

A letter to a Civil War historian on the causes of the election debacle

David North

6 November 2024

I have sent the letter below to an outstanding historian of the Civil War era.

Trump's victory may be shocking, but it is hardly surprising. His election is the disastrous outcome of the long-term and very deliberate repudiation by the Democratic Party of any programmatic orientation to the working class, which Hillary Clinton infamously dismissed as "a basket of deplorables" and Biden recently referred to as "garbage."

Focused on the flim-flam of identity politics — i.e., the politics of more or less affluent sections of the middle class seeking a more favorable distribution of the wealth among the top 10 percent — the Democratic Party convinced itself that it had found an alternative to the politics that prioritized class. This intellectual regression was promoted and justified in the academy by the various forms of anti- and pseudo-Marxist philosophies (Frankfurt School and Post-Modernism) that were embraced by a generation of ex-radical students in the aftermath of 1968.

In the United States, the new anti-Marxism blended with the longstanding tradition of anti-communism. Leftwing politics, of the sort connected to working class militancy, disappeared. The grievances related to identity displaced any serious concern with the massive concentration of wealth in a small segment of society at the expense of the working class.

The pseudo-left replaced calls for equality with demands for equity. This was closely connected to the relentless harping on racial and ethnic differences, and, with it, a contempt for the genuinely democratic traditions of the United States. This found noxious expression in the 1619 Project. All this has been accompanied by a general cultural degradation, the promotion of every form of backwardness.

To the extent that the Biden administration had an agenda, its number one item was the escalation of military conflict with Russia and China. Its endorsement of the Gaza genocide — among the greatest crimes in the history of the new century — has been entirely bound up with its militaristic global strategy.

The disastrous consequences of Trump's victory can be averted only by "a new birth" of genuinely socialist politics, based on the working class and animated by an international strategy that unites global humanity.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact