

# JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

## Book Notes #191

November 2024

By Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence  
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### Election Analysis

## *'This, That, & the Other IV'*



“What happened?” That’s a question many have been asking, myself included, in the wake of the U.S. Presidential Election between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump.

Let's examine some data points (**Dots**) and see if we can connect them. Given that election data is still in flux, these observations must be labeled tentative. They do, however, reveal a pattern much different than many expected. We might not be able to connect the dots, but we might see where they overlap and what insights they suggest.

**Dot #1: Who saw the “red tide” coming in?** Almost no one, not even President-elect Donald Trump. For example, Trump spread rumors of voting shenanigans in Pennsylvania on Election Day until it became apparent that he was actually winning.

This was supposed to be a nail-biter that might last days; but it wasn't, and it didn't. Trump not only won the Electoral College, but he also decisively swept all seven of the so-called swing states. He became the first Republican candidate since George W. Bush in 2004 to win the popular vote.

As of Monday afternoon, he was winning by 3.7 million votes, but if one excludes California, where Harris is winning by 2.3 million votes and President Joe Biden won by five million votes, then in the rest of the country Trump won the popular vote by five million votes. That is a 7 million vote swing from his defeat by Biden in 2020. [1]

Numerous interesting twists lurk in the macro numbers, beginning with Trump's vote total of 74,708,357, which is not quite 500,000 **more** than his 2020 final tally of 74,223,975. Harris' 70,979,779 votes, however, are 10,303,526 **fewer** than the Biden/Harris ticket's 2020 total of 81,283,501. Voter turnout in 2020 was a record high of approximately 67%; turnout in 2024 was estimated to be 65%, but final numbers are still to be determined. Not counting third- and fourth-party candidates, in 2020, 155.5 million voters turned out, but in 2024, that number decreased to 145.7 – almost 10 million fewer! Given that some ballots are still being counted, that number might turn out (no pun intended) to be even fewer. [2]

The quick takeaway is Trump's strategy of focusing his appeal tightly on his base succeeded. He held the base and increased his total by half a million votes. On the Democratic side, the obvious takeaway is Harris did not hold onto 10.3 million voters who voted for her and Biden in 2020. That points to a key factor: Democrats depended upon (always depend upon) high voter turnout, which did not materialize. As the numbers settle, a clearer picture will emerge.

The preliminary takeaway is that turnout was low in California (down 1.3% from 2020), New York (down 3.2% from 2020), Massachusetts (down 5.3% from 2020), and a few other states that Harris was predicted to win. [3] This is purely

speculation, but it suggests that some voters in those states, assuming Harris would win but that the real action was in the seven so-called swing states, simply stayed home. Harris did, indeed, win those Democratic stronghold states, but not by the margins anticipated, which opened the door for Trump to win the national popular vote.

In the seven swing states, voter participation was high. Wisconsin's, for example, was among the highest of any state at a record 76.1%, but it was the Republicans who had the higher margins. Similarly, in Pennsylvania, overall turnout was 0.3% higher than in 2020, but in several critical counties, voter turnout was down from 2020. Harris won those counties but with 78,000 fewer votes than Biden in 2020, while Trump added 24,000 to his 2020 totals. [4] Versions of this story repeated themselves throughout the seven swing states: good turnout but not enough to offset Republican gains among their own voters and the marginal loss of anticipated Democratic voters.

**Dot #2: Where did they go?** Some very interesting data points sing a sad song for Democrats.

First, the 'tsunami of women voters supporting Harris', which a week before the election a major national commentator suggested to me was all but a certainty, turned out to be *a ripple*. Forty-three percent of women 18-44 years old voted for Trump, and almost 50% of women 45-plus voted for Trump. [5] Among Black voters, Harris' numbers dropped from Biden's 91% in 2020 to 83% in 2024.

Of Black men, 24% voted for Trump. [6] Twelve of 14 Texas counties bordering Mexico voted for Trump. These are counties that have historically almost never voted for a Republican and where "most residents identify as Hispanic, Tejano or Latino." [7] Their major issue? In short, "they felt forgotten as illegal border crossings rose and their communities struggled to handle the influx." [8]

Lastly, if Democrats thought the future belonged to them because the young were "Blue," then they learned to their chagrin it was a very pale blue. Voters 18-29 years old supported Harris 52% to 46%, but that was a nine-point drop from Biden's 61% share in 2020. [9] More critically, in that same age group (18-29 years old), 61% of women voted for Harris, but only 47% of men did. Trump won the male vote across all age groups; Harris won the women's vote across all age groups except women 45-64 years old, where Trump won by one percentage point. [10]

**Dot #3: Why did they abandon Harris and choose Trump?** First, there was a shift in the mix, but it's not clear "that voters abandoned Harris and chose Trump." It might be more accurate to say a significant portion of anticipated Harris voters simply did not show up. This will need to be parsed as the data is finalized. Trump only increased his vote totals by 500,000 votes; Harris as a proxy

for the 2020 Biden/Harris ticket lost almost 10 million votes from their 2020 totals. We need to see final numbers, but rather than Trump simply rallying his base, which he held with the aid of new voters, Harris ultimately did not bring out the Democratic vote.

