

Postscript On The 2008 Election

Rick Roane of Cherryhill Media in San Diego has offered to produce an audio-book version of *The Authoritarians* and make it available at minimal cost. I wrote a brief analysis of the 2008 presidential election in two stages for this audio-book, and a third segment the day after the November 4 vote, which are all given below.

Part I—Written Right After the Republican Convention

As I just said (in Chapter 7), I expected the Religious Right to decide who would be the Republican presidential candidate, which proved quite wrong. Even though I mentioned in the Introduction to the book that the authoritarian leaders might not be able to find an acceptable presidential candidate for 2008, I thought surely they would. I did not foresee that the king-makers would be unable to agree upon a candidate among themselves, and thus leave the door open for other forces to shape the nomination.

The Religious Right and John McCain

Let's go back to March, 2007. The midterm election has occurred, the Republicans got pasted at the polls, and the Democrats gained control of Congress. The Conservative Political Action Conference held its annual meeting in Washington, and every Republican running for president attended *except* John McCain—who chose to campaign in Utah instead. (By some reports, whenever McCain's name was mentioned by a speaker, loud booing erupted from the audience.)

By then Rudy Giuliani was opening a large lead in presidential preference polls among Republicans. (Remember? Everyone thought Giuliani would win the GOP nomination hands-down.) But Giuliani was anathema to (almost all of) the leadership of the Religious Right, because he was a “social liberal” on abortion, sexual orientation, and other issues. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, led the charge against Giuliani. He also declared in January 2008, “I would not vote for John McCain under any circumstances.” Richard Land, president of the Religious and Ethics Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, also publicly came out against Giuliani and said the religious leaders he knew did not trust John McCain.

A lot of bad blood had developed between certain evangelical spokesmen and John McCain by then. It had started in 2000 when McCain was running for president the first time. On February 17, seemingly out of the blue, James Dobson attacked McCain’s record from stem to stern, and denounced him in no uncertain terms for being unethical (the Keating scandal) and an adulterer (his affairs during his first marriage). But it was not entirely out of the blue, because McCain was squaring off against George W. Bush in the South Carolina primary two days later, and the Bush team had brought in the former director of the Christian Coalition to get out the fundamentalist vote. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson campaigned vigorously against McCain, and a week after he lost the primary McCain gave an angry speech in which he labeled both Falwell and Robertson as “agents of intolerance” who exercised a corrupting influence in America. The next day he went further, criticizing “the evil influence” these two pillars of the Religious Right had in the Republican Party.

But as he studied his prospects for the 2008 election, McCain (along with lots of other

people) thought the leaders of the Religious Right would select the Republican nominee for president. So as I mentioned in Chapter 7, McCain visited Liberty University in May, 2006 to accept an honorary degree from Jerry Falwell, and extend the hand of friendship to religious conservatives. If there was a moment when John McCain began to sacrifice his reputation for integrity to gain the White House, it was then.

When asked, Falwell said the visit should not be interpreted as a sign he was supporting McCain in 2008. Evangelicals continued to view McCain with suspicion, despite his strong support of the pro-life position. Two “value voters” conferences were held in the fall of 2007 and straw votes were taken for the various Republican candidates. McCain came in last in both.

The trouble was, the religious leaders couldn’t agree on someone else. Mitt Romney was a Mormon and had once endorsed abortion. Fred Thompson, Sam Brownback, Tom Tancredo, and Mike Huckabee all had higher appeal, but some evangelical leaders doubted any of them could raise the dough and wage the hard-fought campaign that would lay ahead. “In the real world, you’ve got to have an organization and some money,” said Rev. Don Wildmon, leader of the American Family Association. “Most of those candidates (below) the first tier lack both” The religious leaders wanted someone who would be both “their guy” *and* a winner, and couldn’t agree on anybody. So they went their separate ways in 2007.

