

Why does Biden continue Trump's anti-people policies?

written by Greg Butterfield
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Breonna Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, demanded President Joe Biden take action on racist police violence.

You've probably heard the saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

This isn't really true, of course. The environment, people and society are constantly changing, even down to the subatomic level. And when enough small changes accumulate, they can lead to sudden, dramatic change — even a revolution.

But one month into the Biden administration, you could be forgiven for thinking of that old platitude. Because the new Democratic President Joe Biden's administration is laying a course to continue many of Republican Donald Trump's anti-people policies, only with some cosmetic changes.

Why?

Politicians and mainstream media often speak of the change of presidents as a "transfer of power." That was especially true in the case of the transition between Trump and Biden, coming after months of The Donald and his allies trying to suppress the votes of Black people and the Jan. 6 coup attempt at the Capitol.

But it's not really a transfer of power. Only the office holders change. The capitalist system, and the super-wealthy bosses who profit from it, continue to hold real power whether a Republican or a Democrat sits in the White House or which faction has a majority in Congress.

All the way back in 1848, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels hit the nail on the head when they wrote in the Communist Manifesto, "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" — that is, the capitalists.

Those capitalist politicians elected to high office, whether a Trump or a Biden, do so with the expectation that they will carry out the interests of the capitalist system. And while a large part of the ruling class tired of Trump's mismanagement of the pandemic and the economic crisis, they still love many of the policies he put in place, like deregulation of industry, tax cuts for the rich, and strengthening police powers.

So Biden, the new "administrator," is expected to carry on. As he told a Wall Street fundraising event [during his campaign](#), "Nothing would fundamentally change."

That's good news for Big Capital. For the rest of us, not so much.

A cage or 'overflow facility'?

In the first few days after his inauguration, Biden made a show of issuing a flurry of executive orders countermanding some of Trump's most egregious and unpopular measures — at least on the surface.

No class-conscious worker will miss Trump's bigoted "Muslim ban" that prevented people from many Muslim-majority countries (and some others) from visiting the U.S. and kept families apart. Many capitalists hated it too. It was bad for their bottom line and undermined their PR for the U.S. as "champion of democracy."

The restoration of the "Dreamer" program for undocumented adults who arrived in the U.S. as children is also welcome.

But while the president and First Lady Jill Biden announced their intention to reunite hundreds of migrant parents and children victimized by Trump's "family separation" policy, under Biden the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Border Patrol continue to [deport hundreds of refugees and immigrants](#), including children.

On Feb. 8, amidst the mass protests and government repression in Haiti, [ICE](#)

[deported 72 refugees](#) back to the country — including 22 children, the youngest a two-month-old baby.

A Biden executive order to temporarily suspend some deportations “pending review” was halted by a Trump-appointed judge. But the deportations of the Haitian refugees would not have qualified, even if the order was in effect.

Remember the outcry in 2018-2019 over Trump keeping children in cages? Biden’s team has announced plans to [reopen an “overflow facility”](#) for unaccompanied minors (children) captured by the immigration enforcement goons. In case you’re wondering, “overflow facility” is just a polite term for “cage.”

In an op-ed published by The Hill on Feb. 13, [“Biden has not done enough to end family separations at the border,”](#) attorneys Clara Long and Elora Mukherjee wrote: “As attorneys who met with hungry, dirty, desperate children separated from their families at the southern border during the height of the kids-in-cages calamity in 2019, we had hoped President Biden would quickly fix the problem. So far, we’ve been disappointed.

“The Biden administration may be choosing to drag its feet on ending Trump border abuses because it doesn’t want to encourage more people to come. This isn’t new. For decades, the United States has justified cruelty at the border with the canard that such treatment will deter future migrants from coming.

“But after months of mass separations of parents from their children in 2018 — the cruelest policy ever rolled out in the name of deterrence — border apprehensions surged in 2019.”

What about Breonna Taylor?

Most workers know how Biden backtracked on his promise of a new \$2,000 stimulus payment. That was quickly changed to \$1,400 — because the \$2,000 now included

the pittance \$600 payment sent by Trump at the New Year. Scrooge would have applauded.

Then Biden agreed to lower the income threshold for people to receive the stimulus. What that lowered threshold will be has not been determined yet, but it will not include any adjustment for the highly varied cost of rent and other living expenses in different parts of the U.S.

