

# Nygaard Notes

## *Independent Periodic News and Analysis*

Number 621

February 15, 2018

### Problem Voters: Wrong Birthplace, Wrong Color

A Pew Research Center survey just before the 2016 election showed that party affiliation among all registered U.S. voters was pretty evenly split, with 44 percent identifying as or “leaning” Republican, with 48 percent going with the Democrats. But that’s for the voting population as a whole. When we look at foreign-born voters and people of color, it’s a different story. Let’s start with foreign-born voters.

In June of 2016 the political scientist Thomas Holbrook, author of “Altered States: Changing Populations, Changing Parties, and the Transformation of the American Political Landscape,” wrote in the *Washington Post* that “substantially more of today’s immigrant voters are Democratic and liberal than we see among the native-born population.” Holbrook compared voters now with voters 45 years ago and found that “the more foreign born voters a state has, the greater the increase in the percentage of people who voted Democratic.”

After noting that naturalized voters in the United States “include just about as many immigrants from Asia (37 percent) as from Latin America (39 percent),” Holbrook asserts that “Like their Latin-American counterparts, Asian-Americans also hold overwhelmingly negative views toward Donald Trump and the Republican Party.”

Conservatives are well aware of this reality. So we see headlines like “Study Finds More Immigrants Equals More Democrats” in the conservative *Washington Examiner*, and “More Immigration Would Mean More Democrats” in the right-wing *National Review*. The nerve center for this line of thought is The Center for Immigration Studies, an anti-immigrant “think tank” founded by John Tanton. (Aim your search engine at “John Tanton network” for some eye-opening info.) We can see that there is a very practical, short-term reason why the right wing wants to limit the numbers of

immigrants: They constitute a voting block that is seen as an obstacle to the conservative agenda.

#### Party Identification and Race

Thomas Holbrook tells us that immigrants tend to vote liberal and Democratic compared to the voting population as a whole. But he also introduces the other dynamic that is troubling the increasingly Trumpist Republican Party: “As recently as the 1970s, naturalized citizens used to ‘look’ a lot like the native-born population; they were roughly the same race, ethnicity, party and ideology. But by the 2000s, the foreign-born citizen population had become overwhelmingly non-white, mostly of Latin American and Asian and Pacific Islander descent.”

**Does race itself manifest itself  
in voting patterns?  
It certainly seems to.**

We’ve seen that immigrants differ from the voting majority in terms of party preference. Now we see that they also differ in racial terms. Does race itself manifest itself in voting patterns? It certainly seems to.

Recent polls find 54 percent of “white, non-Hispanic” voters identifying as or “leaning” Republican. The number for “black, non-Hispanic” voters is 7 percent Republican. (This is from a Pew Research Center poll in 2016, before Trump was elected.) 39 percent of whites identify as Democrats, while an overwhelming 87 percent of blacks so identify. The numbers for “Hispanic” (sic) and “Asian, non-Hispanic” (sic) voters also show strong majorities choosing Democrats over Republicans (63 percent Democrat, 27 percent Republican in the case of “Hispanics” and 66 percent to 27 percent for “English-speaking” Asians. (The problematic terminology is Pew’s language.)

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Greetings,

I'm publishing this issue of the Notes in an attempt to make very clear the electoral strategy of the far right—what I might call the neo-fascist right—in today's United States. In a nutshell, this "other side" is strategizing about how to come to power, how to consolidate its power, and how to build structures that will neutralize challenges to that power.

The great fear is a multicultural United States in which white people are no longer the majority, a day which is due to arrive in 20-30 years.

As this issue will hopefully show, right-wing leaders see two big threats to what they hope will be a long-term restructuring of the U.S. political economy along neoliberal lines. Seth Sandronsky, writing in *Counterpunch*, notes that "neoliberalism, a bipartisan politics of the one percent against everyone else, undermining New Deal and Great Society policies, created the social conditions for Trump's rise." Think of Trump as a Trojan Horse, posing as a "populist," but holding within his movement the power to unleash social forces that threaten to Make America White Again, with all the violence and ugliness which that would entail.

