

PAST to PRESENT

The Journal of the Teesdale History Research Group



Volume 1, Issue 2, Spring 2017

Trump's America

Foreword—Simon Henderson

During his keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in 2004 the then Illinois Senator, Barack Obama, said, “there's not a liberal America and a conservative America; there's the United States of America.” This is a theme to which President Obama returned many times, rejecting the binary code of American politics and seeing only a *United States* not simply a collection of blue and red states. It is difficult not to view the outcome of the 2016 election as a significant reality check to this idealism.

America is a hugely divided nation. It was when Obama spoke in 2004 and it was long before that. The culture wars of the 1960s and 1970s shattered the social and political consensus of the mid-twentieth century. When the pieces of this tumult settled two visions of the country remained. A progressive, liberal, secular and ethnically diverse America faced a conservative, largely white and religious nation. Two countries inside the geographic borders of one. Throughout the Reagan, Clinton and Bush eras this divide remained and partly as a result of de-industrialisation, globalisation and increased immigration, it widened at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Many of those who rejoiced at the triumph of Trump in 2016 were despondent eight years earlier when Obama swept to victory offering a message of hope and change. Indeed his presidency and its embodiment of change alienated those who did not understand or were fearful of it. Demographic analysis after Obama's 2012 victory suggested that by 2050 America would cease to be a majority white nation. Experts noted that unless the Republicans widened their appeal to non-white voters and adopted more inclusive policies they would prove unelectable in future presidential contests. Yet Trump won with the most racially exclusive campaign of modern times.

He did so by tapping into the fears of those who voted against Obama in 2008 and 2012 and, importantly, by converting a small but incredibly significant number of those who voted for him. These blue collar white voters in the rust belt states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio turned against the Democrats because they felt marginalised and alienated. Many of these voters supported Obama in 2008 as a Washington outsider with a message of change. That same anti-establishment impulse led them to reject the mainstream Clinton campaign in favour of Trump. The overwhelming majority of Latinos (65%) and Blacks (88%) rejected Trump. These numbers are roughly similar to those who rejected McCain in 2008 and Romney in 2012.

Traditional gaps between Democrat supporting urban centres and Republican supporting rural communities were also evident in this election. The main problem for Clinton was that ethnic minority voters did not support her in as large numbers as they did Obama and, crucially, those traditional blue-collar Democrat voters were won over by Trump's populism. What he lost in the popular vote in liberal ethnically diverse states like California and New York he won in the Electoral College with small victories in the rust belt where he appealed to many white working class voters. Trump's rhetoric and racially charged populism has shocked political commentators but the enormous social and political divide it reveals has long existed.

Obama remarked in 2016, “If you had to choose one moment in history in which you could be born, and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be -- what nationality, what gender, what race, whether you'd be rich or poor, gay or straight, what faith you'd be born into -- you wouldn't choose 100 years ago. You wouldn't choose the fifties, or the sixties, or the seventies. You'd choose right now.” Trump campaigned to “Make America great again” and in his inaugural address spoke of “rusted out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation,” a scene of “American carnage.”

It is hard to imagine two so different images of one nation. This is the binary code of American politics. It may not be as simple as red and blue states – Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin showed themselves to be an uncertain shade of purple – but it is a real divide that only looks set to widen further.

Where Do The Democrats Go From Here?

Cal Baker

On November 8th, 2016 one of the biggest political shocks of all time took place when Donald Trump – billionaire, golf player and TV personality – defeated Hillary Clinton to become the 45th President of the United States. The New York Post called it ‘a win for the little guy over the elite’, Sean Hannity called it a ‘modern day political miracle’ and Richard Engel on MSNBC called it ‘catastrophic for the United States and our position in the World’. Whatever the view of pundits, one thing was clear - the Democratic Party faced a serious identity crisis.

The view of many liberals and, indeed, some political experts following the shock result on November 8th was that the Democratic Party made a fatal political error by choosing Hillary Clinton – the embodiment of the Washington establishment – as their nominee to run against such a populist candidate. The ‘hard’ wing of the left – the Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren wing – have heavily criticized the ‘Super delegate’ programme that the Democrats use when deciding their nominee. Of the 4051 delegates who vote for the candidate to run for president (most of them voting on behalf of which candidate their state backed via a democratic voting system), 712 of them, or roughly 15%, are ‘super delegates’ who simply vote for their favourite candidate, without any accountability to the people of the country. Hillary Clinton’s campaign was continually dogged with claims of corruption during this process. Hacked emails from the DNC and Clinton campaign manager John Podesta exposed collusion between the supposedly ‘neutral’ DNC and the Clinton campaign, which could indicate that super delegates were being influenced unfairly. Among this confusion, then DNC chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz resigned and the chaos created tainted the Clinton campaign. This perceived corruption gave Clinton a bad name and put off some progressives who voted for Sanders in the primaries.

Since November 8th, many of these progressives have been asking for some change in the politics of the Democratic Party. The race for the DNC chair was a good indicator of where the party stood post-election. The two frontrunners, Keith Ellison and Tom Perez, symbolised the power struggle between the moderate and socialist wings of the party. Ellison, the US representative for Minnesota’s 5th congressional district, had been a staunch Sanders supporter in the primaries and Perez was a former labour secretary under Obama who stood as the less extreme liberal candidate.

The tone was set early in the race when an outside candidate by the name of Vince Tolliver said in an interview about Ellison’s campaign, ‘His being a Muslim is exactly why DNC voters should not vote for him.’ This got Tolliver kicked out of the race but it signified the problems not only in the DNC but the entire country at present.

Tom Perez won the race for DNC chair, making Ellison his deputy. While nice words were said about each other’s campaigns and both candidates were extremely gracious, it served as a foreshadowing that the Democrats may not change at all going forward. After all, are politics even relevant nowadays? Many news outlets – the Hill and the Huffington Post to name a few – tout First Lady Michelle Obama, a woman with no experience of serving as a politician, as a possible Democratic nominee for 2020. This is the price the Democrats paid for not going for a populist candidate to run against Trump in a post-politics age. We are seeing rhetoric replace policy or substance, we are seeing Meryl Streep making political speeches and we are seeing a billionaire businessman who says he’s smart for not paying taxes declare himself a hero for the working classes. What the Democrats will need in 2020, assuming Trump lasts until then and then stands again, is a populist candidate who has actual policy ideas and who can expose Trump for being an ignorant fraud. Many working-class people voted for Trump because he made empty promises like ‘I’ll be the best jobs president ever,’ and ‘We’re going to win so much that you’ll be tired of winning.’ A truly progressive candidate, however, who has real policy proposals on criminal justice reform, tax reform and climate change would obliterate Trump in an election. A large part of me wants Trump to get to 2020 just so I could see him get embarrassed, but in my opinion there would be nothing in the world better than an impeachment, which would mean that Mitch McConnell would have to look him right in his ugly orange face and say ‘Donald, you’re fired.’

