

Faculty Workload and Productivity: The Trauma of Trump

By Henry Lee Allen

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The election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th president of the United States has ushered in perplexing times for the world, the nation, and American higher education.¹ And while the current milieu is certainly dire, it is not a sudden occurrence. Rather, it is the end result of systematic efforts to discredit higher education over the last 40 or so years. The implications of this trend are alarming, and intelligent people everywhere ought to worry about any social system with a majority coalition that is scientifically illiterate or poorly informed.²

Various observers, ranging from the national media to academics, have characterized the Trump administration as being chaotic, at best, and often toxic in its aims and authority.³ This toxicity—defined as a confluence of leader, followers, and environmental factors that make destructive leadership possible—is a real threat to higher education and the faculty who seek

to move students to a nuanced and objective worldview.⁴ At its best, higher education exists to refute foolish arguments, flimsy conjectures, and ephemeral evidence.

Anything less produces trauma.

In human affairs, visibility is not the same as integrity; popularity and profligacy are not equal to truth. In brief, style does not trump substance; dubious rhetoric cannot overcome systematic evidence. Nations can enhance themselves by intelligence and innovation, but they can also atrophy and circumvent the future by a downward regressive spiral.⁵ As we learned from Nazi Germany, the world must be alert to any technologically advanced population characterized by lethal weapons and impotent ideas.⁶ Further, a toxic or traumatic leader sanctions the hubris of reductionist perceptions, particularly if these notions: (1) justify idiosyncrasies, (2) minimize complexity, and (3) assault

the collective welfare of all citizens—especially the truly disadvantaged. For this brand of leader, politics are more important than authentic, tested evidence or the morality of truth seeking. Woe is the fate of any society that enables this type of leadership.⁷

Given the aforementioned issues, higher education within the U.S. faces a precarious future for it must vigorously contest the tyranny of an uninformed governmental coalition, the ascendancy of anti-intellectualism, backlash politics, xenophobia, and other social viruses that have invaded certain segments of the populace. Indeed, the entire post-secondary sector of the academic system now exists in a quasi-extortive state of perplexity and flux, as the current cadre of political leaders and polemical critics refuse to act to enhance its systemic quality.

In this article, I explore what I term the “trauma” of Trump in higher education and society. Specifically, I identify five traumas: (1) immaturity, (2) ignorance, (3) incompetence, (4) incivility, and (5) irrelevance. The cumulative, interconnected sum total of these traumas poses the real threat of making a well-rounded education and scientific literacy less attainable for future generations. While this article probes the ideas and consequences related to the current trauma, I believe that even in the darkest times in human history, hope for redirection and new possibilities always exists.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUMP AND HIS COALITION

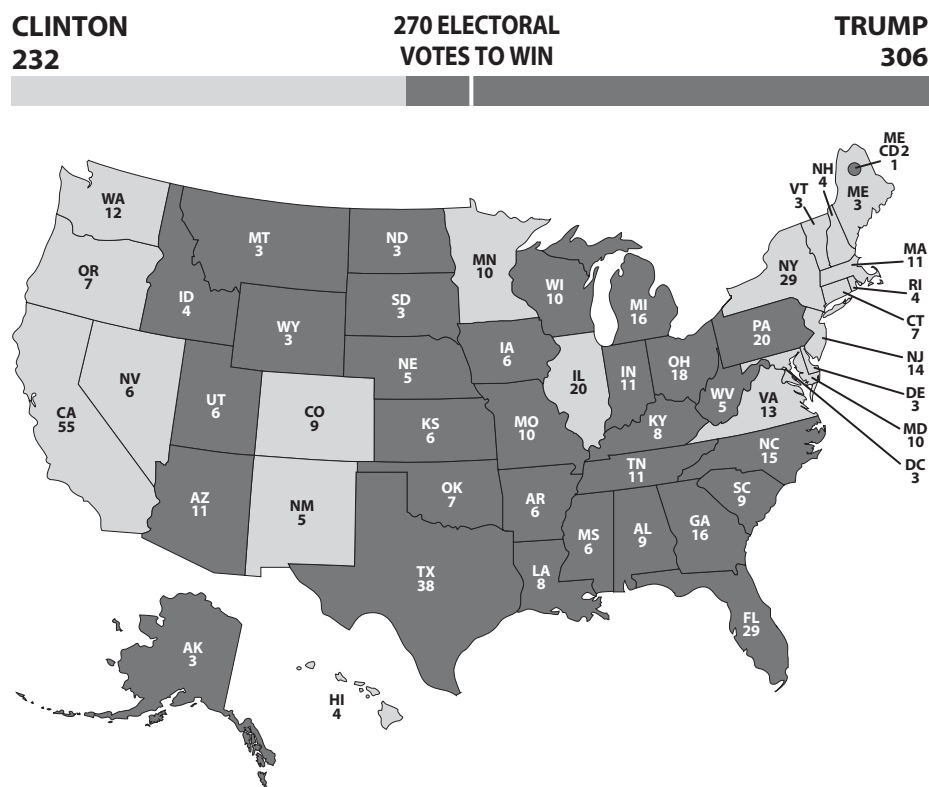
What are President Trump’s intellectual and professional qualifications to lead the diverse, complex post-industrial country of the United States in the 21st century? Which sensibilities influence his coalition of followers? These are difficult questions to answer in elections where merit is circumvented by the whims and caprices of voters who vary in life experience, cognition, morality, and expertise. Some voters are distracted in their political judgments by sports, entertainment, sexual attraction,

