



## TRUMP - A « Symptom » of America's Great Divide, Not a « Solution »

Par [Adeyinka Makinde](#)

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[Adeyinka Makinde](#) 16 mars 2016

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*America is a divided nation.*

*Consistently wracked by a recurring series of 'culture wars' and a general dissatisfaction felt by the electorate about its political elite, it is a country beset by uncertainty about the future of its global economic and military pre-eminence. This general feeling of malaise; a dip in the form and the spirit of a people inherently convinced about the exceptional foundations and rationales underpinning their conception of nationhood is so profound as to have led some to conclude that the currents in contemporary America bear something of a resemblance to the Weimer era in Germany.*

There are deep fissures in the eternally vexed question regarding race and the observance of what some feel is a stifling obeisance to the strictures of political correctness. While it has for long remained split down the middle on the question of abortion there are misgivings among a significant segment of opinion over what is perceived to be the prioritisation of the agenda of the gay and lesbian lobby. As is the case with abortion, the issue of gun control succeeds in producing heated and often bitter debate.

The economy, consistently defined by an extraordinary level of national debt and the apparent permanent loss of manufacturing jobs to foreign destinations, forms a central part of popular discontent and dissent. However, there is little consensus as to how to set things right.

America of course operates as a pluralistic society and has historically spawned a range of influential social movements acting to transform its ethics and social policies towards what is perceived as being for the greater good. But the rise of a succession of populist activist groups; each strident in its complaints about the perceived failings in government and society has been striking: The Tea Party, Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street and American Border Control to name but a significant few.

Where the Black Lives Matter movement decries the relative expendability of the lives of American citizens of African-American extraction at the hands of trigger-happy law enforcement officers, the Tea Party ideology largely expounds on the supposed favouritism given to minorities in terms of opportunities for social and economic advancement. The mantra of wanting to "take back our country" is viewed by opponents not so much as being based on the idea of wishing to see government shorn of its powers as it is about wanting to

halt the progress of minorities at a time when the White House is occupied by a black president.

While the Occupy Wall Street movement's perception of the decline of America is rooted in the increasing disparities in wealth and income distribution in society as well as the malign influence of powerful corporate interests in the economic and political process, anti-immigration groups such as American Border Control posit the view that the country can never be put on the path of revival while there are what they claim to be hordes of Mexicans entering the United States illegally; bringing with them "crime, drugs and squalor." For these groups, the very fabric of America as a nation with a majority European descended population and a particular set of mores is threatened by "immigration via the birth canal."

The analogy made with the deepened social divisions during the Weimer Republic may not be totally misplaced, as indeed may be possible comparisons with the republican and conservative divide in pre-civil war Spain. As was the case with those traditionalists who in Spain of the 1930s looked on in askance at social innovations introduced by the Republican regime such as the legalisation of divorce, contraception and abortion, so too a large segment of present day Americans recoil at the perceived constricting tenets of 'political correctness' and the legalisation of gay marriage which along with other developments are viewed as the wholesale abrogation of traditional American values.

The polarized atmosphere of divisiveness and even outright hatred often on display in political wrangling and the general public discourse is clear to see. While most would agree to a general dissatisfaction with the state of affairs, there is no united consensus as how to tackle the root causes of the social and economic malaise.

In 1930s Germany and Spain, the proposed solutions were predicated on diametrically opposed rationales represented by the Left and Right of the conventional political spectrum. In both situations the resultant 'revolutions' led to the rise respectively of Hitler and Franco.

There is of course no suggestion of an imminent implosion in American society that would lead to an internal war -such a scenario is largely the concern of fiction in movies and in graphic comic book stories- albeit that Colin Woodard, a reporter for a newspaper in Maine, has perceptively argued the position of North America as being constituted of eleven separate stateless nations based on the dominant cultures of swathes of population concentrations in various regions.

Nonetheless, the rise on the one hand of the socialist Bernie Sanders in the Democrat Party and the populist Donald Trump in the Republican Party on the other speak towards a divide in terms of popular reactions to an unsatisfactory view of the prevailing system.