The right, or "alt-right", or neo-Fascist right, or whatever we choose to call them, have decided that immigrants and people of color—as identifiable groups—are two of the biggest threats to their power. That's what this issue of Nygaard Notes is all about.

In solidarity,  
Nygaard

### Problem Voters *from page 1*

Why would this be true? Do the racial attitudes of those who identify as Republicans differ that much from those of Democrats, enough to drive people of color into the arms of Democrats? A survey conducted this past August by the Pew Research Center looked at the attitudes of USAmericans in regard to race, and the results are very interesting.

"Nearly eight-in-ten Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (78%) say white people benefit a great deal or a fair amount from advantages unavailable to black people; just 21% say they do not benefit at all or do not benefit too much. The views of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents are nearly the opposite: 27% say whites benefit a great deal or a fair amount from societal advantages, compared with 72% who say they do not benefit at all or do not benefit too much."

(Here is the Glass-Is-Half-Empty perspective on this: One in five of the supposedly "progressive" party are in serious denial about white privilege. And, the Glass-Is-Half-Full perspective: One in four of the "conservative" party seem to acknowledge the existence of white privilege.)

Another Pew survey taken in August asked directly if people think racism is a big deal. And here again they found a big difference between Republicans and Democrats. They report that 76 percent of Democrats "say racism is a 'big problem' in our society today," while only 37 percent of Republicans agree. Specifically asking about support for "the Black Lives Matter movement" showed 80 percent of Democrats in support. Only 23 percent of Republicans support BLM.

The neo-Nazi demonstrators in Charlottesville last summer were an obvious manifestation of racial hostility and white rage. But racism operates in many ways that are less obvious. For example, a look at the party platforms of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party show that, while neither party is taking true leadership in attacking white supremacy, the Republican Party does not even pay lip service to the idea of racial justice. The GOP platform uses the word "racism" but once, and the word "white" never appears in the platform in reference to race.

I'm not suggesting that Nygaard Notes readers look to the Democrats to address structural racism in the United States! Far, far from it. I'm just talking about voting patterns and how they relate to contemporary struggles around the right to vote. ♦

## Immigrants: “*They Are All Socialistic*”

Xenophobia is the irrational fear and distrust of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange, and this is the foundation upon which the nativist, anti-immigrant agenda is built. Immigrants are, by definition, “foreign” and, in the conservative mind, are not like the Leave-It-To-Beaver “us.” And it’s true that people raised outside of the borders of the U.S. have been directly or indirectly exposed to propaganda systems that are different from the U.S. propaganda system. So (the thinking goes) we must assume that immigrants have different ideas. And xenophobia tells us that “different” is dangerous, as immigrants and people of color are thought to represent a challenge to the character of the United States. What follows is one convoluted explanation of the nature of the “problem,” chosen from among many examples in the right-wing media.

Writing in the online Libertarian magazine *The Federalist*, writer Luma Simms pondered the question of “why so many immigrants, while morally conservative, vote for liberal Democrats in such high percentages.” Her answer had to do with “how immigrants think about, and understand, society and the role of government.” (We’ll leave aside for the moment how Simms, or anyone, would know that “many immigrants” are “morally conservative,” or how “immigrants think.”)

The problem, says Simms, is that “a large majority of immigrants, whether they are from Greece, Iraq, India, or anywhere else, have similar presuppositions regarding government. Although some of these countries are quasi-democratic in their government structure, they all have one thing in common: They are all socialistic to one extent or another. There is government-run

healthcare, pension systems, and a host of other benefits. This means immigrants coming from these countries are predisposed to think of government in socialistic ways, to think that the natural function of government in large part is to redistribute economic resources.” (All the statements here are questionable, but the fear is real.)

“This way of thinking may not make sense to a good portion of the American political landscape, but it makes perfect sense in the immigrant mind...” (*The immigrant mind!*) Adds Simms, “unlike most Americans, who benefit from the residue of classical Western political philosophy (though few are well versed in it), these immigrants have been fed socialism since they were at their mother’s breasts.”

