

The War on Terror Started in 1492

Mohammed Harun Arsalai and Dominique Barron

DECEMBER 13, 2020

Contents

INTRO: By Mohammed Harun Arsalai and Dominique Barron	3
American///Nationalism is its Own Race (by Dominique Barron & Mohammed Harun Arsalai)	3
Bush: The War on Terror (by Mohammed Harun Arsalai)	4
Obama Years: Hope and Change in the Era of Riots (by Mohammed Harun Arsalai)	6
CONTINUATION OF VIOLENCE // INCOMING BIDEN ADMINISTRATION (by Dominique Barron)	7
Right Wing DNC (by Dominique Barron & Mohammed Harun Arsalai)	8
The War on Terror started in 1492 (by Dominique Barron & Mohammed Harun Arsalai)	9

INTRO: By Mohammed Harun Aarsalai and Dominique Barron

During a December 2nd, 2020 interview, former President Barack Obama again attempted to persuade young activists calling to “defund the police” to drop their cause, calling it a “snappy slogan,” and that activists “lost a big audience” the moment they presented their demand with clear anti-police language. Obama’s remarks are another indication that he and the DNC are more interested in appeasing US based fascists, than moving even slightly to the left. The remarks are also part and parcel of Obama’s ongoing media campaign to minimize the damage done during his presidency as he continues to embark on a book tour for his memoirs “*A Promised Land*”, a seemingly innocuous endeavour that doubled as cover for the former president to rehab the US’ global image, while revising his own legacy.

Using the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, a former Civil War hospital, with a giant painting of Abraham Lincoln as backdrop for his theater stage, Obama spoke of America as a “work in progress,” while the nation’s capital was flooded by the fascist supporters of US president Donald Trump. In this moment America is showing its true face; revealing a collapsing political project built upon the shakey foundations of genocide, slavery, the myth of its own exceptionalism, and the lineage of resistance to it — aired like dirty laundry on TV for the entire world to see. Obama is only half correct when he says “Our nation is on the brink of crisis,” as the US has been in a perpetual crisis and war against its Native population and those it enslaved to build this 538-year-old settler colony turned nationstate.

In politics, one learns how to absorb impending blows. Obama shows masterful skill as he ducks and dodges choreographed hits from a fictitious “impartial journalist” — Scott Pelley of CBS’ *60 Minutes* — he claims he was “heartened by the galvanizing effect” on the US population that came out and “marched” against police racism and state-sanctioned murder of Black people. But these were not “marches,” these were rebellions in which thousands upon thousands of Black, Brown, Indigenous youths alongside their white radical counterparts fought the police in the streets — together. They nearly stormed the White House itself even as the state, desperate to contain this anti-state and anti-police rupture, unleashed nearly every tool in its arsenal against them. These are moments of historical reckoning in the current US’ self-identity crisis, realized, and actualized by Black and Indigenous youths across these stolen Native lands.

American///Nationalism is its Own Race (by Dominique Barron & Mohammed Harun Aarsalai)

In his *60 Minutes* interview Obama, perhaps unwittingly but accurately spoke to the constantly shifting and adapting nature of the US nationstate project, again described America as “a work in progress,” not yet “a perfect union,” but something he aimed to make “a more perfect union.” In doing so, Obama revealed his own complicity as not a rebel outsider stuck among white supremacists, but a pacifying bridge between white supremacist president in times of uncertainty and Black rebellion/racial strife.

Since 9/11 and the beginning of the War on Terror, the US has expanded its list of enemies of the state to include non-Black Muslims, incorporating them into its long running war against Black and Indigenous rebels for their resistance (active or passive) largely due to their core belief systems. The war against Islam and Muslims did not start on 9/11, it started at the same period

Europeans made their way to Turtle Island, bringing diseases and their newly envisioned violent ideology of white Christian supremacy — this is how Black Moses or Brown Jesus became white Europeans, a perversion then forced upon the colonized. Genocide and slavery followed, only “re-forming” itself continuously to fit the new settler generation’s palate. These same battles continue to play themselves out generation after generation inside the American plantation colony. Obama played an instrumental role in updating this old aging system — using identity as his secret weapon.

