

# SLOG

2016

## Trump's Base Is Not Poor, It's Middle Class

by [Jen Graves](#) • Nov 7, 2016 at 10:49 am

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Picture a Trump supporter. Now tell me what class s/he's in.

Did you say middle class?

You didn't.

But Ben Davis, [in Frieze](#), points to **a strikingly important Gallup poll** of 125,000 American adults.

It found (emphasis mine): "His supporters are less educated and more likely to work in blue collar occupations, but they earn *relatively high household incomes* and are no less likely to be unemployed or exposed to competition through trade or immigration."

In other words, they may work "blue collar" jobs, but they're not the poor unfortunate souls on the bottom—not at all.

As Davis writes,

Economic inequality has reached unheard of, cartoonish extremes (a process that has accumulated, in the US, under both political parties, for decades). ... Even in the likely event of his defeat, Trumpism will outlive Trump, abetted by the compromises of Clinton, fantasized and real. It will likely repackage itself in less crazy-eyed form, as Marine Le Pen has done in France, mainstreaming the politics of her more openly toxic father. (Ivanka 2020, anyone?)

So it's tremendously important that we not walk away from this election with the idea that Trump is the true voice of the 'white working class.' He is not. He is what happens when class has been so invisible from the discussion that a competent showman with a pack of isolationist zingers feels as credible as the respectable mainstream, with its non-answers to economic questions that only grow more and more urgent.

We in the media missed this story.

We in the media are acting as the Respectable Mainstream.

Why are we looking away from class?

UPDATE: I read Sean Nelson's **August 31 piece** about Trump supporters, and then promptly forgot that he totally called out the class misconception. A doubled-down YES to this, by Nelson: "We tend to refer to this group with euphemisms—the "disenfranchised white lower-middle working class"—but those euphemisms aren't real. They're not poor. They're not disenfranchised."




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