Simms’ point is presumably that these “socialistic” immigrants come here and vote for the socialistic party known as the Democrats. It’s laughable to consider the Democratic Party a bastion of socialism, but Simms does identify a real problem for the Republican party: Foreign born voters (i.e. immigrants) are more likely to vote Democratic than is the nation as a whole.

Read the essay for yourself: <http://thefederalist.com/2015/07/27/why-immigrants-vote-for-democrats/>

The fear that immigrants and their “strange ideas”—like socialism—pose an existential threat to the USA is nothing new. And it’s always been racialized in the peculiar way that so many things are racialized in this country. But there’s something new in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and it’s the coming of the “Majority-Minority” United States. What is that? Read on... ♦

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## Beyond Voting: Demographic Shift as Cultural Threat

One of the most important historical trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is what has been called “The Browning of America.” For centuries now, so-called white people have been the majority race in the United States, and “whiteness” has been enforced as the normative cultural identity of the nation. But soon that will not be true, perhaps in 20-odd years, when the United States is projected to become a country where no single racial group is in the majority. The term to describe this future USA is “Majority-Minority.”

What I am presenting here is a selection of lengthy excerpts from an academic paper that is but one example of some early research into the possible consequences of this huge and inevitable demographic shift.

The paper, published in 2017, is called *Racial and Political Dynamics of an Approaching “Majority-Minority” United States*.

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### Cultural Threat *from page 3*

*Editor's Note: I always struggle with academic language so, in case you do, too, here are a couple of quick notes from Nygaard before we start: First, when academics (like the ones I'm quoting in this piece) use the word "salient," they mean that people have recently learned of, or been reminded of something, so that it's in the front of their minds. For example, school shootings are salient for most US Americans these days. Secondly, when talk about an "assimilative" rather than a "multicultural" ideology, they're referring to a huge debate about, basically, immigration, as it plays out in racial terms. Assimilationists want immigrants to quickly become like themselves, where multiculturalists have more of a vision of celebrating difference. It's the "melting-pot-vs-rainbow" debate. Aim your search engine at "assimilation vs multiculturalism" to learn more.*

OK, now for the excerpts from the paper. The starting point is this: "Recent US Census projections suggest that, somewhere between 2040 and 2050, the percentage of non-White Americans in the United States will *surpass* that of White Americans—that is, White Americans will comprise less than 50 percent of the population." [Emphasis in original.]

It was in light of increasingly frequent mention in the media of "what seems to be an inexorable march towards a 'majority-minority' country that social scientists began to explore what (if any) effects this information may be having on the racial dynamics of the nation."

"Although research on this topic is still quite young, this growing body of work finds clear evidence that White Americans (i.e., the current racial majority) experience the impending 'majority-minority' shift as a threat to their dominant (social, economic, political, & cultural) status. For instance, Whites for whom a 'majority-minority' future is made salient, compared with Whites exposed to control information [that is, Whites who haven't been informed that they will soon not be the majority], express greater concern that their racial group's societal status in the country will decline compared with that of racial minorities."

"Highlighting this demographic shift can also trigger more cultural threats, such as the concern that Whites will no longer represent the prototypical 'American'. In other words, salient information regarding a coming era

in which Whites are no longer more than 50 percent of the national population (despite remaining the largest single racial group) increases concern that the group may lose its place 'at the top' of the societal racial socio-economic and political status hierarchy and/or concern that the group will cease to be centered culturally."

"Whites for whom the impending racial demographic changes of the nation are salient: 1) endorse more conservative positions on a variety of policy issues; 2) express more support for the Tea Party—a relatively extreme version of political conservatism; and 3) report greater support for [then] Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump."

