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## Isn't Donald Trump Exactly What We Deserve?

By David Macaray

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Besides the grinding repetition, the reason I can't bear to watch comedians do their Donald Trump shtick is that their material is so obviously based on the premise that this guy is somehow unworthy of being our president. That his being elected was a monumental goof, a mistake, that we don't deserve him.

In addition to being insufferably smug and self-congratulatory, that assumption is bogus. It is demonstrably false. If we step back and take an unsentimental, warts-and-all look at ourselves, we realize that Trump is not only *worthy* of being president, he seems the obvious choice for it.

Consider: The U.S. is, first and foremost, a nation of consumers. Manufacturers know it, advertisers know it, the Ukrainians know it, and Trump knows it. Indeed, there's nothing we Americans won't buy if it's properly advertised and promoted. And say what you will about Trump, but the man is, first and foremost, a fanatical salesman and promoter.

Consider: We Americans are practical people, which is why we don't form queues at poetry readings. There's no shame in that. We simply aren't a nation of poetry lovers. But we do form queues (often unbelievably long, serpentine queues), beginning at midnight, waiting for the store to open so we can purchase the newest technology. That's because we're a nation addicted to buying stuff. And Trump knows how to sell stuff.

Consider: We gush over rich people. We idolize them. But because that realization seems vaguely “un-Christian,” we pretend we don’t. We tell our children that “money isn’t everything,” but we don’t even believe that ourselves. We are in awe of Wall Street because Wall Street is Taj Mahal rich. And Trump is rich.

Consider: We love celebrities, and Trump was a TV celebrity. We love glamour, and the Trumps are glamorous. Wife Melania and daughter Ivanka are exotic creatures. Granted, that is more a testament to cosmetic surgery than the generosity of Mother Nature, but exotic creatures nonetheless. And as much as we pretend to respect “authenticity,” we don’t. Plastic is good.

Consider: Unlike much of the world, we Americans have always despised intellectuals. We pretend we don’t, but we do. We resent cultural snobs, know-it-alls, smarty-pants media types, and “deep thinkers,” and we admire salt-of-the-earth businessmen, self-made moguls, and (counter-intuitively) military officers.

That’s partly because of our native egalitarianism, and partly because we don’t wish to be reminded of our ignorance. We prefer brevity and plain talk to complexity. We embrace slogans (“Make America Great Again”), and avoid nuance, ambiguity, and self-doubt. Arguably, if we don’t count Ronald Reagan, Trump is the most anti-intellectual president since Andrew Jackson.

Consider: We admire conspicuous muscle and power. Accordingly, as long as the combat doesn’t occur on our own soil, we prefer war to peace. We pretend we don’t, but we do. If that weren’t the case, our defense budget wouldn’t be so absurdly bloated, and we wouldn’t have been engaged in all the military adventurism that has defined us since the end of World War II.

Consider: We Americans are a narcissistic people. We pretend we aren’t, but we are. We don’t have to be tied down and water-boarded to confess that we think we’re the greatest country in the world. Not only the greatest country in the world, but very likely the greatest country in the *history of the world*. If that ain’t narcissism, what is it?

And yet, for all this, we still pretend we don’t deserve Trump? We still pretend to be surprised that we elected a shallow, dishonest, narcissistic bully as our president? As Kurt Vonnegut wrote in *Mother Night*, “We are what we pretend to be. So we must be very careful about what we pretend.”