

Donald Trump and Hugo Chavez:
Demagogues who come to Destroy

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Donald Trump and Hugo Chavez are two of a kind. They are both demagogues—political leaders who appeal the lowest impulses and prejudices of the masses rather than employing rational argument to put forth their political alternatives.

Those with strong authoritarian tendencies are drawn to demagogues like Donald Trump because of his coarse language, bullying and willingness to offer himself as an image of strength with which to identify in the battle with real or imagined enemies. That is exactly what Hugo Chavez did in Venezuela. Chavez destroyed Venezuela and Trump has already severely damaged the Republican party and our North American political discourse.

I lived in Venezuela from 1999-2010 and witnessed its deterioration. Trump has the same political discourse as Chavez—one characterized by grandiosity, arrogance, bigotry, an incapacity to tolerate ambiguity, a policy of simple solutions for complex problems, black and white thinking, the identification of enemies within and outside our borders, a disregard for competence, a discourse of insults, and an abandonment of all statesmanship. He attacks authority and declares proudly his authoritarian ambitions.

An authority has knowledge which is provided responsibly, benevolently and lovingly to those in their care and under their responsibility. Authorities maintain the best traditions of culture. Authoritarians, on the other hand, destroy those traditions. They impose, bully, uses strong arm tactics, and force others to bend to their will. The authoritarian sees people as means to achieving power or as obstacles to that power.

No matter how big Donald Trump gets and no matter how much money he makes, he will always feel in his heart-of-hearts that he is small and poor. He tells us he's brilliant, really smart, really rich, really popular, really successful and if these statements are not obvious over-compensations, he reveals his self-regard most clearly in his projections onto others whom he describes as pathetic, stupid, ugly, losers, dummies, bimbos, morons and idiots.

Trump deplors unthinking political correctness but delivers slogan speeches, bumper sticker discourses, shock jock politics, political bullying and reality show action figure posturing, which have appealed to the lowest human instincts of the frightened and resentful masses.

We look to our political leaders to speak with civility, statesmanship and vision. Trump said that a female news professional, who asked him a reasonable question, was so angry "There was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming

out of her wherever.” He talks about punching protesters in the face for exercising their rights to free speech.

Remember Sarah Palin who made a map placing gun sight crosshairs on democratic districts and then tweeted to her followers, after the passage of the healthcare act, “Don’t retreat, Instead - RELOAD!” And the next thing you know U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords was shot in the head. Trump adviser Al Baldasero said, “Hillary Clinton should be put in a firing line and shot for treason.” Have these people forgotten the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, Martin Luther King? Have they forgotten the assassination attempts on Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan? Right wing Israeli protesters made posters of Yitzak Rabin in the cross hairs of a sniper’s gun sights and the next thing you know Rabin was assassinated.

The Ku Klux Klan speaks in denigrating terms of African-Americans, making it easy to lynch them. Hitler calls Jews “rats”, making it easy to exterminate them. Trump calls Muslims “terrorists” making it easy to prohibit them from entering the country. He calls Mexicans “rapists” making it easy to build a wall. Trump calls Hillary Clinton a “criminal” and his mob chants “Lock her up! Lock her up!” Chavez calls his political opposition “enemies”, “terrorists”, and “tumors” making it easier to attack them with rocks, sticks, guns, grenades, flame throwers, and torture. Now Trump says, “Hillary wants to abolish -- essentially abolish the Second Amendment. By the way, if she gets to pick, if she gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do, folks. Although the Second Amendment people, maybe there is, I don't know.”

Stupid speech is dangerous speech. Political decorum and the discourse of statesmanship are what enable people of differing views to differ with civility, debate the issues and arrive at agreement or compromise. Politicians can show their humanity without having to act like punks.

Trump likes guns. Chavez liked guns so much he gave them away to his supporters and with incendiary speech invited them to attack the opposition, which they did with deadly force. In 1999, when Chavez became president, Venezuela suffered 4,500 murders. The number of murders have gone up every year since then. In 2015 there were 27,875 murders in Venezuela.

At Trump rallies supporters are invited to pledge their allegiance to Trump—the man. That was a Chavez strategy that resulted in a personality cult for weak-minded people. Then after Trump suggested violent responses to Trump protesters, some of his supporters physically attacked those protesters. Trump said violence is not right but defended his supporters as being “frustrated” and accused the protesters of instigating the violence. Trump took this page right out of Hugo Chavez’s play-book. Incite violence with incendiary hate speech, encourage your supporters to attack your opposition, then blame the opposition for the violence, of which they were the victims.

Hugo Chavez had a weak personality and a compensatory mask of strength. He created a garish nationalism and turned his political opposition into national

enemies. He used crude language and was impulsive in his pronouncements. Sound familiar?

As Twitter, YouTube, radio, TV and social media funnel political discourse into sound bites, headlines and bumper sticker messages, we filter out the complexities of political debate, lose the subtleties of the issues and end up with entertaining gladiators arguing their extreme positions armed with insults and intolerance, black and white thinking, and simple solutions for complex problems. It's called demagoguery and we've seen it all before in Joseph McCarthy, George Wallace, and Hugo Chavez among others.