



Welcome to US History Talks

# Preview : Module 6: A Nation Adrift

Talk	Title	Time Period	Date of Talk	
37	The Great Society	1964-1968	May 19th	✓
38	Vietnam	1961-1975	June 2nd	✓
39	US society and culture 1960's	1960-1970	June 16th	✓
40	Return of the Republicans	1968-1976	September 1st	✓
41	US and the World	1964 -1976	September 15th	✓
42	Experiment in Virtue: Carter Presidency	1976-1980	September 29th	
43	US 1970's culture and society	1970-1980	October 6th	



# Talk 42: “The Virtue Experiment”

- Jimmy Carter & election of 1976
- Changing America
- Changing the World
- Iran & Hostage crisis
- The Reckoning....1980 Election
- Epilogue: Carter after the Presidency

# Jimmy Carter (1924-2024)

The Family Store Plains Georgia



Born “deep South”

...oldest of four, brother Billy  
...Father farmer/businessman  
strict uneducated, racist

Mother Lillian nurse, eccentric”  
...oldest Peace Corps volunteer!)

Jimmy...comfortable childhood,  
playmates black....father allows  
...erratic religious attendance

Jimmy first family to finish high school  
....Naval Career...free advanced  
Education and service

# Naval Career (1946-1953)

The graduate admired by mother & sister 1946



Accepted to Naval College  
Graduates 1946, marries  
Rosalyn month later

Rises through ranks 1946-1952

Assigned to nuclear subs 1952  
...reactor shutdown experience  
...career set, 3 children

Father dies...keep career/ lose farm?  
...Rosalyn opposes leaving Navy  
...."biggest fight of marriage"  
....leaves navy, returns to run farm

# Jimmy and Rosalyn 1946



# From Farmer to “born again politician (1953-1966)

Jimmy Carter at work 1970



Focus on farm and business  
...studies agriculture  
...successful. Diverse crops  
..school board, joins Baptists

Enters local politics 1961  
State representative/ avoids race  
Focus education, planning

Runs for Governor 1966  
...Carter pro integration  
.....loses election...depression

Becomes Born Again Christian  
..progressive evangelist  
...Civil rights, equality, help poor  
...and resolves to try again

# From Governor to Presidential candidate

Governor Carter 1971



Develops plan to win

- ...supports Wallace segregationist
- .. “Populist” vs wealth & corruption

Wins Governor race

- ...technocratic leadership
- ...reduces budget/ expands education,
- ...reverses campaign...pro integration
- ...rated successful governor

Seeks vice presidential role 1972

- ....fails to gain nomination
- ...attempts “conservative coalition”
- ...fails...decides to run for Presidency

Least well known of 8 Democrat candidates

# 1976 Presidential Election

- ▶ Republican incumbent Ford discredited
  - ▶ Anti “insider ”mood: Vietnam, Watergate, Nixon Pardon
  - ▶ Stagflation: unemployment 8%, inflation 6%
  - ▶ Ford low competence rating.....Mayaguez, air lift, golf and gaffes...”unable to chew gum and walk at same time”
- ▶ Democrats....confused
  - ▶ Candidate nomination rules “reformed”....complex
  - ▶ Crowded field.....9 viable candidates...no front runner...”big guns” gone ...Teddy Kennedy...Chappaquiddick, McGovern 1972 election disaster

# 1976 Democratic Nomination

- Election Reforms (to avoid 1968 fiasco)
  - Secure result BEFORE CONVENTION
  - Shift to “primaries” (public vote vs party insiders) from 15 to 30
  - Proportional representation within each state (vs winner takes all)
- The “new politics” and new rules
  - Success requires superb organisation, 9 months campaign, financial power
  - Demise of the “favourite sons” ....state specific candidates...broker convention
  - Understanding rules and using process.....importance of “momentum”

The Winner: Candidate who masters “new rules”  
..... and echoes what voter wants to hear

# Carter Wins nomination

- Momentum strategy..9 month campaign, focused on rural states
  - “Peanuts Brigade” ...army of volunteers , small donations
  - Builds delegate count in early rural states primaries
- Totally focused
  - Hands business over to brother “Billy”
  - No distractions, relentless drive, faith in inevitable success
- Consistent : Competence, honesty, faith, security, peace
  - Avoids controversial issues (Compulsory integration, Abortion)

