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No Time to Relax: Dark Clouds in Biden's America



Image by Roger Hoover.

The sense of relief that came over many Americans after the malignant pandemo-fascist Donald Trump's removal from power seems increasingly misplaced. The feeling of relaxation is understandable. The pandemic is in significant retreat inside the U.S. as summer dawns, thanks in part to the Biden administration's vaccination efforts. The improved U.S. health outlook combined with Biden and the Congressional Democrats' large opening stimulus package to spark some modest economic recovery and hiring expansion. Significantly vaccinated fans, shoppers, diners, vacationers, drinkers, entertainment seekers, and gamblers have returned to American major league baseball, basketball, and hockey games, beaches, bars, restaurants, hotels, casinos, movie theaters, concerts, and shopping malls.

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On April 20th, a multiracial jury delivered a guilty verdict on all murder counts in the trial of Derek Chauvin, suggesting that the previous year's giant George Floyd Rebellion might have helped advance the fight against racist police violence.

Since January 20th, the White House, the news cycle, and social media are no longer menacingly occupied by a malignantly narcissist neofascist hate machine who turned the U.S. presidency into a frightening embarrassment that led even many Trump fascism-deniers to liken the 45th president to Adolf Hitler. Trump stirred the white nationalist and sexist hate and anti-truth pot on a regular basis, creating no small traumatic stress for untold millions of American and world citizens.

It been nice to hear that Biden ordered the attempted reunification of families that Trump had sadistically separated at the southern border, that Biden has had the U.S. rejoin the Paris Climate Accord, that Biden proclaimed an end to U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's "offensive operations" against Yemen (the cause of one of the world's worst humanitarian crises), and that Biden was reversing numerous noxious Trump executive actions.

There was news recently that the Trump Organization and perhaps Trump himself are under criminal and not merely civil investigation by the New York Attorney General's office, which is collaborating with the federal Manhattan District's Attorney office in a joint inquiry into Trump's fraudulent actions and tax evasion.

The Department of Justice is preparing cases against hundreds of the January 6th Capitol marauders, who tried to nullify a presidential election at the instigation of their Fearless Leader Trump.

Trump and many of his far-right backers are still thankfully banned from leading Internet venues of so-called social media. And Trump seems so far to have had little success breaking into television or online media by June of 2021.

I could go write much more about how and why many of us have felt relieved to be living in a post-Trump America between January 20th and June 2021,

Beneath the surface calm and sense of recharging and recovery, however, the land fares more ill than it might seem. Numerous related dark clouds, including the continuing specters of neofascist authoritarianism and Trump himself, still hang over the political and material landscape of America, promising new turbulence in the not-so distant future. According to many public health experts, the Center for Disease Control's May 13th relaxation of masking and social distancing regulations for vaccinated people is dangerously premature given the large number of unvaccinated Americans, the lack of any rigorous system for differentiating those had gotten their shots from those who hadn't,

the refusal of a fourth of the population to get vaccinated, and the spread of new COVID-19 variants in a world where the virus was still spreading.

More than 7,500 Americans have died from gun violence during the first five months and three weeks of 2021, a 23 percent increase over the previous year. The U.S. experienced 232 mass shootings at least 12 mass shootings (shootings involving four or more victims other than the shooter) between January 1 and May 25, 2021. Obviously a gigantic problem in and of itself, the nation's maddening and ongoing epidemic of globally unmatched domestic gun violence is a key justification for the nation's gigantic, highly militarized, and arguably fascistic police state. "Armed Madhouse" America's firearm saturation intensified during Trump's last year in office, with gun and ammunition purchases pushed to record levels by the chaos of COVID-19 and fear of racial and political violence.

Speaking of the fascistic police state, police shootings of people continued unabated during the new Biden era, even during the Chauvin trial. "Sadly," the Statista Research Department reported in early June, six weeks after Chauvin was found guilty, "the trend of fatal police shootings in the United States seems only to be increasing, with a total of 371 civilians having been fatally shot, 71 of whom were Black, in the first five months of 2021." Shockingly enough, a white police officer unnecessarily killed the young Black man Daunte Wright in Brooklyn Center, a Minneapolis suburb, during Chauvin's trial.

