

The Con-man Cornered: Obama and the Democratic Debacle of 2014

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The meteoric rise to power of Barack Obama in 2008 was propelled by one of the greatest demagogic US Presidential campaigns of all time: To millions of young Americans, he promised to end the US wars in the Middle East. To millions of working and middle class voters, he promised to end the economic crisis by confronting Wall Street. To women, he promised to protect and expand their social rights and end the gender gap in wages and salaries.

To human rights and civil liberties activists, he promised to end police state surveillance and torture, and to close the Guantanamo concentration camp, which had denied political prisoners a fair and open trial. To blacks, he promised higher living standards and greater racial equality in income. To Latino-Americans, he promised immigration reform facilitating a path to citizenship for long-term residents. Overseas he spoke in Cairo of a “new chapter” in US policy toward the Muslim world. To Russia, he promised President Putin he would ‘reset relations’ – toward greater co-operation.

Obama’s rhetorical flourishes attracted millions of young activists, women and minority voters and leaders to work for his election and the Democratic Party. He won a resounding victory! And the Democrats took control of the House and Senate.

Obama Embraces the Rightwing Agenda

The rhetorical exercise was a massive smoke screen. For his electoral campaign Obama raised over one billion dollars from the ‘1%’ – Wall Street bankers, Hollywood media moguls, Silicon Valley venture capitalists, Chicago Zionists and the Mid-Western business elite. Obama was clearly playing a double game – talking to “the people” and working for ‘the bosses’.

A few analysts cut through the demagogy and identified Obama as the ‘Greatest Con-Man of recent times”, the Washington counterpart of the great contemporary Wall Street swindler Bernard ‘Bernie’ Madoff.

According to the somewhat more skeptical liberals and progressives, Obama would have to ‘choose’ between those who elected him and those who groomed and bankrolled him.

Obama quickly and decisively resolved the progressives’ ‘dilemma’. He re-appointed the two central officials who designed disgraced President Bush Jr’s war policy and Wall Street bailout: Robert Gates was confirmed as Secretary of Defense and Timothy Geithner was renewed as Treasury Secretary. Obama followed by teaming up with the head of the Federal Reserve, Benjamin Shalom Bernacke and Treasury Secretary Geithner to launch a

multi-year trillion dollar bailout of Wall Street, while hundreds of thousands of Obama voters had their mortgages foreclosed and millions of workers, who voted Democratic were fired and remained unemployed, because Washington prioritized Wall Street recovery of profitability over funding job-creating public works.

In response, millions of indignant citizens repudiated the Washington bailout and Congress temporarily shelved approval. However, the White House and the Democratic majority in both Houses, reversed course and approved the biggest State -to- Bankers handout in US - or for that matter, *world* - history.

If the Obama's '*First Wave of Reaction*' appointed powerful Wall Street clones and Pentagon war hawks to his cabinet and the '*Second Wave of Reaction*' led to sacrificing workers' incomes, employment and living standards, so that Wall Street could return to profitability, and the '*Third Wave of Reaction*' was the escalation of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama has dispatched tens of thousands of US combat troops to '*end the war by expanding the war*'!

The Democratic Electorate Strikes Back: 2010

By the end of 2010, sufficient masses of Obama and Democratic voters were disenchanted to the point of not voting in the Congressional elections: The Democrats lost control of the House of Representatives.

The most lucid and clearheaded progressives understood that nothing more was to be gained by waiting patiently '*at the gate, like benighted pilgrims*' for their president Obama's gaze to '*turn left*' or for the Democrats to reverse course in Congress. Hundreds of thousands of citizens shook off the trickster's spell and took to the streets blocking financial districts. '*Occupy Wall Street*' - direct action in the streets, citizens clearly targeted the principle source of the economic crisis and the real power behind the demagogic rhetoric of the White House confidence man.

Federal, state and local police broke up, arrested and incarcerated the peaceful activists. The Occupy Wall Street movement, under massive and coordinated police-state siege, and without political direction, dispersed and disintegrated.

The '*Fourth Wave of reaction*' was illuminated by the Snowden revelations of National Security Agency (NSA) intrusive spying into the lives of hundreds of millions of Americans as well as allied leaders in four continents - and unimaginable numbers of citizens in countries around the world. The White House gave unconditional backing to the entire, gargantuan police state apparatus and its unconstitutional intervention into everyday life of individuals and their families. Hundreds of thousands of civil libertarians, human rights activists and attorneys and millions of liberal democrats were shocked by Obama's blatant refusal to rein-in or even acknowledge the enormous scope of illegal domestic spying.

The '*Fifth Wave of Reaction*' was the cumulative impact of five years of nurturing Wall Street profits and ignoring working and middle class income and declining living standards. Thanks to virtually free federal 'bailout' money, Wall Street borrowed and invested overseas -reaping returns triple the miniscule interest rates in the US. They speculated on the stock market. The 'D-J boom' continued for five years while real incomes of most Americans continued to decline. Young Democratic voters, who had believed the con-man, remained mired at entry level jobs barely paying room and board. The '*Audacity of Hope*' became the

'Humiliation of Return' into their parents' homes for millions of young workers unable to support themselves...

Disenchantment Deepens

Millions of Latino citizens, who were conned into believing that Obama would provide a '*road-map to citizenship*' for twelve million fellow immigrants, discovered that the real Obama policy toward immigrants was a '*road map to violent arrest, incarceration and deportation*': A record two million immigrants were expelled in five years, exceeding the totals of all previous Presidents, even the most rabid rightwing Republicans.

