



# BATTLE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE



'White Students Group' flyers found at UCLA a week after election



Donald Trump attempting to delay Trump University fraud trial

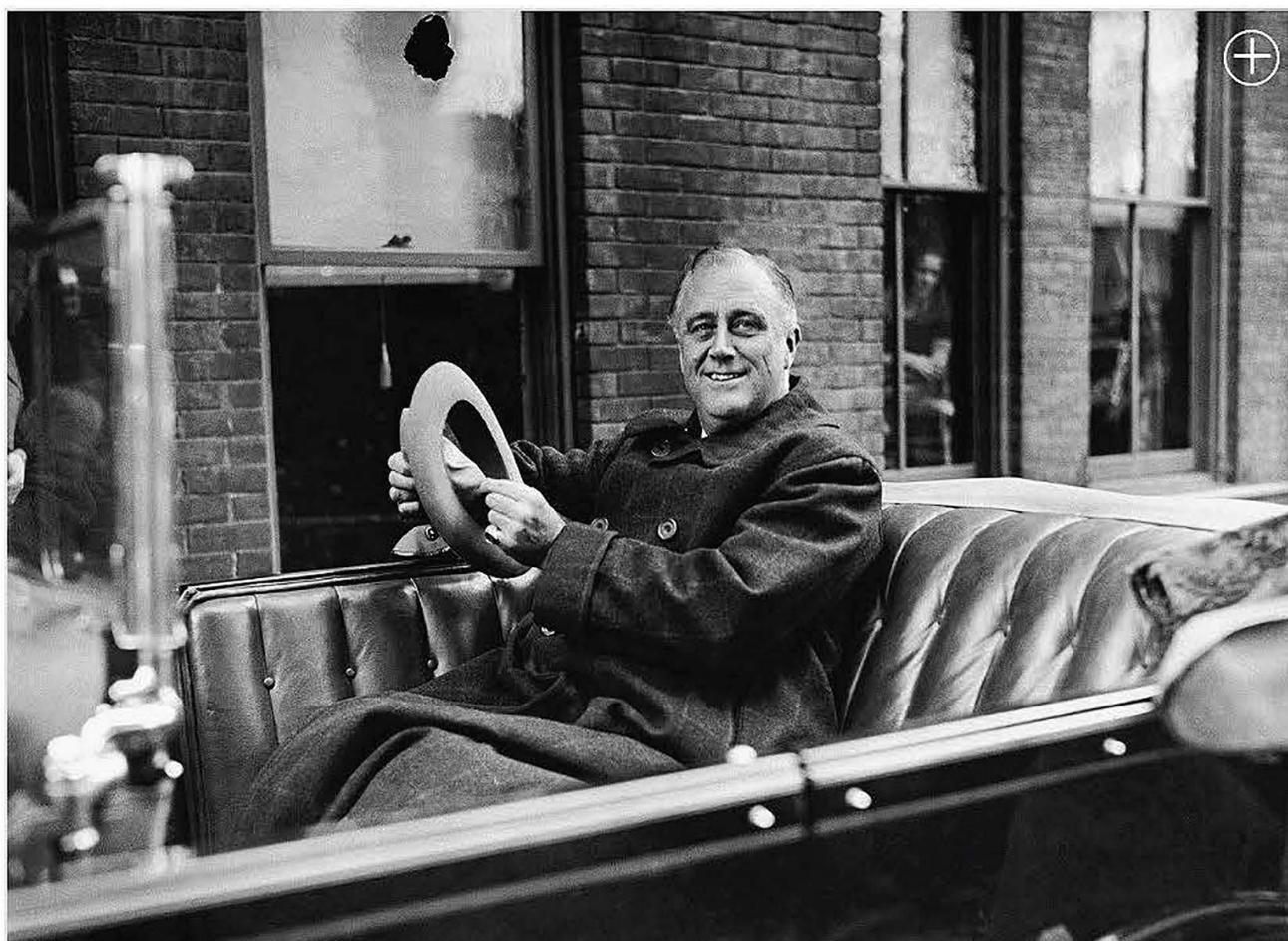


Vladimir Putin congratulates Donald Trump for winning election

## David Paul Kuhn: How FDR's 'forgotten man' sunk Obama's coalition

BY DAVID PAUL KUHN

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS Wednesday, November 9, 2016, 9:40 AM



Democrats were undone by the Americans who were once the keystone of Franklin Roosevelt's Democratic majority. (AP)

Donald Trump stunned the world on the shoulders of Americans whose hardscrabble lives are foreign to him, yet who still saw in him a chance to denounce elites and a status quo that had left them behind. In his wake, came the largest fissure along class lines in more than a half-century of American politics.

Trump won a larger share of white working class men than any presidential candidate, of either party, since the Second World War. His support surpassed the landslide victories of Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. He also won white working-class women at levels unseen in about three decades.

For Hillary Clinton, it was an awful kind of history. She performed worse with working class whites than any major party nominee since at least 1952, when tracking first became possible.

Perhaps not since Andrew Jackson have outsiders so upended American politics, despite wielding meager influence in the financial, political and cultural class.

Democrats were undone by the Americans who were once the keystone of Franklin Roosevelt's Democratic majority. Yet those who FDR called the "Forgotten Man" have, for decades, felt forgotten by Democrats. It was a history that seemingly resonated with Trump. "The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer," Trump said in his victory speech.

Not since 1964 has the white working class so extensively diverged from the votes of college educated whites.

And rarer still, this chasm was dug by the working class alone. Trump performed worse with college educated whites than any Republican since 1996. Clinton's support from educated whites was better than most Democrats before her. But it was all too conventional and too modest, to compensate for her opponent's feat.



