



Episode Title: What Happened with the Presidential Election Last Year? -- A Conversation with Howard Gutman

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Lynn L. Bergeson (LLB): Hello, and welcome to All Things Chemical, a podcast produced by Bergeson & Campbell, P.C. (B&C[®]) a Washington, D.C., law firm focusing on chemical law, business, and litigation matters. I'm Lynn Bergeson.

This week I sat down with my friend and colleague, Howard Gutman, who served as Ambassador to Belgium in the Obama Administration and is now a consultant for global businesses. Ambassador Gutman addresses a broad range of timely and important issues, including the 2020 elections and what happened exactly. And what should [Chief Executive Officer] CEOs be thinking about, given the change in administration, both for U.S.-based and foreign-based businesses? Given Ambassador Gutman's unique view of global business, we touch upon the European Union's precautionary principle and regulatory decision-making, European and American views on Big Tech, and what are some of the biggest challenges to global growth. Now here is my conversation with former Ambassador Howard Gutman.

Howard, I am delighted to welcome you back to our show. You have been a popular, popular candidate for downloading on your former podcast. Welcome, and how are you?

Howard W. Gutman (HWG): Lynn, it is always a pleasure just to get to see you. I guess I am as good as everybody else who has been trapped in their homes since March 10th or 15th, but looking for brighter days ahead, both politically and health-wise.

LLB: Indeed. I hope you and your family are well. Let's get right into it. Howard, you've said on your radio program and in a couple of speeches that I've heard, that it is the wrong question to ask, "What is it we should be expecting in the Biden Administration?" Rather, you have said that the question must be analyzed in terms of a couple of different factors, including what happened in the election? How did Biden win? What's the race for 2024 looking like? What's up in the Senate and the progressive movement? Can you help me explain and have our listeners understand what you mean by that?

HWG: Right. If you look at who Joe Biden is and try to figure out from that where he's likely to go, you miss a lot of the story, because the Joe Biden Administration for the next four years will depend in part on where our country is at, what they're facing in terms of a governing majority or not. If Joe Biden had the Senate and the House and a major mandate from the election, had Donald Trump left, there would be sort of clear sailing ahead for an agenda. But that's not what's happened, so we have to understand where the country is, how this election was won, and then what that means for the Senate and the next four years to understand where Joe Biden can go and will go. Let me explain real briefly.

LLB: Okay.

HWG: It starts in 2016. If you're going to try to understand America today, you have to understand America in 2016, because all of Americans say, "I don't understand those people. I don't even know who they are." Whether they're in the 74 million who voted for Donald Trump or the 80 million who voted for Joe Biden, they say about the other half, "I don't even recognize them. I no longer know who they are." Well, I know who they are. I know who both sides are.

In 2016, not just in America, but around the world, coming off 2008 and 2010 and where we had gone, populism rose. It rose on the left: think Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. It rose on the right: think Donald Trump. But it arose in Hungary. It arose in Poland. It arose in Latin America. It arose in the northern part of Belgium, where a party that used to be considered, when I was ambassador, a terrorist group was now a major political party. It arose around the world.

The difference between places it took off and places it didn't turned on personality. It is always the case with movements like populism, that they remain somewhat a minority movement unless they get coalesced behind a personality that helps it take off. There would not be Brexit without Boris Johnson, and there would not have been the transformation of the Republican Party without Donald Trump. But even so, that's a 40 to 45 percent movement, certainly in America.

In 2016, Donald Trump did not win the election. Hillary Clinton lost the election. Let me repeat that: In 2016, Trump didn't win; Hillary lost. What do I mean by that? Trump got 45% of the vote. He got 2% less than Mitt Romney got four years earlier. Mitt Romney got killed by Obama, 51-49, but he did 2% better than Donald Trump did. But what happened was, in 2016, over 7% of the vote, over 7% went to the polls, voted for president, and said, "I know Hillary's going to win. I'm certainly not voting for Trump, but I do not like Hillary Clinton either. I'm going to vote for myself, Mickey Mouse, Gary Johnson, Jill Stein, a third party. I am going to let politics go on. Hillary will be president, but without me." That 7% of the vote determined 2016, not Donald Trump, the 7% that refused to vote for Trump, but said, "I don't like Hillary Clinton." What happened in 2020 is that 7% went to 1%. That 7% third-party vote went to 1%. The 6% was divided by Biden and Trump, 4% to 2%. There were 2% of Americans who in 2016 said, "I will never vote for Donald Trump," who decided to vote for him. By 2020, he got up to 48%. But Joe Biden took Hillary Clinton's 47% and made it 51%. He got 4% of that previously none-of-the-above vote. The difference between the 4% and the 2% was a net 2% pickup. That represented a flip of Wisconsin from 1% down to 1% up. It represented a flip of Pennsylvania from 1% down to 1% up. It represented a flip of Michigan, to 1% up. It changed the election.

