Why the awful Trump ad? Racism is one helluva drug

Dorothy Brown

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President Donald Trump is at it again, tweeting a thinly veiled racist attack ad designed to turn out his white base for the midterm elections. According to CNN exit polls 57% of white people voted for Trump in 2016. He needs them to come out and vote Tuesday to keep a Republican majority in Congress.

The ad shows some frightening video of an undocumented immigrant from Mexico talking about killing police in the past and hopefully (he says, as he is led away by authorities) in the future. He smiles as he does this; his lawyer has said he is mentally ill.

The ad is designed to remind Trump voters of why they voted for him the first time. It is based on fear, not reality. The reality is those same white voters have more to fear from each other when it comes to crime than they do undocumented immigrants.

Recent Department of Justice statistics show that when whites are the victims of violent crimes, in 57% of the cases, the perpetrator is white. In other words, those 57% of Trump supporters should be looking at each other with more suspicion than they do at other racial or ethnic groups -- including undocumented immigrants.

The research is clear. Undocumented and legal immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born American citizens. The libertarian Cato Institute published a study based on Texas data that showed native-born citizens are more likely to be convicted of committing violent crimes, such as homicide, than either undocumented or legal immigrants.

Nationwide research also showed that states with larger shares of undocumented immigrants tended to have lower crime rates than those with smaller shares of undocumented immigrants. That research held up even when the authors controlled for age, urban areas, labor markets and incarceration rates. After exhaustive research, they concluded that illegal immigration does not increase crime.

So why the scary commercial? Because racism is a helluva drug.

Trump is playing to racist stereotypes about Latinos -- the same stereotypes that led him to say, when announcing his run for President: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their

best. ... They're sending people that have lots of problems. ... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some I assume, are good people."

Why does he have to assume some are good people? Because he does not know for sure. What he does know is that talking about Mexican immigrants as criminals will pander to his base, which apparently buys into the Latino-as-criminal stereotype, even though evidence shows this to be false.

Facts don't matter now; Trump has a midterm to win. But according to exit polls, 28% of Latinosvoted for Trump in 2016. As Democrats and Republicans vie for the Latino vote in tight races across the country, Trump's ad might prove to be his biggest political blunder yet.

Perhaps the midterms will show that Trump should have been more worried about tweeting an ad that instead energized Latino voters.