subjective predilections, and similar mundane affairs. Other voters may be enamored by pithy soundbites, the fallacies of pundits, and social networks that sway their thinking with emotional baits instead of critical thinking. Voting is not a level playing field where intellectual quality reigns. Thus, all social systems based on popular sovereignty can be contaminated by sophistry.

In *The Truth About Trump*, Pulitzer Prize winning author Michael D’Antonio writes that Trump “feels offended when people don’t serve him.”⁸ He chronicles Trump’s socialization from a mother who was obsessed with social status and conspicuous consumption, and a father who was preening, manipulative, and deceptive. The elder Trump also had difficulties with financial improprieties associated with government programs.⁹ Donald Trump was immersed within a heritage of corruption and malfeasance that solidified his implicit fascination with ideas associated with genetic determinism. During his presidential campaign, Trump preyed on his followers’ fear of Islamic terrorists, fear of unemployment, fear of crime, and fear of globalization.¹⁰ The support Trump generated during his run for president (largely based on these fears) and the political coalition he formed has interesting features. Figure 1 is a map showing the distribution of states for the 2016 presidential election.

Table 1 provides empirical data about the most and least educated states: (from the left column to the right column) the percentage of adults with bachelor’s degrees; the percentage of adults possessing a high school diploma; the 2014 median household income per state; the median earnings for those with bachelor’s degrees; and the rank of median earnings for those with a bachelor’s degree. Notice the general pattern: *The most prosperous and highly educated states did not give Trump his electoral victory.*

Table 2 provides additional empirical data about the richest and poorest states in the U.S. From the left column to the right column, it

Figure 1. Final 2016 Electoral College Map

Source: *Business Insider*, "Final 2016 Electoral College Map."

depicts: median household income; population; 2016 unemployment rate; poverty rate; and the ranking of states according to whether their poverty percentage is among the highest or lowest in the nation. Again, the data suggest that Trump's coalition was anchored in those states with high proportions of poverty.

Meanwhile, the Southern Education Foundation released a report on states with a majority of low-income students in public schools in 2011. Table 3 displays these findings.¹¹ With few exceptions (California, Oregon), these states anchor Trump's coalition. Is there any correlation between these educational findings and those voters? Have the regressive ideas favored by Trump and his supporters enhanced the public schools or students in these states? It takes decades of neglect to create these educational conditions and to ignore the tangible

social implications for future generations. Obviously, short-term fixes, poor policies, and failed political leadership are implicated in this state of affairs.¹²

It is also instructive to note that 10 of the states listed in Table 3 had 2012 unemployment rates above the national average (Mississippi, Georgia, Kentucky, Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, California, Oregon, Nevada, and North Carolina) and that all except Tennessee, California, North Carolina, and Texas showed a net decrease in state funding for higher education during this time (FY2009 to FY2014) with Louisiana dropping by a whopping 34.4 percent over the five-year period.¹³

Table 4 shows summary data compiled from the previous tables and applied to the states reported in Table 3 (from left to right): the percentage of low-income students in public

