



November 2020

I WILL NOT
GO Quietly
BACK
TO THE
1950's



NOVEMBER 2020 TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMENTARY/1

In Memoriam: Lydia Sargent/1

A Hotel Satire by Lydia Sargent on the 2012 presidential election

It's Time to Challenge Biden and Corporate Democrats/6

Norman Solomon on the grassroots activist defeat of Trump

This Election Can't Contain Rage of Young Americans/12

Aaron White looks at a dignified future

FEATURES/20

Voting is Only the Beginning of Our Work/20

CJ Polychroniou interviews Noam Chomsky

How Could 70 Million Vote for Trump?/26

Jack Rasmus looks at the votes for Trump



In Memoriam: Lydia Sargent

Lydia Sargent, co-founder of Z Magazine, died on Monday, September 28, 2020 at the age of 78. Lydia had a remarkable career as an activist, actor, writer, and publisher. In addition to being the heart of *Z Magazine* for over 30 years, Lydia was also at one time a member of the Newbury Street Theater in Boston, a founder of South End Press, and was the driving force behind Z Media Institute. She drew significant acclaim for her play, *I Read About My Death in Vogue Magazine* (1985). She also produced, directed, and acted in many plays with the Woods Hole Theater Company. Lydia was also the author of *Women and Revolution* and *Playbook*, and many journalistic works.

Lydia loved working on *Z Magazine*. Whether it was editing copy, choosing graphics, or opening the mail, she took great pride in every detail. When the work became too hard for her to do, it was very difficult for her to let it go. She would ask me every time I saw her how the mag-

azine was doing. We had a great time working on *Z Magazine* together for over 30 years. Even though working with your mother can present some challenges, Lydia's great sense of humor always made the work easy to do.

Her love of life and fearlessness in charting her own path will always inspire those who knew her.

The article that follows is a Hotel Satire that Lydia wrote before the 2012 presidential election. I hope it will give you some insight into who Lydia was.

There's No Such Thing As Legitimate Rape, Because There's No Such Thing As Rape

By Lydia Sargent

Welcome to Hotel Satire where gals learn



how to be the gals that God intended them to be—that is, not men. We had been enjoying our summer, what with the Olympics and the Republican Convention. (Our husbands didn't let us watch the Democrats/Communists). Anyhoo, we were startled to see Mrs. Romney give a talk to millions of people in praise of mothers and homemak-

ers and so forth, when she was clearly neglecting her god-given duty to be at home doing all the things she was praising gals for doing. How can we learn to be proper gals if the experts on the topic are behaving improperly? She should have been at home waiting to serve pot roast to her man, as well as hundreds of his campaign workers.

Anyhoo, another shock came with the ridiculous controversy over a remark made by Todd Akin, Republican Senate nominee from Missouri and current member of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. In late August, Akin explained his opposition to a rape exception for abortion by claiming that women don't

Photo by
John Gomez/
Shutter-
stock.com



actually get pregnant in cases of “legitimate rape.” This was followed by attempts to explain what Akin meant by this.

In the process, we learned about forcible rape—the kind favored by most Republicans and Tea Partiers—one that occurs when a virgin or Christian mother or otherwise “innocent” woman, is carried

away by a stranger at knife or gunpoint.

This led to revelations about Paul Ryan, the Republican candidate for vice-president. He was a co-sponsor of HR 3, the “No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act” as well as the “Sanctity of Life” Act, a federal personhood law which, by declaring a fertilized egg a person, would outlaw all

abortions, many forms of contraception, in-vitro fertilization, and many other interventions. Paul, we love you for caring. God bless.

Next, past comments were referenced, as the controversy raged on. In 1988, Republican State Representative for North Carolina, Stephen Freind, said that the odds a woman who was raped





I AM SICK
OF Explaining
CONSENT



would get pregnant were one in millions since rape causes a woman to “secrete certain secretions that kill the sperm—assuming it really is rape.” Put Stephen with his sperm expertise on that Science, Space, and Technology Committee, please.

We also heard about the Texas gubernatorial nominee in 1990, Clayton Williams, who advised the victims of rape: “If it’s inevitable, just relax and enjoy it...like when you have picnic plans and there’s a thunderstorm.” Thanks Clayton for the advice. Perhaps the gal can serve chips and some chicken salad as well.

In 1997, Bush Federal Judge appointee James Leon Holmes wrote in an article, “Concern for rape victims is a red herring because conceptions from rape occur with approximately the same frequency as snowfall in Miami.” Such wisdom and attention to the weather.

Next came Idaho Senator Chuck Winder who, earlier this year, alarmed about housewives possible claiming rape in marriage, said, “I would hope that when a married woman goes into a physician with a rape issue, that that physician will indeed ask her...was this pregnancy caused by normal relations in a marriage or was it truly caused by a rape?” As if.

For weeks on end, we heard about no pregnancy rape, bad weather rape, no rape in marriage, forced rape, gray rape—sex that falls between consent and denial—and date rape.

After everything quieted down, we realized how much gals still have to learn about being gals, i.e. not be annoying to men. We were ashamed that our men had to spend weeks arguing about what should have been obvious: that gals are vessels for men to do with as they please. Vessels don’t have rights, for chrissakes. Did you gals learn nothing from the Bible? God created MAN in His image and gals from one of MAN’s ribs, thereby granting all MEN the quintessential right to dominion over gals, including their innards.

