

DARK DAYS AND THE COMING OF FASCISM
IN THE “NEW AMERICA”¹

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A Worker of the Resistance

“The price good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.”

Plato (428 – 347 BC)

Introduction

On November 8, 2016, the United States elected a demagogue with dictatorial qualities to become the 45th President of the United States. After more than thirty-five years of neoliberalism being imposed on the country, the American people coalesced around two candidates that should not have been entirely unpredictable. Indeed, with the gap between the wealthiest 1% of the population and everyone else greater than at any time since 1928 – a year before the start of the Great Depression – two candidates emerged who were very much responding to the impact of those policies.² Who were they? Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont on the left and one of the main beneficiaries of neoliberalism on the right, Donald Trump.

Of course, Hillary Clinton won the Democratic nomination for president to run against the “surprise candidacy” of Trump but not without the assistance of the Democratic Party

establishment, itself. As we know now, the outcome of the Democratic primary was being orchestrated by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to benefit Clinton, and *not* Sanders.³ Nevertheless, a man who openly referred to himself as a “socialist” – long one of the most misunderstood words in American Politics – won some *43% of the popular vote* during the Democratic primary indicating that a large portion of the population had “awoken” and was now aligning themselves with a candidate who was directly addressing their class concerns. Yet, Sanders did not win the primary and Clinton did not win the presidency. Instead, one of the world’s richest men, who is both unpredictable and potentially dangerous, gathered the 270 Electoral College votes necessary to ascend to the most powerful office in the world. Today, the American people and the world wait to see what he will do.

The Media’s Explanation of the 2016 Election

According to the corporate-owned media – where just six global conglomerates control 90% of everything that we read, watch, and listen to, with three of those six owned by just two men – there was a very specific reason why Trump won the White House.⁴ Overwhelmingly, the argument coming from the “mainstream media” was that he had provided the “right message” to some of the most important voters in the country. Who were they? The Rust Belt voters. What is the Rust Belt? The Rust Belt is a handful of states which includes all of Ohio and parts of New York, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin. This region of the country was once known as the “industrial heartland” of the United States. In fact, before neoliberalism came to the United States, it was known variously as the Steel Belt, the

Manufacturing Belt, or the Factory Belt – indicating the industrial significance of the region. However, since the arrival of neoliberalism, the Steel Belt has experienced a steady loss of factory, coal, and steel jobs, a decrease in population, an increase of violence in the inner-cities, a general decay of its infrastructure, and a rise in poverty. Thus, the Steel Belt became known as the Rust Belt.

The news media claimed that Trump “spoke” to these voters. And, specifically, he spoke to the working class in this region. Indeed, in what turned out to be the Electoral College significant states of Pennsylvania (48.8% Trump vs. 47.6% Clinton), Wisconsin (47.9% Trump vs. 46.9% Clinton), and Michigan (47.6% Trump vs.

47.3% Clinton), Trump’s victory was chalked up to “hidden” or “pocket” voters, i.e., unexpected working class voters, who turned out to tip the election in his favor. Ohio (52.1% Trump vs. Clinton 43.5%) was



CNN Center, Atlanta, Georgia

also considered to be significant but was not as close in the popular vote (and, consequently, the Electoral College) as were the other states.

Now, the media was *correct* in saying that these states helped to “flip” the election from Clinton (who actually won the popular vote by more than 2.5 million votes) to Trump. However, to understand why working people in these states as well as a large portion of the American working class *not only voted* for Trump, but in fact *voted incorrectly* for him, requires a more detailed analysis of the political and economic system as well as a discussion of political consciousness, itself.

Understanding Capitalism, Class, and Consciousness

The global economic system that dominates the world today is capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system where the means of production (i.e., the farms and factories) are privately owned. Capitalism generates two basic classes – the owning class and the working class – where one’s class position is determined by their relationship to the means of production. Either one owns the productive forces of society or they work for someone that does. Thus, the relationship between the two classes consists of fundamentally opposed class interests and is exploitative by nature as one class (i.e., the owning class) lives off the surplus value created by the other class (i.e., the working class). What is surplus value? Surplus value is what is created by paying the working class less to produce a commodity or service than the actual value of what that commodity or service is sold for by the owning class on the market. We know this as *profit* (or, the accumulation of capital). In fact, whether it is a conservative economist or a socialist economic theorist, it is generally agreed that capitalism’s sole purpose is to accumulate capital for those who own the means of production, which in turn, provides them with enormous power in society.⁵

