After first opening with MS Word, hover in the left margin, then click the little triangle that emerges to collapse the doc to its Heading 1 lines only, so you can see what you’ve got. I Had to use Gregory’s account to get behind the paywall, and copy all the CHUNKs of Murray’s article to make this doc for discussion.

# Comments NONE

By CHARLES MURRAY

Updated Feb. 12, 2016 10:35 a.m. ET

1576 COMMENTS

If you are dismayed by Trumpism, don’t kid yourself that it will fade away if Donald Trump fails to win the Republican nomination. Trumpism is an expression of the legitimate anger that many Americans feel about the course that the country has taken, and its appearance was predictable. It is the endgame of a process that has been going on for a half-century: America’s divestment of its historic national identity.

For the eminent political scientist Samuel Huntington, writing in his last book, “Who Are We?” (2004), two components of that national identity stand out. One is our Anglo-Protestant heritage, which has inevitably faded in an America that is now home to many cultural and religious traditions. The other is the very idea of America, something unique to us. As the historian Richard Hofstadter once said, “It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies but to be one.”

What does this ideology—Huntington called it the “American creed”—consist of? Its three core values may be summarized as egalitarianism, liberty and individualism. From these flow other familiar aspects of the national creed that observers have long identified: equality before the law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and association, self-reliance, limited government, free-market economics, decentralized and devolved political authority.

As recently as 1960, the creed was our national consensus. Running that year for the Democratic nomination, candidates like John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Hubert Humphrey genuinely embraced the creed, differing from Republicans only in how its elements should be realized.

Today, the creed has lost its authority and its substance. What happened? Many of the dynamics of the reversal can be found in developments across the whole of American society: in the emergence of a new upper class and a new lower class, and in the plight of the working class caught in between.

CHUNK

In my 2012 book “Coming Apart,” I discussed these new classes at length. The new upper class consists of the people who shape the country’s economy, politics and culture. The new lower class consists of people who have dropped out of some of the most basic institutions of American civic culture, especially work and marriage. Both of these new classes have repudiated the American creed in practice, whatever lip service they may still pay to it. Trumpism is the voice of a beleaguered working class telling us that it too is falling away.

Historically, one of the most widely acknowledged aspects of American exceptionalism was our lack of class consciousness. Even Marx and Engels recognized it. This was egalitarianism American style. Yes, America had rich people and poor people, but that didn’t mean that the rich were better than anyone else.

CHUNK

Successful Americans stubbornly refused to accept the mantle of an upper class, typically presenting themselves to their fellow countrymen as regular guys. And they usually were, in the sense that most of them had grown up in modest circumstances, or even in poverty, and carried the habits and standards of their youths into their successful later lives.

America also retained a high degree of social and cultural heterogeneity in its communities. Tocqueville wrote of America in the 1830s as a place where “the more opulent citizens take great care not to stand aloof from the people.” That continued well into the 20th century, even in America’s elite neighborhoods. In the 1960 census, the median income along Philadelphia’s Main Line was just $90,000 in today’s dollars. In Boston’s Brookline, it was $75,000; on New York’s Upper East Side, just $60,000. At a typical dinner party in those neighborhoods, many guests would have had no more than a high-school diploma.

In the years since, the new upper class has evolved a distinctive culture. For a half-century, America’s elite universities have drawn the most talented people from all over the country, socialized them and often married them off to each other. Brains have become radically more valuable in the marketplace. In 2016, a dinner party in those same elite neighborhoods consists almost wholly of people with college degrees, even advanced degrees. They are much more uniformly affluent. The current median family incomes for the Main Line, Brookline and the Upper East Side are about $150,000, $151,000 and $203,000, respectively.

And the conversation at that dinner party is likely to be completely unlike the conversations at get-togethers in mainstream America. The members of the new upper class are seldom attracted to the films, TV shows and music that are most popular in mainstream America. They have a distinctive culture in the food they eat, the way they take care of their health, their child-rearing practices, the vacations they take, the books they read, the websites they visit and their taste in beer. You name it, the new upper class has its own way of doing it.

