

And there is of course the question of how Democrats respond to the fact that they are losing hold on a population that used to be a core part of the party constituency. The Democratic Party has largely embraced the new economy and globalization, and those who benefit from the new economy and globalization probably outnumber those who don't. The Democrats could wait it out. However, Donald Trump has shown that the intensity of appeals to those losing out to the new economy can beat a larger group that may be complacent.

But finally, of course, the appeal of Bernie Sanders to a significant portion of the Democratic base is also evidence that the genie is out of the bottle on the left, too. Is there a response in the Democratic Party that can appeal to disaffected voters on both sides of the political spectrum, or are we in an era in which distinct populisms will grow in response to a common set of political concerns?

There is a lot to be said on the topic of populism and the future of American politics, and I don't want to delay too long getting to our panelists, who actually know something about this topic. When we were thinking about how to focus our remarks this evening, there was a very good chance that the result of the election could turn on questions of election law and administration, which is one of the areas I work in. Donald Trump's repeated charges that the electoral process was "rigged" worried many of us in this field that the result itself would be contested, and that we would find ourselves today not knowing who the next president would be. For better or worse, that ended up not being the case, and all accounts suggest that Tuesday's election was pretty typical, as far as administering elections goes. So we can focus here on the meaning of the election from a substantive perspective, although issues of the legitimacy of the electoral process still linger.

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### Lawrence D. Bobo

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I'm going to engage this topic as someone who's trying to finish a book on the question of postracialism in America, and I'm going to pivot off that possibility in most of my remarks here this evening. Prejudice and politics have been intertwined in the United States throughout my lifetime. Indeed, one could say the same thing about the full arc of the development and transformation of the United States of America over its nearly three-hundred-year history. Yet the current moment does feel like a time of deeply acute polarization and, unexpectedly, almost indigestible racialized divisions, political identity divisions, and ideological divisions. As we near the end of a second term for a popular African American president, having just elected as our next president a man who many believe ran an openly bigoted campaign, we're confronted with a

deep, puzzling question: how on earth did we get here?

The short answer is threefold: first, we've just experienced an electoral contest in which a billionaire Republican was able to more effectively cast himself as a champion of the lower, working, and middle classes than his Democratic rival; this was in part made possible, second, by the power of race and racial prejudice in our national politics and political discourse, and, frankly, third, by a sort of paralysis that comes about by the powers of the economic elite and fear of direct appeals to minority voters.

I want to begin by recalling for all of you the old term *Reagan Democrats*, and I want to read you a paragraph from the definitive book on the subject, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* by journalists Thomas and Mary Edsall. They were trying to understand why Republicans kept winning the White House, and, based on research by pollster Stanley Greenberg, they offered the following diagnosis:

These white Democratic defectors express a profound distaste for blacks, a sentiment that pervades almost everything they think about government and politics. Blacks constitute the explanation for their vulnerability and for almost everything that has gone wrong in their lives; not being black is what constitutes being middle class; not living with blacks is what makes a neighborhood a decent place to live. The special status of blacks is perceived by almost all of these individuals as a serious obstacle to their personal advancement. Indeed, discrimination against whites has become a well-assimilated and ready explanation for their status, vulnerability, and failures.

We might now just replace that word "blacks," or add to it "Mexican immigrants," and we've updated that analysis

to 2016. Surely, it will not surprise many of you here this evening, but America has neither shed nor, in my estimation, honestly confronted its legacy of racism or, more provocatively, white supremacy. There are deep, ongoing, and highly adaptive conditions of racism at the institutional, cultural, and individual levels that prefigure and play out in our national political discourse. I believe there are strong prohibitions against direct, honest discourse on this matter, and I hope tonight we can consider some of those. Scholars will surely look back on these times and observe, as philosophers of race Robert Gooding-Williams and Charles Mills

of appeals to black and minority voters. I'll come back to that at the end.

