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A Tribe Called Trump: The Motivation Behind the Education Line & Why People of Color Voted for the Bully-in-Chief

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A Tribe Called Trump, Motivation Behind the Education Line

Why Some People of Color
Voted for the Bully-in-Chief?

Leah P. Hollis

Abstract

Throughout the 2020 election, a constant question arose, “How can they vote for Trump?” Within the context of tribalism and the disenfranchised status created by the deteriorated blue-collar job market, I reflect on labor history to explain how those who are denied affordable education are often excluded from the American dream. This trend disproportionately affects the Black community. In turn, this population potentially remains reminiscent of how America was supposedly ‘great’ for them in the industrial past. Supported by descriptive statistics, I reflect on the educational line in red GOP states and contested states during the 2020 presidential election. The article concludes with the recommendation that higher education must be affordable to help communities transcend the dream of manufacturing for survival, but instead embrace education as a well-informed position in supporting themselves and our democracy.

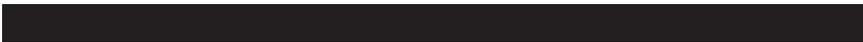
Keywords: higher education, tribalism, labor, 2020 election

Introduction

At the time of this writing, I was watching intermittent updates on election evening 2020. I live in what many call “Pennsylv-tucky.” The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a very cosmopolitan Philadelphia and surrounding counties in the northern and western suburbs, with a somewhat racially diverse City of

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Pittsburgh at the opposite end of the state (Glaser, 2018). In the middle of Pennsylvania, except for Centre County, Pennsylvania, which is home to Penn State University, much of the state voted for Trump. Within a month before the election, MAGA caps and Trump flags were ever-present when I drove ten minutes further west or ten minutes further north from my Philadelphia suburb neighborhood.

MAGA seems simple enough, “Make American Great Again.” However, we should think historically about what America has been. This country’s foundation is built on slavery during a period of expansion that simultaneously relied on the removal and destruction of indigenous people. American growth relied on cheap labor from Chinese immigrants to expand the west and Latin immigrants to take jobs no one else wanted. Trump’s cry to return to his version of a better America implicitly harkened for racial separation, patriarchal misogyny, and supremacist domination. In 2016, more Americans than expected answered Trump’s call.

While running some errands in October 2020, I saw parades of Trump supporters cascading through Pennsylvania’s rolling hills, whooping and hollering about making America great again. I remained slack-jawed to see a roadside stand, much like we see in July selling bootleg fireworks. Instead, these stands were packed with Trump supporters buying Trump paraphernalia, loading up on MAGA and Trump gear. As an African American woman, I shuttered at these public displays for a candidate who denigrates race, gender, immigration, and common decency. Even if we were not experiencing the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in October 2020, I would have sheltered in place to avoid being caught up in potential political unrest.

Days before the election and even days after while waiting for recount after recount, my academic friends and family constantly asked the question, “WHY?! Why do they vote for HIM?!” The distaste and disbelief in their voices were also laced with fear. One could equate watching the election returns with watching footage of the Hindenburg crash. It was horrible, scary, a tragedy, but we just could not look away.

My colleagues and I considered different explanations for voting trends as we traded around ideas about the election, race, and gender. Perhaps, we were enduring this backlash because America had not forgiven itself for electing the first Black president in Barack Obama. Maybe, America was still mad at Hillary Clinton. Her nonchalant pant suits were crammed down our throats after it was revealed that the Clintons moved unfairly to unseat Bernie Sanders’ presidential candidacy at the 2016 Philadelphia Democratic Convention. Nonetheless, a highly qualified yet aloof Hillary, in many opinions, would have been a better choice than an orange-headed reality television star who sports a spray-on tan and grabs women’s genitalia (Steinberg, 2017).

Understanding first-hand how we must be three and four times better than our white counterparts, I, along with my colleagues of color, considered that maybe Senator Kamala Harris’s presence on the ticket sent people in droves into the GOP

camp a second time (Hollis, 2018). Senator Harris is not just Black as we know; she is the embodiment of intersectionality. Black (Jamaican) and Asian (Indian), married to a Jewish man with children. As an HBCU graduate of Howard University, she attended the Hastings College of Law in California and did not follow the customary path through the Ivy League to ascend to a seat on a major party's presidential ticket (Harris, 2019). On that painful night of November 2, 2020, we watched in horror as state after state fell to red: Florida- RED, Texas- RED, Iowa- RED, Ohio- RED. The critically thinking psyche can only project what another four years of an unleashed Trump would do. Historically, he would be the FIRST impeached president to win a second term. My colleagues, family, and I were all channel surfing back and forth frantically between CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, Kos.com, and the local news, grasping for explanations and praying for the downfall of the American oligarchy. And the inquiries kept coming: "what is attracting so many to Trump?"

