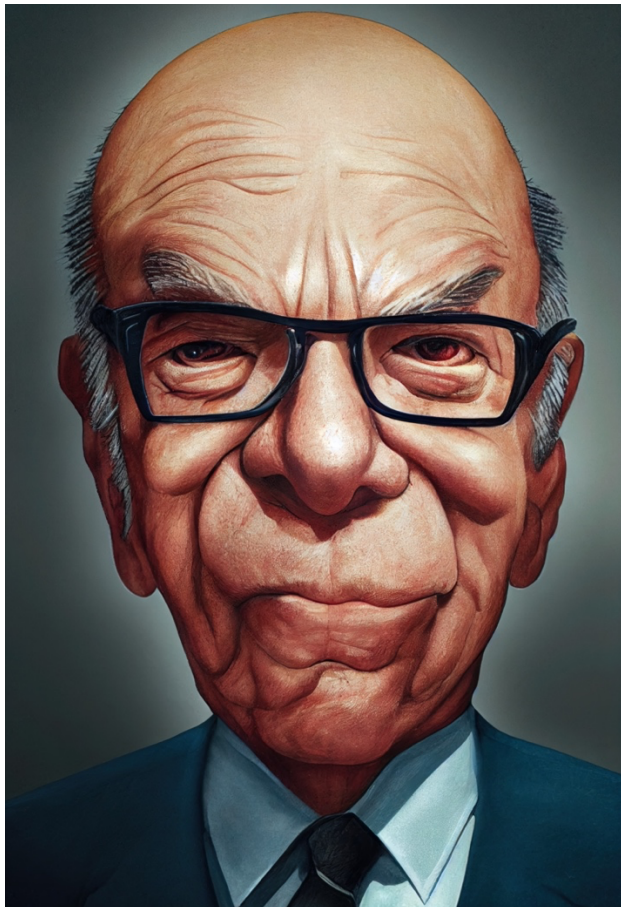


Missing the Point – Breaking Up the Base of the Republican Party

Wednesday, March 1, 2023



Rupert Murdoch, Chairman of Fox Corporation
(Shutterstock)

I know. The man in the featured image may remind you a bit of Mick Jagger, with glasses, but it's not him. *"I can't get no..."*

Donald Trump is no political genius. In fact, some say that he's as dumb as he is nuts – and I agree. So how did he get elected President of the United States? The answer is, he was the beneficiary of a perfect storm of political conditions that were ripe for a candidate with his special personality... Imperfections in how we conduct our primary elections. A pervasive distrust and dislike of politicians in general. A craving for someone as mean and angry as the suppressed feelings too many voters have been having for some time now. Supportive, dishonest right-wing media. A selfish lack of courage on the part of Republican leadership. And a Democratic nominee who didn't appeal to enough of her own Democrat and independent voters.

So, Trump – a candidate most people knew almost nothing about – gets the nomination with a minority of Republican voters supporting him. Trump's elected

President and declares, even believes he's God's gift to America and the greatest politician of all time. In fact, he's just the wrong candidate at the right time, an accidental President whose ignorance and authoritarian tendencies we will struggle to survive.

Four years later, we console ourselves at having elected a self-proclaimed "transitional" President, concluding, prematurely, that we now know better. Lesson learned – and yet here he comes again. Challenged by the likes of Florida's [Ron DeSantis](#) – Yale undergraduate, Harvard Law – and potentially many others who sense that Trump is old and weak, thinking they can lay claim to the base he can no longer control.

DeSantis takes the Republican Party even farther toward the dark side. Trump was just, and still is, lying. DeSantis, on the other hand, [wants to tell us how to think](#), starting with our children in public schools and on up.

The underlying question remains unresolved... How do you get the Trump base of the Republican party to start thinking like normal people?

By "Normal people," I mean voters who know a lie when they hear one. Who know "stupid" when they see it. They're not people with whom you necessarily agree. For example, while you may be pro-choice on the abortion issue, at least you can appreciate that people who are pro-life have what I'll call a "legitimate point of view" and you can respect that. Work things out. Maybe compromise.

Admittedly, on the issue of gun control when it comes to military-grade assault weapons, you may not be as flexible, as respectful of people who claim, incorrectly, that their freedom to own any kind of weapon is guaranteed by the Constitution. It's not. Just a general freedom to bear arms that made sense 250 years ago when rifles and pistols were loaded one bullet at a time, but not so much anymore. Understandably, as bright and thoughtful as the founders of our democracy were, they could not have possibly imagined the gun and other technologies we have today.

