

Pleased by the election results?

November 7, 2012

In following commentary on Obama's victory, I've been struck by the extent to which fear has driven people's votes. Response to Obama's re-election has been a sigh of relief (that we have been spared a Republican reign of terror) or an intensification of the fear felt (and drummed up) on the Right about our enduring four more years of a socialist president (I wish!) bent on destroying the country. Sarah Palin's interview describing her disbelief at Obama's victory was typical. What's revealing about her incredulity is that it shows how much she and the Right believe their own propaganda, how captive they are to their own ideology. Some of my facebook friends, mostly education activists fight the neoliberal "deforms" of privatization of schools, deprofessionalization of teaching, and teacher union-busting are savoring this victory. Others are more ambivalent, questioning what Obama's re-election means for teachers and students in the nation's public schools. As I watched coverage of the Obama headquarters party, I thought about how the Chicago teachers who were at the Obama victory party felt, knowing that they had been striking against a vicious Mayor who was his former chief of staff, against the policies Obama's administration has made its hallmark. A UK comrade summed up my own response: "I guess we must be pleased that Romney wasn't elected even if we aren't particularly pleased that Obama was - is that right?" Obama's victory means continuation of policies that do harm. School reform, neoliberal style - rather than a robust job creation program - will be made the chief instrument to end poverty. Charter schools, which end democratic control of school systems, will be pressed as a panacea for improving educational inequality. Standardized testing will allow corporations to control what is taught and how students and teachers are measured. So, take that sigh of relief that Romney has lost and enjoy the victory - but don't make the same mistake Sarah Palin does. We need to recognize that neoliberalism has done an effective job of frightening people that there is no alternative for them or their children other than the educational program Obama/Duncan have advanced. Our job in the next four years is to show them that we have another vision and will fight for it. Yes, against our opponents in both parties, including the President just elected.