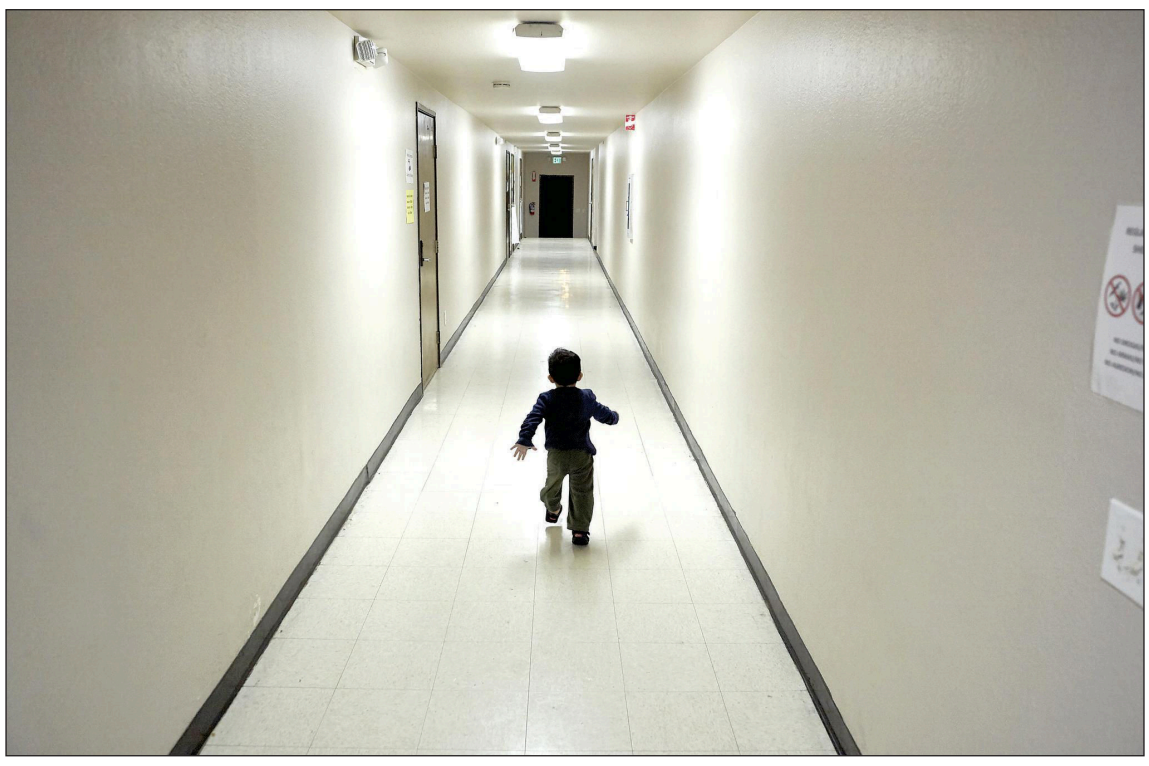
OP-ED

# Grant asylum to families torn apart by Trump

By Emily Cohodes, Sahana Kribakaran and Dylan Gee



GREGORY BULL Associated Press

**A BOY** from Central America in a shelter in San Diego after arriving from an immigration detention center. The parents of 628 children separated at the border have not yet been found.

More than 5,400 children have been detained and separated from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border by the Trump administration since 2017. Many families remain separated, and the violence of this policy has been compounded by the government's failure to keep track of the families it tore apart as it sent children to shelters all over the country and then deported their parents.

The parents of 628 children still have not been found. Just recently, it was revealed that the Trump administration withheld critical contact information for the parents, which could have been used to help locate them.

Even as the country prepares to transition to a new administration that has promised to end family separation practices and to reunify children with their parents, the details remain uncertain at best. President-elect Joe Biden has not yet committed to allowing the reunions — once the parents are found — to occur within the U.S. or, critically, to grant the reunited families asylum here.

It does not take an expert to recognize that forcible separation of families at the border is a severe human rights violation. Images of children screaming as they are pulled from their parents by border patrol officers, as well as the narratives of their experiences, have haunted people across the world since news of this unspeakably inhumane practice broke in 2018. Even more horrific, nearly 20% of the children whose families cannot be located were under the age of 5 at the time of the separation.

As clinical developmental neuroscientists, we know that traumas like these, no matter when they occur in life, drastically increase both short- and long-term risks of mental and physical health problems. But severe trauma has especially harmful effects in early childhood. This is because early childhood is a time of rapid brain development, and the experiences of young children set the stage for what the body's stress response system expects to encounter in the future.

When the body enters fight or flight mode in response to toxic stress during childhood, it is preparing for a lifetime of more stress. Compounding this effect, separation from caregivers is especially deleterious in early childhood, as children rely solely on their caregivers to cope with stress. At the neurobiological level, the mere presence of a caregiver can regulate children's stress systems by damping reactivity in the amygdala, a region of the brain that responds to stress.