Even more horrifying, we have just learned from the Raza Database Project that U.S. police have killed 32,542 people since 2000. Sixty percent of the victims are people of color, who make up just 40% of the U.S. population.

The Chauvin trial and verdict was itself problematic. The media's daily coverage of the proceedings created the illusion of a government and society committed to social and racial justice and to the disciplining of racist gendarmes who go too far. Chauvin was reasonably seen by some social and racial justice advocates as a sacrificial lamb for the preservation of an insidious regime of racial oppression that rarely punishes its worst on-the-ground perpetrators. "Another deep problem here," the Chicago anti-fascist activist Jay Becker wrote me in late April, "is that people who haven't followed other 'trials' of cops who kill (the few there have been) will think that Chauvin's prosecution is typical when it is anything but. The chief of police testifying against him? Prosecutors actually prosecuting? Nope, it's really quite unprecedented and evidence of the deep, deep fear that last summer's rising against white supremacy has instilled in all law enforcement and the powers that be at large."

The danger here is that knowledge-starved Americans and whites especially will think the Chauvin trial was characteristic of how racist cops are usually treated when they kill and cripple Black and brown people. Nothing could be further from the truth, as was suggested by a New York grand jury's February 23rd decision not to indict white Rochester, New York police officers who asphyxiated the Black man Jonathan Prude to death in March of 2020.

Speaking of racialized and authoritarian violence and turning abroad, the Biden administration has coldly refused to reconsider the \$4 billion in annual military assistance Washington grants to the terrorist and judeo-fascist apartheid state of Israel after Tel Aviv murdered at least 230 Palestinians, including more than 60 children, over ten days of one-sided war with the Islamist group Hamas in May. The White House approved a \$735 million guided missile sale to Israel on May 17, in the very midst of the slaughter. And it turns out that Biden's Yemen policy shift isn't all that humanitarian after all. Under Biden's "new" policy, U.S. Department of Defense contractors will continue providing Riyadh's military jets "defensive" support. This means that the U.S. will keep enabling the savage Saudi bombing of Yemen and the blockade of Yemen's ports, reflecting the Biden administration's determination not to disturb its strategic petro-imperial partnership with the arch-reactionary Saudi regime.

Closer to home, Biden's response to the continuing migration crisis at the southern U.S. border is what the historian and activist Aviva Chomsky rightly calls "a cruel joke." The Biden border plan, Aviva Chomsky notes, focuses on "enlisting Central American governments, in particular their militaries, to prevent migration through the use of repression" while advancing a "free market" neoliberal policy model that worsens the economic misery and violence compelling Central American families to flee northward in the first place. Enlisting the Mexican and Guatemalan militaries as *de facto* proxies for Trump's wall, Biden's approach promises to fuel migration and worsen state repression. Meanwhile, the border crisis remains alive and well as juicy fodder for the white nationalist propaganda machine.

Also very much alive in the new Biden era is the ecological crisis, with the climate disaster in the lead, just the biggest issue of our or any time. The Western United States are mired in an historic drought linked to the ongoing capitalogenic climate catastrophe and another record wildfire season beckons in wooded Western regions. As The New York Times reported three weeks ago:

‘In California, wells are drying up, forcing some homeowners to drill new ones that are deeper and costlier. Lake Mead, on the border of Arizona and Nevada, is so drained of Colorado River water that the two states are facing the eventual possibility of cuts in their supply. And 1,200 miles away in North Dakota, ranchers are hauling water for livestock and giving them supplemental forage, because the heat and dryness is stunting spring growth on the rangelands...The most significant, and potentially deadly, effect of a drought that is as severe and widespread as any seen in the West is the wildfires that are raging amid hot and dry conditions. And this is well before the full blast of summer’s heat arrives. California, Arizona, and New Mexico have each had two large blazes, unusual for this early in the year. None has been fully contained, including the Palisades Fire, which has burned 1,200 acres on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Officials are predicting when the fire season ends — if it ever does, as warming conditions have made fires possible year-round in some areas — the total could exceed last year’s of 10.3 million acres.’