For most of the period from 1945 to 1973, as our economy grew, incomes grew for everyone, and the income gap between the most affluent and the least affluent in the United States actually shrank. A quite different story has characterized the post-1973 period, particularly the post-1980 era. Since the Great Recession, a disproportionate share of income and wealth has gone upward to the already most well-off segments of the population. A recent report from the Institute for Policy Studies emphasized that income disparities have become so pronounced that

Brookings Institution senior fellow William Frey have shown that 64 percent of the U.S. population could be classified as white in 2010. Between 2010 and 2050, that percentage is expected to steadily decline, with the United States probably becoming a majority-minority population by 2040. In fact, we hit one important benchmark five years ago, when the majority of new births in this country were children of color. Experimental research shows that when presented with evidence of these demographic trends, many white Americans tend to express a sense of threat from minorities and a greater emotional animosity toward them. They also begin to think, even more than they may have already, in zero-sum terms about opportunities and resources. Moreover, there's some experimental work showing that drawing attention to these demographic terms has direct political effects. Psychologists Maureen Craig and Jennifer Richeson found that experimentally manipulating awareness of this racial population shift increases white identification with conservative political ideologies and the Republican Party.

Enter Donald Trump. It should surprise no one that this nexus of conditions – sharply rising inequality and an increasingly acute sense of economic vulnerability for lower- and middle-income Americans, in the context of rapid population change as we transition from a solid majority white population to a nation without a clear ethnoracial dominant group – opens the door to a powerfully resonant blend of antimorality populism. But what role has partisanship played in the routine mobilization of race in our body politic?

If we were to go back to the presidential contest of 1956 or 1960, you would find that the major party platforms of the Republican and Democratic Parties contained largely similar language about issues of civil rights and race. Indeed, both parties, at that time,

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have written, "It was the most postracial of times, it was the least postracial of times." I believe that only when we get beyond the fallacy of colorblindness and the distorting narrative of postracialism that we can hope to rise to a point of honest, clear-eyed engagement with how and why politics, prejudice, and polarization so often roil our democratic and collective lives.

In the brief time I have here, I want to draw attention to three points of contradiction: one, stemming from the tensions involving the conflict of simultaneous growth of income inequality and of ethnoracial diversity of the population; two, the tensions that arise from both deepening partisanship, on the one hand, and what has become the routine racialization of our politics, on the other; and three, this paralysis around the power of the economic elite, versus fear

America's top 10 percent of earners now make, on average, nearly nine times the income of the bottom 90 percent. Moreover, the top 1 percent of the population now holds a share of wealth roughly equivalent to that of the same population at the time of the onset of the Great Depression. For much of the past two decades, the real value of income stagnated for the middle-income distribution, and those in the lower quintiles actually saw their purchasing power decline. These economic trends have consequences: more and more Americans are experiencing a sense of serious economic vulnerability and worry that they're not going to be able to pass on better prospects to their children.

At the same moment, we've witnessed a sharp rise in the share of the population coming from Asia and Latin America, as well as other parts of the globe. Figures by

actively competed for the black vote, to a degree. So there is no necessary connection between partisanship and issues of race. Beginning with the 1964 election, however, the two major parties began to sharply diverge on issues of civil rights and race. Ultimately, the Democratic Party clearly became the party of the effective governmental enforcement of full citizenship for African Americans. With that came a sea change in partisan alignments. The South went from being solidly Democrat-controlled to largely Republican-controlled. Black loyalty to the party of Lincoln, once something you could take for granted, started to weaken during the Franklin Roosevelt and New Deal era, accelerated under President Kennedy, and vanished and

can to constrain the influence of Democratic voters, who increasingly are minorities. Not only is race thus increasingly aligned with voting by party identification, but political scientists and political psychologists have shown us that attitudes that we would characterize as racial resentments play an increasingly strong role in defining the meaning of those party attachments. The end result is what legal scholar Ian Haney López has termed “dog-whistle politics.” Given improved racial attitudes and the successes of the civil rights era, however, openly bigoted appeals are fraught with the risk of backfiring, at least if directed at African Americans (the same can’t yet be said of Mexicans, as we’ve just seen). But carefully crafted slo-

ing America back,” and then in 2016, we return to Reagan’s 1980 slogan, “make America great again.” The rhetoric of the Trump campaign is not some strange aberration, but merely the next iteration in a worrisome pattern and trend. The racially tinged reaction against the passage of the Affordable Care Act, the emergence of the Tea Party, the solidification of Republican intransigence in the House and Senate, must be read, at least in part, through a racial lens. Donald Trump’s openly bigoted demonization of those of Hispanic heritage, especially Mexican Americans, when he launched his candidacy would be astounding, except that it is of a piece with the long-standing practice of dog-whistle politics and tacit racial appeals. Trump merely exploited the vulnerabilities of the moment, and upped the ante. Those who underestimated the power of this appeal included sixteen major mainstream career Republican politicians, including some with otherwise bankable Republican political credentials and huge financial backing. Witness Jeb Bush. What is the bottom line? We inhabit a troubling moment of alignment of race, and racial-policy-related commitments, with basic party identities. This is not a healthy circumstance for our democracy.