Today, capitalism has morphed into neoliberalism. Neoliberalism might be thought of as an extreme variant of state-regulated capitalism. The idea of neoliberalism was first developed by the so-called “Chicago Boys” in the 1970s and consists of: (1) the reduction or elimination of government spending on social programs such as education, healthcare, and programs for the poor, and (2) the deregulation of private industry and the transfer of government services such as electricity, water, and oil into corporate hands. The purpose behind it is to allow capital to move around the globe unhindered by the state in its never-ending pursuit of more and more capital. Neoliberalism began in the United States in 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan who,

ironically, was helped into office by winning over a large portion of the American working class, including the so-called Reagan-Democrats of the Midwest and the former Steel Belt. Today, global capitalism, in the form of neoliberalism, continues to move towards its logical conclusion. What is capitalism's logical conclusion? The logical conclusion of capitalism is to amass all of the world's wealth into the hands of just one person. This, obviously, could never be done in practice as the system would collapse before it happened. Yet, the system continues to move in this "self-devouring"⁶ direction with the primary feature being to amass great wealth into a tiny fraction of the world's population, while at the same time, generating widespread poverty for the overwhelming majority of the world's people. As just a couple pieces of evidence of this, we might consider the following:

- In the United States, wealth has become so concentrated in the hands of the few since the 1980s that real wages have not only been stagnate since that time (after seeing steady increases since the "New Deal"), but today the richest 20 people in the US have more wealth than the bottom half of the American people combined (some 160 million people).⁷ In fact, further illustrating the gap between rich and poor, wealth has become so narrowly absorbed in the hands of the few that the wealthiest 1/4 of 1% of the US population has more wealth than the wealth of the bottom 99% of the American people combined.⁸
- Globally, capitalism has created a similar situation around the world as it has inside of the United States. Indeed, today almost half of the world's population lives on just \$2.50 a day



Poverty in the United States: Camden, New Jersey

and some 80 percent of the world's people live on just \$10 a day – or a mere \$3,650 per year.⁹ In other words, global capitalism has created a situation where at least 80 percent of the world's population lives in poverty. In fact, the gap between “the haves” and “the have nots” has become so extreme that the wealthiest 62 people on the planet have more wealth than the bottom half of humanity combined (some 3.5 billion people).¹⁰ And, again in mirroring the economic reality of the United States, today the richest 1% of the global population has more wealth than the bottom 99% of the world's population combined (some seven billion people).¹¹

Though rarely taught in our schools, one of the most basic truths of the economic system is that wealth is the cause of poverty and poverty is the cause of wealth. Yet, with the working class at home (and around the world) feeling ever more squeezed by the effects of neoliberalism, did the American people respond by electing someone from their own class? No. Why not? The answer to that question is fairly obvious but is rarely explored enough – *false consciousness*.

False consciousness, is a term derived from the Marxist tradition, which identifies a state of mind of an individual or a group of people who neither understand their class interests nor act consistently with those political concerns. One of the best examples of this kind of problem today is the sizable portion of the American working class that voted for Donald Trump. Indeed, he is a billionaire member of the *owning class* with interests in over 500 companies that span the globe including two that are presently involved in the much disputed Dakota Access Pipeline. Yet, Trump has already stated that he intends to run his companies as president and does not see a conflict of interest between his corporate interests and the “national interest.” Aside from owning or being an investor in these global corporations whose sole purpose is to extract as much surplus value from the working class as possible, we might consider some of the other *anti-working class*

activities that he has been involved with during his lifetime. To be sure, among other practices, Trump has:

- Refused to pay workers and contractors including waiters, dishwashers, and plumbers from the 1980s until today;
- Hired undocumented Polish workers in 1980 and later hired undocumented models beginning in 1999;
- Subjected would be tenants to housing discrimination at 39 of his housing locations in New York;
- Attempted to force renters out through “tenant intimidation” in the 1980s in New York City;
- Been convicted of “swindling,” in the words of the New York State Attorney, millions of dollars from thousands of Americans through his now defunct and fake “university” for which he was court ordered to pay a \$25 million settlement to resolve a class action lawsuit;
- Filed for corporate bankruptcy on four separate instances in 1991, 1992, 2004, 2009; and, refused to release his tax records which have led to questions about whether he has even filed taxes in the past twenty years.¹²

In spite of these unethical actions and him being the very embodiment of neoliberalism, a large portion of the working class, nevertheless, seemed to believe that this “man of the rich” would somehow lead a working class revolt against neoliberalism, itself. Not only that, but they seemed not to mind that he appeared to be a bigot, a misogynist, a racist, an Islamophobe, a sociopath with the primary feature being that of a serial-liar, a narcissist, a pseudo-nationalist, an admitted sexual-assaulter, a fraudster, a xenophobe, married to a woman who was at one time an undocumented worker and who later posed for money with no clothes on in a “men’s magazine,” ignorant, and angry. In fact, some of Trump’s meanness to any one group seemed to *attract*

members of the working class to him – at times, even over their own class concerns. That said, who then should the working class align themselves with and what are their class interests?

