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## The Verdict



Image by Jon Tyson.

The verdict is in: on the merits, Donald J. Trump: guilty as sin and then some. No surprise there.

The House impeachment managers nailed him, though they could have been a tad less supportive of Mike Pence and the men and women in blue, and who knows what they were up to or why when, after winning the right to call witnesses, they decided not to call any.

Was it the “centrist” Senate leadership? The White House? Was it their liberalism (liberals, Robert Frost pointed out, are too reasonable to take their own side in an argument or debate)? Perhaps this will become clear in time.

Meanwhile, forty-three members of the Base and Servile Party, the GOP, voted to acquit. No surprise there either.

Not one of those forty-three miscreants even bothered to question the facts. How could they, when they were there, when it happened to them? They're surely not that into "alternative facts."

The ones who had enough self-respect to look for an excuse took refuge behind a "technicality" — that Trump, being currently out of office, cannot be removed from office, and therefore cannot be impeached.

No matter that textually, historically, and logically, this is a pitifully poor argument, as Jamie Raskin and some of the other impeachment managers made painfully clear, time and again.

No matter either that Trump actually was impeached, though not yet tried and convicted, while he still was in office; or that it was Mitch McConnell, still the Majority Leader, who refused to deal with the impeachment charge before Inauguration Day.

Trump would have had better legal representation had he dug up and hired the Three Stooges, but that didn't matter at all. McConnell had the situation under control.

Before dead and injured bodies started piling up — thanks, in large part to Trump's malevolent and incompetent response to the covid-19 pandemic — it could have been argued that, in the larger scheme of things, McConnell was even worse than Trump.

Among other things, he effectively hijacked the federal judiciary, stuffing it full of troglodyte judges. This was a boon to some retrograde "faith communities" and to doctrinaire free marketeers, and a grievous harm to everyone who still has the sense they were born with. The consequences will not be as easily or quickly expunged as the harms Trump inflicted upon the body politic.

It must be said, though, that, compared to nearly all mainstream Democrats, Trump did have one saving grace. Though second to none in trying to turn China into a Cold War enemy, he did thwart efforts to revive the mother of all Cold Wars, the one that targeted Russia, the only country in the world besides the United States with a nuclear arsenal sufficient for destroying organized human life not just in the United States and Russia, but in all the four corners of the planet we share.

Immediately after voting to acquit the Donald, deep sixing any chance of bringing enough Republicans on board actually to convict him of egregious "high crimes and misdemeanors," McConnell gave a speech that, but for its duplicitous, self-exonerating conclusion, could as well have been delivered by an impeachment manager.

What a remarkable performance! Until that point, McConnell was good only for keeping Republican malefactors in line and for kissing donors' asses. Trump's second impeachment trial showed that he is also a past master at talking out of both sides of his mouth.

He basically had no choice inasmuch as he wanted to keep Trump's base on board, while also placating big money donors who had come to the realization that while Trump had given them tax cuts and deregulation, he was fast becoming bad for business.

In striking out against him, McConnell had not all of a sudden gone decent. He was just responding to the increasingly plain fact that the world had changed.

It has changed in ways that make it plausible to think that we might actually now be better off with Trump not convicted, but only twice impeached and broadly and deeply reviled.

So far from thinking, even for a moment, that the Trump problem has become a dead letter, we can now give full rein, among other things, to:

- shunning and disparaging all things Trumpian; not just the man himself, but also his idiot adult sons (Barron can remain off-limits for a while) and their lady consorts, Ivanka and Jared, bearers of bad seed, Tiffany, the bimbo daughter, and, of course, the aging trophy bride Melania.

- putting a cork in the bipartisan crap that our political class and the corporate media toadies that serve them promote 24/7. Until there is systemic change, Republicans cannot be ignored, but the idea of treating them respectfully or even taking seriously what they have to say is worse than appalling; because they are untrustworthy to the core, it is demeaning and monumentally unwise.

- stifling the temptation to go the Obama-Holder route by letting Trump and Trump Party criminals off scot free. Biden must be itching to do precisely that – “moving on” is in his genes — but pressure from progressive Democrats and others should be mobilized to prevent him from keeping the Justice Department from doing what it is supposed to do, according to the principle of “equal justice under law.”

- encouraging state and local governments also to do their duty by going after Trump and his cronies for their criminally actionable offenses. New York City and New York state have much to offer in this regard, as do the District of Columbia and the state of Georgia. “Go for it,” should be the order of the day.

- moving forward on DC statehood – and Puerto Rican statehood too, if they want it. “No taxation without representation” is, after all, a founding principle of the republic. This would bring more Democrats into the Senate but, even apart from that currently urgent concern, it is a case in which by doing right, we would also be doing good — remedying some of the grotesquely non- and anti-democratic institutional arrangements bequeathed us by those much bally-hoed “founders” of ours. The Senate is high on the list, along with the Electoral College.

- undoing, as best and as quickly as we can, the harm McConnell *et. al.* have done to the federal judiciary – by adding competent and progressive judges to the district courts, the appeals courts, and the Supreme Court would be justifiable on efficiency grounds as well as for obvious ideological reasons. Term limits could be helpful too. How can anyone not choke

on all the blather we hear nowadays about how wonderful our democracy is when our judicial system can and does act like a super-legislature, comprised of judges serving life terms and accountable to no one?

-attacking the massive problems bred by egregious inequalities of income and wealth. Economic inequality aside, our political institutions mandate so much inequality of political power that it would be fair to describe our so-called democracy as a system of minority rule. Adding economic inequality back into the mix and the problem becomes worse by many orders of magnitude.

-moving forward on a progressive agenda of the sort that the Left opposition, now firmly implanted and growing within the Democratic Party fold, promotes. For now, because the fi was in in the primaries, there is no chance of implementing anything called a “Green New Deal” or “Medicare for All.” But by making Biden offers he cannot refuse, it should be possible, at the very least, to move forward in that general direction.

Even before Trump, Republicans have shown themselves repeatedly to be beyond redemption. Now, by voting not to convict Trump of sedition, even in the face of overwhelming evidence the truth and power of which they fully acknowledge, and even when the sedition of which he is accused directly threatened them and their families, the point is so powerfully driven home that there can be no one so willfully blind as to be unable to see it.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party mainstream is still very much in the clutches of the neoliberal, liberal imperialist politics that made Trump possible, if not outright inevitable.

Nothing can be done about the GOP, but today’s Democratic Party is practically begging to be taken in hand and changed.

Perhaps, ironically, the blatant malfeasance of forty-three Republican Senator — jurors can help with that. To the extent that it does, what we lament today could well be seen in retrospect in a very different light, as a blessing in disguise.

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