I believe that the actions taken by the DNC recently reflect the fact that we are living in a world controlled by the elites. The Walton family who own Wal-Mart own more wealth than the bottom 42% of Americans – 130 million people. Wal-Mart says it cannot afford to pay its employees the \$15 minimum wage for which those such as Bernie Sanders are fighting, yet they find pocket change to pay their CEO more than \$9000 an hour. We are living in an economically unfair world, and one of the few things that Clinton and Trump have in common is their pandering to these disgusting, inhumane companies. Trump’s cabinet is made up almost exclusively of billionaires and Hillary Clinton was also heavily criticised for making a speech to Goldman Sachs for \$675000. I dearly hope that in future the Democratic Party offers an alternative to the income and wealth inequality observed throughout the US but in order to do that they will have to re-assess what their party stands for.

They also need to decide whether the best candidate to fight the rising wave of populist nationalism would be a moderate establishmentarian or, in fact, a true progressive who cares about the issues and has real solutions.

Will Trump Be A Successful President?

Jack Parsons-Munn

The establishment has called him a ‘B-list entertainer who doesn’t understand policy’ but will Donald Trump be a successful President? We must first consider the qualities and the economic and political environment needed for success.

Some say that Trump is one of the most powerful communicators in modern politics – a key skill for any leader. He has been described as a master communicator, highly energised, fearless and able to inspire those felt forgotten by mainstream politicians. He has pledged to make ‘America great again’ and put ‘America first’, successfully tapping into many voters’ fears and prejudices. However, truth, honesty and integrity are also crucial skills for successful leadership; skills which have not been in evidence during his campaign or since his election. Trump’s rhetoric has been emotive, ill informed, racist, sexist and often untrue – the claim that Arab Americans cheered the 9/11 attacks despite there being no reports to substantiate such assertions, is a case in point. Trump’s campaign has been described as the most divisive in US political history and despite pledging to unite America, since his inauguration he has continued to divide it.

The first four weeks of Trump’s Presidency have been dogged with controversy. Despite very publically signing several executive orders, Trump has been unable to fulfil election promises, battling with the courts over the controversial immigration order since deemed unconstitutional, and then describing the man responsible for the ruling as a ‘so called judge’. Trump’s promise to use existing funds to begin immediate construction of a wall on the US-Mexico border has hit a financial roadblock with insufficient capital to pay for it. He has waged war with a media that holds him to account calling it ‘disgusting and corrupt’, banning certain newspapers and news channels from press conferences. He has lost his national security advisor in the controversy surrounding the lies he told the vice president over his talks with Russia during the campaign and his attorney general has similarly been accused of lying to Congress.

Many liken Trump to Reagan. Like Trump, Reagan, who would go on to be one of the most popular American Presidents since Roosevelt, was considered ‘unsophisticated and unschooled’ in the complexities of

economics and foreign affairs. However, unlike Trump, who despite pledging to unite America, has created an atmosphere of fear and division, Reagan managed to restore hope and confidence to a country which had been through two decades of crisis – Kennedy’s assassination, Watergate, Vietnam and the worst economic recession since WWII. The nation was on the verge of bankruptcy so whatever economic policies Reagan introduced could not make matters worse.

Obama also inherited an economy in crisis after the 2008 crash. The banking system was in collapse, two major car companies were on the verge of bankruptcy, unemployment was rising and the housing market was in freefall. It was Obama’s policies, passed despite unprecedented obstruction by the Republican Party, which have created the stable strong economy Trump inherits today. This together with a Republican majority in both houses should mean Trump is in a favourable position to enact his policies. However, Trump’s election promises require a massive stimulation for legacy industries such as coal mining and infrastructure. He has also promised tax cuts. With interest rates at near zero, Trump will have little choice but to increase the deficit if he is to fulfil his election pledges. Policies for which Trump will find difficult to secure support from the Republican Party.

Militarily, Obama articulated a more modest vision for America’s role in the world. He signed the nuclear deal with Iran and championed the fight against global warming, all of which dramatically improved America’s image in the world; an image which Trump seems intent on destroying with his adversarial stance towards other world leaders.

The success of Trump’s presidency will be largely dependent on what the American public and the Republican Party are prepared to accept from him. If they are prepared to accept an authoritarian president who exploits the use of executive orders, suppresses the free press and questions the integrity of the judiciary and demonises those who disagree with him then Trump will be successful. However, if the preservation of democracy is key, this is reliant on a president who understands the qualities of truth and integrity, understands the importance of an independent judiciary and a free press.

Post-Truth: Lots Of Questions, Few Answers

Nina Holguin

We live in a scientific world; a world of numbers, facts and a definitive yes or no answer. However, this seemingly undisputable tower of truths is being toppled, by the most unlikely of candidates—post-truth. The political phenomenon is taking the world by storm, baffling politicians and academics alike. It shouldn’t work; it shouldn’t allow someone to be elected president—or should it?

President Donald Trump is something few people expected. He rode a wave of anti-establishment populism offering policies he thought would please conservative blue collared Americans. The fear of change within key swing states meant that his policies on gay marriage, gun laws and global warming helped him to secure a 77 Electoral College majority. Yet now, he is finally quietly acknowledging that these policies may not happen. For example, before his election, he promised to elect judges to the Supreme Court to repeal the same-sex marriage legislation, saying the decision should be made state-by-state. But post election he retracted and said it was *“irrelevant because it was already settled”* in the court. It’s not like many Republicans have changed their mind (as shown by Alabama’s banning of the first gay Disney moment in their new live action Beauty and the Beast). Yet, however illogically, many Trump supporters are still unfazed by their president’s deceit, thus suggesting he has used fabrications for his political gain.

There are numerous lies uttered by Trump that he has somehow managed to sweep under the rug. For example, his Swedish terrorist attacks allegations and his false inauguration audience number. So why are people so undeterred by it? Because it is emotional, apparently this is crucial to the definition of post-truth: ‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.’ This seems harmless on the surface—a heart ruling head approach. However, the sinister reality is that the emotion is fear and anxiety. Politicians are feeding on the fear of the unknown, prejudices- everything that we should be striving to starve in an equal society. Post-truth is dangerous to our fragile democracy. Philosophers may argue that truth is relative, and while that may be the case, it is crucial to maintain the sanity of the population. Admittedly, history is often biased and not the truth but that doesn’t mean our modern society should be as well.