From a political and economic perspective the working class in the United States and around the world should align themselves with a very specific political and economic philosophy as well as a corresponding political party or parties. In the United States, this means that all members of the working class should align themselves with either the Socialist Party or the Green Party – anything less *is* false consciousness. Without a doubt, both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are essentially corporate controlled parties. This has been done through massive campaign contributions by the rich to the two major parties. With their hundreds of millions of dollars spent funding the campaigns of office-seekers each year, powerful multinational corporations and wealthy individuals have created a type of Wall-Street Republic where office-holders are viewed almost like a commodity or security to be purchased by the rich because of their potential for a return on their investment. In so doing, the rich have made it difficult for the US government to serve the interests of the great majority of the American people. Trump is very much a part of this system.



Socialist Party of America

The result of the state being largely in the grasp of a small group of economically powerful individuals is that the United States has become a plutocracy, i.e., a nation that is ruled by the rich, where wealth is valued over “goodness.” Wars are fought for the dual-purpose of creating a market for the investment of surplus capital as well as for gathering that which is needed to fuel (at times, literally) the commanding heights of the economy, i.e., land, labor, and resources.

Solvable politico-economic problems, from global warming to expensive private health care, persist because putting an end to them would also put an end to the profits of those who benefit from their continuance. This great gathering of wealth translates into unmatched political power in US society which in turn has made it possible for the wealthy to pursue their own interests without concern for the rest of the world. Thus, for the American working class to believe that a man of Trump's class (or crudeness) could actually improve their lives is simply inconsistent with his class interests and the logic of the capitalist economic system, itself.

So, what are the American working class' class interests? In short, they are the exact opposite of Trump's class interests. Without a doubt, the class interests of the American working class are: universal health care, free college and graduate school education, halting global warming, a living wage, ending the ongoing wars around the world and reducing the size of the military budget, early maternal (or paternal) support, rent and mortgage control, breaking up the massive sized banks (today the top ten in the US are not only bigger than they were before the Great Recession but have assets larger than the entire GDP of China), greatly expanding mass transportation, and reforming or replacing the capitalist economic system itself, which benefits Trump's class, and not their own.

Who was offering this type of political and economic change? Was it Donald Trump? No. Instead, it was the democratic-socialist Bernie Sanders and the Harvard-trained doctor and Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein. It is true that strength is found in numbers. By that measure the American working class (and the working class the world over) is *by far* the most powerful class on the planet simply by its immense size. Yet, until the working class comes to understand who they *are* and what their class interests consist *of* they will continue to be ruled over and

exploited by men like Trump. Indeed, until they “awaken” from and overcome their false consciousness they will never benefit from the power of their own class.

Is Fascism Coming to the United States?

When future historians look back upon our age, they may well point to Trump’s response, just ten days after his election, to the highly respected cast of the Broadway musical “Hamilton” as the formal end of the American republic. On November 18, 2016, Brandon Victor Dixon who had played Aaron Burr and with black, gay, Mexican, and female cast members by his side decided to address Trump’s Vice-President Mike Pence who happened to be in the audience that night. He said, “You know, we have a guest in the audience this evening — Vice President-elect Pence, I see you walking out but I hope you hear just a few more moments.” As some people in attendance booed the announcing of Pence’s name, Dixon asked for quiet and then spoke directly to Pence. He said, “Sir, we hope that you will hear us out.” Pence, who was by this time at the exit doors, stood and listened as Dixon said, “We, sir, are the diverse America who are alarmed and anxious that your new administration will not protect us — our planet, our children, our parents — or defend us and uphold our inalienable rights, sir. But we truly hope this show has inspired you to uphold our American values and to work on behalf of all of us. All of us.”

With that, the show ended as people in the audience applauded Dixon’s speech and Mike Pence respectfully completed his exit of the building. Nevertheless, by 9:00 am the next day, Trump, the incoming president of the United States, responded to the cast of “Hamilton” on of all things – his Twitter account. To be sure, he said that the cast of “Hamilton” had “harassed” a

“good man” and then demanded that they “Apologize!” for their “insulting” behavior.¹³ No apology was offered. The following day the future president took to his Twitter account again and for a second time demanded an apology from the cast. Once more, no apology was offered. However, if Trump’s reaction is any indication of what he has planned in the “New America” for people who choose to exercise their free speech rights in the exact manner in which the framers had intended – to criticize the government – then the United States (and the world) may be headed for some “Dark Days,” indeed. Without question, the ascendancy of Trump to the White House, forces us to ask the question, “Is fascism coming to the United States?”

