

## ZOHRAN MAMDANI : NEW YORK'S FIRST INDIAN ORIGIN, MUSLIM, MAYOR ELECT.

By winning the New York Mayoral election against a former State Governor endorsed by President Trump & generously financed by its wealthiest capitalists, Zohran Mamdani has joined the ranks of the world's "Velvet Revolutionaries". Prominent among them are Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Corazon Aquino, Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel & Desmond Tutu. They all had their own names for their revolutionary strategies. Gandhi named it 'Satyagraha' (Truth Force), King as 'Soul Force', Aquino as 'Erda' (People's Power) Walesa as 'Solidarność.' (Solidarity), Havel as "Moc bezmocných" ('Power of the Powerless' & Tutu as 'Ubuntu' (compassionate humanity).

Roger Markwick has written a book about them & titled it 'From Violence to Velvet : A Century of Revolutions 1917 - 2017'

Mamdani's revolutionary slogan was 'Affordability'

He aptly quoted Jawaharlal Nehru in his victory speech : "A moment comes, but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance." . His speech is so well crafted, that it qualifies to be in the same league as Nehru's 'Tryst with Destiny' & Martin Luther King's 'I have a Dream' speeches.

Mamdani's background & playbook are remarkably like Mahatma Gandhi's. His paternal ancestors are from Gujarat; he spent two years of his youth in South Africa & has successfully confronted injustice, racism & authoritarianism. A brief sketch of his amazing life is as under : :Born in Kampala in October 1991, he moved to Cape Town in 1996 as his father was appointed Dean of African studies at its University .]These were early post-apartheid years in South Africa & taught him " what inequality & injustice actually look like upclose". Two years later his family & he moved to the United States, where he studied at Bank Street School in Manhattan, graduated from Bronx High School & then secured a post graduate degree in African History from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. Here he co-founded its 'Students for Justice in Palestine' chapter & co-authored an op-ed in *Bangor Daily News*, urging Bowdoin College to join the American Studies Association's boycott of Israel.

In 2019 he campaigned for Palestinian Lutheran minister Khader El-Yateem, in New York City Council's 2019 election & began actively supported the pro Palestine BDS campaign.

Elected to the New York State Assembly in 2020, by defeating five-term incumbent Aravella Simotas, he was re-elected in 2022 & 2024.

In October 2024 he announced his candidacy for Democratic Party's nomination for New York city's Mayoral election. Most political analysts rated his chances of securing it as "less than 1%". He not only secured it but also won the November 5, 2025 Mayoral election with the largest number of votes for over a century This has made him the first

Indian origin, Africa born, Pro-Palestine, Muslim Mayor elect of the most international, capitalist, pro-Israel city in the world! .

Mamdani's election is revolutionary because he has dethroned the Cuomo political dynasty, which was deeply entrenched in New York State politics had dominated it for over five decades . It is also so, because it is the first vital US election won without AIPAC funds. Its first notable impact was on Massachusetts Democratic Rep. Seth Moulton, who is campaigning for a Senate seat in the 2026 primary. He has declared he would hereafter "not accept any funds from AIPAC & would return all campaign donations received hitherto from individuals affiliated with it".

The main components of Gandhi's Truth Force strategy, in his own words, are given hereunder :

"He who fears, fails"

"Peace will come where Truth is pursued & Truth implies Justice:

" Recall the face of the poorest man or woman you have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate will benefit him or her " .

"I would not have that Swaraj in which women have not made their full contribution"

"Independent India as conceived by me will have all Indians of different religions living in perfect harmony".

"A non violent revolution is not about a 'seizure of power' but a determined effort to bring about a transformation of relationships".

: "My sympathies are all with the Jews. But this does not blind me to the requirements of Justice. It is wrong to impose the Jews on the Arabs..

Mamdani's victory speech & the steps he has taken before & after are it, indicate his adoption the Gandhi playbook.

### **1. Fearlessness :**

"I am still young, despite my best efforts to grow older. I am Muslim. I am a democratic socialist. And most damning of all, I refuse to apologize for any of this.

The future is in our hands. My friends, we have toppled a political dynasty.

If anyone can show a nation betrayed by Donald Trump & how to defeat him, it is the city that gave rise to him. If there is a way to terrify a despot, it is by dismantling the means that enabled him to accumulate power.

So, Donald Trump, since I know you're watching, I have four words for you: Turn the volume up.

So hear me, President Trump, to get to any of us, you will have to get through all of us.

### **2. Pursuing Truth & Justice:**

"As we turn the page on a politics that abandons the many and answers only to the few, you have delivered a mandate for a new kind of politics."

Too many working people cannot recognize themselves in our party, and too many have turned to the right because they've been left behind..

In this moment of political darkness, New York will be the light. Here, we will stand up for those we love, the immigrant, a trans community member & the many Black women that Donald Trump has fired from a federal job, a single mom waiting for grocery costs to go down. Your struggle will be our struggle too.

For years, those in City Hall have only helped those who can help them. But on 1 January, we will usher in a city government that helps everyone.