How did we get to this point? Professor Grayling, believes ‘The world changed after 2008’, in reference to the financial crash of 2008, where the gap between the rich and poor increased, and middle-income families faced long stagnation in earnings. This economic struggle created foundations for the fire and hatred surrounding the mainstream issues of today, like immigration. In addition, the power and influence of the ever increasing social media has a large role to play, Professor Grayling states- *‘It’s been empowered by the fact that you can publish your opinion. You used to need a pot of paint and a balaclava to publish your opinion, if you couldn’t get a publisher. But all you need now is an iPhone. Everyone can publish their opinion - and if you disagree with me, it’s an attack on me and not my ideas.’* With everyone posting their own ideas, it is very easy for fake news made by fake newspapers to turn up on Facebook or Twitter.

But really the origin of ‘post-truth’ comes with the liberal ideas within post-modernism in the 1980s, and while it may only be perceived now as an Alternate-Right rebellion, it has roots far deeper and complex.

So why post truth? Fundamentally, it is a backlash. It is a backlash to our scientific world and way of life. To those who support Trump, are the ‘alternative facts’ any different to the ‘real ones’? They didn’t understand when the politicians and scientists shouted numbers at them, nor the issues of the LGBTQ+ community, or immigrants, or the financial crash. So when post-truth- the alternative fact- appeared, people said they were lies but they didn’t seem different to many Americans. Except for once, to many it made sense. The most killings in America for forty-seven years? I want that to be right because there are more immigrants and I don’t trust new things. Serious voting fraud amongst some states? I want to believe that because I don’t like the liberal’s ideas. For a population that felt they were being ignored, it is understandable that these ideas are attractive. Thus, when people disregard these ideas, they simply feel more empowered, because for once they feel right.

Combating this mentality is tough. Both sides can stick their fingers in their ears and scream at the other side telling them they are lying, getting increasingly frustrated and divided. But its not just America, it was apparent in Brexit, with Farage’s £350 million pounds of EU money to the NHS a blatant lie, as well as false immigration statistics. Adlai Stevenson, the unsuccessful liberal contender in the 1952 presidential election was told, “Mr. Stevenson, every thinking person in America is going to vote for you.” And he said: “Great, but I need a majority” and unfortunately this is the harsh truth. The only way we can solve this problem is through discussion and education. Critical evaluation needs to be at the forefront of our improvements to avoid the slanting of social media. Making a compromise and understanding each other, will help to bring a more constructive political atmosphere. We need to stick to our mind but listen with our hearts, and work for a better, safer future. But until we get to that day, instead of punishing them, tell your lying toddler to get into politics.

Trump And The Rise Of The Alt-Right

John Bell

The 2016 Presidential Election shone a light on political groups previously ignored by the media and Obama’s administration, many of which have now come to prominence, from ‘Bernie Bros’ to the Alt-Right (Alternative Right) and everything in between, dramatically changing the way the American public is perceived; no longer just red or blue.

The Alt-Right, voiced via conservative controversialist Milo Yiannopoulos, is one group which has rapidly grown during this time and represents a new generation of conservatives.

The Alt-Right, fundamentally, are a loose group of majority white, working class, male individuals who reject mainstream conservatism and the establishment, united primarily around rejection of political correctness and their advocacy of freedom of speech. Members seek to cause outrage amongst liberals and conservatives alike and are described as 'a new, mischievous, sexy generation of conservatives' by Yiannopoulos. This group had been underrepresented or ignored by mainstream media but Trump greatly appealed to them with his messages and this helped him achieve his victory in the election, an outcome few news outlets predicted.

The Alt-Right was a movement rarely heard of prior to the election, existing as a term coined by white supremacist Richard Spencer in 2010 to avoid the terms racist and Neo-Nazi. However, during the build-up to the election the movement became more prominent and can be associated with American nationalists and men's rights advocates. It still mostly existed on social media and sites such as *4chan* where users would make Trump and conservative themed memes to express their ideas, shared mainly within their own circles and groups, not yet gaining any attention from traditional media. Whether or not they truly believe in the ideas (especially the more 'edgy') or if they are only doing so to see a reaction from others still remains questionable. Any form of online abuse or harassment can be defended under the guise of opening up a conversation on that topic.

Their rejection of political correctness includes rejection of several other ideas from which members feel threatened such as Islamic immigration and third wave feminism. They argue they are promoting 'western values' but this is described by traditional media as white nationalism and islamophobia. Members have great admiration for and are united by Donald Trump.

The movement is so difficult to describe as nothing like it has ever been seen in politics before. Far right groups are rising rapidly across Europe (see the last edition of this Journal) yet none can be compared to the Alt-Right. One reason for this is that, much like Donald Trump, their style of politics is unique due to the group's political background being surprisingly diverse. Whilst the majority of members will be disillusioned conservatives, looking for someone like Trump to represent them, many of its members come from the left. Bernie Sanders captivated the hearts and minds of millions of young, optimistic liberals so when he was beaten by Hillary Clinton to be the democratic frontrunner, many saw it as unjust causing the hash tags #NeverHillary and #JillNotHill (in reference to the green party leader Jill Stein) to appear in the comment sections of Bernie Sanders' social media. A fraction of these die hard Sanders

supporters despised Hillary and the anti-establishment message of Trump was enough to gain their support, assisting in his victory.

When describing 'half of Trump supporters' in September 2016 Hillary Clinton famously grouped them into her 'basket of deplorables' (which media referenced to the Alt-Right). Instead of being stung by this comment the Alt-Right revelled in it and owned the term, embracing the label deplorable. Not only did Clinton's attempt at delegitimising the Alt-Right fail, it finally gave them something that had been missing: mainstream media attention. As the group's presence was still mostly online, with their ideas conveyed through memes and Yiannopoulos, the majority of media ignored the group, choosing to mock them instead of seeing them as a serious factor in the election.

One of the few media outlets to cover the progression of the Alt-Right from the start was ultra conservative news outlet Breitbart news, more specifically (then) tech journalist Milo Yiannopoulos. Whilst never describing himself as a member of the movement, Yiannopoulos, similar to Trump, is one of the few people to have represented the Alt-Right and many members associate themselves with him as well as Trump. Yiannopoulos personifies the Alt-Right; a gay catholic, with Jewish heritage who has built a career out of antagonising others, so much so that he was removed from Twitter. He shows the Alt-Right's diversity united through Trump and fear and hatred of the extreme left. Rioters at the University of Berkeley shut down one of his talks during his 'Dangerous Faggot' tour of college campuses. He uses his influence to continue to support Trump and represent the Alt-Right in his writing against political correctness, feminism and black lives matter.

From the depths of the internet, to making international headlines, the Alt-Right presents a unique case, showing the current state of American politics and social opinion, worryingly exposing a confusing mix of people, some wanting to start a conversation, some wanting a reaction, and some wanting to do serious harm.

Trump And The Rights Of Women

Laura Turner

Donald Trump's approach to women has divided the United States, producing a heavily mixed response around the world. The majority of American women either love him, or hate him; even in his own words he "brings out either the best or the worse in women". For a man who often seems to act so negatively towards the fairer sex, is this approval actually warranted? Despite having been recorded numerous times during

the campaign making derogatory and highly inappropriate remarks about women and sexual assault, a great number of women still voted for him. In fact, according to exit polls, over 53 percent of white women gave him their vote.