Those Americans attracted to Sanders' message are angered by the licence given to profiteering corporations who outsource jobs outside of the United States. They hate the privileges conferred on beyond-the-reach-of-the-law bankers and the trends pointing to the concentration of wealth in the hands of an increasingly smaller percentage of the population. They are concerned about the concentration of mainstream media ownership in the hands of six corporations and are dismayed about student loans that are packaged with onerous interest rates.

But it is of course the campaign of billionaire real estate mogul Donald Trump which has received the greatest amount of attention and also within whose populist agenda the deep

cultural divide in America is laid bare.

Trump's message has seen him become the leading candidate among those seeking the Republican Party nomination. Significantly, his campaign has also earned him the enmity of the political establishment; an entity encapsulated by the duopoly of the respective machineries of the Democrat and Republican Party Parties from which much of the electorate has increasingly become estranged.

That Trump has proved to be a magnet for popular discontent in America is clear enough.

An interesting array of persons and demographics has been energized into supporting him. On a personal level, some are impressed by his 'no-nonsense' talking style and 'Alpha Male' demeanour. So far as his capacity for executing the office of the presidency is concerned, some believe that a man for long enmeshed in the business world with success to go along with it could help cure America of its economic ills.

Trump some claim has surged ahead because he has had the temerity to challenge the status quo. The bland 'business as usual' form of electioneering that has for long constrained the discourse into a fixed set of parameters is gone. For others, Trump is a rabble-rouser; essentially a carnival barker who has turned over a rock that has revealed an ugly underbelly of intolerance and racism.

He has brought immigration to the fore in a way that otherwise would not have been the case. His criticism not only of illegal immigration but also of legal immigration to the United States has struck a chord among segments of the European-descended population who feel threatened by non-white immigration. For these people, the demographic shifts and changes portend towards a marked and irreversible change in America's European-derived culture and mores.

For a man concerned with the preservation of the genetic purity of the white race which he continually asserts by their endeavours solely created the basis of America, the present discourse on the immigration issue is one that has captured the attention of the white nationalist David Duke.

For Duke, Trump's intervention signifies a fundamental breach with the normally 'timid' and prescribed format of debate. For instance, Trump's pledge to deport 12 million illegal immigrants marks a clear shift from the past; a past which according to Duke is littered with ostensibly tough-talking but ultimately insincere Republican candidates who inevitably capitulate by granting mass amnesties.

Duke has of course been made a point of discussion of the election campaign because he has applauded several of Trump's stances while holding back from giving a formal endorsement. It is no surprise that this former member of a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan who later served as a legislator in his home state of Louisiana would become a figure of controversy.

Duke's *weltanschauung*, which is predicated on the fundamental differences between racial groups, has as a central thesis the necessity of the neutralisation of Jewish power on both a national and global level. Trump's strident views on immigration are extremely important to the likes of Duke who fear legal immigration –never mind immigration of the illegal sort- is irretrievably leading to the scenario of European-descended Americans becoming a minority

population.

In this, Duke sees the hand of Jewish influence in engineering a shift toward a national policy of open immigration. Whereas Acts of Congress respectively in 1921, 1924 and 1952 had, he argues, sought to preserve a European majority, the Immigration Act of 1965 sponsored in both houses of Congress by Jewish figures such as Congressman Samuel Dickstein and Senator Jacob Javits 'opened the gates'. The reason which he proffers to his followers is that of an "atavistic hatred" Jews have toward white European Christian culture which they blame for age-long persecutions.

Relegating whites to minority status would, he argues, serve Jewish interests because it enables them to supplant white Americans as the elite in American society and also puts a damper on the capacity for the revival of cohesive ethnic nationalist sentiments on the part of Christian whites from which Jews have historically borne negative consequences.

In the words of Kevin MacDonald, a retired professor of psychology and a guru of sorts for Duke and other white nationalists, "ethnic and religious pluralism serves external Jewish interests because Jews become just one of many ethnic groups...and it becomes difficult or impossible to develop unified, cohesive groups of Gentiles united in their opposition of Judaism."

Duke's obsession with the power allegedly wielded by members of the Jewish community in media, the economy and political influence has led him to praise some of Trump's actions.

For instance, when Trump chided Hillary Clinton for being readily accepting of the necessity for Israel to build a wall to keep Muslims out while at the same time being dismissive of the right of America to do the same, Duke highlighted this as evidence of the hypocrisy of mainstream politicians who cravenly serve the interests of the Israel lobby at the expense of their own national interests.

