Elections in Southwestern PA:

Then and Now

by Mosey Hertzold

Trump won PA by 44,000 votes.

His margin in rural Southwestern counties
was 55,000 higher than Romney's in 2012
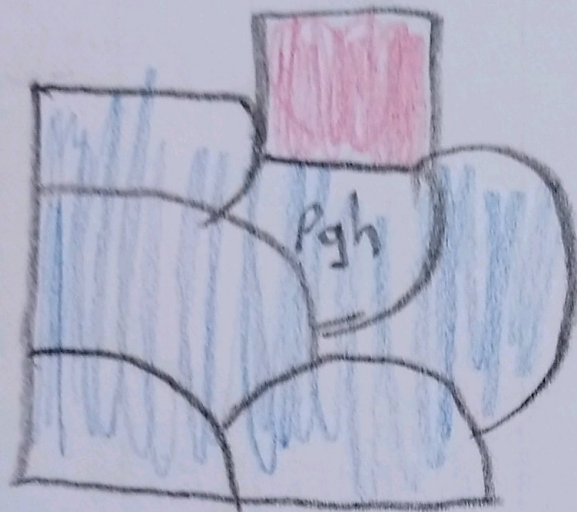
"Reagan Democrats" Narrative

HEADLINE

HEADLINE

HEADLINE

· Many historically-minded analysts have argued that Trump won by gaining support from white working class "Reagan Democrats"
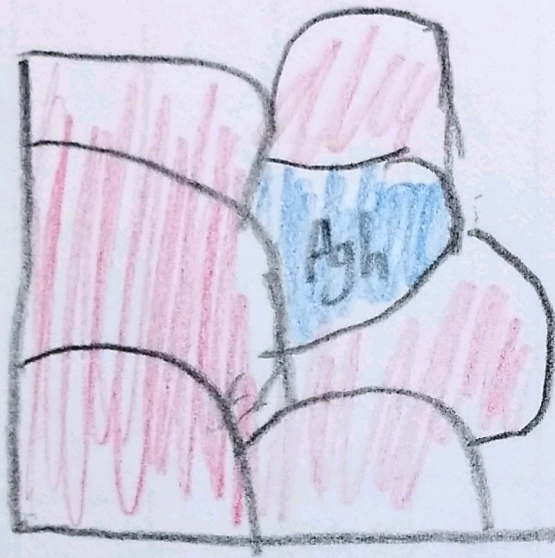
Pre-Reagan (1976)

Pgh

In 1976, every PA County south or west of
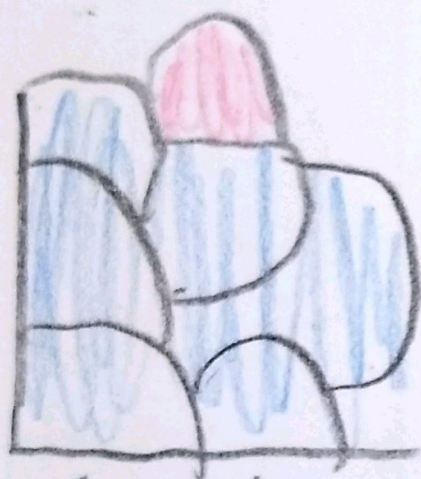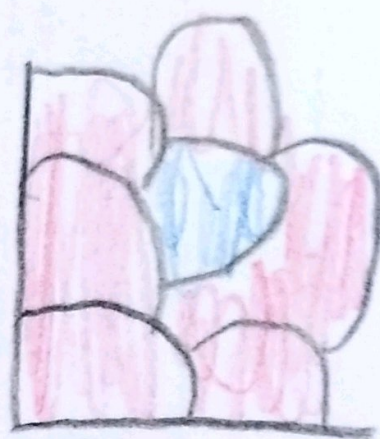Pittsburgh voted for Democrat Jimmy Carter

Trump (2016)

