

Choose Mediocrity and Stagnation. Vote Democrat in Texas.

Facing a depressing choice in the governor's race



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No state party deserves to lose this election cycle as much as Texas Republicans. In their Senate primary, they tossed out a perfectly normal incumbent in favor of a guy whose only distinguishing feature as a politician is that he's an unusually well-rounded scumbag. Bo French openly says Indians aren't real Americans, and Greg Abbott responds to this explicit racism by attacking skilled immigration. *The Economist* reminds us that it's not just about Indians. They got their start bashing Muslims, back when you actually had to have plausible-sounding reasons to target a community of fellow citizens.

First it was Muslims. Last year Mr Abbott tried to block a mosque in Plano from building a community he dubbed "Sharia city" and designated America's biggest Muslim civil-rights group a terrorist organisation. Mr Paxton tried, unsuccessfully, to bar Muslim schools from school vouchers. In the Republican primary Mr Paxton beat John Cornyn, the incumbent senator, with the help of an endorsement of Mr Trump and a new line of attack, with ads accusing Mr Cornyn of having a "special place in his heart for radical Islam".

Then it was legal immigrants. In January, Mr Abbott froze H-1B visa applications at state agencies and universities. Four months later Mr Paxton opened investigations into 30 firms he accused of using "ghost offices" to allow "foreign nationals to invade Texas". In

September Bo French, a Republican running for railroad commissioner (a job that actually involves regulating oil and gas), posted a photo of students celebrating a University of Texas football victory on X—nearly all of whom had brown skin. “The problem is now obviously far worse than anyone imagined,” he wrote. Old-guard Republicans whom the party has ostracised, including Karl Rove and Mr Cornyn, called the post racist. Texas’s top brass didn’t condemn it.

Here, one might add the state’s enthusiastic participation in the Trump administration’s ICE crackdown on law-abiding residents.

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I previously didn’t know about the attempt to prevent vouchers from being used at Muslim schools. Republicans in many states have sought to give parents the right to direct the education of their own children while simultaneously taking money out of the public school system. They have a lot of Christian parents among their supporters, so this is naturally playing to their base. But a movement that tried to maintain even a pretense of caring about fairness and the rule of law would feel compelled to administer the new system in accordance with the Constitution. Unfortunately, that’s not what we have now. Rather, we see the dominant political party in Texas openly pursuing a sectarian agenda.

Meanwhile, Abbott makes himself look like a raving lunatic by going on TV and accusing his opponent of supporting sharia law, along with

"sharia cities" and "sharia compounds." When they stuck to Mexicans and Muslims, they could tell themselves that they were concerned with legitimate issues like terrorism or having an orderly immigration system. Picking on Indians, whether explicitly or through attacks on H-1B, is an escalation in moral depravity and the final sign that the Republican Party as a cultural force now represents little more than a device for logrolling hate.

An acceptance of ethnic and religious pluralism should be treated as nonnegotiable in American politics. Texas Republicans have failed this test. Nativists and racists like to say "we're a nation, not an economic zone." I agree. By being bigots, they attack one of the fundamental pillars of American identity.

All of this is to say that I want to find reasons to like Democrats this election cycle. Thankfully, they generally manage to act like decent human beings.



Gina Hinojosa

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It's a good day to be a Longhorn 🤘



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It's a pleasing thought that Abbott might be taken out by a young (or at least young-looking) Latina, and so I listened to Gina Hinojosa being interviewed by *The New York Times* hoping to be impressed.

Unfortunately, I finished feeling overwhelmed by the mediocrity of her ideas and the smallness of her vision. Take this passage:

And I asked my dad, how come in Mexico there are people begging on the streets and not in the United States? Because we didn't have any of that then. And he said, and I'll never forget, he said, because in Mexico they have the rich and the poor and not much in between. And in America, we have a strong middle class. And he said it with a pride, right? My dad, who also grew up on the border, said it with this patriotism, this proud patriotism. And he was talking about the American dream. And it has occurred to me that that sense of who we are, who our identity is as Americans and even as Texans to some

extent, is being lost. And that so many working Texans and especially young people don't believe in the American dream.

What? This doesn't explain anything. The US clusters with Latin America in terms of income inequality; its Gini coefficient is almost exactly the same as Mexico. America is a better place to live because it has a higher GDP. Raising living standards in the aggregate is therefore what we should be focused on, not trying to compress the distribution of income or wealth.

Hinojosa was asked what she has to say about Texas seeing remarkable economic growth under Republican rule.

There's no question that corporations love Greg Abbott and Texas, but the reality is we have the most people without health insurance of any state, despite the fact that Texans worked more hours than the national average. We have the most children without health insurance of any state. We have the most people disconnected from their electricity because they cannot afford to pay their bills. We have the most bankruptcies of any state in America, and it is small businesses that are struggling to keep their doors open.