So, why did these women choose to offer a seemingly “sexist” candidate their support as the future president of the United States? Certainly, it seemed an odd choice, especially for previously Democratic women, to flip their views when presented with someone so regularly called “misogynistic” by the media. But from interviews carried out by news reporters across the US, it is apparent that their motives are highly varied, from fear of immigration, to opposition to abortion, and a desperation to protect the Second Amendment rights. However, one thing they all seem to have in common is the belief that he is “a good man, deep down.” Though for others, this love for the US seems to be buried deeper than they are able to see.

A proportion of these women readily admit that they think Trump has a disrespectful approach to women and their rights, but voted for him due to “his honesty”, or their inability to back Clinton, whether for reasons of sexism or simply just her unpopularity. An apparent lack of gender-consciousness denied Hillary Clinton the win predicted for her. It is uncertain how much of Trump’s winning margin among male-voters was down to gender-based opposition, or just plain sexism. A large percentage of the 47 percent of white females who did not vote for him clearly believe that his attitude – and that of a proportion of his male supporters - is more than disrespectful. His sexist remarks have stretched through his lifetime from as early as 1990, often dehumanizing and objectifying women, and going against their rights. Trump has been recorded making many lewd and sexual references to women, some before they are even of legal age, even discussing “grabbing [women] by the p***y”, as he bragged of his ability to sexually assault women. To many this is outlandish, and unbelievable; but something some of his supporters evidently disbelieve, or are willing to overlook.

During the presidential race, Trump reacted negatively to opposition thrown his way, both by the media and his fellow candidates. On Twitter, he responded to rumours and disagreement to his policies by saying that it was just another example of “fake media”. However, his reaction when faced with opposition from Hillary Clinton and other female candidates was much more volatile. He insulted Republican rival, Carly Fiorina, numerous times, calling her ugly and a “bimbo”, whilst also insinuating that she is weaker due to her gender. Later, Trump accused Hillary of “playing the woman card”, and this being the only reason she had received more than “5% of the vote”. Despite having publically shamed Fiorina previously in the election for ‘interrupting’ him, he managed to interrupt Clinton 25 times in the first 26 minutes of the first television debate in September 2016.

He then progressed to repeat his insinuation of females being the weaker sex, following Clinton’s bout of pneumonia, questioning whether she had the “stamina” to run the country. This was met with heavy opposition, and immediately branded sexist by the media; something which, again, he disputes.

Whilst Trump tries to convey the idea that he has “utmost respect” for women, his actions, such as calling a breastfeeding woman ‘disgusting’, heavily contradict this. His pro-life stance, and commitment to appoint judges who wish to restrict access to abortion, have left people questioning whether Donald Trump actually realises the importance of feminism in everyday life. It remains to be seen whether his election as President of the United States may represent a backwards step in society’s approach to female rights.

A Woman’s Right To Choose

Sadie Askwith

“Let’s march together through this darkness and with each step know that we are not afraid, that we are not alone, that we will not back down, that there is power in our unity and that no opposing force stands a chance in the face of true solidarity.” Madonna, Women’s march 2017

As women in the UK, under The Abortions Act of 1967, we have full ownership over our right to choose. Abortion is legal up to 24 weeks and in certain cases, such as if the pregnancy poses significant threat to the woman or if there are foetal abnormalities, there is no time limit. There is also no age limit on abortion in the UK and it is free on the NHS for all women. Waiting times last up to two weeks from the initial appointment to the abortion of the foetus and the whole procedure is completely confidential. As women in this country we are massively privileged to have access to free, safe and confidential abortion care if we should ever need to access it - a right to our own bodies that every woman should have.

In America there has been debate between pro-life vs. pro-choice positions for decades. The current debate revolves around the Roe v. Wade decision by the Supreme Court in 1973. The argument is not yet resolved. Prior to Roe v. Wade abortion was not readily available and still illegal in some states including Texas. The decision in 1973 deemed that the majority of states’ rights condemning the procedure were unconstitutional, as the laws denied women their right to privacy under the 14th amendment, and were therefore null and void. This provoked a huge response which continues in active protest to this day.

When researching the pro-life argument in America it became clear very quickly that the movement is powerful amongst Americans from all walks of life. With almost half the population now identifying as pro-life the opinion is also increasingly common and active amongst young people in America. Heavily associated with the church, young people as young as 4 years old in some cases are encouraged through boot camps and organized events to take a stance against abortion, most of which use incredibly graphic images and stories to make their point. Phrases such as 'the modern-day Holocaust', which through my research I have found is commonly used in Pro-Life protest, show the horrific extent of the argument and opinion involved. The procedure is described by Pro-Lifers as a genocide, an epidemic that needs to be resolved. The argument is that abortion is murder, and that women who choose abortion, for whatever reason, are mothers killing their children. This is primarily due to the opinion that 'life' starts at conception, yet medically the start of human 'life' is a murky and relatively unknown area. I personally, both politically and as a woman, find this argument hard to justify. Questioning a woman's motives when choosing to have an abortion I feel is inappropriate and intrusive. There are many reasons that women go through the procedure. Without government funding, availability and affordability, abortion is increasingly being sought elsewhere. This results in women mostly travelling across borders to use unsafe and unsanitary abortion facilities that present a serious threat to both their physical and mental health. The pro-life argument is, whatever your personal stance, damaging women across America, and with President Trump now in the White House, could become a whole lot worse.

Although having a pro-choice past, Trump has announced himself as 'determinedly and decidedly pro-life', perhaps a political calculation to connect with the conservative Republican base. With one of the President's first actions in the oval office being to reinstate the Mexico City policy (first put in place by Trump's hero Ronald Reagan in 1984) stopping funding for international groups which perform or provide information on abortion, it's hard not to expect his actions to be similar with regards to domestic policy. The President signing in the law, although not directly affecting American women, suggests he sees the issue as a priority. Having said also that he would support an abortion ban in the US, President Trump is beginning to emerge as a threat to women across America and beyond. Following the death of pro-life Justice Antonin Scalia before he became President, Trump made a promise to elect only pro-life judges which he stated would 'automatically' challenge the 1973's *Roe v. Wade* decision. His nomination of conservative Neil Gorsuch signalled his intent to follow through on campaign promises.

Women's marches starting in January of this year have drawn some of the biggest crowds ever witnessed in US protesting history. Over four million women and men alike have gathered in over 600 towns and cities in every state of America to protest Trump's presidency and policy, with some marches internationally drawing crowds of 300,000. This record breaking turn-out demonstrates the solidarity of women of all ages, race and religion in America; how even with a President who has limited respect for women or their rights, there is still hope and an incredible driving force for Feminism and the rights of all women in America.

