

Madeleine Rees on the US Election

WILPF

I didn't think we would have to write this. I hoped I would not have to write this. It did not seem possible that a man like Donald Trump could ever be considered as a fit and proper person to hold office. He has shown himself to be a misogynist, a racist, and dismissive of all minorities. He has become President on the basis of lies and the politics of hatred. This is a tragic day for the U.S. and because of its role in the world, for us all.

That's how I feel, but let us pause. We cannot understand exactly why this has happened. One thing for sure is the refusal of so many people – especially white men – to accept a woman as a leader, especially not one that is a self-declared feminist ... (which shows we have much work to do in how we all address that, men even more so than women). The other reasons I can only speculate upon – although there are multiple theories being put forward, and which the establishment everywhere should to pay attention to. There has been a revolt against the machine, as there was in Brexit, [against the failed neoliberal economic order](#). The feeling of having no control over government, of alienation and despair has been important in driving both elections. What is tragic is that it is the extreme right which has seized the moment to rally people in both countries, and will probably do so in Europe. The electorate have not paid attention to the policies but to the feelings and the need for an identity, narrowly constructed. The consequences of all this we can imagine – and they are not good.

Our challenge now is to persuade people of a different way of addressing the failure of the current machine. We have one. It is embodied in how WILPF has worked and analysed the world since [1915](#). We do not give up on that, not now, not ever as what we are offering would bring what so many people are demanding but are running to the wrong people with the wrong policies to provide it. What we now need to do is to organise. Feminists worldwide, both men and women, need to step up to the challenge.

Trump is a man without real convictions, other than his self-belief and narcissism. He is a deal maker. We have no choice than to deal with him, but on our terms. There is some hope; his position on free trade deals, his dislike of a confrontation with Russia ... these are the things we must push. But first we have to push back on his misogyny and racism. On that we can build, even with the women who voted for Trump, but who are unhappy with his position on women, and see if we can get them to join in specific demands on addressing inequalities, violence and the unacceptability of his past conduct; "guarantees of non repetition" as a condition for continued support.

<http://wilpf.org/madeleine-rees-on-the-u-s-election/>

We must look forward. We are in this for the long haul. We can see this as a galvanising moment which focuses us more than ever on the need to engage in the political, (much as it is unpleasant in the main), but if we do not then we leave it to others to dictate. We need to build solidarity across borders through our WILPF Sections and with the like-minded to progress our vision and strategy for achieving a peaceful world. Look to the people in government and parliament that we can work with, across the political divides. And we must avoid picking up the gauntlet of vituperative discourse, of showing contempt for those who disagree with us. It is what has happened in the UK over Brexit on both sides and it will for sure happen in the U.S. That binary has to be resisted.

The horror of the U.S. election is now over and we have to deal with the consequences. We have to show that we too are up to the challenge.