What do you gals think the story of the virgin Mary and the birth of Baby Jesus is about? God decided to get Mary pregnant. Has anyone ever accused God of rape? No, because it couldn’t have been rape because God is in charge of all wombs and MAN is His earthly penetrator/ womb manager and has access 24/7. The very essence of God includes, through the Holy Spirit or just plain godliness, the ability to determine who gets pregnant, whether by penetration or immaculate conception. Gals get to thank

god for the privilege.

Therefore, there can be no debate about legitimate rape or anything other kind. Repeat after me, gals, “there is no such thing as legitimate rape because there is no such thing as rape.” Better learn this lesson. After Mitt and Paul are elected, they will surely ram it home. **Z**

Progressives Made Trump’s Defeat Possible. Now It’s Time to Challenge Biden and Other Corporate Democrats

By Norman Solomon

The evident defeat of Donald Trump would not have been possible without the grassroots activism and hard work of countless progressives. Now, on vital issues—climate, healthcare, income inequality, militarism, the prison-industrial com-

plex, corporate power and so much more—it's time to engage with the battle that must happen inside the Democratic Party.

The realpolitik rationales for the left to make nice with the incoming Democratic president are bogus. All too many progressives gave the benefit of doubts to Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, making it easier for them to service corporate America while leaving working-class Americans in the lurch. Two years later, in 1994 and 2010, Republicans came roaring back and took control of Congress.

From the outset, progressive organizations and individuals (whether they consider themselves to be “activists” or not) should confront Biden and other elected Democrats about profound matters. Officeholders are supposed to work for the public interest. And if they're serving Wall Street instead of Main Street, we should show that we're ready, willing and able to “primary” them.

Progressives would be wise to quickly follow up on Biden's victory with a combative approach toward corporate Democrats. Powerful party leaders have already signaled their intentions to aggressively marginalize progressives.

“Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her top lieutenants,” *Politico*

reports, “had a stark warning for Democrats on Thursday: Swing too far left and they're all but certain to blow their chances in the Georgia runoff that will determine which party controls the Senate.”

Also on the conference call with congressional Democrats was House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, who reportedly declared that if “we are going to run on Medicare for All, defund the police, socialized medicine, we're not going to win.”

Such admonitions were predictable and odd, coming from House Democratic leaders who just saw shrinkage of members of their party due to the loss of “moderate” incumbents as well as the losses of avowedly “moderate” and widely heralded Democratic senatorial candidates in Maine, Kentucky, Iowa and elsewhere.

At the core of such conflicts, whether simmering or exploding, is class war. When Pelosi and company try to stamp out the genuinely progressive upsurge in congressional ranks that is fueled from the grassroots, they're “dancing with those who brung them”—corporate elites. It's an extremely lucrative approach for those who feed out of the troughs of the Democratic National Committee, the Senate and House party campaign committees,

the House Majority PAC and many other fat-cat political campaign entities. Consultant contracts and lobbying deals keep flowing, even after Democrats lose quite winnable elections.

Biden almost lost this election. And while the Biden campaign poured in vast financial resources and vague flowery messaging that pandered to white suburban voters, relatively little was focused on those who most made it possible to overcome Trump's election-night lead—people of color and the young. Constrained by his decades-long political mentality and record, Biden did not energize working-class voters as he lip-sunk populist tunes in unconvincing performances.

That's the kind of neoliberal approach that Bernie Sanders and so many of his supporters were warning about in 2016 and again this year. Both times there was a huge failure of the Democratic nominee to make a convincing case as an advocate for working people against the forces of wealthy avarice and corporate greed.

In fact, Clinton and Biden reeked of coziness with economic elites throughout their political careers. To many people, Clinton came off as a fake when she tried to sound populist, claiming to represent the little people against



DENIES CLIMATE CHANGE?
RIGHT TO JAIL!
DENIES WOMEN'S RIGHTS?
RIGHT TO JAIL!



Photo by Michah Casella/Shutterstock.com

corporate giants. And to those who actually knew much about Biden's political record, his similar claims also were apt to seem phony.

It's clear from polling that Biden gained a large proportion of his votes due to animosity toward his opponent rather than enthusiasm for Biden. He hasn't inspired the Democratic base, and his appeal had much more to do with opposing the evils of

Trumpism than embracing his own political approach.

More than ever, merely being anti-Trump or anti-Republican isn't going to move Democrats and the country in the vital directions we need. Without a strong progressive program as a rudder, the Biden presidency will be awash in much the same old rhetorical froth and status-quo positions that have so often caused Democratic incum-

bents to founder, bringing on GOP electoral triumphs.

In recent months, Biden showed that he knew how to hum the refrains of economic populism when that seemed tactically useful, but he scarcely knew the words and could hardly belt out the melody. His media image as "Lunch Bucket Joe" was a helpful mirage in corporate medialand, but that kind of puffery only went so far.



Meanwhile, the Biden strategists decided to coast on the issue of the pandemic, spotlighting Trump's lethally narcissistic insanity.

But when it came to healthcare—obviously a central concern in people's lives, especially amid the coronavirus—Biden largely fell back on Obamacare rather than advocating for a genuine guarantee of healthcare as a human right. Likewise, Biden

talked a bit about easing the economic burdens on small businesses and families, but it was pretty pallid stuff compared to what's desperately needed. To a large extent, he surrendered the economic playing field to Trump's pseudo-populist blather.

Looking ahead, we need vigorous successors to the New Deal of the 1930s and the Great Society programs of the mid-1960s that were

asphyxiated, politically and budgetarily, by the Vietnam War. Set aside the phrase if you want to, but we need some type of "democratic socialism" (as Martin Luther King Jr. asserted in the last years of his life).

