

Making Sense of Trump's Victory & the Needed Resistance

written by Frieda Afary | November 11, 2024

This article analyzes the vote breakdown, the pundits' views, argues that Trump is a fascist and offers perspectives for the needed anti-fascist resistance.

Donald Trump's election as president, and the Republican victories nationwide are a catastrophe for progressive forces in the U.S. and around the world. What the November 5, 2024 election showed was that while this country is still divided, there has been a rightward shift nationwide and across all demographic and geographic groups. (Levitt, 2024)

Vote Breakdown:

Let's take a closer look at the demographic breakdown of the votes. Approximately 72 million voted for Harris and 75 million voted for Trump. Approximately 700,000 voted for Jill Stein and 700,000 voted for Robert Kennedy. This means that Democrats received 10 million fewer votes than in 2020 when Biden received 81 million. Trump received approximately the same number of votes he received in 2020. (U.S. Election Results, 2024)

While 89% of Black women and 60% of Latina women voted for Harris, only 47% of white women voted for her. Among men, 59% of white men, 47% of Latino men and 24% of Black men voted for Trump. Within the different age groups, the breakdown was roughly 50-50 in all age groups with a small advantage for Harris among people under age 45. (Ross and Davis, 2024)

Among religious groups, 80% of evangelical Christians voted for Trump. 80% of Jews voted for Harris. Among U.S. Muslims, 53% voted for Jill Stein, 21% for Trump and 20% for Harris. (CAIR 2024)

While referendums on abortion rights won in seven states, four of those states, Arizona, Missouri, Montana and Nevada voted for Trump. (Lee, 2024, and Filipovic, 2024). Voters in Missouri and Alaska, which voted for Trump, also voted to increase the minimum wage and require employees to provide paid sick time. These contradictions are important to ponder. However, they do not take away the overall rightward shift exhibited in nationwide counts.

Evaluating Pundits' Views:

Mainstream pundits have mostly attributed the Republican victory and the rightward shift to rising inflation, economic hardships and Democrats being too "woke", and not closing the border to undocumented immigrants in the post-Covid period (Hubler, 2024 and Dowd, 2024). Leftists and left liberal pundits have blamed the Democrats for abandoning the working class and paying too much attention to gender, identity and wokeness. (Corbett, 2024 and Kristof, 2024). Both views have some glaring contradictions.

In fact, the inflation caused by the massive deaths and disruptions of the pandemic was going down, and employment and even real wages were up. The Biden administration, despite its disastrous

foreign policy in the Middle East, was the most pro-worker on the national scene, in comparison to other administrations in the past fiftyfive years. It had also addressed the concerns about the loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs to globalization and had created approximately 800,000 manufacturing jobs through its infrastructure bills. (Hasan and Jones, 2024). Harris, too, despite her effort to cozy up to Wall Street, also supported the PRO act in favor of labor union organizing, proposed a higher minimum wage, more assistance with rent, childcare, elderly care, the continuation of the Affordable Care Act, and reproductive and abortion rights which offer strong economic benefits to women and allow them to continue their education and have time for their jobs. She supported loan forgiveness for students and a strong public education system.

Even if the bulk of the mainstream and leftist analyses of the election results were entirely correct, they do not explain why over 50% of a population suffering from economic hardships, and a working class feeling abandoned would vote for a candidate who was the epitome of the superrich, promised to give massive tax cuts to the super rich, and built his campaign with the help of the world's richest and strongly anti-union factory owner and corporate leader, Elon Musk. (Silverman, 2024)

Trump's victory cannot be explained by economic reductionism.

It can be argued that most of those who voted for Trump have come to believe in authoritarian capitalism. They seem to think that the way to move forward in individual life and as a country is to exploit, cut regulations, cut taxes for the rich, and let a bully and a rapist take charge. They have been deeply recruited into the discourse of patriarchy, misogyny (misogynoir), anti-immigrant hatred and racism even if they themselves are women or people of color. (Green and King, 2024)

The effects of misinformation, disinformation, high-tech distraction and the erasure of memory are also strongly involved in creating the outcome that we witnessed in the election. How else can we explain the fact that Trump's responsibility for the deaths of over 400,000 from COVID under his COVID-denying bumbling administration, (Geller and Har, 2021), his convictions for sexual assault, and fraud, and his violent coup attempt on January 6, 2021 were forgotten or praised among his supporters?

