

January 22, 2017

TRUMP AND HIS INVISIBLE SUPPORTERS

Most of the mainstream media put the attendance at Trump's Inauguration at about 198,000, with the most generous estimates below 250,000. These included about 50,000 protesters (including three of my family members). Compared with the 1.8 million joyous Americans who turned out for the Inauguration of Barrack Obama on January 20, 2009, the turnout for Trump was decidedly subdued, but since we live in the age of electronic media, perhaps the Trump troops can be cut a little slack for not having many "boots on the ground" around the Capitol.

But Donald Trump is predictable, if nothing else. All you have to do is push his button, and he reacts. Not such a good trait to have in a poker player or a President, but there you have it. He is what he is, as the saying goes.

Several commentators (including Rachel Maddow of MSNBC) predicted (and took side bets) that Trump the Insecure would say that the size of the crowd was at least three times its actual size. They were not disappointed. On Saturday, when Trump went to the CIA headquarters in a "despicable display of self-aggrandizement" before the Wall of Honor (former CIA Director Brennan's observation), he blasted the media for "lying" about the size of the crowd the day before. He said that it looked like a million people.

Given the extent of the lack of preparation by Trump and his transition team for actually taking over the executive administration of the country, you would think that the number of attendees at the inauguration ceremony would be the last of their concerns. There are literally thousands of senior level executive branch positions yet to be filled, and yet the Trump Team has not even named people to fill those positions, let alone actually filled them. The Trump team, in

a panic last Thursday – the day before the inauguration – made a few desperate calls to senior Obama Administration officials, begging them to stay on for a while until Trump could get his act together and find a replacement for them. Some agreed, but others exercised their right to “Just say no.” Either they did not want to be associated in any way with the Trump Administration, or they had made other plans.

Trump’s insecurity and “thin skin” is legendary. However, what is becoming painfully apparent is that Trump suffers from a mental disease, known as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), which raises serious questions as to whether he can actually fulfill the responsibilities of his office.

The Mayo Clinic’s definition of NPD is as follows:

A mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for others. Behind this mask of ultra-confidence lies a fragile self-esteem that is vulnerable to the slightest criticism. If you have NPD, you may come across as conceited, boastful or pretentious, you often monopolize conversations, you may belittle or look down on people you perceive as inferior, and you may feel a sense of entitlement (when you don’t receive special treatment, you may become impatient or angry). At the same time, you have trouble handling anything that may be perceived as criticism. You may have secret feelings of insecurity, shame, vulnerability and humiliation. To feel better, you may react with rage or contempt and try to belittle the other person to make yourself appear superior.

Psychologists and psychiatrists generally use the criteria set forth in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association, to give patients a diagnosis of NPD. These criteria include:

- Having an exaggerated sense of self-importance.
- Expecting to be recognized as superior.
- Exaggerating your achievements and talents.
- Being preoccupied with fantasies about success, power, brilliance, beauty or the perfect mate.

- Believing that you are superior and can only be understood by or associate with equally special people.
- Requiring constant admiration.
- Having a sense of entitlement.
- Expecting special favors and unquestioning compliance with your expectations.
- Taking advantage of others to get what you want.
- Having an inability or unwillingness to recognize the needs and feelings of others.
- Being envious of others and believing others envy you.
- Behaving in an arrogant or haughty manner.

Clearly, Donald Trump suffers from NPD, and it doesn't take a professional to make the diagnosis. His symptoms are so obvious and non-subtle. Just as you don't need a weatherman to tell you that it is raining outside (just look out the window), it is not that difficult for a lay person to tell when someone displays the classic symptoms of NPD.

The problem is not just that Trump's NPD is annoying; it is that it is also extremely dangerous. NPD can alter a person's cognitive and behavioral to such a deviation from "normal" that it can affect that person's competency as to their life and job functions. It can exhibit itself in the following ways:

- (1) Cognition (i.e. perception, thinking, and interpretation of oneself, other people, and events);
- (2) Affectivity (i.e. emotional responses);
- (3) Interpersonal functions; and
- (4) Impulsivity.

Does this description remind you of someone you have seen recently? I'll give you only one hint: he was just sworn in as President of the United States.

Another characteristic of a Narcissist is that he/she will never admit to being distressed by their own behavior. Instead, they always blame other people for any problems.

In extreme cases – which is what we apparently are facing with Donald Trump – a Narcissist presents a danger to others because they are in complete denial of reality and lack empathy, which may manifest itself in, for example, ignoring requests to cease behavior (such as cheating and lying); name calling, criticizing, belittling, mean “jokes”, jabs and put downs (verbal abuse); arguments surrounding the same issues over and over; no “closure” - no apologies, no accountability, no consequences, no change.

Trump’s meltdown at the CIA on Saturday, January 21, 2017, one day after his inauguration, should be cause for alarm. His obsession with what he considers to be the undercounting by the mainstream media of his inauguration crowd, to the point where he ordered his press secretary to make an announcement of “alternative” head-count figures, shows that he has crossed the line from just neurotic to pathological.

And why is he bragging – as he did at CIA headquarters -- that he has been on the cover of Time Magazine 15 times, while Tom Brady has only made it once? He is President of the United States, for G-d’s sake, and yet he is so insecure and self-obsessed that he has to publicly remind people that he is the most powerful and important person in the room. It just doesn’t compute, and is not normal. This is because he has serious mental problems.

Perhaps the reason why not many Trump voters took the trouble to travel to Washington to watch the induction ceremonies is that they have gotten that same sinking feeling in the pits of their collective stomachs as the rest of us about Trump’s mental instability and lack of basic competency to fulfill the requirements of the job. Trump and his team let the transition period slip, with day after day representing a missed opportunity to heal the country’s wounds, to bring us together, or at least lay the groundwork for a competent Trump Administration. It is more than “buyer’s remorse” that all of us are experiencing. Despite what they have said after the fact, few

– including Trump himself – actually thought that he would be elected as President and have to actually serve in that position. He craved the attention of the campaign, and probably thought that if his long-shot bet actually paid off and he became the 45th President of the United States, that his insecurity and constant need of reassurance that he was “the Greatest” in every possible category would somehow dissipate and he would have the genuine confidence that he had always craved. However, now that he is President, and is unquestionably the Most Powerful Man On the Planet (yes, even more powerful than Vladimir Putin), he still has the same feelings of insecurity and lack of self-worth, and it having extreme difficulty coming to terms with the stark reality that he will always feel this way and there is nothing he can do about it to permanently ease the pain.

At this rate, if Trump psychological condition deteriorates any further, he will have to be declared to be incompetent to hold office.

Not that most of us would welcome a Pence Presidency. But it seems more and more likely that this is the direction in which we are headed.

There is only one reasonable response to a Trump Presidency, and that is to remember the immortal words of Woodrow Wilson over a century ago: “The history of liberty is the history of resistance.” Long live the Resistance!