The ravages of market-based "solutions" are all around us; the public sector has been decimated, and it needs to be revitalized with massive federal spending that

WHY THE 
FUCK *are we*
STUDYING **FOR** *a*
future **WE** *won't*
EVEN HAVE

goes way beyond occasional “stimulus” packages. The potential exists to create millions of good jobs while seriously addressing the climate catastrophe. If we’re going to get real about ending systemic and massive income inequality, we’re going to have to fight for—and achieve—massive long-term public investments, financed by genuinely progressive taxation and major cuts in the military budget.

With enormous grassroots outreach that only they could credibly accomplish, progressive activists were a crucial part of the de facto united front to defeat Trump. Now it’s time to get on with grassroots organizing to challenge corporate Democrats. **Z**

Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and the author of many books including *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*. He was a Bernie Sanders delegate from California for the 2020 Democratic National Convention.

**This election
can’t contain
the rage of
young Americans**

By Aaron White

“Mic check, mic check.

We’re gonna try something different,” a young Black woman bellowed into the bullhorn, joined by two young marching band drummers.

“You, can’t, stop, the revolution,” she sang. “You can’t stop the revolution” louder this time. Hundreds followed behind, bopping to the rhythm.

The crowd had been marching for hours, steadily growing as the night progressed, picking up angry and lonely mourners along the way.

The routine was all too familiar. Chanting into the dark and desolate concrete canyons of lower Manhattan, watched by the drone and helicopter buzzing above.

“Whose bridge? Our bridge.” The leaderless crowd, now amassing to a couple thousand, chanted as they seized the Williamsburg overpass.

As I walked back home, the chanting echoed onto the adjacent streets lined with shuttered businesses and makeshift homeless shelters.

What Future?

One in four young people in the United States seriously considered suicide in June.

Around 52% of 18-29 year olds are living with their parents—the highest percentage in more than a century.

Those of us born between 1981-1996 own just 4.6% of wealth, even though we are 35% of the total workforce—the largest cohort in the labor force.

In this collapsing empire, there’s not much to look forward to.

Nearly 1,000 Americans are dying every day from COVID-19, and models predict that the virus could take more than 400,000 lives by the end of the year. Twelve million Americans have been kicked off their employer-based insurance since the pandemic began, tens of millions face the immediate threat of eviction. And 45 million Americans continue to carry a collective \$1.6 trillion of student debt.

Many young people are suffering in solitude, exacerbating an already pervasive epidemic of loneliness.

Children are watching the small towns they grew up in reduced to ash along the West Coast, as the prospects of a hospitable future appear more futile every year.

And all the while, the federal government, even on the

eve of the election, has refused to pass another much needed stimulus package to prevent millions from falling off the cliff edge.

Yet even amidst this darkness, a revolutionary energy has captured the minds of young people across the country. Beneath the superficial election noise—the varnish of vanity has worn off, exposing a beautiful awakening of solidarity and determination to build a radically better future.

A Long March

For many young people, Bernie Sanders was the one presidential candidate that was able to speak directly to our needs. He was going to be the one to dismantle the rotten system: abolish student debt, decommodify the healthcare industry and institute a wealth tax.

But his candidacy collapsed in March after the remaining moderate candidates consolidated behind Joe Biden at the last minute.

For those who were part of his campaign, it was a devastating end. Bernie triggered a renewed belief in democracy—that there were some politicians that cared about you, who would fight for you. He understood that the system was rotten.

This wasn't, as Cornel West would say, that milquetoast neoliberal hope. It was the kind that spoke to the constant battle for dignified survival, in a vicious system that suffocates so many Americans, so much of our generation.

He spoke to those graduates sent off into the world in a deep pit of debt peonage; bar staff who fear a surprise medical emergency will spontaneously send them into bankruptcy; Uber drivers and independent contractors surviving off lower wage, algorithm-based work; and those overwhelmed by the prospect of an uninhabitable future.

And then COVID-19 struck.

The hospitality industry disappeared overnight. Many were forced to abandon their lives of precarious independence, moving back home or struggling under the weight of unpaid utility and rent payments. The ideal of an independent life—of liberty—moved even further out of reach overnight.

“There was no time to process, no one understood what was happening,” Sarah, a former assistant general manager at a restaurant in midtown New York, told me.

As restaurants were ordered to shut down on March 16, many in the hospitality industry were left out in the cold. “I didn't know it was my last

day, I never got to say goodbye.”

Those with Social Security numbers applied for unemployment benefits. Undocumented immigrants were totally abandoned by the system.

“Only one guy out of 40 who worked in the kitchen qualified for unemployment. Some of them had worked in this restaurant for nearly fifteen years.”

Millions filed for unemployment every week, making the Great Recession of 2007-2009 look a minor blip. Many more tried to file, but couldn't get through the backlog. “You couldn't call, it would take me six hours just to get through.”

The state labor department websites were unprepared and overwhelmed. An estimated 60 million people in the U.S. were fired between mid-March and the end of April, nearly a third of the entire labor force. Twelve million people have lost their employee-tied health insurance.

However, many in my generation never had any insurance to begin with.

As businesses and schools shuttered overnight, the streets emptied. Between March and May, an estimated 110,000 small businesses across the country closed.

The howls of sirens grew





WE ONLY
LOSE IF
WE STOP

FIGHTING

exponentially. At night the only vehicles I saw on the streets were ambulances.

Over the final two weeks of March, New York went from its first reported death to over 1,000 as incarcerated inmates dug mass graves on Hart Island.

Only the disposables were forced to walk the streets: the essential workers and those with nowhere else to sleep.

