



Millions of Americans choosing “none of the above”

About a dozen Uber drivers in Florida and New York have told me they’re not planning on voting for a presidential candidate and neither are most of their friends and family. Ditto with the ladies at the dry cleaners. Most of the personal trainers at my gym either aren’t planning to vote at all or not vote for President.

Many of the checkout people at the supermarket? Not interested.

Then there are my business and professional colleagues who have been wringing their hands so hard that it’s amazing they can still use their fingers. Anecdotal to be sure, but everywhere I go, people from all walks of life, of all genders and ages tell me they hate the choices for President and aren’t planning on voting for either Mr. Trump or Mrs. Clinton.

Most people who tell me they are planning to vote for a presidential candidate are so markedly unenthusiastic you’d think they were being forced to swallow some horrible tasting cough medicine. Never in my lifetime (and I’m 57) have I ever seen so much ambivalence less than two weeks before a presidential election.

There is a huge “basket of undecidables” – people who either can’t choose or are determined not to choose a presidential candidate. A significant percentage of the everyday folks I talk to are planning to vote for Senatorial, Congressional and other races, just not for President. And I make it my business to ask folks about the election to see what people are thinking.

What so many Americans are thinking is that they’re being asked to choose between the lesser of two evils and the problem is that the lesser of two evils is still evil. A lot of folks actually feel that President Obama looks good by comparison to who’s running now, thereby conclusively proving Einstein’s Theory of Relativity.

The first *Billboard* number one single of the 21st Century was Shaggy’s “It Wasn’t Me” (2000), wherein the Jamaican pop-reggae singer relates how when caught by his girlfriend *in flagrante delicto* with another woman decides to outrageously, vociferously and repeatedly deny everything by saying “it wasn’t me,” despite clear visual evidence to the contrary. (youtu.be/Qv5fqunQ_4I). That’s how a lot of the Undecidables feel about Hillary Clinton. A lot of prevarication. A lot of shenanigans with missing emails, personal servers and bald-faced denials in the face of Wikileaks visual proof.

Many of these people are former Bernie Sanders supporters who also are uncomfortable with the millions she and her husband made to essentially peddle influence and access along with her close ties to the Top 1 Percent.

Then there is Donald Trump. For fans of *Citizen Kane*, Orson Welles’ seminal take on plutocratic excess, one can’t help but recall that when the character Charles Foster Kane (while running for governor) was caught having an affair he opted not to do the honorable thing and withdraw from the race but tough it out even with the specter of horrible defeat looming before his eyes. A newspaper magnate, he has front pages prepared with the huge headline “Fraud at the Polls” if he didn’t win. Trump’s railing about the election being “rigged” while having no shame whatsoever about his verbal and physical treatment of women is life-imitating art incarnate.

Trump also has that “Il Duce” thing going on. Ron Chernow in his bestselling biography “Alexander Hamilton” asserts that “Hamilton’s besetting fear was that American democracy

Inside the Basket of Undecidables

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would be spoiled by demagogues who would mouth popular shibboleths to conceal their despotism.” At the Constitutional Convention held during the summer of 1787 in Philadelphia Hamilton said that “demagogues are not always *inconsiderable* persons. Patricians are frequently demagogues.”

The clergyman at the house of worship I attend gave a sermon a few months back asserting that often “societies get the leaders they deserve.”

The choice between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump says something about America in 2016.

In many quarters the qualities of both honor and shame have disappeared in equal measure. The very fabric of our civil society seems to be unraveling before our very eyes and this is why so many people who yearn for a time when things were better, when America was better and who want America to be better (not necessarily “great”) again have found a comfortable spot in the Basket of Undecidables and are proudly supporting “Nobody in 2016.”

My prediction is for low voter turnout at the top of the ballot as a protest “none of the above” non-vote on Nov. 8 to send a signal to our country’s political leaders that today’s choices are unacceptable.

By Howard Barbanel