# Republican Nomination: Reagan Challenge

Ronald Reagan 1976  
Governor California 1967-1975



Gerald Ford  
(unelected President 1975-1976)



Reagan challenge

- .... ex Goldwater supporter
- ... Anti government
- .... "Welfare Queen" speech

RR Loses nomination by 1%

- ....discredits Ford
- ....inspirational speaker

Ford "wins"

- ....Leadership questioned
- ...Reagan" : alternative "Populist"/champion of Right

# The 1976 Election

...televised debate...Ford "gaffe" USSR & East Europe

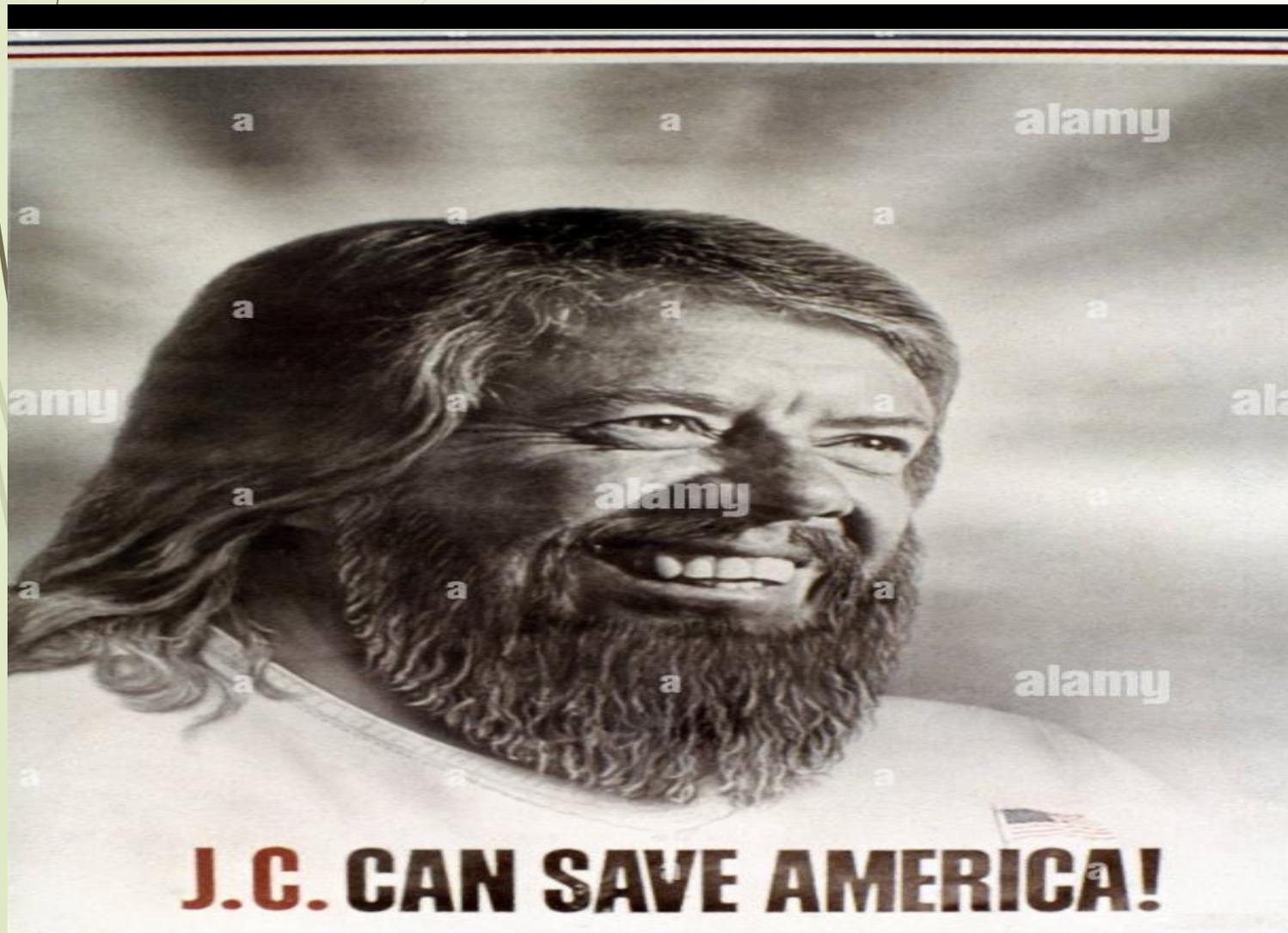


Carter campaign...meet the people  
Ford: "Rose Garden Strategy"... act Presidential



# Jimmy Carter as Jesus

## Jimmy as “Jesus” campaign ad



Carter surges in polls after Ford 2<sup>nd</sup> debate

Carter agrees to Playboy interview  
...accused of being “too pure”  
...confesses imperfections and guilt  
“of lust in the heart”  
..not qualified to judge sins of others

Evangelical vote collapses  
..lead shrinks  
....Carter....”holy Joe!”

