in medical technology and healthcare availability results from working-class white men's high rates of alcoholism, obesity and tobacco use.

Garret Keizer, a former teacher and Episcopal priest, wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* about the Left's dilemma:

It is by now a truism that Donald Trump poses a knotty conundrum for his competitors in the Republican Party, who can attack him and his retrograde sentiments only at the cost of alienating Trump's supporters, whose votes they need to win. Less obvious, or at least less discussed, is the parallel conundrum Trump poses for self-styled progressives. How far can they go in decrying Trump's support among white blue-collar workers without seeming to write off what was once regarded as a core progressive constituency?

It could be argued that the writing-off has already occurred. There has long been a shift in left-liberal politics away from any broad identification with "the workers"—narrowly conceived as white, male and straight—in favor of specific social and environmental issues that pose no threat to existing economic structures. In that regard, Trump's blue-collar support might be viewed as a vindication: Workers of the world, take a hike. We never liked you much anyway.

Conservative anti-Trump writers have made similar points. Kevin Williamson of *National Review* wrote:

The white American underclass is in thrall to a vicious, selfish culture whose main products are misery and used heroin needles. Donald Trump's speeches make them feel good. So does OxyContin. What they need isn't analgesics, literal or political. They need real opportunity, which means that they need real change, which means that they need U-Haul.

Regarding Williamson and other conservatives expressing similar sentiments, Matthew Yglesias of the liberal *Vox* noted:

These are politically explosive thoughts because the basic political reality is that Republicans rely on heavy majorities among white working-class voters to win elections. Back in 2012, 62 percent of non-college white people voted for Mitt Romney—a larger majority than the GOP got with better-educated whites, only 56 percent of whom backed him. The good news for Barack Obama was that only 57 percent of non-college white people voted at all, a far lower percentage than college graduate whites or African Americans. The great conservative hope for 2016 was to reactivate those "missing white voters"—voters who, it turns out, like Trumpism more than they like conventional conservatism. . . .

[T]hese are essays making the case that suffering white working-class communities don't deserve help of any kind.

Sean Collins of the British online magazine *Spiked* argued that "clueless attacks" by the Establishment have fueled Trump's campaign.

Worried about Islamic terrorism? You're an Islamophobe. Worried about immigration? You're a bigot. Indeed, the denigration of Trump supporters is one of the ugliest aspects of the anti-Trump hysteria.

As it became known that a core part of Trump's support comes from those without a college education, some began to use that fact to dismiss his voters as 'uneducated', 'low-infor-

mation' or just moronic. Trump fans are portrayed as excessively anxious about terrorism, irrationally so, and thus susceptible to being duped by a demagogue like Trump. . . .

Those core Trump supporters who are disparaged as the 'uneducated' are what we used to call the working class. Sections of the working class have been alienated from the political process in recent years. In the 2012 election, many white workers without a college education abstained rather than voting for Obama or Mitt Romney. Now that it appears that Trump has them engaged in politics, the establishment parties have only themselves to blame for ignoring them for so long.

The elites hate the Trump supporters, and the feeling is mutual. The Trumpites' disdain is reminiscent of the campaign run by businessman Ray Shamie against Elliot Richardson, a former attorney general and secretary of defense, for the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts in 1984. Shamie taunted the blueblooded Richardson, and defeated him, with the sarcastic slogan: "Vote for Elliot. He's better than you."

### Smug

Emmett Rensin, writing in *Vox*, described "the smug style in American liberalism" that—

has been growing these past decades. It is a way of conducting politics, predicated on the belief that American life is not divided by moral difference or policy divergence—not really—but by the failure of half the country to know what's good for them. . . . It has led an American ideology hitherto responsible for a great share of the good accomplished over the past century of our political life [i.e., liberalism] to a posture of reaction and disrespect: a condescending, defensive sneer toward any person or movement outside of its consensus, dressed up as a monopoly on reason.

Liberals believe that they are the smart ones. They devour scientific research that, they think, proves their own superiority—like the studies purporting to show that *Daily Show* viewers and NPR listeners are smarter than others, and the study, as

reported in 2011 by *Psychology Today*, in which "researchers at University College London found that self-described conservative students had a larger amygdala than liberals. The amygdala is an almond-shaped structure deep in the brain that is active during states of fear and anxiety. Liberals had more gray matter at least in the anterior cingulate cortex, a region of the brain that helps people cope with complexity."

