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**David McGrath: Blaming the entire country for Trump's election not only pointless but false**



Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, delivers her concession speech at Howard University, in Washington, on Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2024. (Ruth Fremson/The New York Times)



By **DAVID MCGRATH**

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The day that John F. Kennedy was assassinated, I was a freshman at St. Joseph's Seminary in Westmont.

In between classes, an announcement over the school's loud speakers directed students to the auditorium where we were given the news.

The only presidential assassination I previously knew about was Abraham Lincoln's. So the murder of my own president was shocking, barely comprehensible and the first loss of life that emotionally affected me.

Over the days that followed, we watched hours of television news with Walter Cronkite and live coverage of the alleged assassin being suddenly shot to death by nightclub owner Jack Ruby in the Dallas police station. I watched the entire ceremony and saw Kennedy's 1-year-old son salute as his father's coffin.

It was a time I will never forget. But the aftermath also included news commentators, writers, ordinary citizens and even a couple of my teachers theorizing that we all were to blame. Whether you were part of the population that opposed a Catholic president or disliked desegregation or a right-wind resident of Texas or anyone who said or did nothing about the escalating violence in the country, everyone was somehow at fault.

([scholars.org/contribution/what-assassination-president-kennedy-meant](https://scholars.org/contribution/what-assassination-president-kennedy-meant))

I did not question such assertions since I was only 14 and they were being made by adults in authority. They were similar to the "persuasion" techniques police detectives have been known to use when convincing an innocent to confess. But I never was able to figure out how I fit into the assassination plot between Lee Harvey Oswald, Fidel Castro, the mafia, a second shooter on the grassy knoll, or the CIA, all parties suspected at one time or another of being involved.

I was reminded recently of this same kind of dubious blaming after reading a USA Today essay

([www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/columnist/2024/11/06/trump-wins-2024-presidential-election/75942805007](https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/columnist/2024/11/06/trump-wins-2024-presidential-election/75942805007)) suggesting that because “every country has the government it deserves,” all Americans must be to blame for electing a president who is a convicted felon, adjudicated rapist, pathological liar and reckless narcissist.

The op-ed was written by Rex Hupke, a former Chicago humor columnist. But this particular essay was not very funny. His shaming accusation that all Americans “willfully chose” Trump is just not true.

In fact, the roughly 80 million people who voted for Harris — just under half of all voters — would adamantly object to his generalization that, “We are Trump.”

The hell I am!

Our nation is like many others in which the population is divided into left and right factions, and one or the other assumes power at intermittent periods in history owing to a myriad of complicated political, cultural,

economic and anomalous forces. And in this cycle, the left faction is obviously not the one that “own(s) every bit of the shameful and painful and embarrassing things (Trump) does,” which Hupke claimed.

His self-flagellation in which he blames us all for Trump is a skillful bit of writing, if not also a tad melodramatic. But hypotheses like his are as harmful as pinning Kennedy’s death on an unsuspecting seminarian since they distract from or interfere with our need to move forward as MAGA’s loyal opposition, staying vigilant, thorny, loud and positive about being right, being unified in our defiance and being resolved to bring about the necessary change for the future.

I get why he wrote it: he was angry and he had a deadline.

Heck, half of all America is angry and wants to lash out.

But the “society is to blame” rhetorical devices are as old as Shakespeare, who trotted out an early version in the Prince’s soliloquy at the end of “Romeo and Juliet” in which he blamed all of Verona for the legendary lovers’ deaths.

They are dramatic and compelling but, as a practical matter, untrue.

Harris may have lost the election for a lot of different reasons, such as a late start or an unclear message or some combination of racism and misogyny, which some voters disguised as being upset about “the economy.”

But whatever the reason, we are (definitely, emphatically, indubitably) not Trump!

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