

circumstances, underlying objective, and Donald Trump

In reading about this crazy primary season circus, I came across a profile of Al Sharpton on Politico. The subject was Sharpton's take, as a fixture of New York politics for decades, on the Donald Trump phenomenon. And what he said about what motivates Trump is instructive in terms of the concept of underlying objective, which is central to the approach to acting that I teach:

*And that's when he gets to his keenest observation – the best assessment of Trump's deepest motivations I've yet heard, and one that Beltway pundits who don't understand the tangled psychological geography of the five boroughs miss: Trump may have been born with millions and erected huge buildings that bear his name, but he still feels the resentment of a **gaudy, new-money outsider who has decided to burn down a Yankee establishment that always viewed him as a garish, grasping joke.***

"Donald Trump was a Queens guy," says Sharpton, who hails from Brooklyn's Brownsville, the city's toughest neighborhood, a collection of housing projects jammed hard between Queens and the Jamaica Bay swamps – and the scene of an all-out crack war in the 1980s and '90s.

"His father was a successful real estate guy, but they were Queens guys. They were outer borough

*[and] had to break into the big Manhattan aristocracy. He was an outsider – rich, but an outsider. He was not part of the Manhattan elite. **So, he always had this outsider feeling – us against them.** So, in many ways, when I read people talk about, 'Well, do you have a billionaire as a populist?' **He does feel like he's one of the guys who was shut out.**"*

So, in terms of underlying objective, which is a way of thinking about objective that unites the character's long-

term plot goals with his moment-to-moment needs, we can see that Trump needs respect as an elite American , as a man among men. And we can also see how this need arises from the defining **circumstance** of his youth: that his father and himself were shut out of the winner's circle in Manhattan social life. So then it becomes incumbent on the actor to do the imaginative work of exploring what that condition of being shut out actually looked like, how it was directly experienced in that past of the character, so that it becomes particularized and lives in the body of the actor.

See also the Islamic State and acting and rethinking "motivation" with Sebastian Junger and Rachel Maddow.