

TRUTH IN LOVE

Dangerous is Not Diagnostic: *Warning Required for Natural Disasters, Trump*

**By Parris J. Baker
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Hurricane Idalia was a monstrous storm that was exceptionally large and seldom experienced in Florida's Big Bend region. With sustained winds of 125 mph, Hurricane Idalia was rated a Category 3 hurricane.^[1] The last time winds this powerful were recorded in the Big Bend region was 127 years ago in 1896. Across the region, from Tampa to Big Bend, the storm surges created by Hurricane Idalia broke water-level records. Storm surges are among the greatest threats to life and property during a hurricane.

The usually warm water temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico (at times more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit) combined with hurricane-force winds provided plenty of energy to fuel Idalia's rapid growth and strength. Fortunately, the National Weather Service of Tallahassee, Florida, recognizing the extreme shifts in the weather conditions, issued extreme weather warnings to alert the residents of southern Florida of the potential dangers, which saved an incalculable number of lives. Indecision, uncertainty, or refusal to issue warnings to the residents of Florida would have cost many lives. Recently, many of the residents of Maui and Lahaina, Hawaii were not afforded enough time to escape the fast-moving flames, propelled by high winds because they were not adequately alerted.

The warning of the rapid development of Hurricane Idalia and her accompanying storm surges provided people sufficient time to evacuate their homes, protect their properties, or better prepare them to ride out the storm. The advance warning also allowed the Federal Emergency Management Agency

(FEMA)^[2] enough time to mobilize, and with its federal partners prepare necessary commodities and critical supplies for the residents of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. It would have been considered neglectful and irresponsible had individuals in positions to warn the public of impending danger remained silent.

In like fashion, Brandy X. Lee, a forensic psychiatrist, a graduate of Yale School of Medicine, and the author of the books “The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Experts Assess a President” (2017) and “Profile of a Nation: Trump’s Mind, America’s Soul” (2020), proposes an important and necessary lesson for psychiatrists, mental health professionals and practitioners, and other members of the health and human service communities: How can we meet our societal responsibility to warn of existential dangers while speaking ethically and responsibly?

To be fair to this discussion, the sacred Office of the President has been maligned, exploited, and disparaged by other men who participated in questionable behaviors while occupying the presidency. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 signed in law by President Andrew Jackson (1829-1837) caused the near genocide of five Native American nations. President Warren G. Harding’s presidency (1921-1923) was marred with scandal, cronyism, and influence-peddling. President Herbert Hoover’s (1929-1933) refusal or resistance to use large-scale federal interventions to address the stock market crash, the banking industry crises, and the concomitant Great Depression created nation-wide conditions of human suffering. Both Presidents Andrew Johnson (1865-1869) and William Clinton (1993-2001) were impeached.

In other words, America has had some unscrupulous men in the presidency, but none as dangerous as former President Donald Trump (2017-2021). Because of Trump, present national and world political, military, economic, and environmental conditions have dramatically and rapidly shifted and are now, more than ever, conducive to the production of irreversible destruction. Ignoring the warnings signs and remaining silent is negligent and irresponsible and has the potential to set humanity on a course for world annihilation: daily threats of nuclear war and nuclear weapons proliferation; significant world-wide catastrophes related to climate change; the persistence of infectious diseases; and the increased frequency of natural and human-influenced environmental evils such as air and water pollution.

In his four years as president, Mr. Trump repeatedly tested the boundaries of what is constitutionally permissible and what constitutes immoral and unethical practices. Moreover, he has degraded and disparaged the virtue of democracy, the office of the presidency, women, LGBTQI+, veterans, immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, the disabled and differentially abled, and his family and friends.

In my view, Mr. Trump is very comfortable endorsing and encouraging violence as a primary problem-solving strategy. He has addressed many of our nation's crises related to international relations, the Mexico-U.S. border, immigration and the care for immigrant children, and families by utilizing a Machiavellian motif. Except for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Supreme Leader of North Korea Kim Jong Un, former President Trump has spoken to world and national leaders in a very self-serving and mercurial manner. Mr. Trump has offered repeated demonstrations of narcissism and maliciousness.

As I see it, Donald Trump's actions are clearly dangerous. This description of the former president is not diagnostic, a clinical assessment, or the interpretation of tarot-card readings. Many psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and mental health practitioners, guided by the Goldwater Rule,^[3] have been reluctant to speak directly to the dangerous behaviors exhibited by the former president.

Though Mr. Trump now faces both federal and state criminal charges, he remains a threat to our nation and the world. If history is a guide, it is also clear that he will relentlessly pursue regaining the power of the presidency. What is also abundantly clear is that 40 percent of the Republican electorate and many of the current Republican presidential candidates seem comfortable about publicly endorsing a twice impeached, four-time indicted former president to be re-elected to the most powerful job in the world.

Dangerous is not a diagnosis. We have a duty to speak out. We have a duty to warn:

An unusually large and very powerful political and economic storm is in our nation's forecast.

[1] The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale is a 1 to 5 rating based on a hurricane's sustained wind speed. Category Three Hurricane have sustained winds 111-129 mph (96-112 kt or 178-208 km/hr). Devastating damage will occur: Well-built framed homes may incur major damage or removal of roof decking and gable ends. Many trees will be snapped or uprooted, blocking numerous roads. Electricity and water will be unavailable for several days to weeks after the storm passes. [Here](#)

[2] Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the Department of Homeland Security. [Here](#)

[3] Goldwater Rule. Established in 1973, Section 7. 3 of the American Psychiatric Association Principles of Medical Ethics states: Psychiatrists have a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health. On occasion psychiatrists are asked for an opinion about an individual who is in the light of public attention or who has disclosed information about himself/herself through public media. In such circumstances, a psychiatrist may share with the public his or her expertise about psychiatric issues in general. However, it is unethical for a psychiatrist to offer a professional opinion unless he or she has conducted an examination and has been granted proper authorization for such a statement. [Here](#)

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