Or, to ask an inflammatory question, was the Democratic vote suppressed? At the moment, the data will not answer that question, but voter ID laws, purging voter rolls, and other tactics implemented in several states seem to have worked. “Seemed” being the keyword, for one does not want to be an alarmist. Still, it is a question that needs to be examined.

**Dot #4: What do the numbers mean?** The above review of the numbers can easily descend into a semantic fog parsing statistical minutiae. What trends emerge from the fog? In a recent conversation with a seasoned political operator, we discussed what happened by asking the question, “Was Harris’ defeat tactical or strategic?” By tactical, we meant could she have campaigned more effectively; by strategic, we meant were there overarching macro issues she did not address that Trump did. As always, upon reflection, it was not *either/or*, it was *both/and*.

**Dot #5: Tactical:** Which really asks, who ran the smarter campaign? As the proxy for an unpopular (justified or not) incumbent, Harris did little to distance herself from Biden. Instead, she chose to run by attacking Trump’s all too dubious character and the threat he poses to the preservation of American democracy. That strategy resonated among Democrats but fell flat with Republicans and undecided voters. Trump, on the other hand, focused on the economy, false allegations of crime-committing migrants, falsely alleging an overall rise in crime rates, and views regarding gender. On each, he scored big.

**Dot #6: Strategic:** Trump scored big on most voters’ top-of-mind issues. Regarding the economy, voters dismissed all data, pointing out that the American economy is booming at levels not seen since the 1960s and accepted Trump’s claims that the economy is in shambles because of high inflation and high interest rates. At the macro level, it is inarguable that the economy is flourishing and the inflation rate is down, but at the micro level of “citizen-consumer” at the meat counter in Giant Eagle, the price of hamburger tells another story. It’s a story that resonated with voters. A personal example: last week, I bought two pounds of 90/10 ground sirloin. It cost \$7 a pound. My father owned a meat business; he would be flabbergasted at that price. Forget the cost of hamburger 50-plus years ago. A quick glance at an inflation calculator tells you that in pre-Covid 2019, that ground beef would have cost \$5.68, or today it is 23.2% higher.

So, while the inflation rate is down, embedded price increases from the past five years remain. For the average voter whose eyeballs roll back when you say, “Let x

*equal...*," that is the decisive reality. On the economy, Trump seized a limited truth and ran with it.

On the other three issues, however, his sustained campaign of misinformation prevailed. Yes, there is a migrant issue on the southern border, as voters in those Texas and Arizona counties can tell you. But no, migrants aren't eating their neighbors' cats in Springfield, Ohio, and Venezuelan gangs are not terrorizing Aurora, Colorado, nor are they in any other American city. Yes, there are undoubtedly issues, but the fantastical portrait of a nation under siege is part of a larger program of misinformation fogging voters' capacity to understand their own society. Compare those images with your own experience living in Erie County, Pennsylvania. Who are you going to believe: the Fox News, Newsmax, Truth Social, social media mediasphere, or your own eyes? It appears people don't trust their own eyes.

Apparently, the mediasphere trumps reality, a phenomenon we've explored in multiple **Book Notes** that can be found [here](#).

Similarly, the relentless campaign against transgender people, a legitimate but marginal issue, telescoped into a national emergency. Tell me: do you know one family whose child left for school in the morning one gender and returned later in the day another? President-elect Trump repeatedly said that was happening. The migrant and transgender issues apparently blunted the impact of the very real question of women's reproductive rights. Although most pro-abortion state referenda passed, not quite half of all women voters voted for Trump: the unofficial tally is 45%. That explains the failure of the female tsunami to materialize, but why did almost one in two women vote against her own interest? First, abortion is a loaded question. To state the obvious, not all women are pro-abortion rights. But beyond the anti-abortion movement, why did 53% of white, suburban women, who were expected to drive the tsunami of women voting for Harris, instead vote for a misogynistic, serial sexual harasser?

