

The Guardian's Marina Hyde accuses actress Susan Sarandon of being Trump's "asset"

David Walsh
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In a column in the *Guardian* July 5, ("Protest all you like, Susan Sarandon. In effect you work for Trump"), commentator Marina Hyde asserted that American actress Susan Sarandon was an "asset" of Donald Trump. Sarandon's great crime? Failing to endorse Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election, and instead calling for a vote for Jill Stein of the Green Party.

The event that immediately occasioned Hyde's indignation was Sarandon's arrest June 28 at a protest in Washington against Trump's "zero tolerance" immigration policies and the brutal breaking up of immigrant families.

According to Hyde, Sarandon had no right to demonstrate against Trump and his policies. In her "droll," mocking way, the *Guardian* journalist noted, "I'm puzzled as to what Susan was doing there in the first place. Didn't she, in effect, vote for Trump, with her showy endorsement of third party Green candidate Jill Stein? Yes. Yes she did."

There is no politically coherent or compelling logic to any of the arguments in Hyde's column, even the most apparently obvious of them. In fact, if Sarandon *had* actually voted for Trump, she would still have every right to denounce his policies. There are countless Trump voters who are currently shocked and outraged by his administration's actions.

It is Hyde and the *Guardian* who are in effect aiding and encouraging Trump's vicious crackdown on immigration by jeering at and maligning those protesting against it.

In any event, because she opposed both Trump *and* Clinton, Sarandon has brought down upon her head the wrath of Hyde and the entire upper middle class, "progressive" Democratic Party constituency (including, venomously, the *Nation's* Katha Pollitt).

Sarandon, 71, has a lengthy history in film, dating back to the early 1970s. She was nominated for an Academy Award for *Atlantic City* (1980), *Thelma & Louise* (1991), *Lorenzo's Oil* (1992) and *The Client* (1994), before winning for *Dead Man Walking* (1995).

The actress, long known for her generally left-wing views, strongly backed Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders in 2016

and, unlike the candidate himself, refused to transfer her support to Clinton when the latter won the Democratic Party nomination. In June of 2016, she suggested that Clinton might be even more dangerous than Trump. "She did not learn from Iraq, and she is an interventionist, and she has done horrible things—and very callously. ... I think we'll be in Iran in two seconds." Noting that she did not know what Trump's policies were, she went on, about Clinton, "I do know what *her* policies are, I do know who *she* is taking money from."

In an interview on the eve of the election, Sarandon observed acerbically about her decision not to support a female candidate, "I don't vote with my vagina." She further explained, "Fear of Donald Trump is not enough for me to support Clinton, with her record of corruption."

In November 2017, she told an interviewer from the *Guardian* that "Bringing attention to working-class issues is not a luxury. People are really hurting; that's how this guy got in. What we should be discussing is not the election, but how we got to the point where Trump was the answer." She repeated her contention that Clinton "was very, very dangerous. We would still be fracking, we would be at war [if she was president]. It wouldn't be much smoother. Look what happened under Obama that we didn't notice."

In other words, the actress, to her credit, has demonstrated a degree of political independence and refused to submit to the "lesser of two evils" argument that is one of the banes of American political life. The subordination of the working class to the Democratic Party and bourgeois politics generally, legitimized by that miserable pragmatic formula, has enabled the American ruling elite, represented by both parties, to sharply lower living standards, destroy social programs and eliminate millions of jobs over the past 40 years. Historically, it has been a formula for disaster.

In her recent comment, Hyde, who writes columns on celebrities ("Lost in Showbiz"), sports and politics each week, ignores every question of substance and principle.

First, in the manner of all superficial media pundits, the *Guardian* journalist chooses to avoid how it was that the

Obama administration, beloved by the affluent petty bourgeoisie everywhere, angered and alienated millions of workers. The bailout of Wall Street, the slashing of auto workers' wages, the steady growth of social inequality, the deportation of millions of immigrants, the endless illegal wars and drone strikes, the relentless attacks on constitutional rights, all this and more discredited the Democrats and helped open the door for a billionaire demagogue like Trump. A portion of the disaffected voted for the Republicans in November 2016, while many, disgusted with both candidates, simply stayed home.

Second, there is the matter of the Clinton campaign itself, the most right-wing in Democratic Party history. Clinton, the favorite of the military and the CIA, made obvious her contempt for the mass of the population and her intimacy with the bankers and the ultra-rich, even as she played up racial and gender politics. The strategy failed miserably.

Clinton and Trump were the most widely hated pair of presidential candidates in American history, but the former has the distinction of running a campaign so far to the right and so wretchedly out of touch with social reality that it permitted Trump to eke out an Electoral College victory.

Furthermore, as Sarandon suggested, there is no reason to believe that with a Clinton victory, America or the world would be a fundamentally different place. War with Iran or Russia would have been just as much a looming reality, if not more of one. As for immigration, Clinton would have continued Obama's brutal policies, as Trump has essentially done. Trump is not some monster from the deep, he is a concentrated expression of the bankruptcy and criminality of the American ruling elite.

If one were to take Hyde's article seriously, it is crudely slanderous. She directly addresses Sarandon at one point: "Until you come to some sort of personal and public reckoning with the sillier shit you've said, in effect you work for HIM. You are a MAGA [Trump's "Make America Great Again"] asset."

This is an arrogant and stupid attempt to outlaw any political activity beyond the bounds of the Democratic Party. Of course, the source has to be taken into account.

Hyde, the Oxford-educated daughter of Sir Alastair Edgcumbe James Dudley-William, the second Baronet of the City and of the County of the City of Exeter, and the granddaughter of Conservative Party politician Sir Rolf Dudley-Williams, is a decidedly unappealing figure.

We have previously referred to Hyde as an "intellectual lightweight," and, less charitably, as one of the "cynical, self-satisfied idiots" who seem so comfortably at home at the *Guardian*. (She does prompt one to paraphrase Mark Twain: "Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a *Guardian* celebrity columnist. But I repeat myself.")

Her special function, in between columns on celebrity feuds and scandals, is to delight a portion of the newspaper's readership with snide, sneering commentary intended to help her and them forget the privileged and selfish character of their lives and outlooks.

Hyde is one of those "cheeky" journalistic "contrarians" whose every important thought sustains and confirms the status quo down to its last nut and bolt. The victims of her most serious barbs, like Julian Assange, for example, are invariably those whose actions challenge the official narrative and whose example threatens to inspire young people in particular to question the existing order of things.

Hyde likes to characterize anyone who genuinely opposes that order of things, which has made her life very comfortable, as presumptuous and full of themselves. People should be petty and trivial, unconcerned about the fate of humanity, just as she is. Thus Assange, according to Hyde, locked up in the Ecuadorian embassy and threatened with death by top American officials, is guilty of exhibiting "insufferable superiority," while Sarandon "appears to have had zero moments of self-doubt" and is "unshakeably convinced" of her "own moral rectitude."

The *Guardian* sage's usual, extremely presumptuous advice to people whose opinions she disagrees with is to tell them to shut up or go away. Her columns are aimed at intimidating or inflicting "a period of silence" (her borrowed phrase) on those who make her uneasy—in the end, so that she can go on feeding at the trough undisturbed. This journalistic trash is repugnant and perhaps confuses the more susceptible, but it will have no effect whatsoever on the growth of genuine social and political opposition.



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