Utility and rent bills went unpaid. Child hunger soared as the schools that provided free meals closed. The percentage of children who “sometimes lacked enough to eat” grew 14 times higher than last year.

The government did very little to help. The rich got even richer.

“I Can’t Breathe”

In May, the video of George Floyd’s murder sparked the largest social movement in the history of the United States. Up to 26 million people say they joined Black Lives Matter protests.

In New York, amorphous crowds formed all over the city as the police responded in full body armor.

As I left my house one evening, a swarm of teenagers ran towards me, as cops were chasing them from behind.

One of the kids, while clutching a skateboard, jumped on top of a police van and smashed the window. I ran with the crowd, afraid of getting kettled.

I turned a corner and saw a police car on fire. Behind me, the windows of a bank were smashed, the words “fuck the system” graffitied next to the shards.

The next day trucks brought in plywood. Workmen boarded up the stores. The mayor instituted a curfew as helicopters circled the sky all night long. Sleep became impossible.

And then came the collective mourning.

Intimate forums in public parks and squares were organized by different groups around the city. At a spontaneous assembly in Washington Square Park a Black teenager grabbed the mic: “I am more afraid of being killed by the police than I am of COVID.” Many nodded in unison.

Activists from VOCAL-NY, The Black Youth Project and other organizations came together to establish an encampment outside City Hall demanding that the Mayor cut the NYPD budget by \$1 billion.

The occupiers painted their dreams on large sheets of canvas; hosted radical reading groups; watched civil rights

documentaries from the 60s; and fed the hungry and the homeless.

A healthcare station was established: no deductibles, no copayments. People cared for one another unconditionally.

The cops had had enough though. It was time to crack down on these dirty kids. At 4:00 AM, nearly 100 NYPD officers showed up in body armour. The crowd responded: “Why are you in riot gear? I don’t see no riot here.”

The next day hundreds of teenagers gathered to protect the occupation. Lines of defense were erected, and plastic barriers were placed in the middle of adjacent streets. Those with bikes formed rows of protection in front, hundreds firmly stood behind, arms locked.

This was no fire drill. The occupation would be protected at all costs. This was our new education, the lived practice of solidarity.

An older Black man, pensively looked out at the human barricades. He told me: “you gotta do what you gotta do. It wasn’t easy going over the Edmund Pettus bridge. Nothing’s easy. King got stabbed.”

A couple of weeks later, the cops won. The occupiers were evicted. Yet the marches continued. Every single night.

After the Kentucky Attor-



I DON'T WANT TO BE
THE **LAST GENERATION.**
CORONAVIRUS WON'T
BE THE ONLY DEMON THAT
WILL COLLAPSE MY LUNGS.



I
WANT
COLORS
IN MY
LIFE



NOT
ONLY
GRAY
AND
FIRE!



ney General announced that none of the officers involved in the shooting of Breonna Taylor would be charged with homicide, a huge wave of protesters passed my apartment, and I joined them. As the night progressed, hundreds more did the same.

"No justice, no peace. Black women matter," a young Black woman screamed, her vocal chords worn out.

Geritocracy

U.S. political institutions operate in a different reality. The Senate has an average age of 62; while the House of Representatives is slightly younger at 58.

Those leading the political resistance are stuck in a by-gone era.

Dianne Feinstein, the Democratic chair of the powerful Senate Judiciary Committee is 87 years old. Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House, is 80 years old. Their net worths are \$58.5 and \$54 million respectively. The political system works just fine for them, they are in charge.

Blinded by an addiction to wealthy donors and legislative decorum, their check on incipient authoritarianism is delivered in the form of symbolic gestures: kente cloth, shredded speeches, or even a

celebratory hug.

Joe Biden is their leader, harking back to a mythical land of yesterday when things were "normal." He is the one who has made a career of appeasing their corporate constituency. "Nothing would fundamentally change," he told donors at a New York fundraiser last year.

He will raise the corporate tax rate to 28% (where it was when Trump entered the Oval Office); he will protect and build on Obamacare, increasing the subsidies for private plans, ensuring no one pays more than 8.5% of their income on insurance.

He boasts about "beating the socialist." The game will continue, this time with more decorum. No need to worry: he is not going to abolish the private health insurance industry; he is not going to cancel all of your student debt; he is not going to defund the police; and he is not going to scale down the Pentagon budget. He's the safe bet.

And he knows how the game operates, he's been at it since 1972—the same year the *Godfather* was first released.

For us, normal is crisis

When I was six years old, my school principal disrupted my first grade class. She sat in front of the room and demonstrated with her hands that two airplanes had crashed

into two very large buildings near us. The school day was over, our parents would be picking us up early that day.

Life overnight was turned upside down. For the next several days my parents made me wear a mask to protect my young lungs from the dangerous air. Life slowly returned back to a new normal.

In Washington the partisan bickering wasn't as intense. Back in the days of that normality, radical agendas had bipartisan support: the Patriot Act, the Authorized Use of Military Force, the invasion of Iraq. Every military budget passed without a problem.

The militarism swept into daily life with unanimous consent. I became numb to NYPD officers with massive machine guns patrolled subway stations. Sometimes I was late to high school, as the police inspected my backpack for the off chance I was carrying mass explosives, not heavy textbooks.

I was the privileged one. In foreign lands U.S. drones patrolled the skies, striking "enemy combatants" on a whim. School children were collateral damage. Before long, this sophisticated surveillance technology came home to roost.

