Conservative Values or whose poop is that?

“*I think Donald Trump wanted there to be massive division and he was telling people there was a path by which he was going to stay in office after January 20th. That was never true. And he wanted chaos on television*.” Nebraska Republican Senator Ben Sasse [Sasse].

“He is a race-baiting, xenophobic, religious bigot.” Senator Lindsey Graham (R) South Carolina, December 8, 2015 [Keilar]

“He doesn’t know the difference between truth and lies.” Senator Ted Cruz (R) Texas, May 3, 2016. [Keilar]

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Neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barrett’s describes the brain as a predictive device [Barrett]. “*It asks, Which combination of my past experiences provides the closest match to this sound, given this particular situation with its accompanying sights, smells, and other sensations?*” Barrett argues that prediction may be the brain’s primary mode of operation. As hunter/gatherers, we learn by experiment, observation and analysis and by culture where the good berries and roots are, which mushrooms are good to eat, which stones flake into sharp blades, how to start and control fire and whose poop is that, does it belong to something good to eat or something which might want to eat us? Replace culture with “consensus view” and we see that this is nothing more than the scientific method or more properly, the scientific method simply codifies how we’ve always learned stuff and formed our world views based on facts.

Applied Mathematician Roger Penrose, who won last year’s Nobel in Physics for his work on black holes writes in his substantial work, The Road to Reality: “*I believe it is more important than ever, in today’s technological culture, that scientific questions should not be divorced from moral implications. … We need to address the question of separating true from false before we can adequately attempt to apply such understanding to separate good from bad*.”

In 2015, Donald Trump called Senator John McCain a coward, despite the fact that McCain served six years as a prisoner of war during a conflict which Trump avoided because of his supposed bone spurs. Trump was the first and only presidential candidate in the last forty years to refuse to release his tax returns, either because they revealed he wasn’t a billionaire or was an incompetent businessman or heavily in debt perhaps to potentially hostile foreign interests or he was a crook or because he avoided paying any taxes and apparently all the above. During the 2016 campaign, he told his crowd that there were second amendment solutions to preventing Hilary Clinton from becoming president and appointing Supreme Court Justices. We knew what a liar, racist, fascist, crook he was before he had ever become president. And his personal attorney for twelve years Michael Cohen told us that. There is no excuse for having ever voted for, supported or defended Donald Trump. There is no excuse for not knowing what a creep he was unless one’s world view is a confused mass of falsehoods. Conservatives such as George Will and Max Boot knew. So did Lindsey Graham and Ted Cruz [Keilar] though they forgot. Principled people left the party. Opportunistic creeps remained.

If I were to describe a man who thought the Earth was less than 10,000 years old, denies evolution, believes human-caused climate change and COVID19 are hoaxes, selfishly refuses to wear a mask, believes President Obama was born in Kenya, is a racist, a xenophobe, a homophobe and an anti-vaxxer, believes Trump won the election, guns save lives, myriad conspiracy theories, and rejects scientific evidence, believes a little socialism is bad and unregulated free markets are good, could we predict his political party? All these beliefs are false and yet mainstream Republican orthodoxy.

We Homo sapiens are the most self-important of all species. Religious humanists believe we are the image and likeness of a deity which is about worshiping ourselves instead of said deity and in any case is absurd. Secular humanists, including many neuroscientists, believe the human brain is the most remarkable and complex thing in the universe, despite the fact that a sperm whale sports the same biological structure only 7 times larger. What is exciting about us is our hands and our ability to network, cooperate and work together, i.e., socialize within a community sharing knowledge and sustenance. That the Earth is 4.5 billion years old is one of the most remarkable facts we humans have discovered. It should be widely known and celebrated and though due to one remarkable scientist, Clair Paterson, he could not have discovered it, without having stood on the shoulders of millions of other humans, cooperating and not just other scientists and engineers but farmers who grew the food that he ate and tradesmen who put the roof over his head.

Many psychologists believe that facts don’t matter to Democrats any more than they matter to Republicans. That is unsupportable and misleading. American society is awash in bullshit from the mainstream media, social media, marketing and advertising, extreme religion and in the neo-classical economic ideology we teach in college. But liberals have not so distanced themselves from reality that they have lost their moral judgment. Liberals still trust science, even if they don’t understand it. They are open minded and have a healthy skepticism of nonsense. They don’t vote for politicians like Trump, Senators Hawley and Cruz, and representatives like, Paul Gosar (Arizona), Mo Brooks (Alabama) and Andy Biggs (Arizona) who may have conspired with domestic terrorists to destroy our country and its constitution. And of course, closer to home, Dave LaRock.