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Another characteristic of the new upper class—and something new under the American sun—is their easy acceptance of being members of an upper class and their condescension toward ordinary Americans. Try using “redneck” in a conversation with your highly educated friends and see if it triggers any of the nervousness that accompanies other ethnic slurs. Refer to “flyover country” and consider the implications when no one asks, “What does that mean?” Or I can send you to chat with a friend in Washington, D.C., who bought a weekend place in West Virginia. He will tell you about the contempt for his new neighbors that he has encountered in the elite precincts of the nation’s capital.

For its part, mainstream America is fully aware of this condescension and contempt and is understandably irritated by it. American egalitarianism is on its last legs.

While the new upper class was seceding from the mainstream, a new lower class was emerging from within the white working class, and it has played a key role in creating the environment in which Trumpism has flourished.

Work and marriage have been central to American civic culture since the founding, and this held true for the white working class into the 1960s. Almost all of the adult men were working or looking for work, and almost all of them were married.

Then things started to change. For white working-class men in their 30s and 40s—what should be the prime decades for working and raising a family—participation in the labor force dropped from 96% in 1968 to 79% in 2015. Over that same period, the portion of these men who were married dropped from 86% to 52%. (The numbers for nonwhite working-class males show declines as well, though not as steep and not as continuous.)

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These are stunning changes, and they are visible across the country. In today’s average white working-class neighborhood, about one out of five men in the prime of life isn’t even looking for work; they are living off girlfriends, siblings or parents, on disability, or else subsisting on off-the-books or criminal income. Almost half aren’t married, with all the collateral social problems that go with large numbers of unattached males.

In these communities, about half the children are born to unmarried women, with all the problems that go with growing up without fathers, especially for boys. Drugs also have become a major problem, in small towns as well as in urban areas.

Consider how these trends have affected life in working-class communities for everyone, including those who are still playing by the old rules. They find themselves working and raising their families in neighborhoods where the old civic culture is gone—neighborhoods that are no longer friendly or pleasant or even safe.

These major changes in American class structure were taking place alongside another sea change: large-scale ideological defection from the principles of liberty and individualism, two of the pillars of the American creed. This came about in large measure because of the civil rights and feminist movements, both of which began as classic invocations of the creed, rightly demanding that America make good on its ideals for blacks and women.

But the success of both movements soon produced policies that directly contradicted the creed. Affirmative action demanded that people be treated as groups. Equality of outcome trumped equality before the law. Group-based policies continued to multiply, with ever more policies embracing ever more groups.

By the beginning of the 1980s, Democratic elites overwhelmingly subscribed to an ideology in open conflict with liberty and individualism as traditionally understood. This consolidated the Democratic Party’s longtime popularity with ethnic minorities, single women and low-income women, but it alienated another key Democratic constituency: the white working class.

CHUNK

White working-class males were the archetypal “Reagan Democrats” in the early 1980s and are often described as the core of support for Mr. Trump. But the grievances of this group are often misunderstood. It is a mistake to suggest that they are lashing out irrationally against people who don’t look like themselves. There are certainly elements of racism and xenophobia in Trumpism, as I myself have discovered on Twitter and Facebook after writing critically about Mr. Trump.

But the central truth of Trumpism as a phenomenon is that the entire American working class has legitimate reasons to be angry at the ruling class. During the past half-century of economic growth, virtually none of the rewards have gone to the working class. The economists can supply caveats and refinements to that statement, but the bottom line is stark: The real family income of people in the bottom half of the income distribution hasn’t increased since the late 1960s.

During the same half-century, American corporations exported millions of manufacturing jobs, which were among the best-paying working-class jobs. They were and are predominantly men’s jobs. In both 1968 and 2015, 70% of manufacturing jobs were held by males.

