

**WHY  
HILLARY  
LOST**

**ARVIN VOHRA**

# INTRODUCTION

Donald Trump's upset victory over Hillary Clinton has left many Americans shocked, enraged, disturbed, and afraid. The political polls and pundits were completely wrong. Common sense was wrong.

On the surface, Trump had literally everything going against him. His own party leaders had rejected him, and withdrawn their endorsements and support. All of America heard him bragging about his aggressive approach to women. He had been accused of sexual assault by over a dozen women.

The Republican governor of the vital swing state of Ohio publicly wrote in John McCain instead of voting for Trump. In fact, that same governor, John Kasich, even ran ads against Trump. (Trump later won Ohio.)

Trump had made one political blunder after another. He had mocked a disabled reporter, insulted Muslims, veterans, and anyone else he could find. Despite being a billionaire, he had not paid income taxes. His university was under investigation. He had never held public office. Actors, writers, and comedians were openly opposing him.

On the other hand, Clinton had relatively few problems. There was an issue involving classified emails that, frankly, around zero percent of the population understood. There was a Whitewater real estate scandal from a few decades ago that no one seemed to have any interest in.

Clinton was endorsed by more newspapers and more celebrities. She had much more positive media attention. She had decades of political experience. Most people believed she had won both debates against Trump.

The odds of his winning were ranked at around 15%. Experts predicted that Clinton would win in a massive electoral landslide.

Now that the politically unthinkable has happened, many Democratic voters are struggling to make sense of the results. From their perspectives, it seems that:

1. A huge percentage of the American population is racist, xenophobic, and homophobic.
2. Americans, including millions of women, hate powerful women.
3. People really, really care a lot about email servers.

This book is designed to examine those possible explanations and others, in order to give political groups the information they need to address the issues this election has brought to light.

## A LITTLE ABOUT ME

My own unusual background, as a half political insider, half political outsider, gives me a perspective that, if nothing else, is different. I am the Vice Chair of a now small, but rapidly growing, political party called the Libertarian Party.

In my political work, I have traveled around the country, and met people of all political backgrounds and walks of life. I have recruited and/or trained dozens of candidates and hundreds of activists. I prefer to work on the ground, getting the real story from people in various locations.

I also am heavily involved in the social media strategy of the Libertarian Party, which has one of the most dynamic and forward thinking social media presences in American politics, despite our comparatively small size and budget. Part of that work is learning to keep the pulse of different political groups and factions, using both personal and mathematical measurements. I grew up inside the Beltway, and I have been surrounded by politicians, government contractors, and federal employees for my entire life. I grew up with the kids of the big evil lobbyists. I have been versed in Washington culture since elementary school, including the vital nuances of political strategy often ignored by the press.

Both of my parents were civil servants – my father worked for the Department of Energy, and my mother for the state Health Department. Later, they both became

entrepreneurs. I am also an entrepreneur, and understand the mindset and goals of small businesses.

I am an ethnic minority, and have seen life from that perspective. I have been made fun of for my ethnicity, and even been discriminated against. Even though I am not Muslim, I look Arab (my parents are actually Indian), and I have received plenty of discrimination because of that. (It can take me a while to get through airport security, to say the least.)

Politically, I had no preference between Clinton and Trump. My goal was to have the Libertarian candidate, Gary Johnson, break previous Libertarian records (which he ended up shattering). I'm one of the few national level political strategists who can be objectively neutral about the results.

From this disinterested, half-insider, half-outsider perspective, I hope to help people understand why Clinton lost. I do not pretend to know all the details or have all the answers. Anyone who says that is either lying or delusional. But I believe this analysis will help Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, Greens, Constitutionlists, and Independents understand the 2016 election.

During the next months and years, there will be dozens of books written on this topic that will examine every single technical angle of this election. They will look at percentage turnouts, the dollars spent on media buys, and the numerical data that political analysts love. But despite

my own background as a former actuary, I do not think this election was primarily about that.

This book will focus on the psychological, emotional, and cultural forces that shaped the election.

One final note: I call this book *Why Hillary Lost*, not *Why Trump Won*, because I believe that the strategic mistakes made by the Clinton campaign, the Democratic Party, and the progressive movement allowed the Trump victory. Trump got about 1.5 million more votes than McCain had in 2008. Clinton got over 6 million votes fewer than Obama had in 2008. She somehow lost millions of the voters Obama had brought to the Democratic Party. Had she kept even half of those voters, she would have been elected.

The 2016 election was a race to the bottom, and Hillary Clinton won.

# THE DEMOCRATIC ECHO CHAMBER

## OUTREACH

Politics depends on outreach. The massive success of the Democratic Party over the last 8 years has been a clear testament to that fact.