By the fall of 2007 Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation and Bob Jones III had endorsed Mitt Romney. Pat Robertson took time out from his 2,000 lb. leg presses to

endorse—hold onto your hats—Rudy Giuliani. Don Wildmon came out for Mike Huckabee.

Huckabee was developing momentum in the rank-and-file. He finished first in the straw vote of the first “values voter debate” and came a very close second at the next conference. An AP-Yahoo News Survey in December 2007 found that 4 in 10 evangelicals had changed their preference for president, and most of them had switched to Huckabee. He was developing that all-important “mo-mentum.”

Then Came the Primaries

Giuliani, still leading in the polls but losing ground as evangelical leaders made his pro-choice stance better known to their followers, blazed a trail that no future presidential candidate will likely ever follow. He decided to skip the “insignificant” early primaries and concentrate on Florida’s January 29th contest instead. And that ended his chances.

Thanks to a genuine, underfinanced grass-roots movement led by local pastors, Mike Huckabee won the Iowa caucuses in January, 2008. He did not do nearly as well in New Hampshire a few days later, but New Hampshire has relatively few fundamentalist voters.

This was the point at which the national evangelical leaders could have thrown their support to the candidate who clearly had the greatest appeal to their followers. Trouble was, many of the leaders were already committed to someone else. Huckabee’s next big chance came in the South Carolina primary on January 19, where he only got 43% of the evangelical vote, and lost to McCain. The next day Rush Limbaugh said he opposed the nomination of both McCain and Huckabee. Huckabee stumbled further in Florida, where he came in fourth. He was essentially finished when Dobson finally endorsed him in February.

Dobson also declared then, “I cannot and I will not vote for Senator John McCain as a matter of conscience... Should John McCain capture the nomination, as many assume, I believe this general election will offer the worst choices for president in my lifetime. If these are the nominees in November, I simply will not cast a ballot for president.”

But McCain did win most of the remaining primaries. Even though upwards of 40% of Republican supporters are white evangelical Christians, who constitute by far the largest demographic block within the party, and are easily led, a candidate favored by almost none of their leaders had become the nominee. The leaders had no one to blame but each other.

Whereupon a stand-offish courtship ensued. McCain may have felt the Religious Right had nowhere else to go, but it did form the core of the Republican party and he could certainly use its enthusiastic followers to counter the passion Barack Obama inspired. The leaders of the Religious Right, in turn, found themselves on the outside looking in at the political party that they thought was theirs.. Both sides could use each other, but both sides were testy.

The evangelical leaders had the most to gain, IF they could get back into the game. In May, according to Robert Novak, Dobson invited McCain to visit his Focus on the Family campus in Colorado Springs. A member of McCain’s staff called back and instead invited Dobson to meet with McCain in his hotel suite when McCain was in Denver on May 2. Dobson refused, and McCain declined to go to Colorado Springs. The stand-off was predictable, given the things Dobson had said about McCain in 2000..

Several issues remained on the table: the party platform, and the selection of a vice-

presidential candidate. Dobson again started the ball rolling on July 20, when he announced there was a possibility, despite his firm declaration to the contrary, that he might endorse McCain. “If that’s a flip-flop” he said, “then so be it.” (Uh yes, that’s definitely a flip-flop.) The McCain campaign however did not fall all over itself thanking Dobson for his *possible* change of heart.

In mid-August new reports began circulating that McCain had a short list of four men for his V-P choice, including two pro-*choice* advocates: Joseph Lieberman and Tom Ridge. The campaign was bombarded by warnings that he better not pick someone who supported abortion, or there would be a revolt at the convention. On August 20 McCain announced he would accept a plank in the party platform that opposed all abortions, including cases of rape, incest, and risk to the mother’s life. That directly contradicted a position he had embraced since 2000, when he begged George Bush not to accept such a plank. But it was sweet music to the leaders of the Religious Right.

