

United States: The Republican and Democratic Parties Today

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“Civil and voting rights is not only a Black issue. It is the touchstone for basic human rights that benefits all working-class people—Black, white, Latino, Asian and indigenous. It was won in a long bloody struggle over decades. That lesson is crucial today in fighting and defeating Trumpism.”

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Part One, The Danger Trump Represents

The Republican Party has been thoroughly transformed. Donald Trump is in complete control.

A large part of the Republican base reveres him as the strongman who alone can set the country right. They are part of a cult, personally loyal to him, believe whatever he says, and ready to do what he wants.

Trump is now taking on a more public role, including projecting mass rallies, his preferred venue. The first one happened on January 15.

He has amassed a large fund he intends to use in Republican primaries this year in support of candidates loyal to him against any whom he thinks are not sufficiently subservient.

His renewed public efforts will continue through to the November elections for congresspeople and state offices.

This is the first stage of his campaign to run again for president in 2024.

He not only wants the Republicans in November to take back the majority in the Senate, where there is a fifty-fifty split today, but also the House, which has a slim Democratic majority — but to do so with candidates most loyal to him.

Republican legislators in states they control have passed laws that will curtail Black voting rights, echoing how Black voting right were eliminated in the South under Jim Crow. While not explicitly stated, the new laws will remove many registered voters in urban and rural areas where African Americans live.

In addition, there are laws changing how votes are counted, and giving more power to Republican-controlled state legislatures and Republican officials to change the results if they go against them in the November 2022 elections.

They will also be used to guarantee Trump will win in 2024 if he loses the popular vote as he did in 2016 and 2020.

Presidents are not elected by the majority of the eligible voting population, but by an arcane procedure established in the Constitution — the Electoral College representing the states, not the voting population, elects the president.

The state legislatures name the electors allocated to each state.

The main author of the Constitution, James Madison, boasted this was done to exclude those allowed to vote. At the time, only white men who owned property were allowed to vote.

Over time, it has become the norm that in most states the candidate who wins the majority of popular votes gets all the electors from that state to the Electoral College.

This has resulted in Republicans George W. Bush in 2000 and Trump in 2016 winning in spite of receiving a minority of votes cast nationwide.

With their new laws in certain most contested states, Trump Republicans can control the Electoral College to ensure his election, if, as is likely, the election is close. In 2020, Trump got about 48 percent of the vote.

If these laws were in place in 2020, Trump would have been re-elected.

To understand what Trump represents, it is useful to remember what his two campaigns, in 2016 and 2020, and his years in office, revealed.

One was his projection of himself as the authoritarian strongman needed to right America's wrongs, right from the day he announced he would run.

Another was his open racism against Blacks, Latinos, Mexicans, nonwhite immigrants, and other people of color, tapping into white fears they were losing their position of supremacy and privilege.

His hard base was racist whites of all classes. Others who voted for him did so by ignoring his racism — that's the best that can be said of them.

From the time he first announced his candidacy in 2016, violent racist groups like the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys knew that they would prosper under a Trump presidency.

White supremacy over Blacks and Native Americans has been a characteristic of all governments in what became the United States since colonial times.

The ruling classes, at first capitalists and slave owners, and then capitalists after the Civil War, and their political parties have been founded on and enforce white supremacy.

This was obvious under slavery, then in the Jim Crow period not only in the South but across the United States. As the Black Lives Matter (BLM) massive uprising in 2020 demonstrated, white supremacy continues to this very day.

BLM popularized the concept of institutionalized, system-wide racist oppression, which has been

extended to all non-whites, Latinx and others.

The Proud Boys and other white nationalist (or white supremacist) groups that have grown under Trump are best characterized as violent incipient fascists.

Trump relied on them to “stand by” after the election and then to “stand up” on January 6, 2020, in the violent attempted coup at the Capitol Building.

Liberals and many socialists thought that the election of Biden meant that “Trump is over” and a return to “normalcy.” They have been proved wildly wrong.

Trump prepared his comeback weeks before the 2020 election, when it looked like he would lose, by declaring that he could only lose by fraud.

After the election he continued to trumpet that the election was “stolen” from him by massive fraud. He opened a new campaign to have the election reversed by legal means in state legislatures and courts, in what is known in Latin America as an “auto-golpe” or “self-coup.”

In a “self-coup” a previous ruler who losses an election simply doesn’t recognize the results and stays in power.

The violent events of January 6 were a last attempt to get Congress not to certify the election results.

They were also a demonstration that Trump was ready to use extra-legal means. He also prevented the Army from allowing National Guard to intervene for almost four hours.

Since then, his relentless campaign to continue to say the election was stolen from him by fraud has been the “rationalization” for the Republicans to pass their new restrictions on voting rights and controls over the election results in key states.

Trump and the Republicans also have road the wave of white backlash and rage against the massive, Black-led demonstrations of 2020.