All that happened in 2020 was people disliked Joe Biden less than they disliked Hillary Clinton. It's not that they love Joe Biden. It's not that they said, "I was dying for a 78-year-

old guy who's been around for 47 years and just plays it central." That's not what was happening. They said, "I have to vote for president," and 6% decided they'd actually vote this time, and 2% more said they'd vote for Joe Biden than Donald Trump. They said, "I mind Joe Biden less than I minded Hillary Clinton. I'm willing to vote for him." There is not an overwhelming mandate. How do we know?

The number of seats in the House got cut to 5% Democrat lead. There hasn't been an administration that's controlled the House and the presidency with such a narrow lead in the House since 1900. And we know that they did not pick up the Senate. Now we have to wait and see what happens with the Senate race in Georgia. But I suspect at best, it will be a split, and the Democrats will not have the Senate. There is no particular mandate. There is no ability to get legislation passed because we don't control the Senate, other than we will have a modest infrastructure bill, I suspect. We'll have a modest incentive to come out of the pandemic, whether it's giving money away or whether it's spending, or --we will have a modest stimulus package. But beyond that, there's no legislative agenda, tax, environmental, or the like, legislatively, that can be had because of the nature.

And at the same time, the fact that he doesn't control the Senate gives Joe Biden a complete defense against the progressives. Elizabeth Warren demanding to be Treasury Secretary. "Sorry, I can't get you in." Bernie Sanders saying, "I will vote against the stimulus package if it doesn't hand lots of money to people." "Sorry, I can't get it passed."

The Joe Biden we will see for four years is controlled by the fact that Donald Trump is still here; 74 million people support him. He will start running. He's started running already. He's already raised \$207 million, Donald Trump has, toward his reelection in 2024. Because this fight that we've seen to challenge the election, that's had fund-raising. That fund-raising goes to the [Republican National Committee] RNC and to a Donald Trump [political action committee] PAC, both of which can be used for the next four years by Donald Trump to run for president.

We've already started the 2024 election. He's got Donald Trump as a critic, 74 million people who won't accept him. No Senate, a razor-slim majority in the House, defense to the progressives, and that is how to understand Joe Biden.

LLB: Well, that's a particularly astute and I'm sure accurate, but somewhat dark, take on the recent election and what we might be looking at over the next four years. I continue to be relentlessly hopeful and optimistic that as divided as we are, the next four years will be certainly an improvement over the past four, which may be a very low bar, Howard. Unique low bar, but that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

HWG: Lynn, I was going to say that is a low bar. Yes, it's an improvement. And let me say, it's not that glum, because in some respects we are the most effective as a government -- and in fact, all governments are most effective -- if you have experienced, veteran technocrats without a mandate, and just run the darn thing effectively. Let's get a COVID reaction handled well. Let's not piss off every one of our allies while we get our climate policy right, while we get our economy right. It's a technocrat government, but at least it's competent, efficient, moral, and fair.

LLB: Right. In that regard, President-Elect Biden has been naming members of his cabinet. I guess it's about halfway through at this point. What significance do you take from the appointees to date?

HWG: It is really an amazing Cabinet, but not unexpected. When you -- a few things to understand in looking at a Cabinet. When you don't control the Senate, you can't get your people confirmed. You actually fill Cabinet seats -- there has to be Senate confirmation -- with those people who will appease your party and can get confirmed. I didn't say a thing about, in that sentence, the people you listen to or the people whose opinion in those fields you value. Because that's not how our government is run anymore, when the Senate is dominated by one party and the White House by another, or one of the wings of your parties demand your Cabinet look a certain way. All you do is devalue the value of your Cabinet. What it turns out is your Cabinet becomes the people who administer departments.

