

Trump Lost the Election, But What is the Future of Trump and Trumpism?

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Democrat Joseph Biden defeated Republican President Donald Trump by a popular vote of about 78.6 to 72.9 million votes and an Electoral College vote of 306 to 232, yet Trump has refused to concede and calls the vote “rigged” and the election “stolen.” While he has not spoken publicly, his Tweets keep his supporters mobilized and has encouraged them to contribute to the political action committee he has created, supposedly to finance his lawsuits to overturn the election in various states, but actually to pay of his campaign’s debts. His intransigence encouraged tens of thousands of his supporters—including far right white nationalist groups—to march on Saturday in Washington, D.C. to protest the theft of the election.

Meanwhile, Trump’s lawsuits in several battleground states—Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Georgia—have been thrown out of court, mostly for lack of evidence of fraud or mishandling of the vote. His failure to win the lawsuits has made nearly impossible a second, higher stage of a political challenge, the attempt to get state legislatures to override the vote and send Trump delegates to the Electoral College on December 14. All of this had led some Republican leaders to begin to abandon Trump and recognize the Biden victory. The collapse of this legal strategy and the decline of support from his party therefore makes it impossible for Trump to stage some sort of coup.

Having lost the election, what is Trump’s future? At the top of his agenda is arranging a pardon for himself, a pardon for crimes of which he has not been convicted. He might try to use the presidential pardon to pardon himself, which would almost surely end up in the Supreme Court. Some think he will resign before January 20, so that Vice-President Michael Pence can assume the presidency and pardon him. The precedent for this is the unconditional pardon of President Richard Nixon for any crimes that he might have committed by his vice-president and successor President Gerald Ford in 1978. Such a pardon, however, would only cover federal crimes, and New York State prosecutors are ready to indict him for financial and election related crimes.

Trump has suggested that upon leaving the White House he might start a new TV program, since he has become furious with Fox News, which for years supported and promoted him but which early on recognized Biden’s victory. He could find a network for a TV show with himself as star, the income from which would be important, especially as he has some \$900 million in debts coming due soon.

Trump has also talked about running for president again in 2024. If he does begin to campaign for the election in four years, it would cause difficulties for the Republican Party whose leaders might like to free themselves from their vassalage to him. Some close to Trump think he would not run for fear of losing, and if Trump decides not to run, Pence or some other less flamboyant but equally rightwing Republican will run.

The problem greater than Trump is Trumpism. Some 70 million people voted for Trump, and perhaps a third of those are the hardcore racists who rallied to the building of the border wall, the Muslim ban, and his call to Make America Great Again. More than half of the white working class supports Trump, which poses an enormous challenge to building a progressive working class movement. If Trump gets his TV show and his "Trump 2024" campaign he will continue to feed his base misinformation, lies, and his racist, sexist, anti-immigrant views through his tweets and his mass rallies. There is also the possibility that some other even more virulent politician, a neo-fascist, rises to challenge him.

In a historic shift, Republicans have become the party of the white working class. The task for the left will be to find a way to build a multi-ethnic working class movement to resist Trump and to pressure the neoliberal Biden.