



The Changing of the Guard in Cleveland: What a Difference Donald Trump Has Made

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What a difference four years makes. The just-ended Republican Convention in Cleveland was a lot different from the Tampa GOP convention four years ago, and a lot different from the St. Paul Republican convention four years before that. One is tempted to say, “Let’s count the ways,” starting with the conventional wisdom-defying rise of Donald Trump, but it’s hard to count that high. So let’s just focus on six:

First, look who wasn’t there. No John McCain, no Mitt Romney, no Jeb Bush, no George W. Bush, no George P. Bush—no Bush family whatsoever; we can all decide for ourselves how many Republicans were truly saddened by their absence. And if they had appeared, we can guess how many channel-surfing swing voters might have caught a glimpse and said to themselves, “Hey, there’s Mitt Romney! That reminds me: I need to vote Republican this November!” (Said nobody.)

Second, gay rights. The days of overt Republican hostility to gays are long gone. And so, even, are the days of benign neglect. Today, Trump, a New Yorker to his core, has brought at least some “New York values” to the Party. And gays have reciprocated; as Silicon Valley mogul Peter Thiel declared on Thursday night, “I am proud to be gay. I am proud to be a Republican. But most of all, I am proud to be an American.” And the crowd went wild—[with a standing ovation](#). And a few minutes later, from the same podium, Trump himself gave an extended shoutout to gays, carefully articulating the letters “LGBTQ”—twice.

Yet the new Republican strength goes way beyond sentiments of patriotic equality, important as those are. The real GOP edge comes from an issue much more fundamental—*survival*. That is, the Democrats, palsied with political correctness, are unwilling to do or even say anything against Muslim immigration. Indeed, the official Democratic position is actively to subsidize the influx; the Obama administration has allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to help relocate Syrian refugees to America. And that idea of open borders has consequences, as the world is reminded constantly—terrorist attacks are coming every few days.

In a surprisingly pro-Republican article, *Rolling Stone* quoted [Chris Barron, a gay Trumpeter](#), making the case for Gay Republicanism in stark terms:

The left wants us to believe that this election is going to be about bathrooms or who is going to bake our wedding cake. LGBT people and our allies know that this is a question of life or death. We saw what happened in Orlando. We have a radical Islamic ideology out there that is dedicated to exterminating LGBT people all across the globe.

And yes, a Falwell also spoke in Cleveland—[Jerry Falwell, Jr., son of the late legendary social conservative](#). And yet the younger Falwell was there only to praise Trump and, in effect, to bless the new era of tolerance.

Third, law and order. In his [acceptance speech](#), Trump used the phrase “law and order” no fewer than eight times. As Mickey Kaus quipped, we were perhaps witnessing the emergence of [“President Truliani”](#)—that is, a fusion of Trump and Rudy Giuliani.

Needless to say, the MSM, never having seen a pro-criminal cause it didn’t wish to champion, reacted harshly. As *Newsbusters’* [Scott Whitlock](#) chronicled, reporters searched their thesauruses to find new ways to accuse Trump of being dark, dystopic, *Mad Max*-like, and, of course, racist. And so obviously, CNN had to [ignore its own post-speech poll](#), which had found that [75 percent of Americans liked Trump’s address](#).

Yes, we know that the MSM hates it when a Republican scores points with the voters. Journos much prefer it when GOPers ignore winning issues. For example, John McCain before 2008: what reporter didn’t love him as an always-quotable basher of his fellow Republicans? But of course, the same reporters had to turn on him as soon as he got the GOP presidential nomination.

Poor McCain. He never quite realized that if he was playing a cynical game to win fame as a teller of MSM-approved verities, the MSM was playing an even bigger game—as an enforcer of Democratic victories.

So in his September 4, 2008 [acceptance speech](#), the Arizonan, subservient, as always, to his MSM mentors, didn’t mention “crime” or “law and order” even once.

Similarly, Mitt Romney, in his [August 30, 2012 acceptance speech](#), also didn’t once mention “crime” or “law and order.” And why were these Republicans struck dumb on the key issue of safety for Americans? As we have seen, the MSM didn’t want them to talk about it—because talk of “law and order” makes Democrats nervous. Also, perhaps McCain and Romney, cloistered within their own secure bubbles, had just never thought much about crime.

And yes, it’s true that the crime rate has fallen over the last quarter-century (even it has upticked in the last few years). Yet even so, some seven million serious crimes are committed every year, including around 16,000 murders. So there’s plenty of political juice there—for a Republican willing to squeeze it out.

Trump is a squeezer. Growing up in pre-Giuliani New York City, he saw urban crime up close, and the lingering imprint of those harrowing experiences were on full display in Cleveland.

Fourth, immigration. As we think about this issue, we might be confused into thinking that McCain and Romney were the same person—or at least had the same speechwriter.

Here's McCain in his 2008 acceptance speech, offering the usual MSM-approved open-borders line:

In this country, we believe everyone has something to contribute and deserves the opportunity to reach their God-given potential, from the boy whose descendants arrived on the Mayflower to the Latina daughter of migrant workers. We're all God's children, and we're all Americans.

McCain, of course, was always more interested in foreign wars than homeland security; as was said of him, his motto was, "Invade the world, invite the world."

Four years later, Romney wasn't much different. Here he is, sounding the same as McCain, pulling out the same rhetorical flourishes:

We are a nation of immigrants. We are the children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the ones who wanted a better life, the driven ones, the ones who woke up at night hearing that voice telling them that life in that place called America could be better. . . . When every new wave of immigrants looked up and saw the Statue of Liberty . . . none doubted that here in America they could build a better life, that in America their children would be more blessed than they.

