

# Accountability is not for the powerful

Women and children are considered “other” in society. This means that their lives are always seen to be of less value in comparison to men. When we add considerations such as race and class into the mix, we get a grim reality of inequity that demonstrates society’s distaste for those who are seen to exist on the margins of society. The recent allegations of sexual assault by an Indigenous schoolgirl against Nigel Dharamlall is an example that puts all of that on display.

The PPP/C has a long history of hiding behind the law with calls to let justice “run its course” when it comes to the violent men in its party. It is something that should worry us all as these men’s access to vulnerable children provides them with leeway to harm and scar them.

We must ask the question as to why so many survivors of violence are now sharing their stories on social media rather than going to the police. Could it be that they have no trust or faith in it? Why should they after all, when justice in our context is something that can easily be bought and paid for, especially when the victim is a young Indigenous girl and the alleged perpetrator a bigwig in the ruling party? Child sexual groomers are rife. They are known of, protected and promoted, whereas their victims are constantly vilified and branded as liars. The government has a responsibility to its citizens, but one thing we can always count on is them dismissing the concerns of citizens. They continue to send a dangerous message to survivors of violence that their voices and experiences do not matter. What this does is allow these



predators to continue with impunity, ensuring the perpetuation of abuse.

The words of Anil Nandlall that protest actions amount to interference in the investigations is telling - albeit not surprising - regarding the way in which the powerful close ranks around those within their orbit. Instead of chopping off the diseased foot on their body, they target anyone that challenges them. It is quite amazing to me that citizens who protest against the atrocities allowed to continue are the ones facing the harshest criticism from members of the government and the Director of Public Prosecutions, while the alleged abuser is treated with kid gloves. How is one granted the leeway to willingly proceed on administrative leave from office in cases such as these? What does justice mean when

power holders are clearly choosing to side with an alleged abuser while trying to maintain the illusion of justice? Whatever modicum of trust might have still been held in the justice system has been significantly eroded and further undermines the credibility of the government. It is quite a strange place we live in.

Citizen dissent is important in any functioning democracy, so it is not surprising that the PPP/C constantly tries to suppress it and brands protesters calling for justice in the matter as being politically motivated. Our very narrow view of politics has done us a disservice. Politics is not just about the government and the opposition, it is about the values with which one lives their lives and the views they hold on issues from the economy to human rights. So in that vein, yes, the protests are political in nature, all citizen action is political.

The government has yet another opportunity to tackle child sexual grooming from a principled stance and is yet again failing. Political considerations and power are the only things that matter to them. They cannot be relied upon, they cannot be taken seriously. Citizens must continue to dissent against the established pattern of predators within public office, to protect future victims from their claws. There is no commendable future for Guyana that does not protect its children or provide justice for those who have been harmed.

## US Politics and the Paris Finance Summit

By Jeffrey Sachs  
New World Economy

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley and French President Emmanuel Macron invited world leaders to Paris on June 22-23 to reach a new “global pact” to finance the fight against poverty and human-induced climate change. All kudos for the ambition, yet few dollars were put on the table. To an important extent, the continuing global failure to finance the fight against poverty and climate change reflects the failings of US politics, since the US, at least for the moment, remains at the center of the global financial system.

To understand US politics, we should start with the history of the British empire. As Britain became an imperial power, and then the world’s leading power of the 19th century, British philosophy changed to justify Britain’s emerging empire. British philosophers championed a powerful state (Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan*), the protection of private wealth over redistribution (John Locke’s right to “life, liberty, and property”), markets over government (Adam Smith’s “Invisible Hand”), and the futility of aiding the poor (Malthus’ law of population).

When humanitarian crises arose in the British empire, such as the Irish famine in the 1840s and the famines in India later in the century, Britain rejected providing food aid and left millions of its subjects to starve, even though food supplies were available to save them. The inaction was in line with a laissez-faire philosophy that viewed poverty as inevitable and help for the poor as morally unnecessary and practically futile.

Simply put, Britain’s elites had no interest in helping the poor subjects of the empire (or indeed Britain’s poor at home). They wanted low taxes and a powerful navy to defend their overseas investments and profits.

The United States learned its statecraft



Jeffrey Sachs

at the knee of Britain, the mother country of the American colonies. America’s founding fathers molded the new country’s political institutions and foreign policies according to British principles, albeit inventing the role of president instead of monarch. The US overtook Britain in global power in the course of World War II.

The lead author of the US Constitution, James Madison, was an ardent enthusiast of Locke. He was born into slave-owning wealth and was interested in protecting wealth from the masses. Madison feared direct democracy, in which the people participate in politics directly, and championed representative government, in which the people elect representatives who supposedly represent their interests. Madison feared local government because it was too close to the people and too likely to favor wealth redistribution. Madison therefore championed a federal government in a far-off capital.

Madison’s strategy worked. The US federal government is largely insulated from public opinion. The public majority

opposes wars, supports affordable healthcare for all, and champions higher taxes on the rich. The Congress routinely delivers wars, over-priced private healthcare, and tax cuts for the rich.

The US calls itself a democracy but is in fact a plutocracy. (The Economist Intelligence Unit categorizes the US a “flawed democracy”). The rich and corporate lobbies finance the political campaigns, and in return, the government delivers low taxes for the rich, freedom to pollute, and war. Private health companies dominate healthcare. Wall Street runs the financial system. Big Oil runs the energy system. And the military-industrial lobby runs the foreign policy.

This brings us to the global climate crisis. The most powerful nation in the world has a domestic energy policy still in the hands of Big Oil. It has a foreign policy that aims to preserve US hegemony through wars. And it has a Congress designed to protect the rich from the demands of the masses, whether to fight poverty or to fight climate change. The US leaders who attended the Paris Summit, John Kerry (U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate) and Janet Yellen (U.S. Treasury Secretary) are individuals of outstanding ethics and deep and long-standing commitments to fighting poverty and climate change. Yet they cannot deliver actual US policy. Congress and the US plutocracy stand in the way.

The leaders at the Paris Summit recognized the urgent need for a massive expansion of official development financing from the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), meaning the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and others. Yet to expand their lending by the amounts needed, the MDBs will require more paid-in capital from the US, Europe, and other major economies. Yet the US Congress opposes investing more capital in the MDBs, and the US opposi-

tion is (so far) blocking global action.

The Congress opposes more capital for three reasons. First, it would cost the US a little bit of money, and rich campaign funders aren’t interested. Second, it would accelerate the global transition from fossil fuels, and America’s Big Oil lobby wants to delay, not accelerate, the transition. Third, it would hand more policy influence to global institutions in which China participates, yet the military-industrial complex wants to fight China, not collaborate with it.

Thus, while developing countries need hundreds of billions of dollars in additional MDB lending each year, backed by additional MDB capital, the US and Europe are instead pressing the MDBs to lend slightly more with their existing capital. The MDBs might possibly squeeze out another \$20 billion in loans each year with their current capital, a tiny fraction of what’s needed.

The exasperation of the developing world was on full display in Paris. Brazil’s President Lula da Silva and several African presidents made clear that there are too many summits and too few dollars. China’s Premier Li Qiang spoke quietly and courteously, pledging that China will do its part alongside the developing countries.

Solutions will finally come when the rest of the world moves forward despite US foot-dragging. Instead of allowing the US to block more capital for the MDBs, the rest of the world should move forward with or without the US. Even the US plutocrats will realize that it’s better to pay the modest price of fighting poverty and climate change than to face a world that rejects their greed and belligerency.

*Prof Sachs is professor and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and president of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. [www.jeffsachs.org](http://www.jeffsachs.org)*