We have read repeatedly that the country has a divisive educational line in politics (Kelderman, 2020). As the cost of higher education has soared through the stratosphere, with states contributing fewer and fewer dollars to their respective state universities, the average citizen on Main Street was often left behind (Watson, 2017). Comparatively, I attended college in the mid-1980s. My friends and I could pick up a summer job at Hardee's or the local Dairy Queen to save money for the following year's tuition. Unfortunately, post-recession funding has never returned to pre-recession levels, with nine billion less sent in state funding to higher education during 2017 (Mitchell et al., 2017). With tuition exponentially rising, today's summer DQ jobs may only pay for one class, not an entire year or even a semester of college tuition.

I know of recent baccalaureate graduates who disclosed that they had a shiny degree in the Classics, Psychology, or History with a corresponding student loan debt over \$70,000. After four to five years of intense collegiate study, many graduates could only find jobs in retail instead of in jobs they anticipated upon graduation. The jobs they found were at the Center City Williams Sonoma or Philadelphia's Galleria. They bought into the American dream, inclusive of home ownership and a family. Instead, they had a house on their backs, given the voluminous debt strangling them from college. Complicating the matter, many low-interest government loans were not readily available, a vacuum that commercial lenders exploited. Several students just a generation behind me stated that they owe almost double the original loan award, given the reoccurring interest rates associated with the private loan. Higher education has been priced out of the average person's reach. Further, these stories relate to undergraduate degrees, not the masters, doctoral, and professional degrees, which typically launch people into the upper middle class ranks.

I thought of these financial constraints during the 2016 election. I concluded that we have shot ourselves in the foot, by out pricing education, so the average

John Q Citizen does not have the critical reasoning or training to spot a narcissistic, xenophobic, misogynist liar. The discernment that accompanies education has been siphoned off from the public psyche, with the digital divide widening and a true chance for opportunity throughout our communities whittled down to a hope and a prayer. Perhaps our American society has not realized that the financial wrestling between the have's and the have-not's has resulted in a cacophony of the international embarrassments that we all have shouldered between 2016 and 2020. During the 2020 election, these ideas were drifting around my mind and waiting for Arizona or Pennsylvania to be called for the Democrats. As the wait continued for on election night 2020, I returned to the interactive map for “Pennsyl-tucky” county returns. In a sea of red counties throughout the middle of the state, I see one shining blue sapphire—Centre County. This county, like the other rural counties, has a sleepy feel to it. I have visited that area several times, yet also, as a Black Pennsylvanian native of the middle 1980s, I never applied to Penn State given my recollection of Klan rallies in that area during the 1970s and 1980s. Centre County has a regional airport, smaller than a single terminal of major airports. This place is not a bastion of diversity and clamors for Nittany Lion college football on game day. Like other major college areas, the place is a ghost town when the team plays. However, the operative word here concerning the 2020 election is not football; it is college. Centre County is home to Penn State, one of the largest college campuses in the country, and undoubtedly the largest employer of Centre County. They voted blue in a red state (Pennsylvania Department of Labor, 2020).

American Decline in Manufacturing

When I reflect on Pennsylvania in the 1970s and 1980s, I recall how Bethlehem Steel rose to be the second-largest steel manufacturer in the world. During World War II, their sales swelled from \$135 million in 1941 to \$1.33 billion and employing over 300,000 people (Roth, 2020). The steady decline of Bethlehem Steel was precipitated by shifting market conditions, a rash of costly weather-related incidents in the late-1970s, foreign steel, and corporate greed (Farabaugh, 2019; Roth, 2020). Thousands of former steel workers were handed broken promises in retirement, no health care, and drastically reduced pensions (Roth, 2020). A corporation that had supported two world wars and provided much of the steel for the United States modernized infrastructure entered resounding silence. In 1995, the last steel was poured at the flagship Bethlehem, Pennsylvania plant. Bankruptcy ensued in 2001 after a 132 year run for the company (Roth, 2020).

