Opinion
Guest Voices



A young girl holds a "Black Voters for Harris-Walz" sign outside of Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris' election night watch party at Howard University, Tuesday, Nov. 5 in Washington. (AP photo/Terrance Williams)



by Alessandra Harris

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

November 9, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

As a Black Catholic woman, mother and author, I am devastated but not at all surprised by this country electing Donald Trump as president for a second term. In January 2016, at a campaign stop at a Christian college in Sioux Center, Iowa, Trump infamously stated, "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters, OK? It's, like, incredible."

While Trump has not shot anyone (that we know of), since losing the 2020 election he has led an attempted coup, been convicted of 34 felony counts, was booked on racketeering charges, found liable by a judge of inflating the value of his assets and net worth in exchange for more favorable loans, found liable by a jury for sexually abusing a woman and found liable for defaming her twice, spread hate-filled conspiracy theories about immigrants and FEMA, made crass jokes at fundraisers and simulated a sex act with a microphone at a campaign rally.

Yet in spite of Trump's behavior, according to the The Washington Post exit polls, a majority of white Americans — the largest voting bloc in the country — chose to vote him into office a second time. Meanwhile Black men and women, Hispanic/Latino women, Asian voters, all other non-White voters, Jewish people and religiously unaffiliated voters all supported Harris over Trump. Only Hispanic/Latino men joined whites in voting for Trump over Harris.

Had Harris won, I would be writing that America has turned a corner. Instead, white America has remained true to its roots; roots grounded in the supremacy of whiteness, patriarchy and disdain for and fear of the non-white "other." As I detail in my book, *In the Shadow of Freedom: The Enduring Call for Racial Justice*, America was founded by colonization, attempted genocide and forced displacement of Native people, followed by the brutal enslavement of people of African descent for 246 years and apartheid-like Jim Crow segregation from 1877 until all Black people could freely vote after the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Advertisement

This country, stained by original sins of anti-Black and anti-Native racism, violence and subjugation, is now at a crossroads. Based on census data, the United States is projected to become a majority-minority country by 2044, meaning white people will no longer be the majority. As an elderly white male, Donald Trump represents the America that white people fear losing. His and his campaign's racist rhetoric, his failed Muslim ban, the violence he fomented against Asian people during the COVID-19 pandemic, his promise to carry out the largest deportation effort in American history and his vow to end birthright citizenship for children born in the country to undocumented immigrants are all ways to maintain a white American grasp on a country that is rapidly diversifying.

On the other hand, Kamala Harris represented the America of the future. As a woman of Jamaican and South Asian descent born to immigrant parents in America, she exemplified and embraced the mix of cultures, identities and values starkly in contrast to the patriarchal, male and white domination that have defined the United States since its founding. And white America rejected her.

I admit that I do not know what the next four years of a Trump presidency will hold. I do not feel safe or welcome in a country that would elect someone so blatantly racist, misogynistic and fascist. But that's the point. It has always been an inconvenient truth that Native people, Black people, immigrants and women are the backbone of this country even while being unapologetically unwelcome in it. White men reap the reward.

Since I have studied and written about American history, Catholic history and African American history, I am not surprised by the election results. As Ta-Nahesi Coates wrote in *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*, "I don't ever want to forget that resistance must be its own reward, since resistance, at least within the life span of the resistors, almost always fails."

I do not believe I will see the end of racism or sexism in my lifetime. I do not believe that the American dream is attainable for everyone who simply "works hard enough." Yet my faith in a God who is always on the side of the oppressed, marginalized and persecuted will remain unchanged. God will continue to liberate, to care for and to love everyone, without exception — even when the majority of Americans choose not to. I will hold fast to my faith in such a God because, to paraphrase the great Black gospel artist Donnie McClurkin, when you've given your all and there's nothing left to do: just stand.

This story appears in the **Election 2024** and **Trump's Second Term** feature series.
A version of this story appeared in the **Dec. 6-19, 2024** print issue.