"For those most committed to progressive racial politics, the findings of recent research examining how people are responding to information about the changing racial demographics of our nation are quite sobering. This [23-page paper] suggests that Whites experience greater concern regarding their racial group's societal rank and cultural status, which, in turn, can lead to a host of negative intergroup outcomes as well as yield greater support for politically conservative policy positions, including on policies most relevant to societal racial equity (e.g., affirmative action, immigration policy, harsh criminal justice policies). The findings of this growing body of work also suggest that Whites are increasingly likely to embrace an assimilative [i.e. melting-pot], rather than multicultural [i.e. rainbow], ideology regarding racial/ethnic diversity in the United States and promote the social, political, and economic interests of Whites—the racial ingroup. In other words, White identity politics are likely to re-emerge in more overt and explicit forms as the racial diversity of the nation increases. Indeed, they probably already have."

Here is the paper's conclusion, in its entirety:

Although the research reviewed here is relatively new, scholars, journalists, and those in positions to shape policy cannot afford to ignore it. Indeed, the relevance of race and racially motivated concerns in public opinion regarding these demographic trends is clear, and the notion that America is post-racial and/or has overcome the racism of its past is incongruent with this social scientific literature. As the nation continues to diversify, the relevance of race, ethnicity, religion, and identity politics is likely to increase rather than fade. Indeed, it is entirely likely that some effort to assuage the identity threat and broader concerns of White ↗↗↗

→→ (Christian) Americans is going to be necessary; but any efforts to do so will also need to avoid privileging the continued and guaranteed racial status superiority of Whites. Maintaining a functioning democracy in the wake of increasing racial, ethnic, and religious diversity, in other words, is likely to require the creation of an inclusive representation of America and Americans, to which members of all racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds can feel connected and included.”

That’s the end of the excerpts from the “majority-minority” paper.

Here are two sentences that sum up what I think is the main point here:

1. The United States has long had a fundamentally racist structure that serves white people at the expense of people of color.

2. White people know this, so we freak out when we consider what it might be like to not be in the majority in a majority-rules system.

The freaking out takes many forms, from an increase in hate crimes, to a resurgence of overtly white-supremacist groups, to increasing denial of the power of racism, to attacks on policies and practices that are seen to “unfairly” benefit people of color.

Right now one of the major strategies born of this white fear is to suppress the votes of the racially-identified “others” that so threaten the current majority.

And that’s why being aware of, and working to resist, voter suppression initiatives wherever we find them is solidly anti-racist work. The rest of this issue of the Notes is aimed at spelling out the nature of the threat and what we can do about it. ♦

## Voting Rights Around the Nation

What follows is a summary of a very useful 6-page summary of an amazing number of efforts—aimed at voter suppression AND voter expansion—put out last week by the Brennan Center for Justice. They do great stuff: Check them out: <https://www.brennancenter.org/>

The summary is called “Voting Laws Roundup 2018”, and it just came out on February 15<sup>th</sup>. They’ve been putting out these reports every year since 2013. Most of what follows is taken directly from the report; I didn’t bother with quotation marks, but you can consider almost all of it to be direct quotes, edited only for brevity.

As of January 19<sup>th</sup>, at least 16 bills restricting access to voting have been introduced in eight states, with 35 restrictive bills in 14 states carried over from last year’s sessions.

“At the same time,” says Brennan, “we are seeing a significant push to expand access to the franchise. Indeed, every state legislature that has introduced restrictive bills in 2018 has also introduced expansive bills. Legislators have introduced at least 144 bills expanding access to the franchise in 22 states,” with 263 expansive bills in 23 states and Washington, D.C. carried over from last year’s sessions.

There are also efforts to expand or restrict voting rights underway outside of state legislatures. Both Florida and Nevada will have voting rights referendums on the ballot this fall, and “a letter the Department of Justice sent to states six months ago has been widely thought to be part of an effort to force states to conduct ill-conceived voter purges. At the local level, activists have sent a series of letters to hundreds of local election officials threatening them with legal action if they do not undertake more aggressive purges.”

### First Focus: Voter Suppression

There are many forms taken by voter suppression efforts. Here are some of them:

Voter ID bills are up in Nebraska and New Hampshire.

