

Yes, Things Have Been This Bad Before; In Fact, They've Been Far Worse

It's closing in on a week before an American election. For some people means that everything absolutely must be about nothing but that election, with hyperbole.

The president of the United States is fear-mongering over the approach of a convoy of Latin American immigrants to get his "base" to the polls.

His Democratic opponents are pretending that every Republican voter is a potential mail-bomber, for the same purpose.

As I write this, a mass shooting at a synagogue in Pennsylvania doesn't seem to lend itself well to the election narrative yet. Democrats are already trying to make it about guns. Republicans note that the shooter apparently disliked Trump for being "too pro-Israel." I'm sure the competing election-related talking points will jell before Election Day.

Things seem pretty bad, don't they? In fact, in a Facebook political conversation the other day a loved one somberly informed me that "things have never been this bad."

Whoa. Just one minute there. Never?

Even focusing on the three aforementioned items, that's not the case. Migrant caravans have been running since at least 2010, "suspicious packages" have been a weekly occurrence since the 2001 anthrax scare, and mass shootings at churches (and schools, and workplaces, etc.) have been above-the-fold news items since Columbine.

But let's look back a little and remember how bad it's been before.

Does the date September 11, 2001 ring any bells?

How about the Los Angeles riots of 1992 (or the Watts Rebellion of 1965)?

The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968, followed by the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy on June 5, 1968 and preceded by the assassinations of Malcolm X on February 21, 1965 and John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963?

Remember Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941)?

Or Black Friday (October 29, 1929)?

Or the whole period from April 12, 1861 to May 9, 1865 (and after)?

It's a long, long way downhill from where we're at, and we've been much, much further down that slope before. More violent. More fearful. More bigoted. Definitely poorer.

The November 6 election won't likely be remembered as any kind of major turning point in history. It's not "the most important election" of the last two, let alone of our lifetimes or our country's.

Yes, things will almost certainly get a little worse, whichever party "wins" and no matter how resoundingly, because that's the direction we were already headed in and not many Americans seem inclined to change direction back toward freedom (if they were, Libertarians would run the election table; the polls indicate no such trend).

Yes, the future looks pretty grim in general. Economic depression, rampant political violence, even open civil war aren't something we're magically immune to.

But neither are those things lurking right around the corner if you vote "wrong" (or don't vote at all) on November 6.