

# My Lyft Ride with a Black Trump Supporter on MLK Day

The media narrative on American politics has become so tedious you don't have to listen anymore. Every story seems to follow a formula, and never more so on than on the Martin Luther King holiday. Every headline proclaims how black Americans are horrified at Trump's insensitivity to the historical plight of blacks in the civil rights movement. After all, he attacked Rep. John Lewis, which apparently violates some canon of the civic religion.

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I had no interest in engaging this debate, but I did call a Lyft car this morning and my driver, a black woman raised in poverty, was very interested in doing so. The news was on and blaring how Trump was attacking the CIA, which made me laugh, and I said, "I'm no Trump supporter but that's funny."

She immediately shot back, "What do you not like about Trump?" I said a few things about his trade policies, but she was having none of it.

"Here it is Martin Luther King Jr. Day and I'm supposed to be all upset that Trump attacked John Lewis, but Trump is right. Lewis said he is not a legitimate president, so yeah Trump got upset. What exactly is Lewis doing to improve the lives of the poor in this town? Nothing. At least Trump has some ideas. He seems to care."

Ok, now I'm listening.

"I'm glad Lewis marched in the protests so long ago," she continued, "but you have to do more than march. That's all

these people do is march. Meanwhile, there are sections of Atlanta I'm afraid to drive in. And I say that as a black woman! It's not even about race. Many blacks in this town live better than white people anywhere in the world. But there's whole communities that have been forgotten. They are paid off with welfare checks but they don't have skills or jobs, and they fear for their lives on their own streets."

She was just getting going, so I wondered how far I could push this. What about Obamacare?

### **Explosion.**

"Don't get me started. My premiums are through the roof. I can't afford it. Because I drive all day and night making money, I'm not poor enough to get any subsidies. So this year I'm going to have to pay \$750 on my tax return because I can't afford to buy insurance. But I can't afford the health care either! And have you seen those deductibles? If anything should happen to you, you go bankrupt. I'll tell you who benefitted from Obamacare. Not the poor. It's the insurance companies and the government."

I pointed out that Hillary Clinton said she would try to improve it.

"You kidding? The whole campaign, she defended all this #@#!. She is just like the rest of these people, all talk, no action, just like Trump said. She has been pushing a pen for 30 years. She is not affected by high premiums. Her health care is covered. She has no idea what the rest of us are going through."

But, I said, Trump is rich and well-covered too.

"Yeah but he starts businesses and has to pay workers. He knows how to create jobs. People say he went bankrupt sometimes. That's what you do if you are hardworking and trying to try new things. Bankruptcy is just part of business.

You win and lose but at least he knows how to learn and respond. The rest of these people don't do anything but give speeches and defend the way things are."

I asked about Obama and his speech warning about destabilizing important traditions in government.

"See? This is exactly the problem: traditions in government. We need to get rid of those and have something new. Trump is the man to do it. I'm not saying he is right on everything but someone has to do something. Things have been the same for too long around here. In my own life, I've had to try something new every few years. I'm taking classes in IT to try something new. Government needs to do that too."

I was feeling pretty persuaded by what she was saying here, so I pushed a bit further. But don't you worry about his thing about foreign trade? I mean, you and I are going to be paying a tax for imports from places he doesn't like.

"I feel more connection to Trump and his views than I do to Obama and people like John Lewis."

"You see, Trump thinks just like a good mother. Any mom knows that the most important thing is to keep things right at home. When the home is right, everything else is right. America is home. He says: you can do all the business you want in these 50 states but if you are going to go wandering around the world, you are going to have to pay a price."

At this point, I winced. There it is, nationalism in a nutshell and the reason why protectionism is so popular. It makes some intuitive sense, until you look at the details. It turns out that absolutely everything is made globally now. You can't impose a home-alone attitude and expect to have a modern economy.

**The Personal is the Political**

So I changed the subject again. What about Trump's personal issues? He seems to have some odd opinions on women and minorities and so on.

"Everyone I know has odd opinions on things, stuff that's crazy and maybe dangerous. You and I probably have some weird views too. But so long as these views don't affect the country as a whole, it's cool. I don't really care. Plus, I'm a black woman and I'm working hard driving people all over this city. You think if he met me, he wouldn't like me? I think he would like me. I feel more connection to him and his views than I do to Obama and people like John Lewis."

We arrived at the airport, and I wished her the best. She apologized for using our ride for a rant. I said that's perfectly fine. I learned a few things. We smiled and wished each other the best. I only wished that a reporter with the New York Times had been there. Not that it would have been reported. The prevailing narrative is much safer.



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