

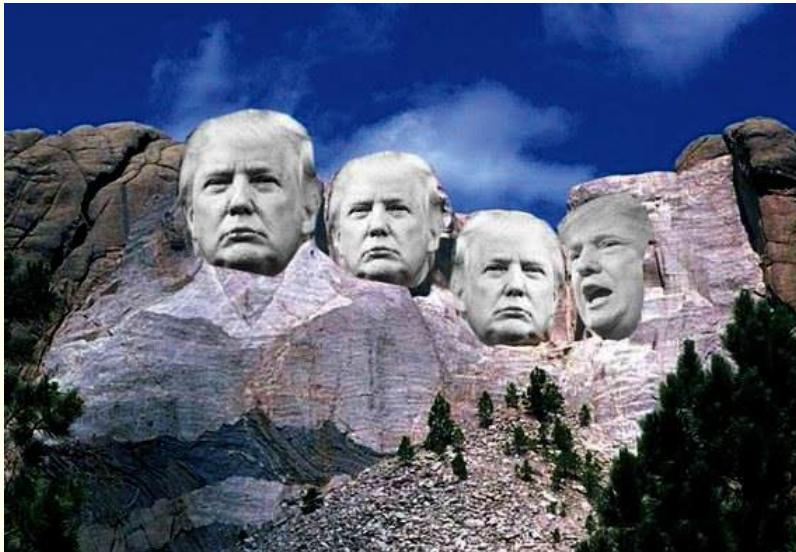
american politics: from high to low

By Tarcisio Beal

The United States has been confronted with serious socio-political crises since the Civil War of the early 1860s. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln was the first indication that the dream of the Founding Fathers of a truly democratic Republic would have to face serious opposition in a society already divided by slavery and the persecution of Catholics. Soon enough the rise of the Confederacy

with the horrors of slavery became the ugly reality of the South. Meanwhile the Robber Barons enshrined capitalism in the American Republic, attempting to justify it as laws and mandates of nature. By the 1930s, the USA was facing major socio-economic problems: 15.1 million citizens homeless, the banking system collapsed; the ecological disaster of the "Dust Bowl" (the storm of May 11, 1934) caused by the removal of 300 million tons of the top soil of the Great Plains of Kansas and Oklahoma, resulting in serious pneumonic fever for the population.

Finally, in 1932, the nation elected a President whose **number one priority was to set up an economic plan to help the poor** and to reshape the government all around: **Franklin Delano Roosevelt**, the democratic Governor of New York (1928-1930) had already centered his leadership on reforming the federal system and taking care of a legion of the poor. He was elected President, in 1932, by 46 of the 51 state votes. He awakened the people for the need of reform and, in 1938, was reelected 523 to 8 *against the Republican, Alfred M. Landon*. Despite health problems (he faced serious paralysis in the 1920s), FDR carried out his *New Deal* reforms during his 16 years in the White House. His style was one of constant communication with ordinary citizens, often through the radio, then personally reading the many letters sent to him and



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often going down to the streets to discuss his options. He helped the homeless by recreating the *Civil Works Advisory*, and his wife Eleanor was fully engaged in social justice and human rights programs. FDR's last great, historical deed was to sign the USA into *NATO*.

Most of the opposition to FDR's programs came from Huey P. Long, Governor of Louisiana (assassinated in 1935) through his

"*Chair the Wealth Program*" which aimed at heavily taxing the rich and liquidating the great fortunes. Unfortunately the Nazi surge in the Germany of the 1930s found a large number of **antisemitic supporters** who were led by none else than the **Rev. Charles E. Coughlin**, a catholic pastor from a small Detroit suburb and the **most powerful radio voice** of the decade, with an audience from 35 to 45 million people. Shamefully enough, he hated the Jews and preached like a disciple of Adolph Hitler, not as a messenger of the Gospels.