"Make America Great Again"—At What Cost?

Evie Scott

Trump's campaign slogan 'Make America Great Again' assumes that the solutions to America's problems lie in the past. Similar to the Brexit vote, Trump's slogan captured the attention of voters that recall a country that, in their eyes, was previously strong and free. More than half of over 54 year olds voted Trump, compared to only a third of under 29 year olds. Realistically speaking, how much of Trump's 'great' America is fact, and how much a romantic myth or ideal? The world has changed, and so have the people in it. The generation who will inherit Trump's America aren't the ones who voted for it. What does this mean for America's next generation?

Trump's actions and campaign promises have already impacted social equality. In 2015 same-sex marriage became legal in all 50 states and although Trump has said that he is 'against gay marriage', he has also said that he is 'fine' with the law, making it unlikely that it will change. This doesn't, however, prevent him from changing the laws regarding discrimination against the LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender+) community. The First Amendment Defence Act (FADA) prevents the government from taking action against a business acting in accordance with religious beliefs: it effectively allows discrimination against non-traditional relationships if it can be religiously justified. Trump has also undermined the Obama ruling that allowed children in state schools to use the toilet that corresponded with their chosen gender. Even within his cabinet, diversity is significantly less than in previous administrations.; of the 22 cabinet members only 4 are women- one Native American, one Asian- and all of the remaining males, except for one African-American, are white.

What future is there for the 'American Dream' if Trump's 'traditional' views allow discrimination based upon gender, race or sexuality?

Trump's derogatory attitudes towards women are widely reported and one of his earliest actions has had an impact on women worldwide. Trump was reportedly pro-choice in 1999, but has changed his view and during the presidential campaign presented pro-life views stating "some form of punishment should be in place for women having an abortion." If Trump's policies are put into action (as has been indicated by his pro-life nominees Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Supreme Court justice Neil Gorsuch) they will limit a woman's choices about her reproductive freedom. However, there is significant resistance to the policy direction that these appointments indicate. The Pussyhat Project and the Day Without A Woman march are examples of women's rights campaigners taking action and showing that people aren't just accepting what comes.

Some of the key issues for the next generation are environmental ones. In 2010 Trump tweeted 'the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive' and has also stated that climate change is 'just weather'. However absurd these views seem, the consequences are serious. He thinks that the Paris Agreement is 'bad for U.S. business' and plans to pull out, meaning companies would have next to no environmental restrictions and would massively contribute to greenhouse gases. Under the Obama administration restrictions were put on potential oil pipe lines. For example, the Dakota access which infringes a treaty made with the tribe whose land it goes through. This is because they would contradict Obama's concerns about global warming and potentially pollute water sources. Trump has since lifted these bans. The impacts on future generations are quite clear here, they will face the consequences of a planet damaged by the previous generation.

Trump has voiced many contentious views, but how many of them are legitimate and will become real laws is yet unknown. In the age of social media it's very hard to find solid facts that aren't interpreted, overplayed or undermined by the media and there is, quite simply, a lot that we don't know about Trump. We can, however, hope that some of these controversial opinions will force people to engage and stand up for their and their children's futures.

Donald Trump, the Climate, and the Fossil Fuel Sector

Jake Knight

Donald Trump has for years seemed to reject mainstream views on climate change, previously describing global warming as a 'hoax', 'non-existent', and a 'total con job'. Then, during his campaign to become President, Trump continued to concern environmentalists – he proposed dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 'in almost every form', repealing Obama-era regulations in order to re-invigorate the fossil fuel sector, and taking America out of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Worryingly Trump's actions since his victory seem to have reinforced his campaign rhetoric.

For example, Trump's new Cabinet has been criticised for over-representing climate change sceptics and supporters of the fossil fuel industry. One such appointment is Rex Tillerson, now Secretary of State. The former CEO of Exxon Mobil has worried many over comments he has made in the past relating to climate change. He has called it a 'future problem ... not needing to be dealt with immediately', also saying that 'burning fossil fuels does not increase climate change'. And since his confirmation as Secretary of State, Tillerson is reported to have 'snubbed' a request from the UN for a meeting on climate change.

Another concerning appointment is that of Scott Pruitt as head of the EPA, the body which enforces environmental regulations – someone viewed as a 'key architect of the legal battle against Mr. Obama's climate change policies' (Eric Lipton, climate change activist). As Attorney General of Oklahoma, Pruitt lobbied against Obama's Clean Power Plan (designed to regulate the carbon emissions of power plants). He even sued the EPA, the very department which he now controls. Controversially, Pruitt made headlines in March when he stated that 'CO₂ is not a primary contributor to global warming,' and possibly more ominous still, Pruitt recently told conservative activists they would be 'justified' in believing the EPA 'should be completely disbanded.'

It is not just Trump's Cabinet appointments which are worrying, but also his statements and executive actions. In February 2017, Trump announced plans for a 10% increase in military spending. Most of this money is expected to come from dollar-for-dollar cuts to the funding in other departments, such as the EPA. Thus, even if there is no complete dismantling of the EPA, as Scott Pruitt has suggested, there could be severe and damaging cuts to its budget – spelling disaster for the environment. In addition, Trump has signed an executive order removing Barack Obama's clean water regulations, designed to

curb pollution into America's waterways and his administration has also scrapped funding for a 'clean energy electric rail project' in California.

However, those who look to benefit from a Trump presidency are oil companies such as Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), who are in the process of building a multi-million-dollar pipeline near sacred Native American burial grounds and under the Missouri River. Protestors at Standing Rock – one such sacred site – have opposed this for over a year, as did the Obama government. In fact, one of Obama's last actions in office was to veto the building of the pipeline's last section under the river. However, four days into his Presidency, Trump allowed access for ETP, in what the protestors call a 'possible environmental disaster like we've never seen before.' If oil spills into the Missouri, the Great Sioux Nation will probably cease to exist. Construction under the river has already begun. Coincidentally, Rick Perry, Trump's newly appointed Energy Secretary, has a board position at ETP – which is expected to make \$156 million from the sale of the oil.

Trump's impact on the environment could also be felt at a global level. Take, for example, the Paris Agreement (PACC), which is designed to limit carbon emissions and 'prevent any significant rise in global temperatures' (EU Climate Action). 133 countries, including the US, have ratified the Agreement, yet Donald Trump has consistently stated that it was a 'terrible deal' and that America would be exiting it as soon as possible. Indeed, Myron Ebell, who headed Trump's EPA transition team, has stated that Trump 'will definitely pull out of [the] Paris climate change deal.' This perhaps reflects the growing sense of isolationism in America: as other countries tighten their laws on climate change, the US looks set to loosen theirs, and as the second-largest polluter in the world, this could have damaging global consequences.

