

TRUMP SOLD GRIEVANCE AND AMERICA LIKED WHAT HE WAS SELLING

Once Trump got everyone hooked on his grievance drug, Merrick Garland was never going to make a difference.

I have tried, over and over, to explain how the investigation into Trump and his co-conspirators proceeded. More recently, I've explained how you couldn't have charged Trump with insurrection – the only thing that would have disqualified him from running – until after May 2023, and had Jack Smith done so, it would have ended up exactly where we are here, with John Roberts delaying everything until after the election.

No effort to explain the process – the two years of exploiting phones, the months of January 6 Committee delay, the ten months of privilege fights, the month Elon Musk stole, or the eight months John Roberts bought Trump – none of that has mattered, of course. People needed an explanation for their own helplessness and Merrick Garland was the sparkle pony they hoped would save them.

But nothing Merrick Garland would have done would have mattered anyway.

That's because since January 2017, since Trump learned that Mike Flynn had been caught undermining sanctions on the phone with Sergey Kislyak, Trump has used every effort to hold him accountable as a vehicle to sell grievance.

This is the core premise of the Ball of Thread podcast I've been doing with LOLGOP.

Rather than being grateful when learning that FBI was investigating four of his close campaign advisors had monetized their access to him – rather than imagining himself as the victim of the men who snuck off and met with Russian spies

– Trump made himself the victim of the FBI. He invented a claim he was wiretapped, and then kept inventing more and more such false claims. And then he (possibly on the advice of Paul Manafort, whose associate Oleg Deripaska funded HUMINT before the Democrats did) used the dossier as stand-in for the real Russian investigation. It wasn't the Coffee Boy yapping him mouth that led to the investigation into those trying to monetize access, this false story tells, it was the dossier Russia filled with disinformation, a guaranteed way to discredit the investigation. Once you convince people of the lie that the FBI *really did* investigate a candidate based off such a flimsy dossier, it becomes easy to target all those involved, along the way gutting the Russian expertise at FBI.

Then Bill Barr came in and used the authority of the Attorney General to lie about what the investigation found; almost no media outlets have revisited the findings once it became clear that Barr didn't even bother learning what the report said. While trying to kill Zombie Mueller – the parts of the investigation that remained after Mueller finished – Barr's DOJ literally altered documents in an attempt to put Joe Biden at the genesis of the investigation into Donald Trump, yet another attempt to replace the actual investigation, the Coffee Boy and campaign manager and National Security Advisor and personal lawyer and rat-fucker who were found to have lied to cover up the 2016 Russian operation, with a storytale in which Democrats are the villains.

John Durham never bothered to learn what the report actually said either. Had he done so, it would have been far harder to criminalize Hillary Clinton for being a victim of a hack-and-leak operation, along the way taking out still more expertise on Russia.

And while Barr was criminalizing people, he followed Rudy's chase for dick pics in an effort to criminalize Hunter Biden and his father.

Do you see the genius of this con, Donald Trump's most successful reality TV show ever?

Vast swaths of America, including at least half the Supreme Court, and millions of working class voters, *really believe* that he – the guy who asked Russia to hack his opponent some more – was the victim.

And that's how a billionaire grifter earns the trust of the working guy.

For the most part, the press just played along, repeating Trump's claims of victimhood as if they were true.

It's also the problem in thinking that if only Trump faces legal consequences, he'll go away, he'll be neutralized.

We saw this every time he faced justice. The first impeachment. The second one. The New York trials. Each time, his grievance became a loyalty oath. Each time, he sucked more and more Republicans into the con. Each time he made them complicit.

The hatred of and for Trump by Rule of Law is what made him strong, because he used it to – ridiculously!! – place himself into the role of the little guy, the target of those mean elites.

We'll have decades, maybe, to understand why Trump resoundingly won yesterday. Some of it is inflation (and the unrebutted claims it is bigger than it is), which makes working people angry at the elites, people they might imagine are the same people persecuting Trump.

For many, though, it's the appeal of vengeance.

Trump has spent nine years spinning a tale that he has reason to wreak vengeance on Rule of Law. The greatest con he ever pulled.

So even if DOJ had charged Trump, two months before Merrick Garland was confirmed (though all three of the charges people imagine would be easy – incitement, the call to Brad Raffensperger, and the fake electors plot – have

been unsuccessful in other legal venues), even if DOJ had convicted Trump along with the earliest crime scene defendant in March 2022, even if Trump hadn't used the very same means of delay he used successfully, which would have *still* stalled the case past yesterday's election, it still wouldn't have disqualified him from running.

It still would be the centerpiece of his manufactured tale of grievance.

It still would be one of the elements he uses to make working people think he's just like them.

You will only defeat Trumpism by destroying that facade of victimhood. And you will not achieve meaningful legal victories until you do that first.

I know we all need an easy way to explain this – an easy culprit for why this happened.

But it's not Merrick Garland, because years before he came on the scene, Trump had already convinced everyone that any attempt to hold him accountable was just another attempt by corrupt powers to take him down.

Trump sold the country on grievance and victimhood. And in the process he made half the country hate Rule of Law.

Update: This is a good summary of how Trump lures in people attracted to grievance.

The Republican Party has been the party of the Low-Trust voter for a very long time. It's the party that wants to get rid of institutions, of any of the bonds that connect us all together. The Democratic Party is the party of institutions, the party of Good Governance. It's the party of trusting other Americans to make good choices for you. There is very little that the Democrats can do to appeal to the Low-Trust voter, and you saw what that means for the future of our politics last

night. I would go so far as to say that we're seeing the effects of a realignment of what partisanship is. The GOP is the party of the perpetual outsider and the Low-Trust voter, the people calling for things to be torn down. The Democrats are the insiders, the institutionalists. That's why you saw realignment of people like Liz Cheney and Vermont Governor Phil Scott, people who still think the government matters even if they disagree on how it should be doing things.

I don't know what you can do to win back the Low-Trust voters.

[snip]

I don't know how you build back trust in the government. Things like FEMA in disasters are supposed to be able to do that, but the post-hurricane situation in North Carolina, where outside agitators went in to try to destroy that trust, and people on the Internet went out of their way to spread lies about how the Federal government had abandoned Asheville, are just examples of how everything can be used to pop out more Low-Trust voters.