And then came 2008. The banking system collapsed. Congress swiftly acted, passing the Troubled Asset Relief

Program. And as the government purchased nearly \$700 billion worth of assets and injected equity into failing financial institutions—including those responsible for the subprime mortgage bubble—millions of homeowners faced eviction.

No one was arrested, and executives continued to rake in enormous bonuses. Millions on the outside suffered. The system was operating as normal.

Doses of reality

As the movement demanding an end to endless greed has grown stronger, allies of the streets have started to make their stamp on the halls of power—bringing with them a strong dose of reality.

In 2018, several unabashedly progressive women entered the Congress: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tliab and Ayanna Pressley. And this year the “Squad” will likely expand with the addition of Jamaal Bowman and Cori Bush. They campaigned on a bold agenda: passing a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, a Homes Guarantee, dismantling the military industrial complex, and instituting a reparative economic agenda.

Young radical organizations

pushed them over the line. Justice Democrats, a group of ex-Bernie staff members, built a movement to bring real working class people into Congress. The Sunrise Movement, an army of young people, swarmed the phone lines, knocked on doors, produced brilliant ads, and participated in civil disobedience to win a Green New Deal.

And over the last several years organizations such as the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) have seen their ranks increase by tens of thousands—many inspired to join by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

The revolution extended down the ballot. In cities like New York and Philadelphia, a slate of young and diverse socialist candidates were elected to serve in the state legislatures, bringing the cries for a dignified future inside the halls of power to fight for a homes guarantee, gig worker rights, a Green New Deal and dismantling systemic racism.

The party elders unified against these newcomers, who were intent on breaking up the established order. The old tricks aren’t working as well as they used to, however. The times have changed.

As the old withers away, the new is being born. But is it too late?

The Margins of Despair

With Congress and Trump failing to pass another stimulus before the election, the United States is entering a very dark winter.

The first stimulus package that passed in March included about \$500 billion for small business loans. Those lucky enough to receive the funds have found they are rapidly running out.

What happens when more than a third of small businesses in New York disappear forever? And what happens to all the chefs, bartenders, managers and cleaning staff whose incomes depend on these jobs?

Nearly 23 million Americans are still on unemployment aid, with over a million continuing to file every week.

What happens to the 40% of Americans who couldn’t—even before the pandemic—afford an unexpected \$400 dollar expense?

Since May, eight million Americans have fallen into poverty, with minorities and children being hit the hardest.

The crack at the center of America is growing. **Z**

The Publication of Origin for this article is Open Democracy.



Voting Is Not the End of Our Work. It's Only the Beginning

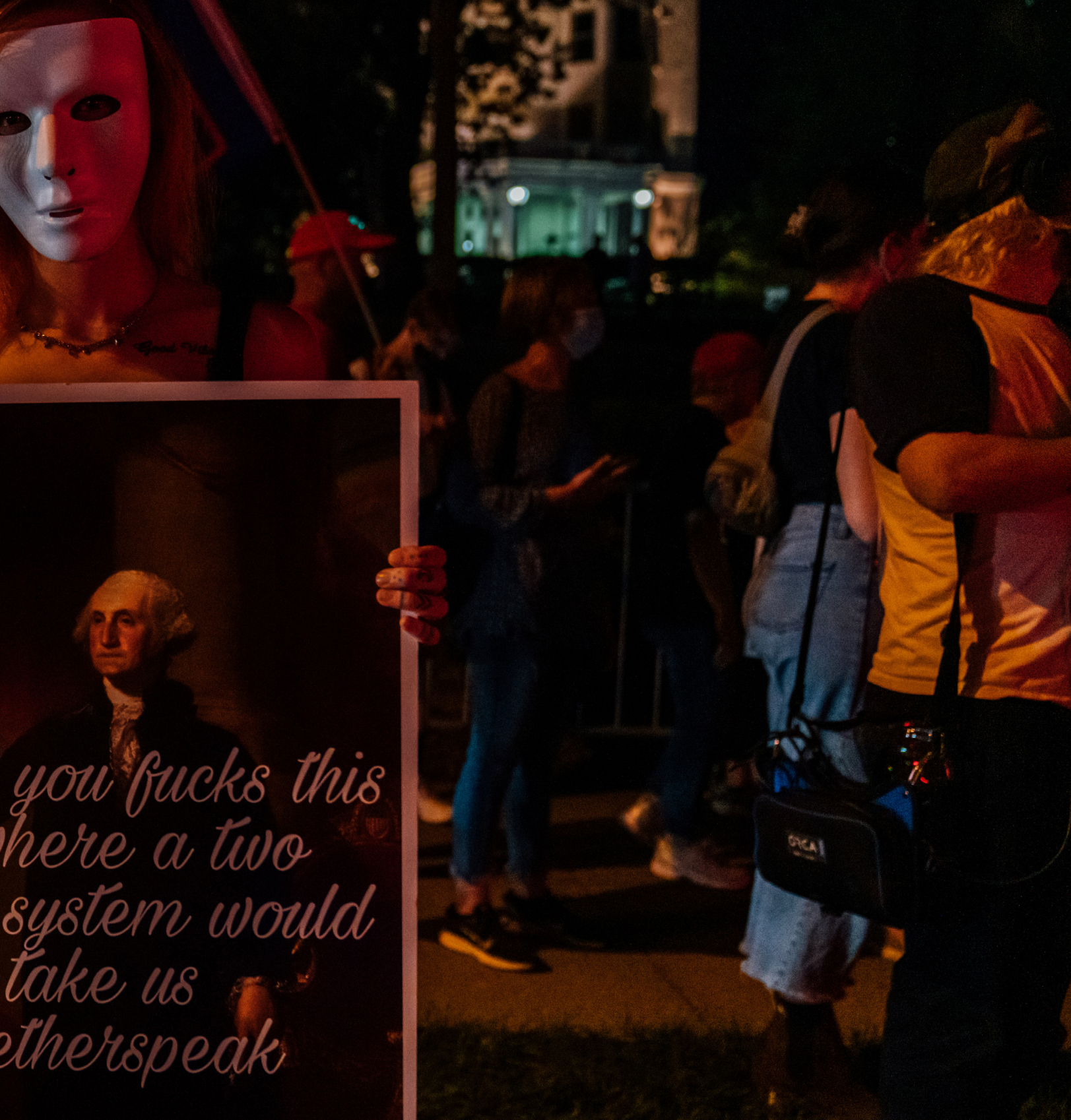
C.J. Polychroniou interviews Noam Chomsky





