

United States: Trump and Republicans Attack Black Voting Rights, as Mass Upsurge Fights Back on All Aspects of Black Oppression

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Trump and the Republicans fear that recent polls suggest that Trump might lose the November 2020 election and the Republican majority in the Senate.

They know that, as in 2016, Trump is likely to lose the popular vote, but could win once again in the vote of the anti-democratic Electoral College. They are concentrating on winning the vote in a number of states where the vote will be close.

One tactic they are using in those states where they have control of the governments is to curtail the right to vote of African Americans, who in their great majority don't vote Republican. The Republican Party voters are overwhelmingly white.

Some background is needed to understand how they think they can get away with such fraudulent tactics.

The original Constitution endorsed the slavery of Black Africans, who were captured and transported to the U.S., and their decedents.

The Civil War overthrew slavery, and in the decade or so of Reconstruction following the war, certain amendments to the Constitution were adopted.

The 13th amendment abolished slave labor except for prisoners. The 14th gave citizenship to the former slaves and anyone born in the U.S. except Native Americans who were forced on reservations. The 15th amendment prohibited the states from denying a male citizen the right to vote based on "race, color or previous condition of servitude."

The former slaves and their supporters wanted the amendment to give all male citizens the right to vote, but were forced to accept the compromise of the 15th amendment.

To this day, there is no Constitutional right to vote for all citizens. Voting rights are left to the states.

In the counter-revolution to the Civil War and Reconstruction beginning in 1877 that established the Jim Crow system of extreme suppression of Blacks in the former slave states in the South, voting rights for African Americans were all but eliminated. The 15th amendment was gotten around by using all sorts of laws and regulations that made it impossible for Blacks to vote, without directly mentioning race or color.

This was enforced by terror against Blacks, by the state governments and the extra-legal violence of the Ku Klux Klan.

It was the Democratic Party that administered this system of apartheid ("segregation" as it was called) in the South, and was backed by the national Democratic Party.

The Jim Crow system lasted for eight decades until it was overthrown by the Black struggle of the 1950s-1960s, as part of the youth and Black radicalization that has become known as "The Sixties."

Part of that was the passage in 1965 of the Voting Rights Act, which included a provision that in the Jim Crow states where the rights of African Americans to vote were suppressed, any new laws concerning voting rights had to be overseen by the federal government.

The Democrats nationally were forced to break with their Southern wing to back such civil rights laws, and the Republicans stepped into the breach. What was known as the "Solid South" for the Democrats has since become the "Solid South" for the Republicans.

Since then, there has been a counter-revolution to many aspects of the gains of "The Sixties." This gone the deepest concerning the rights of Blacks, resulting in what Michelle Alexander proves is "The New Jim Crow" in her book of that name.

Just as the counter-revolution to the Second American Revolution (Civil War and Reconstruction) didn't reestablish slavery, but the Jim Crow system, the counter-revolution to the gains of the Black struggle that overthrew Jim Crow, the New Jim Crow didn't reestablish the old Jim Crow but a new form of the national oppression of Blacks that has been part of the development American capitalism from the days of the British colonies up to the present.

This post-Sixties counter-revolution was carried through by both Democratic and Republican administrations.

The legal form of this new system has been mass incarceration that disproportionately affects Blacks and Latinos. Once released, white former prisoners and Black ones are treated differently. How Blacks with criminal records are treated impacts the whole Black community as a result of the systematic oppression of Blacks, is explained by Alexander. This is reflected in continuing disparities in health care, education, employment, income, wealth, housing, police terror, and more, that has been powerfully exposed by the current uprising of Blacks and their supporters of all colors.

An aspect of this counter-revolution was the 2013 decision of the Supreme Court to overturn the Voting Rights Act, in a five to four vote. The five comprised the reactionary wing of the Court, whose ascendancy itself is a result of the counter-revolution. The same five to four ratio exists today, but with different members.

The argument of the majority of the Court was basically that racism in the U.S. no longer was a major factor in the U.S. This reasoning was also adopted by all politicians of both parties. We were supposedly in a new situation of "color blindness." What is happening in the streets today shows how false and disingenuous that argument was.