Biden’s climate plan, while abandoning Trump’s absurd anti-science denialism, is “orders of magnitude lower than where we need to be,” observed the executive director of the pro-Green New Deal Sunrise Movement.

Also dangerously alive and well five months after Trump’s departure from the White House is the threat of homegrown Amerikaner fascism. Four months after the Attack on the Capitol, the moderate Republican *New York Times* columnist David Brooks published a column titled “The G.O.P. is Getting Even Worse.” By Brooks’ chilling account:

‘It’s as if the Trump base felt some security when their man was at the top, and that’s now gone. Maybe Trump was the restraining force. What’s happening can only be called a venomous panic attack. Since the election, large swaths of the Trumpian right have decided America is facing a crisis like never before and they are the small army of warriors fighting with Alamo-level desperation to ensure the survival of the country as they conceive it.

The first important survey data to understand this moment is the one pollster Kristen Soltis Anderson discussed with my colleague Ezra Klein. When asked in late January if politics is more about “enacting good public policy” or “ensuring the survival of the country as we know it,” 51 percent of Trump Republicans said survival; only 19 percent said policy.

The level of Republican pessimism is off the charts. A February Economist-YouGov poll asked Americans which statement is closest to their view: “It’s a big, beautiful world, mostly full of good people, and we must find a way to embrace each other and not allow

ourselves to become isolated” or “Our lives are threatened by terrorists, criminals and illegal immigrants, and our priority should be to protect ourselves.”

Over 75 percent of Biden voters chose “a big, beautiful world.” Two-thirds of Trump voters chose “our lives are threatened.” This level of catastrophism, nearly despair, has fed into an amped-up warrior mentality.

“The decent know that they must become ruthless. They must become the stuff of nightmares,” Jack Kerwick writes in the Trumpian magazine *American Greatness*. “The good man must spare not a moment to train, in both body and mind, to become the monster that he may need to become in order to slay the monsters that prey upon the vulnerable.”

With this view, the Jan. 6 insurrection was not a shocking descent into lawlessness *but practice for the war ahead*. A week after the siege, nearly a quarter of Republicans polled said violence can be acceptable to achieve political goals. William Saletan of Slate recently rounded up the evidence showing how many Republican politicians are now cheering the Jan. 6 crowd, voting against resolutions condemning them.

...With their deep pessimism, the hyperpopulist wing of the G.O.P. seems to be crashing through the floor of philosophic liberalism into an abyss of authoritarian impulsiveness. Many of these folks are no longer even operating in the political realm. The G.O.P. response to the Biden agenda has been anemic because the base doesn’t care about mere legislation, just their own cultural standing.’

(Brooks’ was on point, even he insisted on using idiotic and inappropriate descriptors for fascists like “hyperpopulists.”)

Five months after January 6th, the GOP still belongs to its malignant cult leader Trump. It has expelled the right-wing Rep. Liz Cheney (R-WY) from the number three position in the House Republican caucus. Her sin: insufficient loyalty to the Fearless Leader. Congressional Republicans have just nixed an independent commission to investigate the putsch attempt even after the Democrats bent over backwards to make the proposed body bipartisan and limit its scope.

The malevolent monster in Mar a Lago, who belongs in a cage, will decide who his party runs or federal and even some state elections. His choices are all about allegiance to Him. State election officials who certified Biden’s victory have been replaced by Trump loyalists in “red” (Republican-controlled) states. By early April of 2021, Republican legislators had introduced 361 bills to restrict voting rights in 47 states, marking a 43%

increase in just a month, with 55 voter suppression bills moving through the legislatures in 24 states.

