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The Nation Just Lost the Election



Image by Katelyn Perry.

I guess I'd call the Trump victory an "expected" shock.

In the deepest core of my being, I was unhappy with virtually everything about the election: unhappy with the Kamala Harris campaign and her unrelenting support of Israeli genocide, unhappy with the Democratic Party and its contempt for progressive voters' values even as the party remained certain it owned their votes. But at a more superficial level, I pretty much thought Harris would win, just because Trump was way-y-y too crazy ("they're eating the pets!") to actually be able to reclaim the presidency.

But Trump did it — not simply capturing the "battleground" states and gaining an Electoral College win, as he did in 2016, but apparently winning the overall popular vote. As of this morning, as I sit here in my expected shock, I see that Trump is ahead of Harris by some five million votes, with counting still underway in some states. And, by the way, the Republicans also reclaimed control of the Senate.

The Dems managed to lose to a dancing goofball and outright racist. They lost to the guy whose own [former aides](#) have called a loser, a liar and, yikes, a fascist. How did they manage to do that?

My sense is this: Trump's appeal to his base was anything but superficial. It may have been a bunch of lies — that he's a friend of the working class, for instance, even though he's a pseudo-billionaire under the control of corporate elites — but he spoke to their deepest values. “He promised to close the border, ‘help our country heal’ and ‘fix everything,’” the [New York Times](#) noted.

He continually talked about the enemies he would protect America from — everyone from immigrant murderers and lunatics to liberal billionaires. A good, solid sense of the enemy creates community! And Trump was the community's spiritual icon: its symbolic soul, the absolute counter to politics-as-usual. He was able to present himself as the protector of everything the MAGA base valued, from fetuses to assault rifles. And he did so while riding in a golf cart. No small feat!

So how did Kamala Harris and the Democrats manage to lose? From my point of view, the reason is glaringly obvious: They failed to stand for much of anything, at least beyond “Trump's an idiot.” They campaigned as the lesser evil! Vote for us. We're not nearly as bad as Trump.

The most striking example of this, it seems to me, was Harris's refusal, or inability, to disconnect herself from the Biden administration's unwavering commitment to arming Israel. While “too many Palestinians have died,” Israel has “a right to defend itself.” Palestinians — even Palestinian children — were abstractions. So much so that the Dems wouldn't even allow a Palestinian to speak at the Democratic National Convention. What values were they running on? They were committed to centrist blather. They were committed to their lesser-evilism.

Yet, ironically, the Democrats didn't even have the endorsement of [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), who congratulated Trump when his victory was declared, telling him: “Your historic return to the White House offers a new beginning for America and a powerful recommitment to the great alliance between Israel and America.”

Not even Netanyahu could tolerate the lesser-evil Democratic centrism.

What if, instead of courting Liz and Dick Cheney and the anti-Trump Republicans (thus utterly diminishing the possibility that they were running on real values), the Harris campaign had reached in the other direction and courted Green-leaning voters, rather than

simply dismissing Jill Stein as a spoiler and, beyond that, completely ignoring what she stood for.

What if? What if?

There's an enormous American voting bloc that's being left out of the country's pseudo-democratic, two-party electoral system. Trump's base can hear their values and fears trumpeted (so to speak) with loud bluster. But progressives allegedly remain on the margins, banned from having actual political traction, at least on the issues of the present moment.

For example, [Nick Tilsen](#), a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation and president of the NDN Collective, commented, in an interview with Democracy Now on Nov. 5, while the vote count was still in progress, on a recent apology President Biden made to Native Americans about government-run boarding schools from an earlier era, which sought to eradicate indigenous culture. Yeah, sorry about that. Yet in the present moment, Biden and the U.S. are complicit in the eradication of Palestinian culture. Unfortunately, there's nothing we can do about that.

So here we are, stuck with Trump's second term. God knows what this will amount to. Maybe we won't ever have to (or be allowed to) vote again.

The work ahead of us is enormous. Not only must we prepare to stand up to the Trump agenda and the looming possibility of some form of fascism. We also have to reclaim the Democratic Party and start transforming its values.

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