Table 1. Most and Least Educated States in the United States

State	Adults with Bachelor's Degree	Adults with High School Diploma	2014 Median Household Income	Median Earnings Bachelor's Degree	Rank of Median Earnings Bachelor's Degree
Massachusetts	41.2%	89.7%	\$ 69,160	\$ 57,451	6th highest
Colorado	38.3	90.5	61,303	48,818	12th highest
Maryland	38.2	89.6	73,971	59,691	highest
Connecticut	38.0	90.1	70,048	61,087	4th highest
New Jersey	37.4	89.1	71,919	60,575	2nd highest
Virginia	36.7	88.5	64,902	55,797	8th highest
New Hampshire	35.0	92.2	66,532	51,965	7th highest
Vermont	34.9	92.0	54,166	42,228	20th highest
New York	34.5	85.7	58,878	53,280	16th highest
Minnesota	34.3	92.6	61,481	51,226	10th highest
Washington	33.1	90.4	61,366	54,844	11th highest
Illinois	32.8	88.2	57,444	51,638	17th highest
California	31.7	82.1	61,933	55,900	9th highest
Kansas	31.5	90.3	52,504	46,785	25th lowest
Utah	31.1	91.4	60,922	45,861	13th highest
Hawaii	31.0	91.7	69,592	49,725	5th highest
Oregon	30.8	89.7	51,075	42,084	23rd lowest
Delaware	30.6	89.0	59,716	51,577	14th highest
Rhode Island	30.4	85.8	54,891	49,218	19th highest
Nebraska	29.5	90.3	52,686	43,402	24th highest
Maine	29.4	91.7	49,462	40,695	19th lowest
Montana	29.3	92.6	46,328	37,487	10th lowest
Georgia	29.1	85.6	49,321	48,679	17th lowest
Pennsylvania	29.0	89.4	53,234	50,017	22nd highest
North Carolina	28.7	86.4	46,556	44,021	11th lowest
Wisconsin	28.4	91.4	52,622	47,027	25th highest
Alaska	28.0	92.9	71,583	56,042	3rd highest
South Dakota	27.8	91.7	50,979	40,316	22nd lowest
Texas	27.8	82.2	53,035	51,491	23rd highest
Iowa	27.7	86.1	53,712	46,851	21st highest
Arizona	27.6	86.1	50,068	46,407	21st lowest
Missouri	27.5	88.9	48,363	44,221	15th lowest
Michigan	27.4	89.9	49,847	48,731	20th lowest
North Dakota	27.4	92.2	59,029	42,262	15th highest
Florida	27.3	87.2	47,463	43,378	12th lowest
Ohio	26.6	89.4	49,308	48,648	16th lowest
Wyoming	26.6	92.6	57,055	43,572	18th highest
New Mexico	26.4	84.2	44,803	42,412	8th lowest
South Carolina	26.3	86.1	45,238	45,253	9th lowest
Tennessee	25.3	85.8	44,361	43,654	6th lowest
Idaho	25.0	90.1	47,861	41,423	14th lowest
Indiana	24.7	88.4	49,446	44,424	18th lowest
Oklahoma	24.2	87.3	47,529	43,293	13th lowest
Alabama	23.5	84.7	42,830	45,874	4th lowest
Nevada	23.1	85.1	51,450	45,505	24th lowest
Louisiana	22.9	83.6	44,555	46,903	7th lowest
Kentucky	22.2	84.5	42,958	43,798	5th lowest
Arkansas	21.4	85.3	41,262	43,020	3rd lowest
Mississippi	21.1	82.8	39,680	41,004	lowest
West Virginia	19.2	85.2	41,059	40,963	2nd lowest

Source: Adapted from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey.