McCain apparently wanted Lieberman as his running mate, but his advisors argued that would lead to a huge floor fight at the convention, and pushed for other candidates instead, particularly Mitt Romney. McCain resisted and shifted to Sarah Palin instead. She had not been checked out by a long shot. McCain met with her (for the first time) on August 28 and announced the next day that she would be his running mate. This sealed the deal with the Religious Right. It took James Dobson about 3 milliseconds to appear on a radio program and announce he would vote for McCain. The evangelical leadership was immensely gratified; they had gotten some very important concessions from a candidate who didn’t like

them any more than they liked him. They still had clout.

Two Figures

Two of the evangelical leaders stand out in this story for me, one because he was so often in the news, and the other because he has disappeared. Dobson is, of course, the former. I think his profound switch reveals much about his character. He attacked John McCain in 2000 for not being a man of principle, but he took as unequivocal a stand against McCain as one possibly could, and then went completely against his word. When he said, “I would not vote for John McCain under any circumstances,” what he meant was, “Except in the circumstance that McCain wins the primaries. Then we’ll see.” There isn’t a pinch of integrity in that position.

Let me point out something about this switcheroo in the context of this book. Suppose you were James Dobson, and you now wanted to make nice with John McCain. Wouldn’t you worry about the impact of that on all the people whom *you’ve* told McCain is an unethical, adulterous, impulsive, hot-headed, foul-mouthed, money grubbing crook whom you’d never, ever vote for—all of which Dobson earlier had said about McCain? How can you expect them to pay attention to you in the future when you go so completely against your own word on such a major issue? But I suspect Dobson didn’t worry even 15 seconds about that. He knew his followers would follow. “The despicable enemy is now a good guy, according to the leader. He’s in the in-group now. It’s as simple as that.” Authoritarian leaders take their followers almost completely for granted, as well they can.

The person who disappeared is Pat Robertson, whose level of absurdity Dobson is

now approaching. Did you notice that John McCain scorched both Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, but (as far as I know) only tried to make amends with Falwell. I'll bet Pat Robertson noticed it. John McCain's message to the host of "The 700 Club," in McCain's celebrated terminology, is "F you!" Robertson could stick a dagger in McCain now, but even if he wanted to, his handlers would stop him. And even if he did, the rest of the evangelical leadership would rally around McCain. He's not their guy, but they fear and loathe Barack Obama.

The McCain-Obama Match-up

It will take many books to analyze the McCain–Obama campaign, but in the context of this one, the most striking fact to me has been Obama's difficulty in building a commanding lead. He has some natural disadvantages which the Republicans have skillfully and fairly pointed out. But the country was disgusted with the GOP, registered Democrats far outnumbered Republicans, the economy was in big trouble (supposedly the death knell for the party holding the White House), Obama had much more money, McCain was vulnerable on so many issues—and yet Obama has had only a slight lead in the polls. Why is it so close?

Part of the reason would have to be that McCain, like Obama, had many supporters who are unmovable. The polls showed white, Christian evangelicals strongly favored McCain, even if their leaders did not. The alternative, Obama, was altogether distasteful to them. Obama is probably a much more religious person than McCain, but John Kerry volunteered to serve in Vietnam, and won medals for heroism, while George W. Bush did

everything he could to avoid going any closer to Vietnam than Alabama, and the Religious Right ignored that. Obama was not religious “in the right way.”

The Democrats made appeals to younger evangelicals, who are much more concerned about the environment and eliminating poverty than their parents are. I doubt these appeals will make much difference, and will be delighted if this turns out to be another stupid prediction on my part. But young evangelicals will, I predict, be unable to go against their parents’ preferences and their community’s norm. They have enormously strong ties to both. It will be so easy for the Republicans to assure them that McCain will address the environment and poverty, “but in a sensible way.” Young evangelicals have trusted and been reassured by their parents’ views all their lives.

