

Inquiring Minds topic – 23 November 2018

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Election 2018: Fear, Money and Women

Just before the 2016 election I moderated a discussion titled the politics of fear. The intense use of fear in the 2018 campaign returns the subject to relevance. I quote from the editorial of the News-Press for November 5 titled "Trump would like you to be very afraid":

"President Donald Trump's pre-election campaign of fear and loathing crested this week with a latter-day version of the infamous "Willie Horton" political ad of the 1980s.

"The Horton ad highlighted a recidivist African-American felon and was widely condemned as playing to racist fears. So what was at the top of Trump's Twitter feed on Halloween? Footage of a grinning twice deported Mexican immigrant being sentenced to death for killing two California law officers, with a Trump admonition: 'It is outrageous what the Democrats are doing to our country.'

"The fact that Democrats had nothing to do with this man -- or that those committing illegal immigration actually commit fewer crimes than native born Americans -- is apparently of no matter as Trump stumped for Republican candidates around the USA. Sen Jeff Flake, R-Arizona, called the ad 'sickening' and 'just a new low in campaigning.'

"Be afraid, be very afraid" is a time-honored political trope. But Trump is taking it to whole new levels:

"When a few thousand migrants broke through Guatemalan border fencing to enter Mexico last month and began hiking to the United States to seek asylum, it might have been prudent to supplement the Border Patrol agents and 2000 National Guard troops already on hand with a few hundred active-duty service members for logistical support (they're barred by law from any enforcement action). But that wasn't dramatic enough for Trump. He declared a national emergency, described

the migrants as invaders, and dispatched 5200 troops to the border with an additional 6000 to possibly follow. That would create an Army larger than the U.S. employs against the Taliban and terrorism in Afghanistan. It would be enormously expensive; a government study found that a 2006 troop deployment to the border cost \$120 per person per day."

This follows the USA Today front page story of November 1 about conspiracy theories of Soros recruiting the caravans of migrants from Central America and how that false story was repeated by members of Congress, the President's son and celebrities.

This fear strategy is credited by commentators on CBS, CNN and PBS with energizing the Republican base for November 2018.

This has not been entirely one sided. The fear of Mr. Trump has energized Democrats.

Money is another factor. Estimates of campaign spending for 2018 exceed \$5,000,000,000! Is that money from a few people or corporations? Or is it from many small contributions as in the Texas campaign of Beto O'Rourke? What is the effective way to promote a campaign?

Women ran in unprecedented numbers for many offices. Many of them won. How will this affect the body politic?

Votes count as demonstrated in the Florida and Arizona elections to name just two. What is it that inspires people to vote?

What do we have to look forward to? The use of fear, the effect of the way money is raised, women in elective office are each part of the future. How should we react to any or all of these?

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Suggested regarding the topic: articles in TIME magazine, Nov. 19, 2018.