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# Think Strategically

## Martin Luther King's United States Does it Aspire Toward Four More Years of Growth or Chaos?

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### Is this the United States of America Martin Luther King Dreamed Of?

In the tapestry of the United States, where dreams of unity, progress, and justice were woven into its very foundation, the question emerges: **is this the America that Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned?**

As we stand at the precipice of another electoral cycle, the query transforms into whether the nation aspires toward four more years of growth or chaos. The perspective is nuanced by the unique lens of U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico, who, despite not having the privilege to vote for the President, keenly observe the unfolding political drama. As the 2024 electoral cycle begins, analyzing the trajectories of key candidates like President Joe Biden and Former President Donald Trump becomes imperative.

This exploration delves into the Thin Veneer of Civilization theory, the transformative period post-Trump's election, and the challenges of discrimination faced firsthand. It ultimately invites contemplation on the America envisioned by its citizens and the path the nation chooses to tread in the coming years.

The U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico do not have the privilege of voting to elect the President of the United States; we only have the chance to vote during the primaries, which is a secondary prize for some.

As the U.S. begins with the Iowa caucus today, at least with the three Republican Presidential Hopefuls that remain in the race, Former President Trump, Ambassador Nikki Haley, and Governor Ron De Santis, the polls showed Former President Trump ahead of the pack.

The Thin Veneer of Civilization theory, initially introduced by Dutch primatologist Frans de Waal to illustrate the delicate nature of human morality, gains heightened relevance in light of recent developments. Then championed by biologists like George C. Williams and cited more recently by Former CIA Director General Michael Hayden, the theory posits that the thin layer of civilization shielding society is susceptible to disruption.

Since April 30, 1789, when George Washington became the First U.S. President, the United States has been hailed as a mature, stable, and dependable democracy the world could trust and rely on.

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However, since the election of Donald Trump, our democracy has undergone a transformative period in which our nation's unity, self-worth, dependability, and fairness have been altered.

### **Discrimination is the result of Fear and Ignorance.**

In my view, a pivotal moment in recent U.S. History that broke the once steadfast fabric of civilization, safeguarding Americans from radical ideologies and discriminatory forces unfolded during the "Unite the Right Rally" in Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 11 and 12, 2017, marked by hate, rage, violence, and the tragic death of Heather D. Heyer. It gave a new voice and platform for discrimination, hatred, and violence that continues to ravage the United States to this day.

Former President Trump remarks on Charlottesville, instead condemning "hatred, bigotry, and violence". He stated there were "very fine people on both sides", much to the country's dismay.

Personally, throughout this period, while traveling through the states as U.S. Citizens from Puerto Rico, we have faced on our own skin hatred, discrimination, and bias just because we speak Spanish as our primary language.

Usually, discrimination and hate are the result of Fear and Ignorance. We share how these elements are interconnected, the Fear of the Unknown, and how discrimination often arises from a fear of unfamiliar or different things. Fear can develop when individuals encounter people, cultures, or ideas they don't understand. A lack of exposure, misinformation, or preconceived notions may fuel this Fear. In this context, ignorance is a lack of knowledge or understanding about other individuals or groups. Stereotypes and prejudices can form when people are not exposed to accurate information about diverse communities. Ignorance can lead to the perpetuation of harmful beliefs and discriminatory behavior. Insecurity, hate, and discrimination can be manifestations of personal insecurities. Individuals who feel threatened by differences may resort to discriminatory actions to assert a false sense of superiority or control. This often stems from a fear of losing one's identity or status.

Last but not least is the Lack of Empathy. Ignorance and Fear can contribute to a lack of empathy. When individuals fail to understand or relate to the experiences of others, it becomes easier to harbor negative feelings or engage in discriminatory behavior.

Addressing discrimination and hate requires education, exposure to diverse perspectives, and fostering empathy. Encouraging open dialogue, challenging stereotypes, and promoting inclusivity are essential to building a more tolerant and understanding society.

### **Presidential Candidate's Strengths and Weaknesses.**

As the 2024 electoral cycle in the U.S. with Iowa is happening this week, it becomes time to analyze what appears to be a redo of the 2020 election.

We must analyze candidates like President Joe Biden; considering strengths and weaknesses is crucial. Biden's experience, steady leadership, and focus on unity are acknowledged strengths, but

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concerns about his age and cognitive abilities persist. Policy controversies and economic challenges also attract criticism.

Former President Trump's economic record, populist appeal, and deregulation efforts are strengths, but his polarizing rhetoric, handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and legal/ethical issues are perceived weaknesses. Trump's cultivation of a "Cult of Personality" is notable, with his base's strong loyalty overlooking controversies and portraying him as a victim.

Since President Trump came to the political arena, he has preferred to create a "Cult of Personality" around him. The Cult of Personality refers to a situation where a political leader is excessively idolized, and their image is elevated beyond their actual achievements or abilities. Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States, has been a notable example of the cult of personality.

During his political career, Trump cultivated a strong and distinctive public image, characterized by his outspoken and unfiltered communication style, business background, and emphasis on being an outsider to traditional politics. Most of his supporters are drawn to his unconventional approach and perceived authenticity, while critics argued that his rhetoric sometimes bordered on populism and fueled a personality-driven political climate.

The cult of personality around Trump is more evident in his base's strong loyalty, which overlooks controversies such as the January 6 Insurrection known as the Federal Election Interference Case, the Georgia Election Interference Case, The Classified Documents Case, The Hush Money Case, and the N.Y. Financial Statements Fraud case or a plethora of divisive statements. Trump's influence has made his base believe that all these accusations are part of a political vendetta against him, and he is portraying himself as a victim.

### **The Last Word: The Lack of Emotional Attachment.**

For most U.S. Citizens, it is a difficult choice between President Biden and Former President Trump as both candidates lack the friendly emotional attachment that Presidential candidates provide when running for office.

Let me share several quotes from former Presidential Candidates and the last two from our current Presidential Hopefuls.

- "There are many of ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still". Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- "Accomplishment will prove to be a journey, not a destination". Dwight D. Eisenhower.
- "We can no longer afford to be second best. I want people all over the world to look to the United States again, to feel that we're on the move, to feel that our high noon is in the future". John F. Kennedy.
- "I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience". Ronald Reagan.
- "The future rewards those who press on. I don't have time to feel sorry for myself. I don't have time to complain. I'm going to press on". Barack Obama.

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- "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best," They're sending people with lots of problems. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people". Donald Trump.
- "No fundamental social change occurs merely because government acts. It's because civil society, the conscience of a country, begins to rise up and demand change". Joe Biden.

In conclusion, whether the United States aspires toward four more years of chaos is complex, intertwining political dynamics, societal values, and the impact of leadership on national unity.

As the nation stands at the crossroads of another electoral cycle, we urge a thoughtful reflection on the path forward to ensure a resilient and unified United States of America.



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