

After the Elections... The Promise of Change...And the Change We Need

You couldn't miss it on Election Night. People actually pouring into the streets to celebrate the election of a president. Emotions ran high, and tears flowed.

And in the days after: people talking to friends and strangers alike of hope. Hope for a coming era of change from the horrors of the Bush years. Hope for overcoming racism. Hope for a new era of service to the common good.

Hope—hope that is founded on the real possibilities for fundamental change in this world—is indeed precious. Dedicating your life to something higher than the ethic of "I-want-mine" is so vital that the future of humanity actually depends on it. And overcoming—truly overcoming—the divisions of society based on inequality and oppression must be at the heart of any real movement for social change.

But now, in the days and weeks after, one must ask and honestly grapple with some basic and very serious questions.

Hope for what?

Service to what?

Unity around what goals and what values?

And victory for whom?

Now that Barack Obama has been elected, the question is posed for all those who genuinely desire changes so desperately needed by the people of the world:

What are you going to do now?

Will you fight for the changes that got you to put your hopes in Obama? Or will you "wait and see"? But how long will you wait, and how much will you have to see? What will you find intolerable? At what point will you step up and resist?



U.S. troops in eastern Afghanistan near Pakistani border, October 24, 2008.

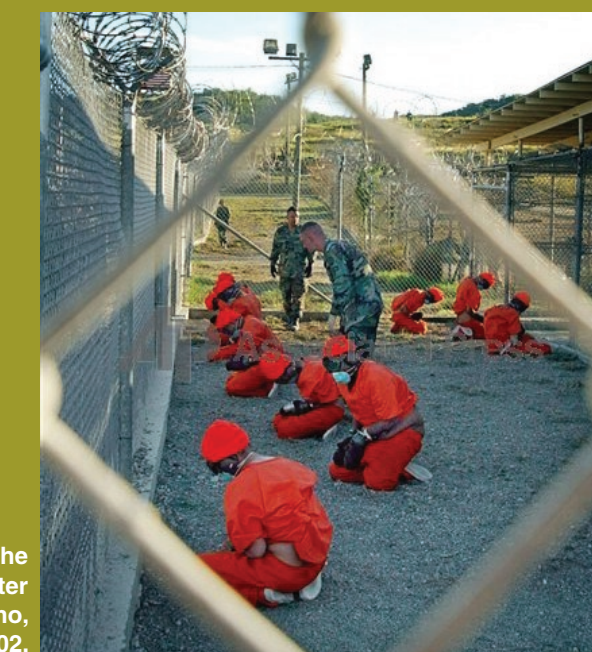
What are you gonna do as Obama trains people to think in terms of patriotism and "the greatness of America" when this is being used as a rallying cry for war? Obama has called for shifting troops out of Iraq...and into Afghanistan. Obama called Iran "one of the greatest threats to the United States, Israel and world peace...and we should take no option, including military action, off the table." And he is in favor of the U.S. taking unilateral military action in Pakistan. If Obama steps up the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan or launches a war against Iran, will you passively accept and go along with this? Or will you resist such steps in an endless war for empire?



Pakistan homes destroyed by U.S. air strike along the border with Afghanistan, November 1, 2008.



Afghan woman and her daughter grieve the death of a relative killed in a U.S. air strike in Azizabad, Afghanistan, August 23, 2008.



Detainees in the U.S. torture center at Guantánamo, January 2002.

What about the continuation of government assaults on people's rights and the passing of repressive laws? Obama voted for the passing and renewal of Bush's fascist Patriot Act. While calling for the U.S. torture center at Guantánamo to be closed, Obama also said, "Now the majority of the folks in Guantánamo, I suspect, are there for a reason. There are a lot of dangerous people." And Obama voted for the FISA law which legalized the Bush regime's warrantless wiretapping of vast numbers of people in the U.S. and gave immunity from lawsuits to telcom companies that collaborated with that illegal spying. Will you go along with such things...or will you resist?

WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO NOW?



New Orleans residents try to evacuate after Katrina, September 2005.

What are you gonna do in the supposedly "post-racial" USA, when Obama repeats his mantra, "we are all Americans" and rules out of order taking on all the cruel and brutal ways in which Black people are oppressed? After a New York judge handed down a not-guilty verdict last May on the cops who shot 50 times at Sean Bell and killed him just before his wedding, Obama said, "We're a nation of laws, so we respect the verdict that came down." In his speech on race, Obama equated the anger of Black people at their continuing oppression with what he called "resentment" among whites, saying, "In fact, a similar anger exists within segments of the white community. Most working- and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race." Will you go along with such reactionary shit? Or will you say "NO FUCKING WAY" and carry out uncompromising struggle against white supremacy and the systematic oppression of Black people?



Abortion rights supporters at the Democratic National Convention, August 2008.

When Obama says "we can find some common ground, because nobody's pro-abortion," and keeps conciliating with the right-wing attacks on abortion and birth control, where will you be? Will you accept this as the new reality? Or will you stand up against the assaults on women's rights?

If you're asking, "But what can we do?"

We say: There IS real HOPE and real SERVICE to bring about REAL change—work that urgently cries out to be done.

There is the work of fighting for your best ideals and hopes for change. There is the work of actually digging into how the world really works, into America's real place and role in that world, and into what revolution is all about and how it might be possible. There is the work of fighting the power, and transforming the people, for revolution.

There's going to be storms. You can sit and let it pour down on the people, here and all over the world, or you can do something to wrench a whole better future out of it.



Protesting the Sean Bell verdict, May 7, 2008 in New York.