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**U.S. ELECTION
2016:**
Trump Nation

Hosted by MICHAEL SERAPIO



**NEWS
IN
REVIEW**

IN THIS ISSUE

U.S. Election 2016: Trump Nation (Duration 18:25)

Donald J. Trump was considered an outsider and long shot from the start. An American businessman and reality-show host, he announced his candidacy for president of the United States in June 2015. With no real political experience, it looked certain that his opponent, former Secretary of State and Washington insider Hillary Clinton, had the leading edge. Still, it became one of the most contentious presidential races in U.S. history. In the end, the American people voted for Trump Nation.

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U.S. ELECTION 2016: Trump Nation

VIDEO REVIEW

Before Viewing

When Donald Trump was running for president, he promised to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border, promote U.S. isolationism by repealing and renegotiating international trade treaties, rescind health care for low-income citizens (covered under the so-called Obamacare plan) and stop Muslim immigration to the U.S. He was also accused by a number of women of committing sexual assault, and he revealed in a presidential debate that he hasn't paid personal income tax in years (which, he said, makes him smart).

1. Why do you think voters would be willing to overlook controversial policies and behaviours to elect their preferred candidate?

2. What would motivate people to reject traditional politicians in favour of a celebrity business person?

Viewing

1. What was Hillary Clinton's message to supporters in Pennsylvania?

2. How does the CBC's Adrienne Arsenault describe Donald Trump on the eve of the election?

3. How did Trump manage to mobilize voters against Clinton? What emotional response did he capitalize on?

4. What is Electionland? What does Electionland do?

5. What are some of the controversial promises that Trump vows to keep as president of the United States?

6. While Trump won the presidency with more than 270 Electoral College votes, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by over two million votes. True False

7. a) According to the University of Montreal’s Claire Durand, what factors did pollsters fail to consider in the lead up to the election?

b) How big a lead did she give Clinton heading into the election? Why were her conclusions significant?

8. Why did some immigrant voters support Trump? What appeal did his stance on immigration have for them?

9. Why are non-documented immigrants terrified of a Trump presidency?

10. a) How would you characterize Barack Obama’s views regarding Donald Trump?

b) How would you characterize Donald Trump’s views regarding Barack Obama?

c) How were their attitudes toward each other reflected at their first meeting at the White House?

11. Who did urban voters tend to support in the election? Who did rural voters tend to support?

12. What two staff appointments by president-elect Trump surprised most political pundits? Why were these appointments surprising?

13. What signs of policy back-peddling did Trump show shortly after his election victory?

After Viewing

In his victory speech, Trump showed signs of conciliation and diplomacy. He said, “Now it’s time to bind the wounds of division. To all Republicans and Democrats and Independents across the nation, I say it is time for us to come together as one united people. It’s time. I pledge to every citizen of our land that I will be president for all Americans and this is so important to me.”

Based on the documentary you just watched, and the news you have heard or read about Donald Trump, do you believe he will be a president for all Americans? Do you think his election victory will make him more open to other perspectives as he is now a president for the people who backed him as well as the people who didn’t back him? Please explain your viewpoint.

THE STORY

Minds On

In a blog written for the Wall Street Journal, Matthew J. Dowd claimed that one of the takeaways from Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election was the following:

// If voters have a choice between a flawed insider and a flawed outsider, they will want the flawed outsider unless those flaws become totally disqualifying. //

1. What flaws would make a candidate totally disqualifiable?
2. Why do people voting today prefer political outsiders to political insiders?

Source: Dowd, Michael J. (November 13, 2016). Ten takeaways from Donald Trump's upset win and the 2016 election cycle. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from: blogs.wsj.com.

An utterly surprising result

In what has been described as one of the most surprising results in U.S. presidential history, Donald Trump defied the pollsters and took the White House, bringing Hillary Clinton's bid to become the first female president to a stunning end. In the lead up to the election, prognosticators claimed that a Trump presidency was unlikely — that too many hurdles needed to be cleared for the New York businessman to win the highest office in the land. On election night, he cleared those hurdles and a shocked nation woke up to the news that president-elect Trump would move into the White House in January 2017.