C*J. Polychroniou: Although Biden has seemingly won the election, the Democrats failed to materialize a blue-wave landslide, and it is clear we will continue to deal with large-scale Trumpism. Given that you were extremely skeptical of the polls from day one, what do you think contributed to the massive turnout for Trump, even as Biden saw an even more massive turnout? Or, to phrase the questions differently, why is nearly half*

**Photo by Alex K
Shutters**



ent Photography/
stock.com

the country continuing to support a dangerous charlatan leader with such a feverish passion?

Noam Chomsky: The very fact that someone

could be considered a serious candidate after just having killed tens if not hundreds of thousands of Americans through a disastrous response to COVID-19 is an extraordinary victory for Trump—and a defeat for the coun-

try, for the world and for hopes for a decent future.

Some of Trump's victories are very revealing. A report on NPR discussed his victory in a solid Democratic county on the Texas-Mexico border with many poor Latinos that hadn't voted Republican for a century, since Harding. The NPR analyst attributes Biden's loss to his famous "gaffe" in the last debate, in which he said that we have to act to save human society from destruction in the not very distant future. Not his words, of course, but that's the meaning of his statement: that we have to make moves to transition away from fossil fuels, which are central to the regional economy. Whether that's the reason for the radical shift, or whether it's attributable to another of the colossal Democratic organizing failures, the fact that the outcome is attributed to the gaffe is itself indicative of the rot in the dominant culture. In the U.S., it is [considered] a serious "gaffe" to dare to hint that we have to act to avoid a cataclysm.

Poor working people in the border area are not voting for the predictable consequences of Trump's race toward cataclysm. They may simply be skeptical about what science predicts. Sixty percent of conservative Republicans (35 percent of moderate Republicans) believe that humans are contributing "not too much/not at all" to global warming. A poll reported in *Science* found that only 20 percent of Republicans trust scientists "a lot...to do what is right for the country." Why then believe the dire predictions? These, after all, are the messages pounded into their heads daily by the White House and its media echo chamber.

South Texan working people may not be ready to sacrifice their lives and communities today on the basis of claims in elite circles that they are instructed not to trust. These tendencies cannot be blamed solely on Trump's malevolence. They trace back to the failure

of the Democratic Party to bring to the public a serious program to fend off environmental catastrophe while also improving lives and work—not because such programs don't exist; they do. But because they don't appeal to the donor-oriented Clintonite neoliberals who run the Democratic Party.

There's more. Trump has shown political genius in tapping the poisonous currents that run right below the surface of American society. He has skillfully nourished and amplified the currents of white supremacy, racism and xenophobia that have deep roots in American history and culture, now exacerbated by fear that "they" will take over "our" country with its shrinking white majority. And the concerns are deep. A careful study by political scientist Larry Bartels reveals that Republicans feel that "the traditional American way of life is disappearing so fast that we may have to use force to save it," and more than 40 percent agree that "a time will come when patriotic Americans have to take the law into their own hands."

Trump has also skillfully tapped reservoirs of anger and economic resentment among the working and middle classes who have been subjected to the bipartisan neoliberal assault of the last 40 years. If they feel that they have been robbed, they have good reason. The Rand Corporation recently estimated transfer of wealth from the lower 90 percent to the very rich during the 4 neoliberal decades: \$47 trillion, not small change. Looking more closely, the transfer was primarily to a small fraction of the very rich. Since Reagan, the top 0.1 percent has doubled their share of the country's wealth to an astonishing 20 percent.

These outcomes are not the result of principles of economics or laws of history but of deliberate policy decisions. If decisions are shifted from government ("government is the problem," as Reagan claimed) they do not disappear. They are placed in the hands of the



Photo by Julia
stoc



by Leshay/Shutterstock.com

corporate sector, which must be guided solely by greed (per neoliberal economic guru Milton Friedman). With such guidelines in place, results are not hard to anticipate.

On top of the near-\$50 trillion train robbery, the international economy (“globalization”) has been structured to set American working people in competition with those in low-wage countries with no workers’ rights while the very rich are granted protection from market forces, by exorbitant patent rights, to take one

example. Again, the effects of this bipartisan enterprise are not a surprise.

Less educated workers may not know the details or understand the mechanisms that have been designed to undermine their lives, but they see the outcomes. The Democrats offer them nothing. They long ago abandoned the working class and have been full collaborators in the racket. Trump in fact harms workers even more than the opposition, but he excoriates “elites”—while slavishly serv-

ing the super-rich and corporate sector, as his legislative program and executive orders amply demonstrate.