What is fascism? Fascism is an authoritarian, hierarchical political system where there are very few at the top and sometimes just one, i.e., a dictator, who make all the decisions for the whole of society. If socialism as an economic system is the equivalent of democracy as a political system as both are based on equality, then fascism as a political system is the equivalent of capitalism as an economic system as both are based on inequality. Again, an idea that is rarely taught in schools but is still, nevertheless, true. This kind of system which stands in contrast to the whole notion of human dignity and equality is one that Trump is very much accustomed to and has benefitted to an *extreme degree* from financially. Now, with a Republican controlled Congress and a conservative Supreme Court on the way with possibly two more conservative justices to follow, there is the very real possibility that Trump will preside over a political system that places virtually no checks on him at all. This, together with his debased personality traits creates a situation where the only thing that may well stop Trump is Trump himself. Without a doubt, it is a formula that makes it possible for him to become the first American tyrant.

Yet, in many ways the Trump government is even more dangerous than the traditional fascist state. Indeed, as Trump was “elected” by the people and now serves as head of government

which in no way violates the Constitution he will have an air of legitimacy. All of this said and getting to the fine point of things, if we are concerned with fascism coming to the United States then let us first identify what it is that fascist states *do* and then compare that to what this new American government appears *to be*. Accordingly, fascist states tend to:

(1) *Privilege one group of people over another without a justifiable reason for doing so* (e.g.,

Tutsis being privileged over Hutus by imperial Belgium in pre-genocide Rwanda). Is one group of people likely to be privileged over another in the “New America?” If we are to look at the incoming regime’s policy proposals for undocumented workers (largely Mexican nationals) and Muslim residents, then the answer to that question would have to be an unqualified, “yes.” Even though undocumented workers in the United States have absolutely nothing to do with the problems now facing the country, the early indications are that a Trump presidency would bring this first principle of fascism into existence. The plan, of course, is to build a massive-sized wall along the southern border of the United States, that Mexico somehow will pay for, and then begin deporting millions of undocumented workers because they are, among other things, a strain on the state, are taking American jobs, and have a high number of criminals within their ranks.

While we don’t know for sure, to carry out this plan, the federal government would likely need to create some kind of new and costly bureaucracy – possibly an “Internal Border Security” (or the IBS, for short). This new bureaucracy would deploy thousands of future IBS agents to patrol carwashes, fruit orchards, hotels, restaurants, and other job sites where the targeted group would be required to present their “papers.” If they cannot show proof of citizenship or some other legal status which gives them permission to be in the country, then they will be arrested and deported possibly to never see their families again.

If conservatives think that the social-welfare state is strained now, wait until millions of more people qualify for social welfare programs than the 46 million people (some 1/6th of the population) that already do because they have lost an income-earner from their household. Moreover, deporting millions of people – there are some 11 million undocumented workers currently in the United States – coupled with increased tax cuts for the rich and decreased funding for social programs, if not done correctly, will drive the \$20 trillion national debt higher and make life for the poor even more difficult in this “New America.”

This new regime also intends to target Muslims simply because they might somehow be a threat to the “national security” of the United States because of their religious affiliation. The primary way of pursuing these individuals is by creating a so-called “Muslim Registry.” Instead of addressing the *real causes* of terrorism which are the US wars around the globe and the exploitation of the world’s people by western transnational corporations, the new administration intends to lay the blame of the wars at the feet of the victims themselves. This will be done by making “a suspect” out of anyone that “looks like” someone from a country that the United States government is currently waging war against.

If that isn’t enough, there has also been early discussion of creating “internment camps” for Muslims to protect the internal security of the United States similar to those created to confine Japanese-Americans during World War II. The Japanese internment camps were dangerously created through an executive order by Franklin D. Roosevelt, later recognized as a mistake by the nation and eventually led to a government apology and reparations for Japanese-Americans.

Rounding up Muslims and Mexicans will likely create at least one additional social problem. Ultimately, it will give license to every ignorant American who doesn’t understand

the real causes of terrorism and the economic benefit and necessity of undocumented workers to ramp up their nastiness (including violence) towards their fellow countrymen who practice Islam or are of Mexican decent. That this kind of discussion has even entered the national conversation should make all of us consider the direction the country is now moving.