To conclude, what we can really begin to see is Trump carrying forward his campaign pledges. Of course, there will be obstacles in his path. For example, exiting PACC would take at least four years, and scrapping the EPA would take a vote in Congress. There could also be many legal battles from the activists who will no doubt challenge the President's actions. However, Trump could simply ignore the PACC emissions targets – penalties are currently non-existent for failing to meet them – and with a Republican-majority Congress, it is considerably easier for Trump to pass any required votes. Things look ominous, and deeply concerning, for environmentalists in the USA. Those who rejoiced in Obama, and his aim of a cleaner America, look set to be side-lined in Trump's business-orientated US – and may possibly see a key part of the 44th President's legacy destroyed by the actions the 45th.

Trump And The Environment

Evie Ridgway

Trump's environmental policy and aims have caused wide controversy both within the scientific community and in global politics. Named supposedly "anti-establishment", Trump's unusual and uncensored use of Twitter enabled him to share (Nov 6 2012) that he believes "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese to make US markets non-competitive." Although later claiming that this was a joke, his perspective on global warming continues to reflect this earlier claim. Among other precarious aims, he intends to remove the US from global climate treaties, bring back the coal industry and get rid of the EPA, saying in a 2015 interview "Environmental Protection, what they do is a disgrace. Every week they come out with new regulations" and "We'll be fine with the environment. We can leave a little bit, but you can't destroy businesses."

As a businessman with a net-worth estimate of 3.9 billion dollars, it is important to not only look at his political perspective but his companies and their impact on the environment. Scottish citizens, environmental agencies and charities have opposed greatly the imposition of his golf courses which have not only industrialised the countryside, but the employment it was supposed to generate has not materialised. He has since called Swedish windfarm development near his golf course "public vandalism", despite the importance of implementing renewable energy. More recently, "Trump hotel" in Chicago has had incredibly poor ratings of energy efficiency, as one of the worst buildings of its size. This is not an anomaly. In a 2014 analysis of buildings in New York City, 6/9 of his branded business properties were in the bottom 20% of energy efficiency. He has failed to consider the environment in the expansion of his enterprise, and this does not reflect well on his priorities.

With his political campaigns in mind, on January 18th 2016, Trump said "I think that climate change is just a very, very expensive form of tax." His concerns with business and profit are forcing environmental issues to take a back seat. His aim to dismantle the Paris agreement, which Obama only just signed in September 2016, shows that he is not willing to be globally involved with battling climate change, suggesting that he certainly denies its severity. Another point of concern is his aim to make federal land available for drilling up fossil fuels and getting rid of 'unnecessary' regulations. His cabinet is filled with those connected to fossil fuel companies, and although renewable energy companies do not rely on the federal government, Trump seeks to intensify fracking and non-sustainable energy sources, and the impact of this is certainly going to be significant.

Since his success in the election, Trump has already begun to deliver on some of his aims. The EPA, set up in 1970 to protect the health of the people, is particularly being targeted as Trump's ultimate aim is to abolish it. The current administrator of the EPA, Scott Pruitt (nominated by Trump) has questioned the science of global warming, sued the EPA 13 times and benefited financially from fossil fuel companies. The page of the EPA is also being edited to put less emphasis on climate change. What's more, cuts to the EPA wouldn't significantly benefit other areas. A 290 million cut would fund the Department of Defense for less than five hours. Trump has also signed the executive order for the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline; a highly disputed project because it encourages transportation of fossil fuels and a bill has been signed to get rid of Obama's regulation to protect waterways from coal waste, intended to protect 6,000 miles of stream and 52,000 acres of forest.

These are just a few examples of his actions so far. If he has been able to achieve this much so far, the rest of his presidency will simply devastate all measures to reduce climate change. Unfortunately, a cabinet full of climate-change deniers and businessmen can only lead to a huge step back for the scientific community and the world. It is clear that he does not intend to respect any of the environmental policies of the Obama administration, but get rid of them, and quickly.

Trump, Race And Return To The Past

Catherine Soulsby

The election of America's first black president in 2008 seemed to signal the arrival of a post-racial or colour-blind society. Yet Donald Trump has on many occasions shown himself to be ignorant and racist, and throughout his campaign it seemed he was challenging some key aspects of racial equality. In May of last year during his presidential campaign he implied that Gonzalo Curiel - a federal judge - was unfit for his job because "he's a Mexican", despite being an American citizen who was born in Indiana. Moreover, Trump refused to condemn racist hate groups like the KKK because he hadn't researched them. It is preposterous to believe Trump is unaware of these groups, especially the infamous Ku Klux Klan. He is also yet to speak out about neo-Nazi groups rallying around Trump which go back as far as August 2016. By ignoring such things as president he shows poor leadership in the ongoing fight for racial justice and equality.

Levels of racist attacks have been on the rise ever since Trump moved into the White House. "Since the election, we've seen a big uptick in incidents of vandalism, threats and intimidation spurred by the rhetoric surrounding Mr. Trump's election," said Richard Cohen, President of the Southern Poverty Law Centre. This makes direct reference to the violent attacks of racism being inspired by the words of Donald Trump. In New School, New York City, multiple swastikas had been drawn on several doors in a residential hallway where three Jewish women resided. A residence at SUNY Geneseo was also vandalized with a swastika and the word "Trump". The advocacy of racism from Trump has galvanised his supporters into action, spreading hate speech and countless violent attacks.

The 1960s are typically thought to be the time when racism in America was confronted most directly with protesters, boycotters and marchers struggling for racial equality in the Civil Rights Movement. Riots and shootings were common place as thousands of civil rights protesters marched throughout the South and in many cases the North as well. Radical groups like the Ku Klux Klan and other whites who believed in white supremacy spread terror and fear through the South. In the present day this concept feels alien and unbelievable thanks to the amount of support for equality and justice won through landmark civil rights legislation in the 1960s. Now with Trump's presidency beginning the past threatens to be revisited. In Trump's inauguration speech, he repeated the phrase "America first". This pro-independence line was used by the fascist sympathisers who campaigned to keep the United States out of the Second World War and is also a slogan used in several Ku Klux Klan propaganda pieces.

It is alarming because of the phrase's disturbing and obviously racist roots. One of the Ku Klux Klan's most prominent newspapers - the Crusader - publicly showed clear "enthusiasm" for the billionaire's candidacy. The Trump campaign did officially criticise the article and denounce any hate, yet in 1927 Fred Trump (Donald Trump's father) was arrested as one of the Klansmen marching through the Jamaica neighbourhood in New York. So people are left in angst, wondering whether America voted for a sympathiser or even a possible supporter of such a despicable hate group.