During the same half-century, the federal government allowed the immigration, legal and illegal, of tens of millions of competitors for the remaining working-class jobs. Apart from agriculture, many of those jobs involve the construction trades or crafts. They too were and are predominantly men’s jobs: 77% in 1968 and 84% in 2015.

Economists still argue about the net effect of these events on the American job market. But for someone living in a town where the big company has shut the factory and moved the jobs to China, or for a roofer who has watched a contractor hire illegal immigrants because they are cheaper, anger and frustration are rational.

Add to this the fact that white working-class men are looked down upon by the elites and get little validation in their own communities for being good providers, fathers and spouses—and that life in their communities is falling apart. To top it off, the party they have voted for in recent decades, the Republicans, hasn’t done a damn thing to help them. Who wouldn’t be angry?

There is nothing conservative about how they want to fix things. They want a now indifferent government to act on their behalf, big time. If Bernie Sanders were passionate about immigration, the rest of his ideology would have a lot more in common with Trumpism than conservatism does.

As a political matter, it is not a problem that Mr. Sanders doesn’t share the traditional American meanings of liberty and individualism. Neither does Mr. Trump. Neither, any longer, do many in the white working class. They have joined the other defectors from the American creed.

Who continues to embrace this creed in its entirety? Large portions of the middle class and upper middle class (especially those who run small businesses), many people in the corporate and financial worlds and much of the senior leadership of the Republican Party. They remain principled upholders of the ideals of egalitarianism, liberty and individualism.

And let’s not forget moderate Democrats, the spiritual legatees of the New Deal. They may advocate social democracy, but they are also unhappy about policies that treat Americans as members of groups and staunch in their support of freedom of speech, individual moral responsibility and the kind of egalitarianism that Tocqueville was talking about. They still exist in large numbers, though mostly in the political closet.

But these are fragments of the population, not the national consensus that bound the U.S. together for the first 175 years of the nation’s existence. And just as support for the American creed has shrunk, so has its correspondence to daily life. Our vaunted liberty is now constrained by thousands of petty restrictions that touch almost anything we want to do, individualism is routinely ignored in favor of group rights, and we have acquired an arrogant upper class. Operationally as well as ideologically, the American creed is shattered.

Our national identity is not altogether lost. Americans still have a vivid, distinctive national character in the eyes of the world. Historically, America has done a far better job than any other country of socializing people of many different ethnicities into displaying our national character. We will still be identifiably American for some time to come.

CHUNK

There’s irony in that. Much of the passion of Trumpism is directed against the threat to America’s national identity from an influx of immigrants. But the immigrants I actually encounter, of all ethnicities, typically come across as classically American—cheerful, hardworking, optimistic, ambitious. Keeping our national character seems to be the least of our problems.

Still, even that character is ultimately rooted in the American creed. When faith in that secular religion is held only by fragments of the American people, we will soon be just another nation—a very powerful one, a very rich one, still called the United States of America. But we will have detached ourselves from the bedrock that has made us unique in the history of the world.

Mr. Murray is the W.H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His many books include “By the People: Rebuilding Liberty Without Permission” and “Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010.”

CHUNK

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# The Same Thing Again, As Commented by Fred:

By CHARLES MURRAY

Updated Feb. 12, 2016 10:35 a.m. ET

1576 COMMENTS

If you are dismayed by Trumpism, don’t kid yourself that it will fade away if Donald Trump fails to win the Republican nomination. Trumpism is an expression of the legitimate anger that many Americans feel about the course that the country has taken, and its appearance was predictable. It is the endgame of a process that has been going on for a half-century: America’s divestment of its historic national identity.

For the eminent political scientist Samuel Huntington, writing in his last book, “Who Are We?” (2004), two components of that national identity stand out. One is our Anglo-Protestant heritage, which has inevitably faded in an America that is now home to many cultural and religious traditions. The other is the very idea of America, something unique to us. As the historian Richard Hofstadter once said, “It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies but to be one.”