Again, when in December of 2015 Trump went before the Republican Jewish Coalition Presidential Forum to tell them "I know that you don't like me because I don't want your money", Duke was quick to interpret those comments as being profoundly revealing of the state of affairs in contemporary America. No political figure would have the courage to utter what he considers to be an 'unmentionable truth;' namely that of a preponderance of Jewish money in the electoral process.

He revels in the sorts of points of analysis as that given by Uri Avnery, a former member of the Knesset, who in his 'Gush Shalom' blog once accused casino magnate Sheldon Adelson of being like a figure "straight out of the pages of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Avnery was alluding to an event which occurred in March of 2014.

As part of what several mainstream media outlets have referred to as the « Sheldon Adelson Primary », Adelson summoned four Republican politicians hopeful of running for the party's presidential nominations in order to make a decision as to which candidate he would offer financial backing. All four including Jeb Bush and Chris Christie were present or former serving state governors. What followed Avnery described as "a shameless exhibition » during which « the politicians grovelled before the casino lord."

Thus it is no surprise that Duke enthusiastically repeats his claim that Hillary Clinton's top seven backers are Jewish and is encouraged by Trump's sneering reference to a previously

undisclosed loan given to his rival Ted Cruz: “Goldman Sachs own him. Remember that!”

While he expresses reservations about Trump, he appears persuaded by the fact of widespread media hostility towards Trump along with the concerted efforts by the Republican establishment to discredit him as ample evidence of Trump’s potential as a president who will not kowtow to what he sees as prevailing Jewish interests and will act in a manner that would go a long way in re-asserting the interests of European-descended Americans.

The Trump campaign raises two key issues. The first relates to the culture associated with the operation of governance and the electoral process. The second is to do with the qualities of the candidate himself.

It is clear for anyone that the American political process is riddled with corruption and that what passes for a democracy is actually a system run under false pretences as a democracy.

A study by the political scientists Martin Gilens of Princeton University and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University concluded that “majorities of the American public actually have little influence over the policies our government adopts.” The views of rich people have a much greater impact on policy decisions than those of middle-income and poor Americans.

It is effectively government serving the interests of oligarchs.

The law has paved the way for entrenching this state of affairs via successive Supreme Court decisions which relate to the funding of campaigns. The case of Buckley versus Valeo in 1976 arguably provided the basis through which politicians can be bought and controlled by billionaires and corporate interests. In striking down certain provisions of the Federal Election Campaign Act (1974), it removed limits to the amount of money which could be spent on campaigns although limits were still affixed to the contributions of individuals

However, by overturning sections of the Campaign Reform Act (2002), the Citizens United versus Federal Electoral Commission case of 2010 went further by removing limits in expenditures made by non-profit and for-profit corporations. McCutcheon versus Federal Electoral Commission added to this by removing the biennial aggregate limit on individual contributions to national party and federal candidate committees.

The cumulative effect of these decisions –all of which invoked violations of the First Amendment as justification- has been to effectively remove restraints imposed on election spending.

Former President Jimmy Carter has bluntly stated what the implications are:

It violates the essence of what made America a great nation in its political system. Now it’s just an oligarchy with unlimited political bribery being the essence of getting the nominations for president or being elected president. And the same thing applies to governors, and U.S. Senators and congress members. So, now we’ve just seen a subversion of our political system as a major payoff to major contributors, who want and expect, and sometimes get, favours for themselves after the election is over. ... At the present time the incumbents, Democrats and Republicans, look upon this unlimited money as a great benefit to themselves. Somebody that is already in Congress has a great deal more to sell.

The results are there to see.

The links between political figures and Wall Street have increasingly taken an insidious and pervasive form. This takes into account the relationships developed in-between election campaigns. Hillary Clinton of the Democratic Party, for instance, has become wealthy from her links with the corporate world and particularly from her connections with banks.

Public financial disclosures show that she earned a total of \$2,935,000 from 12 speeches which she gave before banking concerns between 2013 and 2015. While her standard fee is \$225,000, Goldman Sachs once paid her \$675,000 for a single speech and Deutsche Bank \$485,000. In fact, Clinton has earned a staggering \$21,677,000 for 92 speeches that she gave to private organisations over the same timescale.

