

Every President Leaves a Legacy, So What Will Donald Trump's Legacy Be?

As our country struggles to recover from the Trump presidency, it's hard not to think about what Pres. Donald Trump's legacy will be. We're living it every day.

If you Google "Donald Trump's legacy" (with the quote marks so you only get hits with those words in that order), you get 57,000+ hits, and it's interesting to see the various takes on his legacy. The #1 hit is, appropriately, from the BBC, which has the useful perspective of being British but with a nightly news program on public television, which I record and occasionally watch. (There is an entire BBC America channel on both Dish Network and DirecTV.)

That article makes the observation that "If Donald Trump had followed the example of his predecessors and conceded power graciously and peacefully, he would have been remembered as a disruptive but consequential populist leader.... a president who, before the pandemic, presided over an economic boom, re-oriented America's opinion of China, removed terrorist leaders from the battlefield, revamped the space program, secured an originalist (conservative) majority on the US Supreme Court, and authorized Operation Warp Speed to produce a Covid-19 vaccine in record time."

Indeed, the legacy of Donald Trump turned on his incitement of violence because he could not accept defeat, an aspect of his personality so well laid out in his niece Mary Trump's book, "Too Much and Never Enough."

But it was not his first incitement of violence. At least one clip from his many rallies comes to mind where he encouraged his followers to assault a protestor, declaring that he would pay the legal expenses if they were prosecuted.

The BBC article describes his Alt-right followers as "Trump's shock troops," and indeed they were just that, appropriately reminiscent of the Nazi Brown-shirts, aka Storm Troopers. A big element of Trump's legacy will be his emboldening of violent right wing extremists, including white supremacists, epitomized by his response to the 2017 Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally.



By Jim Smith

Trump's "Big Lie" about losing the 2020 election due to fraud and his emboldening of right-wing extremists is his most enduring legacy (in that we are living with it well beyond his term in office), but there are other important elements of his legacy worth highlighting.

We lost four years of leadership in addressing climate change, which poses an existential threat to our planet. He cut funding for renewable energy and boosted support for coal and other fossil fuels. He emboldened climate deniers, but that was just one element of a larger denial of science. We're living with that legacy not only in the forest fires and drought plaguing our country, but also in lives lost due to vaccine hesitancy, which he fostered *despite* taking credit for Operation Warp Speed.

Trump's damage to the Republican Party may or may not be long lasting, depending on how successful the party, fueled by his rhetoric, is in the 2022 and 2024 elections. Losses in those elections would be a second repudiation of Donald Trump and could, hopefully, lead to a return to the GOP of old which did, for the most part, put country above party — at least until the election of Barack Obama, when it truly assumed the role of being the "Party of No" under the leadership of Sen. Mitch McConnell.

Trump's reshaping of the judiciary, not just the Supreme Court, will be an enduring legacy, too. With the help of Sen. McConnell, he appointed over 250 judges, most of them recommended by the conservative Federalist Society. The American Bar Association rated 10 of Trump's ap-

pointees "unqualified," but the Senate confirmed them anyway.

Donald Trump succeeded as no previous president has in demonizing the free press, or what he called the "lamestream media." (The use of insult name-calling is

also his legacy.) If a news item didn't flatter him, he called it "fake news" and his followers believed him. He called the free press "the enemy of the people," but saying so identifies Trump as the true enemy of the people.

Are You Curious How Trumpers Respond to This Column?

[This article did NOT appear in the print version of "Talking Turkey."] I'll just use initials so as not to embarrass these readers.

B.O. has been particularly annoying recently. He was the person I quoted last week as saying he supported Donald Trump because he loved our country. Having learned civic discourse from our previous president, he defaults to personal insults. Here are some excerpts from recent emails:

"Here you go, genius! A liberal rag is reporting this, so go ahead, idiot. Bury your head in the sand. Mid-terms are coming! This [Afghanistan withdrawal] is one of many unfolding disasters that YOU voted for! Open borders, superspreader, inflation gone wild, \$4 gas, soaring taxes just for starters! How stupid are you?"

"Oh, damn, because I really want fat ignorant Socialist fools like you to respect me! Hilarious idiot!"

When I pointed out that he wasn't responding to the substance of my column, he replied:

"Sorry, Jimbo, I don't read garbage."

When I replied that he couldn't handle the truth, he responded as follows:

"You're embarrassing yourself, idiot! Don't contact us anymore, you pathetic Realtor scum! For the last time, do NOT contact us again! Your phone calls and emails must STOP! As I said before, we don't want to do business with you and Golden Real Estate!"

Note: I never called him, only showed his listed home to a buyer client of mine, and he called me. I never emailed him again, but he kept emailing me:

"Will dead Americans be dragged through the streets? For all those evil people who hate America like you, this is a great event! Remember 1979? It's back, you clueless buf-

foon, as Afghanistan women will get killed/abused, as Lyin' Biden and you could care less."

And he sent the following email accompanying a Daily Telegraph screenshot with the headline, "Parliament holds the President in contempt."

"Here you go, Genius! You VOTED for pitiful senile IDIOT! The World is watching!"

Another regular writer is **S.M.**, whose invitation to have lunch I accepted last month. He didn't like my "oxymoron" headline last week and wrote:

"Looks to me like Uncle Joe is, take your pick any or all: A coward, a soul in the grip of dementia, incompetent and unable to plan an orderly retreat with over seven months to do so. His Kabul moment will reverberate for years. Watch China, Russian and NATO."

When I replied that I would reach the same conclusion if I were in his same news bubble, "especially the tired dementia line," **S.M.** responded:

"It is interesting that you attack me rather than try to defend."

G.W. is upset that my political ad appears where the police blotter used to appear:

"Now I see a political blurb and sales 'hocus pocus' from you! Phooey. Wake up. You have my sincere DIS-respect."

It's hard not to be discouraged that Tucker Carlson and Trump himself continue to have a die-hard following, raising millions for 2022 and 2024. If they succeed in taking control of Congress in 2022, they could well win the White House in 2024, and we may have to write off the Great American Experiment. I'm heartened that the developments in Afghanistan have only lowered Biden's approval rating to 50% — an approval rating which Trump *never* achieved.

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