

A Paradigm Shift in America's Intellectual Community

By [Pablo Ouziel](#)

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Contrary to popular belief, the big change in America's society stemming from the recent presidential elections, was not the election of the first African-American president. The most important event has taken place in the intellectual community, in which a paradigm shift has taken place and few have noticed.

The new era of voting for the lesser of the two evils has penetrated the core of America's critical intellectual community, and some of the biggest voices for change have endorsed Obama. In effect, what has taken place is the union between those opposed to imperial ideology and those endorsing it. Although this serious event has gone largely unnoticed, American intellectuals will need to reflect on its consequences seriously if they are to contribute to the building of a stable future for humanity as a whole, and in particular to mending the tarnished corrupt fabric of American society.

One American intellectual, James Petras, has been able to identify the direct social consequences of such a paradigm shift and prior to the elections has publicly expressed his views in an article titled; The Elections and the Responsibility of the Intellectual to Speak Truth to Power: Twelve Reasons to Reject Obama and Support Nader/McKinney.

As the title of the article clearly states, Petras voices the reasons why intellectuals have the responsibility of voting against Obama just like they should vote against McCain. In regards to those intellectuals who have endorsed Obama he says:

"They are what C. Wright Mills called 'crackpot realists', abdicating their responsibility as critical intellectuals. In purporting to support the 'lesser evil' they are promoting the 'greater evil': The continuation of four more years of deepening recession, colonial wars and popular alienation."

After listening to Obama's first speech after his victory, a victory he said was of the people, what Petras is saying seems disturbingly accurate when looked at through the prism of critical discourse analysis. One can look back now to the presidency of George W. Bush and listen to his rhetoric. What has been his message throughout the last 8 years? When Obama's core messages are compared to Bush's, it becomes apparent that the coming presidential plans are not too different to current presidential policies.

Even more disturbing, is the fact that when Bush spoke throughout his presidency there was always a slight cynical reaction by the majority of the public, as most of the surveys have shown time and time again. However, last night the cynicism seemed to have vanished and the hope of a new American century was reborn with full force, to the clapping thunder and

joyous splendour of the reborn American people. With every word uttered by Obama one could see how the empire was not gone, Bush almost killed it, now Obama the symbol of hope, together with all the American people in unity, are going to reconstruct their country and the world, restabilising America's faltering hegemony.

For those in the struggle against imperial expansion, the task ahead is going to prove daunting. Perhaps the echoed endorsement of the new presidency by some of the world's most public intellectuals is going to set back the struggle for true justice, in the sense that although voting without 'illusions', a landslide victory has been handed out to Obama by millions of delusional Americans. Expect more bailouts of the economic elite, expect the war drums to continue, expect more people to lose their homes and jobs. Keep organizing at the grassroots level because millions of Americans are going to need help, like the billions of people around the world who year after year ravaged by the smiling face of capitalist imperialism, have been shouting out and had their voices ignored.

The essence of capitalism in the twenty-first century is one of popular misery, thunderous war, and smiling politicians, as the global elites struggle to save pieces of their crumbling cake. In the middle of this chaos there is room for 'hope', there is certainly no 'illusion', and respect must go to Ralph Nader for fighting on and James Petras for speaking truth to power. As for the paradigm shift faced by America's intellectual community, strong choices must be made and a new generation of intellectuals must begin to drive critical thinking into a more serious and coherent direction, if humanity as a whole, is to overcome the obstacles it faces.

Pablo Ouziel is a sociologist and freelance writer.

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