Table 2. Richest and Poorest States in the United States

State	Median Household Income	State Population	2016 Unemployment Rate	Poverty Rate	Poverty Rank
Mississippi	\$ 41,754	2,988,726	5.8%	20.8%	Highest poverty rate
West Virginia	43,385	1,831,102	6.0	17.9	5th highest
Arkansas	44,334	2,988,248	4.0	17.2	6th highest
Louisiana	45,146	4,681,666	6.1	20.2	2nd highest
Alabama	46,257	4,863,300	6.0	17.1	7th highest
Kentucky	46,659	4,436,974	5.0	18.5	4th highest
New Mexico	46,748	2,081,015	6.7	19.8	3rd highest
Tennessee	48,547	6,651,194	4.8	15.8	11th highest
Oklahoma	49,176	3,923,561	4.9	16.3	9th highest
South Carolina	49,501	4,961,119	4.8	15.3	14th highest
Montana	50,027	1,042,520	4.1	13.3	24th highest
North Carolina	50,584	10,146,788	5.1	15.4	13th highest
Florida	50,860	20,612,439	4.9	14.7	16th highest
Missouri	51,746	6,093,000	4.5	14.0	22nd highest
Idaho	51,807	1,683,140	3.8	14.4	19th highest
Indiana	52,314	6,633,053	4.5	14.1	21st highest
Ohio	52,234	11,614,373	4.9	14.6	18th highest
Michigan	52,492	9,928,300	4.9	15.0	15th highest
Maine	53,079	1,331,479	3.9	12.5	21st lowest
Arizona	53,558	6,931,071	5.3	16.4	8th highest
Georgia	53,559	10,310,371	5.4	16.0	10th highest
South Dakota	54,467	865,454	2.8	13.3	24th highest
Kansas	54,935	2,907,289	4.2	12.1	20th lowest
Nevada	55,180	2,940,058	5.7	13.8	23rd highest
Iowa	56,247	3,134,693	3.7	11.8	18th lowest
Texas	56,565	27,862,596	4.6	15.6	12th highest
Wisconsin	56,811	5,778,709	4.1	11.8	18th lowest
Pennsylvania	56,907	12,784,227	5.4	12.9	23rd lowest
Nebraska	56,927	1,907,116	3.2	11.4	15th lowest
Oregon	57,532	4,093,465	4.9	13.3	24th highest
Vermont	57,677	624,594	3.3	11.9	19th lowest
Wyoming	59,882	585,501	5.3	11.3	14th lowest
Rhode Island	60,596	1,056,426	5.3	12.8	22nd lowest
North Dakota	60,656	757,953	3.2	10.7	10th lowest
Illinois	60,960	12,801,539	5.9	13.0	24th lowest
Delaware	61,757	952,065	4.4	11.7	16th lowest
New York	62,909	19,745,289	4.8	14.7	16th highest
Minnesota	65,599	5,519,952	3.9	9.9	6th lowest
Colorado	65,685	5,540,545	3.3	11.0	12th lowest
Utah	65,977	3,051,217	3.4	10.2	7th lowest
Washington	67,106	7,288,000	5.4	11.3	14th lowest
California	67,739	39,250,017	5.4	14.3	20th highest
Virginia	68,114	8,411,808	4.0	11.0	12th lowest
New Hampshire	70,936	1,334,795	2.8	7.3	lowest
Connecticut	73,433	3,576,452	5.1	9.8	4th lowest
Hawaii	74,511	1,428,557	3.0	9.3	2nd lowest
Massachusetts	75,297	6,811,779	3.7	10.4	9th lowest
New Jersey	76,126	8,944,469	5.0	10.4	9th lowest
Alaska	76,440	741,894	6.6	9.9	6th lowest
Maryland	78,945	6,016,447	4.3	9.7	3rd lowest

Source: Adapted from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 Annual Population Survey.

Table 3. States with a Majority of Low-Income Students in Public Schools: 2011

State	Rate
Mississippi	71%
New Mexico	68
Louisiana	66
Oklahoma	61
Arkansas	60
Georgia	57
Kentucky	57
Florida	56
Tennessee	55
South Carolina	55
Alabama	55
California	54
West Virginia	51
Oregon	51
Nevada	51
North Carolina	50
Texas	50

Source: Southern Education Foundation, *A New Majority: Low-Income Students in the South and the Nation*.

schools; the poverty rate; the ranking related to the poverty rate; the percentage of adults with bachelor's degrees; and the ranking of median earnings for those possessing bachelor's degrees. Again, Table 4 reveals a pattern related to Trump's electoral base: States anchoring the Trump coalition have the highest levels of poverty and the lowest median earnings for people with bachelor's degrees (except California and Texas).

In sum, angry and desperate voters propelled President Trump to his electoral victory in spite of his inadequacies as a leader or his gross inexperience in government. The tyranny of abject pain overrode more progressive ideas. Where this undiscovered country will end up is problematic for all—especially for those who love the best aspects of post-secondary education.