How did we get to this abyss? Presidents Eisenhower, Roosevelt, and even Nixon had not distanced themselves from reality. Before “welfare-queens-in-Cadillac’s” Reagan, a racist was as equally likely to be a Democrat as a Republican. Before Reagan the environment was a bipartisan concern. After Reagan Republican values became increasingly distanced from reality and morality, applauding racism, selfishness and greed. Listen to what former Republican Governor Christine Todd Whitman (the last Republican I have ever voted for) says about how the Trump Republican party lies about science and has taught people to distrust science [Whitman]. Tucker Carlson avoids people bearing facts.

Former Republican General Colin Powell said of the January 6th invasion of our capitol “*this was a national disgrace but we’ll get through it.”* Not if we don’t understand its origin and not if we don’t remedy the fundamental problems we have with the truth. We need to address the flows of disinformation and dishonesty which permeate our nation.

The poop in the middle of the nation belongs to Donald Trump along will all of the responsibility for January sixth’s insurrection, violence and death. But it is shared by his enablers and the 75 million people who voted for him because in the best light, they simply didn’t care. The Republican party has become a cult. And it will not harm the country to prosecute the bad guys, especially the ones holding public office; It can only strengthen it. We can only hope Susan Collins learned, when the bad guy gets away with it, he learns he can get away with it. Justice matters. Only ten Republicans in the house learned that lesson.

I have lots of good friends, business partners and associates and relatives who are republicans and I love you all and I care about you. But you do need to open your worldviews up to reality, develop curiosity and begin to care. Wearing a mask is not an issue of personal freedom but acknowledging a responsibly we have to our elderly friends and neighbors and people whose immune systems have been compromised by cancer treatments and so on. It is not about you. It is about our society and our community. I know it is the hardest thing in the world to admit you were wrong and that Trump used you. Simply, admit to yourself “*wow, I really blew that one. Maybe I should actually read the IPCC reports before I stupidly flap my lips denigrating them because some stupid irresponsible dishonest creep like Tucker Carlson or Donald Trump, who have also never read them, tells me to. Maybe I should stop being a lemming. Maybe I should learn to think for myself. Maybe that is what freedom is really all about*.”

I recommend everybody, regardless of party or politics, get a copy of “How to Build and Habitable Planet, the story of Earth from the big bang to humankind” by Charles H. Langmuir and Wally Broecker. Read a chapter a week, about 30 pages, and you will be done in about a half a year. And you will understand a little better who we are and just how cool we really are. We are not the smartest creature in the universe or even here on Earth but we are pretty cool nonetheless. And we’ve actually learned quite an impressive amount about nature and how things work including planetary climate.

One more observation about Trump: he is a psychopath [Dodes]. He threw his second in command, and loyal lapdog, Mike Pence under a bus and fed him to a mob chanting “*hang Mike Pence*.” And they would have. Then he threw those very same supporters under a bus in his ridiculously late speech on January 13, asking for calm but not forgiveness. As I advised one supporter back in 2016 “*you can vote for him but don’t ever do business with him.*” If it benefits Donald Trump to stab you in the back, he will.

And you know what? I’m going to thoroughly enjoy watching co-conspirator Rudy Giuliani defend Donald Trump during his impeachment hearing. Talk about a couple of losers.

Wait this just in: Trump is refusing to pay Rudy. All those Republicans who thought they were contributing money for Trump’s legal defense, as Trump will remind us sooner or later, probably from jail; they were suckers and losers. And there goes Giuliani’s pardon. [Harding]

[Barrett] Lisa Feldman Barrett, How Emotions are Made, the secret life of the brain, Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2017.

[Dodes] Lance Dodes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ku3z9ZejrLQ>

[Harding] Luke Harding, January 14, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/14/trump-refusing-to-pay-rudy-giuliani-legal-fees-after-falling-out>

[Keilar] Brianna Keilar, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FXuXqzUO9E>

[Sasse] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGriXkcxP-U>

[Whitman] Christine Todd Whitman, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGkIn4SGT_I>