Your Health Secretary runs an important part of our government. He administers all the programs done by the Department of Health. But he's not going to set health policy. It's not like Xavier Bacerra is going to tell Joe Biden, Steve Ricchetti, Ron Klain, Tony Blinken, and Susan Rice where to go on health policy today. He's going to administer a department. It's an important job, but that's what he does, and Donald Trump says -- and Joe Biden says, "I think he can do that well."

Marcia Fudge will administer Housing, but it's not like a congresswoman from Ohio with no particular background is now going to be our leading thought person in Housing. And for -- who is our leading thought person, that cabinet -- small C, that cabinet, that group of advisers for Joe Biden -- is not new. Joe Biden's had his team for a very long time. They have waited for this day, but they have expected it. They have been in training. They fully expected it. And so how do we know?

Take a look at West Executive strategic advisors. WestExec was a group that Tony Blinken and Michèle Flournoy formed in 2016 when they expected to be in government under Hillary Clinton. Tony Blinken expected to be Secretary of State. He was Deputy Secretary of State under Kerry, and under Hillary. And Kerry was going to be leaving, and Tony would be Secretary of State. Michèle Flournoy was the senior Defense Department person in charge of policy. She was the policy person Hillary and Joe listened to. She expected to be Secretary of Defense. David Cohen was Deputy Secretary of CIA. He was expecting to be the Head of the CIA. Dan Shapiro is doing a great job as U.S. ambassador to Israel with Mideast policy. He was expecting to stay on.

So guess what happened? The Cabinet-in-waiting, the Cabinet that didn't get their jobs under Hillary Clinton because she lost, but was even closer to Joe Biden. So it was the Cabinet-in-waiting, four years ago formed a little group to wait together. WestExecutive was the Biden Cabinet-in-waiting, just waiting for him to win to be turned on.

And how do I know that I'm not just making this up? How do I know they're actually thinking that way? Well, I know Ron Klain for 30 years, since our kids played soccer in grade school together, and we were lawyers together in the Bush-Gore case. And we practiced law, not in the same firm, but in the same zones. Ron's been a family friend for 30 years.

Steve Ricchetti I go back with as long as Mark Warner's political career because Mark's a friend from law school, so I've known him for decades. I've known Tony Blinken for 15 to 20 years. I have coffee, I have lunch with these guys regularly, normally. And starting in 2017, I wanted to go see them to talk about the Biden campaign. They were the campaign-in-waiting. We continued to see each other, but instead of meeting at the Palm or meeting at a Starbucks, we met in their offices, because as far back as 2017, they said, "We can't be

seen together at a Starbucks because if we do, it will be reported in Politico that Joe Biden is running, and we're not ready to announce." They were that careful three and four years ago.

LLB: That's smart.

HWG: In keeping this done correctly, they are professionals. That's how I know there's no ethics blight in the last four years by Joe Biden. Steve Ricchetti wouldn't have it. That's why I know Tony Blinken can get confirmed with the clients of WestExec. They wouldn't have risked it. This is a very experienced Cabinet-in-waiting, probably the people most experienced in these areas, the people around Joe Biden, who he'll listen to, and the government will be run by Ron Klain, by Steve Ricchetti, by Mike Donilon, by Tony Blinken, and by Susan Rice.

LLB: You have alluded some to this already, Howard, but what can you tell our listeners about what to expect in maybe those first hundred days of the Biden Administration?

HWG: The entire Biden Administration, I suspect, will be well thought out executive action that's been thought out for years, and a couple of pieces of legislation the only thing he can get by. The two legislations will be a stimulus package far less aggressive than the Democrat Left would like, but at least it will take account of the fact that as a country, we're probably not out and about until the spring. We've got to do something about the number of people who are going to be foreclosed on, be thrown out of their apartments between now and then, so there'll be a small stimulus package.