What does this ideology—Huntington called it the “American creed”[[1]](#footnote-1)—consist of? Its three core values may be summarized as

* egalitarianism,
* liberty and
* individualism.

From these flow other familiar aspects of the national creed that observers have long identified:

* equality before the law,
* equality of opportunity,
* freedom of speech and association,
* self-reliance,
* limited government,
* free-market economics,
* decentralized and devolved political authority.

As recently as 1960, the creed was our national consensus. Running that year for the Democratic nomination, candidates like John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Hubert Humphrey genuinely embraced the creed, differing from Republicans only in how its elements should be realized.

Today, the creed has lost its authority and its substance. What happened? Many of the dynamics of the reversal can be found in developments across the whole of American society: in the emergence of a new upper class and a new lower class, and in the plight of the working class caught in between.

[I reject the notion that “Wanting to get rich” became part of the national creed only 50 years ago. –FNC]

CHUNK

In my 2012 book “Coming Apart,” I discussed these new classes at length. The new upper class consists of the people who shape the country’s economy, politics and culture. The new lower class consists of people who have dropped out of some of the most basic institutions of American civic culture, especially work and marriage. Both of these new classes have repudiated the American creed in practice, whatever lip service they may still pay to it. Trumpism is the voice of a beleaguered working class telling us that it too is falling away.

Historically, one of the most widely acknowledged aspects of American exceptionalism was our lack of class consciousness. Even Marx and Engels recognized it. This was egalitarianism American style. Yes, America had rich people and poor people, but that didn’t mean that the rich were better than anyone else.

[I think an article like this is empty without giving the Elephant in the Room (the takeover of our government by Zionists) a role in the discussion. –FNC]

CHUNK

Successful Americans stubbornly refused to accept the mantle of an upper class, typically presenting themselves to their fellow countrymen as regular guys. And they usually were, in the sense that most of them had grown up in modest circumstances, or even in poverty, and carried the habits and standards of their youths into their successful later lives.

America also retained a high degree of social and cultural heterogeneity in its communities. Tocqueville wrote of America in the 1830s as a place where “the more opulent citizens take great care not to stand aloof from the people.” That continued well into the 20th century, even in America’s elite neighborhoods. In the 1960 census, the median income along Philadelphia’s Main Line was just $90,000 in today’s dollars. In Boston’s Brookline, it was $75,000; on New York’s Upper East Side, just $60,000. At a typical dinner party in those neighborhoods, many guests would have had no more than a high-school diploma.

In the years since, the new upper class has evolved a distinctive culture. For a half-century, America’s elite universities have drawn the most talented people from all over the country, socialized them and often married them off to each other. Brains have become radically more valuable in the marketplace. In 2016, a dinner party in those same elite neighborhoods consists almost wholly of people with college degrees, even advanced degrees. They are much more uniformly affluent. The current median family incomes for the Main Line, Brookline and the Upper East Side are about $150,000, $151,000 and $203,000, respectively.

And the conversation at that dinner party is likely to be completely unlike the conversations at get-togethers in mainstream America. [Elephant in the Room!! Things you’re not saying!!] The members of the new upper class are seldom attracted to the films, TV shows and music that are most popular in mainstream America. They have a distinctive culture in the food they eat, the way they take care of their health, their child-rearing practices, the vacations they take, the books they read, the websites they visit and their taste in beer. You name it, the new upper class has its own way of doing it.

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Another characteristic of the new upper class—and something new under the American sun—is their easy acceptance of being members of an upper class and their condescension toward ordinary Americans. Try using “redneck” in a conversation with your highly educated friends and see if it triggers any of the nervousness that accompanies other ethnic slurs. Refer to “flyover country” and consider the implications when no one asks, “What does that mean?” Or I can send you to chat with a friend in Washington, D.C., who bought a weekend place in West Virginia. He will tell you about the contempt for his new neighbors that he has encountered in the elite precincts of the nation’s capital.