So I expect the Religious Right to work hard for the Republicans. Oh, not as hard as they worked for GWB, who was their perfect candidate, but as things stand now (in early September, 2008) I’d be surprised if they didn’t turn out in their usual numbers and 70% of white Christian Evangelicals voted for McCain/Palin...with the emphasis on the latter.

The other group that is proving immovable for Obama is white male blue collar workers, most of whom are nominal Democrats. There are several reasons for this, I suspect. For one thing, McCain seems more like a “man’s man,” what with having been a navy pilot and a POW. But for another thing, Obama isn’t a white guy. Some people wonder why white male blue collar workers would vote for a Republican, against their “class interest,” but it’s not hard to see why. White male blue collar workers are the most vulnerable segment of American society if persons of color get a fair break. They’re like the *less* skilled white

baseball/basketball/football players who filled out major league rosters when African-Americans were not allowed to play. After all, Jackie Robinson replaced a white guy, and they see themselves as pretty replaceable too. They don't warm to the idea of a "black" president who (they think) will give nonwhites special advantages.

We know from research that prejudiced people do not respond to overtly prejudiced appeals. Instead they look for other reasons to justify their discriminating against someone. The Republicans have given them lots of "Obama's different from us" rationales without having to use racial epithets.

The GOP advertising campaign has brilliantly appealed to the white, blue-collar males in another important way. They have saturated the airwaves with any number of aggressive ads, usually misleading and unfair ones. (The worst, in my judgment, was taking a statement Obama made about "It's not me, it's us" 180 degrees out of context and portraying it as "It's all about me" .)

The Obama camp reacted at first with that stunned deer-in-the-headlights confusion that the "swiftboat attack" produced in 2004. "Why, this is outrageous! This is a lie! You can't do this!" But the Republicans strategists, then and now, had no interest in playing fair or with honor. They were in the game to win.

What does this have to do with white male blue collar workers? As a group, they may care more about aggressiveness than fairness in a presidential candidate. They want to see who is the *toughest* guy. You want to be on his side. It's like establishing a pecking order in the school yard, or a family. Josh Marshall at Talking Points Memo correctly identified the

Republican strategy as the “bitch-slap” approach– with apologies for the term, and the act. “I don’t give a damn if it’s fair!” the McCain campaign said as sub-text in ad after ad. “I’m going to hit you over and over. Yeah, I’m mean and brutal. Yes, these are lies. Yeah, this is unjustified. What are you going to do about it, huh?” The strategy comes right out of the social dominator’s play book, page 1. When the Democrats did not aggressively fight back, a lot of white, male, blue collar workers concluded McCain was a tough leader, the kind of guy you’d want running the show, and Obama was another Democratic wimp.

Labor union leaders warned the Obama campaign that he would lose the blue collar vote if he did not counterattack, and Obama did in his acceptance speech at the Democratic convention. A Gallup Poll showed the speech had its biggest impact on males who had not previously supported Obama. Unlike the Religious Right, and opposition based on racism, the “tough guy” vote is still accessible to the Democrats. (I’m not saying they should be unfair or lie. I’m saying they should continue now to be assertive and confrontational about the truth versus the lies. So far as I know, the “new politics” doesn’t mean you let somebody kick the stuffings out of you.)

Postscript--Part II

It’s now October 14, the day before the third presidential debate. The campaign still has two and a half weeks to go, but Rick is ready to produce the galley version of this audio-book so I’ll have to go with what has happened so far. Maybe we’ll be able to squeeze in some more after the presumably happy ending on Nov. 4.

A lot has happened since the national conventions. The economy turned out to be not just in “big trouble,” but in the worst mess in our lifetimes. Sarah Palin has brought out the evangelicals as everyone expected, but has also proven so unqualified that some prominent conservatives have called for her to resign. The horribly unfair “It’s all about me” ad has been bested for UNfairness several times by claims that Obama wants to teach sexual intercourse in kindergarten, favors unlimited abortions, and caused the turmoil on Wall Street. The Democrats have hit back, however, following their nominee’s statement that he wouldn’t throw the first punch, but he would land the last one. Polls show the Democratic won all the debates so far. And polls also show the Obama-Biden ticket has opened a significant lead over McCain-Palin, and is doing well in most of the battleground states.

