

In Diversity We Trust: Joe Biden's Cabinet Choices

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Perfumed and tailored for a certain brand of folksy, identity politics, Pete Buttigieg hoped to blast his way to the White House having run a community of 102,000 constituents in South Bend, Indiana. Mayor Pete was hoping for the best, though his effort did not so much stall as fall over early on before the somnambulist who eventually won both his party's nomination and the Presidency.

With President-elect Joe Biden hoping to give the impression of full-blooded diversity in his Cabinet, Buttigieg was a natural choice for transport secretary. At least New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and the US Conference of Mayors [thought so](#). He spoke well, much like a textbook Rotarian who wishes to justify the club fee. He comes across as tutored, yet to be jaded. And there was that wonderful bonus thrown in: his sexual politics.

Biden has gone where many a US president has gone before, pushing up the hill of exceptionalism, proudly [claiming](#) that he has gotten his appointments the way no other president before has.

"This Cabinet will be the most representative of any Cabinet in American history." Meretriciously, he claimed it would be a "Cabinet of barrier breakers, a Cabinet of firsts."

Buttergieg had been his ninth "precedent-busting" pick.

To keep him company was, of course, the Vice President-elect herself, Kamala Harris; Alejandro Mayorkas (Department of Homeland Security) – the first Latino to occupy that position and defense secretary appointee Army Gen. Lloyd Austin – the first Black American for the role. Avril Haines is pencilled in as chief of the US intelligence committee – the first woman to take the reins. The world's citizenry can rest assured that they will be monitored, bombed and tortured by a most inclusive set of Cabinet appointees.

Biden's choices are certainly brimming with the rehearsed lines and testimonials. Haines, to take but one example, [claims](#) to "have never shied away from speaking truth to power.... I've worked for you for a long time and I accept this nomination knowing that you would never want me to do otherwise."

Former CIA director John Brennan [is also taken by her](#) "willingness to speak up and speak out if she sees something that needs to be said, so she is not somebody who hesitates to be contrarian as necessary."

This barely squares [with her approval](#) of an "accountability board" that exonerated CIA personnel from conducting espionage on investigators charged by the US Senate for investigating claims of torture. Far from speaking truth to power, she took a shovel and

sought to bury it. Haines also threw in her lot in backing Gina Haspel for the role of CIA director, despite Haspel's torture speckled resume.

The appointments have certainly propitiated the devotees of diversity across a number of publications and fora. *The New Republic*, making specific reference to court appointments, [suggested](#) that it "may actually be an essential move [...] to make after the Trump era". Biden's "diversity promises" were "identity politics at their best."

Jodi Enda of the Center for American Progress [wrote glowingly](#) of the president-elect's appointment of an all-female communications team. It was "a particularly stunning move"; women, for the first time in history, would "have the chance to weigh in on every important White House decision. Women will be advising the president and speaking for him." Making much of this, the network had to justify the soggy praise. Having such a team was good because women's priorities were "different" from men. "In general, women are more often focused on issues such as healthcare, pay equity and education, which directly affect their families, and are more concerned about equality for immigrants and people of color."

Such a vulgar politicisation of multiculturalism and identity also serves another function. Not only is it meant to convince the multicultis and identitarians that they are onto a good thing with Biden; they can also scorn those voters who backed the soon-to-be-exiting Donald Trump. That's a huge number to scorn, suggesting that change is something bound to be left in cold storage. As conservative commentator Daniel Henninger has [suggested](#), "diversity in practice is preponderantly *political*, which is to say, divisive."

The diversity drive has become a creature of itself, a lobbying tool, pressing Biden into making appointments to satisfy investors. Asian American and Pacific Islander lawmakers, for instance, [wish for their share](#) of the diversity pie and would be deeply disappointed "if several AAPIs are not nominated." Texas Rep. Vicente González [has demanded](#) no less than five Latinos to occupy Cabinet positions.

Consolation prizes [are being doled out](#) to candidates with neither the expertise nor the interest. Ohio Rep. Marcia Fudge [had hoped](#) to head the Department of Agriculture but instead got the call to fill the role of secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Ironically enough, it was Fudge [who told](#) *Politico* in November that, "You know, it's always 'we want to put the Black person in labor or HUD'".

The racial-gender-sexual arithmetic has entailed ensuring a plastering and splash of shallowness, a squeezing of rhetoric that, on closer inspection, fractures with the clichés. In such cases, history suddenly has eyes and is looking at Biden. "The eyes of history," he insists, "are gazing at my diversity inclusion." This does not necessarily do him any favours. This is fashion show politics, not substantive thinking about how best to ameliorate a fatigued, broken state. We await the achievements of the appointees in due course, but a good number of the ills of the US Republic will continue to be ignored by the practices of the establishment.

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