There will be an infrastructure package of some sort, and otherwise the rest is executive action. And that will consist of, we will quote, unquote, "reenter the Paris Climate Agreement the first day." Now, that's the silliest statement I've ever heard because we never really entered it under Barack Obama. The President of the United States agreed to it, but he knew he couldn't get it passed as a treaty that bound us because the Republican Senate would never have agreed to it. The only way we entered the Paris Agreement is Barack Obama signed as President of the United States for whatever good that was and voluntarily made payment. We never left the agreement because Donald Trump didn't ask the Senate to pass the legislation barring it. The Democrat House never would have done that, so all he did as President was say, "You know what the guy before me said? I disagree, and I'm not paying."

And Joe Biden reentering it isn't going to have the force of law like a treaty because he couldn't get it passed the Senate. What he'll do is say, "We're now a member. We're now going to pay our share. We're going to meet with Angela Merkel and talk about how we solve the India problem. We're going to be a player once again," but that will happen the first day.

The other early agenda will be Iran. We left the Iran agreement under Donald Trump. It was a little bit of false leaving because the reason for the Iran agreement was that Iran at the time we entered into it could have gone nuclear within eight months. We *had* to have inspectors go in. But once they had done their job, we bought some time. We had pushed Iran back. But we now haven't had inspectors in for over three years. We need them back in, so we've got to somehow have an agreement where our inspectors get back in. Therefore, there will be an Iran agreement. I suspect it will be somewhat renegotiated from before to save face for everybody. But fundamentally, the Middle East, if it wasn't us, it would be Saudi and the Emirates and Bahrain and Qatar. No Sunni country and Israel are not going to stand by without knowing the state of Iran's nuclear enrichment.

LLB: Howard, you've written a bit about how repairing damage to the reputation of the United States in Europe was an early challenge back in 2009. How much damage do you think has been done to America's reputation and influence during the Trump Administration?

HWG: The lasting damage that's been done is that this is possible in America. I mean, who is Europe? When I was U.S. ambassador, if I would be in a particular restaurant and all of a sudden I would hear a spontaneous applause break out, I would turn; I knew who it was. It was a group of 80-year-olds. They weren't applauding me. They were thanking us for having saved them in World War II. They were still thanking us. The war memorials all over Belgium, they matter. I cut more ribbons there. Every town has their battle scars because they lost their grandparents. They had the Germans in houses with holes in the walls. We are still the America who came to their aid, and they need to believe in us. That took a hit under George Bush. When I got to Belgium -- you got to remember, under Bush, Belgium barred -- under George Bush and the weapons of mass destruction that didn't exist, if you remember that era -- Belgium barred U.S. planes from their air space. They barred U.S. ships in the port of Antwerp. And they had indicted Donald Rumsfeld for genocide. That's where they were. But with Barack Obama coming in -- so when I got to Belgium, the favorable-unfavorable towards U.S. leadership was 8% favorable, 64% unfavorable.

LLB: No kidding!

HWG: That's where it was in '09.

LLB: That really surprises me.

HWG: That was weapons of mass -- when they're going to indict our Secretary of Defense, it was that low. It is slightly lower now. It's hard to go lower than 8%. There's got to be someone who likes you, so it's slightly lower now, but it's about the same. The ambassador who goes to Europe and says, "We're back. We believe in climate; we're going to lead. We believe in security; we're going to lead. We believe in privacy; we'll engage with you. We believe in environmental regulation; we'll engage with you." That will be immediately accepted, but it won't change memories. What it's shown them is never get too dependent on the United States, because it can change in a minute. And here's what I'm about to say, Lynn, and I'm sorry to say it. If they're smart enough, they would know it likely *will* change in 2024. Because if health doesn't intervene, how would you handicap a Donald Trump-Kamala Harris 2024 race? They have to prepare for that while they welcome us back, so they'll welcome us back, but they're no longer going to fundamentally change that Europe has to be dependent on Europe because in a day America could change.

LLB: We talked a little bit already about climate change, a topic that has been repeatedly emphasized by President-Elect Biden and was certainly a big topic in the campaign. In your view, how hard do you think it will be to reestablish U.S. leadership in this area, or even convince international partners that we're serious about addressing the issue, given the past four years?

