

Eulogy for Obamaism circa 2008, America 2016

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1. This is a very painful essay for me to write. When I say painful, I mean it quite literally. I feel physical pain. This is not the essay I thought I would be writing after seventeen months of the ugliest campaign America has ever seen. Don't get me wrong. I never believed the polls either. I mean, I wanted to but was scared. How could they be that unwaveringly sure of a Clinton victory? So I am not surprised by Donald Trump's hideous victory but I am shattered. My ligaments have peeled away from my joints, my bones are splintering through my muscles. It also pains me to admit that if Hillary Rodham Clinton had won, some millions of people would be feeling exactly as I feel now except in reverse. I know this intellectually but in my current state it is hard for me to fully recognize this...fact. So after I finish writing this essay, I will retreat into my own universe of make-believe the way Donald J. Trump does. His fact-allergic campaign has made it this far apparently so why can't I do the same?

2. Or perhaps I should whip up some conspiracy theories a la Donald? Did Russia in fact hack the election? How is it the polls were so wrong?

Either Russia did hack the election or pollsters should indulge in some serious self-reflection. I did not believe the Hillary-tilting polls because the world zeitgeist right now is trending undeniably rightwards. Before Brexit, the polls got it wrong, and they were wrong about the Colombian peace deal too. But how will we be sure of public opinion on anything now?

Are pollsters skewing the data they collect? Or, is their own class bias and political disposition so pronounced that it makes them unable to register views they don't personally support?

As a researcher, this is a frightening and sobering thought.

3. I had wanted to write an essay in the aftermath of the election to make some common-sense suggestions such as: Doesn't the horribly long American presidential campaign waste millions and millions of dollars that could be spent on more worthy causes? And what of the cost to the environment with the presidential candidates criss-crossing the country in a dizzying tap dance across the battleground states, going from east to west, north to south in their private, fuel-guzzling planes, sometimes to five different states in a single day? Never mind. Donald Trump believes that climate change is a Chinese hoax.

4. Trump patriarch, Trump wife (!) and Trump progeny will be the new First Family.
Lean, solemn, dignified Barack Obama will be replaced by this flabby, hate and

vitriol-spewing windbag. That is basically the nicest thing I can say about Donald Trump, a man who, by his own admission, sexually assaults women and is thus more than a mere bully. He is an out and out barbarian who does not have one iota of ubuntu. It is not only his policy positions on things like torture that I abhor. He is an advocate, he seems to find it titillating, the thought of torturing people. No, it's not just his ideas I find distasteful. I find him as a man repulsive. Who knew I would one day miss George W. Bush? He seems so innocuous by comparison because Trump represents everything I despise: the arrogance of inherited wealth, monolingual/monocultural ignorance, the apex of white male privilege that is blind to the suffering of all others because it can be... Michelle Obama, an elegant, accomplished, inspirational First Lady, will be replaced by a...trophy wife who plagiarized her 2008 convention speech and actually broke the law by working in the US illegally before she had the correct visa. But nobody cares because she is white and European. Whoever tries to explain this election result without first admitting that it has **everything to do with race** and the fact of Hillary being a woman should stop right now. Many of the American people who decided to vote for Trump could not bear the thought of going from a black man to a woman. They are restoring white male privilege and white male patriarchy to its "proper place." They are not only trumpeting Trumpism, they are eschewing Obamaism.

5. When Obama was elected in 2008, whatever happened in the wake of his election, whatever mistakes he has made or setbacks he has endured, that moment was a singular moment. I wrote that somewhere but now I can't remember where. It was a singular moment in time in which all the sacrifices of progressive people everywhere suddenly blossomed into a rainbow of potential. The skies soon clouded over but Obamaism, for a moment, was about hope and change, not a red or blue America but a United States of America. The slogans of Clinton's campaign - build bridges, not walls; love trumps hate; stronger together - have been repudiated by the American people who have chosen Trumpism - reject non-whites, non-Christians and immigrants (except Trump's own wives); choose hate over love thy neighbor (or thine Syrian refugees); construct divisive walls instead of building bridges that at least reach for the other side... This election was not only about a practical change in national direction. It was fundamentally about a symbolic shift away from the politics of progressivism. Progressives will mourn the fact that now Trump will pick the all-important Supreme Court justices who define the country's direction for a generation or more. But more than the tangible policy issues such as abortion, gay marriage, criminal justice/immigration reform, the national debt and health care which traditionally divide conservatives and progressives, this election is about symbolism. It is a Great Shunning: a shunning of political correctness, diversity of all types, female and black empowerment, multiculturalism, and most certainly kale and quinoa-eating liberals. When the KKK is celebrating Trump's presidency, sit up and take notice. White supremacists, not just white nationalists or the so-called alt-right, believe their man is back in the White House...and it's **not just** those in the US...