"For as long as we can remember, the working people of New York have been told by the wealthy and the well-connected that power does not belong in their hands.

Together, we will usher in a generation of change. If we all embrace this brave new course, rather than flee from it & confront oligarchy & authoritarianism with the strength it fears, not the appeasement it craves, we will succeed..

### **3. Concern for the Poor & Oppressed:**

Tonight we have stepped out from the old into the new. So let us speak now, with clarity & conviction about what this new age will deliver & for whom.

Central to that vision will be the most ambitious agenda to tackle the cost-of-living crisis that will freeze rents for more than 2 million tenants, make buses free, and deliver universal childcare across our city.

We will work tirelessly to make lights shine again in the hallways of NYCHA developments where they have long flickered.

Safety and justice will go hand in hand as we work with police officers to reduce crime and create a department of community safety that tackles the mental health & homelessness crises.

This campaign is about people like Wesley, a New Yorker who commutes two hours each way from Pennsylvania because rent is too expensive in this city. And it's about people like Richard, the taxi driver I went on a 15-day hunger strike with outside of City Hall, who still has to drive his cab seven days a week.

I speak also of Yemeni bodega owners and Mexican abuelas. Senegalese taxi drivers and Uzbek nurses. Trinidadian line cooks and Ethiopian aunties.

Fingers bruised from lifting boxes on the warehouse floor, palms calloused from delivery bike handlebars, knuckles scarred with kitchen burns: these are not hands that have been allowed to hold power. And yet, over the last 12 months, you have dared to reach for something greater.

For years, those in City Hall have only helped those who can help them. But on 1 January, we will usher in a city government that helps everyone.

We will stand alongside unions & expand labour protections because when working people have ironclad rights, those who seek to exploit them are greatly diminished.

New York will remain a city of immigrants: a city built by immigrants, powered by immigrants and, as of tonight, led by an immigrant.

Together, New York, we're going to freeze the rent together, make buses fast and free & deliver universal childcare".

Mamdani received over a million votes, becoming the first candidate to do so since Mayor John Lindsay in 1969. He won 61% of Black, 57% of Hispanic % 33% of Jewish vote.

US political analyst Ben Davis, has written about this in the Guardian as follows:

"In both the primary & general, Mamdani reshaped the electorate, bringing hundreds of thousands of non-voters to the polls, from young people to left-behind immigrant communities. For the first time, these voters reflected New York city's demographics, were a coalition that spanned classes & races, dominated by low-income renters & public transit users.

But its most important component was the 100,000 active volunteers who knocked on doors, talked to neighbours & co-workers & transformed politics into a living, breathing act of

community responsibility & not just showing up to tick a box every few years. This has happened here for the first time in many decades”.

#### **4. Inter Religious Harmony**

“We will stand steadfast alongside Jewish New Yorkers in their fight against the scourge of anti-Semitism & with the more than 1 million Muslims in this city's five boroughs. No more will Islamophobia be trafficked in this city to win an election.

Tonight we have spoken in a clear voice. Hope is alive. More than a million of us stood in our churches, in gymnasiums & community centres, as we filled in the ledger of democracy.

And while we cast our ballots alone, we chose hope together. Hope over tyranny. Hope over big money and small ideas. Hope over despair.

#### **5. Mobilization of women & youth**

“I can see the dawn of a better day for humanity and that is because of you. So before I say anything else, I must say this: thank you.

Thank you to the next generation of New Yorkers who refuse to accept that the promise of a better future was a relic of the past.

This victory is for all of them, and the more than 100,000 volunteers who built this campaign into an unstoppable force. With every door knocked, every signature earned, and every

conversation, you eroded the cynicism that has come to define our politics.

Together, we will usher in a generation of change. If we all embrace this brave new course, rather than flee from it & confront oligarchy & authoritarianism with the strength it fears, not the appeasement it craves, we will succeed.

A CBS News poll indicated he received 66% of first-time voters. & 84% of votes from women aged 18-29 & 65% of women aged 30-45.

Mamdani's all-female transition team is led by Elana Leopold as executive director. Its co-chairs were Maria Torres-Springer, former first deputy mayor & Lina Khan, Federal Trade Commission Chair in the Biden administration.

He has named Dean Fuleihan as his first deputy mayor and Elle Bisgaard-Church as his chief of staff. The latter was his chief of staff in the state Assembly.

On the important Housing Commission he has appointed 'Open New York' President Annemarie Gray, New York State Tenant Bloc leader Cea Weaver & New York Real Estate Board President Jed Walentas, United Way president & CEO, Grace Bonilla; & former deputy mayor for health & human services Melanie Hartzog.

## **6. Transformation of relationships**

Mamdani's intrepid effort to bring about a change in relationships is shown in his seeking a meeting with President

Trump, despite all previous meetings between him & his opponents being disastrous for the latter, as happened to Ukraine President Zelensky.

Mamdani's meeting with President Trump had a stunning outcome. On its conclusion the latter, at their joint press conference, stated "Our meeting today actually surprised me. He wants to see housing being built. He wants to see rents coming down. These are things that I agree with".