HWG: The good news is, although we didn't talk the talk, we *did* continue to walk the walk. In fact, one of the things I do is I advise European offshore wind. And through the Democratic governors and in fact, Republican governors, Charlie Baker in Massachusetts as well, through technology, when Europeans came to America and said, "I can get you green energy for somewhat more money," they sold none of it. They didn't sell any. Nobody in America back in 2016, even 2012, nobody in America wanted to buy green energy for more. We just wanted cheaper energy. When technology lowered the prices, now they say, "I can

create manufacturing and construction jobs and not raise your energy bill.” And that sold in America.

We’ve become the largest offshore wind market. We have become -- Texas and Oklahoma have become solar and onshore wind markets wildly, just because it is in assistance to their carbon world. We have always walked the walk. We’re in place.

Remember, when George Bush walked out of Kyoto, he walked out of the Kyoto Climate Talks we refused to sign. From the day George Bush walked out to the day Barack Obama walked into Paris, having abandoned the Kyoto Climate Talks, we, America, cut our carbon footprint more than all the countries that signed that Kyoto combined. Think about that. The country that left Kyoto cut their carbon more than all the countries that signed the Kyoto Agreement combined.

Why? Because a guy named George Mitchell, not the legislator, not the senator, not the secretary, a guy named George Mitchell, an oil and gas man in Texas, discovered that if you spray air and water horizontally against rock with some salt, you combust it and get out gas, that would lower your carbon footprint more than oil, so we started fracking. And by fracking with half of the carbon footprint, we had a bigger effect on our emissions than all of the Kyoto countries combined. It’s -- as long as our technology kept up, the only thing we were doing was irritating people by not talking the talk. We were just -- we were giving aluminum foil for Europe to chew on and let them get that shock of their teeth all the time.

The best person I know to go fix that is John Kerry. John Kerry was not named our Climate Czar. He’s not in charge of regulations and technology and -- he’s our climate emissary. He will go to France and talk French. He will talk languages. He will share good meals and good wine, and he will show that he, like Al Gore, believes in climate to their core. I think we’ll be able to take care of some of those problems.

LLB: That is indeed good news. You had mentioned your representation now as a consultant for global businesses, including the wind industry in Europe, Howard, but let’s take a little broader lens here. As Former Ambassador to Belgium, you really have a, in my view, extraordinarily unique view of global businesses. What do you think CEOs should be thinking about as a result of the change in Administration, both for U.S.-based businesses and foreign companies? What words of advice do you have?

HWG: The most important, I think, is running a business for tomorrow. It is a different world that they’ve never met before for so many businesses, not because Joe Biden replaced Donald Trump, but because this is occurring as we are going to -- optimistically -- emerge from the pandemic. I’ve been advising lots of businesses.

Last March, I went to the movie industry, the movie theater industry, and said, “You are bankrupt unless you make changes right now. And by the time you realize it, you also will not -- the way content is distributed will have changed.” And the National Association of Theater Owners laughed at me and said, “We will be open in June with blockbusters. And by July, the second half of the year will be as profitable as any -- we’ll make 2020 as profitable as any year.” And I just said, “You guys are not looking for tomorrow.” On the other hand, I’ve now been advising theater owners for the last month that with every theater going out, there are values that are amazing, that they can grow as long as they understand what their industry’s facing. Well, that’s true. Theater owners is an amazingly easy example to give.

But if you're in technology, you never would have seen -- if you owned Zoom, you never would have seen the boom ahead. And if you are at Marriott, or you are oil and gas, or you are -- the question isn't what happens in 2021, when we have this amazing recovery and everyone travels. The question is, "What does the new normal look like in a world where we've changed who we are, where we've experienced a pandemic, where we have a Biden Administration that will join for the good the world patterns?"

But the entire world pattern's changed. And you better understand how that affects your company. You've got to see tomorrow; and then you've got to be able to justify what you're doing in the world of tomorrow, instead of being run the way businesses always do, which is they look at last year and then look at year after year. Last year was not a year ago any longer. Last year was a lifetime ago.

