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[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

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<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/05/03/the-failures-of-capitalism-donald-trump-and-right-wing-terror/print/>

## The Failures of Capitalism, Donald Trump and Right Wing Terror

By Chuck Churchill  
May 3, 2016



Once again we are getting “rope-a-doped” by the two-party electoral sideshow. But in this election cycle there are a few strands that appear to have escaped the parameters of the corporate/bank dominated ideology characteristic of both the Republican and Democratic parties. Bernie Sanders’ campaign has partially broken with neoliberalism and opened the country to a different message. Sanders calls himself a democratic socialist, and it is important that this term is getting wide play in our political discourse: anyone who tries honestly to find out what it

actually means, cannot avoid understanding that socialism aims to transform an economic system based on the private property and profits of the few, into one where the primary motive force is human need. It proposes to make the people who actually do society's work the builders and operators of that society's governance and institutions.

Bernie's politics, however, are a revival of FDR's New Deal. He seeks to empower poor and working people (regardless of so-called "race") to participate in the process of freeing our society from the control of the big rich by voting for a candidate of the Democratic Party. Whether he can do this from inside that Wall Street-dominated party is questionable. Even if by some miracle he overcame the power of Wall Street and the corporate media to become president, he would have to work within the institutions established in our history to ensure the rule of capital and its minions.

Meanwhile, on the right, the Republican Party has been using its "Southern Strategy" since Richard Nixon to divide people by making veiled racist appeals, coupled with reactionary "culture wars" ideas and attacks on abortion and women's rights; they continue to deny global warming while promulgating policies that de-regulate any governmental oversight of corporate power and hand over large tax cuts to the already wealthy. Recently we are also seeing a more open revival of the kind of racist and fascist movements that have always lurked beneath the surface in the post-Civil War U.S. Older organizations like the Ku Klux Klan are now being joined by Neo-Nazis—both with long histories of racist murder and genocide. And for this election, the Republicans have fielded a candidate in Donald Trump who has put aside the usual veiled racist appeals and is openly signaling his affinity with these white supremacist organizations.

There some concrete reasons why this is happening now. The main one is capitalism's failure to meet the needs of billions of people worldwide. The U.S. engages in seemingly endless wars for control of resources and labor, though with decreasing success, while jobs are exported, unions undermined and destroyed, and right wing terror promoted. Here at home it's the Nazis and the Klan, or "lone wolf" killers influenced by right-wing ideology. And when these terror groups rally publicly, far from being stopped and arrested, they are given police protection to spread racist hate and violence. These are the same police forces that attack and murder people of color with impunity.

Worldwide, the U.S. military spreads its own terror with bombing and drone warfare in which the "collateral damage" takes the form of innocent civilians, many of whom are women, children and older people unable get out of the way, killed and maimed by American bombs supposedly aimed at terrorist groups such as the Taliban or ISIS. U.S. authorities claimed that the Taliban were defeated in 2003, but somehow they have been allowed to regroup and resume fighting, while the U.S.-supported Afghan government is notoriously corrupt. This relationship is nothing new, as the U.S. has propped up regimes like "South" Vietnam's notoriously repressive government that had little popular support, and would otherwise have been swept away. Furthermore, of the current terrorist boogymen, al Qaida got its start when the U.S. was arming and supporting Osama bin Laden against the Russians in Afghanistan in the 1980s, while ISIS did not even exist before the U.S. invaded the Middle East. These terror organizations as well as the suicide pilots that flew planes into the Twin Towers on 9/11 are the "blowback" from

decades of failed American policies in the Middle East. They all subscribe to an ideology that originated with our ally Saudi Arabia; it's a death cult that makes suicide bombers out of desperate young men, women and children, while their big capitalist leaders sit and collect the oil revenues. The U.S. also supplies arms to an increasingly rightist Israeli government to occupy and brutally oppress millions of Palestinians.

