

# **On the November Elections and the next steps in building the anti-imperialist movement in the US**

**(November 25, 2008)**

On November 4, 2008, millions of new voters stepped into political life with the hope that the traditional (as many put it) rich-white-male-Christian cultural monopoly on political power would no longer determine the conditions of life in the United States. These millions who stepped forward to be counted -- young, poor, women, people of color, the wronged and abused, the falsely accused, sick and disabled, atheists, Muslims, Buddhists, and progressive Christians, displaced, evicted, and laid-off, and other "outcasts" and have-nots - were repelled by that *de facto* oligarchy, which had, they felt, excluded them. The Bush regime had arrogantly and unsuccessfully led that traditional elite for 8 years of widening wars and monstrous economic crises, which drew widespread domestic and global anger and condemnation. With high hopes, the millions of new voters were joined by millions of others who were trying to find a way out of the mess that this system has been making of their lives and of the world. Black people, Latinos, other people of color, workers, and youth stepped out of the shadows of solitude and "making do" and into political life, albeit within the confines of a presidential election.

By and large, these millions are responding to the promise of access, of open doors. They bring with them the worries and concerns and angers of their lives—of the wars being waged on false pretenses, of the worsening conditions of life. These are the issues they bring with them, though solutions to these issues were not on the electoral table.

On the night of November 4, hundreds of thousands in cities around the U.S. celebrated their success in electing the first Black president and the fact that millions of whites moved past the racist fears and codewords that have habitually set the boundaries of political life.

But to move forward, celebrations must turn to sober, straight talk.

The interests around which Barack Obama and the Democratic Party leadership have coalesced, despite the campaign banner of "change", are the interests of the rich and the privileged, even as more wars are looming and the economics of the capitalist system here and worldwide are dragging the lives of millions into deeper crisis.

In January, Barack Obama will become the 44th Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. government, which controls and protects an empire of corporations, banks, military bases and occupying armies all around the world. Obama has reached this position by loyally serving this bipartisan system in the U.S. Senate and by being vetted, tested and auditioned over the past two years in running for the presidency. In the course of this, Obama convinced the majority of the U.S. capitalist class (his campaign contributions from Wall Street were twice as big as McCain's) that he was the best candidate to take the reins of empire at a time when the U.S. is bogged down in two wars in the Middle East, and is in the midst of the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression, with the worst effects on the

lives of working people here and around the world yet to come. For them, Obama is a reliable and safe bet to protect their interests. The fact that Obama will be the first Black president is an undeniable asset for the rulers of the U.S. It symbolizes a shift in the **overtly** racist practices of the country, but not one substantive enough to overcome the built-in *tilt* and nature of the system.

In fact, while millions have stepped forward under the banner of "Change", these millions have the challenge to shape the political terrain for the period ahead. Because if left to Obama and the Democratic Party, the base of support for imperialism will not be challenged, but broadened.

What can we expect from an Obama administration? Will Obama be a new face on the same old stuff, or will there be substantial differences?

The capitalist system requires more than a new face. From its new CEO and Congress, the system will require more regulation, more government intervention, more international coordination and multilateral, not unilateral, aggression and occupations. It needs more "partnerships" with compliant regimes in semi-colonies and dependent countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Therefore, we should:

