Twitter Thread by Caitlin Dickerson



Caitlin Dickerson
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1/Following great stories by @jennymedina and @mannyNYT, sharing some of what I saw on election night, most of which I spent with Mexican-American Republicans in the Rio Grande Valley (Cameron and Hidalgo counties) w/ @IlanaPL on the ■.

2/I had seen on social media before I arrived that Trump trains were happening locally and I was curious to see if he had gained meaningful ground (You know by now that Hillary won there in 2016 by 33 and 41 percentage points respectively.) ex: https://t.co/3bFETTZ6cv

> This is the RGV where my wife Debbie (@debber66) grew up. it\u2019s the bluest part of Texas and mostly Hispanic. She never thought she would see the day! #Maga2020 #RGV https://t.co/ziPTmgjhWB
>
> — Dinesh D'Souza (@DineshDSouza) November 3, 2020

3/I also wanted to see what it was like, in a red state allegedly turning purple, to be in a blue region that may have been moving in the opposite direction.

4/Aside from Twitter, it was hard to find coverage of the Trump trains (which, according to locals, had been going on every weekend for at least a month, with hundreds involved) or of growing local enthusiasm for Trump.

5/Late morning, I spoke to @MorganGrahamGOP, the first Latina head of the Cameron County Republicans, who expected modest but meaningful gains. “I don’t think he’s going to break 40%, but mid-high 30s. That doesn’t seem like a lot to folks,” she said, but in the RGV, it was.

6/I saw far more pro-Trump than pro-Biden signs & billboards. At the entrance to the Mcallen elections annex, the busiest polling place w/ a block party vibe & mariachi band, a boisterous crowd cheered for Trump. Across the street, fewer Biden/Harris signs sat alone in the dark.

7/ Based on what I had read, the differences seemed chalked up to a small vocal minority -- statistically insignificant. Later, locals said that the lack of enthusiasm on the Democratic side signaled that Dems had taken them for granted.

8/As results came in, I chatted with people at the Cameron County Republicans watch party at a local bbq spot. Some were longtime Republicans (rebels in the region) and others had voted for Hillary in 2016. People touched on a few themes:

9/Boot straps: Some said their parents had come illegally from Mexico and, on next to nothing, managed to foist them into the working/middle class. (Median income is $38-39k, so money stretches more than in other parts of the country.)

10/These are folks for whom the American dream basically worked out. They wanted to keep gaining ground financially and not to look back and worry about the poor or disadvantaged. (This may conflict with structural inequalities but was nevertheless true for them).

11/Relatedly, not-Latino-ness: A mayoral candidate summed this up earlier in the day. He didn't like the term bc "not all of our families come from there." His parents were born in Mexico, but his ancestors from Spain, so he didn't like the L word or its baggage.

12/Religion: Some said being pro-life was their primary voting issue, and/or that what you do at home is your business but that Biden had crossed a line by standing up too aggressively for gay and transgender rights.

13/Folks who voted for Hillary in 2016 said they had done so because her resume was superior. They said they had expected Trump to bomb the presidency, but when he didn't, they were more comfortable voting for someone whose stances on social issues aligned better with theirs.

14/Many of these Mexican-American Republicans who voted for Trump said they were "pro-immigration." Pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients? Yes. "Amnesty" for people who've been in the country for 10+ years? Yes. Some restrictions on the border? Yes.

15/They believed that the R party of the future, and Trump, could get on board w/ this. I also heard a couple versions of, "yes, Trump is racist, but not a single American president since Regan had helped immigrants, so what's the difference?" Which brought them back to 12.

16/I closed out the night in the Cameron Republican War Room, where they had beat projected gains by dramatic margins (though most of the RGV counties still went for Biden) and were already talking about how to build on them in 2022.

17/ Stories I mentioned where my colleagues dig deeper into this: https://t.co/2mlS5BVnvE and https://t.co/hrOuG3qRdF