



commentary

by Frank Perez

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What Does Donald Trump's Victory Mean?

"The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum."—Noam Chomsky

It's been two weeks since we all woke up in the Twilight Zone. For many, the shock and horror of Trump's victory has turned into anger and resolve. Yet questions persist. As with any tragedy, the first question is why.

How could over 60,000,000 people vote for a man who is the antithesis of all that is decent and good in humanity?

Did it matter to his voters that he is a greedy, racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic bigot? That he has an utter disregard for the Constitution and democratic principles? Apparently not.

And what of the liberal reaction to his victory? Should the fact that bigotry was not a deal-breaker for half the country be so surprising? It certainly didn't come as a shock to the African-American community.

If Trump voters wanted to "drain the swamp," why were so many republican incumbents re-elected?

Is Trump really as bad as he portrayed himself in the campaign?

He has already significantly backpedaled on his chief campaign promises (the wall, the Muslim ban, repealing Obamacare, prosecuting Hillary Clinton), but he has already appointed an avowed white supremacist as his top advisor and the rest of his appointments consist mostly of career politicians and lobbyists. So much for "draining the swamp."

Does Trump believe his own rhetoric? Does he have any core beliefs?

Everything in Trump's life and career indicates the only core belief he has is that greed is good. He is a caricature of the clichéd capitalist pig who will screw over anyone in his insatiable quest for greater wealth.

What a Trump / Pence Administration Means for LGBT+ People

Many in the LGBT+ community felt as though a vote for Trump/Pence was a vote against them. They took it personally, and with good reason.

The President of the Log Cabin Republicans admitted the 2016 GOP platform is "the most anti-LGBTQ platform in history." If Trump has no core beliefs regarding LGBT+ issues, Mike Pence and his fellow republicans do, and they are terrifying.

As scary as the republican platform is, it doesn't go far enough for Vice President-elect Pence. As Governor

of Indiana, Pence signed a bill in 2013 that would put gay couples in jail for applying for a marriage license. He is also a big believer in conversion therapy (pray the gay away). And he is also an enthusiastic supporter of "Religious Freedom" laws that legalize discrimination.

Pence is an Evangelical Christian and believes that anything LGBT+ is evil. HIV funding? Evil. Hate crimes legislation? Evil. Being transgender? Evil. Non-discrimination protections? Evil. Marriage equality? Very evil.

So when half the country votes for a ticket and a party that hates LGBT+ folk, does that also mean these voters hate us? Was the GOP sweep an indication of widespread homophobia?

A backlash against marriage equality, transgender visibility, and shifting attitudes on the subject of queerness certainly played a role. But it was more than that. Racism and misogyny were also factors. We've always known these two social ills have persisted but many were surprised that 43% of women voters went with Trump. This reveals to us, as does the GOP's solid base in the South (the poorest, unhealthiest, and most uneducated region in the country), that voters are perfectly willing to vote against their own self-interests if they are frustrated enough.

So what are they frustrated about? Two things. First, the loss of an idealized, perfectly white, very straight, patriarchal Pleasantville-esque past that never actually existed. Second, the establishment; namely, gridlock in Congress and the two party monopoly on the electoral system. Although they are galaxies apart ideologically, both Trump and Sanders tapped into this vast frustration.

Putting it in Perspective

This frustration is nothing new. Senator Huey Long, who was right about everything, once described Congress as a restaurant, "They've got a set of Republican waiters on one side and a set of Democratic waiters on the other side, but no matter which set of waiters brings you the dish, the legislative grub is all prepared in the same Wall Street kitchen."

These corporate fat-cats are greedier than you could possibly imagine. Wealth disparities between the rich and poor are wider in the U.S. than

any other industrialized nation. For example, the 400 richest individuals in the U.S. own as much wealth as every African-American household in the country combined with one-third of the Latina/o population.

