



Zohran Mamdani Soars to Victory - But What Would Malcolm X Say?

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day, this is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Montreal, Canada, on November 5th, 2025, for a Reason2Resist. Well, yesterday, New York City voters caused a political earthquake by electing in a landslide vote the Democratic mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani. The Mamdani campaign is notable for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that he is somebody who unapologetically, proudly identifies as a Muslim. He looks like an individual who comes from the global south, and most provocatively, he has stated, and with entire justification, that if the war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu steps foot in New York City, he, as mayor, would direct the police to arrest Netanyahu. When one considers the political environment in New York City – and I did live there for seven years when I was practicing law on Wall Street, so I have some familiarity, direct experience of the political environment in New York City, and it's become even less welcoming to people like Mamdani over the years – it is truly remarkable that someone with his background and someone who has expressed these views about the leadership of Israel would, in that environment, ascend to the mayoralty. And do so by a comfortable margin in last night's election.

Quite apart from his devotion to Islam, his appearance, his statements about Netanyahu and about the genocidal Israeli entity, Mamdani has put forward an agenda for the people of New York City, which perhaps it would be too much to call it radical, but certainly is quite progressive and assertive from the standards of conventional NYC politics. And the five main planks of Mamdani's campaign were: a rent freeze on rent stabilized units, a public grocery option, enhanced measures to make child care more affordable to New York City residents, free busses and a substantial investment in affordable housing resulting at least in the near term and the construction of 200,000 new units. I personally favor all of these, particularly the rent freeze, although it is highly controversial from the perspective of mainstream economists.

When I was living in New York City back in the 1990s, for most of the time I was there, I was living in the West Village and a lot of the units on Charles Street where I myself resided and rented an apartment were rent stabilized. And the fact that rents were so regulated as they were at the time, meant that a lot people who were struggling artists, who worked for the administration of the city, who were bus drivers, actually were able to afford apartments in the heart of the West Village, which really, I think was a major attraction for me personally, for many other people who lived in the area too. I didn't want to be surrounded all the time by well-heeled bankers and Wall Street attorneys. And I really appreciated the fact that in our neighborhood in the West Village, there was this diversity and there was a population of people in the community who to a significant degree represented the cross section of New York City life.

And starting in 1994 and right up until 2019, there were a number of deregulatory steps taken by increasingly right-leaning administrations in New York City, which resulted in a lot of units in the city that had formerly been subjected to rent stabilization being liberated from the constraints of people-oriented regulation. And as a result of that, I went back after I stopped living in New York City, I did go back a number of times and visited my old neighborhood and it was always my impression that it was becoming increasingly gentrified and that it had very much lost its character and it is now largely overrun with the dreaded banker class and Wall Street attorneys. So this is certainly something that I would support, a rent freeze. It may not be anywhere close to a complete solution to the affordability crisis for people who live in New York City, but it's a good start. And all of these other measures, I think – the public groceries, the childcare, the free buses, the affordable housing investment – these are important steps that will significantly improve if implemented and that's the big if, the lives of ordinary citizens of New Yorkers. And that's undoubtedly a big part of the reason why Mamdani prevailed in the landslide last night.

There is however, one major problem with Mamdani. And that problem, my friends, is that he is a Democrat. Of course, if he were a Republican, I would be even more skeptical of his stated commitment to social justice. But Democrats nowadays are hardly better than Republicans. And over the past few days, as I pondered the possibility of a Mamdani victory, I was reminded of Malcolm X. And in 1964, in one of the greatest political speeches of the modern era, Malcolm X offered words of wisdom to African Americans who had placed their trust in the Democratic party. And here is some of what he had to say in that famous speech, which was titled: *The Ballot or the Bullet*.

Malcom X: Oh, I say you've been misled. You've been had. You been took. I was in Washington a couple of weeks ago while the senators were filibustering. I noticed in the back of the Senate a huge map, and on this map it showed the distribution of Negroes in America. And surprisingly the same senators that were involved in the filibuster were from the states where there were the most Negroes. Why were they filibustering the civil rights legislation? Because the civil rights legislation is supposed to guarantee voting rights to Negroes in those states. And those senators from those states know that if the Negroes in those states can vote, those senators are down the drain. The Representatives of those states go down the drain.

And in the constitution of this country, it has a stipulation for and whenever the rights, the voting rights of people in a certain district are violated, then the Representative who is from that particular district, according to the constitution, is supposed to be expelled from the Congress. Now, if this particular aspect of the constitution was enforced, why, you wouldn't have a cracker in Washington D.C.