In 2016, every ~~county~~ rural + suburban county in the region voted for Trump
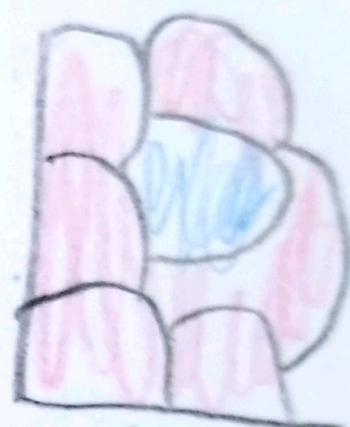
"Reagan Democrats": Expected Results
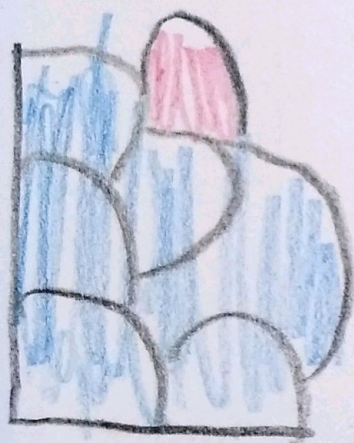

Actual
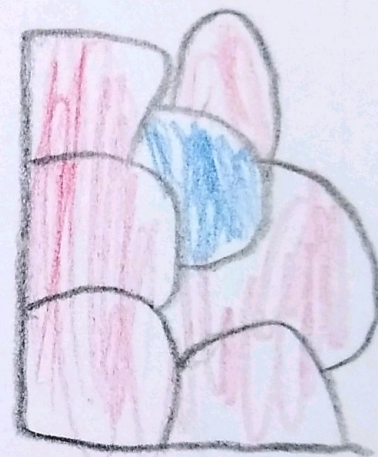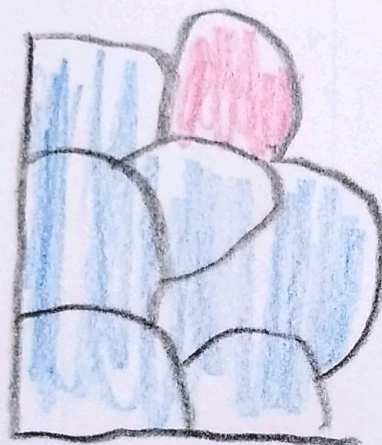1976

Expected
1984

−
=

Actual
2016

The "Reagan Democrat" theory posits that Trump's electoral map in 2016 would look similar to Reagan's in 1980 or 1984
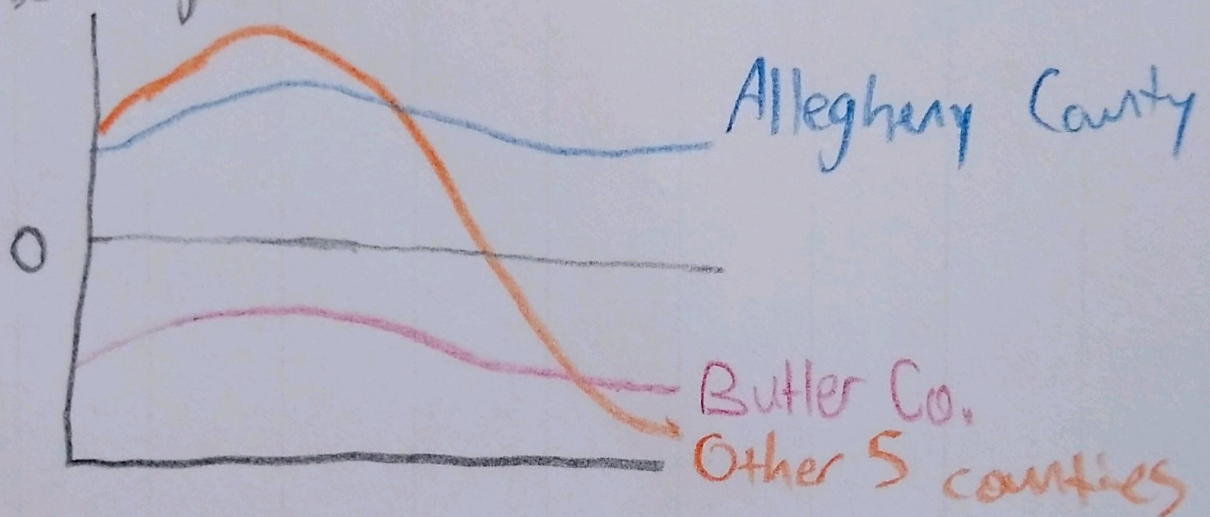
Actual 1984 Results