(2) *Mix business with the state for the purpose of wars of aggression* (e.g., Nazi Germany which did business during World War II with Porsche, Mercedes Benz, IBM, Bayer, Volkswagen, and the eventual US Senator Prescott Bush, among *a long list* of others). The United States

is already highly involved in using private corporations to wage wars of aggression. For instance, the US government has contracted with over 100 private military firms in its war and occupation of Iraq and uses hundreds of corporations to supply the military with weapons and equipment for its wars around the world. In fact, with the assistance of companies such as Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and General Dynamics, the United States



The Chief Architects of Fascism: Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler (1944)

government has “mixed business with the state for the purpose of wars of aggression” in its more than one-hundred wars since 1945. In addition to its ongoing wars, the US currently has troops deployed to some 150 separate countries (out of a possible 195) on every continent except for Antarctica. And, most concerning of all for republican government, not one time has congress formally declared war for any of these wars or deployments since 1945 as *required* by the Constitution. This, of course, has rendered our most democratic body (i.e., congress) little more than a “debating society” when it comes to questions of war.

This global military force and US transnational corporations spread all around the world are the surest signs of empire. To enforce this global order, today the world is faced with a man that wants to *increase* the size of the military budget which now stands at some \$1.2 trillion and is larger than likely all other 194 countries combined. Together with his deadly bravado surrounding foreign policy and unpredictable behavior, there is no reason to think that the wars, occupations, and deployments around the world will come to an end any time soon.

Nor is there reason to believe that the “refugee crisis” or the bombs now falling on the people, hospitals, schools, and children of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria will come to an end in the near future, as well. The ongoing “refugee crisis” and the war in Syria were brought to life most sadly by the death of the innocent boy Alan Kurdi who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea and later washed up on the shores of Turkey all by himself after trying to escape



Alan Kurdi (2012-2015)

the Syrian civil war with his family – a war that the United States *has both* helped bring into existence and perpetuate. With his death we all lost something. And, why? To further enrich an already fabulously wealthy component of Trump’s class – the oil industry. All of this is to say nothing of this dangerous man’s access to a nuclear weapons arsenal (whose size he wants to increase) that is so large that it could destroy every city on the planet two times over – putting an end to the human race, itself.

(3) *Repress dissent and limit or eliminate civil liberties and civil rights* (e.g., Augusto Pinochet of Chile, supported by the United States, imprisoned, tortured, and killed thousands of Chilean citizens during his seventeen years in power for their opposition to his rule). The new regime plans to re-implement the House Un-Americans Activities Committee that was originally used

from the 1930s-1975 to identify communists and communist “sympathizers” in American society. In this new version, articulated by Newt Gingrich (a potential Trump appointee), it would be used to identify those individuals that are considered to be radical Muslims committed to ISIS and then strip them of their American citizenship.

Yet, instead of having any impact on ISIS, the implementation of the committee may be used more of an entrance into the realm of government repression of dissent. Is it too hard to imagine that after first pursuing “supporters” of ISIS (what does that even mean) that the Trump regime might eventually pursue individuals who oppose the government on the grounds of being an “enemy of the state?” We don’t know, but one of the most basic things that all fascist states do is crackdown on dissent and go so far as to “disappear” their radical intellectuals and members of the opposition. Among many other tyrants, this was the case with the US backed dictators of Pinochet in Chile (1973-1990), Fulgencio Bautista in Cuba (1952-1959), and the Shah in Iran (1953-1979).



*President Augusto Pinochet:
Dictator of Chile (1970-1990)*

Whatever ends up happening, if we take just a cursory look at a few pieces of law that already exist we can see that the legal infrastructure is currently in place for a man without scruple to crack down on dissent if he so chooses. For example, the Supreme Court ruled in the famous case *Schenck v. the United States* (1919) that words spoken during times of peace may not be protected during times of war. The most important time in the life of any nation is during a time of war. The United States appears to be in a current state of permanent (though undeclared) war. The only non-violent way which members of a democracy can check or hold

responsible a government which belongs to them during times of war is to discuss, critique, criticize and propose alternatives to the government's chosen path of war. Anything less is not democracy. Yet, is it not possible to imagine Trump bringing *Schenck* fully to life by declaring that dissent against the new government represents a "clear and present danger" (to use the Court's language in the case) to the "national security" of the United States because we are "at war" and that criticism of the government, therefore, is open to suppression by the state? Again, we don't know. But, is it not possible to imagine?

Turning to a more recent law, NDAA 2012 is the military budget passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama in 2012. Not only is it immense in size providing money for the ongoing US wars around the world but it also allows for the arrest and indefinite detention (i.e., imprisonment) without charge of American citizens who are considered to be supporting enemies of the United States. Indefinite detention without charge is a clear violation of the Constitutional guarantees of habeas corpus, the right to a trial by jury, the right to confront witnesses, and due process of law, among others, yet, it remains in place nevertheless.

