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their futures, Goldwater's campaign was steeped in the fear of enemies. The Civil Rights movement constituted a criminal assault on individual liberty and states' rights that would produce a federal police state in which people would lose the freedom to live as they choose (that is, in segregation). Protest was framed as a breakdown of moral order and an indicator of criminal unrest. Such "welfare state" initiatives as Medicare and Social Security could only foster pathological and parasitical dependencies—primarily in Black communities, we understood. But vicariously, through Goldwater, we would beat back those enemies. We would win.

Liberals cheered Goldwater's epic defeat. But their glee was misplaced. Even in losing, Goldwater changed mainstream political possibilities. He'd been willing to wage tactical nuclear warfare. His campaign helped set the stage for what would become the Republican "Southern Strategy," which refined racist dog whistling to an art and ultimately delivered the historically Democratic South to the GOP. Fear, resentment, and the presumption of superiority were the glues that bonded people, including me, to his campaign. Paradoxically, to supporters, those sentiments had felt comforting, even hopeful. I was stunned by the magnitude of the loss. That liberal glee, stamping me once again as a loser, cut to the quick.

My arc towards progressivism began in 1965, during my last two years of high school, thanks to one courageous classmate and three remarkable teachers who challenged me to reconsider my views. They did it individually, in a multitude of ways, including sharing their own beliefs and telling me more about themselves. While often putting me uncomfortably on the spot, they were never demonizing, ridiculing, or demeaning. No one tried to tell me what I should believe. They listened as much as they talked.

When I could so easily have been a symbolic representation of everything they held in contempt, my classmate and these teachers looked more deeply and, with no guarantees, reached for the most human and the best in me. And at

some point, I started to reach back.

I began to see what was obvious, but what I'd never paid attention to before. Poverty was widespread in my hometown, and it was intensely raced, as was every aspect of civic, social and economic life. The Red Scare was a way to avoid facing injustice at home while barricading yourself against danger and creating a military on steroids. The Goldwater folks taught me to build community by defining myself against enemies, but when you do that, you're always anxious about anyone who isn't just like you.

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fice of defense begin to crumble, to see your own beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors in a clearer, harsher, light. But those three teachers and that classmate made it possible for me to come through it without feeling so cornered that I had no choice but to hit back out of anger and shame.

This is why I think it's so important to try, as progressives, to compete for the part of Trump's audience that may be reachable. People didn't write me off. I must do the same.

**BEYOND GOLDWATER, WALLACE, AND TRUMP**

In 1968, in the wake of the King and Kennedy assassinations, so-called "race riots" broke out in more than 100 U.S. cities. Anti-war protesters at the Democratic National Convention were met with violent responses from Chicago police. And George Wallace ran for president as an independent. Although he ultimately lost, I was shocked by how much support he elicited in my hometown, then a reliably Democratic stronghold.

From the outside, Wallace's right-wing populist crusade looked like nothing more than crude demagoguery. But people I knew who supported Wallace felt that he alone understood their struggles and fears. The local steel mill, a huge employer, was already feeling the discomfiting stirrings of what, in a little more than a decade, would become a

full-fledged steel market crash. Simultaneously, Anglo supremacist norms were being challenged. The world they knew was coming apart, and they desperately wanted someone to put it back together. In Wallace's vision, their lives became meaningful, their futures more hopeful. Unlike Goldwater, Wallace played directly to people whose lives were of no concern to those who dominated the political discourse.

I see so much of Wallace in Trump. Like the former governor, Trump has an instinct for tapping racial and economic anxieties in emotionally-charged and, to many, compelling ways. But ghost stories, whether told by the Right or the Left, only amplify anxiety. They don't produce more just societies.

Somebody's got to do the work of engaging ordinary White folks who support Trump, as well as other right-wing agendas. If we don't, right-wing populism will reappear again and again, in forms that have evolved to adapt to changing conditions.

It's not sexy work. It requires a kind of radical compassion that resists the easy politics of contempt and dehumanization. It would be so much easier to simply distance ourselves from people we've come to regard as bigoted, benighted, and lost—the "basket of deplorables," if you will. But "easier" never created political transformation. And believe me, as someone whose almost 50 years of progressive activism speaks to the power of engagement with real human beings rather than demonized ghosts, I know that it can be done. ☐

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