

HOW AMERICA'S FIRST WOMAN VICE PRESIDENT STEPPED UP

Win or lose, I think by the time exit polls come in this week, there will be real cause to question the poll-driven narrative we've been fed since February. Indeed, that's already happening as Black and Hispanic and young voters are moving to Kamala Harris in recent polls, which is precisely what people skeptical of early polls said would happen months ago.

That technically means that Joe Biden might have been in far better position in the polls than reported – not in terms of favorability, but in a head-to-head with Trump. Still, the debate debacle (which Bob Woodward subsequently disclosed was significantly a reflection of Biden's stress about Hunter, something I noted in real time) provided the opportunity to switch candidates. And Biden put his ego aside for the good of the country.

He entrusted to his Vice President the fate of the nation.

On June 29, I suggested that if Biden dropped out, whoever replaced him might break through the Double Haters logjam.

There is no chance that Trump will become anymore likeable, honest, or coherent. If someone besides Biden had four months to capitalize on his negatives, it might flip the table. It would eliminate the double haters election. If someone [not] named Biden found a way to make Trump's malice matter more than his stammer, it might well matter.

Joe Biden has a choice to make about whether he remains the best shot to beat Donald Trump. And one way or another, Republicans will be stuck with a

candidate who vigorously acts
unpresidential.

On July 21, almost immediately after Biden endorsed Harris (remember this time stamp reflects Irish time), I repeated my Double Haters comment and noted that Harris speaks about choice better than anyone but Gretchen Whitmer (in retrospect I realize I underestimated the Vice President).



emptywheel (Blue Monday)

@emptywheel

Two of the most important factors going forward.

- 1) Short of Big Gretch, Kamala has the best voice to talk about choice (and, bc Vance is Trump's Veep, birth control).
- 2) If she can break the Double Haters stalemate, this could snowball.

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On September 1, I described how Harris' focus on choice was forcing accountability on Trump for one of his most disastrous actions as President.

Kamala's team has succeeded in making abortion something more: the most obvious item on a laundry list of the ways the far right has tried to take rights (and books) away, a fight for Freedom, one that has enthused millions of younger voters, especially women of child-bearing age.

And so, as I thought it might, Kamala's focus on choice is one of the things that has remade the race.

[snip]

Thus far in this campaign, a focus on abortion has also provided a way to make visible the patriarchy presumed in most threads of the right wing coalition backing Trump, especially but by no means exclusively Christian nationalism. Lest voters ever forget, Kamala's campaign keeps rolling out one after another video in which JD Vance demands women get back to the

role *his* Church dictates for them:
breeding children.

A number of things – the successful convention, a surge in registration among those women of child-bearing age, polls showing that abortion is the most important issue for a larger number of voters – have led horserace journalists to finally cop on.

[snip]

This is more than agitation.

It is flailing.

Panic.

A recognition that *he is losing* because of actions he took as President, he is losing because of what the payoff he owed to social conservatives who put him in the White House, a far right SCOTUS, did to women. What NYT journalists with another book contract describe as “head-spinning” is not about branding, it’s about panic because Kamala threatens to hold him accountable for his actions.

No matter how many contradictory statements Trump makes about what a second Trump term would do, there’s no escaping what his first term did do. There are no backsies on Dobbs. There are no backsies on Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett. There aren’t even any backsies on that platform granting fetuses protection under the 14th Amendment, even if NYT’s Trump whisperers continue to pretend that didn’t happen.

[snip]

[E]ven as Kamala has already made Trump an equivocating wreck, nine-tenths of the way through *his* campaign and just in time for low-information voters to witness it, she has only just laid a

foundation to build on.

Both before and after the debate, I described how Kamala Harris' very deliberate and perfectly executed plan to get under his skin made her the protagonist of the campaign.

Journalists missed the Vice President's clear intent because they treated Donald Trump as the protagonist of this story.

I don't know how much the debate will affect the direction of the race. Though she struck blow after blow, it was still the 60/40-40/60 result I also predicted. The debate itself is most likely to have an effect for the way it gives Brian Fallon another opportunity to suggest Trump is too weak to take Harris on in a second debate. It might even lead some Trump cultists to wonder – to merely begin the process – of asking whether he really *is* the loser that Kamala Harris said he is.

But it may do something more important, indirectly.

In August, the press treated Kamala as the story largely because Trump was huddled in his mansions. But they still treated him as the protagonist. Every time he gave the order, they scurried to attend things billed as press conferences which were little different from his rambling rally speeches. He made them props in a fantasy that he had shared more about what he plans to do as President than Kamala Harris, and they were happy to play the role he demanded.

Yesterday, the press got their first chance – likely their only chance – to see the two candidates side-by-side.

And they left with the certainty that Vice President Kamala Harris was the protagonist of that story. Of this

story.

Since that moment – since Vice President Harris made her hulking opponent look small on the stage – Trump has utterly failed, day after day, to regain control his emotion. He has lashed out at everyone. Harris, Jews, reporters, everyone who has ever crossed him.

In an attempt to sow distrust and division, he unleashed a flood of disinformation that exacerbated the floods Helene and Milton built.

By mid-October, as record numbers of voters started casting early in-person votes, Harris waltzed into Fox News and caught them cooking the books. That same week, Trump swayed on stage for almost 40 minutes, got embarrassed in a Bloomberg interview, and chose to defend January 6 rather than win Ramiro González' vote. Charlamagne tha God nudged Harris to use the word fascism.

Sure, there were moments in October where Trump's increasing fascism fed despair.

Vice President Harris' response taught a lot of white people the lessons of leadership she learned as a child of the Civil Rights movement.

And she carried on, executing the plan. She and Liz Cheney kept methodically reaching out to women – to the kind of white women who voted against Hillary Clinton in 2016.

As Trump wallowed in his toxic emotions, in the insecurities being made to look small by a Black women elicited, his handlers allowed him one after another indulgence, all leading up to the potentially fatal one: the Madison Square Garden fascist rally that seemingly confirmed the concerns raised by Trump's generals. Just as the low-information voters he had been banking on all year started to tune in, Trump's fascist rally mocked them, recalling back his refusal as President to treat them with respect.

And it wasn't just Hispanics that could lose him Pennsylvania. Trump provided an opportunity for key validators like Lebron James to explain, succinctly, that America is still fighting for equal rights.

All this time, pollsters kept contorting their polls for fear of missing Trump voters.

Until Ann Selzer came along and told us what pollsters should have recognized from the start: Women vote. And this year, women will vote for a woman to be the first woman President.

Symbolically, Kamala Harris went to East Lansing last night and refused to even speak of Donald Trump.

Turn the page.

This thing is not over. Harris' thousands of volunteers have to get out every vote tomorrow. A flood of bros might come to the polls tomorrow and make that effort meaningless. Harris lawyers have to fight to count every vote – and keep fighting all the way to January if Trump attempts to cheat again.

This thing is not over.

But holy hell, Kamala Harris and her entire team stepped up.