

United States: Why Many Blacks Turn on Biden Over Palestine

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PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN is in trouble with young African American voters. His unconditional support for Zionism and the U.S. military support to the Israeli state's horrific war against the Palestinian people in both Gaza and the occupied West Bank is behind the growing opposition

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Biden refuses to tell the state of Israel to end its genocidal war in Gaza. He repeats all the lies of the Israeli regime.

For many young Black people who believe the Democratic Party takes their support for granted, his foreign policy of war mongering and empire building is a signal that Biden can't be counted on to fight racism at home either. Some will stay home or vote for independent candidates — or even vote for Trump as the lesser evil in the 2024 presidential election.

Meanwhile Conservative Democrats have joined with the pro-Israel lobby to target elected officials in their own party who call for a permanent ceasefire and humanitarian aid. The number one target is Detroit Congresswoman, Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian American ever elected to Congress.

Voices Speak Up on Common Struggle

Many mainstream news outlets are reporting on these shifting views. A December 17 Associated Press story is an example:

“Cydney Wallace, a Black Jewish community activist, never felt compelled to travel to Israel, though ‘Next year in Jerusalem; was a constant refrain at her Chicago synagogue.

“The 39-year-old said she had plenty to focus on at home, where she frequently gives talks on

addressing anti-Black sentiment in the American Jewish community and dismantling white supremacy in the U.S.

“I know what I’m fighting for here.” she said.

“That all changed when she visited Israel and the West Bank at the invitation of a Palestinian American community organizer from Chicago’s south side, along with two dozen other Black Americans and Muslim, Jewish and Christian faith leaders.”

The trip abruptly ended because of the Hamas attack inside Israel on October 7.

But the trip had a big impact on Wallace’s views. She, and a growing number of Black Americans, see the Palestinian struggle reflecting their own fight for racial equality and civil rights. The recent rise of protest movements against police brutality and the structure of white supremacy and institutional racism that plagues nearly every facet of life has connected Black and Palestinian activists under a common cause.

Demetrius Briscoe had voted for Joe Biden in 2020, but the senior at Bowie State University, a historically Black university in Maryland, is on the fence about whether he will support the president next year.

Briscoe told USA Today that he “doesn’t think many of his peers will vote for Biden because he hasn’t demanded a cease-fire.

“He’s really putting a stain on his presidency that I don’t think will be easily washed away,” said Briscoe, adding, “If the Democrats call for a cease-fire it may save the Democratic Party from, I think, a wave of young people not voting for them.”

At a ceasefire rally in October at Howard University, Delaney Leonard, a 19-year-old sophomore who helped organize the rally, remarked that she has no intention of voting for Biden. She doesn’t think she’s alone.

“It’s definitely going to play a factor into people making their voting decisions,” Leonard said.

Keesha Middlemass, an associate professor of political science at Howard University, noted “Young people are finally seeing the impact of America’s war machine.” They are deeply concerned about Biden’s blind loyalty to Israel, without any consideration of Palestinians’ right to exist.

Solidarity and Mutual Support

Khadirah Muhammad, a senior at Georgia State University, remembers seeing on social media the Black Lives Matter murals in Gaza and watching Palestinians demonstrating during the 2020 George Floyd protests. For her these were symbols of solidarity.

“I just feel like it’s necessary to speak up when things are wrong,” said Muhammad, 22, who joined a pro-Palestinian rally on campus in October. “It’s really heartbreaking.”

While many Jewish faith leaders, students and activists were key supporters of Martin Luther King Jr and the Civil Rights Movement, translating that into support for Israel shifted in the 1960s with the Black Power wing of the Black Freedom struggle, said Michael R. Fischbach, professor of history at Randolph-Macon College and author of “Black Power and Palestine Transnational Countries of Color.”

Fischbach said he's not surprised younger African Americans feel empathy for Palestinians. Several factors connect them, including a sense of kinship in this "global gated community," a pushback against what they believe is settler colonialism and shared experiences of living in segregated communities.