Virginia has introduced a bill making it more difficult for prospective voters to register, and it has also introduced a bill to limit voter registration mobilization efforts.

Indiana has introduced a bill shortening their early voting period, and Utah has introduced a bill permitting election officers to shorten the early voting period in

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**Roundup** *from page 5*

certain circumstances.

Nebraska and Virginia have introduced bills restricting access or increasing burdens related to absentee voting. Indiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, and New Hampshire have introduced bills implementing restrictive list maintenance practices.

Georgia and Washington have introduced bills relaxing minimum standards for election administration. New Hampshire has introduced two bills that appear to be directed at making it more difficult for students to vote.

**Second Focus: Expanding the Vote**

On the bright side, there are lots of efforts underway to expand the franchise.

Bills to implement Automatic Voter Registration have been introduced in 12 states. AVR “is a transformative reform that registers voters unless they ‘opt out’ of registration and leverages existing technology to more efficiently update the voter rolls.” (Elsewhere on their website, Brennan explains AVR: “Automatic voter registration makes two transformative, yet simple, changes to voter registration: Eligible citizens who interact with government agencies are registered to vote unless they decline, and agencies transfer voter registration information electronically to election officials. These two changes create a seamless process that is more convenient and less error-prone for both voters and government officials. This policy boosts registration rates, cleans up the rolls, makes voting more convenient, and reduces the potential for voter fraud, all while lowering costs.”)

Seven states have introduced bills that would allow voters to register on Election Day. Four states have introduced bills establishing online voter registration. Three states have introduced bills allowing voters to update their addresses on Election Day. Eight states have introduced reforms extending registration deadlines or adding registration locations or methods. Seven states, including Florida, have introduced bills restoring voting rights to individuals with criminal convictions. Seven states have introduced bills expanding opportunities for early in-person voting. Seven states have introduced bills expanding opportunities for absentee voting.

Three states have introduced bills easing the burden of existing voter ID laws. Virginia has introduced legislation eliminating its photo ID requirements entirely.

Arizona has introduced a bill making it easier to establish proof of citizenship. Arizona and Virginia have introduced bills either increasing opportunities to vote by provisional ballot or increasing the likelihood that a properly cast provisional ballot will be counted. Five states have introduced bills extending polling place hours. Three states have introduced bills expanding access for student voters.

Kansas, Missouri, South Carolina, and Washington have introduced bills improving access for voters with disabilities. New Hampshire has introduced a bill that would expand language access for voters who speak a language other than English.

The Washington Senate has passed a bill that grants citizens the right to challenge electoral systems that deny race, color, or language minority groups an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choosing. Fascinating. Learn more here: [www.wavotingrights.org/](http://www.wavotingrights.org/)

Oklahoma, Virginia, and Washington have introduced bills permitting minors to pre-register to vote prior to their eighteenth birthdays.

You may want to read the whole 6-page report, and see what’s happening in YOUR state! Find it here: [www.brennancenter.org/analysis/voting-laws-roundup-2018](http://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/voting-laws-roundup-2018) ♦

## Voting Rights: What You Can Do

Law professor Garrett Epps, writing in *The Atlantic* magazine in 2012, quoted one of my favorite historians, Eric Foner. Epps wrote that “Eric Foner notes that Americans like to regard our history as a steady, if slow, forward march for democracy. The reality is much more complex. ‘It’s not just a story of expanding the right to vote. It has expanded and contracted,’ Foner says.”

Epps goes on to comment that “We may be living in one of the periods of contraction.” Is that true? That is really up to us; it’s not a given. With that in mind, here are a number of organizations, campaigns, and legislation aimed at encouraging and strengthening voting rights in the United States. I hope you will pick a favorite or two and give them whatever support you can.