And yet, the lead seems to go forward three steps, say after a debate, and then go back two. There’s an undertow that keeps this from being as breakaway a victory as it should be. Some voters have such strong resistance to the Democratic nominee that when he does impress them, they still are overcome later by their doubts (and Republican attacks). He may have to impress them three or four times to get their votes. And there are the “Undecided” voters, who still comprise about 6 percent of the polls. “Undecideds” usually break strongly for the conservative candidate in an election, and some of them aren’t the least bit undecided. I’ve a pretty good idea who the people are who say they’re undecided, but have already made up their minds not to vote for Obama on racial grounds.

So while this *should* be a landslide Democratic victory, at this stage I think it will be

closer than many people are saying.

Let's look at a few recent developments in the campaign in the context of this book. The economic turmoil has been the biggest reason for Democrats' rise in the polls. It has brought back some "Reagan Democrats"—particularly white blue-collar males—as they see the threat to their jobs, homes and hopes. But the second-biggest reason for the Democrats improved standing is the reaction among women to Sarah Palin.

Palin not only brought the rank-and-file Religious Right into action, she also momentarily attracted a lot of women who saw her as a genuine heroine for women's causes. For a while, you couldn't buy a potato without passing half a dozen magazines at the check-out stand with her smiling face on the cover. But as time passed, as her record became better known, as her singular unpreparedness for national office became crystal clear, as her ignorance made her a laughing stock, as her distortions and lies about her record came to light, and as she hid away and stone-walled, she came to resemble not Blue-Collar Super Mom, but George W. Bush with lip-stick.

Sarah Palin brought some desperately needed energy to the Republican campaign. She always draws a bigger, more enthusiastic crowd than John McCain. And reporters noticed that when Palin and McCain did a rally together, some people would leave after Palin gave her speech, not staying for McCain's. Many evangelicals still dislike him. He will undoubtedly be the only presidential candidate in history who will get the votes of millions of people who pray to God he wins, and just as sincerely hope that he then dies at the Inaugural Ball.

As I said in the first part of this postscript, I think almost all these people would have voted for McCain anyway. They weren't going to stay home when someone they considered the "Anti-Christ" was running for the Democrats. So I doubt the GOP picked up many votes by placing Sarah Palin on the ticket. Instead she probably has lost them lots of votes among the people who count at this stage—Independents and undecided Republicans and Democrats.

It's no accident, I think, that the level of vitriolic attacks on the Democrats at Republican rallies—from the stage and from the audience-- have mainly come since Palin joined the ticket. Partly this happened because the Republicans decided to ratchet their negative campaign to the max as they found themselves falling behind. But secondly Palin's candidacy has brought out significant numbers of religious conservatives, high RWAs, and studies show these people have a lot of hostility in them looking for a place to explode. As well, it seems to me that Palin has incited her audiences more than McCain has. I don't envy the Secret Service's job now, because authoritarian followers are looking for their authorities to sanction attacks on "the enemy" and the Republican ticket has, at times, whipped up hostility in their frightened followers.

The followers are frightened partly because they are so terribly misinformed about things. As noted in the book, high RWAs travel in tight circles, getting their information from each other and sources that tell them what they want to hear. That's why so many of them believe Obama is an Arab and a Muslim and a terrorist and so on. Their friends tell them he is, and they tell *their* friends. The Republicans could stop most of this nonsense by saying, "No he's not," and John McCain recently told a rally that Barack Obama was a decent

man and they should not be scared of his being president of the United States. But the crowd boo'd, and it's asking a lot of politicians to discredit a whisper campaign that's hugely benefitting them. A lot of people in the Republican campaign might raise a toast to their loyal followers with the words, "Yes, you're narrow-minded and uninformed and wildly mistaken and will never discover the truth. And we love you for it. We can't possibly win without you."