Just four weeks earlier he had threatened to withhold federal funding from New York City & send in the National Guard & arrest Mamdani if he was elected.

A BBC report about this meeting was titled 'Unexpectedly friendly - not at all what was predicted' & stated : "After months of warning that New York City would become a "Complete & Total Economic & Social Disaster" under a Mamdani administration, Trump said today that he'd be comfortable living in the city with Mamdani as mayor". He also said he "feels confident in Mamdani's ability to lead the city we both love".

New York City's budget for fiscal year 2026 includes approx. \$7.4bn in federal funding, accounting for 6.4% of total spending, At considerable risk during his campaign, it is probably secure after his November 21.meeting with President Trump.

Mamdani's fundraising has also broken records. It raised more than \$20m from small donors, whose average contribution was \$80. His pre-inauguration fund raising has also been equally impressive.

## 7. The Palestine Israel issue :

Mamdani's long standing sympathy & support for the Palestinians commenced with his co-founding the 'Students for Justice in Palestine' chapter of Bowdoin College. He subsequently co-authored an op-ed in *Bangor Daily News*, urging Bowdoin College to join the American Studies Association's boycott of Israel. In 2019 he campaigned for Palestinian Lutheran minister Khader El-Yateem, in New York City Council's 2019 election & then began actively supporting the pro Palestine BDS campaign.

For his support to Palestine thereafter, hereunder are extracts from an article titled 'Zohran Mamdani Won't Be Silent on Palestine—Even If His Party Is' published in July 2025 by the Institute of Palestine Studies :

"For years, Palestine has remained a politically sensitive topic in U.S. discourse. The American political landscape has cultivated a culture of caution & silence about Palestine. This has intensified with the ongoing genocide in Gaza. The Biden administration was openly complicit in the bombing of Palestinian civilians. The Trump administration has shown profound disregard for their mass starvation. Among elected officials, unwilling to challenge their pro-Israel, Zionist donors, this is a near-taboo topic. Against this backdrop, a Zohran Mamdani administration in New York City could be a seismic shift. He has been unflinching in his support for Palestinian rights.

An immigrant from Uganda he is one of few elected officials in the US to openly support the BDS campaign & the Palestinian struggle for self determination He has never shied away from condemning the genocide in Gaza & the apartheid in the occupied West Bank. He has even averred that he would arrest Benjamin Netanyahu if he ever came to New York City while he is its mayor. .His outspoken views on Palestine are in stark contrast to those NYC's present mayor Eric Adams, who has ordered arrest of hundreds of protesters—including university students and faculty—for participating in anti-genocide demonstrations in recent months.

Mamdani's mayoral term could be a turning point not only for NYC politics, but also for the national discourse on Palestine & its right to self-determination. It could challenge the long dominant pro-Israeli orthodoxy in U.S. political discourse & be a catalyst for change.

Mamdani's intrepid grassroots level campaigning & fund raising has encouraged other Muslim Americans to do likewise & succeed. Notable among them are : Ghazala Hashmi, a Muslim academic administrator of Indian origin, who was elected Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia. Born in the Indian city of Hyderabad, she had moved to the US as an infant in 1969, graduated from Georgia Southern University & secured a Ph.D from Emory University.

In the Minneapolis Mayoral election Somali American Omar Fateh secured the second place but since his opponent Jacob Frey did not win an outright majority a second round election will be held.

Just NYC Mayor-Elect Mamdani, Fateh is a democratic socialist, and campaigned with policies of higher taxes on the rich & more affordable housing. Fellow Somali American politician, Congresswoman Ilhan Omar had canvassed for him.

In Dearborn, Michigan, Abdullah Hammoud, born in Egypt of Lebanese parents, won its mayoral election an overwhelming with 73 percent of the vote. He is Dearborn's second youngest mayor & its first Muslim & Arab American one.

In another Michigan city, Arab American Ms Mo Baydoun won the City of Dearborn Heights mayoral election, with 68 percent of the vote.

Elsewhere, the Boston suburb of Sommerville adopted a resolution, with 55 % vote majority, urging city officials to divest from companies that "engage in business that sustains Israel's apartheid, genocide & illegal occupation of Palestine". This initiative was taken by the 'Sommerville for Palestine', advocacy group. Whether the suburb's mayor-elect will enact this proposal is unknown.

Sommerville became a pro-Palestinian stronghold after Turkish Tufts University student Rumeysa Ozturk was detained by US Department of Homeland Security officers in March 2025 over her pro-Palestinian views.

Will Durant had lauded Gandhi thus : "China followed Sun Yat Sen, took up the sword and fell into the arms of Japan. India, weapon less, accepted as her leader one of the strangest figures in history, and gave to the world the unprecedented phenomenon of a revolution led by a saint, and waged without a gun"

I will conclude by paraphrasing this quote :  
Andrew Cuomo, followed Mario Cuomo & fell into the arms of oblivion. New York City elected as its leader one of the strangest figures in US history, & gave to the world the unprecedented phenomenon of a revolution led by an Indian origin Muslim, & waged without a penny of AIPAC funds.

!~~~~~

Total Word count " 3014