

Vote to Save Our Basic Civil Rights

July 31, 2024



Symposium on the U.S. Election

This article is part of a symposium on the U.S. election.

The U.S. Left has long debated how to respond to elections and this year the controversy is more intense than usual. We asked two thoughtful left commentators—Rebecca Gordon and Natalia Tylim—to give their contrasting views on the November election and then we got brief personal comments from several members of the *New Politics* editorial board. Please note that these articles were completed before the June 27 Biden-Trump debate. The arguments advanced regarding Biden and the election more or less still apply if the Democrats replace him with another politically comparable candidate.

The Lesser Evil Is Still Less Evil, *Rebecca Gordon*

No Election Can Save Us: Confronting Genocide and Creeping Fascism, *Natalia Tylim*

Vote To Save Our Basic Civil Rights, *Frieda Afary*

Don't Just Vote or Not Vote, *Daniel Fischer*

The Election and Left Responsibility, *Stephen R. Shalom*



The choice in the 2024 U.S. presidential election is between Joseph Biden, a liberal capitalist who is soft on Israel's brutal occupation of Palestinians, and Donald Trump, an outright fascist and misogynist. Trump openly promises dictatorship, ending free speech/assembly, imprisoning dissidents, and putting undocumented immigrants in concentration camps.

With Biden, we will still have the right to hold meetings, publish contrary views, and protest. Women will still have contraceptive and abortion rights in the Democratic majority states. We will still have some basic labor, civil rights, and environmental laws and will still be able to protest against Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. The United States will still send aid to the Ukrainians fighting against Russia's brutal imperialist invasion.

With Trump, any journalist or politician who has stood up to Trump's authoritarianism, anyone who has been active in defense of human rights, Black Lives Matter, feminism, LGBTQ rights, anyone who has been politically involved in solidarity with Palestinians and Jewish peace activists can face arrest, imprisonment, and in some cases death.

The choice is very clear to me. One candidate, Biden, despite his many defects, gives us the chance

to continue to publish, organize, protest for human rights, and stay alive. The other, Trump, will silence and kill us.

During the primaries, it was sensible to register protest votes to make a statement and to put pressure on Biden to change some of his policies. Now, however, given how close the two candidates are in the polls, given how strong Trump's base is at this point and how his anti-human and authoritarian capitalist ideology has taken over the minds of tens of millions in the United States, it is incumbent upon those who believe in human rights and progressive values to vote for Biden. At this point, not voting at all or voting for a Third-Party candidate is a vote for Trump.

As an Iranian American librarian, writer, and activist, I keep thinking about how the majority of the people in Iran have suffered for decades because of the terrible mistakes that their "progressive" opposition leaders made in 1979 by allowing a religious fundamentalist authoritarian government to take power. Forty-five years later, the Iranian people have still not been able to rid themselves of this brutal regime.

May 31, 2024