Indeed, McCain and Palin have *promoted* the "terrorist" label with their campaign linking Obama to William Ayres. This is McCarthyism at its worst, guilt by association--any association. But this works with high RWAs for exactly the same underlying psychological reason: those tight circles. High RWAs believe, strongly, that you're judged by the people you associate with. That's why they try to minimize their contact with "others." If someone has some sort of connection with a bad guy, any sort of connection, that means he's a bad guy too. Unless, of course, he's *your* guy, as in McCain's Keating connection, or Palin's husband who joined an organization that wants Alaska to secede from the United States. Revisit Chapter 3 if you want to see how such double-standards can lay side by side in high RWA minds.

Another thing High RWAs will readily believe is that their side is losing because the Democrats are cheating in voter registration (which certainly appears true in some instances, but doesn't explain the lead in the polls), or because the media "will not tell the truth" about Obama (such as, he's a Muslim terrorist). Similarly they're ready to believe that the housing mortgage crash that has hurt the Republicans so much was in fact caused by Democrats

forcing lenders to give mortgages to poor (that is, African-American) people.

It all reminds me of Hitler's Big Lie as he rose to power that the only reason Germany lost World War I was because the army was stabbed in the back by Jews in Berlin. Because high RWAs will always believe these falsehoods about the election of 2008, I doubt they'll ever become reconciled to the Democratic victory that seems ahead. They will forcefully oppose many of the proposals the new administration will enact. They aren't going to go away. They're too frightened, and now they're too angry as well.

And here's where John McCain reaps the ultimate grapes of wrath. Who's going to be in control of the Republican Party after this election? The Religious Right, for sure—the last people McCain would want to fill the vacuum he'll leave behind. They'll form its firmest voting block more than ever, because conservatives with conscience and others have abandoned ship. And he provided them with a leader out of nowhere when they couldn't find one themselves. Sarah Palin will probably prove a disastrous choice, but the job is hers now if she wants it. And I don't think she'll turn it down. The conservative columnist David Brooks knew what he was talking about when he said on October 6th that Sarah Palin represents a fatal cancer upon the GOP.

When all is said and done, the Republic may have thankfully passed through the perilous times I referred to at the beginning of this book. America now has the opportunity to reclaim itself from the horror of recent times and establish an era of hope and renewal, although the problems ahead are formidable. This is where Barack Obama's message of uniting and working together will become important, as I was also saying at the end of

chapter 7. Whatever their shortfalls, High RWAs are not aliens or “the enemy” or “the other,”—the way they see their outgroups. They have extra helpings of some unhelpful traits, such as fearfulness and ethnocentrism, but they have good qualities too that will be needed. I don’t think you’ll ever convince them they’re wrong, but you can still get them to work for common goals, and a magical transformation can take place when that happens. There’s too much common cause in the country nowadays to let the differences among us decide things. Lincoln’s words at his second inaugural might well be recalled on January 20, 2009: “With malice toward none, with charity for all” let us bind up the nation’s wounds. Can we bind all the wounds, can we agree on everything, can we unite in every effort? Probably not. But we can unite for much, maybe most. It is a dream worth pursuing. As a nation, as a world, we are all in this together.

Part III—Written on November 5, 2008

The Polls, the Undecideds, and the “Bradley Effect”

The national polls all correctly predicted Obama would win, but they varied quite a bit in their accuracy. First prize goes jointly to Rasmussen and Pew Research, both of whom predicted a 52-46 split when the real numbers appear to have been 52.3-46.4. That’s pretty darn good, and not unusual for these outfits. As well, Nate Silver at FiveThirtyEight.com predicted a 6.1% difference, which came very close to the 5.9% figure produced by the voters. The worst prediction came from the USA Today/Gallup poll, which gave Obama nearly twice his real margin of victory at 53-42, and Gallup’s own poll, which had it 55-44.