And that's true of each -- so who are the kind of visionary CEOs? Well, look at Pfizer. Pfizer did not take a dollar of government funding from us. When we were foolish enough to turn down 100 million doses, Pfizer made more. Pfizer is in an amazing driver's seat, and it doesn't change once we get everyone -- it doesn't change in May, how we've been. Pharmaceuticals can take this opportunity to continue to create tomorrow, but they've got to do it with the Biden Administration, with the pushback from government, but with the knowledge that they are no longer -- Remember in 2008, Osama bin Laden was the third worst person in the world in the McCain-Obama debates. They would agree -- Obama and McCain -- about what a scourge Osama bin Laden was.

The second biggest scourge, though, worse than Osama bin Laden, was the CEO of Big Oil. CEO of Big Oil. McCain spit on them, and Obama spit on them in the debates. And I had Rex Tillerson's people come see me and say, "What can we do about this? Somehow we've become the bad guy." And the only person that was worse than Osama bin Laden and the Chairman of Big Oil was the Chairman of Big Pharma. You remember that? It was the Chairman before -- that was a -- I used to call my friend Jeff Kindler, who was the head of Pfizer and say, "When did you become worse than Osama bin Laden?" But it was the health care and drug price debate. Chairman of Big Pharma has -- done that now -- he's been replaced right now by the Chairman of technology companies, Facebook and Google. They're becoming the new Osama bin Laden, right? Both in Europe and America, they're jumping ahead of each other. I don't know how two companies that give us amazing products for no cost -- next time I get lost, if I have to pay \$35 a month for my Google Maps, I'll do it. But I've never had to pay a penny for Google Maps. But somehow they lost that fight. You've got to see where tomorrow's coming; tomorrow is shaped by the pandemic, by the Biden Administration. But don't get too comfortable because Donald Trump's the leader in the clubhouse for 2024.

LLB: Now that you mention the attacks, both in Europe and in America, lodged against Facebook and Google, how do you size up this attack on Big Tech, where it's at right now and where it may end up?

HWG: It's a little -- Big Tech has to get ahead of everybody on the issues that are difficult. The issues that are difficult is privacy. The issues that are difficult is they are the regulators of speech and thought. We never had someone able -- we just got our news from Walter Cronkite from 7:00 to 7:30 every night. I'm showing my real age. I get that. Or at least my father got that. Let's say it that way. But that world's changed. They've got to be the leaders on that. They've got to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

That's what Pharma did with the Obamacare health care, become part of the solution, not part of the problem. But for the rest of it, Big Tech, Google, Facebook suffer from the same problem Barack Obama suffered, in my mind, whenever I face Republicans who are criticizing Obama. I view Obama as the third most effective presidency in history. They regard it as one of the worst presidencies in history. And what I used to say is Obama was amazingly effective at everything but selling how effective he is.

So I got to tell you, Google and Facebook, to me, can do a better job at letting us know the value of what they provide to our citizens, which if they took it away or charged for it what that would be. If tomorrow you didn't have Google as a search engine, it wouldn't be that you would have all these other effective search engines. It's that you would pay to buy Google as a search engine. You would pay for Google Maps, you would pay. And so it's the question of whether it comes out of the consumer directly or the consumer through shopping choices and what happens. I think we've all opted one way, but it's such an easy political whipping boy. You can -- whoever does this and says, "Why are the attorney generals going after my favorite companies, Facebook and Google?"

LLB: Yes.

HWG: Somehow there's a disconnect. So, again, I think they've got to get there, both in Europe and in America. Now in Europe, it's easier because they always do the sort of holier than thou because they're not American companies. They do protectionism for European companies while they are pretending it's wrapped in complete privacy. You can accommodate the privacy without fostering the protectionism, just because it's a U.S. company, which to say Google is a U.S. company is silly. There's Google operations all over the world.

LLB: Howard, we've talked a lot about really big issues that are front and center in the news and on talk shows. What is the most unnoticed or underemphasized issues or factors, economic or political?

HWG: It's a terrific question because almost by definition, you don't think about. What I'd rather say is, unnoticed by whom? What happens is when there are 80 million of us, we exist in Hollywood; we exist in Washington, who say, "I don't recognize those 74 million Trump voters, and who are they?" We do a disservice to ourselves, to our companies, to our -- if we fundamentally don't understand how to appeal to people.