Following that decision, not only the Southern states originally named under the Voting Rights Act, but in other Republican-controlled states, many new restrictions on Black voting rights have occurred, of course not mentioning race or color, but using new laws and regulations to strike many Blacks from the voting rolls, often backed by the Supreme Court when challenged.

Faced with the possibility of losing the 2020 elections as a result of Trump's deliberate failure in confronting the corona virus pandemic, which was a major cause of deepening the following recession (a result that caught Trump unawares); as well as his championing of a violent smashing of the current uprising - the Republicans are stepping up measures to curtail the Black vote.

An article in the May 19 New York Times titled "Republicans to Pursue a Crackdown on Voting" begins, "Six months before a presidential election in which turnout could matter more than

persuasion, the Republican Party, the Trump campaign and conservative activists are mounting an aggressive national effort to shape who gets to vote in November – and whose ballots are counted.”

It says, “The Republican program, which has gained steam in recent weeks, envisions recruiting 50,000 volunteers in 15 key states to monitor polling places and challenge ballots and voters deemed suspicious.”

Who will these “volunteers” be? Will they be drawn from Trump’s hard racist core supporters? Will they include “heavies” from the violent far right to intimidate “suspicious” voters?

And who will these “suspicious” voters be? We know the answer – it will be people with black or brown skin.

The article continues that the Republican plan includes \$20 million to challenge lawsuits by voting rights advocates “seeking to loosen state restrictions on balloting,” which are aimed at Blacks. How will the Supreme Court rule on these cases that come before it?

Trump, the Man on the White Horse

The Trump election campaign in 2016 was based on open racism, which has marked his time in office up to his proposal to use the U.S. military to crush the current uprising and “dominate” the streets.

But another theme of his 2016 campaign and his time in office was that he was the strongman who could “clean out Washington” and right what was wrong with the country, by the power of his personality.

He has succeeded in whipping the Republican Party with few exceptions into line, supporting him no matter what he does or says, with absolute loyalty. His core supporters among hard white racists, some 30-35 percent of the population, already give him complete loyalty.

Trump famously said that he could walk down Fifth Avenue in New York City, shooting whomever he wanted, and his supporters would continue to back him.

He wants to do the same with the whole government. He repeatedly claims that as president “I can do whatever I want.”

When the Democrats impeached him (a ridiculous and futile exercise), he said that if he faced removal from office there would be violence in the streets, and that the police, the military, and his armed followers would defend him and keep him in power.

Historically, the police in capitalist countries have been a fertile recruiting ground for the far right, as has the top officer caste in the military. Many commentators who whitewash the police in the U.S. blame “a few bad apples” for police murder of Blacks. That this is a lie is reflected in the fact that the police “unions” always come to the defense of cops who commit crimes, including the murders that have sparked the current massive movement.

The role of the police is to be an anti-worker armed unite of the capitalist state. The whole history of the U.S. labor movement demonstrates this from strike-breaking to frame-ups and murders of militant worker leaders and more.

In the U.S. their role has always been to enforce the institutional racist oppression of Blacks. The police were first formed out of patrols to capture runaway slaves. Today they enforce the New Jim

Crow system with the mass incarceration of Blacks – they are the first institution to put Blacks in the pipeline into prison with arrests. They use violence including murder to “keep a lid on” the Black community.

Many in this new movement recognize this and are demanding the police be broken up and reformed under community control.

Trump has also begun to put out feelers to be ready to claim that if he losses the election it will be because of fraud, and he might not accept the results.

A major development in the last few days has been armed forces generals and retired generals breaking with Trump over his proposal to use the military to smash the current mass upsurge. Why? These reactionaries did this only because of the swelling power of the mass movement, and represents one of the victories of this movement already evident. [1]

It also represents a major defeat for Trump’s authoritarian plans. If this upsurge marks a new beginning of a sustained movement like the civil rights movement of the 1950s-60s, and it clearly has that potential given the understanding of the problem evinced by many of its young leaders, Trump will not become “The Man on the White Horse”.

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P.S.

- Article written for Green Left Weekly (Australia).

Footnotes

[1] See article by Malik Miah available on ESSF (article 53610), [United States: Hundreds of thousands march, rally for Justice; activists demand defund, dismantle, reimagine policing](#).