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Then things started to change. For white working-class men in their 30s and 40s—what should be the prime decades for working and raising a family—participation in the labor force dropped from 96% in 1968 to 79% in 2015. Over that same period, the portion of these men who were married dropped from 86% to 52%. (The numbers for nonwhite working-class males show declines as well, though not as steep and not as continuous.)

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These are stunning changes, and they are visible across the country. In today’s average white working-class neighborhood, about one out of five men in the prime of life isn’t even looking for work; they are living off girlfriends, siblings or parents, on disability, or else subsisting on off-the-books or criminal income. Almost half aren’t married, with all the collateral social problems that go with large numbers of unattached males.

In these communities, about half the children are born to unmarried women, with all the problems that go with growing up without fathers, especially for boys. Drugs also have become a major problem, in small towns as well as in urban areas. [Very significant. But I think I heard that somewhere already before. –FNC]

Consider how these trends have affected life in working-class communities for everyone, including those who are still playing by the old rules. They find themselves working and raising their families in neighborhoods where the old civic culture is gone—neighborhoods that are no longer friendly or pleasant or even safe.

These major changes in American class structure were taking place alongside another sea change: large-scale ideological defection from the principles of liberty and individualism, two of the pillars of the American creed. This came about in large measure because of the civil rights and feminist movements, both of which began as classic invocations of the creed, rightly demanding that America make good on its ideals for blacks and women.

But the success of both movements soon produced policies that directly contradicted the creed. Affirmative action demanded that people be treated as groups. Equality of outcome trumped equality before the law. Group-based policies continued to multiply, with ever more policies embracing ever more groups.

By the beginning of the 1980s, Democratic elites overwhelmingly subscribed to an ideology in open conflict with liberty and individualism as traditionally understood. This consolidated the Democratic Party’s longtime popularity with ethnic minorities, single women and low-income women, but it alienated another key Democratic constituency: the white working class.

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[The author had Trumpism all defined -- in detail -- even though the word is not in wide use and can be less than a half year old and may die aborning!! -FNC]

But the central truth of Trumpism as a phenomenon is that the entire American working class has legitimate reasons to be angry at the ruling class. During the past half-century of economic growth, virtually none of the rewards have gone to the working class. The economists can supply caveats and refinements to that statement, but the bottom line is stark: The real family income of people in the bottom half of the income distribution hasn’t increased since the late 1960s. [1980 or 1981 if you use real family income, isn’t it? –FNC]

During the same half-century, American corporations exported millions of manufacturing jobs, which were among the best-paying working-class jobs. They were and are predominantly men’s jobs. In both 1968 and 2015, 70% of manufacturing jobs were held by males.

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Add to this the fact that white working-class men are looked down upon by the elites and get little validation in their own communities for being good providers, fathers and spouses—and that life in their communities is falling apart. To top it off, the party they have voted for in recent decades, the Republicans, hasn’t done a damn thing to help them. Who wouldn’t be angry?

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And let’s not forget moderate Democrats, the spiritual legatees of the New Deal. They may advocate social democracy, but they are also unhappy about policies that treat Americans as members of groups and staunch in their support of freedom of speech, individual moral responsibility and the kind of egalitarianism that Tocqueville was talking about. They still exist in large numbers, though mostly in the political closet.

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CHUNK

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CHUNK

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By CHARLES MURRAY

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But the success of both movements soon produced policies that directly contradicted the creed. Affirmative action demanded that people be treated as groups. Equality of outcome trumped equality before the law. Group-based policies continued to multiply, with ever more policies embracing ever more groups.

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CHUNK

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But the central truth of Trumpism as a phenomenon is that the entire American working class has legitimate reasons to be angry at the ruling class. During the past half-century of economic growth, virtually none of the rewards have gone to the working class. The economists can supply caveats and refinements to that statement, but the bottom line is stark: The real family income of people in the bottom half of the income distribution hasn’t increased since the late 1960s.