6. Yes. I hear you critics grumbling over there. You view my assertion here that Hillary's defeat has everything to do with racism and sexism as ignoring the real economic pain that many Trump voters are feeling. There is without a doubt great economic pain in the US, as in all countries which promote neoliberal policies that further enrich the wealthy at the expense of the middle and working classes thus intensifying income inequality.

There will be a lot of blame handed around: whose fault is it that Hillary lost? The Russians, Julian Assange and Wikileaks, the media feeding frenzy that gave the Tangerine Bully hours and hours of free publicity, the interference of Jim Comey and the FBI, a weak campaign message, a flawed candidate lacking in charisma? We can debate all of that but first we must blame the voters. Some people refer to them as "low-information" voters. But I will refer to them as victims of America's broken education system.

No-one who has actually understood Trump's tax plan would for one moment be fooled into thinking he is going to do anything in office except pursue policies that benefit him and wealthy families like his. Anyone who knows the first thing about globalization has to know that Trump cannot roll back time and bring well-paying manufacturing jobs back to America. One of the most diabolical elements of his campaign has been how he has lied to working people.

7. I wrote of the Donald of Trumped-up Self-Importance's campaign as utilizing curiously "Third World," Banana Republic tactics. Now, will he govern like a Third World dictator? Will the Tangerine Bully curtail press freedom and put Hillary in prison as he has threatened to do and force the Obamas into exile? Will he run the US like his own personal slush fund, using his position as president to enhance his brand's global business opportunities?

He has already refused to put his holdings into a blind trust as is commonly-accepted practice and says his children will run the family business. But they have promised not to talk to him about it so that they don't influence any policy decisions that could benefit them and their business and we should definitely believe them...because why?

Nepotism and padding family bank accounts whilst tax payers and the state treasury foot the bill is very "Third World," Banana Republic...Amhlope/Makorokoto/Congratulations in advance?

8. So...the world is a topsy-turvy, unjust place. Hillary, eminently qualified for the job of POTUS, was felled by her emails? Yet Trump has skated away scot-free without paying a price for his multiple offenses, protected by various forms of flagrant double standards.

For example, Jim Comey of the FBI decided to drop a bombshell into Hillary's campaign when he released a letter saying he was investigating her emails for the second time (and then cleared her for the second time two days before the election). But Mark Burnett of NBC refused to release any potentially-damaging Apprentice footage of Trump because of contractual obligations.

When Trump's horrible Access Hollywood tape came out, Billy Bush, his

interlocutor, was fired by NBC for his role in the offensive tape. But Trump, the protagonist, goes on to the White House...does that make sense? Wikileaks stole John Podesta's emails and released them to embarrass the Clinton campaign and have people like Donna Brazile fired from their pundit jobs at CNN. But no-one from the IRS leaked Trump's full tax returns (which I'm positive are fascinating). If they had, they would have been prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

9. I will not read any more coverage of this election travesty and I will black out all TV because the thought of seeing any of the sinister Trump campaign spokespeople is sickening: skeletal Rudy Giuliani who always looks like he is wearing a frightening Halloween mask but he's not; mendacious Kellyanne Conway who spins faster than a washing machine; plastic...what's her name... Katrina Pierson or Pearson or whatever her name may be; venal Chris Christie...the list goes on.

The only hope is that the cabinet formed by Trump and Christie, along with a Trump presidency, will be held to account...No, not by a Democratic Senate or Congress, the Republicans control it all now, but by the US constitution which is about to undergo its most severe test ever.

The American-dominated world is mortified, confounded, anxious. I wish the US did not so dominate the world stage. But it does. And the presence of such an unstable, woefully unprepared and erratic ego-maniac at the helm induces blood-freezing-in-arteries-type fear... As one of my dear Delhi friends texted me:

What the hell is happening, babe? I see Trump winning???! This is crazy and too much disheartening.

Exactly, I replied. You have put it exactly right...

So, as they say, God Bless the United States of America and please, God, bless all the rest of us as well!

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