

## Why Trump?

David P. Redlawsk

November 9, 2016. The day after the night before. Donald Trump is president-elect. How could this be? Even as her lead drifted downward, polls seemed all but unified that Hillary Clinton would win nationally. The irony of that is that it looks like she will, in fact, win the popular vote once it is all counted. But Trump will be president.

Why did this happen? I don't have specific answers, and there will be a lot of data to analyze in the future. But looking back to where it all started, in Iowa, I think we all had the clues in front of us and just didn't take them, seriously enough.

In August 2015, I went to Iowa to embed myself in the 2016 Iowa Caucus campaign. A few months later, I attended a Trump event in Burlington. Until then, I had been puzzled by Trump's rise. That event opened my eyes, but not enough. At the time, I mused over what I had seen and heard. What follows is part of what I wrote in about Trump in early December 2015. Nearly a year later, I think it is a big part of the answer as to Why Trump. (Full text at <http://iacaucusproject.org/2015/11/donald-trump-superman-with-a-super-will/>)

### Donald Trump: Superman with a Super Will

I think I get it now. I mean, I got it intellectually before. People are angry, frustrated, looking for something. But after attending a Donald Trump event in Burlington recently, I get it emotionally. At least I can see what the feeling of Trump means to the true-believer Trumpites.

Trump is about a future that is much better than today and more importantly about the force of will to make it so. Most candidates have some future-looking aspect to their campaign which they claim they will pursue if elected. But Trump really seems different, so bombastic in his praise of himself and his abilities that you almost have to believe it could be true.

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Waiting for the main event, the nearly overflowing crowd – 2,000+ people – is excited and anticipatory, waiting on the man that many see as a potential savior of *our* country, of *our* future. What fascinates me, and challenges logic, is that this savior is not one of them, did not rise out of the masses to come to save us, but instead is himself part of the moneyed elite that candidates on both sides are spending a great deal of time attacking of the aisle spend attacking. Somehow, the fact that Trump is *not* one of us adds to his power; it is plausible to think since he's traveled in those rarified circles he fully understands how to make the world do what he wants.

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[Tana] Goertz [Trump Iowa co-Chair] closes by calling out to the crowd in a way that almost felt chilling to me: The Trump train will *steamroll anything in its way to the White House*. While this may or may not be the case – the day after the rally the first poll showing Ben Carson ahead of Trump was released, and more have come since – the crowd responds with a roar.

What I feel in that roaring crowd is a palpable sense of desire for something, anything, that will somehow change things. What things? Well, that's not so clear. In many cases people have specifics on their mind. And Trump himself, once he gets past the first 20+ minutes reading his poll results, does address a few issues. But for the most part, that's not what people are excited about. Oh, sure, they cheer Trumps' claim that he will lower taxes and simplify the tax code ("It will be beautiful," he says.) And they seem to like the other policies he touches on. The crowd also appreciates the idea that, as Trump says, "Nobody controls me." And they really go wild when he says "I'm a good Christian, when I'm president we will say Merry Christmas again."

But they aren't really there for all that.

What they are there for is to see Trump as Trump, the ultimate salesman, who tells us that he is running because he's tired of others failing. In particular, he calls out Mitt Romney, saying Romney failed, so I have to do it myself. Trump, who no matter how much is spent against him will prevail because he is literally superman. He knows how it all works, and he will cut through it all by the force of his outsized will.

As Trump goes on with an hour-long stream-of-consciousness speech, I decide that the crowd basically just likes the language. They like the superlatives, the self-referential ego-driven commentary, and yes, the demagoguery. It touches them emotionally and in the end, the effect seems to be to make people feel good about themselves just because they were there to hear it all. The rhetoric hits home. American is losing, and keeps losing.

... [I]n Trump's world that losing will end. Not might end, not might be fixed a little, but, as simply put by Trump, "We won't lose any more. I will make us great. Hillary won't have a clue about what's happening with jobs going to other countries. Hillary would say we don't like it, but would be hit by lobbyists. I'll be hit, but they won't have a chance, it's over." He goes on to say that he has the best people, and the best people can fix it. And the crowd continues to cheer. All that is needed to make this happen is the best people, and the best of the best is Donald Trump.

Donald Trump is superman. And like Star Trek's Captain Picard, Donald Trump just has to say it to "make it so." The will to make it happen is the power to make it happen. All that's missing in Washington and America is someone who has the will to just fix it, and Donald Trump tells us he has it. Who wouldn't want that?

Today, with President-elect Trump beginning his transition, I wonder, how could we have not taken this more seriously? How could we have not seen it coming? It was right in front of us all along.

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