***Dot #5: What's the cliché? To a hammer everything looks like a nail?***  
Well, as a "hammer," I ask myself "How does ***The American Tapestry Project*** help answer that last question?" We will explore that answer's nuances in next week's **Book Notes: "This, That & the Other V."**

For now, to end on a positive note, here are two poems, one by Edna St. Vincent Millay singing of her love for America, which love, although at times America confuses the hell out of me, I share. The other, for those wondering if their vote counts, by contemporary American poet Aimee Nezhukumatahil. It reminds us that "One Vote" can matter a great deal. Regarding whether or not your vote counts, of course it does, or the right wing wouldn't be trying so hard to suppress it.

### Modern Declaration

I, having loved ever since I was a child a few things, never having wavered  
In these affections; never through shyness in the houses of the rich or in the  
presence of clergymen having denied these loves;  
Never when worked upon by cynics like chiropractors having grunted or clicked  
a vertebra to the discredit of these loves;  
Never when anxious to land a job having diminished them by a conniving smile;  
or when befuddled by drink  
Jeered at them through heartache or lazily fondled the fingers of their alert  
enemies; declare

That I shall love you always.  
No matter what party is in power;  
No matter what temporarily expedient combination of allied interests wins the  
war;  
Shall love you always. [11]

### One Vote

*After reading a letter from his mother, Harry T. Burn cast the deciding vote to ratify the 19th amendment of the U.S.  
Constitution (granting citizens the right to vote, regardless of gender.)*

My parents are from countries  
where mangoes grow wild and bold  
and eagles cry the sky in arcs and dips.  
America loved this bird too and made  
it clutch olives and arrows. Some think  
if an eaglet falls, the mother will swoop  
down to catch it. It won't. The eagle must fly  
on its own accord by first testing the air-slide  
over each pinfeather. Even in a letter of wind,  
a mother holds so much power. After the pipping  
of the egg, after the branching—an eagle is on  
its own. Must make the choice on its own  
no matter what it's been taught. Some forget  
that pound for pound, eagle feathers are stronger  
than an airplane wing. And even one letter, one  
vote can make the difference for every bright thing. [12]

Next week the Presidential Election of 2024 seen through the lens of ***The American Tapestry Project.***

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*“Election Results Map a ‘Snip’ from Bing.com”* at **Bing.com** available at [congressional election results 2024 - Search](#) accessed November 10, 2024.  
*“Norman Rockwell, Golden Rule, 1961. Cover Illustration for The Saturday Evening Post, April 1, 1961”* at **Reddit** available at [Norman Rockwell, Golden Rule, 1961. Cover illustration for The Saturday Evening Post, April 1, 1961. : r/Jewish](#) accessed November 10, 2024.

### End Notes

1. *“2024 Election Results”* at **Microsoft Bing Election Results** available at [2024 election results - Search](#) accessed November 10, 2024.
2. All numbers cited here are computations based on data *“2024 Election Results” cited above* and *“2020 United States presidential election”* at **Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**, available at [2020 United States presidential election - Wikipedia](#) accessed November 10, 2024.
3. *“2024 turnout is near 2020 record. See how each state compares,”* in **The Washington Post** available at [Voter turnout in 2024: Map shows how they compare by state - The Washington Post](#) accessed November 11, 2024.
4. Bender, Michael C. *“Why Was There a Broad-Drop-Off in Democratic Turnout in 2024?”* at **The New York Times** available at [A Look at Democratic Voter Turnout and Trump’s Election Victory - The New York Times](#) accessed November 11, 2024.
5. *“2024 United States presidential election”* at **Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia** available at [2024 United States presidential election - Wikipedia](#) accessed November 11, 2024.
6. Johnson, Steven Ross and Elliott Davis Jr., *“How Key Demographic Groups Voted in 2024 Election”* at **USNews** available at [How 5 Key Demographic Groups Helped Trump Win the 2024 Election | National News | U.S. News](#) accessed November 10, 2024.
7. Hernandez, Arelis R. *“How border counties in Texas flipped from blue to red for Trump”* at **The Washington Post** available at [How border counties in Texas flipped from blue to red for Trump](#) accessed November 10, 2024.
8. Ibid.
9. Johnson, et. al. *cited above*.

10. “2024 United States presidential election” at **Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia** available at [2024 United States presidential election - Wikipedia](#) accessed November 11, 2024.
11. Millay, Edna St. Vincent, “Modern Declarations,” in **Collected Poems** Ed. Norma Millay (New York: Harper Perennial, 1956), p. 352.
12. Nezhukumatathil, Aimee, “One Vote” at **American Academy of Poets** available at [One Vote by Aimee Nezhukumatathil - Poems | Academy of American Poets](#) accessed November 11, 2024

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