Furthermore, under NDAA 2012, providing "support" to "enemies" of the United States has been so poorly defined that some types of speech merely criticizing US foreign policy may result in American citizens being arrested and sent to prison for an indeterminate length of time without any charges filed against them at all. Is it unrealistic to think that this man, who reacts so poorly to criticism, would not use this law in a way that would punish not enemies of the American people but those that he perceives to be his own? For instance, could we not imagine Trump using the billions of absolutely unconstitutionally gathered telecommunications between US citizens each month by the NSA to produce an "enemies list" of the regime and

then punish them accordingly? Again, we don't know, but is it unreasonable to think that this man who seems to lack even basic decency would not be willing to try?

In turning to some of Trump's cabinet appointments, if we don't already, we should be able to more clearly see what is on the horizon for the United States. In fact, some of the key figures around him are so outrageous that there is no possible "good" that could come from them. For instance, in returning to Vice-President Mike Pence, his political views are so closely in-line with the "Old Testament right wing" that they resemble someone from the political elite that ruled over society in the political dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale*. For example, he rejects evolution, signed a bill as governor of Indiana that allowed for legal discrimination against members of the LGBT community based on religious principle, believes that homosexuality can be "cured" by conversion therapy through practices such as chemical castration and electroshock therapy, and favors so-called "abstinence education" (i.e., "no sex before marriage") over "comprehensive sex education" being taught in our public schools. An ultra-right wing Christian-conservative if there ever was one.

A second figure, probably the most dangerous man around Trump, is Steve Bannon. With an MBA from Harvard, this former investment banker for Goldman Sachs appears to be the "man behind the president." He served as the chief executive officer to Trump's presidential campaign and has been appointed the chief strategist and Senior Counselor to the President – a position that makes him essentially the second most powerful person in the White House. Bannon, a self-described "nationalist" (another feature of fascism), is most well-known as one of the leaders of the "alt-right" movement in the United States through his "news service," Breitbart News. The alt-right is a far-right media movement that voices, in one fashion or another, the views of white supremacists, white power nationalists, ultranationalists, the KKK,

misogynists, anti-Semites, xenophobes, Islamophobes, neo-Nazis, and religious extremists. In all likelihood, the ideology and internal movement of the regime in the “New America” will be shaped by the views and scheming of this very powerful and dark individual. Another Trump appointee, Retired Lt. General Michael Flynn, has been chosen to be Trump’s national security advisor. In support of Trump’s views about Islam in general, Flynn has argued that, “we are facing another ‘ism,’ just like we faced Nazism, and fascism, and imperialism and communism.” This time around it “is Islamism” which “is a vicious cancer inside the body of 1.7 billion people on this planet and it has to be excised.”¹⁴ Why Islam is a “vicious cancer” is not clear and let us hope that his “advice” to the new President for excising it is not consistent with his military background. Finally there is Senator Jeffrey Sessions who has been picked to become the new US Attorney General – the very embodiment of law and order. Yet, unbelievably, he has already stated publicly that he does not believe that Trump’s admission of forcibly grabbing a woman by the genitals amounts to sexual assault.¹⁵

In addition to these individuals, Trump has surrounded himself with billionaire neoliberals such as Wilbur Ross who has been charged with running the Department of Commerce, global warming deniers that are friendly to oil interests such as Scott Pruitt who has been picked, ironically, to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, hard-core-killing military generals such as James Mattis who has been nominated to run the Pentagon, wealthy corporate lobbyists, rich family members, and other extreme right-wing ideologues that should make us all now see in which direction the country is currently moving.

Using history as our guide, if the new regime continues down this path, not only are they laying the groundwork for government attacks on the American people but at the same time are sowing the seeds for long-term civil unrest and possibly even a new American revolution. Some

say that we live in the “Age of Irony” where the intended (or stated) meaning of a thing is the exact opposite of the actual meaning of that thing. The “Age of Irony” opened with the Bush Administration declaring that the United States was going to *liberate* Iraq but then preceded to wage a war against and *occupy* that country for the next fourteen years resulting in the deaths of more than one million Iraqi citizens.¹⁶ Today, the age continues. Without a doubt, the United States will now have a billionaire demagogue referred to as a populist sitting in the White House that was democratically elected who is threatening to turn the very idea of democracy on its head. Thus, if we return to our original question – “Is fascism coming to the United States?” The only response that we could give is that, “it already has.”

Conclusion: Our “Winter of Discontent”

The great Greek philosopher, Plato, more than 2000 years ago argued that a democracy will eventually deteriorate into an oligarchy (or plutocracy) which, in time, will further degenerate into a dictatorship where society is ruled by a man exhibiting only the basest of emotions.¹⁷ Today, there is nothing stopping the American republic, which has already devolved into a plutocracy and is recognized as such by even some mainstream political science scholars, from disintegrating further. For certain, after first sparking a democratic revolt (which seems to be happening right now) but later descending into a chaotic political order, the American republic will eventually degenerate into a dictatorship – or “rule by the criminal” – where US society would be guided by those exhibiting only the basest of human emotions. The election of Donald Trump, unfortunately, seems to have proven the great-ancient philosopher correct.