These are clear neofascist white-nationalist efforts to quash non-white and urban votes in response to the Big “election fraud” Lie and to a related pervasive, paranoid-style Caucasian sense that white Americans are being endangered and “replaced” by nonwhites due to demographic change. With support from demented white Amerikaners who cling to such beliefs, Republifascist state legislators across the country are advancing and passing droves of arch-reactionary bills meant to suppress Black and LatinX voting, criminalize liberal and left protest, undermine COVID-19 protections, and prevent educators from talking about racism in American history past and present. But of course. As the left historian and journalist Terry Thomas recently told me, “Erasing history and creating a national mythology are key parts of the fascist playbook.”

In a distressing mid-May 2021 reflection, *The Week*’s Damon Linker noted that “The Threat of Civil War Didn’t End with the Trump Presidency.” Noting that “a significant chunk of the American electorate now resides in an alternative universe of facts about the nation’s elections,” Linker warned about an entirely plausible scenario for 2024-25 in which Trump or another authoritarian white-nationalist presidential candidate is able to seize power, negating Biden’s popular and Electoral College win with help of Republican control of the U.S. House and key contested state legislatures:

‘Let’s assume for the sake of a thought experiment that the 2024 election pits Joe Biden against Trump or a Trumpist Republican, that Biden prevails in the popular vote by a healthy margin, that the Electoral College is decided by three states controlled by Republican officials where Biden prevailed by just a couple of percentage points, and that the GOP controls a majority of the state delegations to the House of Representatives. In this scenario, the three key state legislatures, citing unsubstantiated stories of election fraud, refuse to certify the official slate of Democratic electors and appoint an alternative slate ready to vote for the Republican candidate...This would throw the Electoral College into chaos, requiring the House to assume responsibility for the final outcome.

Republicans are favored to take control of the House in 2022, but already they control a majority of the state delegations. That will very likely still be true on Jan. 6, 2025. Which means that they could declare the Republican the victor even if Biden wins the popular vote and the Electoral College — though they would of course claim to be acting on the conviction that in reality Biden lost the key states and so also fell short of the required electoral votes...’

Such a soft coup, likely accompanied by significant hard repression, would be welcomed by the Republican base, 80 percent of whom continues to hold a favorable view of Trump three months after the attempted putsch. Much of this base is fascist. An American Enterprise Institute poll conducted after the Attack on the Capitol found that 56% of the nation's Republicans (more than 36.5 million Americans) backed the "the use of force to arrest the decline of the traditional American way of life." Four in ten (39%) explicitly embraced political violence "to protect the nation." Nearly two in three (66%) Republicans said that Biden's election win was not legitimate. Nearly three in 10 Republicans believed that the wild fascistic QAnon claim that Trump was fighting a global child sex trafficking ring was mostly (17 percent) or completely (12 percent) true. Just 30 percent of Republicans rejected this insane claim as inaccurate. Half of Republicans believed the fantastic and Orwellian claim that "antifa was responsible for the attack on the Capitol."

Five months later, a Yahoo News/YouGov poll found that well less than half of Republicans (41 percent) believed that supporters of Trump bore "some" or "a great deal" of the blame for the Capitol Riot. Less than a quarter (23 percent) of Republicans blamed Trump for the riot and more than half (52 percent) believed Trump was "not at all" to blame.

Even more counterfactually surreal is the finding that nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of Republicans placed "some" or "a great deal" of responsibility on "left-wing protesters trying to make Trump look bad" – this even though the FBI and even Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy have repudiated the falsehood that leftist protesters were involved. Also stunning is the fact that most Republicans (52 percent) believe that the January 6th rioters were "primarily peaceful and law-abiding."

Less than one in five (18 percent) of Republicans think Biden "won the election fair and square"; nearly two-thirds (64 percent) believe the election was "rigged and stolen from Trump." Nearly three-fourths (72 percent) think there was enough "election fraud" in 2020 to "influence the outcome." Widespread acceptance of the Fearless Leader Trump's Big fascist Lie of a stolen election is no doubt part of why 43 percent of Republicans felt the bloody siege of the Capital was actually or possibly "justified."