I've averaged the 16 national polls I could find that conducted surveys in the last days of the race, and together they showed Obama with 51.4% and McCain with 43.6%. Five percent of the vote was accordingly "undecided," or (in a few cases) going to some other candidate. You can see that most of that 5% broke for McCain, boosting his poll average of 43.6% to 46.4% and making the race somewhat tighter. During the Democratic primaries, "undecideds" also went against Obama once they got into the voting booth. This fits in with the observed tendency I mentioned earlier for people who say they haven't made up their minds to end up voting for conservative candidates. Does it also show the "Bradley effect" that I was worried about? If so, it was quite weak.

Sarah Palin

Analysis of voting patterns, backed up by (the somewhat unrepresentative) exit polls, show that Sarah Palin did drag the Republican ticket down. She influenced significant numbers of moderates, Independents, and women to vote for Obama. (But the big reasons for Obama's victory were George W. Bush, the economy, Obama's huge financial advantage, his masterful organization, and ultimately his message and charisma.)

The exit polls found that 74% of white evangelicals/Born-again Christians voted for McCain, four percent less than voted for George Bush in 2004 but still a very solid turnout and by far the GOP's strongest demographic. I haven't seen a breakdown by age yet, but it seems clear Obama's attempt to win over (young) fundamentalists proved the least successful of his various stratagems. He did, of course, earn the support of many other religious voters.

The Religious Right remains the base of the Republican Party. If its leaders get their act together, they can make Sarah Palin (or you or me) the GOP nominee in 2012—a fact that

rightly troubles the “Eastern Establishment” of the party no end. Yes, Palin is getting a lot of bad press today, especially with the *Newsweek* behind-the-scenes revelations. But these will mean nothing to high RWAs who will vote-as-led in the 2012 primaries. But 2012 is a galaxy far, far away and a long time ahead. A lot will happen between now and then.

A Final Point

Despite all the factors handicapping the Republicans from the start, and the painfully inept, lurching, hypocritical, unfocused campaign they ran, some 60 million Americans voted for McCain/Palin. That’s a pretty sobering realization. I think it shows Barack Obama was working against a significantly stronger headwind than John McCain was, yet he prevailed.

Unfortunately, the wretchedly divisive 2008 GOP campaign will, I fear, poison the country for some time. High RWAs have been told over and over again by their trusted sources that Barack Obama is a Muslim socialist/Communist America-hating dictatorial terrorist intent on destroying the country. They have been led to intensely dislike, if not hate the president-elect, and it’s no accident, I submit, that the Secret Service noted a sharp increase in the number of threats to the Democratic standard-bearer as Palin’s crowds became more rabid. Furthermore the Republican National Committee, Fox News, and so on have sold authoritarian followers the myth that the Democrats won through massive voter fraud, because the media conspired to keep Americans from discovering “the truth” about Obama, and that the Democrats caused all the problems that have occurred over the past eight years. You could easily find postings on various blogs in the last weeks of the campaign saying people should be ready to “take up arms” against an “illegal Obama tyranny” to “preserve

democracy and the Constitution.”

Thus while Barack Obama may genuinely seek a more inclusive, consensual approach to the country’s dire problems, many high RWAs may say “Count me out.” *Their* leaders--social dominators pursuing their own agendas--will instead stoke the often racist dislike for Obama that was so evident at Republican rallies in the closing days of the campaign.

Almost nothing would give me greater pleasure than seeing the research on authoritarian personalities become totally irrelevant, now that we have seemingly put the nightmare behind us and begun anew. I’d much rather people get interested in my next book instead, which is about a far more pleasant subject: my studies of the sexual behavior of university students. But I’m afraid www.theauthoritarians.com will remain worth people’s visiting for the next little while at least.