After the 9/11 attacks, American democracy once again showed its true nature as the distinctions between Democrat and Republican faded almost entirely and in a haze of bloodlust as the entire ruling class rushed to be loudest proponents for war, showing just how similar these two parties actually were. The continuity in the American political project that Obama dry-snitches about in his interview as he admits the presidency is like a relay race in which one “passes the torch”, president to president. The problem, of course, is that the torch was also carried by the Klan to burn down Black homes/churches and by their settler ancestors when they raided Native villages and encampments. That torch still represents anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and racial capitalism, passed down from president to president; George Washington to George W., Obama to Trump and now to Biden.

Bush: The War on Terror (by Mohammed Harun Arsalai)

In the lead up to the 9/11 attacks, two scandals were brewing in American politics, one on Wall Street and a lesser-known one at the UN, where a commission on COINTELPRO provided firm evidence of the US government’s war on dissidents. On a August 1, 2020 program/discussion on COINTELPRO between political organizers, researchers, and scholars, Tanzeen Doha and Hannibal Shakur of Milestones Journal spoke with respected elder, radical activist, and author Professor Ward Churchill. In the program, Churchill explains the details of the US government’s war against US-based dissidents throughout the 1900’s, culminating in a war against Black and Indigenous radicals in the 1960s/1970s. Churchill was one of those who presented evidence to a commission on US government abuses, including murders, violations of free speech as well as evidence of over 10,000 home break-ins by the FBI among other US government agencies. As America was finally about to receive the truth of what had been taking place, the 9/11 attacks and the rush to war silenced, then buried the commission’s inquiry.

In the days that followed the attacks, the US project, then led by George W., launched “Operation Enduring Freedom,” the war on Afghanistan/the global War on Terror on October 7th — the same day America celebrates “Columbus Day” to signify the settlers first step into this “New World,” now used to signify America’s colonial expansion through an all out assault on the world’s politically minded Muslims. US officials scrapped federal and international laws signed at the UN (as they always do when it ties their hands), and claimed Muslims detained on the battlefield of the War on Terror were “enemy combatants,” and thus no law, treaty, or agreement among nationstates applied to independent Muslim actors or their organizations. This in effect transformed the entire planet, including the US itself, into a battlefield meaning there would be no peace for rebellious Muslims anywhere. The War on Terror was Bush’s addition to the American political project’s Counter Intelligence Program, or COINTELPRO, against Black radicals and the potential for separation — a war that began centuries before with the settlers’ wars against

Indigenous resistance, slave revolts, and maroons. There is another torch, relay race, and political project happening inside the so-called Americas that runs antagonistically counter to Obama's relay race; the political project of decolonization and liberation.

After introducing "enemy combatants" into modern discourse, Bush was able to dodge prosecution for clear violations of international law signed at the Geneva Convention regarding the rights of detainees and prisoners of war. Muslims throughout the US and the world were subject to US-sponsored abductions, extraordinary rendition, arbitrary and indefinite detentions and torture, in some cases leading to death. Homes were raided from New York City to Jalalabad, civilians were brutalized and taken into arbitrary custody. Some simply disappeared. According to the ALCU, between November 2001 and March of 2002, then-Attorney General John Ashcroft, the Department of Justice, and the FBI detained or questioned more than 8,000 Arab or South Asian Muslim immigrants and students visiting the US. Many of those detained were deported without reason, trial, or access to legal representation — a basic fundamental right and one of the basic conditions for democratic practice — which were stripped from Muslims and other politicized and racialized subjects. It was the largest roundup since WWII, when the US placed between an estimated 110,000 to 120,000 Japanese people into internment camps. In the raids post 9/11, practically all political Islamic, Islamist, or Muslim participation in the coming weeks, months, and years of an "antiwar movement" were disrupted. This allowed for rampant Islamophobia and ineffective front groups and organizations to control the direction of the antiwar movement, while those the War on Terror was waged upon were sidelined. The antiwar movement collapsed with the election of Obama, proving it was never antiwar, but merely anti-Republican — therefore still pro-state/pro-war.

