



Now, Talk Radio votes.

By Holland Cooke, reprinted from Talkers magazine November 7, 2012

Voters chose. Now it's our turn.

Smartest thing I heard the-morning-after: Local hosts, many of 'em righties, asking callers "What happened?"

Books have already been written analyzing the 2012 vote. And beyond politics, there are radio Programming implications, actual Average Quarter Hour consequences.

What's already apparent is that voters didn't conform to the prevailing Talk Radio narrative:

- Heavy early voting and long lines say "Hear me!" to Talk Radio's default I-talk-you-listen model.
- Relevance overcame noise. The week before the election, during the storm of the century, listeners were hearing "Benghazi." Exit poll headline: Obama was more-relatable "to people like me."
- Truth trumped Trump truthers, and other canards. That ad about Jeep jobs moving to China backfired in Ohio, where 1-in-8 jobs are auto-related. And 58% in NBC's exit poll say they do think we're still recovering from the Bush recession.
- Gender gap: Even on election day, Rush Limbaugh, of all people, was calling "The War on Women" a myth. Now they'll be 19 of 'em in the United States Senate. And those two sound bites about rape were fatal.
- IS The Tea Party is over? Or will we hear double-down? Senator-elect Ted Cruz surprised lots of Texas Republicans with his primary win. Elsewhere, bomb-throwers like Joe Walsh and Allen West are one-and-done. Michele Bachmann barely survived. Some talkers, who smell the coffee, will make callers the star, others will book yet-another Ted Nugent interview.
- The Big Money lost. The Citizens United ruling disabled Caller ID for political ads; but all that Koch Brothers and Karl Rove and anonymous do-re-mi didn't R.O.I. Linda McMahon blew \$91 million losing two-Senate-races-in-two-years in Connecticut. Looking sleep-deprived and emotionally-spent the-morning-after, Chris Matthews offered that "telling people how to vote is disrespectful." Are we telling listeners what to think? How to feel? Or are we ASKING?
- This "browning of America" we've been hearing predicted is happening, and will lever the 2016 race. See that Hispanic vote? Don't assume Texas will always be red.

Romney heard. Did WE? No-less-than Time Spent Listening is at stake.

His concession speech could not have been more gracious. He stood alone, without wife-and-family's shoulders to cry on, and smiled; and he praised his supporters and the process and his opponent. His faith seems very genuine.

Morning-after, as I was talking several talkers I coach down-off-the-ledge, I urged that they tell listeners what Dr. Frasier Crane said: "I'm listening." And consider quoting that famous quip from the late, great Mo Udall: "The people have spoken...the bastards." ☺

Station management: Be curious about small ball, the ground game that contributed so much to Obama's win. His street team worked door-to-door with apps, Romney's literally used pencil-and-paper. Radio stations that sweat details win; those that respond to this election by simply hollering louder lose.

As Talk Radio now votes on its future, will we LISTEN? Or will The Big Voices double-down on an angry, predictable, one-note caricature?

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