

## **I am joining the resistance.**

By Laure Murat, Director of the UCLA Center for European and Russian Studies

**In the wake of the election of Donald Trump, this historian, who lives in Los Angeles, is participating in an opposition group at her university. It is a struggle that has only just begun.**

I would understand if *Libération* asked me politely to stop writing my column. I should make myself clear: I have the intention, starting now, to talk regularly about Donald Trump. Each month, I will dedicate myself to examining the real impact of his policies and their consequences on students who are already being insulted, harassed, aggressed on campuses like UCLA, where white supremacists vociferate their demands. You might accuse me of being biased. I am. A man who insults women, Black people, Mexicans, the disabled, LGBTQ communities, has the official support of the Ku Klux Klan—which paraded in North Carolina to celebrate his victory—I want nothing to do with him, and I am fighting against him. “*We re-ject the presi-dent e-lect,*” as protestors chant downtown. As the ballot boxes have shown, too, that a majority of Americans agree, with Hillary Clinton winning the popular vote by more than 2 million votes (a number that is likely to climb over the coming days and is already being called *the most resounding victory in the history of American presidential elections*). It’s a record. Especially given that she won with 3 million fewer votes than Obama in 2012. Clinton is perhaps hated by a great many people, but Trump is, *in reality*, hated even more.

As in 2000, indirect universal suffrage is once again being called into question. “*The Electoral College is a disaster for democracy,*” said Trump in a tweet in 2012. This is the only point on which I agree with him. Let us not forget that the Electoral College was instituted by the Founding Fathers to guarantee the continuation of slavery (1), (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/electoral-college-slavery-constitution>) a fact that resonates considerably given that during the Republican campaign, we heard, in the crowd, that “*the real place for niggers is in the cotton fields.*” Could the presidential electors change the course of history by voting for Clinton even though they are beholden to Trump voters in their state? Twenty-four states are required to uphold the results. But what about the twenty-six others? Could the electors reverse the numbers, thereby respecting the popular vote at the expense of the local vote? It is highly improbable, but it is nevertheless what is being demanded in a petition, which has garnered more than 4.5 million signatures. Never has the site Change.org ever received so many. It’s a record.

Another re-consideration: polls and newspapers. If they made a mistake on the numbers (another record, in its own right), why should I rely on the statistics we seem to be reading everywhere, that a third of Latinos voted for Trump, along with 53% of white women? On what are they basing their calculations of probability? Why should I believe these experts who predicted panic in the markets if Trump won, when they are at present up? On this point, I learned of an interesting bit of news. The day after the election, the shares of the two biggest companies that manage private prisons (a system that Hillary Clinton wanted to abolish) rose in value. Corrections Corporations of America jumped 49% and GEO Group Prison 21%. Welcome to Trumpland.

Worry and anxiety, legible on so many faces in California, are justified. Especially after the nomination of Stephen Bannon, agitator on the far-right whose personal site compares, among other things, the work of Planned Parenthood to the Holocaust. The nomination of Jeff Sessions, a senator from Alabama, to the Department of Justice is not reassuring either. In 1986, he was obliged to apologize for saying: *“I thought that the Ku Klux Klan was okay. Until the day I learned that some of its members smoked pot.”* It was a “joke.”

From this point forward, we need to imagine how different struggles might take shape. At the initiative of a formidable woman, Gil Z. Hochberg, professor of Comparative Literature, a resistance group immediately formed at UCLA. At our first meeting, on November 10<sup>th</sup>, we were about twenty people in attendance. Getting twenty people together in just two days, in an American university where professors are buried with work, is an achievement in itself. We were mostly women and five men, all of color. Except one. Who is Jewish and gay. Not a single heterosexual WASP. I was told: “It doesn’t matter.” But yes, it does matter. Four days later, I brought these observations to an American historian, a native of Michigan, who joined our executive committee. He told me, sighing: *“I know. I am always the only white hetero in these kinds of meetings. I’m used to it.”*

The diversity of the group, including people who have lived under dictatorships or come from countries dominated by authoritarian regimes (Franco, Hassan II, Erdogan, Netanyahu, et al.), represents the best of what the U.S. has to offer: diversity, intelligence, courage, gender equality, humor. Seven of us formed an executive committee. We got to work. I’ll keep you posted.

In the meantime, I recently received this incredible quotation from a friend: *“Just as mutant and monstrous algae invade the Venetian Lagoon, so our television screens are populated, saturated, with ‘degenerate’ images and statements [énoncés]. This is a different species of algae, in a social ecology where men like Donald Trump are allowed to proliferate freely, taking over whole neighborhoods of New York, Atlantic City, etc. to ‘redevelop’ them, by raising rents and thereby driving out tens of thousands of poor families, most of whom are condemned to ‘homelessness,’ becoming the equivalent to the dead fish of environmental ecology.”* This text is an extract from *The Three Ecologies* by Félix Guattari. It was published in 1989. This was twenty-seven years ago, at a time when the author was sounding the alarm bells about the rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen.

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