“Pennsyl-tucky” is dotted with decaying steel mills from Pottstown, through Coatesville, Johnstown, Braddock, New Kensington, and Farrell. These communities have generations of high school educated dads who worked a hard day at the mill; mothers could stay home and cook endlessly, and all four or five kids could go to college on one paycheck. Dad could buy a new long body car every

two years. This steel-girded, provincial, and gendered informed American dream is not in the so distant memory of rust belt communities still struggling with the demise of Bethlehem Steel less than 25 years ago. Therefore, when Trump says he is bringing back such jobs, though there is not even enough coal in the ground to sustain this industry, the memory of disenfranchised former mill families dares to hope that a steel-beamed Shangri-la can rise in the rust belt.

These emotional attachments, which had been the bread and butter for thousands of families lead many to look past the logical conclusion that a single election could not resurrect mighty steel titans. Growing up in the 1970s in Johnstown, PA, and with grandparents in steel and coal in greater Pittsburgh, I knew first-hand the critical financial bedrock the steel industry meant to all Pennsylvanians. In a visit to Lehigh University in mid-2015, which still has some Bethlehem Steel executive buildings, I was aghast to see the once flagship hulk of a mill, the lead steel manufacturer of a warship a day in World War II, had been retrofitted to an outlet mall and casino. I was stunned when I saw the change; I was literally thinking, ‘oh... the horror.’

Hence, I understand that communities like this are not only excluded from their version of the American dream that sustained decades of families on a single paycheck, but they are also locked out of the pathway to sustainable living wage jobs. As manufacturers of various industries shuttered across the nation, the cost of a college education which can help communities transcend that metal girded moment in time, was and still is largely unobtainable. Whether one's community fell on hard times because of closing industries, in steel, coal, paper, transportation, and other lucrative blue-collar jobs, the lifeline to educational transition has been snatched away as well. One might think that subsequent blue-collar generations would embrace community college. Two-year colleges are viable solutions, yet the understandably prideful corps of workers who need retraining or reconception of a new path may not want to sit alongside the 18-20 somethings in a stuffy classroom. Subsequently, Trump captured the imagination of the disenfranchised psyche, whether in Pennsylvania, upstate New York, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee, Michigan, and Kentucky. He ignited the boldness of those who felt discarded in a knowledge-based technology world that has forgotten them and the promises made to them. Additionally, he demonstrated his tribal position in the traditional American style through constant bullying and legal battles (Hollis, 2017). Yet, these populations may not have the academic training may not recognize Trump's propaganda as hollow promises for a return to yesteryear. Disenchanted, disenfranchised, and disheartened, communities of former manufacturing towns, whether steel, coal, auto, or lumber, desperately want to believe it can all return. So, they heed the call to the Tribe called Trump.

Tribe Called Trump

The “Tribe” is a term that Anglo Saxon speakers devised to describe a unit of measure when examining a group of people operating in a social structure foreign to their own. Apthorpe (1968) stated that the term tribe was a term used to “cope with, and then to dominate what was presumed to be an exotic and alien world before the social facts” (p. 18). Similarly, the Portuguese inserted their language, *casta*, into the east Indian culture, therefore bringing a caste system to a world the Portuguese used to understand societies foreign to them (Apthorpe, 1968). Through lexicon and later behavior, the hegemonic culture defined and manipulated the ‘other,’ the ‘out-group,’ and those considered different (Allport, 1956).

Tribes have common goals, backgrounds, language processes, and understandings about the world looking in upon them. A substantial component for tribes is unswerving loyalty (Jollimore, 2012); this loyalty extends to the depths of self-sacrifice for the tribe. We witnessed such tribal loyalty on January 6, 2021, when Trump supporters answered the president’s call and stormed the Capitol building leaving five people dead. In such tribalism, one serves the group, and the group serves the individual (Jollimore, 2012, p. 6). This ideology encourages the tribe’s chief to expect an uncommon loyalty from tribe members, to lie to authorities, face incarceration, and violate the U.S. Constitution. However, if tribal members violate these unrelenting codes of loyalty, the tribal chief vilifies these members in a tweet, as evidenced by Trump’s treatment of Pence when the vice president chose the U.S Constitution over the GOP tribe.

What Friedman (2018) finds noteworthy is that such tribal behaviors, biases, and prejudices are not ‘hardwired’ (2018, para. 2). These psychological and emotional commitments evolve from what people learn in their environment; loyalties and corresponding actions emerge from socially constructed messages about behavior. In this Tribe called Trump, America witnessed four years of dog-whistle remarks about ‘very fine people’ on both sides of the 2017 race riot in Charlottesville, Virginia (Gray, 2017). Trump’s remark about ‘shit-hole countries’ or ‘the squad,’ demonstrate to tribal members that a narrow American ideal is privileged over diversity. Trump’s proclamation empowered the far right to solidify its tribal values. (Beckwith, 2018; Sullivan, 2019).

