

# The Delray Democrat

## **The Anatomy of Trump Voters<sup>1</sup>**

*June Sandra Neal*

My neighbor, a Chinese immigrant, came at me on our walkway. She overheard me discussing my anguish over Trump's prisoners, the migrant children in detention camps, and the fact that I have been unable to do anything to help them. Lawsuits filed by immigrant advocacy groups, letters to Congress, all have yielded nothing.

In her heavily-accented English, my neighbor shot, "You are a communist. The Democrats are all communists. Bring everybody in, give them everything for nothing. Trump will stop it." The rant was lengthier, but that sums up its theme. She saw no correlation between her opportunity to start a new life in this country and others, of different nationalities, who wish to do the same.

Then I went inside and got a phone call from an old friend in Connecticut; I was surprised, since she had chosen to sever the friendship because of my stand against Trump. She sends her daughter to a private religious school. She will vote for Trump again because his Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, who couldn't answer a single question at her confirmation hearing, promised public money for private religious schools. When I asked how she could support someone who is taking from the 95% of American students who attend public schools to help the 5% in private and religious education, this friend, who had always demonstrated a concern for others, could not answer. Perhaps her old self was muted by the re-conditioned one that Trumpism has spawned.

Some call it single-issue politics. It is also irrational. Many Orthodox Jews believe Trump is Israel's only true friend and Netanyahu turns Trump sycophant every opportunity he gets. Yet Obama supported every loan guarantee that Israel requested during his administration. Against all evidence, others cite the economy (which arced from near-disaster to a dramatic upswing under Obama) or the exclusion of immigrants (by the very descendants of immigrants) or the sense of racial and national superiority he has legitimized.

Evangelicals have shown unyielding support for Trump's pretend pro-life and pro-Israel rhetoric, despite the fact that his every action is antithetical to their values. Why? In his new book, *The Immoral Majority, Why Evangelicals Chose Political Power Over Christian Values*, Ben Howe traces the evangelicals' feelings of rejection when President Obama was inaugurated (why I cannot say) to the promise of a savior in Trump who nominated two anti-abortion Supreme Court justices. Yet, Howe argues, this is from a man of "untold chasms of depravity." They know it. And the result, Howe says, is that the evangelicals live in "a vortex of moral ambiguity and relativism."

Then I spotted a recent op-ed in the New York Times by conservative writer Brett Stephens

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discussing his dilemma about filling his home bookshelves with titles he considers superior, while disagreeing with the immoral views of their authors. He chose to keep the books.

I wrote back and argued that Stephens resolved his literary moral predicament by severing the books from their provenance. It is logical. One thing is not the other. Or is it?

I once asked my literature students a long-lived question, “Can art be immoral?” Consider the well-crafted novel that glorifies rape and misogyny written by one who leads a blameless life. Hitler hoped to get into the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. What honest analysis can blot out the DNA shared between the author and the art?

But politics is irrational. Many American voters support Donald Trump because of specific issues (abortion) or amorphous ones (racial superiority). Logic goes in the dustbin.

History warns us of the catastrophic consequences of such intellectual butchering, of rationalizing the depravity of a dictator who inflames the racial, national or religious enmity that says, “We Are Better Than the Others.” This is the enemy before us, not GDP figures or trade regulations. And this is what we need to recognize if we are to win the next election.

Supporting a depraved president for his promises of prosperity and racial supremacy is like taking candy from a pedophile.

As Yeats asked, “How can we know the dancer from the dance?” We cannot.