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USA

# New Challenges for African Americans

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**WHAT DO AFRICAN Americans face with the new government of Democrats Joe Biden and Kamala Harris? After four years of a far-right regime that denied science and medicine in favor of death and profits, disproportionately destroying Black and oppressed minorities' lives, the answer for most is more a hope to lessen structural discrimination than it is high expectations for fundamental change.**

## Meaning of Trumpism

The election results exposed the depth of white identity “grievance/victimhood” politics. While Trump lost the popular vote by some seven million, he won over 73 million voters — the most ever except for Biden’s 80 million — including a large majority of both white men and women.

Republicans who follow Trump’s lead made gains in the Congress and state legislatures. Trumpism is more than Trump. It reflects strong white-nationalist sentiments in the white population and successful voter suppression focused against African Americans.

“I think it’s a dose of reality of the times that we are living in,” said Nicole Small, vice chair of the Detroit Charter Commission, who believes the Trump vote was a “blatant attempt at voter suppression.”

“I do not believe that Trump has created racism amongst people, but I do think he was the safety net and the vehicle for people to be more active in practicing their racism and their prejudiced beliefs publicly,” Small said.

Trump never saw his presidency as representing all Americans. Trumpism exacerbates what’s been true for centuries. The cult-like enthusiasm for whatever Trump says and does means that white racism is now more intense.

### What Biden Represents

Joe Biden acknowledges that his nomination and electoral victory required large numbers of Black votes in urban areas along with Latinos, Asian Americans and Indigenous people.

Since the November 3 presidential election, almost each week a Black man is brutalized or murdered by police. It is not by accident. The ideology of policing is racist and in defense of the status quo (de facto white domination).

According to the Associated Press, “A prominent law enforcement training group is promoting a lengthy research document riddled with falsehoods and conspiracies that urges local police to treat Black Lives Matter activists as terrorists plotting a violent revolution.

“The document [is] distributed by the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association.... It alleges Black Lives Matter and antifa, an umbrella term for leftist militants, are ‘revolutionary movements whose aims are to overthrow the U.S. government’ and claims they are planning ‘extreme violence.’”

Biden, however, has not embraced the Black Lives Matter movement or any of its demands. To fundamentally

change how Black and Brown communities are protected they have raised the demand “Defund the Police.”

Instead, Biden has proposed sitting down with so-called police union heads, police chiefs, elected officials and leaders of establishment civil rights groups to modestly improve policing. Black activists leading the multiracial racial justice demonstrations are not invited.

Kamala Harris, the first Black and South Asian woman vice president and a former California attorney general, endorses Biden’s vision of policing. It is in line with her own practices in the most populous state.

The first Black president, Barack Obama, has openly attacked the demand of Defund the Police, calling it a misguided slogan. For BLM activists, it is not a slogan. It is a thought-out demand based on decades of experience dealing with occupying police forces in Black and brown communities.

Obama, whose record toward African Americans communities was right-of-center policies that did little, is Biden’s approach.

His appointment of “moderate” Black, Latino and women figures to his cabinet reflects the rise of a layer of well-off middle class and professional people into mainstream capitalist society. But these individuals do not represent the best interests of the working class, particularly its poorest.

## Movements Respond to Crises

Various BLM groups said before the election that they would continue to respond to police terror with street protests and demands on city, state and federal officials, including Democrats, to enact radical changes. The key, they all say, is to force government and corporate powers to advance the interest of the African American community, and not rely on capitalist politicians who “look like us.”

The same applies to the health pandemic crisis facing the African American, Latinos, Asian American and Indigenous communities who are the worst hit by the coronavirus. Will Biden and Democrats make sure that these communities get the vaccine first, and will it be free to those without health insurance?

Biden is opposed to universal health care (Medicare for all). He does not explain how essential low-wage workers, including Latinos (many undocumented) working in agriculture (many are undocumented), will be safely vaccinated and not targeted by immigration cops.

Biden says he will return the United States to the WHO (World Health Organization). But he has no plan to make sure the entire world, especially “Global South” countries, are able to get low-cost vaccines. The big pharmaceutical companies are there for profits not health care.

The pandemic has exposed the inequalities of the health care system. Black and brown people have always received inferior health care compared to whites in general. Based on past and ongoing racial policies many African Americans don’t trust the medical establishment.

# Activists Push People's Action

African American activists and commentators see the reason for the polarization: White-identity “grievance” politics convinces the poorest working-class whites to unite with billionaires against Blacks and nonwhites.

Blacks understand this. It as part of the blood and bone of American history. The race card is always played by white politicians and those in power to win the white racial group to oppose socio-economic progress.

Biden's concept of government is to make deals with conservatives even at the sacrifice of more liberal positions. His team will reflect pro-corporate Democrats who care more about working with mainstream Republicans than promoting progressive policy.

The New York Congresswoman from the Bronx, Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, has been the most outspoken against Biden's move to the center right. Her demands and those of other progressives are intended to pressure Biden's team.

That's a flawed strategy — working inside the Democratic Party to bring social and economic change. It does not work.

What inspired a multiracial and working-class coalition against Trump, and by default for Biden, was the broad-based Black-led racial justice uprising. The movement against the police built an effective Rainbow Coalition to fight racism.

The answer to Trumpism, modern-day white supremacist politics, is to continue to mobilize for real change. The leaders of the Black Lives movement have all pledged to fight police violence and political corruption. Others including leaders of the women's, gay rights and unions must do the same.

Source: *January-February 2021*, [ATC 210](#).

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