Beating the odds

Trump is tantamount to an independent candidate. While winning the nomination for the Republican Party, he essentially ran as a renegade looking to shake up the political elite



that governed the party. He beat the odds and won the nomination — rather easily in fact — despite a slate of established, experienced and highly regarded Republican contenders. While the main guard of the Republican establishment rejected him, the grassroots embraced him as their conquering hero. Next came Hillary Clinton. Once again, the odds were stacked against Trump — Clinton was regarded as one of the most experienced candidates to run for office in decades. This didn't seem to matter as he was able to ride a wave of voter discontent past the Democratic nominee and leave the so-called political elite in his wake.

A bitter and controversial campaign

Trump's victory came at the end of a bitter and controversial campaign. The Republican nominee broke just about every rule in the political playbook: he frequently spoke with little regard for the facts, he often blatantly lied, and he scapegoated minority groups. He promised to build an eight-metre-high wall along the U.S.-Mexican border in order to keep illegal immigrants out of America (and make the Mexicans pay for it!). He also said he would put a stop to Muslim immigration and force existing Muslims to register on a U.S. government database. He managed to win approval by catering to the fears and anxieties of his constituents (mostly, but not exclusively,

white voters) — vowing to clean up the Washington swamp that is polluted with political aristocrats who care little for the common citizen. He also vowed to bring jobs back to the U.S. and resurrect the manufacturing sector in the U.S. midwest. His anti-establishment, pro-commoner message rung true to millions of voters. The desire for change was so strong that even a serving of Trump would satisfy the appetites of a vast number of people who felt disenfranchised from their democratic franchise.

During the 2016 presidential election campaign, Donald Trump was accused by 12 women of sexual harassment and assault. Most of these accusations came to light after an audio recording of Trump speaking about his desire for ongoing sexual conquests was released.

“Oh America, what have you done?”

The day after Trump’s victory, The Toronto Star’s Rosie DiManno echoed the feelings of many Canadians when she quipped, “Oh America, what have you done?” She referred to the election results as a reflection of “a conspiracy — of racists and reactionaries, white supremacists, misogynists, Islamophobes and xenophobes, isolationists, sexual scavengers, haters.” But this emotional perspective held little relevance in light of Trump’s victory. He managed to secure victories in key battleground states like Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin as well as most of the U.S. south. Indeed, the Trump message was the victorious message — like it or not.

Just prior to the election, the FBI announced that it was resurrecting an investigation regarding Hillary Clinton’s use of personal email to conduct top secret government business while she was Secretary of State. While the FBI cleared Clinton of wrongdoing, many feel the damage was done by voting day and that Trump’s depiction of Clinton as “crooked Hillary” influenced a larger number of voters.

Clinton and the popular vote

As for Hillary Clinton, she fell victim not only to election night defeat, she was also a victim of the first-past-the-post electoral system. Despite winning the popular vote by 2.5 million ballots, Trump won the grouping of votes that came with each state in what is known as the electoral college. In the end, Clinton’s 65 million votes only garnered her 232 electoral college votes compared to Trump’s 306. Sadly, close to 90 million eligible voters did not cast a ballot in the 2016 election.

Donald Trump has vowed to remove the U.S. from trade treaties like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This has prompted Canadian politicians to encourage a renegotiation of trade treaties rather than a wholesale U.S. withdrawal from the deals.

Trump Nation

In the wake of the results a deeply divided nation emerged, with over half of the nation searching for calm amidst a fresh wave of fears of what a Trump presidency might mean. While the president-elect was conciliatory in his acceptance speech and in his first meeting with out-going President Barack Obama, his pledge to keep most of his controversial campaign promises were the source of anxiety for many Americans. Combine this with the fact that the Republican Party won a majority in Congress and the Senate and it becomes highly probable that Trump is in a strong position to push through some of the more controversial elements of his platform. In 2016, Trump Nation took the reins of power. Next comes a presidency that has world’s attention, for better or worse.

Source: DiManno, Rosie (November 9, 2016). Trump turned election into a scorched-earth rampage. The Toronto Star. Retrieved from: thestar.com.

To Consider

1. Why were pollsters and pundits surprised when Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election?
2. What controversial promises did Trump make during the campaign?
3. What do you think of Rosie DiManno's reaction to the election of Donald Trump? Is she being fair or unfair to Trump?
4. Why do many people feel that Hillary Clinton was the victim of the system in the 2016 election?
5. Why do you think people are so anxious about a Trump presidency?
6. Why do you think that 90 million citizens chose not to vote in the election?