Consequently, the tribe was learning the treasured values throughout the 45th presidency. Perhaps the tribe was further motivated by Trump’s Presidential Debate performance in which he stated, “stand back and stand by...” and then his rallying cry on January 6, 2021, “If you don’t fight like hell- you’re not going to have a country anymore” (Donald Trump, January 6, 2021, personal communication, broadcast by NBC News). Wearing Camp Auschwitz shirts, carrying Confederate flags, and with one protester wearing fur and a horned helmet, the tribe loyally responded (Barrett, 2021; Sandler, 2020). Thus, when framed by tribalist ideals, the Trump presidency which began with misogynist and racist proclamations came

to a predictable crescendo when an unbridled mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol Building, smashing windows, and urinating in the Capital, perhaps to mark their territory.

Higher Education and Fiscal Decline

Higher education or the unattainability associated with higher education is also a compelling factor for the Tribe called Trump. Higher education, once thought for the elite, expanded enrollments from 1895 to 1915 (Geiger, 2005; Kramer, 2011). Thelin (2004) noted that higher education experienced another enrollment boost between World War I and World War II. After the second world war and the advent of the Cold War, and international competition to maintain power on the world stage, the United States federal government infused funds into higher education. As a result, Geiger (2005) reported that the increase in college-aged youth attending college burgeoned from 15% to 45% between 1940 and 1970 (Kramer, 2011, p. 18). With young people and veterans seeking higher education, the federal government also had a marked interest in research; hence, funding for graduate education and research increased (Geiger, 2005; Kramer, 2011; St. John & Parson, 2004). As of 1972, Pell grants, supplementary Education Opportunity Grants, and other programs funded higher education for increasingly more students (Kramer, 2011).

However, in 1995, the tide turned, enrollments were down which left many schools competing for students (Kramer, 2011). This decline in enrollment mirrored the aforementioned manufacturing decline. Appropriation to states grew only by 13% but institutional costs rose by 41%; students and their families shouldered this 41% increase with tuition increases of 107% between 1980-1998 (Kramer, 2011, p. 19; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002). The financial problems exploded with the 2008 recession that created a quarter trillion-dollar deficit in both 2009 and 2010 (American Association of State Colleges and Universities [AASCU], 2010; Kramer, 2011, p. 20).

Our society in its steady divestment from higher education, has created a chasm for the general population. The blue-collar industry was in decline; the cost of higher education was simultaneously rising. As a result, the lucrative blue-collar jobs evaporated along with the state and federal subsidies that made higher education affordable. Plausibly, the divergent shift of dwindling living wages and increased higher education is a cogent factor in analyzing voting trends.

Higher Education Versus Tribalism

Reflecting on that early November 2020 evening when friends and family frantically asked, “how could they vote for him...,” I recall thinking about Penn State and Centre County, Pennsylvania. On the election evening, it occurred to me to look at other red states with large universities. I hypothesized that despite a

state voting ruby red Republican, that the counties hosting large universities were blue. As stated previously, society constructs tribal behaviors such as prejudice and bias. The electoral map potentially shines light on those socially constructed behaviors. Those in counties with major universities appeared to vote for Biden, while undereducated counties voted for Trump. The voting trend was not universally true when I looked at, for example, the University of Alaska or the University of Arkansas. Nonetheless, I located 27 counties in red Republican states that were home to large universities. These higher education hosts voted Democratic while the state was highly contested or voted Republican. See Table 1.

Those in educated communities could potentially reason better with arguments about the U.S. Constitution, the pandemic, national security, and morality. Granted, Trump voters may have other financial rationale to vote for the businessman turned politician. In any case, the critically thinking mind may resist tribal