But what would happen when you expel the Dixiecrat, you're expelling the Democrat. When you destroy the power of the Dixiecrat, you are destroying the power of Democratic Party. So how in the world can the Democratic Party in the South actually side with you, in sincerity, when all of its power is based in the South? These Northern Democrats are in cahoots with the Southern Democrats. They're playing a giant con game, a political con game. You know how it goes. One of them comes to you and makes believe he's for you. And he's in cahoots with the other one that's not for you. Why? Because neither one of them is for you. But they got to make you go with one of them or the other. So this is a con game. And this is what they've been doing with you and me all these years. The first thing Johnson got off the plane when he became President, he asked, "Where's Dicky?" You know who Dicky is? Dicky is old Southern cracker Richard Russell! Look here! Yes! Lyndon B. Johnson's best friend is the one who is the head, who's heading the forces that are filibustering civil rights legislation. You tell me how in the hell is he going to be Johnson's best friend?

DL: Now, to be fair to the Democrats of the time, the civil rights legislation did eventually pass. You may have seen in the captions there that these Dixiecrats, as Malcolm X called them, engaged in the longest filibuster in US history trying to stop the passage of the civil rights legislation. But it did pass before Lyndon B. Johnson left the White House. And it was a major victory for the civil rights movement. That being said, today African Americans are nowhere near to the promise of equality, to the fulfillment of that promise, particularly vis-a-vis white Americans. For example, in 2021 life expectancy for Blacks in the US was 71, but for white Americans it was 76. In 2018 per capita income for Blacks in the US was 22,500, whereas for Whites it was 36,300. Today, Black inmates make up 38% of the population in US federal prisons, which constitute about 12% of the general population. So without a doubt, despite all the promises, both Democrats and Republicans have failed to deliver true equality to African Americans and to other racialized groups including but not limited to Native Americans.

So what does this mean for those of us who support Zohran Mamdani today? Was Malcolm X right? Do his words or should they resonate with us in 2025? Are we chumps? Have we been had? Have we been took? Well, there are already a couple of troubling signs. First of all, there is this news relating to Barack Obama. He was reported a few days prior to the vote to have called Mamdani and to have offered to be a sounding board without offering an endorsement to Mamdani. You can be sure that if Obama's offer is accepted, he will be using his influence and powers of persuasion and whatever levers of coercion he can employ to move Mamdani to the right and away from the core planks of his platform, which are outside the strictures of what the leadership of the Democratic Party is prepared to support. Because ultimately the leadership of the Democratic Party today is owned by the billionaire class.

And in response to this reported outreach from Obama, a spokesperson for Mamdani told The New York Times that "Mamdani appreciated President Obama's words of support and their conversation on the importance of bringing a new kind of politics to our city". I can assure you folks that ain't Barack Obama gonna bring a new kinda politics to New York City. Maybe Mamdani will, but the more he relies upon the discredited former president, the less likely he is to deliver on the promise of a new kind of politics. And this diplomatic language that Mamdani employed in response to this outreach was rather different from the commentary on Obama that Zohran Mamdani had offered publicly during the period when Obama was in the White House.

So, for example, here is a tweet by Mr. Mamdani on June 29th, 2013. And he said: "Hasn't Obama shown that the lesser evil is still pretty damn evil? How to improve if the criteria is just 'better than rep. crackpot?'" And of course, Mamdani was entirely correct to point out the evil of the Obama administration. This is a man who ordered extra judicially the murder of hundreds of people through drone strikes in the Global South, particularly in West Asia. He even ordered the killing of a US citizen and his son. I believe that was in Yemen. This is a man who presided over the rapid expansion of the surveillance state. Barack Obama, this was an individual who swore that he was going to shut down that human rights abomination, Guantanamo, within I think the first hundred days in office. But ultimately it stayed open and continued to function in violation of international humanitarian law throughout the two terms that Obama served.

This is a man who negotiated the largest military aid package in US history, \$3.8 billion per year to the Israeli genocidal entity for a period of a decade. This is a man who refused to prosecute any of the CIA torturers or those who had authorized torture under the Bush administration, even though he himself acknowledged that these so-called enhanced interrogation techniques did constitute torture. So indeed he was an evil president and no worse than his predecessor, certainly not worse than his successors Biden and Trump, but nonetheless someone who deserved to be harshly condemned. Or his contempt for international law and basic human rights and human decency, frankly. And so it's a little bit troubling that after having adopted what was an entirely fair critique of Obama in the lead up to his election, Zohran Mamdani was talking about Obama in appreciative and diplomatic terms.

But it doesn't stop there. There are other concerning signs as well. So, take a look at this news. This is in the Forward, a relatively progressive, albeit I think liberal Zionist media publication in the United States. And the headline here, this is from a few days ago: *Mamdani opposes Zionism but wants New York public schools to teach about it*. And according to the reporter Hannah Feuer, "Mamdani has announced plans to fight to anti-Semitism in New York City using a curriculum that seems to contradict his own views on Israel. The 'Hidden Voices' program reviewed by the Forward teaches students in kindergarten through 12th grade about Jewish Americans in US history and defines Zionism as, quote, 'the right to Jewish national self-determination in their ancestral homeland'," close quote. And, of course,

this is a reference to Palestine. And we know what a dire cost the Palestinians had to pay in order for Jewish persons from the West, principally Europe, to come to what they regard as their ancestral land and to establish a permanent presence there. The price that they are paying today is nothing less than apartheid and genocide. So it is indeed concerning that Mamdani would support this curriculum.