For almost fifty years after the Second World War, the U.S. was caught up in a confrontation with the Soviet Union. Since its collapse, however, America's leaders have been neo-conservative in thinking that world dominance was achievable, despite the weight of the historical record that shows every nation seeking world domination eventually provokes a reaction by other nations in opposition. This readily available historical knowledge has not stopped the latest reckless American moves against Russia and China. The U.S. helped overthrow a pro-Russian government in Ukraine and used neo-Nazis there to attack opponents. When Russia countered this by annexing the Crimea and supporting pro-Russian forces in Ukraine, the U.S. used its control over NATO to move troops closer to Russia's borders. Imagine the U.S.'s response if the Russians moved troops into southern Canada, or northern Mexico. In the Pacific, the U.S. has begun its "pivot to Asia," confronting the growing strength of China and pushing Russia and China closer together. Pro-U.S. elites in Brazil are now trying to get rid of a government that had moved that country closer to both Russia and especially China (the BRICS coalition). Most frightening of all, instead of engaging in negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons in the world, the U.S. is refurbishing its own stockpile while selectively enforcing a ban on certain countries like Iran, while North Korea, with its own nuclear arsenal, thumbs its nose. The shadow of a nuclear holocaust remains.

The United States' enormous "defense" budget is untouchable and only increases, lining the pockets of the "military industrial complex." Yet corporate bosses will not or cannot pay living wages but must continue to recruit workingmen and women to fight other workers and peasants around the world. Some of our rulers surely know that all these moves will be resisted by working people everywhere; at this point it's in a piecemeal and disorganized fashion, but nevertheless with growing numbers. The Bernie phenomenon is one clear sign that this is happening and that millions are fed up with oligarchic rule that tries to force austerity on workers here and throughout the world. This can be seen in the ongoing large nighttime demonstrations in France, the rise of Podemos in Spain, and Greek resistance to European bank-imposed austerity. Europe's rulers also look to counter these working class movements with fascist parties like the National Front in France and the emerging rightist movements in Germany and Austria, countries with fascism clearly in their historical backgrounds. They are, of course, aided in this by the flow of refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria. This is yet another war brought on by the U.S.'s destabilizing policy of "regime change." As in Libya, U.S. actions opened the door to ISIS and an increase in the terrorism it claims to be fighting! Ironically, it has been Russian intervention there that has prevented the growth (for now) of groups like ISIS.

In the U.S., resistance to the United States' disastrous foreign policy has not (yet) galvanized an anti-war movement like that of the Vietnam era, but the possibilities of this happening are growing despite the decades long efforts of our rulers to leave the "Vietnam syndrome" behind. The War in Vietnam was fought at a time of relative prosperity. Now, however, workers can see that corporate and political leaders have unlimited money for their wars, but little to raise wages

and improve people's lives. The billionaire class fears a mass workers' movement that demands economic and social justice and opposes imperialist wars, and is thus preparing a political response. I believe that our rulers could live with either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump, but Trump offers them a bonus: the promotion of greater divisions among the working class, and the potential for violent white supremacist gangs to be used against any mass movement with explicit multi-racial and pro-working class (socialist) aims that police power is unable to suppress (as was done to Occupy Wall Street). In his hostility to Mexican immigration, Trump also lines up with the current neo-fascist movements in Europe that attack immigrants. Furthermore, as the U.S. acts militarily as the world's bully against smaller and weaker countries, what better leader than a consummate bully like Donald Trump!

Divide and rule tactics (coupled with judicious use of repression) have been employed by elites to rule over much larger numbers of subjects since the Roman Empire. In America, "race" has been the most prominent divisive category, with the main target African Americans, from slavery until today. In the southwest, Mexicans, both immigrant and citizen, have also suffered from racism, and Donald Trump's anti-Mexican immigrant diatribes are of a piece with this history. Racism has thus been the most frequent tool of modern ruling classes whose power is threatened by mass working-class movements, though clearly not the only one; and our corporate media highlight any differences that might be useful in dividing people. Promoting divisions (race, native born vs. immigrant, ethnicity, gender, "culture" and "identity politics," sexual preference, religion, young/old) among a class of people that must sell their labor for wages paid by capitalists has been remarkably successful in enriching the few at the expense of the many. It also distracts the masses and obscures the deepest, most widespread and fundamental division separating people today: that between the capitalist class of owners in control of business and the state, and the billions of the world's people who must live by their labor—if they can find work at all! The working class of the United States almost seems tailor made for such divisive tactics.