Table 1
Voting Trends by State/County/University

<i>State</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Biden</i>	<i>Trump</i>
Colorado	Boulder CO	Univ. of Colorado	78.8%	19.20%
Florida	Alachua CO	Univ. of Florida	62.4%	35.4%
Florida	Leon CO	Florida State Univ.	63.50%	35.3%
Georgia	Fulton CO	Georgia State Univ.	72.4%	26.4%
Indiana	Tippecanoe CO	Purdue Univ.	49.0%	48.4%
Iowa	Story CO	Iowa State Univ.	57.4%	40.0%
Kentucky	Fayette CO	Univ. of Kentucky	58.6%	39.3%
Louisiana	E. Baton Rouge Par.	Louisiana State Univ.	55.5%	42.5%
Michigan	Ingham CO	Michigan State Univ.	62.2%	33.0%
Michigan	Washtenaw CO	Univ. of Mich.	72.7%	26.0%
Missouri	Boone CO	Univ. of Missouri	54.9%	42.4%
Montana	Missoula CO	Univ. of Montana	60.6%	36.8%
Nebraska	Lancaster CO	Univ. of Nebraska	52.8%	44.8%
Nevada	Clark CO	Univ. of Nevada Las Vegas	59.9%	45.4%
New Mexico	Bernalillo CO	New Mexico State Univ.	60.9%	36.7%
N. Carolina	Durham CO	Duke Univ.	80.8%	18.0%
N. Carolina	Forsyth CO	Wake Forest Univ.	56.0%	42.4%
Ohio	Franklin CO	Ohio State Univ.	64.8%	33.6%
Pennsylvania	Centre CO	Penn State Univ.	51.4%	47.3%
Utah	Salk Lake CO	Univ. of Utah	56.5%	40.6%
S. Carolina	Richland CO	Univ. of South Carolina	68.4%	30.1%
S. Dakota	Clay CO	Univ. of South Dakota	54.1%	43.1%
Tennessee	Davidson CO	Vanderbilt Univ.	64.5%	32.4%
Texas	Travis CO	Univ. of Texas	71.7%	26.5%
Virginia	Albemarle CO	Univ. of Virginia	66.0%	32.5%
Wisconsin	Dane CO	Univ. of Wisconsin	75.5%	22.9%
Wyoming	Albany CO	Univ. of Wyoming	49.3%	46.5%

predilections and instead subscribe to reason. If my hypothesis is remotely accurate, the truth remains that the country is unwinding democracy by making higher education fiscally unfeasible for the average American.

When I consider tribalism, I understand why I heard a flurry of disbelieving comments, “why vote for him?” Nonetheless, when I recall those cascading cars across the hilltops, adorned with Trump paraphernalia, roaring for their tribe, I could understand why they gravitated to the hope that America would become EMPLOYED again, at least in their communities. This thought took me back to Pennsylvania’s Taj Mahal, the former Bethlehem Steel plant, a majestic and intricate tomb along the Lehigh River. The former august steel mill has been reduced to belching blinking lights and advertising two-for-one sales on last season’s linens.

As a third-generation coal and steel descendent, I too have that tug on my heart for the hay-days of manufacturing. Nonetheless, engaging in education, technology, and the life of eternal learning, I can rationally transcend the past and see a new future through education. I can dream of innovation and my place in it. My ability to visualize myself in the future work and stability takes the sting out of my eye when I gaze upon those inactive smokestacks.

Though nostalgia lingers in a declining economy, a comforting anticipation is for the future and the training to fund my present existence without shame or humiliation. My father who worked in the mill a year between college and his professional career retold me the value of hard work. He taught us to work doubly hard to maintain a safe and secure well-being. However, Dad could visualize something different from his father’s coal mining career, the transcendence from the mill to education. My mom, the daughter of a steel worker, led our family, through education, to another reality. But everyone was not in the same position to consider a different life path.

Steel and manufacturing jobs were the good life. During the height of manufacturing and in previous decades, the Black middle class did not rely on a college degree (Lacy, 2007). The social-political modern era considered the Black middle class within the bounds of ‘wealth and skill’ (Summers, 2004). Blacks could attain middle class status as porters, ministers, construction workers, beauticians, and drivers. The Black middle class and elite also were urban and particularly entrepreneurial, whether trained labor or service labor. They had a stable income encompassing several job functions and titles (Summers, 2004, p. 17).

Notably, the values regarding manufacturing, with mother in the kitchen and a new car every two years were perhaps more important to the Black community. Arguably, as with most economic shifts, Blacks have limited career mobility because of lacking access to technology, discrimination, and socioeconomic status (Alexander, 2008; Livingston, 2003). As a result, the Black community experienced a slower economic recovery and endured increased job displacement (Cook et al., 2019).

The definition of ‘middle class’ shifted with the access to higher education.

