



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on December 31, 2016

Democrats Should've Known

Donald Trump's win shouldn't have been such a surprise to Democrats.

In April 2008, for instance, presidential candidate Barack Obama talked about the political anger and widespread dissatisfaction in the Rust Belt and the Midwest during a political fundraiser in San Francisco, making the same points Presidential candidate Donald Trump would successfully make eight years later about how trade, imports, and American businesses relocating abroad were decimating U.S. factories, destroying jobs, boarding up small towns, and abolishing a way of life.



"You go into these small towns in Pennsylvania and, like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing's replaced them," Obama told the well-heeled San Francisco gathering. "And they fell through the Clinton administration, and the Bush administration, and each successive administration has said that somehow these communities are gonna regenerate and they have not."

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Obama had it correct, but instead of sticking with an empathetic analysis and proposing policies for job creation and a manufacturing revival, he switched to how the non-swanky and struggling workers in the Rust Belt and Midwest were dealing with their downward mobility in a politically incorrect manner.

"And it's not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations," Obama told the San Francisco audience. His somewhat mocking analysis was more Harvard than Lower Turkeyfoot Township in Pennsylvania, population 568, poverty rate 18%, \$12,812 per capita annual income.

"Obama made a problematic judgment call in trying to explain working class culture to a much wealthier audience," wrote Mayhill Fowler in the Huffington Post. "He described blue collar Pennsylvanians with a series of what in the eyes of Californians might be considered pure negatives: guns, clinging to religion, antipathy, xenophobia. Such phrases can reinforce negative stereotypes among Californians, who are a people in a state already surfeited with a smug sense of superiority."

It's easy to envision actress [Shirley Jones](#) listening to Obama's fundraiser speech in California and thinking about the unemployed and under-employed guys back home in Smithton, Pa. (population 385, 100% rural) sitting in a dingy little bar and talking about the elk hunt, the recent doubling of Mexican immigrants in town, to two, and how one of the regulars at the bar gets sprinkled by his wife with holy water every time she catches him tiptoeing into the house after midnight.

Shirley Jones — Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in 1960 for playing a vengeful fille de joie



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in *Elmer Gantry*. Smithton — largest employment sector, waste management. Ratio of residents to registered sex offenders: 131 to 1 (that's a town total of three registered sex offenders, a small enough number to comfortably squeeze into back seat of a tiny Peugeot 108 if they'd quit grabbing each other).

The latest breaking news from Smithton as I'm typing this and checking Google for the aforementioned information: "South Huntington man accused of hitting woman with mallet on Fitz Henry Road, located about a half mile away off the Smithton exit on Interstate 70." Chances are the assailant was just another pugnacious run-of-the-mill guy with a mallet and a mainstream sexual preference rather than some outlandish type of officially registered public nuisance.

Hillary Clinton made the same mistake as Obama with her "basket of deplorables" comment at a glitzy September campaign fundraiser in New York City — \$250,000 to \$1,200 per ticket.

Clinton, after speaking of policy proposals related to jobs, Supreme Court appointees, addiction, mental health, people who see both the economy and the government as letting them down, violence, homelessness, gun laws and economics, haughtily described half of Trump's supporters as "racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic, you name it" — a scornful and condescending portrayal that pushed voters and potential support away and energized Trump's base.

Barbra Streisand, in imperial attendance, topped off the night of Hillary's sold-out fundraiser with a set that started with "Losing My Mind" and concluded with "Send in the Clowns."

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