

Democrats Defeated Trump. How Do We Defeat Trumpism? 22 Priorities.

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In the election that culminated on November 3rd, Joe Biden decisively defeated Donald Trump.

Biden won with a larger percentage of the popular vote than any other challenger to an incumbent President since Franklin Roosevelt defeated Herbert Hoover in 1932. He received more popular votes than any other Presidential candidate in American history. He won by a decisive margin in the Electoral College – 306 to 232. He turned Arizona and Georgia – two states with solid GOP Presidential voting records – blue.

Donald Trump's defeat was an existential priority. Failure was not an option. Another four years of Trump carried with it potentially apocalyptic risks for America and for humanity. As his own niece Mary Trump has written, Donald Trump was the most dangerous man in the world.

Trump's defeat, the continued Democratic control of the House, regaining control of the Senate, should be occasions for celebration and pride for American Progressives. Progressives of all stripes united with more moderate Democrats, many Independents and even a few disaffected Republicans to form the united front that led to our success.

But American's repudiation of Trump did not defeat *Trumpism*.

Trump turned out his followers – especially among non-college white voters. We turned out more of *our* voters, or we would have certainly been looking down the barrel of another Trump term. And just imagine how Trump would have behaved with the mandate of re-election at his back.

But after all of his lies and incompetence; after his gross mis-management of the Covid-19 pandemic; after a deep economic recession – 70 million Americans still voted for Trump. *How is that possible?*

The Roots of Trumpism

Donald Trump is the symptom of a much deeper malady.

Many Americans – especially white, non-college working people – and especially those in rural areas, small towns and small cities – saw Trump as an avatar for their feelings of resentment against the elites.

All of the things that repulse many college-educated suburban and urban voters are the very things these Trump supporters liked about him. They liked the fact that he told the elites to go to hell. They liked that he refused to go along with the protocols and conventions of “normal” political life. They like that he appeared “authentic.”

They feel disrespected by the elites. They think they are robbed every day by all of the “fancy” people who make money from their wealth instead of their work. They fear for their futures. And they are right.

Trump, and his far-right enablers, seized upon those feelings – just as other demagogues and racists have done for centuries. They used an increasingly sophisticated information eco-system – Fox News, Sinclair Broadcasting, OANN, a network of Facebook pages – to surround Trump followers with a world of “alternative facts” that redirected their legitimate grievances at “the other”: people of color, immigrants, foreigners.

And this phenomenon is not unique to America. Similar movements have recently gained strength throughout the western world – just as they did in the Europe of the 1930’s.

We will not defeat Trumpism or other right-wing, “populist” movements by lecturing, or “educating” Trump followers. **We will defeat Trumpism by addressing their legitimate grievances – by creating an economy that delivers for all working people. Or as President-elect Biden says, an economy that rewards work, not just wealth. We must create an economy that delivers for the people on the streets of Scranton, not just Park Avenue.**

This does not mean that Democrats should do more to “compromise” with the Wall Street wing of the Republican Party. Just the opposite.

The good news is that delivering for much of the Trump base simply requires that we deliver for all working people. There is no contradiction whatsoever between delivering for white, rural, small town working people – and delivering for people of color, urban information workers, young people, college students, suburban women, small business owners, immigrants – all of the components of the growing Democratic majority in America.

But it does require that we make ending the growing chasm of economic equality, and the creation of good-paying union jobs across America, top priorities of the next four years. It requires that we put a screeching halt to the half-century-long decline

in the percentage of income that goes to those who work – and the simultaneous increase in the amount that goes to those who own wealth.

And it means that Democrats can't just "deliver" for working people. We have to empower working people – through unions, through election to office, through positions in the next Administration and with a voice in the media.

Since the first of the year, the American political landscape has profoundly changed.

Number one – and most important – the Georgia victory set the stage for Democrats to take simultaneous control of the White House, House and Senate for the first time in a decade. This potentially allows us to actually deliver new progressive initiatives and also allows us much more control of the fate of the battle for progressive values.

