

# Race and Class in America: Social Unrest and Political Tensions in the Wake of the 2016 Elections

Irrespective of who wins: Domestic Struggles to Intensify After National Poll

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This year's presidential contest have been marked by an escalation in social tensions involving both national and class issues.

These divisions within the United States are manifested in the polling data which have revealed a sharply split electorate. Although most polls are showing a narrow victory for former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, others indicate that wealthy real estate magnate Donald Trump is very close behind or in the lead.

The Clinton campaign has been negatively impacted by several factors. Hillary was not the choice of large segments of the Democratic Party constituency as Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders nearly won the primary process.

As keen observers of the primary elections noted that it was the New York elections which marked the beginning of the reversal of the momentum that Sanders had generated largely through independents, youth, students and a growing percentage of African American voters. Democratic Party state conventions were marked by acrimony over the apportionment of delegates.

This degree of internal strife was carried over into the National Democratic Convention where the Chair Debbie Wasserman Shultz was forced to resign due to revelations from Wikileaks showing there was a conspiracy to deny Sanders the nomination. Delegates engaged in protests within the halls of the Convention in Philadelphia, some walked out of the proceedings or were expelled. Outside in the streets there were demonstrations in support of Sanders. Others called for the Sanders delegates to support Third party candidates such as Jill Stein for the Greens.

Obviously there is limited enthusiasm for the Clinton campaign. Polls have shown that both Trump and Clinton are two of the most unpopular and untrusted candidates in U.S. history to gain the nominations of their parties. Although Trump who has drawn large crowds to his rallies as did Sanders during the primary, many Republican stalwarts have rejected his candidacy saying his rhetoric attacking immigrants, Muslims and women will inevitably hurt the party in other races for the congress and senate as well as damage their ability to gain votes among these sectors of the population.

A daily tracking poll released its results on November 7, just twenty-four hours before the final chance to cast a ballot. This polling data says its results compiled by "Rasmussen Reports final White House Watch survey shows Democrat Hillary Clinton with a two-point

lead over Republican Donald Trump with less than 24 hours to go until Election Day. Among early voters, Clinton has a double-digit lead. The latest national telephone and online survey of Likely U.S. Voters shows Clinton with 45% support to Trump's 43%. Libertarian Gary Johnson picks up four percent (4%) of the vote, while Green Party candidate Jill Stein gets two percent (2%). Three percent (3%) still like some other candidate, and four percent (4%) remain undecided. On Friday, Trump and Clinton were tied at 44% apiece. The two major party candidates were tied most days last week. This survey has a margin of error of +/- 2.5%."

## **Racism and the Trump Factor**

Many African Americans and other nationally oppressed people believe that Donald Trump is a racist. Trump claims that there are African Americans who support his candidacy but polling data suggests otherwise.

Moreover, the official newspaper of the Ku Klux Klan, the Crusader, carried a front page editorial with an image of Trump. The paper utilized the campaign slogan of the Republican nominee, "Make America Great Again", as the title of the editorial.

According to Fortune magazine on November 2, "In the last week of the presidential campaign, Donald Trump got lavish praise from a newspaper — but it's not one any major-party presidential candidate would want. The Ku Klux Klan's official newspaper embraced Donald Trump. The latest issue of The Crusader didn't specifically urge readers to vote for the Republican nominee, but it got very close. It used Trump's 'Make America Great Again' campaign slogan as its headline for an editorial praising the Trump catchphrase and the Republican presidential candidate himself. The newspaper bills itself as 'The Premier Voice of the White Resistance.'"

In response to the apparent endorsement, Fortune goes on to note that "In a statement, the Trump campaign called the newspaper 'repulsive.' It said its 'views do not represent the tens of millions of Americans who are uniting behind our campaign.' Trump has been criticized in the campaign for refusing to condemn the Ku Klux Klan and disavow the endorsement of David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Asked by CNN's Jake Tapper to 'unequivocally condemn' Duke, Trump claimed ignorance. 'Just so you understand, I don't know anything about David Duke, okay?' Tapper repeatedly pressed Trump to disavow Duke and the KKK, and Trump declined. Later Trump claimed that he had trouble hearing the question."

Meanwhile in Greenville, Mississippi, a 111-year-old African American Baptist church was firebombed and graffiti saying "Vote Trump" was marked on the side of the damaged building.

The state of Mississippi has a long history of racist violence against African people from the period of antebellum slavery through the white resistance to Reconstruction after the Civil War into the modern era of Civil Rights and Black political power.

On November 2, Reuters press agency reported in relationship to the attack that "Greenville Fire Chief Ruben Brown Sr. told a news conference on Wednesday afternoon that investigators had determined the fire at Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church was 'intentionally set.' 'Samples and evidence have been collected from inside the church and are being analyzed to determine the accelerant or ignition source,' Brown said. Earlier in the

day he said no one was injured in the Tuesday evening blaze, but the church was extensively damaged. 'We're investigating this as a hate crime,' Greenville Police Chief Delando Wilson told a news conference early on Wednesday. 'We feel that the quote on the church is intimidating.'

This same article goes on to quote Wilson saying the fire "tries to push your beliefs on someone else, and this is a predominantly Black church and no one has a right to try to influence the way someone votes in this election. ' Wilson told the Wall Street Journal that police on Wednesday evening were interviewing a 'person of interest' in connection with the fire but the individual had not been charged."

### **Outcomes of the Elections Will Foster Further Unrest**

Irrespective of who wins the poll on November 8 it will not resolve the ongoing social and racial tensions in the U.S. Neither candidate has been seriously questioned by corporate journalists in regard to their specific policy proposals related to concrete conditions facing the majority of people inside the country.

If Trump wins the racist, misogynist forces will be emboldened to engage in further attacks against African Americans, women, Muslims and immigrants. Trump has already suggested that if he does not prevail it would mean that the elections were rigged in favor of Clinton.

At the same time if Clinton wins by a narrow majority of the popular vote and through gaining more electoral votes, the right-wing will also be compelled to escalate their attacks against the oppressed, Democratic Party voters, and others they have designated as "the enemy."

Consequently, a serious discussion among progressive constituencies in the U.S. will be in order beginning on November 9. The masses of working people and the nationally oppressed must recognize that both the Democrats and Republicans represent Wall Street and the Pentagon.

Efforts aimed at building a genuine people's movement are required. This is the task of those who are serious about making fundamental change and transforming the racist capitalist system.

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