- **Expect** a U.S. military surge into the killing fields of Afghanistan to protect a government of US-backed warlords from rival fundamentalists, and another surge across the border into Pakistan. This is one promise that Obama is not likely to break.
- **Not expect** the return of US troops from Iraq, though there will be "redeployments" and further privatizations of the military. Barack Obama has backtracked from his anti-war promises early in the campaign. He will keep tens of thousands of military advisers, trainers, contractors and bases in Iraq, with large numbers of combat troops stationed in neighboring countries. Obama will send US troops from Iraq to Afghanistan.
- **Not expect** the withdrawal of U.S. troops, advisers and military bases from the Philippines, Colombia and other global hotspots where the U.S. imperialists have important economic and strategic interests.
- **Expect** an Obama presidency--as he pledged to AIPAC-- to continue all-out U.S. support for the state of Israel and its brutal military occupation of the land and people of Palestine.
- **Not expect** the dismantling of the newly formed U.S. military command for Africa (AFRICOM), which is headed by a Black general. **Expect** expansion of this invasive hegemonic re-colonization program.
- **Expect** that even with a Black president at the helm, there will be no high level assault of the myriad forms of white supremacy that are woven into the capitalist system. Police brutality and the criminalization of Black youth, unemployment rates of 20% and higher in Black communities, re-segregation of schools, ICE raids and deportations aimed at Mexican and other immigrant communities--all of this will continue and even worsen no matter who is president. During his campaign, Barack Obama even denied that the system of white supremacy exists. In an attempt to prevent severe disruptions and the unraveling of the imperialist political-economic-social order, President Obama will promote a seemingly "post-racial" "multi-cultural-ism" that dismisses the profound oppression and exploitation of millions of Black and Latino people as a thing of the past—or as a product of their own making and failings. And he will couple this with a xenophobic appeal that "we're all in this together", and blame the crisis that "we Americans" suffer, on the people of the world.

- **Expect** continued class polarization. Obama's support for the \$700 billion bailout of banks and financial institutions is a clear indication of where his class loyalties lie. More multi-billion dollar bailouts for banks and big corporations lie ahead. With foreclosures, evictions, credit card defaults, unemployment and poverty on the rise, Obama and the Democrats are talking about palliative measures that will not even begin to address the depths of the crisis.
- **Expect** austerity programs and cuts in social spending in the years ahead. It will be Obama's job to sell them to Black, Latino, Asian and white working people in the name of national unity and shared sacrifice.
- **Not expect** strong support for same sex marriage or women's rights. Barack Obama is opposed to same sex marriage. Obama supports Roe v. Wade but is trying to find "common ground" with anti-choice activists. We cannot expect Obama's nominees to the Supreme Court to be jurists who take a firm stand for a woman's right to an abortion unless there is a determined mobilization by pro-choice and progressive forces to make him and the Democrats do so.

On the positive side, this presidential campaign has swept a new generation into political life and has remade the political stage in many ways. Particularly among this new generation, the Obama campaign and election has generated great hopes and expectations, but inevitably the orientation of the new administration toward politics acceptable to the privileged will heighten the burden on the broad masses of Blacks, Latinos/Chicanos and whites, workers and youth.

As this happens, those who have indulged in uncritical exuberance at the election, will come to realize that the "Obama checks" they have written are being returned for "insufficient funds."

In the meantime, anti-imperialists must resolve to not give the new administration a pass or a honeymoon. The times require us all to focus and develop the People's Agenda for educating, organizing and mobilizing in the period ahead, including these issues:

- **The struggle against War and Empire**—from Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Philippines and Colombia, to ending the thousand US military bases around the world, ending the occupation of Palestine, and upholding the sovereignty of all indigenous and colonized peoples. Support people's struggles against displacement & for the right to return—in the Gulf Coast, the inner cities, and around the world!
- **The struggle for Justice**—from demanding privacy rights, to demanding full rights for immigrants and organizing to stop ICE raids, to ending the criminalization of youth and the massive imprisonment of millions, to defending the reproductive rights of women, the human rights of LGBTQ communities (people with all sexual orientations), and ending forever the policies of torture, indefinite detentions and rendition. Stop police abuse and racial profiling! Free All Political Prisoners!
- **The struggle for decent lives**—demand complete and universal health care, education, housing, and decent jobs for all. Fight all layoffs, deportations, evictions, foreclosures and utility shutoffs. Demand rollbacks in the price of food, rent, and fuel. Fight for unhindered rights of access to technology, to people's history, people's culture, and complete and unrestricted rights to organize, to associate, to protest, to

travel--and for the right to organize for self-defense against the rising "backlash" and ongoing tide of racist attacks.

Tremendous challenges and opportunities await struggling people throughout the United States. We must join together to overcome the challenges ahead and seize the opportunities to create the just world we need.

*Another World Is Possible*

*Without Imperialism!!*

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