

Oprah and Chomsky: Is There Room for Both on the American Left?

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[Oprah vs Noam Chomsky](#): Isn't there room for both in America's progressive culture? The idea of celebrities being involved in social issues was once met with mockery.

Oprah and Kaepernick changed that. So did SLN and Chomsky.

Who prevails as our most effective changemaker remains to be seen.



Arguably, in America, most progressive paths—highways, suburban streets, lanes—over the past two generations lead back to (or through) **Oprah Winfrey**. So why do liberal media bypass her? Are sociologists and progressive journalists waiting for her passing to acknowledge Oprah's unmatched, still evolving, role as a catalyst for change? Not erudite enough for highbrow 'alternative' media? Too ho-hum-midday-mainstream for smart American college elites who believe that nighttime analyses offer the real fix for America's troubles?

(Put aside international policies where, to start, both our elites and masses support any US military action to guarantee global stability.)

On domestic affairs Oprah has a worthy place.

Regrettably, except for climate change added to our woes, we debate the same stubbornly persistent issues: health, gender equity, abuse, violence, racial and economic inequality, censorship, voting and immigrant rights. Decades-old challenges still scream for a solution. Many are the very topics that TV talk-show host Oprah Winfrey helped propel into public consciousness. She still hasn't abandoned them.

This lady's no gadfly. Through her multiple media platforms she's tackling America's endemic problems today even more vigorously and strategically.

It seems to me that progressives could strengthen their arguments, their influence too, by at least occasionally referencing Oprah's projects, evaluating her style and examining her statements and her strategies (even with her missteps). Why ignore her? Even if unavailable for interviews, she's on record—anywhere.



Our progressive media seem to prefer ancient, long-winded men-personalities like the inimitable **Noam Chomsky**. Let's face it, the MIT- icon adds little that's new in his dispassionate recalls of American war crimes and injustices. I wonder: are progressives so uncertain of their agenda, so embarrassed by setbacks, that they invoke Chomsky's composed level headedness to stifle their rage and affirm some moral superiority?

If you're giving marks for longevity and dependability, Oprah matches Chomsky.

America's progressive media aren't averse to invoking celebrity witticisms to support their positions. (Trevor Noah and John Oliver are certainly deserving.) But do liberals champion satirists because ridicule decorously reinforces their own elite views?

Oprah's approach to culture and America's problems couldn't be more in contrast to those luminaries—neither the satirists nor the professors. Still, a touch of emotion along with her patriotism, her verve, her capacity to change, her personal faith— not least, her public reach—surely warrant this woman a place in our liberal political dialogues.

Oprah's identification of social issues precedes by decades many principles and problems which progressives are focused on. One hardly needs to recall how her TV talk show led the way— tackling painful social and medical issues, drawing celebrities into social action, launching socially relevant media projects from Dr. Oz to filmmakers Lisa Ling and Ava DuVernay.

Even if liberals bypass her, Oprah forges ahead, again innovating, again tapping new sources and resources, again a film.

With the exception of Spike Lee, Oprah has arguably done more than anyone to advance film productions re Black history and culture onto a new plane. That began 35 years ago with her roles in feature films followed by [productions she executive-produced](#):- series like "Queen Sugar" and exposés like "When They See Us".

Even after some flops, with each new venture, Oprah more rigorously advances her social change goals: a) identifying, nurturing and employing Black talent; b) creating

and affirming a real alternative representation of African-America, a nation and a history once patronizingly confined to the Black victim or Black noble savage. If you haven't seen it, check out [Oprah's "Black Love"](#) series launched in 2017 on OWN network. You may have also missed OWN's four masterfully produced [pre-2020 election town halls](#) across six states. Its success was not star power, but brilliant management, timeliness and grace. Oprah, hosting, gives the floor to regional activists Stacey Abrams and Reverend Barber, Black women university and college leaders, city mayors and sorority presidents, members of Congress, Women's March organizers and Color of Change advisors. Authority is subsumed by respect, by voices of mainly women representing constituents ready to meet hundreds of thousands of voters.

All that while liberal media pundits damn Trump and his crowd.

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Barbara is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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