

Clinton vs. Trump is a Issue of White Crisis that I am not Interested In
by Antwann Michael

In America racial politics matter; and it matters more than we care to think. What history has proven time and again is that, as Charles Mills argues in his text *The Racial Contract*, “white supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today.” Mills’ thoughts help us to understand that race is more than just an adjective to describe someone or, if you’re Rachel Dolezal (yep it’s officially a verb), a group to join to express solidarity, belonging, or connectedness. Mills’ seminal work examines the concept of the social contract which was used to constitute western societies; in particular my interest are in the American experience with this contract. Looking closely at American history, we learn that recognition, rights, and benefits were accorded to white people—in particular white males—at the exclusion of Native Americans and enslaved African people. What this necessarily means is that not only did the social contract within the American experience recognize white people as citizens, but that contract was guaranteed by preventing access to non-white peoples thereby establishing a strict binary in the United States whereby rights and humanity were recognized or as Charles Mills stated in his work “Europeans versus non Europeans (geography), civilized versus wild/savage/barbarians (culture), Christians versus heathens (religion)...they all coalesced into the basic opposition of white versus nonwhite.” In essence what Mills argues is that the experience of white people in the United States, as it relates to being socially and politically recognized by the State, is not only constituted by a social contract—a concept studied and debated by many political scientists and philosophers—but that the social contract itself is guaranteed by a racial contract resulting in the exclusion of non-white persons.

Moving further in Mills work he states “where indigenous peoples were permitted to survive, they were denied full or any membership in the political community, thus becoming foreigners in their own country.” What I wish to point out here and drive home is that the exclusion of particular groups was (and still is) necessary to constitute a political body, particularly when that polity is established in whiteness. It is no secret that the United States is par excellence in the demonstration of this. This fact has not changed over time nor space resulting in, as Mills argues, that no matter where the non-white body is located full recognition and membership in the political community is prevented. In other words, non-whiteness signals a requisite mis-recognition of humanity and **requires** exclusion.

In our present moment, people of color are being heavily petitioned for the sake of saving America from alleged doom. The fact that people of color represent the means by which the US will be ‘secured’ is no new experience—please read Mills’ *Racial Contract*. What this necessarily means is that the security and well-being of white life in America is to be guaranteed by the votes, or lack thereof of people of color. Meaning that if white life is to be continued as is whether those lives be wealthy, middle class, or working class white people, it will be because people of color voted (or did not vote) for a candidate that will enact policies which continues the standard of living for either of these white groups. As interesting as this may seem, and the implications that this should have—meaning people of color having a strong say in political platforms and decisions—people of color are still denied **FULL** membership and recognition in the US polity. For Black people the narrative is a storied one. For the sake of brevity, I’ll begin

in the 80s with a Hollywood actor, who managed to land the gig of being the President of the United States.

By now we all know the deal. Reagan was no angel for Black people. From the beginning days of his campaign Reagan stressed strong support for States Rights and often spoke against the Voting Rights Act of 1964. Ronald Reagan was not fond of affirmative action programs and accordingly slashed federally funded job and training programs that benefited Black people. Although Nixon started the war on drugs, Regan took the war to new levels. The number of persons in prison for non-violent drug crimes in 1980 was 50,000, by the time Reagan left office this figured more than doubled—the majority were people of color. The 80s were indeed a roaring time for conservatism. Geopolitics and changes in federal policy all resulted in Black people in neighborhoods experiencing a heavy presence of police, resulting in white communities being able to move about freely and live life unpoliced and enjoy as much powder cocaine as they desired because crack cocaine, which was mostly used by people of color—in particular poor Black people—is what sent one to prison. Regardless of how one voted, policies were shaped to benefit white life as Black people suffered. By the time Reagan was preparing to leave office Black family income per capita was only 56% of that of white families.

George Bush was no better as a follow up to Regan. Bush's campaign is best known for the Willie Horton ad which played on white fears of Black crime and democrats being too close to the recognition of Black rights and privileges (rights which democrats try to recognize as little as possible without losing their white base—hi Bill and Barack *waves*). Bush is also known for his appointment of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court—need I say more. Bush continued Reagan's war on drugs and its impact on Black people, only this time the drug war was matched with Bush 41's veto of the 1991 Civil Rights Restoration Act and threatening the banishment of race-exclusive scholarships impacting Black and Brown university and college students across the United States. Bush 41's hopes for a continued presidency were diminished when women and Black people refused to get behind him. This, matched with Ross Perot's presence, ushered Bill Clinton into the White House—a move which caused many Black people to think they would finally be treated fairly in the United States.

