

The Loose Cannon in Next Year's Midterm Elections: Hint, His Initials are DJT

Right after he was elected president, I made a prediction. I said that for the next four years – or however long Joe Biden was president – you wouldn't hear even one good word about him from the opinion talking heads on Fox News. Not one good word no matter what he did.

Yogi Berra allegedly said that predictions are hard, especially when they're about the future. But this one wasn't hard at all. It was quite easy. Because if you know anything about how cable news operates, you understand that the way they make money – both liberal and conservative channels – is to give the audience what it wants to hear. Don't do anything risky like expose the viewers to ideas they may disagree with. Pandering is the way to grow the bottom line. Throw red meat to the people watching, feed their biases, support their values, and entice them to come back for more.

So saying anything good about President Biden on Fox would go against the business model, which is not a good idea if you care about ratings and your job. And for the record, it was the same at the liberal channels during Donald Trump's time in the White House. Bashing him was good for business.

No one paying attention would dispute the obvious – that we're living in hyper-polarized times. And cable news is a major reason. Every night the hosts pour gasoline on the fire, because dividing the American people is what brings in money. If that sounds simple, it's because it is.

We've heard a lot about Trump Derangement Syndrome – a malady suffered by liberals and progressives who hyperventilate at the mere mention of his name. Lance Morrow, the perceptive

essayist, has written about the people who despise Trump. "Hating Mr. Trump and his followers dramatizes one's own virtue," he says. "It makes elites feel good about themselves in the way, classically, that poor whites in the South were able to feel better about their own lot by despising and discriminating against black people. Progressives think that hating not only Mr. Trump but all conservatives settles their debts and cleanses them of sin. It gives them a certain moral luster."

Every word rings true. But there is a kind of psychological disorder to be found among his most loyal supporters too. They believe what most people rightly find unbelievable. Their reality isn't the reality of most of Americans.

Which brings us to new poll by Morning Consult about the events of January 6, 2021 at the Capitol. Six months later, only 30 percent of registered Republican voters blame Donald Trump for the riot that occurred that day. They are, I suspect, the same people who get their "news" from conservatives on cable TV. But there's more. Forty-one percent blame ... Joe Biden. Yes, more GOP voters blame Joe Biden for what happened that day than blame Donald Trump, who spent an hour riling up his loyal fans, some of whom then invaded the Capitol.

Whether a GOP voter thinks Donald Trump stirred up the crowd and bears some responsibility is one thing, but blaming Joe Biden is quite another. This goes way beyond normal partisan politics. This is just plain crazy.

How is Joe Biden responsible for the riot, or insurrection, or whatever else you want to call it? Could it be because he won the election? Maybe. I mean, if he didn't have the audacity to actually beat Donald Trump, there would have been no mayhem at the Capitol on January 6.

But did Joe Biden really win? Not if you ask Republicans. A

poll by Reuters/Ipsos taken in mid-May found that 53 percent of Republicans don't believe that Biden won fair and square. Instead they believe Donald Trump is the "true president" – compared with 3 percent of Democrats who somehow believe that and 25 percent of all Americans.

Want more proof that Trump's most passionate supporters don't share the same reality as most Americans?

Another poll, this one taken in late May by Yahoo News/YouGov found that 73 percent of Republicans pin "some" or "a great deal" of blame for what happened on January 6 on "left-wing protesters trying to make Trump look bad" – this even though there's no evidence to back up that belief and that both the FBI and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy rejected the idea that left wing protesters were to blame for what happened that day.

As for the future: If you listen to conservative pundits you'd have every right to believe that the GOP will win big in next year's midterm elections – and not only because a new president's party almost always loses seats in Congress during the first midterm election.

This time around, Democrats have a surging crime rate in cities run by their fellow Democrats, the mess on our southern border and looming inflation hanging around their necks. So the wishful political thinking you hear coming from conservative media may in fact become reality next fall.

But there's a wild card out there and surprise, surprise ... it's Donald Trump. If at his rallies this summer – and in his interviews with supposed journalists posing as potted plants on Fox – he continues to say that he really won, if he continues to look back instead of forward, there's a chance that swing voters, independents and even some moderate Republicans might want to distance themselves from a party whose nominal leader – and many of his supporters – suffer

from political delusion.

A lot can happen between now and November 2022. Crime may drop. The border may not look so bad. Inflation may not develop or only be transitory. All that would help Democrats. And remember, Donald Trump managed to pull off a political hat trick during his four years as president: He lost the House during his presidency, the Senate and the White House too. He and his ego are more than capable of causing still more trouble for the GOP next year.

There's another quote attributed to Yogi Berra that confident conservatives on TV, the ones who are already predicting a huge GOP victory next year, might want to consider. "It ain't over 'til it's over."