

70 Million Americans

by Bill Herbst

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OK, so Biden pulled it out and won, both in the popular vote and in the Electoral College, a gift from America's founding fathers that is already a century past its "use by" date. No, the election results haven't been certified yet (and won't be for quite some time, maybe late November or even early December). But Biden has been declared by the number crunchers in mainstream media as the heir apparent, the President-Elect.

Might that pronouncement be premature? Probably not, with the obvious caveat that Donald Trump — for whom the specter of being a "loser" at anything is tantamount to a fate worse than death — will do his damndest (or rather, his legions of lawyers will) to invalidate the results and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. This is, of course, no surprise. We knew it would happen; Trump told us so himself, over and over. (As a relevant aside, that's one of the things I'll miss about Donald Trump — his complete, brazen openness about everything. Most criminals, including the future political criminals who are guaranteed to arise in America, make an effort to hide or mask their depredations. Not The Donald. He is totally transparent and out-front about his beliefs and intentions.)

But no matter. As I've written over and over, *Trump is going down*. That's been my four-word mantra as an astrologer for the past year, and I see no reason nor any evidence that inclines me to back away from it now. The only questions in my mind are: 1. How fast will Trump fall? 2. How far? And 3. How many of us will he take down with him? Time will tell on all those.

So, Trump will leave the White House. The views he represents, however, will not perish from the earth. They are alive and well (or maybe zombie-risen and sick) in this country. What we now shorthand as "Trumpism" has always been a significant facet of the American psyche. For four years, many pundits and commentators have repeated their Greed Chorus denial of reality. "*This is not who we are,*" they cried. Au contraire. This is *exactly* who 40% of us are (and I'm not all that sanguine about the other 60%).

Consider: *70 million Americans voted for Donald Trump*. That's more votes than Trump got in 2016 and the second-highest vote total for a Presidential candidate in American history (for now, Biden is the new #1 in all-time vote count).

70 million Americans. Stop for a second and let that fact sink in. Chew on it. Allow it to cook and fester in your mind.

After four years of one hellish development after another — after a viral pandemic that has claimed the lives of a quarter-million Americans (and will probably take at least that many more over the next year no matter what we do now to address it), after an economic disaster that is a mere sneak preview of much worse to come, after outrageous cruelty, completely absurd foreign policy, wholesale gutting of government institutions, the descent of one side of the political uniparty into complete madness (the Republicans) and endlessly ineffective and often downright stupid foolishness by the other side (the Democrats), after 25,000 outright lies spoken and tweeted by the President — 70 million Americans STILL voted for him.

This would be stunning were it not so utterly predictable.

Polls consistently report that an overwhelming majority of Americans would like to see universal health care (through government-sponsored, single-payer health insurance, now called “Medicare for All”). About the same percentage are reported as supporting environmental protection and the phasing out of fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy sources. A somewhat smaller percentage, but still a sizable majority, are in favor of various other “liberal” or “progressive” positions, including a woman’s right to control her own body by choosing whether or not to carry a fetus to term, free college, and increasing the minimum wage sufficiently to provide working Americans with a livable income.

And yet, 70 million Americans voted to keep Donald Trump in office as President of the United States for another four years (and probably four more after that...).

By and large, these voters consider themselves staunch patriots and true-blue Americans. They see themselves as defenders of freedom and protectors of their beloved country. They are mostly right-leaning “conservatives,” although their definition of conservatism is not the same as mine. Many of them see the Left — and even centrist Democrats — as “socialists” (sometimes preceded by the adjectives “radical,” “godless,” or even “demonic”). Needless to say, I have a starkly different perspective on who they are and what their beliefs imply.

I have no trouble understanding their arguments and rationales. I just disagree. The universes of opinion or belief we live in could hardly be further apart. And no amount of “reaching across the aisle” will reconcile the differences or transform “Them” into “Us.” The relevant question for me is this: *Are these 70 million Americans who voted for Trump just my opponents or actually my enemies?*

My answer (although it’s more a response than an answer) is that I’m not sure. It depends on what minute of which day you ask me. On the morning of a given Tuesday, I might say that they’re opponents whose opinions conflict with my own (as is inevitable in human society, and not necessarily a bad thing). On the evening of the following Wednesday, however, I might see them as my mortal enemies, people whose beliefs are not only wrong, but reprehensible, deranged, and dangerous.

And so it goes. Back and forth, as predictable as the tides.