



A worker takes a measurement at a highway construction site in Stony Brook, N.Y., Aug. 30, 2022. (CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz)



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Are Democrats finally coming to grips with why they lost the 2024 election? Are they grappling with how they came to be so untrusted by the working class?

In a [recent interview](#) with Ezra Klein, Democratic pollster David Shor argued that "the most important political trend of the last 30 to 40 years, both here and in every other country in the world — at least in Western countries with elections — has been this story of education polarization. Basically, we've seen highly educated people move to the left, while working-class people have moved to the right."

Shor argued that the competing narrative — that Donald Trump's ascent was really a continuation of the GOP's "Southern strategy" after the Civil Rights Act, motivating white voters with racist dog whistles — was wrong. White voters did not shift very much in 2024. Trump's biggest gains were among Hispanic and Asian voters, especially immigrant voters.

"There's a very clear correlation between how many immigrants there were in a county and how much Trump's vote share increased," Shor said. "In counties like Queens, N.Y., or Miami-Dade, Fla., Trump increased his vote share by 10 percentage points, which is just crazy."

How crazy? "Our best guess is that immigrants went from being a Biden plus-27 group in 2020 to a group that Trump narrowly won in 2024. This group of naturalized citizens makes up roughly 10% of the electorate."

Michelle Cottle recently [profiled](#) Rep. Jason Crow of Colorado. "A lot of communities divide the world between when you shower: before work or after work," he told her. The problem for too many Democrats is that they do not know anyone who showers after work.

Crow said working-class voters still complain that the Democrats consider them "deplorables" eight years after Hillary Clinton used that adjective to describe Trump supporters. "They're not listening to us because they don't believe that we respect them and see them," Crow said.

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"How the Democratic Party wound up in the political wilderness has myriad answers," Cottle writes. "But one of the clearest and, for many Democrats, the most vexing is that the party became identified as the champion of cultural elites. Mathematically speaking, this is no way to win the White House, the Senate or the House."

When Trump and Elon Musk portray themselves as blowing up "the establishment," working-class voters love it. The establishment hasn't done a lot for them in the past 40 years of neoliberal economics practiced by both parties. They aren't as scared of tariffs as college-educated people because free trade decimated their towns in the 1990s and they do not have robust 401(k)s taking a hit in the markets today.

Cottle put her finger on one of the key reasons working-class Hispanic and Asian voters are bolting the Democrats: The party represents "cultural elites." Naturalized Americans tend to come from countries with more conservative cultural mores than are found on your average college campus.

It is disorienting enough to come to America. You have to learn a new language, master new ways of interacting socially, adjust to a different culture. On top of all that, to be told that your gender is fluid and volitional, or that the police who protect your neighborhood are the bad guys, or that America is racist to its core, or that religion should not enjoy a privileged place in society, these cultural markers do not endear Democrats to new citizens.

Andrew Sullivan [appeared](#) on "Real Time With Bill Maher" last week. Sullivan has long understood the way the culture affects politics and warned Democrats away from embracing academic slogans and causes. Yet, he, too, betrayed a central bias of the cultural elite. "I do not care about the economy if the government in this country claims it can break down anyone's doors, seize anyone with no due process, put them on a plane, and send them to a foreign jail."

I see his point, but Sullivan can afford to say, "I don't care about the economy." Concern about being able to provide for one's family is not something to sneer at.

Working-class voters are 'not listening to us because they don't believe that we respect them and see them.'

—Rep. Jason Crow

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Michael Schaffer at Politico published a fine [essay](#) last week about two public servants, Voice of America's Michael Abramowitz, who was placed on leave by Trump, and U.S. District Court Judge James Boasberg, who is demanding answers from the Trump administration about its deportations of migrants. Schaffer could have written about dozens of other excellent public servants in Washington, people who went to St. Albans Prep or Georgetown Prep, then to an Ivy League university, took a good-paying job in public service rather than seeking obscene salaries on Wall Street or K Street or Silicon Valley. These public servants contribute daily to the common good.

But they are the establishment and the establishment as a whole did nothing to stop the loss of jobs to free trade and nothing to demand justice for those who lost their homes in the 2008 economic meltdown, or demand justice from those who perpetrated that meltdown.

Democratic donors, strategists and staff come from similar pedigrees, move in similar social circles. They, too, may not know anyone who showers after work, except those they pay to weed their garden, or fix their roof. The establishment — the term was coined by the late, great Henry Fairlie — is disconnected from the working-class.

Trump seized on the disconnect. He may be selling snake oil, but at least he pays attention to working-class people and does not disrespect them or their choices publicly. He shows up at wrestling matches. He never speaks in academic jargon. He identifies working-class grievances and offers up a simplistic explanation or enemy as the source of those grievances.

It worked in 2024 and it will keep working unless the Democrats learn what's on the mind of the people who shower after work.