

## Trump will be remembered by those who believe he had their back in the culture wars

Clint Cooper

December 5, 2020

Though President Donald Trump has not conceded defeat, the postmortems on his administration already are being pondered by cultural conservatives who were never sure he was one of them in the first place.

In point of fact, he may never have been one of them, but he gave the rank-and-file the full-throated idea that he was one of their tribe. Indeed, not since Ronald Reagan has a Republican president matched words with deeds and then even more words.

Although in 1999 Trump had proclaimed himself "very pro-choice," he would never have been elected president by Republicans if he hadn't switched positions on abortion. Then he nominated a strongly pro-life vice president in Indiana Gov. Mike Pence and has continued to nominate pro-life judges, including Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, who could provide a fifth vote on reversing *Roe v. Wade* at the federal level.

He further signed executive orders that blocked federal funds for family planning abroad from going to groups that advocate or perform abortion, that blocked domestic family-planning money from going to such groups (such as Planned Parenthood), that imposed restrictions on funding for fetal-tissue research, and that attempted to protect the rights of pro-lifers in the medical field.

Further, he was the first president to speak at the annual March for Life, and remained the vocal foe of late-term abortions that he first gave voice to when Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton supported them in 2016.

Trump also frequently spoke for millions in the country worried about the stealthy fingers of political correctness entwining their way around every aspect of life.

He was mocked and ridiculed in 2017 when, in speaking about the removal of a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, he said, "I wonder is it George Washington next week and is it Thomas Jefferson the week after? You know, you really do have to ask yourself, where does it stop?"

In the late spring and summer of 2020, while most people stayed in their homes at the behest of governors to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, protesters and anarchists raged in cities, tearing down statues and monuments of Jefferson, Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, Christopher Columbus, abolitionists, Abraham Lincoln and scores of others while local authorities in many cases stood by and did nothing.

Meanwhile, colleges and universities cancelled speakers who didn't fit their worldview, people lost jobs over long-forgotten words they'd written 30 years ago and many found themselves isolated for expressing their religious views on social media.

While 77% of conservatives in a Cato Institute survey said they now feared speaking their mind, Trump spoke for them, excoriating those who would prefer to regulate what can be said instead of allowing individuals to express their First Amendment rights.

The president proudly stood up for the country's Founding Fathers, its flag, its national anthem and many of its symbols while the disgruntled argued that he couldn't "make America great again" because it had never been that great in the first place.

On immigration, as columnist Rich Lowry has pointed out in National Review, the Southern border wall has never been completed (and Mexico certainly never paid for it), but millions who voted for Trump appreciated his unapologetic desire to control who came across the border, how much they cost the federal government and what they do to American jobs.

Under him, the border crossings did slow, attempts were made to keep people from terror-sponsor countries from coming in and attempts were made to control the likes of chain migration.

As Lowry noted, and his supporters applauded, Trump declared "we should put our national interest first in making immigration policy."

Politicos in the future will debate the president's 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the efficacy of lessened regulations, the inability to provide any replacement for the Affordable Care Act, and the actions taken or not taken in light of the current global pandemic.

They will calculate the effect of his tweets, haggle over his divisiveness, hash out his empathy (the lack of which his former campaign manager said last week prevented him from winning in a landslide) and argue whether his name-calling may have cost him support from thousands of suburban women.

But most of the 74 million people who voted for him appreciate — whether they were his deep-seated beliefs or not — his leadership in the cultural wars in which they had felt so belittled, outgunned and forgotten.

The next Republican nominee may have all the right answers on policy, but GOP voters also are likely to demand someone they feel has their back as does the man leaving office in January.