

## Democracy trumps the victim generation

By Janet Albrechtsen, *The Australian*, 23 November 2016

Hip educators love to talk about so-called “teachable moments” that emerge from listening to and responding to the cues of children so that teaching relates to real-life events. It’s appropriate, then, that the infantile reactions to Donald Trump winning the US presidential election provide so many teachable moments. While it’s an open question whether those who have succumbed to puerile reactions are willing to learn anything about themselves, we can at least thank them for explaining, in the clearest of terms, why Trump won.

First, Trump’s win provides an unmistakable teachable moment about a complacent generation’s waning commitment to democracy. In 2013, the Lowy Institute poll found that among people aged 18 to 29, fewer than half said democracy was preferable to any other kind of government. More than one-fifth of this young cohort said that it didn’t matter what kind of government we had. The same poll this year found that just 61 per cent of the population and 54 per cent of 18 to 29-year-olds think “democracy is preferable to any other kind of government”.

Those dismal numbers sprang to life these past few weeks on the streets of New York, Miami, Atlanta, Philadelphia, San Francisco and elsewhere when thousands of anti-Trump protesters showed their disdain for a democratic election result. Those city streets were full of those from a pampered generation who have rarely heard the word no. This is the safe-space, all-must-have-prizes, trigger-warning generation, the children of helicopter parents who have been taught they should be protected from what upsets them.

When the election didn’t go their way, they, like children, chose infantile tantrums over grown-up concession and respect for democracy. Their progressive tilt against democracy will only confirm to Trump supporters that they made the correct decision.

In New York last week, when vice-president-elect Mike Pence attended the blockbuster Broadway show *Hamilton*, many in the crowd booed him and the stage actors gathered to harangue him. Revealing contempt for or ignorance of their country’s history, including the subject of the Broadway show, the baying crowd and hectoring actors proved why Trump voters felt utterly disconnected from insider elites. After all, as one of America’s finest founding fathers, Alexander Hamilton, told the New York State convention meeting to adopt the federal Constitution on July 27, 1788: “Here, sir, the people govern; here they act by their immediate representatives.”

Trump and Pence, not to mention the Republicans who will control both houses of congress, are the people’s democratically elected representatives.

In Australia, Roz Ward, the Marxist academic from La Trobe University, provided a living, breathing, berating insight into the Left’s hypocrisy. The woman who is responsible for the Safe Schools program in Victoria, embraced by Victorian Labor Premier Daniel Andrews, took to the streets of Melbourne to protest against Trump and then physically harassed a man wearing a Trump hat. Ward exposed the fact she’s not interested in anti-bullying but instead is committed to the new fascism where dissent from her views is not tolerated.

Trump supporters are entitled to feel further validated in their choice when they remember how sections of the media hyperventilated over the prospect of Trump voters not accepting the election result if their candidate lost to Hillary Clinton.

It would be a serious undermining of democracy, the pundits said on CNN and elsewhere. In another teachable moment about hypocrisy, these same people haven't raised an eyebrow over the thousands protesting against Trump's victory.

Perhaps the most incisive teachable moment from Trump's win is the propensity of the current generation to see themselves as hapless injured parties rather than resilient, robust individuals. The cues, even in Australia, tell the story: an after-school club at Newtown Public School in Sydney's inner west received "art therapy" because they were upset over Trump's win and were chanting "we hate Trump".

It's hard to imagine how children as young as five talk about killing Trump unless their parents have projected their own hate and outrage on to their kids. That parental irresponsibility is only compounded by introducing therapy to help five-year-olds deal with an election result. How will the kids cope when they fail a test or don't make the netball team?

Then again, why wouldn't a trendy inner-city school offer therapy for kids when one of Australia's biggest accounting firms, PricewaterhouseCoopers, offers the same to its adult employees? Proving that the firm's dodgy and highly political report in March about a gay marriage referendum was not peak stupidity, PwC boss Luke Sayers has launched his firm to new heights of absurdity. On November 10 Sayers sent a letter to PwC's 7000 Australian employees offering them counselling in the wake of the US election result.

The sad learning from Sayers's letter is that it confirms how the virtues of resilience and true grit have been relegated to the past, replaced by self-indulgence and victimhood. After all, November 8 marked a democratic election, not a terrorist attack. The rush to offer therapy for an election result signals why millions of ordinary Americans picked the politically incorrect Trump over Clinton. Here, writ large, was the democratic rejection of the cultural malaise that Sayers epitomises.

Make America great again? The starting point ought to be making America tough again. And we could aim to do the same in Australia. A few hundred years ago, colonial pioneers forged a new home in a daunting but beautiful country. Less than 100 years ago, postwar migrants sought out a new and free country, laboured through a Depression to build lives for their families. A few generations ago, resilient young men went to war to fight against Nazi Germany.

Now, a pampered generation of men and women, many of whom don't have much regard for democracy, seek out therapy for themselves and their children when an election result doesn't go their way. Few things mark the worst of modernity as clearly as this rush among highly educated professionals to be victims of a democratic election on the other side of the Pacific Ocean.

Sayers has done nothing to show real compassion or care for his employees. If he wasn't a laughing-stock after his firm's intervention into the gay marriage debate, he surely is now. But, then again, maybe he's auditioning to be the new boss of the Australian Human Rights Commission, a body devoted to turning those who are easily offended into victims.

Inevitably, life throws up the occasional loss, a curly challenge, a disappointing failure. If we embrace victimhood and the concomitant bastardisation of "therapy" as the means to deal with an election result, what hope do we have of dealing with the big stuff?

The other teachable moment from Trump's win is that even an ocean away from the US, people who are horrified by the soft and sappy underbelly of modernity will feel more emboldened to confront and reject those people, institutions and political parties that fail to understand that resilience, not victimhood and therapy sessions, turned a handful of small British colonies into a great nation.

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