Donald Trump won a larger share of white working class men than any presidential candidate, of either party, since the Second World War. (JOHN LOCHER/AP)

Trump caught the strategic White Whale. He rallied enough working class whites to compensate for performing at levels with Hispanics considered too low to win. That is, according to conventional political physics. For conventional Republicans.

---

#### **Election Night 2016: Joy and despair as Donald Trump is elected president**

---

Trump proved anything but a conventional Republican, amassing electoral feats that humbled countless political analysts throughout this campaign (including this writer). It explains why Trump became the first Republican to win Pennsylvania since 1988. He remade the political marketplace, while also amplifying trends that have been developing for decades.

To grasp what's changed, consider 1964. That year, Lyndon Johnson's landslide created the largest class gap since the Second World War. Six-in-10 working class whites voted Democratic, while six-in-10 college educated whites backed the Republican.

The modern electorate has reversed. The Republican won two-thirds of working class whites and half of educated whites in 2016.

Compared to whites with a college degree, working class whites are significantly more likely to earn meager salaries, experience joblessness, face wage competition from new immigrants, experience family breakdown and suffer the deindustrialization of America.

---

[President Obama congratulates Trump, invites him to White House](#)

---

Most of these struggling whites ultimately backed the man who will likely be the wealthiest president since George Washington. Yet that's not what's atypical about 2016.



The history is the margin by which he did it, and the whites he did it without.

Amid all the talk of whites voting increasingly along racial lines, Trump's share of white support overall was rather ordinary. He won roughly the same portion of whites as several recent Republicans. Trump performed better than expected with Hispanics. He still performed badly but his share slightly surpassed Mitt Romney. Clinton underperformed with Hispanics and blacks, by Democratic standards.

And for all the attention to gender dynamics this year, the fissures along class lines dwarfed the gender gap. The gender gap did hit historic levels. Among whites, the gender gap nearly matched the modern record set in 2000 (23 percentage points).

---

[Gabriel Schoenfeld: Trump vs. Nixon: a tale of the tape](#)

---

By comparison, the class gap among whites (35 points) is 150 percent larger than the previous modern record gap in 2008, an election that occurred amid the worst financial crisis in seven decades.

Clinton's lifeline was expected to be white college educated women. But they gave her the slimmest majority. Her margin matched several Democratic male nominees before her. It was too little against too much.

Class divisions proved too deep. She would have been the first female president. Yet she won only a third of white women without a college degree. That's worse than any Democrat since 1972, when Nixon nearly swept the entire electoral college. That year, Nixon also became the first Republican since at least 1952, to perform better with working class whites than college educated whites.



Democrats were undone by the Americans who were once the keystone of Franklin Roosevelt's Democratic majority. (AP)

## What the class gap means

It's been a half-century since Nixon began what Reagan finished, when the blue bloods were replaced by the blue collars and a Republican majority emerged with them. Over time, as the GOP championed free markets, it overlooked that a majority of its voters had become casualties of American capitalism. So outsiders seized the breach. In the 1990s, it was Ross Perot. Today it's Trump, and the presidency with him.

For the first time, the modern stratification of American wealth echoes across politics. One recent study reported that the wealthiest 10 percent of families now hold about three-fourths of all wealth in the United States. Their wealth increased about 150 percent over the last quarter-century, while the wealth of the bottom half declined. Notably, families headed by someone with a college degree have almost four fold the wealth of families headed by someone with a high school diploma.

These class divisions now run so deep that they challenge the notion of American meritocracy. Yet Trump's victory also carries echoes of the working class political revolts rumbling across Europe.

Like much of the European working class, these whites are comparing a difficult present against a better past. As good days prove more elusive, Democrats have long wondered why these voters don't turn to them. The answer begins with the tone of the conversation, much as it does with nonwhites and Republicans. Struggling whites turn left and hear liberal culture characterize their lives as "privileged." So they stopped listening.

Democrats are now reaping that whirlwind, one long in the making. In recent years, Democratic wisemen began giving up on the white working class. It left Republicans with a systemic advantage in Congress. With Trump's win of the White House, he sundered that final Democratic wall. At some point next year, Republicans will likely control all three branches of government.



The Clinton campaign was left stunned Tuesday. (JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES)

As remarkable as Trump's feat is, it was not fated. Barack Obama was said to mark a permanent electoral revolution in 2008. Yet hyperbole aside, there were signs of the limits of his victory - none more than his mandate being born of the economic crisis rather than demographic change.

Amid that economic turmoil, Obama won the presidency with a larger share of white male voters than any Democrat since Jimmy Carter. He performed better with blue collar white men than John Kerry and Al Gore.

Soon Obama chose to push for health care reform over a "new New Deal". Blue collar white men suffered the bulk of job losses at the height of the recession. And all over again, Democrats lost their mandate because they ignored the men who made it. By election day 2010, Democrats performed worse with whites than any midterm election since Dwight Eisenhower.

---

#### [U.S. stocks open steady after Trump win causes market chaos](#)

---

Now, six years later, Hillary Clinton won less than a quarter of working class white men - a performance so poor it is without precedent since the Second World War. She won fewer working class whites overall than the Democrat who won only 17 electoral votes, George McGovern.

Now Trump's challenge is to get the party of smaller government to do more for its working class majority - to aid the voters who gave Republicans the presidency at a time when the GOP was said to be, much like the white working class itself, destined for wilderness.

*Kuhn is a political analyst and author of the political novel "What Makes It Worthy" and "The Neglected Voter: White Men and the Democratic Dilemma."*