

Monday, April 1st 2019

Dear Chris,

As my taxi from Miami airport makes its way towards the city, a curtain of rain suddenly drapes all around us; as it lightens, the newly constructed vista of steel and glass of downtown Miami rises before me. Gone are the flowers and the lush, green vegetation of 'Pasqua Florida' ('The Feast of Flowers') - so named by the Spanish subjugator, Ponce de Leon, as he landed on the peninsula during Easter of 1513. What remains of Spanish rule are the red diagonal lines of the standard of Castile, which are now emblazoned on Florida's state flag.

Upon my arrival in downtown the rain becomes a hushed vapour and the sound of falling water is replaced by Spanish. My eyes are treated to welcoming signs of food from all parts of the southern Americas; from Colombia to Peru and beyond. Another addition is that there are European supercars at every turn, slowly circling the skyscrapers. My senses beguile me...am I in a Latin Dubai!??? This is a dramatic change from my last visit nearly a decade ago; and yet there still exists a soft separation, a divide between ethnic Floridians and their demarcated neighbourhoods.

Dramatic real estate changes of the last decade are matched by the political tremor of Amendment 4, which was passed in November 2018. This law restores voting rights to convicted felons and in Florida there are 1.6m of these. That represents a 10% increase in the voting population, of which a quarter are black. Just for reference the margin of victory in Presidential elections since 2000 has been a few hundred

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thousand votes in either direction with 2016 being particularly tight. This is no margin at all with so many votes now coming 'on line'. This influx of voters should convincingly tilt the state away from the Republicans.

In 1830 President Andrew Jackson did the opposite of Amendment 4. He passed the Indian Removal Act, which deprived the native tribes of the right of owning land, and demanded the forced removal of the indigenous population. Jackson's actions promoted the establishment of planters and slavery that dominated the state. 'Old Hickory' also happens to be the hero of President Trump whose portrait he has placed in the Oval Office.

With La Florida now 'in play', any Democrat has a clear opportunity to win the state and the Presidential election in 2020.

The Seminoles of Florida, a mixture of Creek Indians and runaway slaves fought 2 wars with Andrew Jackson and lost both. The result was 'white settlor' dominance for a century and a half. This restoration of voting rights may set the foundation for a new dominance - overturning the spectre of Andrew Jackson and his heirs.

See you tomorrow - Mustafa