Mark Warner taught me who they were, who they are, a very long time ago, and I should have known because, in fact, then I understood who my father was. Let me explain at least what I think is going on.

John Kerry, when he was running for president, called Mark Warner, then Governor, now Senator from Virginia, and said -- and Mark was a very popular politician in a Republican state at the time, a popular Democrat. And he said, Kerry said, "I've been running against the Bush tax cuts. The Bush tax cuts help less than 2% of America, and they therefore go at the cost of 98% of America." And what Mark Warner said is, "Although they only help the 2% of America, the other 98% of America aspire to be in that 2%. And they don't want to be handed out anything. They just want the playing field where they can get there on their own. And so they don't mind it, and when you play class warfare, we lose. When you play class warfare, we lose. They'd rather be poor than be insulted."

LLB: Hmm.

HWG: It is the most important lesson I ever learned. Because guess what? My father was an illegal immigrant to America, and he went to the Garment District, the sweatshops. And he had a zillion times the easy way out. Buyers for the big -- for Robert Hall, for Bradlees, for Wal-Mart. Buyers would come all the time. They would offer contracts, and they just needed their share, the buyers. It was just a fundamentally corrupt system, but that's how the system worked. My father had hidden for 27 months in Europe, and he didn't care if we weren't going to eat; he was not going to participate in that system. He was so smart, we didn't eat, because it never worked out. But that's who he was. If you appeal to Americans that way, instead of saying they're -- I forgot what word Hillary Clinton used --

LLB: Yes.

HWG: -- so we're not going to go there. There's nothing deplorable about it. There's admirable. We just have to understand what makes people admirable and then market to that and build our society together to that. The good news is, as a political level, Joe Biden gets there. I think he truly values it, because Joe Biden is no different than Howard Gutman, who was the son of Max Gutman. It's just -- I didn't understand the lesson until Mark Warner articulated it, but when he did, it explained my dad. It explains the good people next to us.

It's in the show *1776*. I think it's -- one of the Tories says, "How are we going to bring the people with us?" And they say, "They'd rather focus on the dream of being rich than on the reality of being poor." And that makes sense because that's what we want. We want the freedom to make our own way. And that's an economic lesson. I advise businesses on it all the time. That is a -- "Don't tell me what I need. Present the opportunity so I can decide to get there." It's not that they don't believe in science. We can get the whole, the entire world in favor of climate change. It's that we can't tell them how smart we are and how stupid they are. It won't sell that way.

LLB: Howard, you are the most fascinating guy I've ever interviewed. You were described by one Belgian newspaper as the most popular ambassador ever in Belgium. I'll bet, notwithstanding the past four years, if you were to return today to Belgium, you would be as popular as you were when you left it. I want to thank you, Howard, for joining us today. Fascinating conversation. And let our listeners know about your own radio program. You have one every week, don't you?

HWG: Sure. I'm heard on WRVA News Talk Radio 1140 in Richmond, but it's available on Radio.com from 10 to 11 on Saturdays. It's called "As I See It," but I also then -- that's just some fun on the side there. I'm not a radio kind of guy, but I do a lot of consulting for businesses all over the world.

Lynn, I really appreciate the kind words you said. I can assure you my kids and my wife will disagree. But I got to tell you that, just before we finish, the thing that made me popular in Belgium is the same lesson. My father was an illegal immigrant. I grew up going to public schools in Queens long before, on your own you make it to Columbia University or Harvard Law School.

What I did in Belgium is simply try to listen. So I had to -- as soon as I got there, I said, "Boy, we've been tone deaf for a long time. We have to reengage with the country. We have to build a bridge." The place I built the bridge, I said, "I'll get to the government officials later. I'll get to the business leaders later. I'm going to the people." I went to every -- 570-odd -- every Belgian city, village, and commune. I pledged to do it, and I did it for four

years, and I listened. And that's what we're going to need to do for the next four years. I appreciate it, Lynn.

LLB: Words to live by, Howard. Thank you so much, and all my best this holiday season to you and your family. Stay safe.

HWG: All the best.

LLB: My thanks again to former Ambassador Howard Gutman for speaking with me today about the election outcome, the race for 2024, challenges to global growth, and what every CEO needs to know in heading into the new year.

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