Number two – the Trump inspired riot at the United States Capitol has marginalized Trump and his political movement, divided the Republican Party, and creating an iconic symbol for Trump and Trumpism that will help define Trump's legacy.

Twenty-Two Progressive Priorities to Defeat Trumpism

1). Use every means to reenforce the seriousness of the Trump inspired mob's attack on the Capitol in the voter's minds – marginalize Trump and Trumpism – and make the Trump Capitol riot the indelible symbol for Trump and his presidency.

The impeachment itself will help achieve that goal. Hearings on why there was a failure to defend the against Capitol attack, and the prosecution of the leaders of the insurrection will also serve this purpose.

In addition, progressive organizations should demand that every GOP Congressperson and Senator not only denounce the riot, but also declare that the election itself was free and fair and that in fact there was NO evidence whatsoever of voter fraud in the November election.

2) Once Biden and Harris are inaugurated; the main focus of attention should move away from Trump and be directed immediately to the top priorities of the new Democratic Administration. The Administration's Executive Orders need to be celebrated. And progressive must mobilize at the grass roots to pass critical legislation – much of which is included in the priorities below.

3). End the pandemic. Joe Biden will provide the competent leadership to end this disaster for all Americans. It is critical that we all support this effort. We need to pass a major Covid relief bill, as soon as possible.

4). Pass a massive infrastructure program early in the Biden Administration. It should be huge. Had Democrats doubled the size of the stimulus at the beginning of President Obama's administration it would have turbo-charged economic growth and led to a much different outcome in the 2010 mid-terms where Democrats lost control of Congress.

It should create millions of high-paying union jobs. It should focus heavily on providing for the infrastructure needs that will make America prosperous in the future: renewable energy, and universal broadband coverage (including in rural and small-town America). Such a program will unite working people and young people. It will also go a long way toward enhancing the economic prospects of small-town America as well as our urban communities.

5). Pass labor law reform to assure that working people can join unions and organize to represent themselves. Unions are the only sure way to raise the share of income that goes to work, not wealth.

6). Increase the Federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour, reinstate the Obama-era overtime rules that Trump scrapped, and reverse the Trump tax cuts for families making over \$400,000 per year.

7). Take on monopoly power. One big reason why some tech billionaires make three quarters of a million dollars *an hour*, instead of \$15 an hour, is the concentration of growing economic power in companies like Amazon, Facebook and Google.

8). Take on the pharmaceutical industry and bring down drug costs. There is no valid reason why Americans should pay twice as much for drugs as everyone else in the world.

9). Pass a Public Option for the Affordable Care Act. This will do more to bring down health care costs in the near term than any single step by forcing health insurance companies to cut prices or lose all of their business. And it will provide a bridge to a truly rational Medicare for All type system. There is no good reason why Americans should pay twice as much for health care per person as people in other industrial countries with better health care outcomes.

10). Rebalance the courts. The courts – and especially the Supreme Court – have been packed with pro-corporate judges who will rule to prevent the democratization of our economy. We must change that by expanding the Supreme Court and prioritizing progressive court appointments.

11). Focus on making American government more democratic. The Senate is the least democratic parliamentary institution in the industrial world. It is even less democratic when a small number of Senators who represent a tiny number of constituents can hold up action using the filibuster. That could allow a tiny minority to block the other initiatives we have discussed. **We must do everything possible to end the filibuster.** And we must focus like a laser on the **2020 redistricting process** that will affect Congress and legislatures across the country. And while we're at it, we should prioritize **statehood for Washington, DC.** After all, two hundred years ago the American revolutionary slogan was "No Taxation without Representation." The same is true for Puerto Rico, if its citizens want statehood.

12). Reform the way we finance higher education in America. Higher education used to be part of our commitment to free public education. Not anymore. Higher education must be made available to the children of working families without burdening them with hundreds of thousands of dollars in student debt. We must move to cancel student debt for working families and once again invest in free public higher education. Education, like health care, must become a right.