It would be foolhardy in the extreme to think that her benefactors will not expect some form of dividend from their respective outlays.

It is important to note that there was never any halcyon era of the business of American politicking being free of corruption. The 'pork barrel' culture of elected politicians being disposed to return favours to moneyed interests is long established. As Huey Long, the legendary Louisiana governor and senator who ran the state as his personal fiefdom, once put it officeholders are "dime a dozen punks."

It should be remembered that the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States constitution, which changed the method of selecting U.S. Senators from appointments agreed upon by members of state legislatures to one requiring direct elections by the electorate, was in part prompted by allegations of corruption in the selection of senators.

The rise of the big city bosses based on the wielding of near autocratic power and the dispensing of patronage such as for example existed with Frank Hague in Jersey City and the Daley dynasty in Chicago is well documented as indeed is the history associated with New York City's Tammany Hall.

In the midst of this election campaign we witness the rise of Donald Trump bearing the mantle of an independent spirit whose wealth ostensibly inures him from the pressures faced by seasoned politicians to be 'bought and paid for' vassals of Wall Street as well as that of a down-to-earth outsider who is not of the establishment.

There are parallels between Trump and other political figures in American history that were populist in message and not the favoured candidate of the establishment of the party with which they were associated. Barry Goldwater in 1964 and Ronald Reagan in 1980 both come to mind. Where Goldwater tussled with Nelson Rockefeller, Reagan took on George Herbert Bush; each opponent being representative of the 'blue blooded' Republican establishment. Trump has even been compared to Huey Long who was plotting a path to the White House when he was cut down by an assassin's bullet in 1937.

However, Trump's candidature arguably offers very little hope for a revolutionary change for two key reasons. The first concerns the man and the policies he is attempting to sell to the American public, and the second pertains to the practical limitations facing an earnest candidate wishing to make changes within the prevailing system.

The tone of Trump's campaign while apparently refreshing to a large segment has

demonstrably attracted those among the masses who readily subscribe to inter-ethnic and inter-religious division. Simply put, Trump does not appear to be a 'healer'. A candidate who arrogantly mocks a disabled person and who makes thinly veiled quips about the effect of a woman's menstrual cycle on her supposed hostility to him is at a fundamental level unsuited to lead.

An indication of his shifty persona and generally unreliable disposition can be garnered from the amount of about turns that he has made in regard to his position on several key matters. He is on record as supporting a universal health care system which would be paid for by government but now claims that he will repeal Obama Care. Where Trump was once in favour of restrictions to gun ownership, under the election spotlight, he now pledges to repeal Obama's tough gun control laws.

And this from Trump some years ago about illegal immigration:

It's very tough to say, 'You have to leave. Get out!' How do you throw someone out who has lived in this country for twenty years? You just can't throw everybody out.

Trump has of course gained both notoriety and support for pledging to deport twelve million illegal immigrants and to ban all Muslims from entering the United States.

He now excoriates both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama where in the past he was fulsome in his praise for both; Clinton as being "very, very capable" so far as inheriting the mantle of president and Obama as being a "strong and smart" leader. While Trump has always claimed allegiance to the Republican Party, he admitted that in many cases "I probably identify more as a Democrat."

It is doubtful that Trump can perform an economic miracle by turning around the trends in the economy. He cannot for instance force Apple Inc. to manufacture goods in the United States and make them pay American workers at 'developed country' levels.

In this matter and others, Trump's sums simply do not add up. He supported President Obama's stimulus package and consistently supported a high level of government spending and other forms of interventionist measures including the use of eminent domain; that is, the compulsory purchase of private property for public use. Trump's tune has changed. He favours an economic policy based on removing 75 million Americans from paying income tax. There would be a top income tax rate of 25% for individual and 15% for corporation. Death duties would be abolished.

Trump's plan for making up for the inevitable shortfall in national revenues is to place a heavy tax on all foreign imported goods – an action which would likely kick start a global trade war and add over \$30 trillion dollars to the debt of the United States.

He cannot bring about a genuinely substantive economic revival without a wholesale 'root and branch' reformation of the economic system. This is a system in which markets are rigged by the Federal Reserve and by the U.S. Treasury.

