TENDAYI BLOOM
Hello my name’s Tendayi Bloom from Politics and International Studies at the Open University, and I’m joined by Richard Heffernan and Agnes Czajka, also of politics and international studies, and we’re going to be talking about the how and why of Donald Trump’s victory. Trump’s victory came as a surprise to almost all commentators and pollsters, so how did it happen, what were the electoral factors that led to success and what did his short victory signal for democratic political systems? So can I just ask, Richard, how did Trump become President?

RICHARD HEFFERNAN
Well experts who didn’t predict something, who said it couldn’t and wouldn’t happen, are not best placed to describe how it happened, but the electoral system in the United States allowed Trump to win because he won a majority of the Electoral College vote, which is the number of votes allocated to each of the 50 states depending on the size of their population. So he won in that contest by 306 Electoral College votes to Clinton, his opponent’s 232 Electoral College votes.

So the rules of the game in the United States allow him to win by winning a majority of those votes that are allocated across the 50 states. If the political system or the electoral process allowed somebody to win the election on the basis of the popular vote, then Clinton would have won. If she for example were running in the second ballot of the French presidency, she got 64.6 million votes to Trump’s 62.4 million votes across the Republic, because she won large popular states, such as New York and California, which weren’t competitive in the election because everybody knew that they would vote for the Democrat.

So Trump’s victory, the thing that makes him President-Elect, the thing that will make him President, once the results are finally tabulated and the Electoral College result certified, on the 20th of January 2017 at 12 o’clock he’ll become President simply because he won the election. Much to the surprise of most people, including it’s said the Trump campaign themselves.

TENDAYI BLOOM
OK thanks. Agnes, does that raise any questions in terms of what it means for democracy?
AGNES CZAJKA
Yes, I mean I think it raises a number of different and quite interesting questions. I mean the distinction between Electoral College votes on the one hand versus popular support on the other hand is one question. Another question of course is voter turnout, because – and this is not the case only for American democracy but as we know voter turnouts are generally quite low. So the question that this raises, you know, when we talk about democracy is who votes for those who represent us. What percentage of the actual population decides who represents us or who represents the American people? How informed are voters? And what do they actually vote for? I mean that’s another question that a lot of people were raising during the Trump campaign but also in the aftermath of the election, you know, do voters actually know what they were voting for, who they are voting for? Do they vote on specific policies? Do they vote on leadership qualities or potential leadership qualities? Do they vote for candidates who speak their language, who share their views, who represent their interests and so on?

So I think when we think about democracies in our presentation, that’s another important question that this raises. And of course the question of whose interests actually Trump represents. You know, does he actually represent the interests of the people who voted for him and can he actually, as he’s gotten support from quite a range of different people, of different classes and so on, and his constituency in many ways is not homogenous. So the question also is, you know, can he actually square all these interests into some sort of comprehensive policies? And of course all of these questions are not just questions to the Trump election, they’re questions that sort of lie at the court of all democracies, of all elections and so on, but I think in this case they were brought maybe to the fore a little bit more because of the contentious nature of the campaign and of the election and so on.

TENDAYI BLOOM
No, that’s very helpful. Maybe it leads to another question for the two of you, which is what kind of questions it raises about the relationship more generally between political leaders and the people?

RICHARD HEFFERNAN
Well I think when people are asked to make an electoral choice, whether they’re electing a Member of Parliament in the UK, a Member of the Congress in the
United States, or the President in the case of this particular race, they do so for a variety of reasons. Some people are partisans: they vote for the Democrat candidate or the Republican candidate. Utah always votes by a majority for whoever is the Republican candidate, so too California for the Democrat. Wisconsin usually for the Democrat, but this time it went for Trump who is a Republican.