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During the same half-century, the federal government allowed the immigration, legal and illegal, of tens of millions of competitors for the remaining working-class jobs. Apart from agriculture, many of those jobs involve the construction trades or crafts. They too were and are predominantly men’s jobs: 77% in 1968 and 84% in 2015.

Economists still argue about the net effect of these events on the American job market. But for someone living in a town where the big company has shut the factory and moved the jobs to China, or for a roofer who has watched a contractor hire illegal immigrants because they are cheaper, anger and frustration are rational.

Add to this the fact that white working-class men are looked down upon by the elites and get little validation in their own communities for being good providers, fathers and spouses—and that life in their communities is falling apart. To top it off, the party they have voted for in recent decades, the Republicans, hasn’t done a damn thing to help them. Who wouldn’t be angry?

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As a political matter, it is not a problem that Mr. Sanders doesn’t share the traditional American meanings of liberty and individualism. Neither does Mr. Trump. Neither, any longer, do many in the white working class. They have joined the other defectors from the American creed.

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And let’s not forget moderate Democrats, the spiritual legatees of the New Deal. They may advocate social democracy, but they are also unhappy about policies that treat Americans as members of groups and staunch in their support of freedom of speech, individual moral responsibility and the kind of egalitarianism that Tocqueville was talking about. They still exist in large numbers, though mostly in the political closet.

But these are fragments of the population, not the national consensus that bound the U.S. together for the first 175 years of the nation’s existence. And just as support for the American creed has shrunk, so has its correspondence to daily life. Our vaunted liberty is now constrained by thousands of petty restrictions that touch almost anything we want to do, individualism is routinely ignored in favor of group rights, and we have acquired an arrogant upper class. Operationally as well as ideologically, the American creed is shattered.

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There’s irony in that. Much of the passion of Trumpism is directed against the threat to America’s national identity from an influx of immigrants. But the immigrants I actually encounter, of all ethnicities, typically come across as classically American—cheerful, hardworking, optimistic, ambitious. Keeping our national character seems to be the least of our problems.

Still, even that character is ultimately rooted in the American creed. When faith in that secular religion is held only by fragments of the American people, we will soon be just another nation—a very powerful one, a very rich one, still called the United States of America. But we will have detached ourselves from the bedrock that has made us unique in the history of the world.

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# As Commented by Rusty

By CHARLES MURRAY

Updated Feb. 12, 2016 10:35 a.m. ET

1576 COMMENTS

If you are dismayed by Trumpism, don’t kid yourself that it will fade away if Donald Trump fails to win the Republican nomination. Trumpism is an expression of the legitimate anger that many Americans feel about the course that the country has taken, and its appearance was predictable. It is the endgame of a process that has been going on for a half-century: America’s divestment of its historic national identity.

For the eminent political scientist Samuel Huntington, writing in his last book, “Who Are We?” (2004), two components of that national identity stand out. One is our Anglo-Protestant heritage, which has inevitably faded in an America that is now home to many cultural and religious traditions. The other is the very idea of America, something unique to us. As the historian Richard Hofstadter once said, “It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies but to be one.”

What does this ideology—Huntington called it the “American creed”—consist of? Its three core values may be summarized as egalitarianism, liberty and individualism. From these flow other familiar aspects of the national creed that observers have long identified: equality before the law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and association, self-reliance, limited government, free-market economics, decentralized and devolved political authority.

As recently as 1960, the creed was our national consensus. Running that year for the Democratic nomination, candidates like John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Hubert Humphrey genuinely embraced the creed, differing from Republicans only in how its elements should be realized.

Today, the creed has lost its authority and its substance. What happened? Many of the dynamics of the reversal can be found in developments across the whole of American society: in the emergence of a new upper class and a new lower class, and in the plight of the working class caught in between.

CHUNK

In my 2012 book “Coming Apart,” I discussed these new classes at length. The new upper class consists of the people who shape the country’s economy, politics and culture. The new lower class consists of people who have dropped out of some of the most basic institutions of American civic culture, especially work and marriage. Both of these new classes have repudiated the American creed in practice, whatever lip service they may still pay to it. Trumpism is the voice of a beleaguered working class telling us that it too is falling away.