This smugness, Rensin wrote, has driven workers away.

In 1948, in the immediate wake of Franklin Roosevelt, 66 percent of manual laborers voted for Democrats, along with 60 percent of farmers. In 1964, it was 55 percent of working-class voters. By 1980, it was 35 percent. The white working class in particular saw even sharper declines. Despite historic advantages with both poor and middle-class white voters, by 2012 Democrats possessed only a 2-point advantage among poor white voters. Among white voters making between \$30,000 and \$75,000 per year, the GOP has taken a 17-point lead.

The consequence was a shift in liberalism's intellectual center of gravity. A movement once fleshed out in union halls and little magazines shifted into universities and major press, from the center of the country to its cities and elite enclaves.

Liberal smugness wasn't always so obvious, according to Rensin.

The smug style has always existed in American liberalism, but it wasn't always so totalizing. [Literary critic] Lionel Trilling claimed, as far back as 1950, that liberalism "is not only the dominant, but even the sole intellectual tradition," that "the conservative impulse and the reactionary impulse . . . do not express themselves in ideas, but only in action or in irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas."

[The writing of] Richard Hofstadter, the historian whose most famous work [is] *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, . . . drips with disdain for

rubes who regard themselves as victimized by economics and history, who have failed to maintain correct political attitudes. But 60 years ago, American liberalism relied too much on the support of working people to let these ideas take too much hold. . . .

The smug style belonged to real elites, knowing in their cocktail parties, far from the ears of rubes. But today we have television, and the Internet, and a liberalism worked out in universities and think tanks. Today, the better part of liberalism is Trillings—or those who'd like to be, at any rate—and everyone can hear them.

"The wages of smug," Rensin wrote, "is Trump."

### "Poorly educated"

Winning in Nevada with 46 percent of the vote to 24 percent for Marco Rubio, Trump, in his victory speech, ran down the results of polls of caucus-goers: "So we won the evangelicals. We won with young. We won with old. We won with highly educated. We won with poorly educated. I love the poorly educated. We're the smartest people, we're the most loyal people, and you know what I'm happy about? Because I've been saying it for a long time. 46 percent were the Hispanics—46 percent, Number One with Hispanics. I'm really happy about that."

In Nevada, Trump won almost all groups for which polls were conducted, including people with postgraduate education (39 percent to 27 for Rubio). Not surprisingly, though, Trump's opponents jumped on his comment that "We won with poorly educated. I love the poorly educated."

In social media, "I love the poorly educated" was sent around the world—tweeted once every four seconds through the next morning—with such comments as "The world is once again laughing" and "Trump ACTUALLY said this."

The *Daily Illini* at the University of Illinois published an article headlined "Donald Trump is not the problem; his voters are," claiming that Trump supporters are "the same voters that Richard Nixon welcomed into the party of Lincoln in 1968 when he carried out his 'southern strategy' to bring the segregationist south into the GOP tent."

(“Nixon’s segregationist Southern Strategy,” which never existed, is a cherished myth among leftists, who use it to justify their hatred of Republicans.) The article continued: “There’s a reason that Trump ‘loves the poorly educated.’ With education comes the ability to think outside of oneself, and for those who would like a base of voters to act purely out [of] racism and prejudice, this presents a problem. Those of us who can think beyond prejudice have an obligation to do so.”

On his ABC TV late night show, Jimmy Kimmel unveiled a commercial supposedly produced by those “poorly educated” Trump supporters, proclaiming that “Merica” needs a “Leeder” who believes in the “Constipation” and the “Second Commencement” and who will stand up to foreigners like North Korea’s “Lil’ Kim,” Russia’s “Voldemort Putin,” and China’s “President Eleven” (President Xi). At least it was *funny*.

The scorn heaped upon “the poorly educated” is rooted in the belief among leftists that Trump and candidates like him appeal mainly to those without much formal schooling, who tend to have low incomes. These are people the Left considers stupid.

In contrast, the libertarian magazine *Reason* ran an article headlined “Trump: ‘I Love The Poorly Educated.’ So Should The Other Candidates.” Wrote *Reason*’s Nick Gillespie: “When was the last time that an American politician acknowledged the poorly educated as something less than a tumor on the body politic that needs to be eradicated, much less thank them?”

