

# He's Not Your Father's Republican

When I was growing up in the South Bronx, my father, a blue-collar guy who worked in a factory, liked to talk to me about politics.

The Democrats he said were for people like us; the Republicans were for rich people.

He stated it as a simple fact. Democrats were for the little guy. Republicans hung out at country clubs and bought stocks and bonds. In my neighborhood, I'm fairly certain everybody was a Democrat. Really. Everybody.

Yes, there's been some movement by the little guy to the GOP, on and off, since the days of Ronald Reagan. But this time around the little guy opted for a billionaire – a billionaire who is not your typical Republican; one who may very well transform the Republican Party into something that will give Democrats headaches for a long, long time.

A typical Republican, in his first week in office, wouldn't have met for over an hour with private sector union leaders – a long-time reliable piece of the Democrat coalition. President Trump did. And the union bosses left the meeting singing his praise.

Take note Democrats.

And blue-collar guys in places like Ohio and Michigan and Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, who voted twice for Barack Obama, broke with the party of their parents and grandparents because they saw Hillary Clinton as one more liberal Democrat who not only didn't understand them, but had the nerve to call them names like deplorable and irredeemable. So they voted for the Republican who made the little guy, for a change, feel like a

big guy.

Take note Democrats.

My father wouldn't recognize today's Democratic Party. He lived through the Great Depression and two world wars and so would have a hard time believing that climate change is the greatest threat to the United States. He wouldn't know what to make of liberal cupcakes on college campuses who need puppies and "safe spaces" to shield them from people and opinions that make them feel uncomfortable. He didn't have a lot of formal education, but he knew what socialism was, and I'm pretty sure he wouldn't have voted for Bernie Sanders. It's also a safe bet that he'd never vote for a far out lefty like Elizabeth Warren. And he wouldn't know why in the world Democrats who had far more education than he ever had were comparing Donald Trump to Hitler and the Nazis.

And what would he think of that woman from Idaho, the executive director of her state's Democratic Party, who wants to run the Democratic National Committee, the one who said, "My job is to shut other white people down when they want to interrupt."

I'll take a wild guess and say my father, and a lot of other little guys, wouldn't want to belong to a party that has anything to do with a nutty liberal like that.

Ronald Reagan famously said that he didn't leave the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party left him. Well, the last election showed that it also left a lot of little guys who live between the coasts.

That's why Democratic leaders met in West Virginia recently trying to figure out how they lost the presidential election and what they can do to not lose it next time around. They're trying to learn how to connect with people who live in places not called Manhattan, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles or San Francisco. Here's a hint, Democrats: Try not looking down your

nose at them.

In May 2016, then candidate Trump spoke to the journalists at Bloomberg Businessweek about how he planned to re-make the Republican Party. “Five, 10 years from now—[it will be a] different party,” he said. “You’re going to have a worker’s party. A party of people that haven’t had a real wage increase in 18 years, that are angry.”

Maybe there’s more to Donald Trump than his critics – I among them – think. Maybe, in addition to being a braggart who is way too thin-skinned and vindictive, he’s also a visionary. Maybe, he’s the one who can transform the Republican Party and make it a “safe space” for lots of Democrats who live in what the elites call “flyover country.”

If my father were still with us, he might have forsaken his Democratic roots and voted for the Republican billionaire who before he moved to the White House lived in a golden penthouse on Fifth Avenue – even though when my father and I had those political talks we lived in a tenement in the South Bronx.

Take note Democrats.