That said, the framers of the Constitution did have some concern about a man like Trump assuming the presidency. Indeed, of the *multiple reasons* why they created the Electoral College, one of them, as Alexander Hamilton explained in Federalist #68, was to ensure that the “men most capable of analyzing the qualities” of a potential president could, in fact, “vote for some fit person” to be the president. And, that “this process of election” provided for a “moral certainty that the office of President will seldom fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications.”

In other words, one of the reasons that the framers created the Electoral College was to ensure that a man who merely possessed the “talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity” would not be able to become president of the nation. Instead, he would be blocked from doing so by this *buffer* (i.e., the Electoral College) between the people and the office. Where a man of “low intrigue” might be able to lead a state government because states elect governors by popular election, only the best would be able to attain the presidency because of the method they chose for electing the president. (In fact, with regard to one of the concerns in the 2016 presidential election, Hamilton even argued that the Electoral College would act as a guard against “foreign powers” interfering with the election of the president). Unfortunately, for the United States today, those that serve in the Electoral College are generally hard-core party loyalists and have sworn to cast their votes in favor of their party’s candidate should he or she win the popular vote in their state. Thus, one of the framers intent, which was to limit the possibility of someone such as Trump from becoming president, has been undermined to a serious degree, by the political party identification of the electors themselves.

Yet, in the end, while we would like to think of ourselves as Martin Luther King Jr., the truth of the matter is that Donald Trump *is us*. Indeed, he is merely a reflection of the dirty, crude,

and vile underbelly of the American political, economic, and social order. He is a creation of our culture; of *our capitalism*. His nasty ways are simply a mirror of the nastiness that has existed in our society since its inception. A society born of an “owning class” revolt. One that placed into power – in ten out of our first twelve presidents, as well as a sizable portion of our congress and two of our first three chief justices – some of the largest slave-holders in the country. They were the original white supremacists, practicing one of the crudest forms of capitalism to have ever existed – a brutal kind of slavery. When their rule came to an end through a bloody civil war, a system of oppression was put in its place with the passing of Jim Crow laws, lynching’s, and the Ku Klux Klan – who showed up in of all places – the very seats of government.

Shortly thereafter, the country moved through a difficult “industrial revolution” that turned men, women, and children into little more than alienated appendages of their tools in the factories, mines, and fields where they worked. And all for what – to further enrich men *exactly* like Trump (e.g., Rockefeller, Carnegie, Ford, Vanderbilt, Morgan, Firestone, and Mellon, to name just a few.). When FDR implemented the “New Deal” and tried to ease some of capitalism’s self-destructive tendencies, the United States moved into an era where blacks, women, homosexuals, and others had to fight to be treated as equal within the politico-economic system, itself. After a brief lull, but in due time, Ronald Reagan was elected and implemented the devastating effects of neoliberalism.

Today, with the impact of that system being felt around the world and with US troops spread across the entire planet to enforce it – a thoroughly fooled and frustrated American working class put into power a mean-spirited man with no shame who has every institutional (and personal) requirement necessary to become the first American dictator. Without a doubt, we now have the worst kind of man with the worst kind of power sitting atop the entire political and economic

system, itself. Yet, it is possibly even worse than that. To be sure, Trump with his hands on “the wheel of history,” may very well bring down the whole idea of the United States and what it means to be “an American.” And, at the same time this “New America” – this vicious, violent, and stupid beast that is unfolding before our eyes – will replace not only the dying American republic but will make the empire more powerful and more dangerous than it has ever been before.

So, as we prepare for our long, dark “Winter of Discontent,” with the very real concern that it may well descend into a violent “Mad Season,” the only thing left for us to do now is *resist*. When our hard winter finally gives way to a new and beautiful spring, let us once and for all, bury all that has brought us to this point. When we do, let us at last, bring into existence a political, economic, and social order that is based on equality, human dignity, and “justice for all.” And, maybe then, we will have a society where all “men of goodwill” can live in peace.

~ In remembrance of Fidel Castro's life-long commitment to justice (1926-2016).

About the Author

Jeremy Cloward has run for public office on three separate occasions (Congress 2009, 2010, and City Council 2012) and is the author of three books and multiple articles. His writings have addressed a range of topics, including: The political economy of the American political system, US foreign policy and empire, capitalism, and socialism. Dr. Cloward has appeared in a number of media outlets, including FOX and KPFA, and today is a professor of political science in the San Francisco, Bay Area.