Bill O’Reilly of Fox News called Trump’s comment “smart,” adding:

By saying he loves the poorly educated, Trump was slapping the elites, whom many voters despise. Trump realizes that he is mobilizing Americans who never took part in the political process. He doesn’t care whether you have a Ph.D. from Harvard. He doesn’t care whether you have a degree from the school of hard knocks. He just wants your vote.

James Taranto, who writes a daily blog for the *Wall Street Journal*, noted the comment from the *Washington Post* reporter about

religious conservatives being “poor, uneducated, and easy to command” and then Senator Obama’s comment about people clinging to guns and religion, and asked:

Is there any doubt both statements reflected, and continue to reflect, the prevailing attitudes of the dominant liberal culture, including of the Democratic Party? Those attitudes explain why the voters in question have been trending strongly Republican for a generation or more. But the attitude of Republican elites has often been more diffident than welcoming. Can you imagine, say, Mitt Romney—who himself got into trouble in 2012 for his surreptitiously recorded comments to donors about “the 47%”—saying he loves the poorly educated?

Trump is neither evangelical nor poorly educated. He is a mainline Protestant (Presbyterian), and by outward appearances not an especially pious one; a sybaritic billionaire from New York who holds a bachelor’s degree from an Ivy League school. Evangelicals and the poorly educated are drawn to him not because he is one of them but because he is open to people who are *not like him*. As the left, and some on the right, denounce him as a bigot, he has been winning by being inclusive.

Scott Locklin in *Taki’s Magazine*:

Your average member of the lunch-pailetariat is acutely aware that those who are presently in charge of the Democratic Party hate him. Rednecks are villainized in the media, in academia, and in the private lives of folks who think they know better because of their sociology class. Many of the problems minorities experience in American society are laid at the feet of working-class white people. The irony is that these pallid scapegoats are politically powerless, unlike the latte tribe that demonizes them. Hating rednecks is the anti-Semitism of Democratic asses. On the rare occasion when Democrats attempt to communicate with their white Neanderthal brethren, it is broadcast on a carrier wave of pure condescension. The left

has a sort of collective Tourette syndrome involving frequent mention of sexism, racism, and gay rights. These subjects are meaningless to hourly laborers who lack the leisure time to nurse nihilistic resentments against Western Civilization.

Liberal writer Thomas Frank noted in a March 7 op-ed that—

the working-class white people who make up the bulk of Trump’s fan base show up in amazing numbers for the candidate, filling stadiums and airport hangars, but their views, by and large, do not appear in our prestige newspapers. On their opinion pages, these publications take care to represent demographic categories of nearly every kind, but “blue-collar” is one they persistently overlook. The views of working-class people are so foreign to that universe that when *New York Times* columnist Nick Kristof wanted to “engage” a Trump supporter last week, he made one up, along with this imaginary person’s responses to his questions.

When members of the professional class wish to understand the working-class Other, they traditionally consult experts on the subject.

Martin Longman, a former consultant for Howard Dean’s organization Democracy for America, wrote in the *Washington Monthly* blog:

There’s a feeling among many progressives, regardless of color, that with the spectacle of the Tea Party and Trumpism, there just isn’t any way to get through to white working class folks and we’re basically idiots if we keep attempting to do it.

But [the research of Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg] suggests otherwise. Remember, we don’t need to win a majority of the vote among white working class folks. We just have to avoid getting slaughtered. And we’ve learned from the hard experience of the 2010 and 2014 midterm elections, that the Democratic coalition of voters is not big enough to avoid catastrophic off-year defeats in federal, state, and local elections.

Once, liberals cared deeply about working-class people. Today, the Left's bias against working-class people is so strong that leftists can't bring themselves to reach out even when their political success may depend on it. Mike Flynn of Breitbart.com noted:

In the immediate aftermath of the 2012, Democrat strategists openly worried about the party's terrible standing with white working class voters. In early 2013, the Center for American Progress [CAP], a left-wing think tank, published a long analysis highlighting the weakness of Democrats among white working class voters. Leading progressive strategist Ruy Teixeira worried that Democrats would face strong political head-winds unless the party could broaden its appeal to these disaffected voters.

