

There is a Way Out of Here!

Trump, Clinton, Stein and Beyond November 8, 2016

by Peter Bohmer, October 20, 2016

I have watched the three presidential debates. Trump's contempt for women, his anti-choice, anti-Mexican and anti-Muslim immigrant stance, his stereotyping of Black and Latinos, his proposed tax cuts for the wealthy and the corporations was disgusting. His toxic machismo and not so coded racism and white nationalism were on full display. Clinton, although not as bad never mentioned poor people, and called for and bragged about continued U.S. militarism. To Trump's racist claims about electoral rigging and fraud in Black communities, his mentioning of Philadelphia, St. Louis and Chicago; Hillary Clinton could have but didn't respond with the past and present actual racist voter suppression, especially by Republicans but also many Democrats in limiting voting by people with felonies, requiring multiple ID's, making registration and voting difficult, especially in low income communities. Also these three debates were limited by no questions about one of the central issues of the day, climate change, and the excluding of the Green Party Presidential candidate, Jill Stein and the Libertarian Party candidate, Gary Johnson.

#### Trump and the Southern Strategy!

I will focus on why the popular support for Trump, even if it is nowhere near a majority of all voters may be a majority of white voters. The support for Trump would be less if he was running against Bernie Sanders but still would be significant and important to understand. I will conclude by talking about what should be done to build a majority movement in the U.S. for gender, racial, environmental and economic justice and peace, and for transforming this society. From most studies, Trump's support is overwhelmingly white and much more among people who identify as male than other genders. However, it is not disproportionately white working class, rather his support comes from whites and especially men of all classes. That many wealthy white people support Trump is understandable. He is anti-union, anti-corporate regulation and wants to cut the taxes of corporations and the wealthy by one half or more.

This significant support by whites and especially by white workers and his easily winning the Republican nomination for President needs to be understood and can be changed. Although not as overt, much of what Trump promotes dominates and has increasingly dominated the Republican Party, just look at their platforms and their Presidential candidates from Barry Goldwater in 1964 to the present. Their Southern Strategy beginning in Nixon's campaign in 1968 has been aimed at getting white working class and middle class people to support the Republicans by promoting "law and order" and appealing to authoritarianism, to unconditional support for the police and military, to cracking down on "welfare cheats" and free-loaders, to locking up drug-users and dealers, and lowering taxes. Sound familiar? It has been a coded racism and so is their growing anti-immigrant rhetoric and proposed policies against Mexicans, Central Americans and Muslims, e.g. building the wall. The Republican Party is increasingly

narrow-minded and white. They are appealing to fears of declines in white status relative to people of color although whites are still relatively advantaged, and to the fears of many whites of being a shrinking proportion of the entire population. So Trump is the logical conclusion of this hateful politics.

#### The Lesser of Two Evils

The other major party, the Democratic Party beginning with Jimmy Carter and especially since Bill Clinton, has become a neoliberal party who are heavily financed by major corporations. They believe in limited social programs, e.g., Bill Clinton's ending of welfare in 1996, and the privatization of public services such as schools. Neoliberals, Republicans but also Democrats promote and fight for so-called Free Trade agreements and institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), NAFTA and CAFTA and even more importantly promoting corporations, both manufacturing and financial, to have unrestricted access to maximize profits all around the world no matter what the cost to communities, workers and the environment—a race to the bottom in wages, regulation and taxes. This capitalist globalization has contributed to the growing inequality of income and wealth in the United States where more and more of the income goes to the top 10% and especially the top 1% of the population and less and less go to the bottom 60% of the population, the majority.

So many working class whites justifiably fear for their future and for their families and communities. Combined with a narrative that blames foreigners, immigrants, black people, especially youth, the “other”, the appeal of a psychotic demagogue like Trump is not surprising, especially given the main alternative, the neo-liberal, pro-corporate Democratic Party. The Democrats for the most part have supported the growth of mass incarceration, especially but not limited to Blacks, Native-Americans and Latinos. Most of the police shootings of Blacks and others have occurred in cities with Democratic Party mayors who for the most part have been part of the problem, not part of the solution. Adding in the complicity of the mass media and also the racist history of this country, it is not surprising that this racist fear-based narrative has so much sway. The lesser of the two evils, the Democrats such as Hillary Clinton and Bill Clinton and Barack Obama also support war, Drone assassinations, a militarized border, and higher corporate profits, and borders open for capital. The Democrats are often contemptuous of working class and poor people, which workers feel and understand.