Since the late 1960s and into the 1970s, higher education is often seen as the gateway to the middle class (Beach, 2012). However, pre-recession research shows that Black student college enrollment was declining (Lum, 2005). Black and brown college-aged kids disproportionately started their college careers at community college because community college full-time tuition is only a third of the full-time public university tuition (AACC, 2017). The transition from the community college to a four-year baccalaureate degree-granting is also daunting because of the loss of degree credit and the prohibitive cost (Clay, 2020; Hollis, 2018a). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the cost of college can be equivalent to half of the take-home income for low-income families (AACC, 2017).

Without education, communities lament over the way ‘things used to be...’ a period of time when America was great, and families only needed a single steady paycheck to actualize that American dream. However, if the state and federal governments keep pricing out communities from higher education, they also cultivate generations left searching for their own version of the American dream, even when it dons a MAGA hat.

Conclusion

If the country is serious about remaining competitive and about providing education for a new generation of students, we must recognize the high value of higher education and be prepared to make the investments needed to pay for it. (Immerwahr, et al., 2008, pp 2-3; Kramer, 2011)

The 2016 polls showed those without a college degree were more likely to vote for Trump (Smith & Hanley, 2018, p. 195). To be blunt, their analysis continued with the statement that Trump voters were “broke and patriotic” (p. 197). Without college degrees and steady funds, Trump voters, regardless of race, longed for yesteryear when college was not the main thoroughfare to the middle class. However, shifting socioeconomic changes in American society have not assuaged the visceral need for dignity. Any community member, regardless of status, educational level, or background, wants respect and a decent wage to pay for safe and comfortable housing.

My comments about the dwindling steel industry are emblematic of several declining industries. Agriculture, automotives, coal, lumber, and service industries also faced major declines and disrupted steady pay for millions of people (Hanrahan, 1984; Mehrotra, et al., 2014; Mouw & Kalleberg, 2010; Ramey & Vine, 2006; Roth, 2020). Mouw and Kalleberg ‘s (2010) analysis of wage inequity from 1985 to 2020 revealed increasing inequality with supervisors and managers receiving fattened paychecks and bonuses, overlooking the average American worker.

The aforementioned dynamics may be the underpinning as to why some Blacks voted for Trump. According to *NBC News*, 26% of Black men with a high

school education or less voted for Donald Trump. Overall, Trump improved the Black turnout for his bid for a second term. According to Statistica exit polls for Trump in 2016, 6% of Blacks voted for Trump; but in 2020, 12% of Blacks voted for Trump (Duffin, 2020). These voters often represented the underemployed and financially disenfranchised. Instead of disenfranchised voters feeling abandoned with only the hype of false promises, voters would not be in such dire positions if our country would make education and housing affordable. The widening divide between the haves and have-nots leaves many without a living wage and grasping for any relief. Instead of asking with a dreadful tone, 'WHY do they vote for Trump' we can consider further basic human needs ask HOW can public policy make democracy accessible for everyone?

For example, just after the 2016 election, a one of my colleagues went to the salon for a manicure. The technician was so happy because her coal miner husband had returned to work after a five-year hiatus; however, the technician's glee soon dissipated when that coal mine shut down again within a year. She and her husband did not consider how long their need would be met, just that Trump had promised relief. In short, this example shows that public policy prevents the transformation to stability for a community still struggling to meet their basic needs. Maslow, through his theory of needs, considered physiological needs (food, water, and sleep) and safety needs (shelter and protection) as the more basic and critical human needs (Maslow, 1970; Rouse, 2004). The public also forgets the measures someone will engage to secure those needs, even if the perceived solution is voting for Trump, who only offers short-term solutions.

With the electoral map in mind, I argue that higher education is a necessary element in maintaining our democracy. Widening the educational gap, which disproportionately hurts communities of color, will continuously erode the democracy that we built. When the living wage evaporates simultaneously with the path to success which is barricaded by high-priced education, people will gravitate to someone, a tribe, no matter how outrageous, to escape an indigent position. Reminiscent of Smith and Hanley's (2018) remarks, instead of cultivating a nation that is patriotic and continually struggling financially, we need to cultivate a nation that can critically discern manipulative fake news from reality. Hence, solidifying and maintaining our democracy comes with closing the digital divide and granting more affordable access to education. This includes a national commitment to minimize the cost of post-secondary education. Democracy evolves and matures when we abandon the trend of making that critical education so unattainable that communities reach for something else. Otherwise, we would continue to under-educate a community to the point that tribalism, not education, wins the day.

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