

# Accustomed to liberating others, who will liberate Americans?

The controversial election of Joe Biden – if certified – as President of the United States has been received by many pundits with a sense of relief from prospects of a second Trump presidency, the first of which – they say – has left America on the “verge,” on the “brink,” or some other synonym, of fascism. Others observed that while America had defeated Trump, Trumpism is here to stay. Bill Maher, the popular American talk show host observed, [“We took a big step towards saving democracy... but democrats were supposed to flip the senate and didn’t; supposed to flip state legislatures, not a one; and lost seats in the House. In a year that was so much about making people aware of racism, their share of minority vote went down. The message to democrats from so much of the country seems to be we don’t like Trump but we still can’t get ourselves to vote for you.”](#) Amidst this sigh of relief, the question that is begging to be asked is whether it is the people or the political system that dodged the bullet.

Trump will never be forgiven for trying to blur this distinction. He is being exceptionalised from his predecessors due to his lack of sophistication that threatened to remove the veil of the American political system by openly claiming to be the defender of white America, something that his predecessors understood as a discreet imperative. Protecting this imperative was a political game that Obama especially played with impeccable political dexterity.

But if Trump was the exception who would have descended America into fascism, why then the caveat that people shouldn’t expect Trumpism to die down even when he’s no longer around? Bree Newsome, the prominent American political

commentator, came tantalizingly close to revealing the reason. ["The two-party system is a hindrance to democracy to begin with. The GOP has descended into full-blown fascism,](#) a cult of personality organised around Trump that initiated new genocidal projects incl. kidnapping children, sterilizing people & allowing COVID to decimate BIPoC [Blacks, indigenous people, and people of colour]," she tweeted on November, 10. Newsome was merely echoing WEB Dubois, the celebrated American sociologist, who wrote in October 1956, "I believe that democracy has so far disappeared in the United States that no 'two evils' exist," he said. "There is but one evil party with two names, and it will be elected despite all I can do or say."

If the two-party system prevents the existence of democracy, then the removal of Trump cannot be construed as "a big step towards saving democracy." Moreover, if the removal of Trump will not change things, then questions must be asked about a political system where the will of the people does not amount to the change they wish to see. Similarly, the objective of elections must be interrogated. Otherwise, they amount to a ritual performed every four years to masquerade the reality. But for whom and for what purpose are they performed?

Richard Wolff, Professor Emeritus of economics at the prestigious University of Massachusetts at Amherst, seems to have the answer, "US capitalism funds a political monopoly operated by 2 parties that support capitalism. They block other parties, esp. socialists, from competing. Each party turns mass bitterness at capitalism against the other party instead. Social division results." In other words, there is a conspiracy between capital and the two parties whose imperative is to blindfold the people into the belief that their vote matters and that they can drive real change. In reality, corporate control over both parties, an important source of funding, has the latter held hostage and unable to deliver anything meaningful beyond "hope." This kind of

“democratic change” – cosmetic in nature – has for centuries assured a bipartisan consensus around the substantive aspects of American domestic and foreign policy: the prison industrial complex that is a constant reminder for Blacks (victims of the real fascism) that they are yet to fully belong to America as citizens with equal rights and privileges as those enjoyed by their white compatriots; and corporate control of the military industrial complex that sustains global domination and exploitation. A politician who excels in selling this deception finds success in the American political system and one who lacks the sophistication to do so in an elegant manner is punished. Trump thought he could blurt all this out from the top of his voice (Twitter) as if the White House is a flea market. This is American politics: the role of politics is to exploit hope every four years. This is the measure of a successful American politician fit for reverence. You try to invent a new politics at your own peril; that’s the lesson.

Although they both suffered from a narcissistic disorder, Obama’s genius was his instinctive grasp that his colour required him to overcompensate by bending backwards to reassure the corporate oligarchy that he wasn’t a disruptive force, Trump’s privileged instincts had him confuse himself with the system for which one was handsomely rewarded with a second term and another was punished and, as a spoilt brat would do, is left pleading to the very system that has had enough of his antics. Trump thinks he is being punished by the system that is allowing democrats to cheat (and his own party that is reluctant to defend him) although he should consider that the entire system is working perfectly fine and simply wants him out.

### **Without accountability, expect identity politics**

Unable to be transparent with the American people about the real source of political power, the successful politician must sell hope without telling the Americans the real source of their hopelessness and why their vote doesn’t mean what they

think it does. Hope for Blacks is premised on the fact that things have been much worse for them – slavery – and that their lives can only get better if only they could emulate the ethos of the “working class” Americans.

For the “working class” Americans – the promised land of the poor blacks who yearn for a time when they could make a decent living – by turning out to vote in heavy numbers they secure their middle-class status that is increasingly threatened a prospect of which could turn them to government assisted welfare programs on which only lazy without the protestant ethic depend. In other words, the “turn out the vote” campaign is a gimmick that promises change that never materializes, particularly in reference to the structural problems facing the people – Black, White, and Yellow – that remain unchanged. This is the real source of disenchantment and disillusionment that has “hindered” democracy, for those who still have some hope left; alternatively, it has “disappeared” democracy, for those who have come to terms with the reality of the American political system. Such a system will remain on the “verge” for as long as the people, to protect their innocence, are not told the truth about how much power they really hold. In the meantime, a result of the failure of the two-party system and the attendant disillusionment, Americans are no longer called upon to vote for a candidate; over a climate of fear, they are enticed to vote against one: if Trump wins, expect fascism!

Accountability is not possible without transparency. Trump is a manifestation of the failure of the two-party system to come to terms with the American people. He is both a beneficiary and victim of this failure, not its cause. Long self-fashioned as an “independent” and an “outsider”, Trump’s promise to Americans was that he would “drain the swamp” once in Washington, a reference to cleaning up the bipartisan corruption. As a result of this bipartisan corruption and greed, political power is beholden to corporate interests at the expense of American voters. This lack of accountability

(which is the real the cause) is what gives rise to identity politics: where there is no accountability, identity politics reigns supreme, as opportunists rise as group defenders to exploit the people's disillusionment, which ironically only increases hopelessness in the long run.

From the perspective of the ordinary person, this is a predicament with no meaningful way out in the foreseeable future. At least not when the politicians and the media remain faithful to the capitalist??? corporate oligarchy in this conspiracy against the American people. As a result of this deception, the people will continue to partake in the voting ritual where politicians promise them hope as a substitute for change. This is not to say that elections will not remain important in the American life; on the contrary, even as they constitute a pacifier for a disillusioned electorate, they are essential for America's stability and the survival of its political system. In other words, the corporate oligarchy needs elections more than ordinary Americans do. Most importantly, as long as the latter can be blackmailed into the belief that their survival is threatened if they don't vote against a worse option – negative democracy –there exists a strong disincentive for restoring the power of the vote by creating a system that is truly accountable to Americans, where their aspirations matter, a system that liberates them from the stranglehold of the corporate oligarchy.

Alternatively, as long as the American people cannot muster up what it takes to liberate their democracy from the corporate oligarchy, the latter will continue to thrive on their backs by shielding the two parties in the assurance that as bad as either party is to the electorate, one of them is assured of winning – notwithstanding the prospect of defeat in the next electoral cycle by a population under a renewed threat.

If we know the winners, who are the losers? Time to liberate the American people.