The millions of workers struggling with enormous student loan debt also know that Biden has [flatly refused to consider](#) the \$50,000 debt forgiveness advocated by many Democrats. He capped the amount at \$10,000 max even in the midst of an unprecedented global economic and unemployment crisis. And even that is not guaranteed.

A big selling point for Biden's administration was that he would take action to bring the rampaging COVID-19 pandemic under control and speed up the distribution of new vaccines. But he's pushed to reopen schools in the first 100 days of his administration, increasing [pressure on teachers' and school workers' unions](#) that have been fighting for a safe return to classrooms and additional resources for remote learning.

Biden's CDC issued guidelines saying it's okay to reopen in-person schooling — even if teachers haven't been vaccinated. How is this different from Trump's dangerous policy? Under either administration, Big Business wants schools open so it's easier to force parents back into unsafe workplaces — health and safety be damned.

During their campaign, Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris condemned the grand jury decision that let off the police who murdered Breonna Taylor. Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron deliberately and blatantly sabotaged the case.

Given how much the Black Lives uprising contributed to mass Black voter turnout

and his election success, you might imagine Biden would immediately order his Justice Department to take action to put the killers behind bars.

But no. Breonna Taylor and the epidemic of racist police terror against Black and Brown people dropped off the radar after Election Day. Sensing which way the winds were blowing, Taylor's mother Tamika Palmer [penned an open letter](#) in December bluntly reminding Biden of his campaign promises to curb police violence. Supporters paid to have it published as a full-page ad in the Washington Post.

Danger of war

The new administration clearly wants to be compared to the New Deal of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. But the [only explicit connection Biden has drawn](#) is with FDR's policy of building up for war: "American manufacturing was the arsenal of democracy in World War II. It will be so again," he said of his economic recovery plan.

Since the Great Depression, U.S. capitalism has relied on war to pull it out of crisis. It doesn't matter which party is in the White House. Biden's foreign policy moves have been especially ugly:

- Support U.S.-backed Haitian President [Jovenel Moïse's illegal plan](#) to stay in power for an additional year, until Feb. 7, 2022.
- Continue Trump's propaganda war and military threats against China.
- Tell Iran that the U.S. will honor the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action "nuclear deal"](#) only if Tehran goes back to observing it first — even though it was Trump that torpedoed the agreement. [U.S. piracy continues](#) against Iran-connected ships.
- [Keep the U.S. Embassy to Israel in Jerusalem](#), where Trump unilaterally moved it despite international protests. Continue unfettered funding, arming and political support for the apartheid regime's [suppression of Palestinians](#).

- Continue to [recognize self-appointed “president” Juan Guaido](#) while refusing to open discussions with the legitimate Venezuelan government led by President Nicolas Maduro.
- Appoint many veterans of the Obama administration State Department responsible for far-right coups in Honduras, Libya and Ukraine.

Even Biden’s heralded decision to end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen is deceptive at best. The U.S. will continue to arm and aid the House of Saud for so-called “defensive” purposes and build up the anti-Iran, anti-Yemen alliance in the region.

On Feb. 5, while millions of people were desperately waiting for the promised stimulus check (and are still waiting today), the Pentagon announced its [first big arms sale of the Biden era](#) — a combined \$150 million in spy tools for the NATO military alliance and missiles for the right-wing regime in Chile.

Break with the system

Nothing the Biden regime has done is new or surprising. Every Democratic administration of the past 30 years has continued and deepened the anti-people policies of the prior Republican government, and vice versa.

Bill Clinton continued and deepened the anti-poor austerity and racist repression of the Reagan-Bush years, escalating mass incarceration of Black and Brown youth — with help from then-Senator Joe Biden. Clinton continued murderous sanctions against Iraq, wearing the country down in the decade between the first and second Gulf Wars.

Barack Obama continued and expanded George W. Bush’s militarization of the U.S. police, mass spying at home and abroad, and drone assassinations. Picking up Bush II’s anti-immigrant baton, Obama earned the epithet “Deporter in Chief.”

Office holders come and go. Capitalism remains the real power behind the throne. And as capitalism continues to decay, it becomes more repressive, more racist, more hungry for war, and unable to respond to the most urgent needs of the people it rules.

We must organize and fight to make the Biden government meet the people's demands. But that's not all.

Capitalism is the continuity between Trump and Biden. Let's build a movement to fight the rotten profit system and replace it with one that can serve the needs of the people: socialism.