Are Trump and His Supporters Fascists?

Although not everyone who voted for Trump is a fascist, there is no denying that the movement as whole is aiming for fascist ends.

In a recent interview, Jason Stanley, philosophy professor and author of *How Fascism Works*, argues that what makes Trump a strongman and a fascist is that he demands absolute loyalty from his employees, promotes crony capitalism and extreme nationalism, rewards theocrats and claims that all problems come from immigrants, Marxists and socialists.

Stanley also emphasizes that when high inequality and profound unhappiness at the system plague a society, a demagogue can redirect the anger toward immigrants and socialists. "Trump gives us a more classically European fascist structure: The Cult of the Leader." (Fadel, 2024).

Robert Paxton, a leading historian of fascism has also identified Trump as a fascist and has stated that what makes Trump different from Hitler and Mussolini is his stronger mass base. (Zerofsky, 2024).

Some on the Left however, refuse to identify Trump as a fascist and prefer to call him a "Bonapartist." They argue that if Trump is called a fascist, then the Left would have to form a united front with the Democrats to fight back against fascism. Some on the Left are reluctant to form such a united front. (Palmer, 2024)

Although Kamala Harris called Trump a fascist when asked that question in an October townhall event with CNN's Anderson Cooper, The Democrats are not speaking of organizing a resistance against fascism. They are still hoping that they will be able to use the legislative and the judicial system to challenge the Trump administration every step of the way, even though the Supreme Court, with a majority of Republican justices, has recently given Trump absolute immunity. The U.S. Senate now has a Republican majority. The House of Representatives will most likely have a Republican majority.

What Lies Ahead and What Kind of Resistance is Needed?

After the Trump administration takes over on January 20, we can expect immediate arrests of undocumented immigrants to satisfy his promise of "mass deportations." Whether this administration can arrest over 11 million undocumented immigrants and deport them is highly questionable, given the cost, the disruption, and the damage it will do to the U.S. economy. Instead, it is much more likely that the arrested immigrants will be put in the "Giant Camps" that Trump promised (Savage, Haberman, Swan, 2023) and that his administration will attempt to put them to work as indentured laborers or send them around to be used as slave laborers. Perhaps he will attempt to use them to start a massive housing construction project to appease his fascist base and assuage any concerns about doing damage to the economy.

Trump and his allies have also promised to go after "the enemy within" and prosecute, drag through the streets or kill the lawyers, judges, Democratic Party leaders and even some Republican Party leaders who stood up to him and tried to hold him accountable for his crimes. He is intent on persecuting and destroying the journalists and those responsible members of the media who have done a heroic job in exposing him and telling the truth. He will go after the socialists and Marxists that he calls "vermin."

We can also expect the implementation of Project 2025 which was devised by the Heritage Foundation, a Republican Think Tank. That agenda spelled out in a 900-page "Mandate for Leadership" document, includes remaking every department of the government according to extreme right views. It replaces career civil servants with political appointees who can be hired or fired at the will of the president. It decimates the public education system, bans abortion and reproductive rights, gets rid of climate protection regulations, removes all "immigration violators" and much more.

Concerning foreign policy, Trump is already forcing the Ukrainians to surrender to Putin's murderous imperialist invasion. He is also making deals with the Netanyahu government and the Gulf Arab states about the future of the Palestinian people. (Naar, 2024)

It is necessary for progressives to be clear about what type of united front and perspective is needed to create a strong resistance movement against Trump's fascism. The networks of millions that came together to vote for Harris and Walz during the pre-election period have created a large base of pro-democracy activists, especially of young people to create such a movement. Mass calls involving up to 140,000 people have been taking place since November 5 to talk about fighting back.

For a strong resistance movement to be formed, we need a deep understanding of why authoritarian capitalism, misogyny and racism are growing globally, and why fighting them goes hand in hand with combating disinformation, distraction and erasure of memory. We need full awareness of facts, history, emancipatory ideas and the ability to argue fairly and convincingly. This requires critical thinking skills and a vision of a viable humanist alternative to the inhumanity of capitalism. I encourage readers to explore my discussion of these topics in my recent book, *Socialist Feminism: A New Approach*.

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