The Republicans have launched a mass campaign against “Critical Race Theory” and any teaching in public schools that systematic, institutionalized racism exists in the United States. School boards and state legislatures from Tennessee to Idaho have banned teaching about racism in classrooms.

On a local level, Trump supporters have vociferously and sometimes violently intervened in school board and town government meetings against critical race theory.

Educational officials have been threatened with violence and even death.

In the weird world of Trumpism, this has been combined with attacks against mask mandates and vaccines to fight COVID, including in schools.

It also includes use of race baiting to claim whites are being discriminated against in vaccine distribution and treatment.

Trump told an Arizona rally on January 15: “The left is now rationing life-saving therapeutics based on race, discriminating against and denigrating, just denigrating white people to determine who lives and who dies. You get it based on race. In fact, in New York state, if you’re white, you have to go to the back of the line to get medical help. If you’re white, you go right to the back of the line.”

The Proud Boys have been concentrating on intervening in local disruptions to recruit.

Through this campaign Trump has intensified his control over and discipline of the Republican Party and is emerging stronger than ever.

What Trump represents is what Marxists call Bonapartism, when in a period where the capitalist parties are deadlocked in feuding and disarray, a strong man emerges who promises to set things right through autocratic means.

This can take different forms, from outright dictatorship and the dispersal of the legislature to virtual autocracy with bourgeois democratic trappings, like what is happening in Hungary today under Victor Orban, who Trump has praised and endorsed for re-election, and his spokespeople have visited.

In any case Trump and Trumpism represents an anti-democratic danger, as we are seeing developing in much of the world.

Part Two: Democrats and Biden in Crisis

While President Joe Biden and the Democratic Party establishment are opposed to the anti-democratic and authoritarian transformation of the Republican Party led by Donald Trump, their response has been weak and defeatist.

Biden and the establishment Democrats, who dominate the party, conspicuously do not defend critical race theory against the Republicans.

Biden does not even mention Black Lives Matter. The party establishment ignores talking about the institutionalized racism BLM exposed.

Biden and the Democratic Party establishment believe the wealthy and Wall Street will someday dump Trump and go back to the old Republican Party — not in the cards for the foreseeable future.

Biden is losing popular support as he appears weak. He and the Democrats are losing support among Black people by their failure on civil and voting rights.

The Democrats' strategy is to rely on the courts and Congress while the Republicans mobilize their right-wing base to undermine democratic changes won over the decades.

Maintaining political power, no matter what, is Trump's objective. He is advancing, as Biden and his Justice Department refuse to go after him for organizing January 6 and other crimes.

The activist groups trying to protect voting rights keep telling Biden that his approach of waiting for the Republicans to change course and go back to the way of bipartisanship, will not succeed.

Biden's January "which side are you on" speech in Atlanta on January 11 did not outline a plan of action.

Meanwhile, these new restrictions are already being implemented. Letters are being sent to residents in Texas under its new law warning U.S. residents (allegedly undocumented) they could face criminal charges if they try to vote. Some are U.S. citizens.

The power of the federal government and executive power of the presidency is not used to challenge

the Republican imposed state laws that undermine voting and civil rights, the health and safety of workers, women's rights and more.

In the 1950s when the Supreme Court ruled that Black children could attend whites only schools, the government sent federal troops to states that refused to comply, to escort Black children to school.

Biden and his supporters so far refuse a similar course today.

He could send Federal monitors to Republican-controlled states that restrict voting rights to oversee voting.

The Federal government could take pre-emptive legal action to stop the harassment and threats to those in charge of elections. Such steps can be done without Congressional approval.

Biden, as chief of the military, could also instruct the Pentagon to vet its forces and force out white supremacists and far right veterans and active-duty military and police.

The issue of voting rights shows the failure of the Democratic Party establishment to protect the right and interests of working people and what it calls "democracy."

What can African Americans and others expect when the next attempt at authoritarian rule inevitably occurs? Democratic Party liberals and other white allies will simply hope for the best.

Martin Luther King Jr and the civil rights leadership told Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, both Democrats, the people would never stop marching and fighting until the government stop the segregationists and impose basic democratic rights for African Americans.

The Black Lives Matter leaders took this approach in building the racial justice movement against police violence and calling for radical reforms.

Today Biden represents the white moderate that King spoke about in his comments from the Birmingham jail on April 16, 1963:

"First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council-er or the Ku Klux Klanner, but 'the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action;' who paternalistically feels he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season.'

"Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection."

Two years later on August 6 the Voting Rights Act was passed as the civil rights movement continued in the streets and a militant left wing inspired by the words of Malcolm X and others grew.

That's what forced "white moderates" leading the Congress to pass this historic law. It became the first time that the concept of one person, one vote included African Americans in all fifty states.

Civil and voting rights is not only a Black issue. It is the touchstone for basic human rights that benefits all working-class people—Black, white, Latino, Asian and indigenous.

It was won in a long bloody struggle over decades. That lesson is crucial today in fighting and defeating Trumpism.

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