During the post-Civil War industrial development of the U.S., large numbers of immigrant workers were encouraged to come here. When they arrived they faced horrific living and working conditions—child labor, long hours, job-related injuries and death, low wages, slum housing, police repression. They were pitted against white native-born workers to keep them from joining in common efforts to unionize, and some native workers were given managerial jobs as foremen and little bosses over immigrants (just as poor white slave patrols were used to control and repress plantation slaves in the ante-bellum South). These whites were encouraged to see themselves as "privileged," salaried employees. Yet they were only a step above the workers they bossed and at the mercy of the owning class, perhaps even more so since they could not join unions and forfeited any solidarity with the people under them.

After the later 19<sup>th</sup> century when large numbers of small and medium sized farmers were driven off the land by the mechanization and deflation of agriculture that prompted the Populist movement, large numbers of American-born whites also swelled the ranks of labor. There were a limited number of managerial positions available, and so the basic American working class became a mixture of immigrant and native labor. Many could see the necessity to organize, by craft and trade, but there was little class-consciousness. When in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries they did manage to forge unions and confront the owners by collectively withholding their labor in strikes, the police and even military power of the state were used to crush them.

Nor was the entire American working class of the time recruited to the struggle. Black workers were systematically oppressed, even lynched, to enforce racist segregation and Jim Crow laws. Racism kept them from joining with white workers in the struggles for unions and workers' rights, and they were lucky if they got the lowest paying menial jobs with which they could barely support a family.

Have we really progressed beyond these conditions today? Black and white workers were kept apart by deliberate policies of segregation. People who live in the same neighborhoods can get to know one another, and can recognize both a common humanity and the common circumstance that they all have to work for a living. This makes building a sense of solidarity much easier, and the spreading of racist lies about people with superficial differences much harder. Have we overcome this today? Do we live together in integrated neighborhoods, and attend integrated schools? Black workers are still ghettoized and face depression-like conditions. And large numbers of our fellow white citizens can hardly support themselves, much less a family. Untold numbers cannot afford a place to live, and far too often are found holding their "will work for food" sign at intersections today.

There has been another tool in the ruling class arsenal for keeping workers in subjection to capital, and perhaps it has been the most decisive. This is the relentless use of anti-communism to discredit the most militant and principled leaders of working-class struggle. In fact, in the U.S., outside of black organizations like the NAACP [how true is this? other organizations?], it was the American Communist Party that led efforts in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s to defend the rights of black people and to bring black and white workers together in the same organizations. The role of Communist organizers in bringing industrial unionism to the U.S. during the Great Depression is an historical fact. Nor does it come as a surprise that these Communist organizers were systematically driven out of the unions, while the Communist Party and progressive allies were attacked and greatly weakened by Truman and the Democrats in the late 1940s, and McCarthyism in the '50s.

The purging of the most militant and class conscious leaders from the union movement left most of those organizations in the hands of "business unionists" who feathered their own nests and too often sold out their working-class brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, individual Communists continued to struggle for civil rights, and their legacy of militant leadership carried over into the '60s and early '70's, a key time in the civil rights movement and of post-war union power in the U.S. But it was not long after this that the U.S. corporate and financial leaders, in response to a variety of factors, including international competition from their erstwhile partners in Europe and Japan, saw their market share and profits declining and began a systematic effort to destroy unions. Ronald Reagan got the ball rolling with his attack on the air traffic controllers. Workers were left without the militant, indeed revolutionary leadership that could have continued the fight against racism. They were encouraged by corporate politicians to "play by the rules," that generally meant working within the Democratic Party. They were deprived of tactics for struggle like the sit-down strikes of the 1930s; worst of all, they have never been able or encouraged to form an explicitly socialist, working-class political party of their own. Workers are systematically victimized by big business control of the economy, politics, and basic governmental institutions, while the mass media and educational systems disseminate a pro-



corporate ideology of division that encourages victim blaming, passivity, and obedience that functions to atomize the entire population.

But the rich have failed to keep the working class quiescent. The capitalist economy has suffered from stagnation for decades, as documented in the pages of counterpunch by such economists as Paul Craig Roberts and Michael Hudson, who have made the point repeatedly that Wall Street and the big banks that now hold the levers of economic power here have no intention of restoring an actual production-based economy to the U.S. Instead, manufacturing jobs have been shipped to China and elsewhere in search of the cheapest labor, while the major goal of financiers is to get more and more people into debt. Our neo-feudal rulers want a docile toll-paying population while they appear increasingly unable to provide the basic standard of living, health care, and education that the world's working people want and need.