Although there was less focus on the American police during the Bush era, police began to use disposable cameras at antiwar demonstrations under the cloak of "national security," laws so vague a stuffed backpack was enough to catch the Department of Homeland Security's eye. High tech surveillance equipment and cities covered in CCTV, all monitored in real time from 'fusion centres,' quickly followed to aid domestic intelligence sharing. With an approximately 50 billion dollar-a-year budget, the DHS was focused internally and with very few or no "Islamic terrorists" to capture, the agency began inventing threats, entrapping Muslim youth or chasing down and hunting left radicals, in many cases "intervening" under the guise of Countering Violent Extremism programs that included druggings and torture — with a specific focus on the synthesis of "left" and "Muslim" radicals emerging from militant struggles that broke out against police after the election of Obama and the collapse of the anti-war movement. Ultimately Islamists and Black separatists/militants in general continue to be the number one enemy, as defined by the US government itself. Similar to the drones that were tested in Afghanistan starting in 2001 just to come "home" to surveil every US suburb, town, and city alike — much of the equipment and surveillance tactics we now see inside the US itself come from overseas counter-insurgency programs and wars. In a very short period between the Bush and Obama administrations, high tech weaponry and anti-riot equipment were put in the hands of nearly every police department in the country. In this time, it has become unusual to not see MRAP tanks patrolling the streets during protests and riots.

Obama Years: Hope and Change in the Era of Riots (by Mohammed Harun Arsalai)

It is true when Obama claims in his interview that he had no choice over “inherited policies from George W. Bush,” but that doesn’t explain why the former president gladly accepted his predecessor’s civil liberties violations against the US population or why Obama did not deviate in the slightest in the US’ War on Terror against the world’s Muslim population. Nor does it explain why Obama himself unleashed a wave of repression against US-based protestors that he is now praising for having marched against police murders of Black people. Nor does that explain how Guantanamo is still open. Obama used every tool left to him by Bush, from NSA wiretaps to reckless droning. It is estimated that Obama conducted at least 542 drone strikes that killed an estimated 3,797 people, including 324 civilians.” As he reportedly told senior aides in 2011: “Turns out I’m really good at killing people. Didn’t know that was gonna be a strong suit of mine.” Obama’s expansion of the War on Terror into Africa, coupled with his calls on African leaders that they “can’t blame all their problems on colonialism,” shows insensitivity at best, a violent arrogance at worst.

As the country celebrated in the streets upon the election of America’s first Black president, Black, Brown and Indigenous radicals were cautioning against the coming days’ theatrics as the US once again attempted to shed its skin like a snake, as it does every 4 – 8 years with election-fever-theater, this time with a Black man to absolve America of its heinous crimes and sins against Black/Indigenous people at home and all Muslims globally. In an instant, a hostile and violent white supremacist problem had been pawned off on a Black man.

Just a few short weeks before Obama was set to take office and magically usher in a new “post-racial” era of hope and change, 22-year-old Oscar Grant, a young Black man from Hayward, California, was gunned down while handcuffed at Fruitvale BART station in East Oakland on New Years Eve, with 100s of onlookers filming with their then-newly-accessible cellphone cameras. Again, in an instant – a white supremacist problem had been shifted to a Black man.

The moment Obama faced national resistance he unleashed a wave of unprecedented repression upon those involved in the early stages of today’s anti-police, largely Black rebellion, starting with what locals and US-based radicals call the “Oscar Grant Rebellions” in Oakland, California. These rebellions spilled into years of anti-police uprisings, the UC student strikes, and then into Occupy Oakland – where the state flooded the community with agents while engaging in extreme surveillance and psychological operations against the city’s radicals under cover of national security, Countering Violent Extremism, Black Identity Extremism, and other programs concocted with lies and bad intel under Obama or continued from the Bush era unabated in the days following 9/11/2001 until today. Although court documents do exist with names of federal officers, operatives, state’s witnesses, among which are military contractors with ties to local, state, and federal authorities as well as within the military intelligence community, and although BlueLeaks does offer a glimpse into the insidious nature of US policing, much remains unknown as the US government refuses to release documentation under guise of “national security.” These intrusions into the lives of activists across the US happened at the same time Obama was helping Arab dictators squash rebellions with endless supplies of teargas in the 2011 global uprisings; he simultaneously coordinated the takedown of every protest encampment in every major city in the country.

Author of forthcoming book “Waves”, which seeks to examine the past decade of political ruptures and rebellions, Black radical theorist/essayist Bobby London writes in 2018, “There were intense and active rebellions across the world. And although we were not all on the same wave, we were inspired by each other and that made us a danger. We were unaware that we had been set up like a row of dominoes, falling one by one after another. Because as we taught each other how to resist, the states we were fighting also learned from each other and coordinated our repression” which accurately summarizes the events that have unfolded, a pattern that continues today.