1. Elsewhere in this issue of the Notes I summarize the “Voting Laws Roundup 2018” put out by The Brennan Center for Justice. But Brennan does a lot more than report. Visit them, see for yourself, and help them out:

**[www.brennancenter.org/](http://www.brennancenter.org/)**

2. It may surprise you to learn that the U.S. Constitution provides no explicit right to vote. Wisconsin Democratic Congressman Mark Pocan has introduced a bill establishing a constitutional right to vote—H.J.Res.74. The bill couldn’t change the constitution, of course, but it proposes that we amend the constitution for that purpose. First introduced in 2013, the bill is explained on the website of FairVote. Learn about it and contact your Congressperson.

**[www.fairvote.org/right\\_to\\_vote\\_amendment#why\\_we\\_need\\_a\\_right\\_to\\_vote\\_amendment](http://www.fairvote.org/right_to_vote_amendment#why_we_need_a_right_to_vote_amendment)**

3. The American Civil Liberties Union has had a Voting Rights Project since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. A few months ago, in light of the modern wave of voter suppression, the ACLU launched a new project. Their *Let People Vote* campaign “intends to ensure that every American’s right to vote is protected.” It “will consist of location-specific calls to action in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.” Go visit, sign their petitions, donate money. **[www.aclu.org/news/aclu-launches-50-state-people-power-let-people-vote-campaign](http://www.aclu.org/news/aclu-launches-50-state-people-power-let-people-vote-campaign)** Allow me a brief digression for an ACLU-related news item: The nation’s news media has largely ignored the lawsuit against Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach that started last week in Wichita. You may recall that Kobach was the head of Trump’s widely ridiculed—and recently disbanded—Advisory Commission on Election Integrity. (You may also recall that Nygaard Notes reported on this sad joke last summer, in NN #609.) The courts have temporarily blocked Kobach from fully enforcing the Kansas law, with the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver calling it “a mass denial of a fundamental constitutional right,” according to the Associated Press. I mention this because the ACLU is representing the plaintiffs in the case, including the League of Women Voters.

4. Speaking of the League of Women Voters, they have their own Voting Rights Project **[www.lwv.org/voting-rights](http://www.lwv.org/voting-rights)**, which has a great blog and many different sub-projects that you can support.

5. Check out the Voting Rights section on the website of *The Advancement Project*

**<https://advancementproject.org/issues/voting-rights/>** Here’s a sample of what you’ll find there: “Right to Vote: The lack of an affirmative right to vote in the U.S. Constitution is inextricably tied to the history of racism in America, as the founders compromised on this right to accommodate slave states. Hundreds of years after the founding of the United States, we are still fighting this original sin. Advancement Project works with seasoned leaders and emerging movements to foster a pro-democracy movement that uplifts the fundamental right to vote.”

6. Finally, if you can’t do anything else, take the time to learn about what’s going on in your state, and in Washington, and then write letters to the editor, comment in social media, forward this issue of Nygaard Notes, bring up the issue of voting rights with your friends, family, or whatever groups you are a part of.

We need to do much more than vote to turn this ship around. But the particular threat of voter suppression demands our attention now. We all have a role to play in this struggle. ♦

“Quote” of the Week: *“Efforts to Reshape the Makeup of the Electorate”*

Elsewhere in this issue of the Notes is a summary of efforts around the nation to both restrict and expand voting rights. That summary does not mention either race or political party, but this week’s “Quote” of the Week mentions both. It appeared in an article in TIME Magazine from a couple of years ago (October 20, 2015) headlined “Blue States Make Voting Easier as Red States Add Restrictions”

*“Since 2010, 21 state legislatures have enacted new laws to curtail ballot access, while 23 others plus the District of Columbia have passed laws to expand it over the past three years. The seesaw struggle reflects efforts by partisan state legislatures to reshape the makeup of the electorate. In most cases, blue [Democratic-led] states have pushed to expand voting rights, while many of the new restrictions have come in red [Republican-led] states. Recent efforts to restrict voting rights—there were 180 different bills introduced across 41 states in 2011 and 2012 alone—have a disproportionate impact on demographics like blacks, Latinos and the poor, voting-rights experts say.”*

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