EFFECTS OF THE TRUMP ERA

Despite the items broached above, 60 million voters endorsed Trump with their votes in the 2016 presidential election.¹⁴ For the country as a whole, however, at this writing, he has attracted sharply divergent approval ratings.¹⁵ While 17 states have averaged a 50 percent or higher job approval for the president from January until June 2017, another 17 states have averaged below 40 percent in approval. Among the states with the highest job approval ratings were: West Virginia (60 percent), North Dakota (59 percent), South Dakota (57 percent), Montana (56 percent), Wyoming (56 percent), Alabama (55 percent), Oklahoma (54 percent), Kansas (53 percent), Kentucky (53 percent), Arkansas (53 percent), and Idaho (53 percent).¹⁶

By contrast, the states assigning President Trump the lowest approval ratings were: Vermont (26 percent), Massachusetts (29 percent), Maryland (30 percent), California (30 percent), New York (31 percent), Connecticut (34 percent), Hawaii (35 percent), New Jersey (36 percent), Illinois (36 percent), and Washington (36 percent).¹⁷ These states are more urbanized, and few of them have a majority of low-income students in public schools indicated in Table 1. Acute questions are suggested by these preliminary findings, especially if they are replicated and validated by long-term trends across varying conditions. In any complex post-industrial society during this age of globalization, should more robust or advanced states be led by Trump's political coalition of leaders from the former set of states? Is that outcome ever in the perpetual national interest? Where are regressive ideas likely to be permeated, in more complex or less complex social locations? Overall, President Trump has more respondents who disapprove (54 percent) of his job than those who approve (40 percent).¹⁸

What signals has the president sent to heal the divide between citizens? What inspiring vision has he promulgated for the evolving, diverse nation? How will his leadership unify citizens for the common good? Have the cabinet

Table 4. States with a Majority of Low-Income Students in Public Schools: 2011, 2017 Poverty Rates, and 2015 Percentage of Adults with Bachelor's Degree

State	Low-Income Student Rate	Percent Poverty Rate	Comments	Adults with Bachelor's Degree	Rank of Median Earnings for Those with Bachelor's Degrees
Mississippi	71%	20.8%	Highest poverty rate	21.1%	lowest
New Mexico	68	19.8	3rd highest	26.4	8th lowest
Louisiana	66	20.2	2nd highest	22.9	7th lowest
Oklahoma	61	16.3	9th highest	24.2	13th lowest
Arkansas	60	17.2	6th highest	21.4	3rd lowest
Georgia	57	16.0	10th highest	29.1	17th lowest
Kentucky	57	18.5	4th highest	22.2	5th lowest
Florida	56	14.7	16th highest	27.3	12th lowest
Tennessee	55	15.8	11th highest	25.3	6th lowest
South Carolina	55	15.3	14th highest	26.3	9th lowest
Alabama	55	17.1	7th highest	23.5	4th lowest
California*	54	14.3	20th highest	31.7	9th highest
West Virginia	51	17.9	5th highest	19.2	2nd lowest
Oregon*	51	13.3	24th highest	30.8	23rd lowest
Nevada	51	13.8	23rd highest	23.1	24th lowest
North Carolina	50	15.4	13th highest	28.7	11th lowest
Texas	50	15.6	12th highest	27.8	23rd highest

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *2016 Annual Population Survey*; U.S. Census Bureau, *2014 American Community Survey*; Southern Education Foundation, *A New Majority: Low-Income Students in the South and the Nation*.

* Denotes states that did not give electoral victory to Trump.

leaders he selected been representative of the nation's emerging future? Anti-intellectualism has infected the country before and faculty in colleges and universities must not allow any leader to sabotage the fate of the nation with these traumas again.

THE TRAUMA OF IMMATURITY

When any president engages in verbal or symbolic immaturity, this is a problem in leadership. When any president takes delight in blaming others (predecessors, opponents) for his or her shortcomings, engages in reprehensible deflections, commits attribution errors, devours narcissism, undermines legislative

authorities, and placates adversaries, insanity nears. When any president rejects authentic collaboration, issues inaccurate statements repeatedly, parlays insulting comments, and makes bombastic projections, he or she lacks social intelligence.¹⁹ When any president symbolizes a mythical, nostalgic past, regresses to the lowest antecedents, recruits also-rans, and relishes manipulating truthful knowledge, that leader is a Pied Piper leading society astray to a dismal, chaotic destiny. Maturity is a key trait for any effective leader. For the so-called "leader of the free world," maturity is not an option, it is an absolute requirement.