ONE-SIDED STORYTELLING

Minds On

Consider the following questions:

- What do you do when you read something on your social media feed that you disagree with?
- Do you write back to the person who wrote or posted the item you disagreed with?
- Do you stop following or unfriend people you find particularly offensive?
- How open are you to divergent points of view?
- What is the line that, once it is crossed, you are done with someone on social media?

The word **divergent** means different.

The big miss

Going into the 2016 U.S. presidential election, just about the entire mainstream media predicted that Hillary Clinton would win. In fact, the odds against a Trump presidency were said to be prohibitively low: the Huffington Post gave him a two per cent chance of winning while the New York Times said he had about a 15 per cent chance of becoming president. Even Trump's own people at the Republican National Committee only gave him a one in five chance of coming out on top. Yet, on election night, Trump managed to run the table in key swing states and leave the Clinton campaign in its dust.

So how did the media and the most reputable pollsters get it so wrong?

There are a number of possible explanations:

- **Media concentration on the U.S. east and west coast** – Trump drew most of his support from rural, middle America. Since the 1990s small media outlets (mostly in rural areas) have either shut down or been amalgamated into big city media conglomerates. Thus, local reporting has been phased out in favour of big news, big market, national reporting. Certainly, when a story emerges in small town U.S.A., the big news organizations descend on the area. However, the majority of the news that people read about comes out of New York, Washington and Los Angeles. In the 2016 election, this created a situation where anti-Trump stories flourished, creating the impression that he didn't stand a chance of winning. With very few "boots on the ground" in rural areas of Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin, the mainstream media — hunkered down in their anti-Trump enclaves — did not see Trump Nation flocking to the polls in a wholesale rejection of traditional Washington politics.
- **Confirmation bias** – people tend to confirm the perspectives and conclusions that they already believe to be true. Many Republicans believed that Trump was a joke candidate when he first tossed his hat into the ring. He wound up winning the nomination rather easily. Similarly, Trump was portrayed as a bumbling, political neophyte by the media in the U.S. presidential campaign. He wound up winning the election. Many people gobbled up stories of Trump's missteps because they confirmed what they believed: that there was no way a man of his character would win the race for the White House. This is why many people were so blindsided when he came out on top on election day. In the end, they focused on stories that confirmed their bias to such an extent that a Trump victory

seemed to come out of nowhere. In the end, confirmation bias played a role in a collective dismissal of the groundswell of support that Donald Trump carried into the election.

- **The anti-immigration, pro-isolationism movement** – Trump capitalized on an anti-immigration sentiment from the start of the campaign. First he targeted an ethnic group (Mexicans) and then he targeted a religious group (Muslims). His message appealed to people who held a bias against these groups as well as those who believe certain groups are taking advantage of the system. For instance, a surprising number of Latinos who legally immigrated to the U.S. supported Trump because they believed that fellow Latinos, who illegally lived in the country, should not be allowed to bypass the immigration process. Trump also capitalized on a pro-isolationism, anti-globalization sentiment. Since the 1990s, jobs have been leaving the U.S. for markets that provide cheaper labour. This has led to the almost complete mothballing of the U.S. manufacturing sector. Trump was able to speak to the people who lost their jobs to overseas markets with promises of

resurrecting the manufacturing sector and forcing U.S. companies to create jobs at home — with dire penalties if they failed to do so. How he'll do this remains to be seen.

- **An anti-establishment thirst for change** – most media outlets underestimated the number of U.S. voters who were tired of the ruling elite politicians making and breaking promises. They also wanted — more than anything — CHANGE. In the same way that British voters opted to leave the European Union in the “Brexit” referendum, voters in the U.S. opted to elect a man they felt was unfit for the office of president rather than bring the old guard, represented by Hillary Clinton, back into power.

Sources:

Byers, Dylan (November 9, 2016). How politicians, pollsters and the media missed Trump's groundswell. CNN Money. Retrieved from money.cnn.com.

Hohman, James (November 9, 2016). The Daily 202: Why Trump won --- and why the media missed it. The Washington Post. Retrieved from thewashingtonpost.com.

McGill, Andrew (November 19, 2016). U.S. media's real elitism problem. The Atlantic. Retrieved from theatlantic.com.

To consider

1. What role did media concentration play in people's perception of Donald Trump?
2. What is confirmation bias?
3. How did Trump use immigration and isolationism to build support in the election?
4. Why do people sometimes opt for an anti-establishment candidate?