While these events were unfolding on the ground, mountains of video evidence of police abuses were flooding American timelines — YouTube was forced to wipe videos of police violence, as well as videos unflattering to the nation’s police forces in attempt to simmer anti-police hostilities among the nation’s youth. Videos of police misconduct, brutality, murder, or even footage of police officers falling off their motorcycles vanished from public record — in coordination and collusion with corporations. However, in quick succession a series of grotesque police murders enraged an already bursting-at-the-seams generation of young radicals. When asked by Pelley if he’d watched the video of Derek Chauvin killing George Floyd in May of this year, Obama responded saying “very rarely do you see it so viscerally,” a comment that is extremely disrespectful to the families of Oscar Grant, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Walter Scott, Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, and Akai Gurley, all of whose lynchings happened under his presidency — all of whom never received justice while Obama assured “change” would come if we all remained calm. But what remains abundantly clear is that riots and rebellions garner results far quicker than “working within the system”.

CONTINUATION OF VIOLENCE // INCOMING BIDEN ADMINISTRATION (by Dominique Barron)

With Biden as the projected winner of the election, there’s been predictable reports regarding his transition team. This includes Cecilia Muñoz, former immigration advisor to Obama who defended family separations and Obama’s cruel immigration policies; Rahm Emanuel, former White House Chief of Staff under Obama and former Mayor of Chicago who covered up the Chicago Police Department’s 2014 murder of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald for over a year; Rep. Cedric Richmond (D-La.) who has received numerous donations from oil and gas companies, despite Biden’s campaign promises to support climate action, which many see as a betrayal by Biden. There is also speculation that Hillary Clinton, former Secretary of State in Obama’s administration, is a potential candidate to become the next US ambassador to the UN. Numerous people have praised Joe Biden and Kamala Harris for the number of people of color and white women on their transition team and whose names have been raised as potential prospects for their administration. But it’s important to not get caught up in this current wave of celebrating liberal identity representational politics, or how such politics simultaneously mask and usher in neoliberal fascism. Different from the growing type of fascism we’ve witnessed under Trump’s administration, but fascism none-the-less.

We’ve already seen people ignoring Obama’s record as they beg for a “return to normal,” a process that has also meant the rehabilitation of George W. Bush, who until Trump, was thought of as the most evil and idiotic president in US history. Now, with Kamala Harris as the first Black and Indian woman vice president, this sentiment is becoming even more exaggerated. However,

Harris' track record in office as first San Francisco District Attorney then as California Attorney General paints another picture. For Black families, especially for Black trans people and cis women, Harris' victory is nothing to praise. She has criminalized parents as part of her anti-truancy program, denied life-saving medical care to a trans woman held captive in a men's prison, and attacked sex workers' in her opposition to the Backpage platform. The Bay Area can not be so quick to forget that while Harris had power as DA in San Francisco, or AG of the entire state of California, she had decision making powers that brutally put down a hundred righteous uprisings and prosecuted countless rebels. Harris is a master at the shadowy arts of state repression. Just like with Obama in the run up to the 2008 election, the Democratic Party has relied on Kamala Harris' identities to garner support in the election only to *immediately* throw Black/Indigenous/Latinx people – the very people who got them elected – under the bus. We already know that Trump and the GOP don't care about us, but we must remember that neither do Obama, Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, or the Democratic Party – which gave birth to the Klan.

In his conversation with Scott Pelley, Obama said that in order to “overcome” Trump's impact, “we have to work at a local level...at that level, I don't think people have that kind of visceral hatred...” But look at the evidence at the local level: Daniel Cameron, the Black Republican Kentucky Attorney General who oversaw the case after Louisville police shot and killed 26-year-old Breonna Taylor in her home, only presented the jury with first-degree wanton endangerment charges – for the (white) people in a neighboring apartment – no charges for killing Taylor. Keisha Lance Bottom, the Black Democrat Mayor of Atlanta, is being considered as a potential candidate for the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development position within the Biden/Harris administration. Just this June, Rayshard Brooks was killed by the Atlanta Police Department while asleep in his car in a Wendy's drive-thru – which was later burned to the ground as a righteous response. Atlanta-based activists have also made it clear that, in addition to repressing the uprisings that resulted against Brooks' murder, Bottom has aided and abetted the horrific housing crisis in the city during her time in office. The pattern of the American political project should be obvious for anyone paying the slightest attention.