Republican response

**FORD** for President

President Ford '76

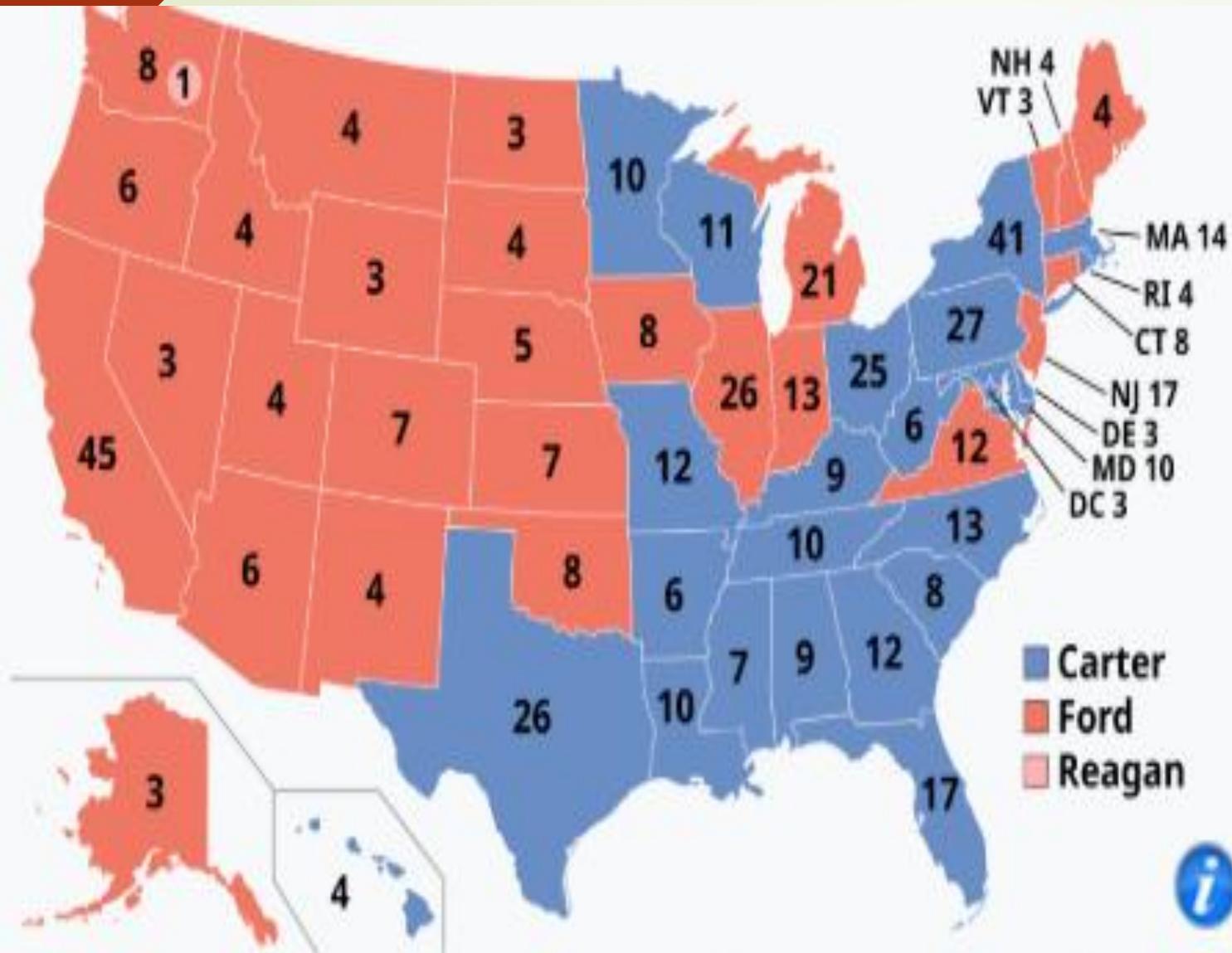


**Elephants Eat Peanuts**

# Everyone trying to understand Americans



# 1976 Presidential Election



Carter wins 50% vote vs 48% Ford..297 vs 240 electoral college

First candidate from deep South since civil war

Never travelled outside USA  
...deep interest in Peace  
...knowledge of domestic issues

Zero national experience  
...dealing with opposition  
...convinced in rightness &



# Changing America

# Jimmy and Rosalyn...walk down Pennsylvania Avenue



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Credit: Newsday LLC

1127405868

# “Peanut float” at Inauguration

..entire population of Plains Georgia arrive via special train



gettyimages®  
Credit: Bettmann

# The new President



# Rosalyn Carter (1927-2023)



Born Plains Georgia  
Family friends with Jimmy  
..”we were poor, but so was  
Everyone else, so we didn’t notice

Attends college ...notices Jimmy  
In navy uniform...smitten

Abandons career for family  
..4 children/ run family business  
...mental health proponent as  
Governor’s wife  
...indifferent to fashion. Reuse clothes

White house...attends cabinet  
Meetings, overseas envoy

Advocates for mental health  
And Equal Rights Amendment

# Rosalyn chairing Mental Health Committee

...succeeds in getting national programme approved in Congress

...considered "most powerful woman in world"



# Jimmy Carter...on taking office

“I have one life and one chance to make it count for something... My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference.”

“The test of a government is not how popular it is with the powerful and privileged few but how honestly and fairly it deals with the many who must depend on it.”

“All I want is the same thing you want. To have a nation with a government that is as good and honest and decent and competent and compassionate and as filled with love as are the American people.”