Assuming this is all true, at least some of these things can be explained by Texas having the second-largest population in the country. It is not a poor state by any measure. Its GDP per capita of \$92K a year puts it nearly 20% ahead of Denmark, which is often held up as the nation that is closest to having gotten everything right. When you consider that Texas isn't filled with Danes, this becomes all the more impressive.

Using per capita figures is pretty much the first rule of comparing political units like states and countries. The US has more murders than Honduras, but it would be ridiculous to use absolute numbers to try to say anything about which country is safer.

Texas does in fact have the highest rate of uninsured children, so that particular point is correct. But Hinojosa forgoes the more intellectually honest framing so that she can keep using absolute numbers to tell people that her state is doing poorly. In terms of bankruptcies, for example, Texas is right in the middle of the pack.

Hinojosa is also leaning into the “big tech is stealing our water” narrative.

I was in the Panhandle, Amarillo, talking to residents where they are fighting the world’s largest data center. It is called Project Matador. Its investors are Rick Perry, our former governor, and his son. They negotiated a deal to get all of their water in this drought-prone area for the data center from the city water supply. When residents asked what happens if we run out of water, the response they told me they got from municipal water was, Well, we will have to turn off the residents’ first. That’s the environment we’re living in in Texas. And so people understand that we are fighting a fight where it’s all of us in the same boat versus like 15 billionaire tech dudes.

Dumb, dumb, dumb. The policies that led to Texas welcoming data centers and Tesla being headquartered in Austin are the same policies that have led to decades of rapid economic growth. And this is precisely what the Democratic candidate for governor has decided to run against.

Other than the fact that she’s not a Republican in the current year, it’s hard to find much good to say about Gina Hinojosa. She’s almost the Platonic ideal of a parochial politician with few ideas of her own, little ability, and even less desire to consider why some leaders and institutions foster growth and innovation while others create stagnation. Her spirit is that of the post office employee, or the DMV lady.

“My pronouns are Mom, Texan, and soon to be: Governor.” Oh, I bet she imagines some redneck sitting there at the bar, turning to his buddy in

overalls, "You know, Boomhauer, I don't think that pretty Mexican lady is like them other Dumbocrats. See the one about the pronouns? She got them good, I tell you what." And so the median red-state voter feels permitted to embrace a politician who favors the growth-killing policies he was always inclined to support anyway, the moment she comes packaged with gender conformity and doesn't activate white status anxiety.

For Democrats like Hinojosa, all we need to fix our problems is to have compassion, listen to our neighbors, and appeal to the down-home common sense of the American people. Long lines, inefficiency, and endless red tape are not obstacles to be destroyed in the name of progress, but monuments to how much we supposedly care for one another. Make sure to check with every local crank before a data center can be built, and stop new technology from being deployed until you have the sign-off of union cartels.

That said, we have no choice but to support Hinojosa this election cycle. We simply can't accept a world where politicians talk as if large numbers of those they govern are biological and spiritual pollutants due to their immutable characteristics.



If Texas Republicans ran on their successful record of improving people's lives, they would deserve to maintain power. Instead, in a state where fewer than a third of children are non-Hispanic whites, they've decided to go all in on the idea that people's ethnic backgrounds determine whether or not they belong in the country.

Perhaps it's not an accident that Texas Republicans have presided over such an impressive story of growth while adopting the politics of hate. In order to prevent the natural tendency of democracy to produce leaders like Hinojosa, it may be necessary to deflect attention from anti-corporate conspiracy theories by running on the idea that you are simultaneously protecting voters from sharia law and forced sex change operations for minors. Bigotry has long been central to the Republican Party's mass appeal, but as we've transitioned into a more populist and neurotic era, we've lost the plausible deniability and political flexibility that leaders used to rely on to prevent things from getting out of hand.

As a result, the very foundations of our prosperity have come under attack. When Republicans demagogued against Mexican illegals, they hurt the economies of their states, but the damage was manageable. Now that the right has turned its focus to Indians, we are witnessing an all-out assault on American dynamism, with the rise of ideas about merit that are practically identical to those advanced by advocates of DEI, except that in this case, the damage has the potential to be much more extensive.

In any case, we can't simply think of short-term outcomes. Results obviously matter, but at some point the legitimacy of the political system comes into question and you need to draw the line somewhere. Wherever that is, Texas Republicans have crossed it. I hope that they lose, but I am under no illusions about what might replace them. There's nothing glamorous, inspiring, or romantic about the DMV lady as a political leader. That is, unless she's standing in the way of fascists.