Here again, Donald Trump represents their (and his own) interests. [you might want to rewrite this, given that key members of the political establishment, certainly reflecting greater corporate power, are not keen on his becoming president] He can be viewed as a shift in our rulers' response to the growing opposition to capitalism's failures. [why him and not Jeb Bush, or Hillary as we will find when the key neo-cons come out from under their rocks?] He is the epitome of a fascist demagogue. Like all fascists, he wants and needs to divide and control the working class, the only potential force in society capable of taking on big capital. To this end, he pretends to be on the side of at least some (white) workers. He attacks the "rigged system" of corrupt party politics, without ever naming the class of people (his own) that control the wealth, politics, and institutions of the country. He is a billionaire demagogue with experience as a media "star"; therefore, like Hitler or Mussolini before him (he has made reference to the latter in his speeches), he knows how to put forward the Big Lie. All of his opponents are liars, but he should be called Big Lying Donald Trump! In this he knows he will be enabled, not challenged, by the corporate media. He appears bold and brave in his scurrilous ad hominem attacks on his rivals, while at his rallies he promotes violence against people of color and immigrants. He mentions unfair trade, and talks about what a great dealmaker he is, but never puts forward any concrete ideas. In this way he makes a phony appeal to the most ignorant and misled sectors of the (white) working class.

Hitler did the same, starting with the name of his organization: the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Trump too uses a hyper-nationalism that promises to "make America great again," while stating in clear terms that it has been Mexican immigrants who are responsible for today's "America" not being great. This is of course laughable! If the U.S. is today in decline, this can be laid at the feet of those holding power: our corporate elite and their political lackeys. This class has been doubling down on failed policies for decades. Nor has it been systematically challenged for its failures by the highly paid talking heads of the media. On cable news it's all Trump all the time. I call it 'Trumpimping.' [love the term; should be into tees for Wolf Blitzer and the gang to wear]. Far from making America great again, Trump's aim is to weaken and divide a working class that is already divided, but is now showing signs of restiveness and is looking around for answers and a plan to reverse 30-plus years of stagnant wages and declining living conditions. As Bernie Sanders makes clear, this cannot but come at the expense of the billionaire class that has taken all the gains over the past three decades. Trump is thus acting in the interests of his class, while he makes all kinds of promises to workers such as bringing back

jobs (for whites only?). But he never cites a single specific policy that might in fact address the enormous and growing divide between the richest 1% and the rest. Instead, his one big proposal is to build a wall on our border with Mexico. His hostility to a huge number of hard working people could not be clearer.

Let me conclude by suggesting that Trump is a straw in the wind. It is clear to me that he is a fascist, but he is also using the existing electoral system to spread his ideas and enable his followers, thus giving them a (thin) veneer of legitimacy. The kind of forum for racism that Trump is providing has not been seen in a presidential campaign since George Wallace. If his racist, white supremacist followers are not opposed, they will only be emboldened and attract even more like them. These types are the storm troopers waiting in the wings to be used by our capitalist rulers. We have seen the promotion of violence at his rallies. We have also seen that protesters, many from the Black Lives Matter movement, have consistently opposed him. Black people know from harsh personal experience about the concrete results of the racist demagoguery Trump is espousing, as do many Latinos and Asians, both native and immigrant.

These protests need to be expanded by the addition of workers of all shades; but white workers especially need to step up and join the fight against this manifestation of fascism. Unless they want to end up the slaves of big business, whites should understand that an attack on workers of color is an attack on their class brothers and sisters, and is a part of a strategy to control and oppress all workers. [why?] And in response to the increased threat of right wing terror being sponsored by Trump, two things should be made clear: 1. There should be no “free speech” for violent racists whose entire organizational history shows them to be murderers. No crying “fire” in a crowded theater; no free speech for KKK and Nazis! 2. Working people have an absolute right both to oppose people like Trump (and those of his class) seeking to exploit and oppress them to an even greater degree, and they have the absolute right to defend themselves against anti-working class violence. We can certainly expect the power of the state to be used against protesters, and our only defense is to turn small protests into a mass movement. The seeds for this have been planted; we just need to clear the ground of illusions!