THE TRAUMA OF IGNORANCE

A wise leader combats any cowardice of intellect in his or her life as well as in those who support them. Thus, a healthy skepticism about ideas is expected—especially in scientific domains. A wise leader is not intimidated by smarter people who have greater professional expertise across vast domains of inquiry. To produce this profile in graduates or leaders is a minimal goal of genuine higher education. For professors who teach, an implicit, intergenerational faculty norm is to respect the authority of tested expertise.²⁰ An opposite norm is to revel in ignorance about the salient issues of the day, by rationalizing absurd notions. Thus, ignorance undermines societal competence and confidence by breeding trauma. There is an intangible trauma associated with stupidity about ethnic diversity, civil rights, climate change, and scientific literacy.²¹

Recent reports have collected empirical data exposing social ills and other challenges in society.²² At the Brookings Institution, William Frey has published about the diversity explosion confronting the nation in the next two decades.²³ The National Academy of Sciences has produced several reports about community gaps in basic scientific literacy.²⁴ Other agencies have exposed the serious problems affecting minority and low-income pupils within public schools.²⁵ Moreover, scientists have issued clarion calls about climate change and its consequences.²⁶ Many other environmental and scientific matters face the nation.

Is the smart response to these myriad issues to roll back civil rights enforcement for a society that is becoming more ethnically diverse? Should the public treasury be used to subsidize private, for-profit sinecures within postsecondary education? Should health care be the purview of the affluent or federal officials? Does the private sector and its markets owe any civic duty to nourish the common good? Are militarism and bullying optimal strategies when sabotaging diplomacy? Has this president demonstrated any of the competencies needed to

lead this society effectively forward in the 21st century? To fail to engage these complicated arenas produces acute trauma for the educated mind. Where is the presidential leadership and acumen about items more important than pecuniary rewards and tax breaks? The verdict is out—intellectual deficits are cumulative, not easily rectified by the magic of sophistry.

THE TRAUMA OF INCOMPETENCE

Seasoned political leaders, within and outside their particular political party, have recognized Trump's inadequate leadership. He seems to have a weak knowledge of key constitutional matters. His foreign policy seems not to grasp the diplomatic intricacies of contemporary global issues. Trump's understanding of history and tact do not reflect the best standards of higher education. Recognizing that every human being has flaws and weaknesses, why then are these matters so traumatic?

There are global implications for any stupidity epidemic in governmental leadership.²⁷ For the world to see, Trump's electoral victory and subsequent presidential predilections amply reveal the inherent weaknesses and limitations within the political and judicial systems of the United States. No exceptionalism here, because the emperor has no credible, sustainable scientific substance. Moreover, there is nothing cute or sacrosanct about political nostalgia, xenophobic nationalism, and an ethnocentric patriotism.

Over the last few decades, many educators have inculcated pivotal research about emotional intelligence, character education, conflict resolution, social intelligence, anti-bullying tactics, and collaboration as vital aspects of citizenry and leadership.²⁸ Meanwhile, criminologists, psychiatrists, and psychologists have documented behaviors that harm others.²⁹ For example, psychologist Daniel Goleman finds that the quality and frequency of our social interactions affect the development of our brains and emotions.³⁰ Whereas constructive relationships enhance our health and wellness,

toxic relationships cause our brain cells to decay and contribute to other forms of cellular damage. In short, an emerging field of social neuroscience has discovered that the ongoing development of spindle cells and mirror neurons in the brain are affected by our social interactions. Goleman further observes that social intelligence involves developing skills in social awareness and interactions that produce listening with receptivity, empathy, social cognition, synchrony, concern, influence, and positive self-presentations. Thus, dysfunctional leaders can have harmful, traumatic effects on those they direct, along with their communities, and vice versa.

Undoubtedly, ignorance impedes competence. Demands for loyalty are not adequate substitutes. At this writing, there are few stellar appointments in the Trump administration. Few close advisors have the gumption to inform the president that success in business affairs is not a panacea for governing a multi-ethnic society. Who would have thought of a leader who would self-incriminate by even the appearance of obstructing justice? What coalition of persons would favor a leader whose public record at best magnifies the best of the worst and champions the worst of the best?