Historically, one of the most widely acknowledged aspects of American exceptionalism was our lack of class consciousness. Even Marx and Engels recognized it. This was egalitarianism American style. Yes, America had rich people and poor people, but that didn’t mean that the rich were better than anyone else.

CHUNK

Successful Americans stubbornly refused to accept the mantle of an upper class, typically presenting themselves to their fellow countrymen as regular guys. And they usually were, in the sense that most of them had grown up in modest circumstances, or even in poverty, and carried the habits and standards of their youths into their successful later lives.

America also retained a high degree of social and cultural heterogeneity in its communities. Tocqueville wrote of America in the 1830s as a place where “the more opulent citizens take great care not to stand aloof from the people.” That continued well into the 20th century, even in America’s elite neighborhoods. In the 1960 census, the median income along Philadelphia’s Main Line was just $90,000 in today’s dollars. In Boston’s Brookline, it was $75,000; on New York’s Upper East Side, just $60,000. At a typical dinner party in those neighborhoods, many guests would have had no more than a high-school diploma.

In the years since, the new upper class has evolved a distinctive culture. For a half-century, America’s elite universities have drawn the most talented people from all over the country, socialized them and often married them off to each other. Brains have become radically more valuable in the marketplace. In 2016, a dinner party in those same elite neighborhoods consists almost wholly of people with college degrees, even advanced degrees. They are much more uniformly affluent. The current median family incomes for the Main Line, Brookline and the Upper East Side are about $150,000, $151,000 and $203,000, respectively.

And the conversation at that dinner party is likely to be completely unlike the conversations at get-togethers in mainstream America. The members of the new upper class are seldom attracted to the films, TV shows and music that are most popular in mainstream America. They have a distinctive culture in the food they eat, the way they take care of their health, their child-rearing practices, the vacations they take, the books they read, the websites they visit and their taste in beer. You name it, the new upper class has its own way of doing it.

CHUNK

Another characteristic of the new upper class—and something new under the American sun—is their easy acceptance of being members of an upper class and their condescension toward ordinary Americans. Try using “redneck” in a conversation with your highly educated friends and see if it triggers any of the nervousness that accompanies other ethnic slurs. Refer to “flyover country” and consider the implications when no one asks, “What does that mean?” Or I can send you to chat with a friend in Washington, D.C., who bought a weekend place in West Virginia. He will tell you about the contempt for his new neighbors that he has encountered in the elite precincts of the nation’s capital.

For its part, mainstream America is fully aware of this condescension and contempt and is understandably irritated by it. American egalitarianism is on its last legs.

While the new upper class was seceding from the mainstream, a new lower class was emerging from within the white working class, and it has played a key role in creating the environment in which Trumpism has flourished.

Work and marriage have been central to American civic culture since the founding, and this held true for the white working class into the 1960s. Almost all of the adult men were working or looking for work, and almost all of them were married.

Then things started to change. For white working-class men in their 30s and 40s—what should be the prime decades for working and raising a family—participation in the labor force dropped from 96% in 1968 to 79% in 2015. Over that same period, the portion of these men who were married dropped from 86% to 52%. (The numbers for nonwhite working-class males show declines as well, though not as steep and not as continuous.)

CHUNK

These are stunning changes, and they are visible across the country. In today’s average white working-class neighborhood, about one out of five men in the prime of life isn’t even looking for work; they are living off girlfriends, siblings or parents, on disability, or else subsisting on off-the-books or criminal income. Almost half aren’t married, with all the collateral social problems that go with large numbers of unattached males.

In these communities, about half the children are born to unmarried women, with all the problems that go with growing up without fathers, especially for boys. Drugs also have become a major problem, in small towns as well as in urban areas.

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1. This author calls it the national creed. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)