He pointed out that "A lot of young people, notably of color in this country, can instinctively identify with Palestinians because it resembles, again, the experience that they're seeing at home."

Polling Reflects Sentiments

For decades segments of the African American community have expressed strong support for Palestinian. This is now growing particularly among African American youth. Polls now reveal that Blacks are more critical of U.S. policy in the Middle East.

There were 2,357 pro-Palestinian protests, rallies, demonstrations, vigils and other actions in the United States between October 7 and December 10, according to the Crowds Counting Consortium, an initiative of the Nonviolent Action Lab at Harvard University.

Of those, 652 or nearly 28% were on college campuses. (The consortium recorded 450 pro-Israel actions during the same period.)

A poll conducted in November by GenForward, operated by the University of Chicago, found that 63% of Black voters plan to vote for Biden in 2024, compared to 17% who said they will vote for Trump if he is the nominee. Biden carried Black voters by a 92%-8% margin over Trump in 2020. Despite the strong support for Biden, this growing disaffection threatens Biden's path to re-election.

In the same poll, 16% of Black voters said they are more sympathetic of Palestinians than Israelis in the conflict, compared to 13% of Black voters who said they are more sympathetic to Israelis. Thirty-nine percent of Black voters said they are sympathetic to both groups; 32% said they did not know.

Muhammad, who has voted for Democrats in the past, said she doesn't feel pressed to support Democrats, whom she called "weak willed."

"Not that I want to see a Donald Trump presidency again," she said. "But honestly, a Joe Biden presidency, I can't see myself voting for him."

Muhammad said she's looking at alternatives. "I like to vote with integrity," she said.

Malcolm X in Gaza

Her concern is a reminder of what Malcolm X said in 1964 after the Palestinian Liberation Organization was established. (The PLO was a response to the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians following the creation of Israel in 1948. The PLO aimed to represent the Palestinian people in their desire for self-determination. It also sought Arab unity.)

Malcolm X traveled to Gaza in 1964 when it was still Egyptian territory (later seized by Israel after the 1967 Six Day War). He wrote and published in the Egyptian Gazette the seminal essay "Zionist Logic."

As a strong opponent of colonialism and exploitation in its various forms, Malcolm X was critical of

how Judaism, Zionism, and colonialism were mixing to continue a dangerous precedent. explaining:

If the “religious” claim of the Zionists is true that they were to be led to the promised land by their messiah, and Israel’s present occupation of Arab Palestine is the fulfillment of that prophesy: where is their messiah whom their prophets said would get the credit for leading them there? It was [United Nations mediator] Ralph Bunche who “negotiated” the Zionists into possession of Occupied Palestine! Is Ralph Bunche the messiah of Zionism? If Ralph Bunche is not their messiah, and their messiah has not yet come, then what are they doing in Palestine ahead of their messiah?

Did the Zionists have the legal or moral right to invade Arab Palestine, uproot its Arab citizens from their homes and seize all Arab property for themselves just based on the “religious” claim that their forefathers lived there thousands of years ago? Only a thousand years ago the Moors lived in Spain. Would this give the Moors of today the legal and moral right to invade the Iberian Peninsula, drive out its Spanish citizens, and then set up a new Moroccan nation...where Spain used to be, as the European Zionists have done to our Arab brothers and sisters in Palestine?

In short, the Zionist argument to justify Israel’s present occupation of Arab Palestine has no intelligent or legal basis in history...not even in their own religion. Where is their Messiah?

Three decades later, Nelson Mandela, the South African revolutionary leader and first president of a free South Africa, said in a 1997 speech on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People what still resonates today among a vast majority of people in the Global South:

“We know too well that our freedom [as South Africans] is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

The intensity of support for Palestine is only getting stronger among young African Americans.

Malik Miah

P.S.

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<https://againstthecurrent.org/why-many-blacks-turn-on-biden-over-palestine/>