Unfortunately, people suffer trauma under incompetent political leadership. Attentive professors devote their lives to refuting the scientific idiocy, policy amnesia, and historical paranoia of stakeholders who lack integrity, cultural competence, tacit knowledge, and a willingness to become lifelong learners.³¹ In a post-industrial era, a competent leader must be aware of the salient issues and select staff based on rigorous expertise instead of cronyism.

THE TRAUMA OF INCIVILITY

Professors assume that inculcating the lessons of higher education ought to make recipients more civil in social relationships as students learn about diverse ways that humans adapt to societies across the spectrum of academic disciplines. Learning should produce empathy

as well as the cognitive sensibilities to see life from the purview of others. Racism and sexism—like the dinosaurs—are relics of the past, moving inexorably toward extinction. Unfortunately, President Trump's tirades escalate incivility and disregard the respect due to others, exploiting them by cheapening their contributions. Notice that white privilege and incivility reinforced each other during Trump's presidential campaign. He continues, as president, by spewing his wrath (often via Twitter) toward the press, FBI investigators, intelligence analysts, Hillary Clinton, world leaders, Barack Obama, immigrants, Mexicans, the disabled, war heroes, patriots, and even the Attorney General of the United States.

Snyder connects incivility promulgated by leaders with the scourge of tyranny, by examining case studies from Europe.³² He reminds us that fascism rejects reason, denies objective truth, and adores a popular culture mythology. All this chaos is promulgated and legitimated by leaders who invent or use conspiracies in the face of uncertainties and perplexities. Moreover, case studies of European history reveal that societies can break, democracies can fall, and ethics can collapse, while popular culture is corrupted by fear, violence, and death. Is this the fate of any society where technological fascination or entertainment supersedes justice or the social welfare of citizens? Admittedly, not everyone experiences the trauma of Trump in the same way, to the same degree. As with the differential impact of radiation, effects vary. Nonetheless, future generations will be damaged collectively by this incivility.

THE TRAUMA OF IRRELEVANCE

Why end with this trauma? Because irrelevant ideas always rob society of a better future. They distract from an optimal focus and siphon off productive energies. Irrelevant or bogus ideas affect budget priorities, military outcomes, educational or human capital investments, and scientific literacy. White supremacy is a bogus myth and an irrelevant option for a thriving

multiethnic society.³³ To ignore this point is to endorse trauma. Making America great again is also irrelevant if you recognize the devastating human consequences of genocide, slavery, lynching, sexism, and downright stupidity in the nation's heritage. To glory in a fake past sanctions irrelevance for the future.

LEADERSHIP ALWAYS MATTERS

Volumes have been written about the topic because quality within any social system is enhanced or diminished by the maturity and style of its leader. To illustrate the acute differences between mature versus immature leaders, recall the 2001 Academy Award-winning film, *Gladiator*. In that film, the protagonist, starring Russell Crowe as Maximus, was a battle-tested general who had effectively led the legions of the Roman army in many wars under the authority of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. While he fought and led a victorious army, Maximus vanquished foes. At the same time, his integrity and character as a leader was anchored toward virtue and the hope of returning to his family. Because of these accomplishments, Marcus Aurelius favored Maximus as his successor to restore Rome to greatness.

Meanwhile, Commodus, a deceitful, pompous, and unethical villain—and also the son of the emperor—was the antagonist. After being rejected as the successor by his father, Commodus commits patricide and seizes power in a coup. Throughout the movie, Commodus hates Maximus, killing the soldier's family and plotting the death of his archenemy. But, Maximus escapes the clutches of Commodus to re-emerge as a great, heroic gladiator. Throughout the film, Commodus displays manipulative, genocidal, and sociopathic tendencies. He lies and cheats with impunity, having no conscience as his amoral behavior unfolds.

For the final, climactic scene, Commodus stabs and injures Maximus before the fatal battle between them. His cheating provokes his own security forces to abandon him as he loses

the battle, and Maximus subsequently kills Commodus. When the battle ends, the injured Maximus dies. Yet, those who secretly supported him (fearing the wrath of Commodus while he reigned), publicly pledge their loyalty to the ideals espoused by their slain leader Maximus. The film ends as the supporters seek to restore virtue, honor, and accountability to Rome and its social, political institutions. This film and its lessons are invaluable for the Trump era. A society must realize that leadership at the highest levels of governance inexorably affects the destiny of future generations. Commodus was a traumatic leader. Commodus, creating havoc wherever he went, was a pathetic, immature leader who inhibited greatness and virtue.