The politics of “virtue”

# Politics of inclusivity



# Carter... breaking barriers

## ..Protestant invites Pope in the White House



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Credit: Bettmann

LGBT Community...first to recognise humanity of others  
...ends discrimination for housing, immigration  
....permits first gay rights meeting in White House



# “Southern Mafia”: “Hamilton Jordan (1944-2008)”

Hamilton Jordan 1976



Carter campaign manager  
Appointed Chief of Staff age 32

Capable organiser, communicator

Considered “party animal”  
....disco nights/ press coverage  
....cocaine accusations  
...affairs. Loose life style

Carter “godly” image damaged  
....toleration of wild antics

Ill fitted to deal with seasoned  
Politicians and serious politicians

# Bert Lance 1931-2013)



Georgia banker &  
Business man

Works on Carter campaign  
...promoted to Director OMB  
..."if it ain't broke, don't fix it"

Prays each morning with Carter

Implicated on banking  
Corruption charges. Leaves  
Office within year. Acquitted

Involved in corruption charges  
1980s...Arab financiers

# Hostage Crisis

- Khomeini demands Shah returned to Iran/ Carter refuses
- Shah drifts around globe
  - Dying from cancer
  - Seeks treatment in US
  - Carter rejects at first, then relents on humanitarian grounds
- Revolutionary Guards decide to act and create crisis

Revolutionary Guards/ students invade US embassy  
...wildly popular within Iran...unifies revolution  
... Khomeini approves action...vs “Great Satan”



# 61 embassy staff hostages ...humiliated..."US can't do a thing!"



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Credit: Bettmann



# US Response

- Carter seizes Iran asset, blocks trade
  - Rejects war option....imposes financial sanctions
  - Hostages subject to torture/ mock executions
  - Carter ...decides to act
- 