13). Early in the next four years, we must make a major investment in childcare. Working families will not be successful if child-care is not available to allow both heads of households to work if they so choose.

14.) We must undertake a massive effort to address climate change with renewable energy options that engage working people in being part of the solution.

15). Begin a process of intensive, in-depth organizing in key swing states, similar to the multi-year efforts that yielded victory in Arizona, and especially in Georgia

The Georgia victory demonstrated once again that there is NO conflict between the need to mobilize low propensity base voters, and to persuade persuadable voters. It took increases among both sets of voters to win in Georgia. Every vote counted.

But especially on the mobilization side, Georgia showed that the combination of long haul "three yards and a clouds of dust" organizing, coupled with a brilliantly executed sprint through the finish line, is the formula for victory in new swing states.

There was an enormous influx of money and volunteer time from all over the country in Georgia over the last two months. But it was coordinated and integrated into the structures that had been built over time by long-term, Georgia based organizations and leaders.

That is a model that would be particularly effective in states like Texas, and Florida – as well as the states where the Senate seats are in especially in play in 2022 – Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Wisconsin.

16). Given our narrow margins in both House and Senate, progressives must prepare to organize and mobilize voters in key states represented by “Moderate” Democrats – most notably Joe Manchin – “Moderate” Republicans, like Collins, and Murkowski – and key 2022 targets that could be moved by political expedience, and whose fate is of great interest to GOP Senate leadership.

17). Progressives must work to recruit and elect progressive/electable candidates in for critical contests to control the House in 2022 – candidates who will focus on ending economic inequality.

18). Progressives should begin focusing early on leaders who might assume the Trumpian mantel – and take action to define and marginalize them. Josh Hawley is certainly one of those, though his prospects have been dimmed by his connection to last Wednesday’s Capitol riot.

19). We must resist with all our collective might the Republican Party’s renewed devotion to controlling the deficit and austerity politics. The GOP couldn’t care less when Trump ran up deficits over the last four years. We must commit ourselves to putting people to work, no matter what it costs, because in fact, **wealth is created by work.** The more people who work at good-paying jobs, the wealthier we will all be. It’s that simple.

20). Progressives must ask for the involvement and the votes of working people of all sorts – including the many white working people in “Trump territory.” Half of politics is showing up. You can’t expect people’s support unless you ask. That means organizing year in, year out – not just before an election. And you can’t expect people to support our movement, unless they are given respect.

21). Support the creation of progressive media platforms of, by and for, working people of all sorts – including white working people in rural areas. These new media platforms are critical to crack the “alternative fact” right-wing media bubble.

22). Continue to stand up proudly for the interests of *all* working people: people of color, immigrants – everyone – and for all of our progressive commitments on critical social issues. One of the most important lessons from decades of building coalitions is the fact that people are perfectly willing to put aside differences of opinion, or even deeply-held commitments, if the coalition delivers for them on their **most critical needs.** But every element of the coalition must feel that they – and **their needs** – are taken seriously and given respect.

Defeating Trumpism will not eliminate systemic racism. Systemic racism has a life of its own and must be rooted out of board rooms, the criminal justice system, the judiciary, the education system, employment and every level of American government. But there is little doubt that defeating Trumpism will create more space to accomplish this goal.

We must never even consider giving up our absolute commitment to end systematic racism, support rights of GLBTQ Americans, gun violence prevention, support for abortion rights, etc. in order to attract support from white working people – and we don't need to. We simply need to take their needs seriously, too.

In Summary

In his gut, President-elect Biden understands the need to empower workers, the importance of unions, the critical need to create good-paying jobs. The best way to defeat Trumpism is to unite to support a strong progressive agenda and to do everything in our power to make the Biden Presidency a success.

We don't need to agonize about how so many ordinary Americans supported Trump. We need to take action to *end Trumpism* now. If we truly deliver for working Americans, we can unite America and create the most progressive period in modern American history.

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