As Michael Hudson, a distinguished professor of economics, argues in his book *Killing the Host*, the whole of the financial system would need re-regulating. This would require a revolutionary tax policy geared towards preventing the financial sector from extracting economic surplus and capitalizing on debt obligations paying interest to that sector.

All Trump has offered thus far is a suggestion that the Federal Reserve ought to be audited and a truculent comment about the Reserve keeping the level of interest rates low so as to protect Obama from “a recession-slash-depression during his administration.”

He holds himself out as an anti-establishment reformer but from Trump there is no reference to a substantively constructed programme detailing how he would go about challenging the barons of Wall Street. He poses as a reformer without attacking power. There is no tangible sense of promise that he could wage the sort of battle with entrenched interests in the manner of previous presidents such as Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Jackson, weary of the powers accumulated by a powerful central bank -which he likened to a hydra-headed monster- and its “paper money”, abolished the Bank of America. Theodore Roosevelt attacked business monopolies via the Sherman Anti-Trust Act while his distant cousin was the instigator of the ‘New Deal’ a radical series of measures which included the institution of a social security system.

Trump’s wealth, while providing a credible image of a politician who cannot be bought, does not guarantee that he would be able to deliver on any radical policies. For one thing, an American president cannot go over the heads of both Houses of Congress and the Supreme Court which holds the final card so far as the settlement of core constitutional matters is concerned.

John F. Kennedy assumed the presidency backed by his father’s considerable wealth. But while he could, as a senator, take bold, independent stances such as his support for Algerian independence, as president, he had to make compromises with interest groups who supported the political party with which he was affiliated. As president, he earned the ire of the military industrial complex, barons of commerce, segments of the Intelligence community and high-ranking fascist-leaning army and air force generals in the Pentagon. He was almost certainly eliminated by a plot originated from elements from the aforementioned groups over discontent with his policies and fear of where he would take America.

Outside of economic and social policies, Trump painted a picture of prudence during a debate on foreign policy. While the other candidates appeared to be falling over themselves to present the image of being strong and decisive on Syria and the Ukraine, Trump said that he would endeavour to pursue a constructive working relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

However, his threat to “bomb the hell out of our enemies” exposes a poor grasp of the workings of international politics; not least a failure on his part to understand the lessons of America’s recent past. It contradicts the criticisms he has correctly levelled at Hillary Clinton for her part in the destruction of Libya.

It also suggests that Trump would go out of his way to appease the armaments industry and fall in line with the dictates of the military industrial complex. This important cog in the economic machinery of the United States, about which President Dwight Eisenhower issued dark warnings in his farewell address to the American people, operates on the basis of increasing defence expenditure and perpetuating the war industry by all available means. This has included facilitating the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in defiance of promises given by America’s leaders as a condition for allowing a reunified Germany to join N.A.T.O.

A President Trump who managed to limit or otherwise remove tax obligations domestically would more than ever need to preserve the United States dollar as the de facto global reserve currency. A necessary element of this state of affairs is the co-operation of the rulers of the oil rich Saudi state to which the United States is pledged to preserve for the consideration of the sale of oil in U.S. dollars.

The United States has served as an overseer of Saudi imperial designs in the Middle East including that regime's part sponsorship of the lengthy and destructive war between the Saddam-era Iraq and Iran as well as the Saudi-backed insurrection against the Ba'athist regime in Syria. Further evidence of Trump as a warmonger can be garnered from his comments that Iran's nuclear programme should be stopped by "any and all means necessary."

But something which admittedly appears to work in Trump's favour is the criticism he is receiving from the political establishment who the electorate hold in low esteem. This also applies to those paragons of the economic order.

For instance, when the economist Larry Summers alleged that Trump "is a serious threat to American democracy", there are many who would keenly take Summers to task for his support of the present corrupt order. It was Summers after all, who helped deregulate the banking system which paved the way for the 'casino banking' culture that led to the economic crash of the late 2000s. Summers also played a key role as an overseer of the mass plunder of the Russian economy in the 1990s.

In this heated atmosphere littered with scornful reproach and blistering invective, the opportunity for calm and fruitful reflection is being lost.

It is clear that Americans need to re-think the nature of the deep-seated identity-politics and the highly partisan approach to issues which is imperiling the sanctity of its institutions and the conventions that govern them. The row related to the unprecedented decision of Republican leaders in Congress to arrange for a foreign leader, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, to give a speech before congress over the head of the serving president provides one example of this.

