

Sanders and Trump – Twin Brothers

Are Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders really twin brothers? My left wing friends like to say that Donald Trump plays on fear and his success is based upon the terror that poor, ignorant white men feel on a daily basis. My right wing buds claim that Bernie Sanders plays on the fears of the poor, unwashed minority who are looking for free government handouts. Extremes in American politics are nothing new. Typically extreme points of view become absorbed into mainstream politics, reshaping the monopoly of the two dominating political parties in this country.

If truth had its way, both Trump and Sanders are successful not because of the fears they sow but rather because of the frustration they represent. Roosevelt's famous quote "the only thing to fear is fear itself" speech was given in 1933. There was genuine fear then of an economic collapse leading to revolution and Bolshevism. The Democratic Party absorbed the fear of the imminent social revolution and became the party of the Social Democrats. Capitalism was preserved, an adequate safety net was created, and the United States economy was rescued by World War II.

The current political environment is driven more by frustration than by fear. There is a relationship between the two concepts, but they are not the same. Voters in both political parties are frustrated by what they perceive as their lack of power. Democrats elected Barack Obama to change the world, and he has been a disappointment to the most diehard Democrats. He simply has not been far enough left, he lost Congress to the Republicans, and his revolution was stillborn. Republicans are still angry that two highly qualified candidates, John McCain and Mitt Romney were so badly beaten by the street organizer from Chicago. How could competency and integrity lose out so badly to youthful testosterone and glib vacuous policy? Republicans are frustrated.

In essence, Trump and Sanders promise the same things; relief from frustration. Sanders assures his base that the minimum wage will become a living wage, and that rich people will finally pay the piper. Trump, for his part, is promising the same thing! A rising tide lifts all boats, and he will make sure that struggling families make lots of money along with the moguls of wealth. In the world view of both men, the United States will be respected again and there will be at least two chickens in every pot and three cars in the driveway. It would be an under estimate to say that there are a few differences on specific pathways for achieving these goals. Trump will have the Mexicans build a wall so that "ordinary Americans" will make more money instead of all those worthless Mexicans. Sanders will integrate those Mexicans into America's great tapestry and they, along with everyone else, will reap the benefits of a society that cares.

Neither man has any clue as to how, in the practical world, to achieve their goals. Reality be damned. What is important is to tie into the frustration that American voters

feel. The more people beat up on Trump and Sanders, calling them extremists, unrealistic and maniacal, the more people love them! In America, everyone loves and desires a superhero fighting for the American Way!

There are some ways in which both Trump and Sanders are extremely good for America. They do provide a safety valve to those who are frustrated by politics as usual. They both have their base believing that they can cut through all the red tape and restore America to a place of prominence, wealth, privilege and the easy life. Of course, life never was easier and the past may have been much more difficult. But elections are not about reality; elections are about hope, desire, and yes, charisma. We forget about that old charisma thing that describes so well John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and to many, Barack Obama. Let's face it; both Sanders and Trump have way more charisma than their opponents. What exactly is charisma? Charisma can be a trait so detestable and scary that people are drawn to it. Why do people go see horror movies about chainsaw massacres, hiding women in closets for five years, and the squirting of blood from every orifice of the body? Why is extreme violence so popular in video games and on TV? We like to watch and we are fascinated by horrors that we would never want to participate in. There is something, yes, charismatic, entertaining and satisfying about watching a good, violent movie.

It is time to stop complaining about Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump, and embrace their message to America. Let us all be so frustrated that we want to make changes to improve the way our nation operates. The other day I talked to man from the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania who was in the hospital for two days due to an emergency appendectomy. His bill was \$46,000. Somebody will pay that bill. Americans are frustrated about that. They have a right to be frustrated about that. Too many people in this country are struggling financially and emotionally. They need a voice, they need hope, and they need to know that somebody out there is bluntly, and maybe even crudely, fighting on their behalf. Low-earning American citizens are competing with even lower earning illegal immigrants in virtually every big city in the United States. Crime in the inner big cities is worse than in the third world, and we now know that the United States has become one of the biggest tax havens in the world.

We are still one of the wealthiest, most successful and most powerful tribes of the world. Part of the reason for our success is that we are living on credit, and our Federal Reserve has pumped enough money into the system to keep interest rates low. Of course, that will not last forever. Some President and some Congress will need to deal with the debt and our intoxicated spending habits. There is a Socialist answer to this, which is to raise taxes and to try to prime the pump by giving more money to the underprivileged. The Republicans address this problem by cutting spending and cutting taxes in the hope that there will be a stimulus from the top. Either way, the solution to our debt and spending crisis will not be pretty.

Whether Sanders or Trump can actually do the job which they promise is almost beside the point. The answer is decidedly “no.” None of the candidates will be able to accomplish everything or even a majority of what they promise, but someone who actually knows how to work with Congress and the States may be able to advance the ball towards the goal line just a little bit.

So, Americans, rise up and vent that frustration. Go to rallies, curse at the TV, and leave the dinner table when you are faced with political disagreement. However, when all the screaming and shouting stops, think about who you would hire as a life coach and a financial family counselor. That person, if there is one in the race, probably ought to be your candidate and mine. Let’s have some fun in the political world and watch the unfolding drama, which is still only in the first act.

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