"As the 2012 elections demonstrated, the group that has perhaps the greatest potential in this regard is the white working class," Teixeira and Andrew Levison wrote in *The New Republic*. "The white working class has the potential to be a—if not the—decisive swing voter group for the future." With great fanfare, the CAP, and other leading progressive groups, launched the "Bobby Kennedy Project" to improve the Democrat's outreach to working class voters. The effort was quietly abandoned soon after.

A contributing factor in the project's demise was the perceived risk of moderating current positions of the Democrat party to attract working class voters. "At this point, the tradeoffs they might have to make to attract more working-class white voters may not be worth the cost in irritating the constituencies of their current coalition," University of Virginia political scientist Geoff Skelley said in an email to the Washington *Free Beacon*.

The hypocrisy of the Left is jaw-dropping. According to general-election exit polls in 2008 and 2012, people without a high school diploma were, by far, *Barack Obama's* strongest education cohort. Obama carried them by 28 points in 2008 and 29 points in 2012. In both elections, Obama's share of the vote declined as one

moved up the educational ladder, from people without a high school diploma (63 percent for Obama in 2008/64 percent in 2012), to people with a high school diploma only (51/52), to people with some college courses but no college diploma (49/51), to college graduates (47/50). The pattern was broken only in the most-educated cohort, made up of people who had done postgraduate work, a group that Obama carried with 58 percent in 2008 and 55 percent in 2012. Among income groups, Obama carried only the lowest, those making under \$50,000 a year, which was about 41 percent of total voters. But in each election he won that group by such a large margin, 60 to 38, that it carried him to victory.

In this year's New Hampshire Democratic primary, Bernie Sanders got 64 percent of the vote among those with a high school diploma or less. (Sanders, it should be noted, said in March, "When you're white, you don't know what it's like to be living in a ghetto. You don't know what it's like to be poor.")

### What's your identity?

Most people base their political decisions mostly on how their friends, neighbors, family members, and co-workers vote, rather than on a carefully reasoned look at the pros and cons of various positions. Thus, we see this kind of pattern: Same-Grain, a social network app that helps people find compatible friends, travel companions, roommates, etc., asked its users whom they were voting for in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and compared their choice to their professions. According to a press release, "the results showed Clinton voters are more than three times more likely to be teachers and more than four times less likely to be in law enforcement than Trump's voters. All Republican candidates have a relatively high percentage of voters in law enforcement, the military, and public safety, while the Democratic candidates enjoy higher support from those in non-profits, government, and entertainment professions. Trump has the highest support of any single profession (construction), but his support from educators and teachers ranks as the lowest support of a candidate from any single profession."

If you're a typical voter, your place in the world, more than your political philosophy, is the foundation for your opinion of Donald Trump.

Scott Shackford of *Reason*:

Trump's constituency is made up of people who believe that they are the ones who have been hurt the most by this system. One might think, then, that Trump would be seen as the enemy here. Trump is "winning" by going completely mercenary with this approach: He is offering to use his knowledge and ability to manipulate this system to benefit those voters.

Shackford's comment touches on the reason that many people have such a strongly negative reaction to Trump, even as he earns the undying loyalty of others. ("I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters, okay? It's like incredible," Trump said in January.) Trump represents "identity politics" of the type usually practiced by Democrats and the Left.

His implicit promise is like that of a lawyer: He'll do the best job he can of representing your interests, whatever your interests might be. He doesn't really care about being philosophically consistent—hence, his all-over-the-map answers to questions about abortion. The vast majority of political leaders take that approach, even when they lie and say they don't. Very few Democratic politicians, and very few Republican politicians, really believe the ideological things they say, the things they believe they must say to get elected.

Many ideological conservatives despise this aspect of Trump because their brand of politics is based on ideas and issues, not on identity politics. They are offended at the prospect that, most of the time, an individual's political orientation is based largely on which group that person is born into, or finds himself by circumstance.

Conversely, leftists hate Trump because he has demonstrated an instinct for identity politics. They fear that, given the opportunity, he can beat them at their own game.