Where many Jewish Americans saw this as a necessary tactic to stymie President Obama's then in progress attempt at reaching a deal with Iran over its nuclear energy programme, many African-Americans saw it as one of a series of insults directed at a black president.

The "You lie" interjection by the southern Republican Joe Wilson during a major speech to Congress by President Obama in 2009, according to former president Jimmy Carter, had exposed "an inherent feeling among many in this country that an African-American should not be president."

But even if the action of enabling Netanyahu to speak before Congress without the consultation of the serving president in this instant was not predicated on the "intensely demonstrated animosity toward President Barack Obama as a black man", it clearly unveiled the power and leverage wielded by the Israel lobby over many United States legislators.

The actions of 47 Republican senators in sending a signed letter to the leaders of Iran warning them against reaching agreement with the Obama administration brought enough

scrutiny to warrant the an accusation of treason.

The crucial point however is whatever the merits of the arguments for and against the deal with Iran, an important convention was circumvented and the office of the presidency was wilfully undermined by legislators who were beholden to an interest group and a gross level of partisanship.

The polarised views over issues related to the killings of Americans by law enforcement officials also exposes a divide based on race and political affinities at the expense of what should be a consensus view on the standards of policing and the even-handed operation of the criminal justice system.

While an increasing amount of cases such as the slayings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner brought forth uncomfortable statistics related to the killing of minorities by police and counter-arguments positing the statistics showing that armed white suspects were more likely to be killed than blacks in the same situation, lost in the emotional and uncompromisingly partisan discourse is the reality of an increasing militarisation of police forces in America.

Many white Americans, comforted by the fact that they are not profiled as criminal or terror suspects because they are neither black nor Muslim, appear aloof to this phenomenon despite the rise in apparently unwarranted shootings for instance of whites who call the police to investigate suspected crimes on their property. Age and respectability are no barriers to being on the receiving end of rough-handed treatment as the case last year of a retired four-star army general in Georgia demonstrated.

Meanwhile the Eric Garner case serves to illustrate how U.S. police officers have increasingly become unaccountable for actions of wrongful arrest and brutality including homicide. Taxpayers have had to fund millions of dollars in settlement of lawsuits.

In America, the issue of race is of course never far from the surface. "The problem of the Twentieth Century", wrote W.E.B. Dubois in 1903 "is the problem of the colour line".

It is also clearly a problem in this, the succeeding century.

The aforementioned Michael Brown case, as indeed also the one involving Trayvon Martin, was overshadowed by race. Each became a contest of accusations and counter-accusations based on perceptions of the racial attitudes of the police, and criminality in the black community. The likes of Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson were called out by whites concerned about their silence in cases where white victims had suffered at the hands of black criminals. This extended also to situations of so-called black-on-black violence.

The issue of race and criminal statistics are projected on to cases such as those involving Michael Brown, serving, from the perspective of many whites, as a justification for the killing of young black men. In other words, that U.S. Department of Justice figures consistently attributing a high level of crime to segments of the black population make it alright to gun down black suspects.

There are a number of caveats nonetheless which need to be kept in mind. For instance, so far as homicides are concerned, most whites -over 80%- are killed by other whites much in the manner that most blacks are killed by other blacks. It is worth noting the statistics issued focus on street crimes and not on organised crime and corporate crime.

If the Department of Justice began compiling statistics related to the ethnic origins of say corporate crime which became repeated like the mantra of black street crime, then it would arguably create a new ambit of racial sensitivities.

It is worth pausing to think of a situation where the media and the public discourse was focused on the ethnic origins of Wall Street operatives who are convicted of financial crimes. The issues of race and social class, needless to say, play a part in this. How else is it possible to explain the 'too-big-to-fail' rationale behind the bailout of corporations on Wall Street? Whereas Iceland allowed banks to fail and jailed criminally culpable bankers, in the United States, the bigwigs in the banking sector escaped prosecution for policies and actions which appeared to be criminal in both conception and execution.

For instance in 2006 and 2007, the Goldman Sachs Group offered over \$40 billion in securities that were backed by at least 200,000 risky home mortgages. What the corporation failed to do was to inform potential buyers that it was also secretly betting on a sharp drop in housing prices which would result in the marked devaluation of those securities.