Operation "Eagle Claw" April 1980  
...disaster, helicopters crash, raid aborted  
...hostages dispersed across Iran



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Credit: Rolls Press/Popperfoto

# Hostage Crisis impact on US



National trauma

...24 hour media coverage  
...”bomb bomb bomb Iran”  
...sense of helplessness/rage

Impact on Carter

...paralyzed/ “hostage” to crisis  
...committed to saving lives  
...seen as feeble/ inept by public

Secret negotiations

...Algeria intermediary

Republicans/Reagan

.....Carter weak & inept  
.....”Make America Great Again”

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Credit: Morton Broffman



# The Reckoning: election of 1980

# Carter re-election: “Dead man walking”

- Economic “Stagflation”: Unemployment 8%, Inflation 14%, Interest rates 20%
- National humiliation ....hostage crisis/ oil shortages
- Rising crime rates & drug use
- Carter determines to keep doing the “right thing”. Confident long run success
  - Micro management hostage crisis
  - Steadfast anti inflation message
  - Abandons deficit reduction....resumes arms build up vs USSR
  - Message to Americans “do more with less”

Carter confident in American people and will of God

And looming over Carter...Ronald Reagan  
“Making America Great Again”...soaring up opinion polls



And then.....the “Killer Rabbit”

# The “Killer Rabbit” incident

Carter Fishing April 1979



“Attacked” by rabbit fleeing  
Predator.....tells staff about  
Rabbit “hissing menacingly teeth  
Flashing”...photos released to press

## The Suspect



# Rabbit becomes emblem of President

WASHINGTON POST 8/30/79

## Bunny Goes Bugs Rabbit Attacks President

By Brooks Jackson  
Associated Press

A "killer rabbit" attacked President Carter on a recent trip to Plains, Ga., penetrating Secret Service security and forcing the chief executive to beat back the beast with a canoe paddle.

The rabbit, which the president later guessed was fleeing in panic from some predator, swam toward a canoe from which Carter was fishing in a pond. It was hissing menacingly, its teeth flashing and nostrils flared, and making straight for the president, he said.

Carter was not injured, and reports are unclear about what became of the banzal bunny. But, fortunately for Carter's credibility, a White House staff photographer made a picture of the attack and the president's successful self-defense.

It was fortunate because some of the president's closest staff members refused to believe the story of the aquatic attack rabbit when Carter related it to them later. Their skepticism arose despite Carter's strong and oft-repeated promises never to lie.

Carter, stung by this skepticism from his inner circle, ordered up a print of the photograph to offer as proof. But even this was not good enough at first.

"You could see him in the canoe with his paddle raised, and you could see something in the water," the doubter said. "But you couldn't tell what it was. It could have been anything."

So Carter ordered an enlargement made. "It was a rabbit, all right," said the staff member after seeing the blown-up photo.

No news photographers were allowed within camera range of Carter on the fishing trip April 20. The White House withheld pictures of the fishing trip and refused yesterday to make available pictures of the encounter with the rabbit.

"There are just certain stories about the president that must forever remain shrouded in mystery," spokesman Rex Granum said.