Apart from almost daily steps to chip away at the environment that sustains life and to pack the judiciary top-to-bottom with far right young lawyers, the main achievement of the Trump-McConnell administration has been the tax scam of 2017: “a delayed tax increase dressed up as a tax cut,” economist Joseph Stiglitz explains. “The Trump administration has a dirty little secret: It’s not just planning to increase taxes on most Americans. The increase has already been signed, sealed and delivered, buried in the pages of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.”

The law was carefully designed to lower taxes initially so as to “hoodwink” Americans to think their taxes were being reduced, but with mechanisms to ensure that tax increases “would affect nearly everyone but people at the top of the economic hierarchy. All taxpayer income groups with incomes of \$75,000 and under—that’s about 65 percent of taxpayers—will face a higher tax rate in 2021 than in 2019.” It’s the same device that the George W. Bush Republicans used to sell their 2001 “tax cut—for the rich.

What happens if Trump refuses to accept a Biden victory and seeks to settle the matter in the Supreme Court? And when corporate lawyers and the militias end up doing their thing, is it even remotely possible that the country could end up under martial law?

My uneducated guess is that it won’t come to that, but it’s a speculation with little basis or credibility. Trump has strong reasons—maybe even his personal future—to hold on to office by any possible means. We are not in the days of Richard Nixon, who had good reasons to question the legitimacy of the vote he lost in 1960, but had the decency to put the welfare

of the country about his personal ambitions. Not Donald Trump. And the organization that grovels at his feet is not the political party of 60 years ago.

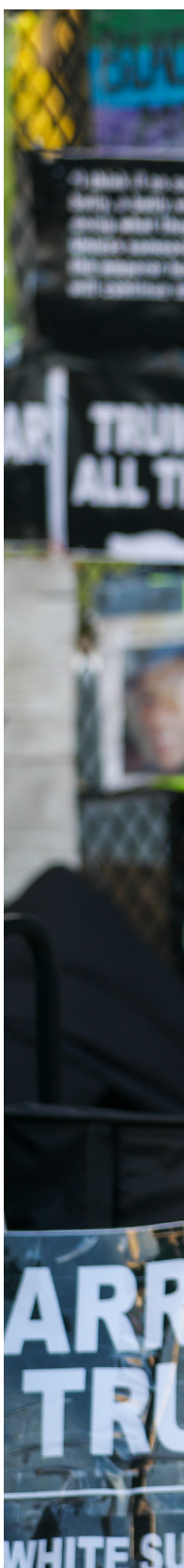
Trump still has two months to wield the wrecking ball that has already diminished the United States, harmed the world and severely threatened the future. His penchant for wrecking everything he did not create, whatever the cost, is hard to miss. He might decide to go for broke.

What are the next steps for the left?

For the left, elections are a brief interlude in a life of real politics, a moment to ask whether it’s worth taking off time to vote—typically against. In 2020, the choice was transparent, for reasons not worth reviewing. Then back to work. Once Trump is fully removed, the work will be to move forward to construct the better world that is within reach. **Z**

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity. The Publication of Origin for this article is *Truthout*.

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. He is a regular contributor to Truthout as well as a member of Truthout’s Public Intellectual Project. He has published several books and his articles have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. He is the author of *Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change*, an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at Truthout and collected by Haymarket Books.



How Could 70 Million Still Have Voted for Trump?

By Jack Rasmus



18th Century LAWS
DON'T WORK
in 21st C
America



Media pundits and others have been deeply perplexed as to why so many Americans in this election—70 million, in fact—voted for Trump.

But it's not all that difficult to understand. There are three major explanations: the economy, health, and, most important, a matter of culture and racism manipulated by clever politicians for the past quarter century, at least.

The first explanation—economics—is that the red states (Trump's base) did not "suffer" as much economically from the recession as have (and are) the blue states and big urban areas. The red states only partly shut down and for just a couple of weeks, quickly reopening as early as May. A few hot spots in New Orleans and Florida were quickly contained. By reopening quickly, they economically minimized the negative effects of the shutdowns and quarantines. They would eventually pay the price in health for the early reopening, but they clearly chose to trade off later health problems for early economic gains. At the same time they quickly reopened, the red pro-Trump states still received the economic benefits of the March-April CARES Act bailout that pumped more than a trillion dollars into the economy benefitting households directly—i.e. this was the \$670 billion in small business PPP grants, the \$350 billion in extra unemployment benefits, the \$1,200 checks, and other direct spending on hospitals and health providers. The Trump states got their full share of the bailout, even if they didn't need it as much after having reopened early. Finally, if Trump supporters lived in the farm belt sector of red state U.S., they got \$70 billion more in direct subsidies and payments from Trump that was designed to placate the farm belt during Trump's disastrous China trade war. That's three main sources of added income the red states received that the blue states, coasts, big cities and elsewhere did not get. In short, the economic impact of this

recession was therefore far less severe in the geographic areas of the greatest concentration of Trump's political support.

Second, COVID did not negatively impact the red states as much as it did the blue states and major urban areas of America—at least not until late in September-October, after which much of the voting had already begun and political positions had hardened. And then when COVID did hit the red states late, it impacted relatively more the larger cities and not as much initially in the small towns and rural areas of Trump's red states.

But even more important than these relative economic and health effects, the continued support that exists for Trump in his base of red states—i.e. in the small town, rural, small business, and religious right areas—is grounded in the "ethnic" composition of his mostly White European heritage followers who are fearful "their" white culture is being overwhelmed by the growing numbers and diversity of people of color in America.