1976 = 1984 ____ 2016

Trump won Pensylvania ~~because of~~ by winning the Southwest
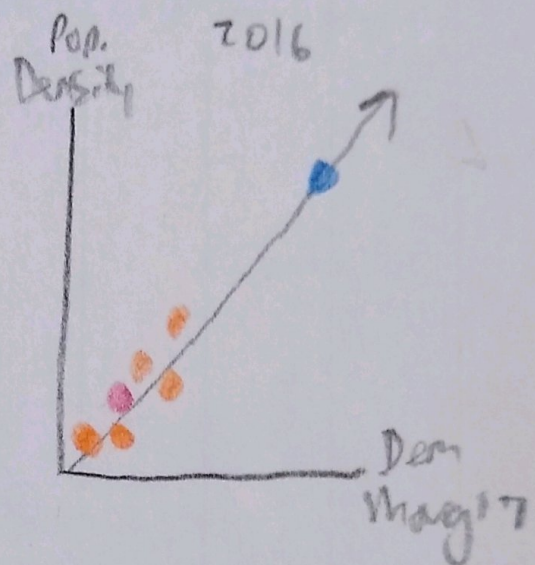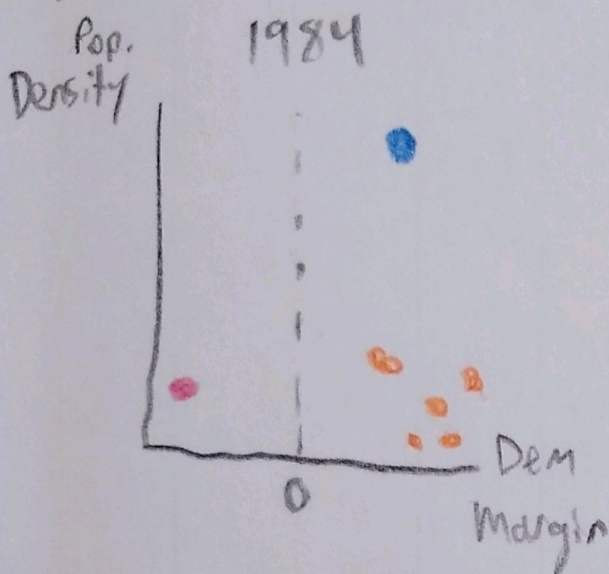—but there were never "Reagan Democrats" there

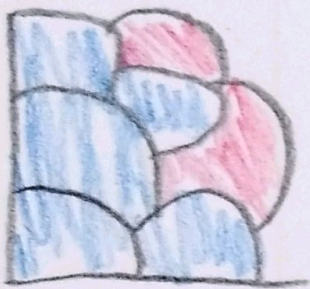Trump's Margin in SW PA part of a larger trend, not an exception or a throwback

% Dem Margin

0

Allegheny County

Butler Co.

Other 5 counties

Trump's New Rural-Suburban Coalition

Pop. Density — 1984 — Dem Margin

Pop. Density — 2016 — Dem Margin

Trump's coalition is not a return to Reagan's, but the conclusion of a long realignment process based on population density

Democratic Options in 2020
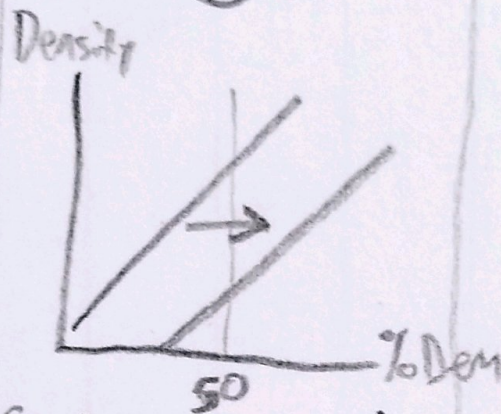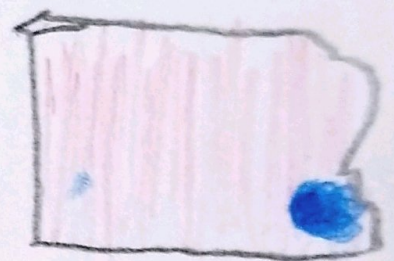
①

Reverse the trend by bringing rural voters back to the party

②

Density

50   % Dem

Shift the curve by increasing Democratic turnout across the board without fundamentally changing the coalition

③

Focus on increasing turnout in Philly and cede Western PA to Trump