

DEALING WITH TRUMP VOTERS

Ever since the election, I've been thinking about how to deal with Trump voters I might meet. This article in the New York Times has helped me clarify my thinking. The star of the story is Amanda Delekta, identified as a sophomore at the University of Michigan and the Political Director of the College Republicans. She is "outraged" that students held vigils mourning the election results, and a biology professor canceled classes on the theory that students would be too upset to learn anything. She is further outraged that U of M's president sent an email she interpreted as saying that the ideas of the "liberal majority" at the school are superior to the "ideology of their peers". She thinks her ideology is entitled to respect. The article doesn't explain exactly what her ideology is, or why it is entitled to respect.

This stupid election campaign did not reveal any ideological stance of the winner. He is devoted to himself and beyond that, who knows. His only serious promises involve walls, deportations, keeping out Muslims, lower taxes, and no regulations. And somehow that will bring back so many jobs in manufacturing. Delekta can't possibly think that is an "ideology" or that this hodge-podge is worthy of respect. There is no evidence that any of this crap would help workers or anyone except Trump and his rich allies. She apparently doesn't realize we've been trying trickle-down economics for decades without any improvement in the wages of the bottom 50% of Americans while the rich have separated themselves from the rest of us.

Delekta doesn't seem to grasp the difference between liberalism as a set of ideas about politics, and a liberal education, which is about free and open inquiry and analysis. She thinks students are somehow being brainwashed by using their brains to read and understand reality, without even noticing that plenty of

people are using their liberal educations without in any way losing their conservative politics. Good examples can easily be found in business and engineering schools, but the same is true in most of the schools.

By rejecting the common understanding that the best way to learn advanced skills is through free and open inquiry and not from memorizing a textbook, she has aligned herself with the base of the Republican Party. That includes the Sandy Hook Truthers, the Pizzagate fanatics, and all the other loons who believe everything from Young Earth creationism to poisonous Chemtrails to whatever lies are peddled by Fox News.

If she were an active learner, she might have read about the rise of fascism in Germany, perhaps *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt. Arendt says that when the artistic and intellectual elites were run out of Germany and Austria or neutralized in place, the masses took up all sorts of crackpot ideas and conspiracy theories as truth. They became fertile ground for Nazi propaganda, and this played a significant role in the rise of totalitarianism.

The Republican Party is now entirely the party of crackpot ideas and conspiracy theories. All scientists conspire with China to create the anthropogenic climate warming hoax. Chemtrails are used to spray us with something for some purpose by unknown malignant agents. If we cut regulations and give enough money to the rich, the economy will grow and manufacturing jobs will return at higher wages than are paid in Bangladesh. It's only the tax code that caused jobs to leave the US, not the minimal wages and minimal environment standards in poor nations. Sandy Hook was a hoax or a government plot or something else nefarious. No harm will come from getting rid of banking regulations. Liberals worship Satan in the basement of Pizza Parlors in DC. Income taxes are voluntary. No one should be upset because Trump chose a White Supremacist as his chief policy adviser. Jailing your political opponents is normal politics.

Delekta thinks all the fear and anger among her classmates over the election could be solved by some Kumbaya about “we’re all Wolverines”, meaning the things that unite us are greater than our political differences. Sorry, but no. When you leave the Enlightenment for Crazytown, you go only with those who choose the crazy. Us post-Enlightenment people will stay in the present as long as possible, at least until you and your nutcase allies turn out all the lights except fire.

It’s the young people who have identified the way forward. They don’t want to be around Delekta; they think she’s nuts. They don’t want to be identified with any of the Republican ideology, especially racism, but also science denialism and anti-factualism, and presumably the entire truth-denying thing. That’s just as true of moderate Republicans, if there are any of those still around, as it is of liberals and independents. No sane person voluntarily hangs around with people who can’t agree on facts and basic morality.

Those of us not in school have to work and live with Trump supporters, but we don’t have to be friends with them. Bare civility will suffice. We don’t have to hire them, we don’t have to listen to them, and we don’t have to let them near our children. They can all keep company with each other. I’m sure Delekta will find many new and charming friends among the Breitbart crowd of White Nationalists, the facebook readers who liked and reposted fake news created in Eastern Europe, and militia groups scaring Muslims on their way to Mosques for services. She has a lot more in common with them than with her classmates at U of M. Or me for that matter.

On edit: on Trump’s and the Republican Party’s science denialism.