The excuse put forward by the regulatory authorities that many devices of market chicanery were not illegal at the times of their operation is unconvincing to many. It demonstrates an extraordinary level of descent in the standard of morality applied to the corporate world as indeed is the case in other spheres.

Those who helped plunge the United States and the world into an economic morass, destroying the livelihoods of many, shrinking their pension funds, saddling many with debts and in effect lowering the prospects of the succeeding generation are not categorised by race.

A worthwhile question for the American public to ponder is whether the construction of racial statistics related to the commission of economic crimes should be an important element of the public discourse as is the case with street crimes.

Ultimately, this may be unhelpful for the simple reason that it would serve to deflect attention from the underlying failures in the system. The aforementioned David Duke in relation to whom Trump took some time before disavowing is as fixated on the levels of black street crime statistics as he is on repeating the claim that Jewish organisations and Jewish individuals 'control' the electoral and wider political process when in fact, the system itself is open to being manipulated by the highest bidder.

The Koch brothers, David and Charles, who are worth a combined \$86 billion provide a study of how any well-resourced group or individual can attempt to buy political influence in order to secure legislative enactment to their benefit rather than for the benefit of the wider society.

The Koch brothers, who have given over 60 million dollars over a 15 year period to groups which deny climate change, are the fossil fuel industry's largest donors to the members of the congressional committee overseeing fuel and energy matters. In 2010, the Koch brothers and their employees donated over \$300,000 to members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee which was overseeing the Keystone XL pipeline proposal.

According to a report by the International Forum on Globalisation, the Koch Brothers would

stand to make up to 100 billion dollars in profits if the pipeline is constructed. This would encompass the areas of exploration, construction and trading. Although the figure related to an expected profit margin is hotly disputed as is the extent of the involvement of the Koch Corporation in this proposed venture, it is worth reminding how Republican members of Congress attempted to use this project as a bargaining tool in the confrontation with President Obama over the budget in September 2013.

This is the daunting context within which any aspiring American president will be required to discharge his or her duties. It is doubtful that Donald Trump possesses the leadership qualities as well as the requisite policies which would serve as the panacea for America's problems, for he appears to be a charlatan and a savvy peddler of populist propaganda.

In any case, it is worth reiterating the limitations of the office. The last president who seemed to act with a great measure of 'independence', that is, one fulfilling the ideal concept of a robust 'father of the nation' who as an elected official proceeded according to his own will in the belief that he was serving the interests of the mass of the electorate was probably Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Today, with a system so closely entwined in satisfying the interests of powerful minority elites, it would be difficult, if not near impossible for a president to effect change of the sort many Americans desire. A president, even one with a considerable amount of personal wealth, cannot hope to displace the entrenched interests of powerful lobby groups such as those representing the defence and armaments industry, the extractive industries, Israel, and, of course, Wall Street and the banking sector.

In several key ways, many who support Trump do so as a projection of their fears and their anger at the system: Anger at the economically debilitating aspects of free trade and the perceived overreach of 'political correctness' as well as the fear of immigration and Islamist terrorism.

But the Trump supporters who cheer on Trump's promises in relation to strengthening laws to combat the perceived 'Muslim menace' at home and abroad appear not to be cognizant of the fact that they are sanctioning the entrenchment of an Orwellian-like police state apparatus that has markedly developed in the post-9/11 era. Many who rail against 'political correctness' have only succeeded in providing overt evidence of their racial and religious prejudices while those subscribing to his strategy for regaining jobs that have gone overseas merely display their naivety of the workings of the economic order.

It is doubtful that most can believe that he has the solutions which he claims he has. From those sharing the racist worldview of David Duke to the neglected working man sensing a different political animal to the tried and failed political classes, supporting Trump is a leap into the dark.

It effectively amounts to a protest vote against the system.

It is the system and the prevailing mores of the political and business establishments that guide it which ought to be the primary concern of Americans. It is only when the system is cleansed of the rules enabling political 'sugar daddies' and corporate interests to buy elections and the rules allowing the rigging of the economic system are properly reformed that the election of a new president will be able to provide the basis for genuine change.

*Adeyinka Makinde is a writer based in London, England.*

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