However, eight years of a black democratic president may have influenced such a vast and dramatic change, after all Trump and Obama could not be more different in terms of politics and ideals. Two terms of a black presidency – whom Trump falsely argued for many years was illegitimate because he was not born in America caused restlessness amongst Republicans which

partly led to such a dramatic election resulting in Donald Trump's success as a white populist backlash candidate. Obama's success as president symbolised change and prosperity, it represented how times have changed for the better since the Civil Rights Movement. By suggesting that America needs to be made "great again" Trump seemingly disregards any progress made for equality between races, genders and sexuality.

With open acts of racism increasing in America, partly catalysed by Donald Trump's election, the problems of the past threaten to disrupt the much needed peace of the future.

Bannon's White House?

David Purkiss

Previous American presidents have been very careful to state that they are not anti-Muslim but only anti-Islamic terrorism. Unlike the presidents elected before him, Donald Trump has found it acceptable to speak out against religious groups such as Muslims. When asked whether he believes Islam is at war with the West, he replied rather shockingly, "I think Islam hates us". However when looking closely at his Muslim ban he has included six countries, none of whom have created terrorists who have killed on American soil. Saudi Arabia on the other hand the country of origin of the terrorists who were involved in the 9/11 attack, the greatest terrorist attack on American soil, is excluded from the list. The only explanation for this appears to be that President Trump has business interests within Saudi Arabia.

The Muslim travel ban is a flagship policy of Donald Trump's Government, in order to understand this specific policy we must first understand his chief advisor, Steve Bannon. Before joining the Trump campaign Bannon hosted a far right radio show on which he stated, in an interview in 2010, "Islam is not a religion of peace, Islam is a religion of submission".

Unlike Donald Trump Steve Bannon has never seemed to vary this view. Bannon could have been one of the main contributors to Trump's recent ban on travel for highly Muslim concentrated countries. This not only shows how Donald Trump wants to prevent certain religions from entering America but also surround himself with people such as Bannon who believe in similar things. Steve Bannon is clearly an ideologue. As he stated in the past, "I'm a Leninist, Lenin wanted to destroy the state, and that's my goal too. I want to bring everything crashing down, and destroy all of today's establishment." In addition, as a February

2017 article in the Guardian points out, a decade ago Steve Bannon wrote an Islamophobic film script based on his view that "the Judeo-Christian West" is engaged in "Global war" against "Jihadist Islamic fascism".

The question really is to what extent is Steve Bannon influencing Donald Trump? As many of Trump's ideas and decisions have mirrored the view previously shown by Bannon on his radio show - especially the travel ban on countries that seem to be largely influenced by Islam and its beliefs. This is in many ways shocking and gives you an idea of why many people who are determined to create a change in the state voted for Donald Trump. The factor that in many ways is more frightening is the authority that Bannon and Trump have created to make many decisions that are unconventional. Steve Bannon believed that instead of just vetting the people entering the US from certain countries they, for a number of years, should stop all Muslims from entering US. This view varies completely to other Republicans, as many believe that legal immigrants are an important part of the economy within the US and some even suggest that they think legal immigrants are some of the best workers within America.

Bannon blames legal immigrants for what he calls "a bleak economic landscape for native born Americans" and believes that to stop them the US need to rise up against those he calls the "ruling political class" who allow legal and illegal immigration to occur. His views are clearly reflected in many of the policies the Trump administration had pursued in the first months since his inauguration.

The Enduring Issue of Race

Sam Nixon

American history is littered with examples of racial tensions and prejudice. Dating back as early as 1562 when the first Spanish voyagers landed in America they were reported to take young Powhatan boys from their families as slaves. It is interesting that one of the first acts committed by foreign explorers on American soil was that of discrimination, almost as a warning of the times to come for the native people. When the first Englishmen settled in Jamestown the Powhatan people took pity on the explorers who knew nothing of the new land.

They offered land for the English to settle on, as a temporary measure, until they found a foot to stand on. However, the Powhatans became increasingly agitated to find the pilgrims permanently settled on their land. The new settlers took it as a right to be served by and offered gifts by the natives.

Is Trump Really A Fascist?

Grace Tarpey

In the 19th century white America systematically destroyed Native American society and culture as they moved westward to settle the continent. The defeat of the Native Americans was symbolically and violently completed in 1890 when a massacre took place in the state of South Dakota near the Wounded Knee Creek. American soldiers intercepted a group of Indians and took them to Wounded Knee where they made camp. On the morning of December the 29th a confrontation took place which ended with the soldiers opening fire and an estimate of 300 dead. The bodies of men, women and children lay where they fell in the bitter winter snows.

The 18th century saw the growth of the slave trade. The national controversy that divided America then ultimately led to the Civil War. The slave trade was integral to forming the America we see today. For around 100 years after the emancipation of the slaves in 1865 there was still racial segregation and lynching that took place in many states in America. Eventually this led to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's and 70's, and the national acknowledgement that something needed to be done.

With the election of Barack Obama in 2008 it seemed America could be heading towards a colour-blind future. This however has not happened. Still black Americans are discriminated against in subtle ways and the criminal justice system promotes racial disparities. From recent figures, 1 in 15 black Americans are in prison so are 1 in 36 Hispanic men, this is compared to 1 in 106 white men. This is an astounding statistic. So while Obama's election convinced many Americans that because their country had voted for him they had solved racial discrimination, the truth was more complex.

The election of Trump partly shows that America remains divided on race. Speaking recently with a friend of the family who lives in America, he told me how only 5 years ago he experienced locals searching for a black man to drive him out of town. This opinion is what defined America in its early days, hating a man for the colour of his skin. Forcing him away from his family and town because he was "dirty" or "dangerous." We hoped that this opinion had changed, yet with the election of Trump those with hateful views on race have been emboldened. So how much has America changed? Seemingly not much, the election of Obama suggested a change for America but the turn towards Trump, provides us with the idea that having a black president was a façade. So are all these events in America's history really just staging posts on the way to a colour-blind American society or will race continue to be America's Achilles heel?

Throughout the election and in his first few weeks in office, Donald Trump has been called a fascist many times. And, from his views on torture and war crimes, to his multiple endorsements by far-right groups, it certainly seems that these accusations may be correct. Is this a fair assessment? Or is it just an exaggeration used incorrectly to make him seem worse than he really is?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines fascism as: "An authoritarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organization." However, to truly examine what it means for a person to be fascist, you must look at the defining qualities of fascist authorities. There has been much debate about what characteristics must be displayed for a person/government to be classed as fascist, but there are several qualities that appear in multiple different interpretations of the issue. For example, a quality that appears in many fascist leaders is a strong nationalistic view, and Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" is a classic example of this. Even going back to the founder of Fascism, Benito Mussolini, fascist leaders have used the idea of returning their countries to their "former glory" as a central point in their campaigns and ideologies. This on its own, however, is not enough to define a government as fascist – many more moderate right-wing politicians also believe the same thing. Another trait commonplace amongst fascist authorities is a strong emphasis on an enemy – or enemies – that the people can blame the problems of the country on. For Hitler, this was the Jewish population, for Trump, it is the immigrant population. Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric is an echo of the "othering" rhetoric used in Nazi Germany and other fascist states.

