

Blue Jean Nation "The deciding factor"

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Many mainstream Democrats can't seem to fathom how people could possibly fall for a billionaire reality TV star. But many feel they've been left behind and the outcome of this fall's election may hinge on who best understands and responds to the causes of their anger.

ALTOONA, WI - What happens when history and the here and now collide?

We're about to find out.

There were two competing storylines at this week's Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. Democrats made history by becoming the first major party to nominate a woman for president. Then there were the tens of thousands of [emails made public by Wikileaks](#) showing how the Democratic establishment played favorites in the race for the nomination and went to great lengths to sabotage Bernie Sanders' campaign.

In the euphoria of finally achieving the long-awaited and historic selection of a woman to be the party's candidate for the nation's highest office, Democrats looked past the fact that their nominee not only is a female but also someone who personifies the political establishment at a time of intense anti-establishment feelings among voters and one who is running as a centrist at a time when there is no center in American politics.

Economist and former Clinton administration cabinet official Robert Reich is [wondering out loud if Hillary gets it](#)

. He sees Clinton running fast to the middle, and astutely observes this is a place that doesn't

exist in our country anymore. He sees rampant populism, taking the form of both an

authoritarian populism

embodied by Republican nominee Donald Trump and a

democratic populism

that Bernie Sanders was tapping into. As Reich says, "If Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party don't recognize this realignment, they're in for a rude shock.... Because Donald Trump does recognize it."

The Democratic establishment and a great many mainstream Democratic voters can't seem to fathom how people could possibly fall for a billionaire reality TV star whose message begins with fear mongering, race baiting and anti-immigrant nativism and ends with the conceit that he alone can keep us safe, maintain order and make us prosper economically.

If they can't wrap their heads around it, perhaps it's because they are not sufficiently clued in to the anger that fuels today's raging populism in both of its forms. When you or I lose our temper, I mean really blow our stacks, we aren't rational in the heat of the moment. Emotion overwhelms reason. We later regret things we say or do out of anger. Why should we expect that this all-too-familiar and all-too-human behavior will never come into play when it's time to vote in elections?

There is a significant segment of American society that feels forgotten and invisible. They see a system rigged against them. They can tell the politicians aren't listening to them and are not working on their behalf. And they are steamed. When they are told the economy is getting better, they aren't feeling it. When they are told the nation's crime rate is actually dropping, all they know is they do not feel safer or more secure. When they are told America is already great, they wonder when some of that greatness is going to come their way.

Is it so hard to understand how tens of millions of Americans who feel they've been left behind could be drawn to someone who tells them they are right to feel the way they are feeling and then assures them he will make their lives better?

The outcome of this fall's election will not likely turn on whether enough Americans are ready to break the ultimate glass ceiling. It far more likely hinges on who best understands and responds to the causes of rising American populism.

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