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Notes

¹ The title of the paper refers to a book authored by the great Pan-African socialist leader of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah. His book, *Dark Days in Ghana* (International Publishers: New York, NY, 1968) was written in response to the CIA backed military coup which forced his government from power and replaced it with a right-wing military dictatorship.

² Drew DeSilver, “US income inequality, on rise for decades, is now highest since 1928,” *Pew Research Center*, December 5, 2013, accessed November 23, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/12/05/u-s-income-inequality-on-rise-for-decades-is-now-highest-since-1928/>.

³ Aaron Blake, “Here are the latest, most damaging things in the DNC’s leaked emails,” *The Washington Post*, July 25, 2016, accessed November 23, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/07/24/here-are-the-latest-most-damaging-things-in-the-dncs-leaked-emails/>.

⁴ See Chapter 11: The Political Economy of the News Media in Jeremy Cloward’s, *Class Power and the Political Economy of the American Political System* (BVT Publishing, Redding, CA, 2016) for a detailed discussion of corporate control over the media in the United States.

⁵ For two good discussions about power in society derived from control over the means of production, see: John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1980) and Michael Parenti, *Power and the Powerless* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1978).

⁶ The phrase “self-devouring” to explain the nature of the capitalist economic system is taken from the great American political scientist Michael Parenti. He has used the term in multiple instances but most recently in his book, *Profit Pathology and Other Indecencies* (Paradigm Publishers: Boulder, Colorado, 2015).

⁷ Chuck Collins and Josh Hoxie, “Billionaire Bonanza: The Forbes 400 and the Rest of Us,” *Institute for Policy Studies*, December 1, 2015, accessed November 23, 2016, <http://www.ips-dc.org/billionaire-bonanza/>.

⁸ The data in this note is drawn from a study by Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Krugman which has been referenced in Michael Parenti’s article, “The Super Rich are Out of Sight,” *Michael Parenti Political Archive*, 2000, accessed November 11, 2016, <http://www.michaelparenti.org/Superrich.html>.

⁹ Anup Shah, “Poverty Facts and Stats,” *Global Issues*, January 7, 2013, accessed November 23, 2016, <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>.

¹⁰ Business, “Oxfam says wealth of richest 1% equal to other 99%,” *BBC NEWS*, January 18, 2016, accessed November 23, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-35339475>.

¹¹ Shah, “Poverty Facts and Stats,” *Global Issues*.

¹² David A. Graham, “The Many Scandals of Donald Trump: A Cheat Sheet,” *The Atlantic*, November 22, 2016, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/donald-trump-scandals/474726/>.

¹³ Christopher Mele and Patrick Healy, “‘Hamilton’ Had Some Unscripted Lines for Pence. Trump Wasn’t Happy,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 2016, accessed November 25, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/19/us/mike-pence-hamilton.html?_r=0.

¹⁴ The Flynn quotes are drawn from Andrew Kaczynski article, “Michael Flynn in August: Islamism a ‘vicious cancer’ in body of all Muslims that ‘has to be excised,’” November 22, 2016, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/22/politics/kfile-michael-flynn-august-speech/>.

¹⁵ Laura Bassett, “GOP Senator Says Grabbing A Woman’s Genitals Is Not Sexual Assault,” *The Huffington Post*, October 11, 2016, accessed November 25, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/jeff-sessions-trump-sexual-assault_us_57fbb902e4b068ecb5e06988.

¹⁶ The number of Iraqi deaths is based on two separate studies. The first study was produced by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, “Updated Iraq Survey Affirms Earlier Mortality Rates,” *John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*, October 11, 2006, accessed November 25, 2016, http://www.jhsph.edu/publichealthnews/press_releases/2006/burnham_iraq_2006.html. Published in its Lancet Report, the university concluded that by late 2006 some 654,000 Iraqis had died since the war began in March of 2003. Two years later, a second study was completed by the independent British polling firm Opinion Research Business (ORB). ORB concluded that by the beginning of 2008 more than one million Iraqi’s had died as a result of the US war on Iraq. The actual number was likely higher as ORB was only able to survey 15 of Iraq’s 18 provinces due to high levels of violence in two regions – Kerbala and Anbar – and because they were refused a work permit in a third – Arbil. Today, the number is likely higher still as the war has continued for at least four additional years since the ORB study was conducted. Information about the ORB study in this note is gathered from: Reuters, “Iraq conflict has killed a million Iraqis: survey,” *Reuters: US Edition*, January 30, 2008, accessed November 25, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/01/30/us-iraq-deaths-survey-idUSL3048857920080130>.

¹⁷ See Plato's Chapter 11: "Warped Minds, Warped Societies," in his *Republic* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 1993).