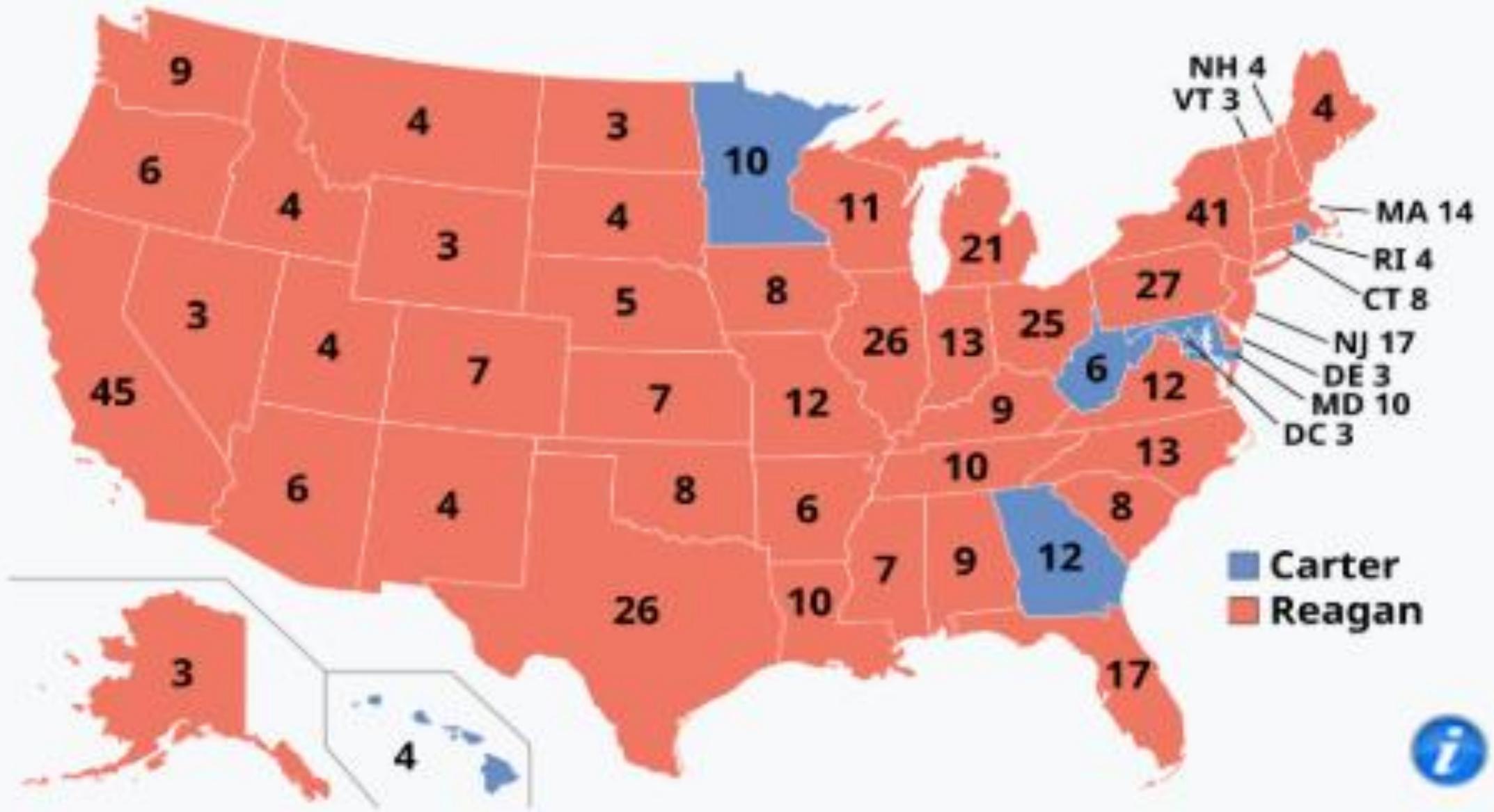
# PAWS



By William Coulter for The Washington Post

# 1980 Election

...Reagan triumphant, Carter humiliated





# Carter: the epilogue

# Post Presidential life of Jimmy Carter

Leaves Presidency feeling “betrayed by people”, Rosalyn depressed, bankrupt

- ▶ Sustained by Faith: commits future life to “good works”
  - ▶ Runs business and recovers loss
  - ▶ Writes memoirs, books of poetry..speaking tours around globe
  - ▶ Establishes “Carter Centre”...global peace keeping non profit
  - ▶ Supports “Habit for Humanity”.....construction projects for the poor across world
- ▶ Wins Nobel Peace Prize 2002 (supported by Egypt, South Africa)

Considered a failed President, the greatest ex-President

# Carter at work for “Habit for Humanity” ...first to work, last to leave



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Credit: Photo Researchers

# Rosalyn joins in 2003



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Credit: Erik S. Lesser



“I have one life and one chance to make it count for something ... My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference.”