Years after suffering childhood trauma, adults still show lasting alterations in the brain's networks that govern fear and emotion regulation. Such biological changes can result in debilitating symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety. There is also compelling evidence for a dose-response effect: The detrimental effects of exposure to trauma are worse for children who experience longer durations of trauma. Psychological treatment can sometimes lessen the impacts of these events, but time is of the essence.

The new administration must immediately reunify and provide mental health care services to affected families. Clinical intervention for young children exposed to trauma can help them reestablish a sense of safety in primary attachment relationships with caregivers, learn about their bodies' response to trauma, and create narratives about their experiences through talking and playing.

Every day of separation from caregivers matters in the life of a young child, and even a few months' delay while the Biden administration decides how to proceed is enough to intensify the adverse effects of trauma on emotional and neurobiological development.

Much of the notoriously difficult work of finding parents and reunifying families has fallen to nonprofit immigrant rights groups. Full reunification for all families will be an enormous and time-consuming challenge for the incoming administration. This work needs to begin immediately.

The new administration must also grant the parents and caregivers of separated children asylum in this country so that families can be reunited as expeditiously as possible. Deporting children to countries from which their families fled — and where they are likely to experience additional trauma — places them at an even higher risk, because past exposure to trauma heightens the likelihood of developing post-traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder — such as flashbacks and hypervigilance for signs of danger in the environment — can severely undermine a child's ability to grow, learn and thrive in all domains of life.

The Trump administration's immigration policies were designed to inflict the greatest possible suffering on migrant families. In Biden's first speech as president-elect, he vowed to "marshal the forces of decency, the forces of fairness ... the forces of science and the forces of hope in the great battles of our time."

Thousands of children are waiting for the Biden-Harris administration to make good on its promise, and every day matters.

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GERRY BROOME Associated Press

**UNCERTAINTY** is always part of polling. Above, absentee ballots are prepared to be mailed.

# Will 2020 mark the end of election polling as we know it?

By Doug Schwartz

Donald Trump was not the first presidential candidate to perform notably better on election day than pre-election polling had predicted. Ronald Reagan did it in the 1980 election. So did Bob Dole in 1996.

Still, the gap between the 2020 polling and the actual results has caused considerable dismay. Since the election, a lot of people have asked the same question: "What went wrong with the polling?"

I've been leading the Quinnipiac University Poll for over 25 years. And while a lot of work remains before there is a final diagnosis of this year's election polls, I don't think it will show that polling has lost its value. I already see some early indicators of what went right — as well as wrong — this year.

In general, public opinion polls have had a good track record over the last 100 years. However, election polls have never been perfect, nor should that be expected. Uncertainty is part of the equation — whether because of the margin of error, who turns out to vote or the number of undecided voters. And this year had more than its fair share of unpredictability, with a global pandemic, record voter turnout and major procedural changes in the way Americans voted with mail-in ballots.

Some believe that President Trump himself may have introduced an added level of uncertainty in gauging public opinion. Since the 2016 election, many have discussed the possibility of the "shy" Trump voter — voters who didn't want to admit their support for Trump to pollsters. A task force created by the American Assn. for Public Opinion Research analyzed the performance of the 2016 election polls and did not find evidence of such voters, but it's worth investigating whether such a phenomenon happened this year.

In Quinnipiac's polls leading up to the election, about 1 in 10 likely voters wouldn't say who they had already voted for or indicated that they either weren't sure or wouldn't share who they were voting for. Despite the unusually high number of voters not revealing their vote preference, post-election analysis shows that our poll and others were generally accurate on the percentage of Joe Biden's support, but underestimated Trump's support.

While this analysis is preliminary, it could certainly suggest that some of the voters who did not share their vote preference ended up voting for Trump. Election polls will need to explore strategies to better capture the intentions of this undecided segment of the electorate, such as developing enhanced follow-ups for those reluctant to disclose vote preference and new ways to build trust between respondents and interviewers.

Couple this dynamic with historic voter turnout, and the uncertainty in polling estimations starts to really stack up. Because polling analysis makes assumptions about voter turnout, whenever turnout is unusually high or low there is increased risk that the polls will be less accurate. It is possible that more Trump voters showed up than expected on election day, and/or fewer Biden voters did. We may have a clearer picture when we get the final reports of exit polls in the next few weeks.

Another factor this year is the unprecedented amount of mail-in and early voting, which may have encouraged new or infrequent voters to participate. Without a history of party allegiance, these voters could be more likely to change their minds, further adding to unpredictability in the election outcomes.

Pollsters face a number of methodological challenges that must be reviewed as part of this post-election analysis. For example, with state polls often limited to calling voters with phone numbers that are local to a particular state, pollsters are exploring how to contact individuals who have out-of-state cellphone numbers but live (and vote) in the state being polled. And, as many Americans continue to abandon landlines, would polls be improved if pollsters relied even less on calling people at those numbers?