In its analysis of historical trends regarding income inequality, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has concluded, "The concentration of income at the very top of the distribution rose to levels last seen more than 80 years ago (during the "Roaring Twenties"). The Great Depression began with the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The republicans controlled both houses of Congress and the White House at that time.

The concentration of wealth is like a collapsing star that has become a super-massive black hole. The concentration of wealth is so dense that everything within its orbit, especially the middle-class, is being sucked into oblivion. Astronomers talk of black holes eating planets, stars, and even other black holes. And with each feasting binge the black hole gets larger, stronger, and hungrier. And so it is with our corporate overlords. These greedy assholes have more money than they could possibly spend in a dozen lifetimes, but it's not enough. They want more.

Which leads us to:

The Horrific Consequences

Many are saying the Trump victory was an anti-establishment vote. Okay, fine. But now we all have to face the dire consequences. If history is any indication, it's going to get worse before it gets better.

The last time the Republicans controlled the Senate, the House, and the White House was 2005—2007. Their policies resulted in housing crisis / financial meltdown of 2008, the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression in 1929. It bears repeating, the republicans controlled the Senate, the House, and the White House then too.

And now they will have a chance to screw things up again. Under a GOP controlled Congress and a Trump White House, you can bet on the following:

Wall Street will have carte blanche to continue its systematic rape of the middle class.

A deregulation bonanza will effectively end consumer protections on everything from safe food and clean drinking water to prescription drug prices.

You can say goodbye to Frank-Dodd banking reforms. The greedy pig bankers will no longer be held in check.

Minimum Wage increase? Forget about it. People who work a 40 hour week at the minimum wage will continue to live below the national poverty level. And don't forget, the GOP would like to eliminate the minimum wage

altogether.

College tuition will skyrocket. Millions will lose their health insurance.

Women's health will be brushed off the table. Plans are already underway to stop funding Planned Parenthood. That means more breast and cervical cancer, and more abortions.

Social Security? Medicare? Medicaid? EBT cards? Housing assistance? Say goodbye to all that too. Or at the very least, say hello to a severe reduction in benefits. Privatization of these services is the stated agenda of the GOP.

The Affordable Healthcare Act? Gone. Welcome back exclusionary pre-existing conditions. Birth control? Nope. Higher insurance premiums are guaranteed.

LGBT+ rights? Oh, hell no. The "Christian" majority has spoken and if they have their way, we'll all be back in the closet or conversion camps or jail. Every advance the LGBT+ community has made in recent years is in danger of being rolled back.

Hate crimes will spike. The Southern Poverty Law Center has already received more reports of hate crimes since the election than they normally receive in a year.

The Supreme Court will likely be packed with Neanderthals that make Antonin Scalia look reasonable. Citizens United will stand but Roe V. Wade, the Voting Rights Act, DOMA, Windsor V. U.S. along with a host of other landmark decisions could very well be reversed.

The environment is f**ked. Climate change is a hoax according to the republicans. Deepwater Horizon and the BP oil spill? You can count on more of those. And the oil pipeline the Native Americans are so pissed off about up in North Dakota? Hell, that's just the beginning. Republican leaders chant "Drill, baby, drill!" when they masturbate. Clean, renewable energy? Not with these assholes.

Labor rights? Nope. Unions are evil and hinder profits. Safe working conditions and child labor laws were all opposed by the Republican Party.

Our reputation around the globe is already worse now than when Bu\$h & Co. broke the world.

But I suppose none of that will matter when that petty, childish idiot has a temper-tantrum and starts a nuclear war.

If all that doesn't scare the crap out of you, consider the potential make-up of President Trump's cabinet: Bobby Jindal as Secretary of Health and Human Services, Newt Gingrich as Secretary of State, Ben Carson as Secretary of Education, Rudy Giuliani as Attorney General, Joe Arpaio as Secretary of Homeland Security, and Sarah Palin Secretary of the Interior. The horror. The horror.

