

IT'S NOT THE ECONOMY, STUPID

Despite Bill Clinton's famous catchphrase that he rode to two terms in the White House, and despite its echo in the 2016 campaign when Trump voters were described as acting out of "economic anxiety", politics in the United States in my lifetime comes down, first and foremost, to racism. Yes, in Trump's case and for most Republicans in office, there is a hefty dose of misogyny mixed in, but the animus against those who are not old, rich, white males unites their hatred.

Russia affected the 2016 contest. Clearly. But one of their primary tools was to stoke racial animus. Another huge impact on the actual outcome of the election was the outright suppression of minority votes by Republicans. It now appears that they may well have tipped the Wisconsin vote through suppression. And all those millions of votes for Trump, in the end, amount to nothing more than a huge endorsement of his outright racism. In the end, they came out on top with a little help from Republican policies expressly developed to prevent minorities from voting.

Trump is America's racism unmasked and he would not be President if there weren't a huge racist component to American culture today. The primary home for that racism is the Republican party.

The last few days have shown Trump revealing both his deep-seated racism and his cynical understanding that virtually his only support now is rooted in America's racism. He tried his best to make his response to NFL protests be about the flag and patriotism. But that is most definitely NOT what Colin Kaepernick was protesting when he started this movement in August of 2016:

San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick has willingly immersed

himself into controversy by refusing to stand for the playing of the national anthem in protest of what he deems are wrongdoings against African Americans and minorities in the United States.

His latest refusal to stand for the anthem – he has done this in at least one other preseason game – came before the 49ers’ preseason loss to Green Bay at Levi’s Stadium on Friday night.

“I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color,” Kaepernick told NFL Media in an exclusive interview after the game. “To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”

Making matters even worse, NFL teams and even billionaire NFL owners—the very parties responsible for Kaepernick still not being on a roster despite abysmal quarterback play on several teams—came out with what some folks saw as admirable statements and actions in response to Trump calling for owners to “fire the sons of bitches” who kneel during the national anthem. The best response to that development came from Shannon Sharpe. If you haven’t seen it yet, watch the entire statement, it is a thing of beauty and something that every American needs to hear:

So what are we to do?

First, those of us who carry the advantage of being old, white males who are at least comfortable if not rich must speak up every time there is an instance of racial injustice. Especially at the local level, when the police treat minorities without respect, make it known that this will not stand. Support larger groups that are working to promote racial justice.

But perhaps it is also worth taking look at our own lives. What aspects of our own lives help to perpetuate racial injustice? Even simple actions can accumulate. The next time you reconcile a credit card statement, take a look at your choices. Do you only eat at faceless chain restaurants? When was the last time you had a meal at a locally owned restaurant with a minority owner? Those are likely some of the best eating establishments in your town if you take the time to look around and try some new cuisines.

How about schools? Do you send your kids to private schools, most of which have been established to get around integration? Worse yet, do you send them to charter schools, which are set up expressly to take money away from public schools?

How about your place of worship? Is it integrated? Does it have any activities or programs aimed at racial justice?

One small action that I've decided to take is that I won't watch another down of NFL football until Colin Kaepernick has been signed by a team.

Trump is the poster child for American racism, but we could all benefit from spending a little time thinking about our own roles both in how he came to be President and what we can do to make sure his sort never gets there again.