



Jerry Brown Keeps Hangin' Round

BY FRED GARDNER ON JANUARY 29, 2021

The New York Times welcomed the new president Sunday with a piece called “What Jerry Brown Could Teach Joe Biden.” An odd accompanying graphic showed Jerry Brown himself seeking guidance from The Great Consultant on high. [Jerry is a first cousin of Jeff Brown, the Hallinan hater described above.]

Journalist Shane Goldmacher attributes Brown’s election in 2010 to a savvy campaign strategy, which involved avoiding over-exposure: “He let Meg Whitman, his billionaire Republican rival, air millions of dollars of unanswered television ads that summer, only to emerge that fall, quite counterintuitively, as a fresh face for voters sick of the deluge.”

I wonder if Shane Goldmacher was in California in the fall of 2010. As of September 10, Meg Whitman was well on her way to becoming governor. (I was covering the medical marijuana movement. Whitman’s fellow Republican, Los Angeles District Attorney Steve Cooley was poised to become attorney general. She was strongly anti-union, he wanted to outlaw medical marijuana dispensaries. They were both ahead in the polls, Whitman very comfortably so.) Whitman was cruising along when Gloria Allred called a press conference to introduce Nicky Diaz Santillan, an undocumented immigrant who had been employed by the Whitmans as a housekeeper and nanny from 2000 through 2009. Meg Whitman had fired her at the outset of her campaign, telling Diaz, “You don’t know me and I don’t know you.” How cold can you get? Doesn’t the nanny raise the kids when mommy is at the office?

After the press conference, things got worse for Whitman. She claimed that she hadn’t known about Diaz’s immigration status. But Allred produced letters from the Social Security Administration notifying the Whitmans that Diaz’s supposed Social Security number belonged to someone else. Whitman next said the letters from the government had never been received. But Allred had a copy of one on which Whitman’s husband had written a comment. The well-publicized episode exposed not just Whitman’s personal disloyalty, miserliness, and cruelty, but her executive stupidity. When she decided to run for governor, instead of telling Diaz to get lost, Meg Whitman could have hired a good immigration lawyer to straighten out her status, and she could have given her ample severance pay to make ends meet until she could find another employer. But no...

It was thanks to Gloria Allred that Meg Whitman's lead in the polls dissolved and California again wound up with Jerry Brown — no friend of the working class, but not a Whitman-type ogre — in 2010.

And Brown is certainly not a moron. Whitman, after blowing \$144 million of her own money on her run for governor, became the CEO of Hewlett-Packard and promptly made the news for spending \$11 billion on a British software company that wasn't worth 11 cents. Jerry Brown owed his margin of victory entirely to Nicky Diaz and her lawyer, Gloria Allred. Kamala Harris owed hers to those two women and to the medical marijuana movement — especially California NORML for their online get-out-the-vote drive.