We Liberals Have to Stop Being so Damn Smug

I didn't vote for Trump. I consider myself a liberal with a small "l." I believe in the value of basic humanity, diversity, and the freedom of religion enshrined in the constitution.

Donald Trump was a candidate who seemed to respect none of those values, and the idea of him ascending to the Oval Office filled me with dread. That's why I was relieved on Election Day to see that most of the polls gave him [a tiny chance of winning](#).

But like everyone else, I watched on election night as the seemingly impossible happened: Trump became the 45th man elected to the Presidency. So what happened?

To put it bluntly, we were too smug.

American Liberalism has, for the last eight years especially, dominated the landscape of popular culture. It's long been an article of faith among [conservative partisans](#) that liberal bias pervades everything from Hollywood to the evening news. They argue that the liberal establishment has worked to stamp out any expression of alternative viewpoints.

And as painful as it might be, it's time to emphatically recognize that [there is some truth to that](#) argument.

As someone who agrees with the slant you hear expressed among most mainstream media outlets, even I can admit that the American Left probably does as much to police free speech as to defend it. You see it in the "[safe spaces](#)" on college campuses, where real discussion is stifled in the name of sensitivity.

There are ideas that are so hateful and destructive to a free and equal society that they should be challenged wherever they appear: things like racism, misogyny, and nativism. Trump, in the minds of many, said things on the campaign trail that ticked all those boxes. And as a result, it became easy (and far too tempting) to dismiss his supporters as representing the death rattle of a time in America when these ideas were mainstream. And it was a vision of America we were glad to see buried with them under another four years of the status quo.

Even in her attempt to plead for some empathy for Trump voters, Hillary Clinton called half of them "[deplorables](#)" and many of us on her side nodded our heads and smirked to hear our own views of them expressed so candidly. Meanwhile, there was no media backlash to a presidential candidate calling a quarter of the country "irredeemable" (except, of course, on [Breitbart](#)).

That's why the possibility of Trump's election wasn't reflected in the polls. So many who wanted to vote for him were afraid that expressing that preference publically would get them called racists and misogynists. And it would have. The media implicitly or explicitly agreed that Trump voters were "deplorable."

These people weren't voting for Trump because they were racists. Sure, some undoubtedly were. But most just wanted the Democratic Establishment to stop sacrificing them on the altar of globalism while dismissing their cries of protest as xenophobia. The unemployed autoworker in Michigan was tired of hearing college kids tell him how he needed to check his white privilege, when he rightfully felt like he wasn't benefiting much from it.

There's a deep and pervasive smugness in American Liberalism. There's a sense that you either agree with us or you're wrong. The people who elected Trump felt unheard because the Liberal

Establishment media chose not to give them a chance to be heard. In response, they threw a brick through a window.

We liberals have to be willing to listen to these people again, or it won't be the last time this happens.

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