Bill Clinton represented the hopes of fairness among Black people. Interestingly, at present Hillary touts Bill's jobs record and what he did for African Americans, but a closer look reveals otherwise. One thing of importance to note is that those who are incarcerated are not counted in unemployment figures, this a particular point to recognize given the accelerating imprisonment rate at the time and Bill Clinton's coming Crime Bill. Moreover, the Clinton administration's careful definition of stable employment and income requirements for one to be considered employed must also be taken into consideration. These two things alone represent the biggest deception of the Clinton presidency. This matched with Clinton's assault on welfare makes the impact of his presidency clear—Black social and literal death. Black unemployment arguably worsened and Black families and neighborhoods became increasingly destabilized during his administration. Black peoples hopes of fairness and inclusion in the polity were dashed and life as Black Americans knew it under Reagan and Bush 41 continued as white Americans prospered and were largely unaffected. Another point to recognize is that when Clinton enacted his Crime Bill crime in the United States was not only low, but trending downward—the correlation between continued and accelerated Black captivity and white freedom are clear here.

George W. Bush, or Bush 43, followed Bill Clinton's horrible record concerning Black Americans. A good place to start is his theft of the 2000 presidential election which was facilitated, in part, by more than 50,000 Black voters being purged in the State of Florida—the State in which his brother Jeb happened to be governor. In the course of his presidency, despite warnings of 9/11 the Bush administration had more FBI agents working a war on drugs than working on international threats against the nation. Bush 43 also attacked reproductive rights, which has particular ramifications for Black women. In addition to this Bush also made access to student loans more difficult and eliminated several of the few remaining federal job training programs, as well as restricted access to Pell Grants. Bush's presidency marked a down turn in jobs, access to healthcare, and a mortgage crisis. All of these disproportionately impacted Black people—particularly in housing as Black people were overwhelmingly given adjustable rate mortgages as White people were given a fixed rate (shoutout to deregulation). All of this happened during George W. Bush's administration and I haven't even addressed Hurricane Katrina—which we all know who was impacted and the lack of quality care and resources that was given—Black residents of Louisiana are still recovering, even as white gentrifiers are flocking to Louisiana to take Black property for themselves. By the time the Bush era came to a close a change agent was badly needed; enter Barack Obama, the exact change agent we needed...or so we thought.

Let's be honest when 2009 rolled around as a people, Black folk were ready. Bush was out, and we finally got ourselves a Black president and Black people, as a whole, believed that we would not only experience change as a group, but that we would be recognized as **FULL** members of the polity. Finally we could, as a group, materialize our claims of what we needed and how we needed it. Wrong. For Black people Barack Obama became the lecturer in chief, he couldn't directly address Black needs, in part, because he would be viewed as showing bias toward Black people, however, he definitely made sure the needs of groups that map as white received recognition as members of the polity—hello LGBTQI—a community which centers the needs of its white constituents while ignoring the needs of its members of color. Barack Obama has also come to be known as the Deporter-in-Chief. While this issue certainly impacts Latino and Chicano lives, it must be recognized that Black people are deported at a higher rate than any other group (check the UndocuBlack Network). President Obama's tenure has also been marked by sharp critiques from many Black voices, and I'm sure we all remember his CBC moment. Eddie Glaude in his most recent work, *Democracy in Black*, asserts under President Obama “black communities have been devastated.”

What is the point in my laying out this truncated overview of presidential history since the 1980s as it relates to Black people? My point is this: that no matter who is in the white house, what history has proven is that the subjugation of Black people as a group is requisite for the operation of the US polity. While we know Donald Trump's stance on police violence against Black people, Hillary Clinton's is not clear. On her website under the issues category, then racial justice—she lists several areas that she will address, however, police caused deaths is not one of them. Rather she presents the issue as guns in our communities (lowkey referring to black on black crime) as she takes pictures with Mothers of the Movement standing by her.

For me, and speaking exclusively for me, this election boils down to a battle over who will stabilize and grow white Americans the most—many believe Trump’s plans will hurt middle-class white workers, so the push for Hillary becomes evident. However, what is missing is how will Black people be impacted by either campaign? The American polity is set up in such way that the prospering of one group demands the exclusion and underperformance of another. Who will that underperforming group be in this phase of American life? History seems to have given us an answer.

And here is the truth of the matter, if Hillary does not the next president of the United States, Black people, and people of color, will be blamed because we did not deliver the desired savior of many middle-class white people, hence the popular mantra “a vote for anyone else but Clinton is a vote for Trump.” Clinton will be held accountable for not being trustworthy, she will not be held accountable for the ways in which she harmed Black communities in the past. White womanhood will go to work for her and supporters will readily find a convenient other to blame for Hillary’s insufficiencies. Case in point:

As the final word I will say this: no matter who is in the white house, Black people will continue in the experiences and social positioning we have historically held to make the functioning of this country possible. We have survived Reagan, 2 Bush men, Obama, and Clinton--we have reason not to want another Clinton and not care who another candidate may or may not be. Clinton vs. Trump, is not my concern—that is an issue for white people to work out. However, White folks of the democratic persuasion need not worry too much if Trump is elected—there will be a Black delegation to say “Welcome.” Welcome to our lives, the lives we have lived for many centuries. White political panic, does not mean Black compliance in the twenty-first century. Sorry, not sorry. This is not my issue.