

# The Nation magazine and Obama's reelection

Barry Grey  
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The response of the *Nation* magazine to the reelection of Barack Obama underscores the deeply reactionary role of the “left” liberals for whom the publication speaks, and the politically diseased character of their obsession with racial and identity politics.

The tone was set in the magazine's postelection editorial, posted on its web site November 7, entitled “A Progressive Surge.” The editorial makes the preposterous argument that the narrow election victory for Obama, whose right-wing policies resulted in a net loss of more than 7 million votes from his total in 2008, represented a triumph of progressive forces over the forces of reaction.

Of an election in which popular disillusionment with the political system and both major parties resulted in a net drop of nearly 10 million votes for president, with voter turnout declining in every state, the editors write: “This right-wing coalition was defeated at the polls by a ‘rising American electorate,’ a coalition of women, African-Americans, Latinos, the young and unionized blue-collar workers in Midwestern battleground states.”

The article gushes over the victory of “several stalwart progressives” in Senate races, including Elizabeth Warren in Massachusetts, Sherrod Brown in Ohio, and Tammy Baldwin in Wisconsin, “who will become the first gay or lesbian to serve in the Senate, where she will join the ranks of a record number of women senators.”

“The new Democratic majority in the Senate,” the editorial asserts, is “decidedly more progressive than the one it will replace.”

The editors are, inconveniently, obliged to note that the “progressive” president and his party are about to enact “devastating cuts to social programs” and are proposing a “grand bargain” on the deficit that “will end up dealing out the most pain to the people Romney disparaged as the ‘47 percent.’”

In the midst of pledges of bipartisan collaboration by

Obama and the Democratic-controlled Senate with the Republicans, the *Nation* somehow concludes that the “1 percent were rebuffed at the polls.”

The article makes the bald assertion that a “racist minority... still poisons this country's politics,” and ends by declaring the *Nation's* fealty to Obama: “We are ready to help—or to push—President Obama to have a successful second term.”

Other articles posted on November 7 sound the same themes. Ari Melber writes, under the headline “Barack Obama's Decisive Victory for Liberal Government,” that Obama's reelection “marks the most decisive mandate for an assertive, progressive governing model in well over a generation.”

George Zornick writes rapturously of Obama's victory speech: “But standing on a chair in the media section last night, watching through camera risers and the elevated smartphones of thousands of joyful people as America's first black president gave a triumphant victory address, I admit to being overwhelmed, and hopeful.”

Hopeful enough to brush aside what he characterizes as Obama's “abhorrent civil liberties policies, the extralegal drone strikes,” which are “unacceptable” but “likely to continue.”

In what precisely does the “progressiveness” hailed by the *Nation* consist? Certainly nothing that pertains to the working class, which has suffered devastating job losses and attacks on its living standards under Obama, and is about to be hit with even more brutal cuts. Or anything that relates to democratic rights, which are being systematically shredded. Or any curtailment of militarism and war.

The editorial provides a hint when it states that a Romney win “would have collapsed the space the left needs to gain strength...” This is a euphemism for careers and well-paying posts in Democratic think tanks, the trade union apparatus, the staffs of

Democratic officeholders, etc.

The full depth of reaction emerges when the *Nation* turns its fixation on race and gender to the subject of white people (that is, white workers). Peter Rothberg, an associate publisher of the magazine, posted a blog Wednesday morning bearing the headline “Celebrate!” and declaring that “today is a time to celebrate the repudiation of a party of hysterical, deeply misinformed, mendacious white men.”

Jon Wiener posted a blog on the *Nation* site the same day with the title: “The Bad News About White People: Romney Won the White Vote Almost Everywhere.”

Wiener writes: “Liberals hoped that whites who opposed Obama in 2008 would learn toleration and acceptance of racial differences after four years with a black president in the White House. But what happened was the opposite: Romney won 4 percent more of the white vote in 2012 than John McCain won in 2008...

“What’s the matter with white people—especially old white men? They used to run everything... Could it be that they resent their loss of power in a country that is becoming more racially diverse every minute?”

Here we enter the field of social pathology. One can only imagine what the *Nation* was preparing to say about the white working class in the event of an Obama loss!

This type of rant, which expresses openly the conceptions that dominate much of the milieu of the middle-class pseudo-left, can be described only as politically and morally sick. There is a whiff of fascism in this descent into racial stereotypes.

The *Nation*’s promotion of such political filth is of a piece with its support for a right-wing government, a party and political system dominated by a financial oligarchy, and the criminal policies they carry out against working people both within the United States and internationally. It reflects the outlook of privileged layers of the middle class that are looking for a bigger share of the capitalist pie and are bitterly hostile to the interests of the working class.



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