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And if you are not a white, Straight, Christian male, well f**k you. You will just have to get used to being a second class citizen again.

But you had your protest vote. Good for you. Congratulations. The 1% thanks you.

The Supreme Irony of it All

The vast majority of Trump voters will claim they voted with their wallets, that economic issues, not bigotry, motivated them. This claim may be partially true but it ignores that fact that a vote can be cast for more than one reason. The vast majority of bigots sincerely believe they are not prejudiced.

I believe racism, misogyny, homophobia, and Islamophobia played a larger role than Trump voters want to admit, but even if we grant them the benefit of the doubt (and it admittedly is a big if) and assume they voted out of economic frustration, their vote still doesn't make any sense.

On the campaign trail, Trump said he was going to "drain the swamp" of Washington. He even bragged about his experience buying political influence and claimed that sin better qualified him to clean up Washington. Marketing himself as an outsider, he simultaneously claimed an esoteric knowledge of the system as an insider. This inconsistency was lost on his voters, who gladly suspended reality because they were so excited that someone was finally saying the awful things about brown people they had been thinking all along but too embarrassed to say.

But there is more. Consider these other ironies:

Rural, small-town America, suffering economically under the policies of the oligarchy run by Wall Street voted for a big city New York billionaire. Trump is the embodiment of the very greed his supporters thought they were voting against. The billionaires are hurting us, so let's vote for a billionaire.

Four in five Evangelical Christians (who, by the way, constituted 25% of voters in the election) voted for Trump, the ultimate personification of the seven deadly sins, a man who knows so little of the Bible he pronounces I\ Corinthians "two Corinthians." Then again, the Bible does condone racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and homophobia—all traits that come naturally to Trump, despite his ignorance of their basis in the Bible.

Incomprehensibly, 42% of women voters voted for Trump, a man who brags and jokes about sexual assault and thinks women who have abortions should be punished, a man who calls women he finds unattractive nasty and fat and dogs, a man who makes creepy jokes about being turned on by his own daughter. Apparently their hatred of

Hillary was so great a lot of women felt justified in voting for an alleged child rapist.

Working people believed Trump's promise to protect their jobs. Yet, over the last 30 years, Trump has been involved in no less than 3,500 lawsuits regarding his refusal to pay contractors and employees. And according to *USA Today*, Trump's companies have been cited 24 times since 2005 for violating the Fair Labor Standards Act. At present, there are over 200 liens against Trump filed by contractors and workers who have the audacity to expect payment for their work.

Pioneering horror novelist H.P. Lovecraft was right when he observed, "From even the greatest of horrors irony is seldom absent."

Follow the Money

One of the many unanswered questions of the campaign is why Donald Trump refused to disclose his tax returns. He was, and still is, obviously hiding something.

During the campaign, Trump said that if he won, his business interests would be placed in a blind trust. That sounded reasonable until he announced his three oldest children would administer the blind trust, thereby making it not so blind. And red flags began waving furiously when Trump announced his children would play a key role on the transition team. Cue the raised eyebrows.

During the last 18 months, Trump spent more than \$8 million in campaign money on his own companies. Nothing in Trump's life—a life dedicated to the shallow, materialistic accumulation of wealth—indicates his lifestyle of greedy selfishness will magically go away now that he has won the Presidency. Rather, he is now in a position to use and manipulate his office to amass even greater, more obscene profits.

And don't hold your breath thinking Trump, "the anti-establishment reformer," will block the republican controlled Congress from allowing its corporate hog owners / capitalist pigs from stampeding toward the government trough. Trump has already started sucking at the governmental sugar-tit.

The War on Science and Objective Reality

If Donald Trump is an offense to taste and decency, Mike Pence is an offense to science and intelligence. Vice President elect Pence is the exemplification of the Republican Party's rejection of science.

According to Pence and the GOP, modern science is a complex web of lies, a hellish conspiracy espoused by Satan and his followers.

