

US ELECTION CAMPAIGN: A SLUG FEST LIKE NO OTHER

WASHINGTON: In America, these are days of rage, fueled by a cocktail of gripes making for a White House race that's been wild and raunchy. Fist fights between opposing sides are now breaking out at rallies, where people give each other the finger. Candidates openly call each other liars, among other insults. Accusations of racism and bigotry have tainted the campaign trail. One hopeful-brash Republican frontrunner Donald Trump, of course, has even boasted in veiled fashion about the size of his genitalia. "This would all be fun if it weren't so serious," said Patrick Haney, a professor of political science at Miami University of Ohio.

Thanks in part to the gnawing sensation that the so-called "American dream" the idea that if you work hard, you will get ahead-is dead or comatose, it is the year of the outsider: the candidate claiming to be utterly free of the dysfunction of Washington-style, nothing-gets-done politics. "There is a sort of fundamental level of irritability in the American electorate right now. Some of it is probably economic and some of it is social and cultural," said Haney.

Paul Beck, a political scientist at Ohio State University, said the national funk cuts across party lines and to some extent stems from dissatisfaction with the status quo. "The other thing is much more deeply seated and that really goes back decades, to the declining status of the middle class," Beck said. Expressed in numbers, it looks like this: in 1970, 62 percent of aggregate US income went to middle-income households. But in 2014, that figure was down to 43 percent, according to the Pew Research Center. This means the other ends of the income spectrum-the poor and the rich are getting bigger.

'American Rage'

Another poll, entitled "American Rage" and published in January by Esquire magazine, gave even grimmer numbers. It found 52 percent of those polled say the American dream is dead, and 54 percent believe they are worse off than they thought they would be when they were younger. "We the people are pissed. And the body politic is burning up," the magazine wrote in an introduction to the polling data. On another hot-button issue-immigration-Esquire said 46 percent of those polled feel immigrants are a burden because they take US jobs, housing and health care. Trump has tapped into these fears, vowing to deport immigrants here illegally, build a wall along the border with Mexico and institute a blanket ban on Muslims entering the country.

Critics have heaped scorn on the 69-year-old businessman, saying he is fueling hatred and racism. Rival John Kasich, the Republican governor of Ohio, says Trump has created a "very toxic atmosphere." Another Republican contender, Marco Rubio, called his language "dangerous." Even President Barack Obama-the target of much of the anger expressed by Trump supporters-has weighed in, condemning the "divisiveness along the lines of race and faith" seen on the campaign trail. Trump says his rallies are nothing but a "love fest." And among the four remaining Republican candidates, he leads by a wide margin.

Trump, the man hogging the headlines, is a billionaire who has never held public office and is widely ridiculed by critics as a bigoted, clownish blowhard. His party is described as cringing over the prospect that he will actually win the Republican nomination, which for his critics borders on handing over the election to the Democrats on a silver platter. —AFP



SKIEN: Norwegian mass killer Anders Behring Breivik makes a Nazi salute as he arrives to a makeshift court in Skien prison's gym yesterday. — AFP

MASS MURDERER SUES NORWAY OVER 'INHUMAN' PRISON LIFE

BREIVIK MAKES NAZI SALUTE, IGNORING LAWYER'S ADVICE

SKIEN: Mass killer Anders Behring Breivik opened a court case against Norway yesterday with a Nazi salute as his lawyers prepared to argue he has received inhuman treatment by being kept in isolation for murdering 77 people in 2011. Appearing in public for the first time since he was sentenced in 2012, Breivik has had just one visitor with whom he had physical contact - his mother, who was allowed into prison and gave him a hug shortly before she died of cancer in 2013. Clean-shaven and wearing a black suit, white shirt and golden tie, Breivik raised his right arm in a flat-handed Nazi salute on arrival at the court, slightly different from the outstretched arm and clenched fist he used in 2012.

Breivik's lawyer accused Norway of violating a ban on "inhuman and degrading treat-

ment" under the European Convention on Human Rights by keeping the 37-year-old isolated from other inmates in a special three-room cell. "There is no tradition in Norway for this type of isolation," lawyer Oeystein Storrvik told the special court that will meet until Friday in a gymnasium at Skien jail about 100 km (60 miles) south of Oslo. Storrvik told Reuters he had advised Breivik against making the Nazi salute. "He (Breivik) says he is a national socialist," he said, adding that making the gesture was "the worst thing you can do in a courtroom."

Norway rejects the charges of inhuman treatment. "Breivik is a very dangerous man," said Marius Emberland, the lawyer representing the state, defending Breivik's conditions. He said another prisoner tried to attack Breivik last year, getting to within earshot.

When stopped by guards, the man shouted: "You are a killer, a child killer ... And I love my country," Emberland said. Breivik killed eight people with a bomb in Oslo and gunned down 69 others on an island nearby, many of them teenagers. He is serving Norway's maximum sentence of 21 years, which can be extended.

Breivik will have a chance to speak today. The single judge - there is no jury - will issue a ruling in coming weeks. Norway considered it too dangerous to hear the case in Oslo. The makeshift courtroom has walls lined with timber bars and a climbing frame as well as two basketball hoops.

Some survivors watched the trial in an Oslo court with a direct transmission by television. Most stayed away, not wanting to revive memories of July 22, 2011. — Reuters



VIENNA CENTER: US Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump at a rally in Vienna Center, Ohio on Monday. — AFP

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