Such chilling polling data is reminiscent of candidate Trump's famous claim that his backers would stand behind even if he "went out on Fifth Avenue and shot somebody." And it is part of why the Congressional Republicans had the chutzpah to vote down the proposed January 6th commission even after Congressional Democrats did all they could to appease the white nationalist party's concerns.

That's the Amerikaner GOP after Trump's presidency, a real threat to carry out a more successful coup attempt in 2024-25 or, if Biden wins a second term, in 2028-29, when presidential term limits mean that the Democrats would no longer enjoy the levers of executive branch incumbency.

And what do the Democrats, the "inauthentic opposition" (Sheldon Wolin's term) party, propose to do about the authoritarian menace? Shockingly little, all things considered. It isn't for a lack of officially stated existential dread. In his first address to Congress last April, Biden said that the United States had recently undergone "The worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War." He linked the January 6th Attack on the Capitol to the Republican campaign to delegitimize November's election and a wider crisis of democracy. "Congress," he declared, "should pass H.R. 1 [the For the People Act] and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and send them to my desk right away." In a similar vein, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer argued in March that the state-level voter restriction laws being passed by numerous red states in the wake of Biden's inauguration "smack of Jim Crow rearing its ugly head once again...If we don't stop these vicious and often racist actions," Schumer said, "Third World autocracy will be on its way" – a curious way to describe the threat posed by First World neofascism in the world's most powerful country. In late May, Schumer cited a "concerted, nationwide effort to limit the rights of citizens to vote" and even Tweeted that the Republican-controlled state legislatures were trying to "*create a dictatorship in America.*"

Biden and Schumer's warnings are not misdirected. Hundreds of racist and partisan voter restriction bills were working their way through state legislatures, obtaining passage in numerous Republican-controlled states as I write this essay. "States have already enacted more than 20 laws this year that will make it harder for Americans to vote — and many legislatures are still in session," the prestigious Brennan Center for Justice reported at the end of May 2021. A measure moving forward in ultra-red Arizona would give the state legislature the authority to override the popular presidential vote and block the certification of future presidential-election results by simple majority vote – a stunningly authoritarian aspiration. White nationalist Republicans are clearly determined to use every weapon at their disposal to roll back nonwhite voting rights and thus Democratic Party electoral strength. A highly organized right-wing and white supremacist campaign is underway to neuter what's left of electoral democracy in the U.S.

The Democratic Party legislation advanced by Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi with support from Biden and Congressional Democrats in Congress would meaningfully

counter this neofascistic campaign. The John Lewis Voting Rights Act and the For the People Act (H.R.1) include automatic national voter registration, independent redistricting commissions to block the gerrymandering of House seats, enhanced mail-in voting, and policies to lessen the campaign finance power of the wealthy Few. Both measures enjoy firm majority support. And yet neither is likely to pass, even with the Democrats holding majorities in Congress and the executive branch. As Luke Savage noted in an *Atlantic* essay titled “If Democracy is Dying, Why are Democrats so Complacent?” the Democrats seem unwilling to match their rhetoric of existential menace with urgently required policy action because of a combination of self-interested investment in gerrymandering, misplaced faith in bipartisanship, and a pathetic refusal to challenge the Senate’s arcane, authoritarian, and racist filibuster rule:

‘Rhetoric about autocracy notwithstanding, some liberal lawmakers are quietly threatened by aspects of the legislation. A few Black representatives in the South, for example, worry that independent redistricting commissions may cost them their seat. And some establishment figures reportedly fear that more democratically structured contribution rules will embolden left-wing primary challengers propelled by small donations. Senator Joe Manchin, meanwhile, has reiterated his opposition to H.R. 1 on the deeply spurious grounds that any prospective voting-rights legislation ought to pass with bipartisan support—a DOA line of reasoning even when it comes to the watered-down version of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act that Manchin himself is proposing.