Evolution, the entire basis of modern biology and medicine, is a liberal lie.

The earth is only 6,000 years old. Climate change is a hoax.

Stem cell research is tantamount to murder.

Cigarettes do not cause cancer.

LGBT+ people can turn straight if they just pray hard enough.

Critical thinking is evil.

Open-mindedness amounts to a lack of faith.

The Electoral College

If there is a glimmer of hope in the Trump / Pence victory, it may be that it galvanizes the nation to finally scrap the arcane Electoral College system.

Over 200 years ago, the founding fathers crafted the Electoral College for two reasons. First, they wanted to balance the power disparity between smaller and larger states. Secondly, simply put, they didn't trust the general population to vote. And remember, the voting population consisted only of some white males. Women and African-Americans would have to wait a long, long time for the right to vote.

The founders feared that a misanthropic charlatan (someone like Trump) might manipulate the ignorant masses and win election only to become a tyrant. Alexander Hamilton attempted to justify the Electoral College in *The Federalist Papers*: "A small number of persons, selected by their fellow-citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations. It was also peculiarly desirable to afford as little opportunity as possible to tumult and disorder."

Most historians, on both sides of the aisle, agree that the founders would be shocked to see how the Electoral College functions today. It affords disproportionate power to "swing states." It encourages a two-party system, a system George Washington warned against. And it violates the essential spirit of democracy by allowing the loser of the popular vote to win the election.

This scenario has happened five times—in 1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, and 2016. In each of these years, the winner of the popular vote was denied the Presidency.

Eliminating the Electoral College would require a Constitutional Amendment—a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate and then three-fourths (38) of the states. It's been tried before. In 1934, such a vote failed by two votes in the Senate. Another vote in 1979 also fell short in the Senate.

Since Bu\$h & Co. were appointed in 2000, a nationwide, state-based effort was begun called "The National Popular Vote." This initiative seeks to eradicate the effects of the Electoral College without having to jump over the huge obstacle of passing a Constitutional Amendment. In effect, the aim is to convince state legislatures to pass legislation that requires its electors to

vote for the candidate who wins the nation-wide popular vote. So far, ten states and the District of Columbia have signed on for a total of 165 electoral votes.

The Problem with Bombs

The extent of the fallout of the Trump / Pence administration remains to be seen. In the meantime, those of us who opposed Trump / Pence are still processing our emotions.

We are dumbfounded and stupefied that so many people voted for such a despicable human being—a man who brags about sexual assault, who makes fun of the physically disabled, who enjoys the support of the KKK and the American Nazi Party. We are truly perplexed that so many people could vote for such an arrogant, selfish man. Even many republicans concede he is a thoroughly disgusting human being. We want our President to be a good person and we are utterly bamboozled that anyone could vote for such a contemptible piece of sh*t.

Does it mean Trump / Pence voters condone racism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia, ignorance, and general bigotry? Unfortunately, the answer in more cases than we thought possible is yes. That makes thinking people sad.

Even if some Trump / Pence voters are not racist or homophobic or sexist, their vote clearly demonstrates the disturbing truth that racism, homophobia, and sexism are not deal breakers for them.

Many Trump / Pence voters I have spoken with have said these well-known character flaws were not as important to them as sending a message. One person told me, "We wanted to lob a bomb at the establishment."

I replied by observing that the problem with bombs is that they kill people. Trump voters have tossed their "bomb." It's too bad so much of the shrapnel from that bomb is going to wound the very ones that tossed it.

So what does Trump's victory mean? It means a lot of people are stupid.

I Told You So

Bernie Sanders supporters are quick to point out, "I told you so."

Indeed they did. They were right all along when they said Hillary could not beat Trump in the general election. But could Bernie have done better? The polls seem to suggest so. But the polls were wrong about Hillary so who knows?