Roosevelt stood as the major contrast to Coughlin's antisemitism, always maintaining a dialogue with the common people and making major efforts to contain big business and prevent it from interfering in the government (1). The approach and goals of FDR were later followed mostly by Democrats Robert F. Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Jimmy Carter and Barak Obama while Republicans Richard Nixon, George Bush and Ronald Reagan pursued a foreign policy of increasing intervention in Central America, siding with dictators and the **drug gangsters' mass killings. It was this inferno that stirred up the constant flow of immigrants from Central America north to Mexico and the United States.**

Now, since 2016, **Donald J. Trump** has been contradicting many of the healthy and democratic reforms

of the past, by utterly confusing the people and dragging the whole nation into its **worst crisis ever**. After escaping congressional impeachment by a single vote, he bought the tight support of the Republican Party and seated a majority of archconservative judges in the Supreme Court and the States' courts. After he became unhappy with Congress, he incited a violent mass **rally at the Capitol**, then refused the evidence that he had lost reelection to the White House. Henceforth he made the **GOP his blind supporter** and began using his presidential powers to enrich and to glorify himself as the greatest president ever, to the point of comparing himself to Jesus and even displaying holy and Jesus-like drawings around the White House. Soon enough he gained the support of the MAGA elite and began enriching himself and his family by overusing the government resources and hurting the national economy. His policies and theatrical power were made even more evident by the newcomer **Elon Musk**, the trillionaire, richest man in the world. Musk, a glorifier of wealth and power, strengthened even further the political control of Trump and the MAGA elite. His Nazi way of thinking is spelled out in his **antisemitic** description of the Jews as "traitors" and "invaders."

Now, as the Midterm elections are imminent, we shall point out some of the major reasons for the decline of Trump's popularity (down to less than 33% at the moment):

1. **A Supreme Court** that has failed to make decisions to protect the human and civil rights of women and protection of the transgender community;
2. The abandonment of climatic protection despite the constant explosion of damaging storms, excessive heat, and active fires that destroyed neighborhoods and thousands of American lives;
3. Assault on scientific evidence, including messing up the *Smithsonian Museum*, and even contesting the scientific handling of the medical evidence of COVID presented to Congress by Dr. Anthony Fauci
4. The illegal, ugly fight of the GOP to prevent and even destroy the evidence of the **Epstein Files** because it might expose the role played in it by Trump; meanwhile justice for the victims of Epstein and Co. have to wait for congressional action;
5. The horrifying handling of **Immigration through ICE** which invades neighborhoods and airports searching for "illegals," with no respect for their lives and birthright; the eviction of thousands of Haitians who had been brought in to work legally—Trump's ugliest example of disrespect for human life
6. Never before has the White House been turned into the center of a President's attempt to immortalize himself by placing his name and image everywhere even by

rebuilding or defacing what his predecessors had done before Trump's presidency.

Now, we could go on and on to line up further the story of the worst President ever, a man who interprets History for his own glorification despite his record. His not-so-veiled sexism, antisemitism, and his praising of Hitler, contradict his claim of being a "Christian nationalist," a concept which he uses mainly to attract the vote of the Evangelicals. Lacking a sense of the morality of power and its abuse and disrespect for democracy, he does and tries to justify whatever he does.

Trump also believes that his leadership has won the support of many countries, because of his waging war on Iran. Nothing could be further from the truth. His foreign policy implies that he's made the nation richer when the USA is already the richest nation of the globe. Recently, he raised tariffs against 80 nations, some of them quite poor; he blames Canada for the terrifying drought/heat that moved into the Northeast when it all came over from the American Northwest. His foreign policy continues to view some nations, especially those of Latin America, as easy prey. The US has practically occupied Venezuela and its abundant oil, still controls Panama, and continues trying to return Jair Bolsonaro (who was imprisoned by Brazil's Supreme Court), as the next President of Brazil, and supports the ultra-right campaign against President Lula. Trump is also threatening, to the dismay of European nations, to weaken **NATO**, the North Atlantic Alliance which has been the ally of the US since World War II. His war on Iran is mostly a desperate war to improve the economy and save the GOP's voting chances by ending the oil crisis; but, instead, it increased the profits of corporate oil into the \$100 millions.

Tens of millions of Americans have been protesting the total disregard for the needs and the rights of the people and the violation of Primary elections seem to be going in that direction, but we must remain vigilant and informed and learn from our own American history.

BIO: Tarcisio Beal, professor emeritus in History at Incarnate Word University in San Antonio has a Doctorate in Theology (STJ -Sacred Theology Licentiate) and has written 5 books on the History of Catholicism, including one in Spanish ("Sigan al Hombre").