*#TheNext400*

** **By Harry D. Sewell**

**Noise versus Signals**

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**O**ur country is moving in opposite directions simultaneously. On the one hand, sweeping Senate victories in Georgia represent the further rise to power of the “coalition of the ascendant” – people of color, young people and those with college degrees. On the other, the events at the Capitol represent a further escalation of white grievance, alienation and calls for a civil or race war. But with both movements, we have to be careful to distinguish between noise and signals.

**The noise**

Much of the last four years has been noise: hyperbole and braggadocio. The biggest this, the greatest that. The talk about widespread voter fraud was a pure fantasy. After over fifty lawsuits, judges up to the Supreme Court cited the lack of any credible evidence. Most suits were simply tossed out without a hearing because the briefs submitted clearly lacked merit. One of the lawyers perpetrating this fraud, Sidney Powell, faces a billion dollar defamation lawsuit from the voting machine company she slandered. Nobody in their right mind believes that long-dead Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez had anything to do with the 2020 election.

There was also noise from the “progressive” side. As former President Obama said, “defund the police may be a pithy slogan, but that’s not going to win any elections.” There *is* an urgent need for police reform. Mental health 911 calls, for example, should be routed to professional staff who can deescalate the situation. But we all know that we need “responsible” policing to keep our communities safe. What we need to address is how police are recruited, trained, deployed and disciplined.

**The signals**

Some of what was said, however, was not noise but signals. When Republicans tried to have votes thrown out in Philadelphia, Detroit, Atlanta and Milwaukee, that was a clear signal of the intent to disenfranchise black voters, even though losses in those states were largely due to defections of college-

educated white voters in the suburbs who previously voted Republican. Efforts are already underway to repeal unrestricted mail-in voting and limit early voting, which were largely responsible for record-breaking turnout.

When “halfmerican” Senator Raphael “Ted” Cruz (his father is Cuban and his mother was American born – he was born in Canada, so maybe he’s one third American) suggested that the solution to certifying this election was to follow the process used in 1877 after the election contest between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel Tilden, was he signaling that African Americans shouldn’t be allowed to vote at all? As the compromise that was reached was Hayes would win, and Reconstruction would end. That ushered in the Jim Crow era of “separate but equal” that lasted well into the 20th century. Incidentally, it was former Republican House Speaker Boehner who called Cruz “Lucifer in the flesh.”

**The Roaring ‘20s**

The decade ahead will be a turbulent one. By its end, all of the current political leaders – Trump, Biden, Pelosi, McConnell, Sanders et.al. – will be well into their eighties and will have exited the stage. Who will replace them? That’s really what the “noise” around the 2020 election was all about: the 2024 presidential election and Kamala Harris. As the sitting Vice President, Harris will have a leg up on Democratic contenders if Biden decides not to run again. And as a leader of the winning coalition, she will have a leg up on the opposition candidate for the Republicans (or whatever faction follows). Republicans – and some Democrats – hate that.

Politicians like Cruz and Josh Hawley, who are seeking to inherit the outgoing president’s base, want to discredit the Biden-Harris administration before they even get started and demonstrate their populist bonafides. The irony is that Cruz, a Harvard Law graduate and Hawley, from Yale Law, both former Supreme Court law clerks, have no more in common with those people than the current president.

**What comes next…**

In the meantime, for the years just ahead, we have to win the fight against the virus and reignite the economy. Criminal justice reform and maintenance (restoration) of voting rights are also high on the agenda. This will play out against the backdrop of an opposition party that is sure to regain its interest in “deficit reduction” to foil more stimulus spending and pursue a heightened zeal for voter suppression.

We know we *can* win and we know *how* to win. And winning is not a zero sum game. If we are the ones seeking balance, vision, justice and healing as Cyril Christo said not long ago, that’s not a black thing or a white thing. America wins.

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