The Bernie supporters have a valid point when they argue the system is broken and that the two-party system's stranglehold on the election process is anti-democratic. And they are correct to distrust the media. Currently, five

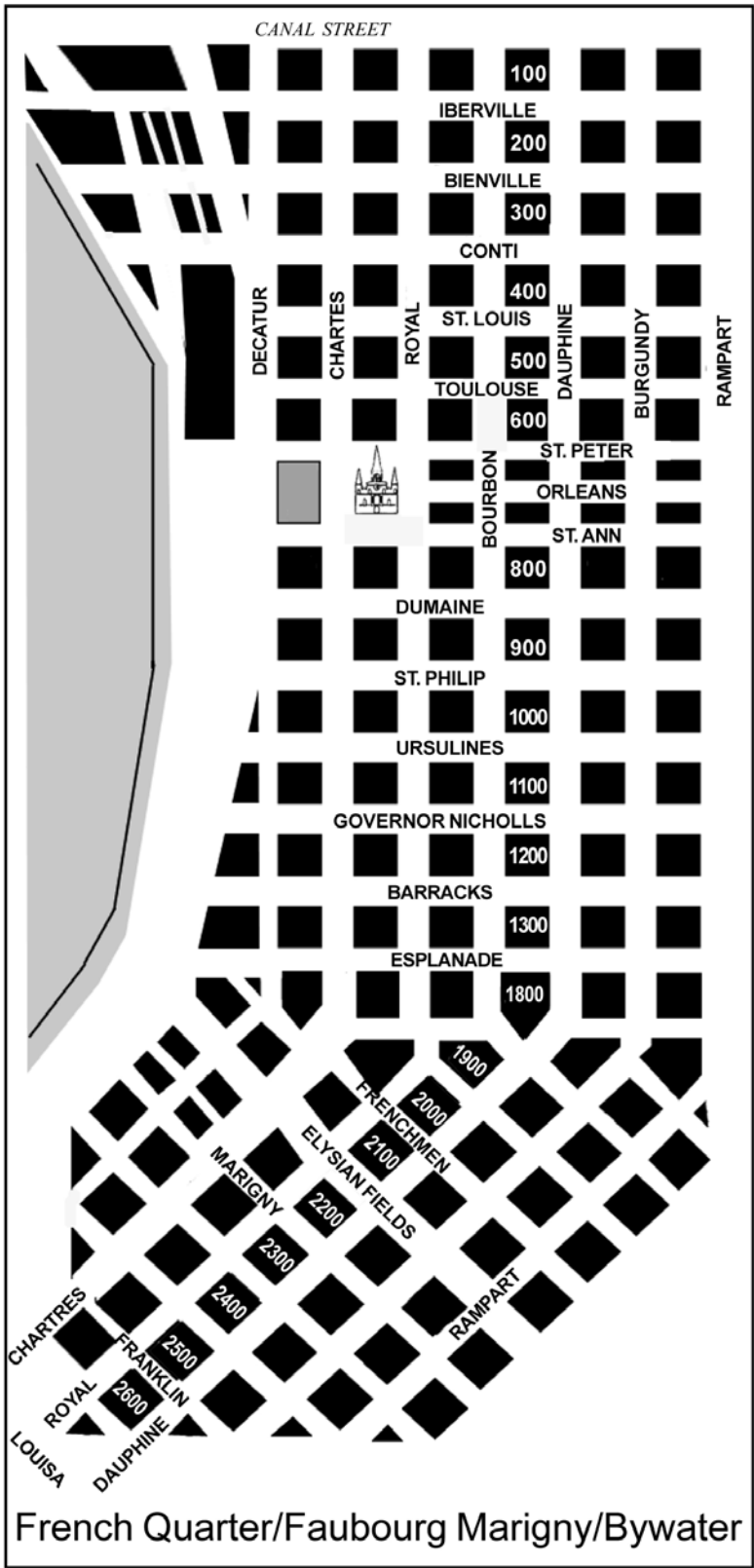
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