*Dr. Steven J. Allen (JD, PhD) is Vice President & Chief Investigative Officer of the Capital Research Center, and editor of Labor Watch.* **LW**

# LaborNotes

Just because a wage law doesn't make economic sense is no reason not to pass it. Lawmakers in **California** raised the minimum wage from \$10 now to \$10.50 an hour in 2017, increasing it by a dollar a year until it gets to \$15. **New York's** state government approved a similar increase. Such laws hurt unskilled workers the most, effectively barring them from many jobs. **Governor Jerry Brown** (D-California) admitted that, "Economically, minimum wages may not make sense," but "morally and socially and politically, they make every sense because it binds the community together and makes sure that parents can take care of their kids in a much more satisfactory way."

**Trey Kovacs** of the **Competitive Enterprise Institute** wrote in *The Hill* that "the **Department of Labor** is rushing to finish its so-called 'overtime rule' by summer. . . . The rule dramatically expands overtime pay eligibility for salaried employees. Specifically, the rule makes salaried employees earning under \$50,440 eligible for overtime pay, which is over a 100 percent from the current salary threshold of \$23,660. **Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez** estimates that around five million new workers will suddenly become overtime eligible, and the rule will boost employees' wages across the country by \$1.3 billion." How will businesses cope? "Cutting wages would make up for 80 percent of overtime costs, according to **U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics** economist **Anthony Barkume**. Or businesses could hire more part-time employees and hourly workers, limiting workers' hours to 40 and reducing fringe benefits. Workers will bear the brunt of the harmful impact of the overtime rule and its unintended consequences. Salaried employees now on a management track may have their work status downgraded to hourly, which will have some impact on their long-term career prospects, earnings, and other benefits, like healthcare and a pension."

The overtime rule will be particularly tough on women. In the December 2014 issue of *Labor Watch*, **Diana Furchtgott-Roth** noted that, as the rule was proposed, "employees who receive overtime pay would not be allowed to take time off, or comp time; they would have to receive overtime pay. Some people may prefer overtime pay, but others, especially working mothers, may prefer more leisure. . . . Overtime rules hurt women by reducing flexibility with their employer. Many women with children, particularly young mothers who cannot afford childcare, would prefer flexibility in their schedule rather than extra overtime pay. When overtime hours are allowed to count toward time off instead of pay, women can change their work schedules according to their needs."

Liberals, of course, claim to care about women in the workplace. Take **Kathleen Mathews**, wife of **MSNBC** personality **Chris Mathews**, who recently ran for **Congress** (unsuccessfully) as the candidate of women. In her TV commercials, she asked: "Why does Congress think it is okay that women get paid 20 percent less than a man for doing the same job?" That question is based on a common but fake belief. It's true that a median female full-time worker makes 21 percent less than a median male full-time worker, but, as noted by **Glenn Kessler** of the *Washington Post*, "the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the gap is 17 cents when looking at weekly wages. The gap is even smaller when you look at hourly wages—15 cents—but then not every wage earner is paid on an hourly basis, so that statistic excludes salaried workers. Annual wage figures do not take into account the fact that teachers—many of whom are women—have a primary job that fills nine months out of the year."

The more factors you consider, the smaller the gap appears. It turns out that the average woman has less work experience than the average man; the average woman works more weeks part-time rather than full-time, compared to men; and, in Kessler's words, "women tend to leave the workforce for periods to raise children, seek jobs that may have more flexible hours but lower pay, and choose careers that tend to have lower pay." Women make up more than 60 percent of college students, which should mean they will make more money, but women are the majority in nine of the 10 lowest-paying majors while men are the majority in nine of the 10 highest-paying majors. And men take the vast majority of jobs that are dangerous or require back-breaking manual labor.

In some circumstances, the gap narrows significantly or disappears. Comparing never-married women to never-married men, the gap is six cents, not 21. And, according to a 2010 study as reported by *Time* magazine, women under 30 made more than men under 30 in 147 of 150 cities surveyed. "In two cities, **Atlanta** and **Memphis**, those women are making about 20% more. . . . with young women in **New York City**, **Los Angeles** and **San Diego** making 17%, 12% and 15% more than their male peers, respectively."

Nevertheless, "From a political perspective," Kessler wrote, "the Census Bureau's 79-cent figure is golden. Unless women stop getting married and having children, and start abandoning careers in childhood education for aerospace engineering, the gap in wages will almost certainly persist. **Democrats** thus can keep bringing it up every year."