How Democracy Becomes Tyranny

from Why Elites Hate by William McGurn in the WSJ

> *No small part of the attraction of identity politics is its usefulness in silencing those who do not hew to progressive orthodoxy. This dynamic is most visible on campuses, where identity politics is also most virulent. It's no accident, in other words, that the mob at Middlebury resorted to violence to try to keep Charles Murray ; after all, he's been called a "white nationalist." In much the same way identity politics has led Democrats to regard themselves as the "resistance" rather than the loyal opposition.*
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> *The great irony here is that this has left Democrats increasingly choosing undemocratic means to get what they want. From President Obama's boast that he would use his pen and phone to bypass Congress to the progressive use of the Supreme Court as its preferred legislature to the Iran and climate deals that made end runs around the Constitution, it all underscores one thing: The modern American progressive has no faith in the democratic process because he has no trust in the American people.*

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I contend that it was the ideology of identity politics and its illiberal execution that cost Hillary the swing states. The Democrats will remain at a disadvantage until they change this.

But there is a further reason for their rejection of democratic liberalism. The early progressives claimed to value democracy and the "people's will", but they also believed in the leader as the one who shapes the people's will. The concept of a single will of a diverse group of people has always been a myth and a very thin veil for tyranny, whatever

its motivation.

The early progressives were blessed with leaders like Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson and FDR, but even these charismatic people resorted to raw power to invoke the ‘people’s will’. The founders’ and framers’skepticism of democracy as a tool of tyranny has proven correct.

Another flaw in democracy is The Myth of the Rational Voter. The minuscule amount of power exercised in a single vote does not justify the time and expense of being informed. But a democracy is ripe for special interests and influence because the benefits are focused and the costs are dispersed. It pays for the rent seekers to bend legislation to their ends, and for campaign fund seeking legislators to accommodate them because the cost per voter is so small.

But “every snowflake pleads innocent, but it is still an avalanche.”