Right Wing DNC (by Dominique Barron & Mohammed Harun Arsalai)

In recent years, the Democratic Party, including its past two front runners Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, have presented anti-immigrant, anti-open borders talking points, selling racism as a nuanced progressive position. They introduced these talking points in the very same week – indicating obvious coordination. This signified the Democratic Party's choice to move towards the far right before even humoring the left, forget about the far left. Instead, the Party continues to grovel itself in an attempt to win over Republican voters, with Sanders even making the claim that “open borders would bring poverty,” echoing the racist, xenophobic myth of the so-called lazy immigrant milking the government for resources, while also somehow at the same time stealing white people's jobs. In our current revolutionary moment, the DNC has gone far out of their way to stifle progress and introduce reactionary legislation. The spectacle still continues – with recent reports of top Democratic officials blaming “Black Lives Matter” and “defund the police” campaigns for their losses at the state level, despite winning the presidency with unprecedented turnout numbers. Yet again, another affront to the Black/Indigenous/Latinx voters who won them

the election. The Democratic Party continues to throw people of color under the bus. Under Obama's tenure, over 3 million people were deported, surpassing George W. by nearly 1 million.

The havoc that Trump has wreaked since taking office in 2017 was made possible by the cultural and political infrastructures ushered in by Obama and the Democratic Party. Their refusal to oppose the GOP while violently suppressing any resistance waged by radicals, a welcoming doorway for a full-blown 21st Century fascist takeover of the country. Trump and the GOP, in response to this year's Black/Indigenous rebellions, escalated this "cold civil war" (shoutout to Hortense Spillers), aided by Obama and the Democratic Party, with their continuously equating any resistance to fascism (all of which they're grouping under "antifa") to fascism itself. Obama and the Democratic Party enabled the far right, while Trump emboldened it. The state took both its mask and gloves off in ways that have not been seen inside the US since the 1960s.

The War on Terror started in 1492 (by Dominique Barron & Mohammed Harun Arsalai)

From George Washington, to George W., Obama to Trump into Biden, there is a straight line of state fascism and repression. It is no wonder why the American project used October 7th, so-called "Columbus Day weekend" celebrated by settlers and the settler state to launch the War on Terror that started with the invasion of Afghanistan. It is the original date of the settlers arrival in this new world that culminates in an ongoing dialogue between the oppressed and oppressor – colonizer vs colonized – two diametrically opposed forces whose contact with one another is written in history with ink of blood. The state has made these connections, making it imperative for resistance to the state to understand these connections as well.

The American project was built on genocide, slavery, and the myth of a white supremacy. People have been struggling against this project since 1492 in the Americas, but even prior in modern-day Africa and Asia. Though the state is constantly shifting and molding itself to maintain its power, the patterns are clear and we can see right through its facade. We will not fall for the ruse of liberal representation-based identity politics, which promotes and celebrates marginalized communities being in key positions of power to dominate and oppress. We must resist the temptation to see this type of representation as "progress." Just because Trump has technically been voted out of office does not mean we should become complacent in our critiques and struggles against the state. "America" only works through the illusion of a cohesive, organized nation stretching from the Pacific to Atlantic Oceans – simply too big to take down all at once. A decolonial approach to this problem is to fall back into regions/territories once autonomously governed by its original Indigenous population – those we seek to work alongside if we are not already of those communities ourselves – by working within their already existing frameworks, bringing our skills to share, not to enforce – toward correcting historical injustices. By falling back into Indigenous territories rather than the settlers city and state structures, our networks, tribes and various organizations may be able to respond and organize more accurately among regional resistances, capable of our own decolonial revolutions within the respective Indigenous territories instead of attempting to take down the American project all at once – a materialization of those rhetorical land acknowledgments made over and over by non Indigenous "community organizers" on stolen Native lands. By drawing clear lines "inside" or "outside" is known, there will be no "outside agitation" unless invited through agreements between the Indigenous territories –

the answers were *always* already here: blood, guts and mfkn landback. Although it is up to the next generations to work out a post-decolonial-revolutionary society, this approach will bring us closer to the ultimate point of political rupture — together: the one in which white supremacy, capitalism and the nation-state phenomenon collapses, or is destroyed by our hands.

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