And in addition, on top of all of that, Mamdani has signaled that he's willing to retain the current New York Police Department Commissioner, Jessica Tisch. He stated this publicly. Now, you may wonder, well, why is that problematic? Well, because Commissioner Tisch is a huge fan of Israel. And here is a recent post from Jessica Tisch, while she's serving as the commissioner and in it she wrote: "The reach of the NYPD is truly extraordinary particularly as it relates to our intelligence and counter-terrorism apparatus. We have over a dozen detectives embedded with international law enforcement agencies who serve as our eyes and ears for threat awareness overseas. This morning the NYC mayor and I got an extraordinary briefing from our detectives stationed in Israel", latter three, of course, being deeply complicit in the genocide against the Palestinian people, and also are really nothing more than abject vassals of US neocons. And she went on and wrote: "Over the past week, they've also gone above and beyond using their contacts to help New Yorkers seeking to evacuate and get home".

So this, I think, was published during the 12-day war with Iran. Undoubtedly, Commissioner Tisch was a fan of the US and Israeli government's criminal war of aggression on the Islamic Republic of Iran. And one has to ask, you know, if this commissioner is in fact retained in that post after the mayor-elect assumes office in January, how would she respond to an order to arrest the war criminal Netanyahu should he step foot in New York City? Which he is entirely capable of doing. Are we to believe that someone of this ideological orientation would actually order the cops under her command to arrest the prime minister of Israel? That seems like a stretch to put it mildly.

So for these and other reasons, some of which are of a personal nature, I must say that I'm skeptical of a Democrat, any Democrat who claims to be a transformational candidate. What are those personal reasons? I've had occasion to talk about them before on Reason2Resist. Back in 2007, when Barack Obama first emerged as a contender for the Democratic nomination in the 2008 election, I was so swept up by his talk of hope and change and the prospect of an African American finally ascending to the presidency of the United States, that I left my position as a frenetic member of the partnership of a law firm in Ontario where I was leading a team of securities class actions lawyers. I took a leave of absence for about 10 days, drove down from Southern Ontario to Indiana, which is where the next primary was going to take place. At this point, it was unclear whether Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama was going to emerge as the nominee for the Democratic party. It was very close at that point in time. And I spent 10 days in India, I went down there on my own dime. I wasn't compensated for any of this. I'm not an American citizen, I didn't have the right to vote, but I felt I needed to do something to support the Obama campaign. And so I did that.

And after Obama – basically, what I did during those 10 days, I was instructed by campaign staff to go into predominantly African American neighborhoods in Indianapolis and share with people instructions on how to vote and make sure that they got to the polling station on voting day. And after Obama secured the nomination, I went back to the United States again. I took another leave of absence for several days from my very busy position as a partner in a class actions law firm to a canvas for Obama in Pittsburgh on the weekend, the several days leading up to the federal election in which Obama obviously prevailed. And I remember I didn't go alone the second time. The first time I went alone, the second time when I went to Pittsburgh, I was accompanied by some other Canadians. And in fact, there was an article written about us in the *Ottawa Citizen*, which was entitled *Obama's Canucks*. And we went down there, did everything we could to help the Obama campaign in Pittsburgh. And on the night when the result was announced on election day, five of us went to a union hall in Pittsburgh to celebrate the victory. I was so moved by it that I actually cried, that's how swept up I was and inspired I was by the first run for the presidency of Barack Obama.

And it didn't take long for me to realize that I had proven myself to be a chump. Basically, between the time that Obama secured the right to assume the presidency, election day in November of 2008, and the time he took office in January of 2009, Obama revealed that he wasn't going to prosecute any CIA torturers, even though he had said throughout the campaign that enhanced interrogation techniques constituted torture. He revealed that he was going to support the bailout of the banks and do nothing effectively to hold them accountable – the bankers, the banksters, who were responsible for a financial crisis that almost brought the global financial system to its knees. And in December of that year, when Israel launched another mowing of the lawn in Gaza and began massacring civilians, Obama refused to utter a peep of criticism about Israel. And in fact, what he said at the time to justify his silence was "there's only one president at a time". And "because George Bush was still the president, it was up to him how to deal with this matter". However, that didn't stop Obama from openly advocating for the bailout of the banks, the fact that he wasn't yet the president. He did that quite shamelessly.