A possible solution includes integrating data gathered using different forms of communication such as email and text with phone surveys. Pollsters could also consider reducing the amount of completed surveys that come from landlines, increasing those from cellphones or even dropping landline calling altogether since a cellphone-based sample may be more representative of the general population.

Polls cannot provide pinpoint accuracy nor should that be expected since they are still an estimate of a snapshot in time. But the polling industry provides a valuable service in taking the pulse of the American electorate on key issues and voting intentions.

It is reasonable for the public to expect the polls to come closer to the mark than they did this year, and pollsters will need to review their methods and make necessary adjustments. This doesn't mean polling is irrevocably broken, but it does need a tuneup.

Doug Schwartz is associate vice president and director of the Quinnipiac University Poll.

# Without Trump, there's no Trumpism

JONAH GOLDBERG

In the aftermath of President Trump's 2016 victory, many supporters of the president wanted to construct an ideological worldview that would — they hoped — not only supplant traditional conservatism but, as the wave of the future, redefine American politics.

As an intellectual project, it was close to a complete bust. For instance, Julius Krein started a journal, American Affairs, with the goal of providing an intellectual framework for Trumpism. As I noted at the launch, coming up with a coherent and consistent ideological program for a president who, as a point of pride, eschews ideological coherence and consistency is an impossible balancing act. Either you defend the ideas or you defend the man, you can't really do both because Trumpism was never an ideological phenomenon, but a psychological one. No wonder that six months later, Krein, to his credit, withdrew his support of Trump and said he regretted voting for him.

Other outlets tried the same thing, and — unlike American Affairs — ended up simply becoming cheerleaders and "Trump-splainers" that start with the conclusion Trump is right and then work backward to prove it.

Now, in the wake of Trump's defeat, the project to create Trumpism-without-Trump has been reborn as electoral analysis. Trump supporters claim that he bequeathed to the right and the country the makings of a new, multiethnic, workers party.

It's a convenient conclusion for those who've argued all along that "Republican elites" were too "stubbornly moored to laissez-faire fundamentalism and limited government as an end in itself," in the words of Newsweek's Josh Hammer, a leading proponent of this theory. Yet, he writes, it "is the Republican Party that disproportionately represents a multiethnic, non-college-educated working class."

There's obviously some truth to this. The erosion of the old Franklin D. Roosevelt coalition, with the white working-class migrating toward Republicans, and college-educated suburbanites inching toward the Democrats, has been a long-standing trend for decades. Trump accelerated these trends. What was new — and surprising — was how Democrats lost some ground with people of color, particularly Latinos.

But this theory, which has already received endorsements from presidential wannabes like Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), seems like just another version of starting with the conclusion and reasoning backward.

First, contrary to the hype, Trump's performance with Black voters and even Latino voters was not so earth-shattering. Exit poll data are not entirely reliable, but since they're what many proponents of the new workers party theory are basing their analysis on, they're worth looking at.

Trump received 12% of the Black vote, 32% of the Latino vote, and 34% among Asian Americans. In 2004, George W. Bush received 11% of the Black vote and 44% of both the Latino and Asian votes. An increase of 1% among Black voters and a double-digit decrease among Latino and Asian voters is not exactly a seismic event. More important, unlike Trump, Bush not only won reelection but won the popular vote.

As for this new working-class party, whatever that means, it's worth noting that the average showing among union households for GOP presidential candidates since 2000 is about 41%. Trump got 40% in 2020, down 7 points from 2016.

Moreover, there's very little in Trump's record that suggests his support among voters had much to do with pro-worker policies. Deregulation, conservative judicial appointments, corporate and income tax cuts: This is ambrosia for the "Zombie Reaganite" elites, the kind who are "stubbornly moored to laissez-faire fundamentalism and limited government." The most aggressive policy Trump pushed in the name of the American worker was protectionism, which ended up hurting more workers than helping, and made free trade more popular.

In short, the problem with seeing the Trump coalition as the foundation of Trumpism without Trump rests on the same misdiagnosis of intellectual Trumpism. It assumes there is more to Trumpism than his entertainment value, his thumb-in-the-eye attacks on the media, and his stoking of resentment. That is a hard model to replicate. Who among the current GOP hopefuls could fill one of his rallies? I mean, Mike Pence could repeat Trump's lines — just as I could sing Beyonce's songs — but that doesn't mean people will show up to listen.

From the outset, Trump's 2016 coalition was a *minority* coalition in terms of the popular vote, but it was almost perfectly distributed to take the electoral college. It might have worked again in 2020, except for the fact that Trump ignited an anti-Trump coalition much larger than the pro-Trump one. Going forward, the demographics of the electorate are moving in the wrong direction for the GOP.

The proponents of a new Trumpy Republican Party are certainly right about many of the Democrats' shortcomings and vulnerabilities. There's just very little evidence that Zombie Trumpism is the best way to exploit them.

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