Same for the authoritarian controls DeSantis is trying to impose that take public education away from the professionals in favor of letting politicians dictate what subjects and books are right for our children. It's hard for those of us who believe he's overstepping to appreciate why his supporters, of which there are a great many, do not share our concerns. ...No gender studies?! Are men and women no longer "a thing"? No discussion of homosexuality as if children, straight and gay, are unaware and unaffected by the reality all around them?

That a substantial minority of us believe so differently about so many important issues is troublesome, to say the least. But then those differences are not, in and of themselves, the problem. It's not about what you conclude, so much as it is about the basis on which you draw those conclusions. Put the verifiable facts on the table and

let well-meaning, thoughtful people decide what they may. And, because I believe in democracy, I'm willing to abide by what the majority concludes. ...I may keep arguing my point of view to see if there are minds that I can change, but I'm okay and may, ultimately, have some mind-changing of my own to consider.

Unfortunately, all the facts are not on the table and the majority doesn't always rule. Turns out that a great deal of the information we garner, that influences our thinking, has been altered by media more interested in ratings than in telling the truth. And there's a critical flaw in our election process. Time and time again, too many people are running in our primary elections, allowing candidates with fervent, but relatively small numbers of supporters to be nominated when the votes of the more "normal" (centrist-thinking) people are split among too many other candidates.

The question is – to avoid the election of a Trump or DeSantis favored by only a minority of voters whose minds inhabit an alternate reality – what, in the short-run, can we do about it? ...Maybe you have some suggestions of your own that you'll send me via email to LesCohen1@gmail.com or, even better, the comment box below? In the meantime, here's what I'm thinking.

Silence the professional deniers of truth... I think news and public opinion platforms on cable need to be subject to the same FCC controls as their regular network counterparts. Just because the technology exists and someone has the corporate resources to make it happen, shouldn't allow a news service to be nothing more than a propaganda instrument for making its producers and talent rich. [Rupert Murdoch](#), principal owner of Fox' cable news service, [has testified](#) that certain of his most prominent commentators knew they were lying when they argued, again and again, in support of Trump and his disciples. So, some of them will be fired, but they'll find other platforms to promote their lying formula for success. And new liars will quickly replace them. Only federal regulation – and viewers coming to their senses in favor of truth-telling alternatives – will diminish the financial motivation for lying in on the air.

Pressure state legislatures to make primaries more supportive of majority rule. Do [what they do in Washington state](#), for example, where everybody runs in a single primary, regardless of party-affiliation, and then the top two candidates – even if both survivors are Republicans, Democrats or unaffiliated independents – face off in the general election. The result of this single primary approach is that the winner is, more than likely, the choice of the majority of people voting.

Pass legislation that takes money out of politics – or, at least, dramatically reduces its influence. We've got to stop electing people because they and their supporters, including "special interests" representing who-knows-what points of view, are rich.

And, perhaps most importantly, go after the confused minority head on. To avoid any confusion on this point, **I'm suggesting that we attack the Republican base.** Not physically of course and not by proffering lies of our own on television. Of course not.

No less a propagandist than Murdoch and his leading on-air personalities have gone on record as lying for money, as playing their audiences for fools. Let's use that to our advantage. Here's a sample 60 second script. I'll leave it to you to imagine the visuals.

"Hey," the TV commercial begins. A good, strong, thirty or forty-something female voice does the talking. Taking her time, her pace and tone are deliberate.

"This man is Rupert Murdoch. He owns the Fox cable news service whose biggest names..."

Give their names, show their faces, with their annual salaries in plain view to even the most near-sighted viewers.

"...have played you for fools. For losers who don't know any better."

"Well, now you know. So, what are you going to do about it?"

"Maybe it's time you changed stations, visited other websites and started getting your news from legitimate sources where the professionals you're watching aren't lying to you for the money they can make."

Something like that. Serious. Direct. Harsh, but nonetheless real. In ten or more different versions running heavy in targeted Republican Congressional districts. To do anything less is missing the point about the seriousness of the situation.

FYI, according to [Celebrity Net Worth](#), here are the annual salaries of Fox cable news stars related to the Murdoch testimony...

Tucker Carlson... \$6 million per year
Sean Hannity... \$25 million per year,
plus another \$20 million from his radio show
Laura Ingraham... \$15 million per year
Maria Bartiroma... \$6 million per year

Lying for a living has served them well.

-Les Cohen

Les Cohen is a long-term Marylander, having grown up in Annapolis. Professionally, he writes and edits materials for business and political clients from his base of operations in Columbia, Maryland. He has a

Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Economics. Leave a comment or feel free to send him an email to Les@Writeaway.us.