Such flowery rhetoric is all very nice—I mean, who doesn't remember Romney's speeches? But this *is* worth remembering: Everyone who came to Ellis Island and was admitted to the US (those with communicable diseases, for example, were sent back) was *legal*.

Of course, in their odes to immigration, legal or not, neither McCain nor Romney could top Jeb Bush, who notoriously defined illegal immigration as an "[act of love](#)." What all three of them—McCain, Romney, and Jeb!—had in common was a message that offered more of the same. That, is more immigration, whether legal, illegal, the more the merrier.

Then, of course, there's Trump, speaking for the other point of view. First the windup:

Nearly 180,000 illegal immigrants with criminal records, ordered deported from our country, are tonight roaming free to threaten peaceful citizens.

And then the pitch:

We are going to build a great border wall to stop illegal immigration, to stop the gangs and the violence, and to stop the drugs from pouring into our communities. I have been honored to receive the endorsement of America's Border Patrol Agents, and will work directly with them to protect the integrity of our lawful immigration system.

Fifth, trade. Once again, there's Romney/McCain, and then there's Trump.

Here's McCain in St. Paul, reading from the Cato Institute playbook:

Opening new markets and preparing workers to compete in the world economy is essential to our future prosperity.

McCain was actually somewhat aware that Heartland America was suffering, and so he had an answer—glorified welfare. As he put it:

For workers in industries—for workers in industries that have been hard-hit—we'll help make up part of the difference in wages between their old job and a temporary, lower paid one, while they receive re-training that will help them find secure new employment at a decent wage.

Such top-down talk was easy for a man whose second wife is a beer heiress and who in 2008 [owned eight homes](#).

Four years later in Tampa, Romney dispatched the entire trade issue in a terse 23 words:

We will make trade work for America by forging new trade agreements. And when nations cheat in trade, there will be unmistakable consequences.

So again, as with law and order, as with immigration, on trade, McCain-Romney might as well have been one.

Then, stupefyingly, Romney went into an extended and self-indulgent riff about the greatness of the company he co-founded, Bain Capital. Thus the tycoon had set himself up for the Democrats' counterstroke; [a series of brutal TV ads and videos highlighting all the workers that Bain laid off, even as Romney made millions](#).

And now we're starting to see, ever more clearly, why McCain and Romney lost: On certain key issues, they weren't much different from Barack Obama. Of course, there were some differences, too, and some big ones. But on the gut issues of immigration and trade, the R's sounded just like the D's. And on crime, the R's didn't have anything to say—for which the D's were *very* grateful. Meanwhile, the white working class, under pressure and looking for help, could easily conclude that McCain and Romney were not out to help them.

Thus the policy choices that McCain and Romney made had political consequences.

As *RealClearPolitics*' [Sean Trende has observed](#), almost seven million fewer white Americans voted in 2012 than 2008; the biggest factor in this drop-off was lack of enthusiasm for Romney. In particular, Romney's career as a corporate takeover artist, putting the profits from layoffs and outsourcing into his own pocket, understandably failed to excite Joe Lunchbucket. And Romney's running mate, the free-trading, entitlement-cutting Paul Ryan, was also no lure to ordinary folks. So again, seven million fewer white voters voted in an election that Barack Obama won by five million votes. Sad!

Trump is different. In this year's acceptance speech, he mentioned "trade" 18 times; one sees the influence of trade-hawk Sen. Jeff Sessions, big time:

Our manufacturing trade deficit has reached an all-time high – nearly \$800 billion in a single year... I have visited the laid-off factory workers, and the communities crushed by our horrible and unfair trade deals.

Sixth, nationalism and nation-building. To get the full flavor of how much things have changed inside the Republican Party, we must go back more than eight years; we must go back 12 years, to [George W. Bush's 2004 Republican acceptance speech](#), in which he declared,

We are working to advance liberty in the broader Middle East, because freedom will bring a future of hope and the peace we all want. And we will prevail.

Got that? Any questions? Using our military, we will win the hearts and minds of Muslims. In pursuit of this goal, one is tempted to ask: *How many military-age children do you have?* (Bush had two; neither of them served.)

And in his 2008 speech, McCain, perhaps the most ardent champion of the Iraq war on Capitol Hill, yet chastened by the challenge of winning in an anti-war year, mentioned Iraq only twice, although one can be sure that he would have loved to talk about it much more. And as for Romney in 2012, well, he just let the matter drop, not acknowledging or thanking the troops for their sacrifice.

Now, in 2016, comes Trump, who said all along that going into Iraq was a mistake, and who said in Cleveland, "Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo."

And then, of course, the New Yorker pivoted to his real target, Hillary Clinton. His critique focused on her tenure as secretary of state; she was the author, he said, of disastrous policies of regime change and nation-building, leading to worldwide "death, destruction, terrorism, and weakness."

Speaking for the MSM, *Politico*, firmly in the pocket of the Democrats, declared itself to be gobsmacked by Trump's stance; its July 22 headline reads, "[Trump rewrites GOP foreign policy/ He blames Clinton for policies that many Republicans endorsed](#)." Well sure, that's the point: Most Republicans were in lockstep with Bush 43-type globalism, which, of course, was not that different from Bill Clinton-type globalism, or Barack Obama-type globalism. (No wonder Republican voters stayed home.)

But Trump is different. He isn't just another Bush-McCain-Romney-type Republican. And from a Republican point of view, that's good. Yes, Bush won a squeaker in '04, but McCain and Romney both lost in landslides. So yes, by all means, let's try something different.

Meanwhile, this year, Hillary Clinton is, certifiably, a Clinton Democrat; she's Crooked Hillary, the Queen of the Rigged Game.

So now, having seen the difference between Trump and his opponents on both sides of the aisle, the voters must judge.