# Jimmy Carter “In quiet times”

*In quiet times, a candle glows,  
Reflections dance in amber light,  
A humble heart where true love flows,  
Moments of joy ignite the night.*

*Reflections dance in amber light,  
The stillness speaks of days gone by,  
Moments of joy ignite the night,  
In memories, hope learns to fly.*

*The stillness speaks of days gone by,  
A humble heart where true love flows,  
In memories, hope learns to fly,  
In quiet times, a candle glows.*

# Jimmy Carter RIP 2024

STAR TRIBUNE CagleCartoons.com  
STK

EC338168

ONE LAST HabITaT, For uS ALL.



# US and China

Deng Xiaoping (1904- 1997) in 1979



US seeks to capitalise on  
USSR/ China split

China “Cultural Revolution”  
...purists vs modernisers

Den Xiaoping  
...dominant leader 1978  
...goal restore Chinese power  
...replace USSR in Vietnam

US supports China vs USSR  
....Vietnam USSR client  
....Accepts Khmer Rouge control  
of Cambodia

# Khmer Rouge rule of Cambodia 1975-1978

Deng Xiao Ping and Pol Pot (Khmer Rouge “Dear Leader”)...campaign of “purification”

33% Cambodians killed (1.5m)  
...US policy “non intervention”  
..China support



# Vietnam Wars 1978-1979



Khmer Rouge “mistake” purify  
Cambodia of Vietnamese  
.....30,000 killed

Vietnamese respond  
...invade Cambodia  
...Khmer Rouge defeated  
...Cambodia Vietnam “puppet”

Chinese seek to “educate” Vietn  
400,000 Chinese invade Vietnar  
1 month war...then withdraw  
.....100,000 killed

US oppose Vietnamese invasio  
Of Cambodia...and no commer  
China invasion of Vietnam

# The Boat People

Vietnamese “Boat People”...the lucky ones



Vietnamese “purify nation”  
...target middle class/ “gays”  
....minorities

Mass exodus by small boats  
....2m flee Vietnam  
....250,000 killed by starvation  
and pirates

# Impact Boat People (1978-1990)

US merchant ship rescuing "boat people"



Carter defers to United Nations  
....global solution  
....accepts US responsibility

United Nations passes  
"Law of Orderly Transition"  
...resettlement camps across A  
...humane activity

Carter accepts 800,000 to US

Fuels anti immigration in US  
...Reagan...."invasion"

# US and USSR

- Nuclear Arms reduction talks
  - SALT 1 Agreement capping nuclear missiles. USSR “catch up” agreed
  - SALT 2 Talks ongoing....reduction in nuclear weapons
- Proxy Wars Africa ongoing, South America, Asia
- USSR economy stagnating
  - arms build up draining productive economy
  - Unrest Eastern Europe: Poland
  - Conservative Leadership: Brezhnev...ailing, risk averse

Carter seeks to extend détente: Vance vs Brezhnev (leverage “human rights”....pope to Poland....unrest in East expands

# Summit meetings Carter and Detente



# SALT 2 “Agreed” Carter/ Brezhnev

Signing SALT 2 Agreement June 1979...Senate to ratify



# USSR invasion Afghanistan December 1979

Solution : Invasion



Absolute monarchy till 1963  
Constitutional monarchy 1963-1973..pro Soviet coup 1973

Modernisation program 1971-78  
....secular/ brutal government  
...women's rights  
...USSR ally/ financial/ tech support

Fundamentalist revolt 1978  
...Soviet leaders killed  
...Islamic Republic declared

USSR dilemma dilemma  
....failed experiment/ USA inspired  
....threat revolt expands to Muslim  
....blame US for fundamentalists

# Impact Afghanistan invasion

Saudi's on holiday in England. Westernized?  
Osama Bin Laden



SALT 2 abandoned/ arms race renewed  
...Carter authorises military build up

Brezinski. Argues for confrontation & wins: .... "enemy my enemy my friend"  
....US supplies weapons...air defence  
....USSR long unwinnable war

New force Islamic "Fundamentalism"  
....Oil wealth fuelled Saudi youth have c  
....US air defence weapons aid stops Ru  
.....evidence success vs secular powers

Parallel anti secular revolution Iran  
....US presented new enemy