So I remember, within a matter of months, I felt betrayed. And as the Obama presidency unfolded, my feelings of betrayal only became stronger and stronger. And then Bernie Sanders came around in 2016, another Democrat who identified as a socialist. And although this time I was much more circumspect in supporting Bernie Sanders, I wasn't prepared to go down to the United States on my own dime and volunteer for his campaign – nonetheless, I was consciously supportive of Sanders when he ran to be the Democratic nominee in 2015. But ultimately, he turned out to be quite a disappointment as well, although perhaps not as much of a disappointment as Barack Obama. So for me personally, whenever I see a Democrat posing as a transformational candidate, however promising the signs may be on the surface, I take these claims with a sizable grain of salt.

At the end of the day, what I suggest to persons who are interested in this whole question of what does the victory of Zohran Mamdani mean: hope for the best, but prepare for the worst. He will confront huge obstacles and some could argue that the relatively easy part is winning

the election. The much harder part is actually implementing an agenda that is ferociously opposed by very powerful constituencies in New York City and nationally and internationally as well. There are a lot of people, billionaires, both inside and outside the United States who are not going to want to see Mamdani succeed in implementing any part of his agenda. So I suggest that people remain alert to any and all signs of yet another democratic betrayal.

But no matter what happens, do not be discouraged, even if it turns out that Mamdani is unable or unwilling to implement all or most of his agenda. And I say this because the mere fact that a candidate with his background and his agenda managed to become the mayor of New York City in a landslide election last night proves that the political landscape in the West is undergoing profound and positive changes. There are of course negative changes and trends in American politics and Western politics more broadly speaking. But this is certainly a very, very encouraging sign.

And in that regard, I want to share with you an article published today by the Israeli liberal newspaper, Haaretz. And you'll see here that according to Haaretz, "it's not only Mamdani's win that spells trouble ahead in the US election". And this article goes on to state as follows: "Focusing solely on the upset in New York is a mistake because Tuesday's results will impact US-Israel relations in ways that go beyond the drama and the Big Apple. The bottom line from Tuesday night is a massive democratic sweep all over the map. Wherever there was a contest, it was won by the Democrats by sizable margins. Virginia is a good example. Abigail Spanberger, who will soon become its first female governor, didn't just flip the state after four years of Republican control, she won by a historic margin of approximately 15% in a swing state where US President Donald Trump lost by only 5% exactly one year ago. Even in the blue wave election during Trump's first term, the Democratic candidate for governor at the time, Ralph Northam won by single digits". And this is the key part of this Haaretz article, quote: "For Israel, this puzzle spells trouble. The country's standing among Democrats has never been worse. This is evident both in public opinion polls that show Democratic voters turning away from Israel in big numbers, and also in the halls of Congress where only a handful of Democrats still adhere to the old principle of unquestionable support for the Jewish state", close quote.

Now just imagine how these tumultuous events, tumultuous from a Republican perspective, are affecting the thinking of Donald Trump. Donald Trump has to be very concerned now about how the Republican Party is going to perform in midterm elections. And if he should lose control of the House and the Senate, and given what happened last night, that is a realistic possibility, to put it mildly, Donald Trump could be looking at another impeachment proceeding. And given how shamelessly he has violated the United States Constitution in his first nine or ten months of his second administration, and given how aggressively he is pursued using the Justice Department, key political opponents of his – and by the way, he may well have had good grounds for going after a number of those persons. For example, the bloodthirsty neocon John Bolton, there is actually a good reason to believe that the indictment of John Bolton is well founded in law and in fact. But nonetheless, to say that Donald Trump has enemies is the understatement of the year. And I'm sure he's very

concerned after having gone through an impeachment proceeding already that he might have to face another one.

So how is this going to affect the Donald's behavior? Well, I would suggest to you that one way it may well affect the Donald's behavior, because he himself has commented on how support for Israel is becoming politically toxic, even within the MAGA movement, this may constitute a significant point of pressure on Donald Trump to rein in the criminal Netanyahu regime to a degree that no US president was willing to do in our lifetimes and certainly in the recent past. However this ultimately will affect the behavior of Donald Trump, as I say it does constitute a political earthquake and promising sign of where the political orientation of Americans is heading and their willingness to support candidates who constitute a substantial break with politics as usual. So whatever may happen to Mamdani, and I certainly do wish him the best, and I hope very much that he doesn't prove to be another democratic disappointment for those of us who are looking for transformational and people-oriented politics, whatever happens, however, this is a very promising sign for the years ahead. For now, this is Dimitri Lascaris signing off from Montreal, Quebec on November 5th, 2025.

END

Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:

BANKKONTO:
Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.
Bank: GLS Bank
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

PAYPAL:
E-Mail: PayPal@acTVism.org

PATREON:
<https://www.patreon.com/acTVism>

BETTERPLACE:
Link: [Click here](#)