This fear is the foundation of his—and their—white nationalism, which is really a form of racism. So too is their anti-immigration directed against people of color—whether latinos, blacks, muslims or whomever. White European heritage, small town, rural, evangelical, small business "heartland" of the south and midwest U.S. sees "their America" disappearing, or at least having to share more equally with people of color. The latter are now almost equal in population to White Europeans, but are not equal politically or economically. They are knocking on the door and want in. They want their equal share.

But clever politicians have convinced White European America that it's a zero sum game: what people of color America may get will be only at their expense. Sharing is not possible. Trump and others, are manipulating this fear and discontent for their own political careers, convincing them that it's an "Us vs. Them"

zero sum game. That way those with wealth and real power redirect discontent from their four decades of obscene wealth accumulation at the expense of everyone else, white or non-white Americans. Whipping up and redirecting discontent into identity and racial identity themes means the super well-off won't have to share with either White European or non-White European people of color.

Pit the one against the other, while those with wealth and power continue to pick the pockets of both. That was, and remains, Trump's strategy. It's also the strategy of his wealthy backers. It's the age-old American ruling class racism shell game, now in the form of "old wine in new bottles," as they saying goes. "America First" means, in effect, the White America of his political base comes first. Trump and financial backers and power brokers—like the Adelsons, Mercers, Singers and their allies—have convinced White European America in the heartland to be fearful and oppose equality for Americans of color elsewhere. That's why Trump sounds very much like a White Nationalist, and even at times as pro-fascist, because that's the message of the far right as well.

Trump has become their bulwark against this demographic change, which they fear above all else. That's why Trump could do or say whatever he wanted and move increasingly to further extremes, and they would still support him. They would support him even in dismantling what remains of truncated Democracy in America, if it were necessary in their view. And they still will continue to support him. Neither Trump nor Trumpism is going away. It has taken deep root in the 70 million, waiting for a resurrection in 2024 or even 2022.

The 2024 election may therefore be even more contentious should Biden and the Democrats fail to aggressively resolve the economic and health dual crises deepening this winter

in America. Should Biden adopt a minimalist program and solution—in the name of a renewed bipartisanship strategy aimed at placating Mitch McConnell's Republican Senate—then "Bidenomics" is doomed. It will result in a mid-term 2022 election sweep return of Trump forces, maybe under the leadership of Trump, or maybe Ted Cruz, or maybe Marco Rubio, or maybe some clever new face. A minimalist Biden program will suffer the fate of Obama's minimalist economic stimulus program of January 2009, which resulted in a massive loss of electoral support for Democrats in the mid-term elections of 2010 and in turn led to the loss of the U.S. House of Representatives Democrat majority, and then the Senate soon after. The economic consequences of that particular gridlock following that are all well known. There is a great risk of the same occurring in 2021-22.

The 2020 election looked in some fundamental ways a lot like 2016, with the differences today being the working and middle classes in the swing states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania flipped back to Democrats in 2020 after having voted for Trump in 2016. It was a three state flip. That flip was because Trump simply did not deliver on his 2016 promises to bring good paying industrial jobs back to those states after 20 years of free trade, offshoring, and the de-industrialization of the region. A good example of Trump's failed promises was the Asian Foxconn Corp., maker of Apple iPhone parts. Trump and Foxconn promised to bring 5,000 jobs to the U.S. upper midwest. It never happened. Foxconn's operation in the U.S. today is limited to only 250 jobs in a warehouse. So the upper midwest again slipped back by narrow margins to the Democrats. But if the Democrats can't deliver jobs either, they'll just as easily slip back again in 2022 and 2024.

The other difference in 2020 from 2016 is the emergence of real grassroots movements



I WILL NOT
GO Quietly
BACK
TO THE
1950's



in Georgia and in the southwest in Arizona-Nevada—Black folks and their allies in Georgia and Latinos and Native Americans in the southwest. Also new organizing and mobilizing of people of color and workers in places like Philadelphia, Detroit, Erie, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere.

These new growing grassroots movements are the real political forces that determined Biden's win, along with the working class and middle class disenchantment with Trump's failed promises. Biden's win had therefore less to do with Nancy Pelosi's strategy of targeting suburban white women, vets, professionals and independents. That strategy failed to produce any "blue wave" whatsoever. In fact, it resulted in Democrat loss of seats in the House of Representatives, while wasting tens of millions of dollars on futile Senate races like that in Kentucky against Mitch McConnell. Just think if that money was spent in Georgia. If it was, there might not be the need to have runoff elections there this coming January for the state's two Senate seats.

No, the Democrat leadership grand strategy was a definite failure; the strategy of mobilizing the grassroots in Georgia and the Southwest, a strategy not supported much financially by the Democrat party leadership, is what has put Biden in the White House.

What remains to be seen is whether Pelosi, Shumer and the moneybag corporate donors of their party will understand what has really happened this election cycle and why Biden really won (and the House and Senate campaigns largely failed). If the leaders of the party now go the route of a minimalist program in 2020, they will no doubt suffer a similar fate in 2022 as they did in 2010. Then we will all be back to square one with a resurgence of Trump and Trumpism once again.

The Democrats are at an historical crossroads. They can either understand the real forces behind the 70 million supporters who

voted for Trump, or they can ignore history in the making and repeat history of the past of 2009-10 and subsequently suffer the same consequences in 2022 and certainly 2024. But don't expect the media pundits to understand any of this, any more than they can even now comprehend why Trump's followers number in the tens of millions despite his loss. They and Trump are not defeated yet. They have been merely checked for a while. **Z**





FROMS
DEMAND
ACTION
FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA

DISARM
HATE



WE ONLY
LOSE IF
WE STOP

FIGHTING