So people vote for a sense of partisan identity. Probably of those voting at the last election for Trump versus Clinton, probably 35% of people who voted Republican vote republican consistently and probably the same could be said for the Democratic side. There are a series of swing voters. And of course the thing about the electoral system in the United States is particularly interesting, the campaign involves all 50 states and all 330 million or so citizens who are eligible to vote and of the age that you need to be, but the campaign is confined to a series of swing states: principally this election in Florida, in North Carolina, in Pennsylvania and Ohio, in Wisconsin and in Michigan. Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio have voted Democrat in the past; however, Ohio votes tends to go the President.

So Barack Obama won these quite handsomely in 2008 and again less handsomely in 2012. And so a lot of people suggest that the Democrat vote for Clinton was down. So it wasn’t just that Trump won, it was also that Clinton lost. She was not seen to be a change agent candidate in a very volatile election. She’d been around in elected politics or representative politics as her husband’s First Lady since 1992. So she was a bit long in the tooth. She’d been a Senator and she’d been a Secretary of State in the first Obama term. And Trump was a new innovative candidate. He’s the first person, the first ever elected position he has held is that of President. The only person who’s done that in the history of that Republic was Dwight Eisenhower who had helped organise and fight D-Day and had been a leading experienced general and a politician of sorts in that capacity. So Trump is elected.

So there’s a lot of reactions to anti-political movements: a lot of people vote because they liked Trump or because they’re angry at Clinton. We need to study this and understand this. It’s too soon to tell what happened, but I do think that the Trump phenomena is extraordinary, because nobody said it could happen, everybody said it wouldn’t happen. I said that myself. I expected to go to bed on
election night at 1.30 when the polls and the networks had called it for Clinton as the Democrat having won Florida and North Carolina; I went to bed at 9.30 the next morning having discovered that Trump had won.

**TENDAYI BLOOM**
Thanks. Did you want to add something Agnes?

**AGNES CZAJKA**
Yes, sure. I mean I think it’s quite right to say that, you know, it’s not just Trump that won but it’s Hillary Clinton that lost, and I think that’s also quite significant. Because there were actually a lot of voters who generally vote Democrat who felt quite disenfranchised in a sense from Hillary Clinton’s campaign for a lot of the reasons that Richard had mentioned. And I think part of the issue was that there was a sense that people wanted something else. That they didn’t want, you know, even Democratic Party supporters said they didn’t want that seasoned politician who has been around for so long, who had a history of voting behaviour for instance that people were quite dissatisfied about and that they wanted something different. Whether that something different was Trump is a different question, but there was a lot of dissatisfaction I think generally.

I think another question that this raises, and I think Richard has touched on this a little bit, is what kinds of qualities do people want in their leaders. Do they actually want a leader who is like them or do they want a leader who is not like them? And I think a lot of the Trump campaign hinged on showing that Trump is one of the people. That he is not a part of that traditional political lead that Hillary Clinton is associated with; that he is in some senses at least an outsider, at least to the political elite and to that traditional political establishment. And I think, and a lot of people have argued that with the rise of mass politics and mass political parties that politicians need to appear close to the people. They need to appear as being one of the people, not sort of as the aloof disconnected political elite, and I think much of this election or at least a significant part of this election and of the success of Trump was about that.

**TENDAYI BLOOM**
Thank you very much. I think we’re coming to near the end of our time that I’m going to give the last word to Richard.
RICHARD HEFFERNAN
To just on the Trump phenomena, I mean Trump has presented himself as an anti-elitist man of the people. He is such in the sense that he owns his own plane which has his name on the side of it, and when he becomes President he will be trading down from the Trump plane to Airforce One, which is less commodious in terms of its appearance and style and comfort. I think he is a wealthy billionaire and very powerful in his own way. Celebrity, of course, because he was involved in reality TV, so he had a named recognition as being a celebrity in his own right established over a number of years and building a lot of ghastly buildings with his name on them throughout the Republic. But I think in part that’s an interesting point because he was a repository for people expressing their hopes but also people expressing their distaste of the political arena and the political establishment. So, and that includes people like us who study it and try to explain it. The people are angry I think in large number and used Trump as a means to make clear their distaste.

TENDAYI BLOOM
Thank you very much. What a great note to end on.

END OF RECORDING