All sane citizens hope for the best for their leaders, for social welfare in society depends on their prowess. Throughout history, governing regimes have depended upon the wisdom grounded in expertise. At the apex of higher education in this nation is a vast army of students, faculty, administrators, and others who could assist President Trump in overcoming the traumas he radiates in society. For the sake of the nation, he needs to redeem his presidency in their direction or face the destiny of irrelevance. Any foolish attempt to devolve the academic system will have a disproportionate impact on resolving societal traumas and move us toward a bleak future.³⁴

NEA and the most rigorous champions of the academy can never permit the immaturity, ignorance, and incompetence displayed by President Trump to contaminate society even further than these regressive, hegemonic, and pretentious contagions have already done. Celebrity status is not enough! Success in business is not an arbiter of effective democratic leadership, as recent months under the Trump presidency have indicated. Regressive ideas fuel trauma. In an ideal sense, faculty in higher education must help adherents and benefactors to discern between truth and falsity, fidelity and flamboyance, ingenuity and impotence.

NOTES

¹ On a personal level, as the final decade of my academic career ensues, I write this essay with a troubled heart—as one who witnessed the enormous promise of the Civil Rights Movement. Thus, under the auspices of NEA, the ideas in this essay are being produced as a record for my grandchildren and the social worlds they will inherit. My gratitude to NEA across 25 years is undeniable! On a second personal note, to be fair, while I assail President Trump's regime in this article, I admit that as an independent African American sociologist of 62 years who understands how social systems operate, I have never been impressed by the popular or media hype surrounding any president, including Bill Clinton or Barack Obama. The views expressed in this essay are my own, not those of NEA.

² Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect*.

³ See Joseph, "Charlottesville Spotlights Trump's Toxic Failure to Lead"; and Torrance, "Why You Shouldn't Try to Copy Trump's Leadership Style."

⁴ Padilla, et al., "The Toxic Triangle: Destructive Leaders, Susceptible Followers, and Conducive Environments."

⁵ Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level*.

⁶ Snyder, *Tyranny*.

⁷ Generations ago, sociologist Peter M. Blau demonstrated that no governmental leader comes to power without a coalition that sustains him (or her). Power is therefore mediated via social exchanges within direct or indirect, overt or covert, relationships. See Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*.

⁸ D'Antonio, *The Truth About Trump*, p. ix.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

¹⁰ D'Antonio's book elaborates upon all these matters and a must read for all interested learners in the academy.

¹¹ Southern Education Foundation, *A New Majority: Low-Income Students in the South and the Nation*.

¹² Derber, *Sociopathic Society*.

¹³ Unemployment figures are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; higher education funding changes are from Illinois State University and State Higher Education Executive Officers, *Grapevine*.

¹⁴ Williamson and Knight, "Choose Your Election Post-Mortem: Part 2."

¹⁵ Jones, "Trump Has Averaged 50 percent or Higher Job Approval in 17 States."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Goleman, *Social Intelligence*.

²⁰ Clark, *The Higher Education System*.

²¹ Alumkal, *Paranoid Science*; Otto, *The War on Science*.

²² Graham and Pinto, *Unequal Hopes and Lives in the U.S.*; Porter et al., *Problems Unsolved and A Nation Divided*.

²³ Frey, *Diversity Explosion*.

²⁴ See National Academy of Sciences, *Examining the Mistrust of Science; Communicating Science Effectively: A Research Agenda*; and *Science Literacy: Concepts, Contexts, and Consequences*.

²⁵ Southern Education Foundation, *A New Majority: Low-Income Students in the South and the Nation*.

²⁶ Otto, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Weidlich, *Sociodynamics: A Systematic Approach to Mathematical Modelling in the Social Sciences*.

²⁸ Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*.

²⁹ The late Russell Ackoff, a professor in the Wharton School of Business (Trump's alma mater), wrote a brilliant book about how to work with regressive thinkers in organizations and society. See Ackoff, *Redesigning the Future*.

³⁰ Goleman, *op. cit.*

³¹ Hickman, *Leading Organizations*.

³² Snyder, *op. cit.*

³³ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*.

³⁴ Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score*.

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