The outreach that has taken the form of traditional advertising, social media, and, most importantly, face-to-face discussions. The personal conversations, not between politicians and constituents, but between friends and family members, was effectively used to influence the elections of 2008 and 2012. Young Democrats with strong talking points were winning over both shy Democrats and independents. The debates on campuses, in classrooms, and in personal conversations allowed Democrats to spread their message and gain votes.

The Democratic National Committee obviously knows the importance of this. They are great at arming their supporters with arguments on various issues. For example, through its creation of the ingenious website “YourRepublicanUncle.com”, the DNC helped provide

people with debate ammunition to win family arguments at Thanksgiving. And people were winning many of those arguments with that ammunition and other Democratic rhetoric.

But in the past few years, the brilliantly effective Democratic strategy of turning each activist into an effective outreach debater has shifted. This has not been done by the DNC. It has been a cultural shift taking place in colleges and other intellectual centers, and it is known as the Safe Space movement.

## **SAFE SPACES HURT DEMOCRATIC OUTREACH**

The safe space movement began as a way to allow LGBT people to communicate in a safe environment that allowed them to discuss their experience of marginalization without fear of being attacked. This idea is not new. Every support group in the world operates from a similar principle. When you speak at an Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meeting, you know that you will be supported, not attacked (even if you admit to something embarrassing, self-destructive, or illegal). Just as in an AA meeting, hate speech is not tolerated in a safe space, and encouragement, sympathy, and support abound.

But there's a huge difference: size.

Alcoholics Anonymous meetings happen at clearly defined locations to which one can go. Inside of an AA meeting, a person knows that there will be no judgements, only encouragement and understanding. But AA has never tried to convert other locations into safe spaces; they do not spread beyond the walls of the room. People who attend AA meetings understand that the general public outside of an AA meeting is unlikely to applaud them for being sober for 12 hours, nor is the public likely to be as supportive of prior miscreant behavior while under the influence.

The creation of small sanctuaries for people to use as needed has seen great success; a small sanctuary makes people feel safe. The safe space movements on campuses and in other spaces, however, have received some backlash and a whole lot of resentment. Why? Because safe spaces attempt to turn huge areas into sanctuaries. That ends up limiting intellectual freedoms. Students lose their freedom to attend potentially exciting or enlightening (or controversial) invited speaker events. They lose their freedom to engage in passionate and intellectual (and possibly upsetting) debate. They feel they can no longer freely explore intellectual questions.

The average college student does not want to create malicious groups to harass other students. The average college student wants to learn, discover, challenge pre-existing ideas and build new ones. All of that requires freedom, and safe spaces have denied students that freedom.

Even college faculty and administration are opposing the safe space movement. For example, this year the University of Chicago wrote a letter to incoming freshmen advising them of the university's "commitment to freedom of inquiry and expression". As a result of this commitment, the letter explains that "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces" are specifically not condoned.

Furthermore, while the idea of having greater and greater sections of cities marked off as safe spaces may seem to strengthen the Democratic position, it actually weakens its position in the battle of ideas. From a strategic perspective, safe spaces are functionally blackout zones in which progressives cannot convert anyone. Since no one can voice opposition, no one can have his views changed.

Safe spaces are not designed to be places of debate or persuasion. Instead of trying to win intellectual debates, the safe space method uses social pressure. If you are not supportive of everything within the safe space, then you're kicked out, screamed at, or silenced. This alienates everyone on any side other than the Democratic side (and has even alienated some Democrats).

For example, suppose a white student decides to wear blackface as part of a costume. Intellectual debate might involve asking why it is important to him, or explaining why doing so is disrespectful or just in poor taste. It can even involve spirited or angry disagreement.

But by the end, that white student might be convinced that the costume was not such a good idea.

The safe space approach has involved such responses as: demanding that he stop, using abusive language, threats, and graffiti, or even creating enough social pressure to ostracize the costumed student. Aggressive and dismissive language has included insults to the intelligence of the opponent, wild accusations about his or her character, legitimate threats, and just violently colorful imperatives. For example, “You can’t wear that, because you don’t know what it’s like.” Or, “Change that costume, or you will be expelled.” Or, “GO SCREW YOURSELF YOU RACIST PIECE OF GARBAGE.”

The safe space approach succeeds in very quickly dealing with the immediate problem of a stupid costume. But it does not win a single convert. It may be true that the costumed opponent does not “know what it’s like”, but he is no more the wiser now than he was before he encountered the safe space. He has certainly been silenced, but that is not a success for the Democratic movement. This costumed “piece of garbage” has not been converted. He has not become a Democratic voter. He is now a seething enemy, silent but lying in wait, ready to strike back at the first political opportunity.

It should be noted here that the use of blackface in a costume can certainly offend. It is arguably disrespectful