

# Belonging, racism and white backlash in the 2016 US Presidential Election



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Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election has been attributed to disaffection among the American populace and its disengagement with the US political system, leading to a seismic shift towards populism. However, in common with Brexit, dominant discourses in Trump's campaign centred on issues around belonging and identity with clearly marked boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

As Matthew Hughey argued (<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-donald-trump-racism-bartlett-page-perspec-0224-jm-20160223-story.html>) in 2012, a hierarchy of Whiteness determines levels of belonging and citizenship in America, with Whites enjoying a privileged status. The othering of non-Whites echoed throughout the Trump campaign – which some argue is the key to his political success.

However, Hilary Clinton marginally won a greater share of votes than Trump – despite his presidential win. According to [Pew Research Center](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/why-electoral-college-landslides-are-easier-to-win-than-popular-vote-ones/) (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/why-electoral-college-landslides-are-easier-to-win-than-popular-vote-ones/>) (PRC), Clinton received 59.6m votes, compared to Trump's 59.4m. Trump's victory was secured through a larger number of Electoral College votes.

Former Ohio State Senator [Nina Turner](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IHGPUEx0PE), stated in a CNN interview earlier this year (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IHGPUEx0PE>), that America was built on racism and sexism where the all-White



#### Section 4: Diversity and Division

Hillary Clinton's evolving gender appeals  
(<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/hillary-clinton-evolving-gender-appeals/>)

'Madam President' and the need for a historical contextualization of the 2016 Race  
(<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/madam-president-and-the-need-for-a-historical-contextualization-of-the-2016-race/>)

The 'nasty' politics of risk, gender and the emotional body in the US Presidential election  
(<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/the-nasty->

'founding fathers' drafted the US Constitution that excluded Blacks, since they were legally defined as 3/5ths of a human being, or mere chattel to be owned and enslaved by Whites.

Slavery is the reason the Electoral College voting system was established under the 12th amendment in 1787 – to protect slave states that had more slaves than free men who were eligible to vote. The 12th Amendment permitted the South to include slaves in its electoral count, giving the region an advantage over the north, that would otherwise outnumber the south in eligible free voters.

The Democrat and Republican parties have always been racially divided. Throughout the recent history of presidential elections, 90 per cent of African Americans have voted for the Democrats, while most Whites have voted Republican. In last week's Presidential Election, 58% of Whites voted for Trump, while 65% of Hispanics and 88% of African Americans voted for Clinton (PRC (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/hillary-clinton-wins-latino-vote-but-falls-below-2012-support-for-obama/>)).

While people of colour in the US overwhelmingly voted Democrat, Clinton was unable to replicate the spectacular Democrat gains in the 2012 Presidential campaign. Back then 71% of Hispanics voted for Obama, along with 93% of African Americans (PRC (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions-by-race-gender-education/>)). But in 2016, notwithstanding her general unpopularity with American voters – Clinton had to contend with a forceful White backlash.

As Mathew Hughey explained, the recent White backlash can be traced back to 2008 when Barack Obama became the first Black president of the US. It found expression through the public questioning of Obama's American nationality legitimised through mainstream media coverage, and through the Tea Party movement with its links to the Klu Klux Klan and other far right groups. Their mission statement to 'take our country back' (from non-Whites presumably), resonated throughout the Trump campaign.

politics-of-risk-gender-and-the-emotional-body-in-the-us-presidential-election/)

Why Trump's male chauvinism appeals to some voters more than others  
(<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/why-trumps-male-chauvinism-appeals-to-some-voters-more-than-others/>)

Trump's 'promised land' of white masculine economic success  
(<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/trumps-promised-land-of-white-masculine-economic-success/>)

Attempting to understand Hillary Clinton's favourability ratings  
(<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/attempting-to-understand-hillary-clintons-favourability-ratings/>)

A very queer Presidential election campaign: personal reflections from an

Let us not forget Trump's 'promise' to ban Muslims from entry to the US, increase surveillance of them and create a national register – nor his reference to Mexican immigrants as 'rapists' and 'criminals'.

Bruce Bartlett argues that Trump's political success can be attributed to his dexterity in feeding White perceptions of 'reverse racism' (<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-donald-trump-racism-bartlett-page-perspec-0224-jm-20160223-story.html>) – the belief that Whites are more racially disadvantaged than people of colour – who are also perceived as responsible for their 'discrimination'. The growth of the non-White population in the US has driven more Whites to the Republican party, to the point where it has become a racial interest group that exists to protect and maintain White supremacy, with Trump at its helm.

Cyberpsychologist Mary Aiken (<http://bigthink.com/videos/mary-aiken-on-donald-trump-politics-and-the-internet>) describes Trump as 'a troll who has jumped off the internet and into the real world', leading to a cyber-migration of extreme racism that encourages people to act on their racist beliefs. The increase in racial abuse and violence towards people of colour post-election, suggests that America is on a dangerous path.

But there is a glimmer of hope that this path is a temporary one. First is the reality that while America is possibly more racially divided than ever, almost 60 million Americans voted against Trump. Voter turnout was the lowest in 20 years, it is argued, because neither Trump nor Clinton were regarded as progressive candidates. The personalised, vitriolic, debates between Trump and Clinton took American politics to an all-time low.

However, mainstream America is already looking for a future beyond Trump and the most popular person in politics right now according to a WSJ/NBC poll (<http://qz.com/812189/michelle-obama-outscores-hillary-clinton-donald-trump-and-her-own-husband-on-favorability-a-new-wsjnbc-poll-shows/>) on 9 November is former First Lady Michelle Obama. Her momentous speech in the wake of the sexual abuse

LGBT perspective  
 (<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/a-very-queer-presidential-election-campaign-personal-reflections-from-an-lgbt-perspective/>)

Love didn't trump hate: intolerance in the campaign and beyond  
 (<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/love-didnt-trump-hate-intolerance-in-the-campaign-and-beyond/>)

The blue-collar billionaire: explaining the Trump phenomenon  
 (<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/the-blue-collar-billionaire-explaining-the-trump-phenomenon/>)

The theology of American exceptionalism  
 (<http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/us-election-analysis-2016/section-4-diversity-and-division/the-theology-of-exceptionalism/>)

revelations about Trump, addressed both raced and gendered inequalities in a manner that promotes cultural democracy and unites a divided nation around a common humanity.

Despite the calls for Michelle Obama to run for president in 2020, as the Guardian reports on 11 November (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/11/michelle-obama-run-for-president-politics>), this is most unlikely. But the popularity of Michelle Obama is the clearest indication that progressive politics can be a reality again, when the right candidate delivers the right message. The question now is, if not Michelle Obama, then who?