

## Gras 2020 Yearly Letter



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**Politics:** I had to wait until Biden and Harris became President and Vice President due to the violent reactions to their win by white supremacists encouraged to do so (in prior weeks! ) by Donald Trump. The Riot happened 1-1/4 miles away from my townhouse in D.C. While the Biden-Harris win was a huge relief and a narrow squeak for US democracy, that election needed the Georgia Senate win to restore democratic possibilities for the country. When the people's majority elected Obama for eight years, wanting his vision of democracy, it never arrived because corporate money and profit via Mitch McConnell ruling the Republican Senate aborted all such thoughts. As I have discussed Trump every year in my annual letters – which are now available at [www.vwgras.com](http://www.vwgras.com), I won't do it here. But the fact that Trump received 70 million+ votes not just from the wealthy but from blue-collar white workers does need some puzzled discussion. If the wealth gap between America's richest and poorer families more than doubled from 1989 to 2016, according to the Pew Research Center, why do poor white working-class people still vote for Trump? This ever increasing wealth inequality is destroying democracy, especially as the growing billionaire class use their wealth to take over the media (see Robert McChesney) as well as federal and state governments.

With the internet, however, you can find almost any answer you seek. So I found Timothy J. Lombordo **“Why white blue-collar voters love President Trump”** (Washington Post, Sept 16, 2018). “Since the 1970's ... class-based political language and appeals to blue-collar identity have been at the heart of conservative efforts to win-over working -and lower-middle-class white voters. Republicans have won the battle for these voters for (the last) 40 years by speaking to their blue-collar identity and values”. Their identity, of course, is white and their values are hard work and intelligence which have provided

them with crafts and skills which give them privileges over other ethnic groups, despite formal legal equality. But our democracy says that “all men are created equal” and so all discrimination and segregation based on race, color, creed or national origins should not be tolerated by our government. Democrats ran Congress for forty years up to Newt Gingrich’s takeover in 1994. Beginning with Lyndon Johnson’s (after Kennedy’s assassination) **Civil Rights Act (July 2, 1964)** this document aimed not only to integrate public facilities, but also private businesses that sold to the public, such as motels, restaurants, theaters, and gas stations. Public schools, hospitals, libraries, parks, among other things, were included in the bill as well. It also prohibited discrimination in the awarding of federal contracts, especially the billion dollar Defense contracts. In fact, Lockheed Aircraft Corporation agreed with Johnson to follow “an aggressive seeking out for more qualified minority candidates for technical and skill positions”. This agreement became the administration’s model for a “plan of progress” to pressure other defense contractors, including Boeing and General Electric. Not only did this “plan for progress” apply to employers, it also applied to Universities. In 1967, while finishing my Ph.D (at University of Chicago), I taught in the Chicago Junior Colleges. During that summer, I “planned and prepared” Black high school graduates for entry into colleges that Fall – paid by a government program. Later, Universities were also pressured to hire more non-white and women teachers. Back in 1979, there weren’t many Black Ph.D’s. Mike Sundel (English chair) at GMU, solved this problem by hiring Amelia, a black woman Medievalist historian from Yale. A lot of Medieval history can be taught as literature. Both Democrats and Republicans (Everett Dirksen and Nixon) supported this program of “affirmative action”. With the arrival of Reagan and Milton Friedman, doing political “affirmative action” for people gave way to doing affirmative action for corporations. Increasing the GNP every year was all that was needed for America to thrive, they claimed. And the GNP increased greatly under Reagan’s tax cuts for corporations while corporations cut their costs by eliminating jobs for people with Robots.

Not only does Biden have to solve the Covid-19 pandemic problem first, he has then to solve our widespread growing wealth inequality, sky-rocketing higher education costs, crumbling Federal bridges and roads, and the environmental threats of fire, flood, heat, and world-wide food crises. I’ve just had my 92th birthday (Feb 11) and am now galloping into 93. I have enjoyed my stay on this planet very much with both people and the Earth. But the beauty of the Earth has diminished and the discomfort of people has increased. I doubt whether future life will be as giving and bountiful as was mine. What has happened, however, is that knowledge and the speed of knowledge acquisition has increased greatly. Humans can now (and should) gain control of the environment as well as life itself. Hopefully, we will do it in the right way. Start thinking as “we” which includes the Earth. Repudiate Friedman’s claim that a corporation’s only duty is to benefit stockholders, nobody else: just think “us” and “me”. I doubt whether life will continue if profit is made the ultimate value.

I did turn my (two car garage and barn) farm-house into a country cottage last year. Besides the house, the outside storage buildings also had to be repaired. I’ll show you some pictures of farm and new cottage.



This will be my last annual yearly letter. My usual section on evolution, however, will still come later. I can no longer write with speed and memory which is why this letter arrives so late. So, while my decrepitude increases, I suffer no pain and enjoy life from a different perspective that age makes possible.           Vernon

P.S. If you won't find out more about race and immigration relations go to **Wikipedia: Affirmative action in the United States**. Every thing found above came from there.