

PODCAST TEXT #51 --TRUMP AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE VICTIM

Donald Trump is completely committed to being a victim. According to him, he's misunderstood, mistreated, persecuted, falsely accused and unfairly punished. As in his phone call to Zelensky, he is 100 percent innocent; his enemies are 100 percent evil. Here is an example, excerpted from Trump's recent six-page letter to Nancy Pelosi:

There is nothing I would rather do than stop referring to your party as the Do-nothing Democrats. Unfortunately, I don't know that you will ever give me a chance to do so. After three years of unfair and unwarranted investigations, 45 million dollars spent, 18 angry Democrat prosecutors, the entire force of the FBI, headed by leadership now proven to be totally incompetent and corrupt, you have found NOTHING! Few people in high position could have endured or passed this test. You do not know, nor do you care, the great damage and hurt you have inflicted upon wonderful and loving members of my family."

And then:

More due process was afforded to those accused in the Salem Witch Trials.

This commitment to victimhood is deeply embedded in Donald Trump's character.

Let's look more carefully at exactly how Trump's victimhood functions. What is the point of making yourself out to be a victim? Psychologically speaking, what does it accomplish? The answer is that it counteracts feelings of guilt. I use the word guilt to include feelings that someone has done or is doing bad things and feelings of being a bad person. In this sense guilt includes feelings of shame. In the end, it's all about feeling like a bad person, either by virtue of a person's actions or shortcomings.

Feeling and proclaiming that you are a victim, when objectively you are not, is a way of restoring a feeling of innocence, a feeling that you are good—and, therefore, not bad. And once guilt is negated and innocence restored, the victim can then go about hurting others and doing bad things

again. Consciously, the victim experiences him or herself as innocent or martyred, but less consciously, under the table, he or she can continue to pursue hostile aims. The whole thing is cyclical, because whenever guilt begins to insinuate itself into awareness, a person again plays the victim card and innocence is restored. “It’s not me, it’s them.” “I’m not doing bad things—bad things are happening to or being done to me.”

Ultimately, victims aren’t responsible for anything bad that they do or that happens to them. Badness is outside them, or bad things are being done *to* them by others, and, therefore, it therefore has nothing to do with the victim’s essential being.

Think of the psychological advantages victimhood promises to deliver. A person is not only good instead of bad, but also is entitled to sympathy rather than disapproval. Enduring the mistreatment of others can even come to be a source of pride. Victimhood then seems heroic, more akin to great martyrs like Joan of Arc than the Devil or just ordinary SOBs. And, as I said, being an innocent victim psychically enables someone to do bad and harmful things. It’s like a free pass. The

logic goes: Since I'm persecuted, I have the right to do anything I want without regard for others.

Victimhood is a living and breathing get-out-of-jail-free card that constantly sprinkles forgiveness and exoneration on one's harmful actions.

Trump is a perfect case in point.

He is always a victim; this position enables him to be nasty. Since he's always aggrieved, he feels entitled--entitled to be cruel and bully others without ever having to feel that he's doing anything wrong. People say that he lacks a conscience or even that he is psychopathic. In fact, his investment in victimhood explains the underlying dynamics. Since the world owes him some type of indemnity for all the ways he's been misunderstood and mistreated, his conscience is constantly put on the back burner or extinguished altogether. The guilt that a normal person would feel for acting and speaking like Trump is neatly counteracted by his need to always see himself as the injured party.

Starting from the premise that the mind seeks out ways to diminish guilt and shame, Trump's grandiosity—his presenting himself as

“perfect” —easily fits this same bill. Thus, feelings of victimization and superiority are easily compatible.

Since his basic instincts are to cheat, lie and disparage others, Trump’s psyche needs a cover story. As a result, his presidency rests on his claims that he is being persecuted by Democrats, the media, and the deep state. These claims are necessary to enable him to act in cruel and reckless ways without guilt. This, of course, is why impeachment is so potentially traumatic to him. The world is pointing a finger of accusation at him which he cannot escape. He’s consumed with retaliatory and sadistic rage. And, thus, as a result of the increased threat of guilt and shame, he has to become more and more of a victim, which permits him to be even more cruel.

Unfortunately, we ain’t seen nothing yet.