This toxic combination of declining economic security and income and a future that looks bleak together with deep-seated racism and an anti-immigrant framing, which is not primarily economic but rather they are taking over our country, causes many white working people, to blame those with less power, to look downward as the cause of their problems. This is often easier than understanding that the causes of the many problems people face are caused by the 1% and a neoliberal capitalist system that has been built on colonialism, slavery, racism and patriarchy.

There Must Be Some Way Out of Here!

What is to be done? Trump is almost certainly going to lose the November election but the misplaced anger of his supporters is not going to go away. There is the danger of a growing fascism from below. This shouldn't be taken lightly and must be challenged. Nor should the growing surveillance, police state and militarism together with not solving the economic and environmental crisis which will continue if we sit back and are passive with Hillary Clinton as president.

The Occupy Movement of 2011 called for uniting the 99% against the 1% and pointed to capitalism as the source of unemployment, poverty, declining quality of life and the obscene income and wealth going to a few at the expense of the many. Although short-lived, partially because of government repression, it has increased awareness that the cause of economic problems were not the poor or people of color or immigrants but rather caused by those who have economic and political power, the 1% and Wall Street. The popularity and growth of the movement in support of Bernie Sanders is directly connected to Occupy Wall Street. The Sanders campaign has energized many people and together with the Black Lives Matter movement, the climate justice movement and the inspiring Native American led movement in North Dakota against the Dakota Access Pipe line has created a surge in activism; a connecting of issues and struggles, and increasingly going beyond reformism and capitalism in seeking alternative values to the dominant ones and an alternative to capitalism. Based on my analysis of white working class support for Trump and of these important and inspiring and growing social movements, our challenge is to develop campaigns and a program that challenge corporations and neoliberalism and advocate for economic justice with an equally central anti-racist and pro immigrant and racial justice politics. This means a principled unity, uniting our struggles and people, not by downplaying militarism or racism or homophobia or misogyny but connecting the movements and the central economic and social and environmental problems of today. It means having empathy for white working people and using popular education methods to build a program that puts the needs of the most oppressed in the front but also in words and actions strives for a principled unity that goes beyond a common enemy, not a least common denominator unity. It means, for example, talking about the virtues of immigration, which gives us the opportunity to learn about and experience diverse cultures and people which is worthwhile and meaningful.

With respect to this presidential election, the Green Party comes the closest to putting forward a platform that connects the issues I have been examining. The Greens promote these interconnected forms of justice in a thoughtful program. I support Jill Stein and the Green Party and I suggest you vote for her. Even if Hillary is the lesser of two evils, there is no reason to vote for her as she is going to win Washington State easily and it is important that there is a significant vote that is to the left of her pro-corporate centrism. But changing this society will require much more than voting for the Greens or deciding not to vote in the presidential election or even voting for Hillary Clinton. It means learning, although not necessarily in school, and

sharing what we learn with our friends, family, community, coworkers about the kind of society we want and how to get there. It means getting involved in activism and movements that challenge white supremacy, white nationalism and fascism, which organize and pressure Hillary Clinton to keep fossil fuels in the ground and oppose the TPP, to end U.S. warfare and to raise the minimum wage top a living wage. Reforms such as giving a path to citizenship to undocumented immigrants and reducing police violence are important as is defending hard fought gains such as women's right to choose and social security. They should be combined if we and the planet are to survive with non-reformist reforms such as a basic guaranteed income for all, free quality education and quality day care, reducing the prison population and the military budget by 90% or more and opening our borders. These non-reformist reforms are necessary but not sufficient but should be part of a strategy and program for liberation that is national and global, of a society where work is meaningful and not alienating, where poverty and hunger and houselessness are ended, where racism and sexism are challenged at their root and overcome. This means ending capitalism and creating a participatory democratic society based on based on meeting people's needs, one not based on profit, a multi-cultural, feminist, sustainable participatory socialist alternative.

It is Possible and Necessary! Think Big and Act Boldly!

Si Se Puede!