Trump's deeply worrying attitudes towards the constitution, torture, war crimes, and nuclear armaments are also all reasons why many regard Trump as a fascist. While he hasn't actually ordered any extreme violence to achieve his goals, he has expressed the desire to do so. One example of this comes from back in December 2015. During an appearance on Fox News's "Fox and Friends," Trump said that the way to defeat ISIS was to "Take out their families," despite the reality that targeting civilians is in fact a war crime. When, in the GOP debate of March 2016, he was questioned about General Michael Hayden saying that US soldiers would refuse to follow such illegal orders, he replied "They won't refuse, they're not going to refuse me — believe me."

The perpetration of war crimes is characteristic of fascist leaders in the past, and Trump's advocacy of torture and the violation of the Geneva Convention both buy in to this. Also in March of 2016, he said "We can't water board, but [Islamic State] can chop off heads. I think we've got to make some changes, some adjustments [to the Geneva Convention]."

On the other hand, Trump's multiple threats that paint him as a fascist are most likely just that – threats. It is quite unlikely that Trump will actually go through with most of the things that he has said he will do; he has gone back on many of the promises he made during the election (his plans to deport all illegal immigrants, for example). His divisive ideas expressed throughout the election process seem to have softened after Trump was elected and subsequently come into office, and although he has still passed several more controversial executive orders in his first few weeks in office, it seems that he has either realised that his plans are more difficult to execute than he originally anticipated, he changed his stance on a lot of things very quickly, or he never actually intended to pass the laws in the first place. Furthermore, the checks and balances that are central to the American system of democracy were designed to stop any one individual or group from becoming too powerful and have remained robust and resilient for over two centuries.

In conclusion, although the Trump administration lacks the authoritarian and totalitarian aspects to really be considered fascist, Trump himself has displayed fascist tendencies and does lean towards a very nationalistic, "I'm right and everyone who disagrees is wrong" view that is central to most fascist policies. From his continued distrust of the media and playing into the fears of the (largely white) American people to his almost hysterical obsession with voter fraud, and security leaks, there is no doubt that Trump has more than a few fascist attributes.

Trump And The LGBT+ Community

Scarlett Ballantine

In Obama's second inaugural address in 2013, he said: "If we are truly created equal then surely the love we commit to each other must be equal as well." On the 26th of June 2015, the United States Supreme Court ruled gay marriage legal nationwide, meaning the 14 states with bans on same-sex marriage would no longer be able to enforce them. The Obama administration introduced the White House LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) page to highlight major legislative achievements, historic court victories and important policy changes for people within the LGBT+ community.

The page also acted as a platform for certain campaigns for gay rights such as the "It Gets Better" campaign to help those in the LGBT+ community who are struggling with suicidal thoughts. The creation of the LGBT+ page on the White House website, as well as the monumental advances which occurred in Obama's presidency, shows just how far the LGBT+ community have come in their fight for equality, recognition and acceptance within American society.

On the day of Trump's inauguration, alongside many others, the LGBT+ page was removed from the official White House website and has yet to make a return. This shocking change caused an uproar of horror on social media and undoubtedly created a bitter start to Trump's presidency. A real sense of uncertainty and fear surrounds the LGBT+ community's future with Trump as their president. However, a majority of the LGBT+ community knew his presidency would lead to big changes. Mr. Trump's public statements on gay and transgender issues have been called "confusing and conflicting." As a candidate, Mr. Trump told Fox News that he would "strongly consider" appointing Supreme Court justices who would overturn same-sex marriage but later in the campaign held a rainbow flag on stage and presented himself as gay-friendly. Trump said that he opposed marriage equality because he was a "traditional" guy, choosing to support domestic partnership benefits instead. Trump later reversed himself and said he also opposed civil unions. After the Supreme Court ruling, Trump said the court had made its decision and, although he disagreed with the ruling, he did not support a constitutional amendment that would allow states to re-ban marriage equality. While Trump at one time said that federal law should protect people from discrimination based on sexual orientation, he took aggressively anti-equality positions as a formal candidate. Trump has expressed support for the so-called First Amendment Defense Act (FADA) which makes two claims, that "(1) marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman, or (2) sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage." Unsurprisingly, he has declined to support the Equality Act. As has been illustrated, Trump's confusing and unpredictable stance on LGBT rights has left many, many people across the world worried for the LGBT+ community's future.

The Log Cabin Republicans, one of the country's most influential LGBT+ Republican groups praised him as "perhaps the most pro-LGBT presidential nominee in the history of the Republican party." However, the group announced they would not back the party's choice of presidential candidate because of views held by some of Trump's advisers and his support for a bill that would protect people who disagree with same-sex marriage from federal penalties. This highlights how Trump's advisers could be the real threat to LGBT+ rights. Leaders within the LGBT+ community said they were especially alarmed when Mr. Trump chose Mike Pence, who has a long record of opposition

to gay rights, as his running mate. “What we know about Mike Pence is that he led a direct, massive and concerted effort in the state of Indiana to deny equality to L.G.B.T. people,” Ms. Mariah Carey said. “It’s not like Trump didn’t know who he was.” As Governor of Indiana, Mr. Pence opposed gay marriage and signed into law a bill that made it legal for businesses to cite religious freedom when refusing service to gay and transgender people. As a member of Congress, Mr. Pence voted against employment non-discrimination protections for gay and transgender people and also voted against the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” He also argued for public funding of conversion therapy and said federal funding for H.I.V./AIDS treatment should be renewed only if the government could certify that no money went to “organizations that celebrate and encourage the types of behaviours that facilitate the spreading of the H.I.V. virus,” according to an archived version of his campaign website.

The transgender community was one of the first of the LGBT+ to experience a direct hit from Trump’s changes as President. Previously, Obama’s administration education and justice departments said public schools must respect transgender pupils' gender identity even if their education records or identity documents indicate a different sex. Trump previously said that he would rescind the Obama administration’s guidance that transgender students be treated with dignity and allowed to use restrooms that match their gender identity. Additionally, he made it clear he would not enforce federal civil rights laws that ensure transgender Americans are treated equally under the law. However, at a later stage of his presidential campaign, Trump said transgender students should be allowed to use whichever bathroom "they feel is appropriate". Nonetheless, Trump's government revoked guidance to US public schools that allowed transgender students to use toilets matching their gender identity. This immediately undid the Obama administrations policies on education and the justice department’s work, which was set to protect and respect young transgender pupils. Trump’s actions instead have done the reverse and have put young transgender pupils in a very challenging position, in which their identity is no longer respected and they face inevitable bullying. Where once the victims of bullying had a champion or their rights in the White House, now they do not.