My third and final point here is the paralysis produced by the power of an economic elite that is constraining political discourse, and fear of appealing to and mobilizing the power of minority voters. If I had to diagnose the current moment, I’d go back to where I started: somehow, a billionaire, who has a gold-plated toilet in his rooftop condominium in Manhattan, has a stronger appeal to poorly educated, working-class whites than a woman running as the head of the Democratic Party with some of the greatest egalitarian credentials in politics you might have. How does that happen? One explanation is that she wouldn’t go after Wall Street, at least not in the way Bernie

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was replaced by a near-complete capture – and I do mean that word capture – by the Democratic Party in subsequent years.

An unfortunate effect of these developments is that both major parties, to a degree, depend on racial division for their electoral success. On the one hand, then, in a context in which Republicans are content to completely cede the black vote, Democrats only need to do so much to expect black loyalty. After all, where are black voters going to go? So even under Obama, nothing you could construe as a truly strong minority or black agenda is articulated within the confines of major party politics. On the other hand, especially as the population changes, the Republican Party worries more and more about mobilizing its base, and doing what it

gans and rhetoric that play on underlying racial resentments and sensitivities has been a routine staple of Republican Party politics.

Thus, in Nixon’s 1968 campaign, we get the Southern strategy and “law and order” message. In 1980, we see Reagan launch his campaign for the White House in Philadelphia, Mississippi, where civil rights workers Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney were murdered, with a speech calling for the enforcement of states’ rights. Reagan also frequently deployed the “welfare queen” stereotype, or later that of the “strapping young buck” using government-provided food stamps and welfare to live better than the rest of “hard-working America.” By 1988, we get Willie Horton. In 2010 and 2012, we hear chants of “tak-

Sanders did. Clinton's campaign was clearly afraid to say, "I'm going to represent you guys against these economic elites." That economic message just wasn't there, especially at the end, when her whole campaign was directed *against* Trump, and not *for* the rest of you.

The alternative is to say she failed to double down on the Obama coalition, recognizing that Obama got reelected in 2012 by hyper-black turnout, more than replacing the

intolerance. If anything, a two-term Obama presidency signals something important about the majoritarian character of the mass public at this point, underlying racial inequality and division notwithstanding, and the real ultimate closeness in the overall vote – and, in fact, Hillary won the overall vote. Second, the success of the Trump candidacy should worry us all the same, because it didn't implode. In this context of economic anxiety, rising inequality, popula-

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two million white votes he lost with two million-plus African American voters. And here's the thing that hasn't gotten much coverage to this point: in the upper Midwest states that Clinton lost – and I'm going to include Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania – the entire margin of Trump's victory in each of those states can be accounted for by her lower black percentage vote, and lower black turnout, compared with Obama. I want you to think about that. As it turns out, despite what you might have read in the *National Review*, if Obama had gotten just his 2012 numbers, and Trump had exactly his 2016 numbers, Obama would have been elected to a third term.

It is not my intention to sound an unremittingly pessimistic note. If there are takeaways here, they are perhaps threefold. First, the current moment is best read as complex. Changes in our institutions and norms, and in the outlooks and attitudes of the mass of Americans, have been significant, and are not easily overridden or reversed. There are clearly contending political alliances out there. There's no single, overarching axis of

tion change, and enduring problems of racism and racial inequality, there's something there that needs to arouse real concern, and to be fought against with vigor, because it's not hard to envision scenarios in which this dangerous mix becomes even more divisive and volatile. Third, to reiterate the point I started on, race has always been an ingredient of American national politics. Its salience, explicitness, and centrality vary from one election cycle to the next, but it's never been an irrelevance. We've got to forget this postracial fantasy. The only way to make progress on racial issues is to face them directly and honestly. Assuming these inequalities, identities, and divisions are not there, or are somehow just willy-nilly and will naturally heal themselves, is a serious error, as Donald Trump just proved beyond all doubt. Thank you very much.

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