Probably the most egregious and cynical con-job of all was the *mega-con* Obama perpetrated on Afro-Americans. More than any other group in the US, Afro-Americans have supported Barack Obama: Ninety-five percent voted for the '*First Afro-American President*'.

Under President Obama, Afro-Americans have lost more personal wealth than under any president since the Great Depression. Many key indicators show that the economic conditions of Afro-Americans have worsened dramatically under Obama.

According to the US Federal Reserve's survey of consumer finances, between 2009-2014, non-white household incomes have declined by nearly a tenth to \$33,000 a year. Median incomes fell by five percent. Data on net wealth – assets minus liabilities – tells an even more brutal story. The median non-white family today has a net worth of just \$18,100 – almost a fifth lower than it was when Obama took office. In contrast, white median wealth increased by one percent to \$142,000. In 2009 white households were seven times richer than blacks; that gap is now eightfold. Both in relative and absolute terms, black Americans are doing much worse under President Obama. His '*Wall Street First*' agenda (bailing out the banksters and mortgage swindlers) has relegated Afro-Americans to last place. Racial inequalities have deepened because Obama, who may have '*shot some hoops*' on an urban ghetto playground and dressed up as a '*black role model*', in fact, oversaw an increasingly segregated and deteriorating school system. In Washington, he marginalized African-American concerns about double digit rates of unemployment in Detroit and other urban centers, while offering pompous, stern '*moral*' lectures to unemployed blacks about their '*family responsibilities*'.

Obama's demagoguery and deceptive populist posturing bamboozled most progressive voters for a period of time, but after *five waves of reaction*, many of the activists '*wised up*' – first in the streets and then in the elections – by refusing to vote for Democrats running in the Congressional elections of 2014.

The Democratic Debacle of 2014

The major reason for the Democrat's debacle in the 'mid-term elections' was the high rate of abstention and lack of activists getting out the vote. In many states, where the Democrats lost, the overall rate of abstention among eligible voters approached seventy percent. And there is reason to believe that the vast majority of non-voters (aka – the '*none of the above*' voters) were Democrats, people disenchanting or hostile to Obama's betrayals and, in particular, voters who believed that he had deceived or '*conned them*'.

Young people's participation in this election, a major factor in mobilizing voters for Obama in 2008 and 2012 and doubly deceived, were notable by their absence: Young voters' share of

the electorate declined from 19% in 2012 to 13% in 2014. Parallel declines were documented in Latino-American and Afro-American turn-outs.

For those who voted, nearly half (45%) said that the '*economy was the key consideration*' and by *economy* they didn't mean Wall Street's booming profits, or record high Dow Jones Stock quotes, which White House Democrats had hailed as their 'economic success'. For the American middle and working class voters '*the economy*' that drove some to vote on November 4, 2014, was measured in the deterioration of affordable health insurance coverage and pension plans, the decline of living standards and the growth of 'dead-end' low-paid, contingent employment that rendered the lives and future increasingly unstable.

Most former Obama voters *did not defect* to the Republicans: They realized that both Democrats and Republicans were responsible for the domestic economy-busting decade-long wars and Wall Street hand-outs. They did not vote: Most abstained! Some former Democrats and Independents, and not a few Republicans, turned their anti-Obama animus into a rabid racist rant against the black President and extended their anger toward people of color in general. *Obama's con game* has aroused deep racist undercurrents in US politics.

If his image as the first African-American President inspired a moment of hope and promise for greater racial equality in this country, his *reactionary economic policies in practice* allowed rightwing politicians to divert white worker and middle class economic discontent away from the criminals and swindlers on Wall Street to racist hostility toward the beleaguered black communities.

Post-Elections: The Con-Man is Cornered

The new Republican Congressional majorities will continue to implement the fundamental economic and foreign policies of the Obama regime. Wall Street profits will continue to grow, income disparities between capital and labor will continue to sharpen and the highly militarized foreign policy of the last six years will become more overtly bi-partisan. The Democratic President will join with the Republican Congress in pursuing military confrontations in the Ukraine and in sending more US troops to Syria and Iraq. Under pressure from Israel and its powerful US supporters, increased sanctions against Iran will scuttle US negotiations with Tehran. Obama's blockade of Cuba will continue, as will bi-partisan hostility to center-left governments in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil and Argentina. The grotesque narco-state terror and mass murder in Mexico and Central America will continue to fuel the massive refugee pressure on the US border and expose the hypocrisy of Washington's *humanitarian* military missions in the Middle East.

The Republicans rode to power by exploiting discontent with Obama's '*Five Waves*' of reactionary policies; they will now co-operate with him in launching a '*6th Wave*'. The Republican Congressional majority will embrace Obama's proposal to '*fast-track*' free trade treaties covering Asia and Europe, currently blocked by House Democrats and opposed by US trade unions.

The Republicans will join with Obama in backing corporate tax '*reform*', which substantially reduces the tax on US multinational corporations' overseas earnings in order to end the hoarding of profits in low tax countries – while intensifying austerity on American workers and the poor.

In other words, Obama will now openly coordinate with his Republican counterparts on an

agenda they have shared from the first day he took office. This time Barack Obama, *the Con-Man*, will have to *play it straight and cut the populist palaver* – Republicans and their business partners demand economic payoffs and overseas military victories. Obama, the ‘cowering Con-Man’, has been unmasked by progressives and is cornered by the Republicans... and they have no further use for *his congab*.

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