The single greatest obstacle, though, has to do with the rules governing the Senate, and whether Democrats are ultimately willing to match their language of urgency with a strategy even remotely proportional to it. Due to the chamber’s filibuster rules, most legislation requires 60 votes to pass—an impediment that effectively empowers lawmakers representing only a tiny sliver of the electorate to block policies they dislike at will, including those designed to make American democracy fairer and more inclusive. (Especially frustrating, as the voting-rights expert Ari Berman has pointed out, is that Republican-controlled legislatures face no such supermajority requirement when passing legislation designed to restrict the vote—a kind of “asymmetric warfare” in which those working to preserve minority rule have a majoritarian advantage.)

Although Biden has mused about the idea of reforming the filibuster, he has ruled out its elimination. Manchin, predictably enough, is resoundingly allergic to the idea of change, while his fellow conservative Democrat Kyrsten Sinema ironically stated her emphatic

support for H.R. 1 within days of dismissing filibuster reform in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*.

“What,” Savage asks, “is more important: the death of democracy, or the preservation of a Senate tradition that has been leveraged for decades to protect conservative minority rule?” (Luke Savage, *The Atlantic*, May 24, 2021.)

Savage might also have brought up the matter of Supreme Court expansion, which Biden kicked down the road with a blue-ribbon commission to, you know, “study the matter.” Never mind that the high court seems poised to undo women’s right to abortion, already well under attack in red state America. Savage could also have noted that numerous other reforms measures linked to the common good, not just the voting rights bills but also the PRO-Act (which would essentially re-legalize union organizing in the U.S.) and more, were doomed by Congressional captivity to the minority rule practices of the U.S. Senate and the right wing’s control of the Supreme Court. And he might also have included in his analysis the Biden Justice Department’s apparent unwillingness to prosecute Trump for any of his numerous crimes against humanity, popular sovereignty, and the general welfare.

The specter of Republican neofascist authoritarianism hangs heavily over the United States. Asked by *VOX* reporter Sean Illing how concerned he was about the fate of U.S. “democracy” in light of the Republican’s authoritarian direction and the Democrats’ apparent unwillingness to counter the GOP’s antidemocratic action with forthright moves like the absolution of the reactionary filibuster in late May, political scientist David Faris says he is thinking about other countries to live in after 2024 since the Republicans seem determined to squelch out the last embers of American democracy and the Democrats appear to be unable or unwilling to protect what’s left of popular self-rule:

‘My current level of concern is exploring countries to move to after 2024. I’m deeply concerned about the direction that the Republican Party has taken, especially over the last year or so...Trump on his way out the door...took the Republicans’ waning commitment to democracy and ...weaponized it, and he made it much worse to the point where I think that a good deal of rank-and-file Republican voters simply don’t believe that Democrats can win a legitimate election. And if Democrats do win an election, it has to be fraudulent. So 2020 felt like a test run. The plot to overturn the 2020 election never had a real chance of working without some external intervention like a military coup or something like that, which I never thought was particularly likely. But the institutional path that they pursued

to steal the election failed because they didn't control Congress and they didn't control the right governorships in the right places.

...I worry complacency has set in on the Democratic side and people are lulled into thinking things are normal and fine just because Biden's approval ratings are good.

...The structural problems are even worse than I anticipated. I also didn't fully anticipate the unapologetically authoritarian turn in Republican politics. But the fixes are still there. You have to abolish the filibuster in the Senate, you have to mandate national nonpartisan redistricting, you have to make voting easier, and you have to outlaw some of these Republican voter suppression tactics.

It's bleak. I don't know what else to say.

Democrats have to get extremely lucky next year. They either need to luck into the most favorable environment for the president's party that we haven't ever had for a midterm election or ... I don't know. There's not much else they can do. None of these democracy reforms can get through on a reconciliation bill. If Democrats don't pass nonpartisan redistricting, they're going to be fighting at a huge disadvantage in the House. That's the ballgame.'

The title of Illing's interview with Faris is "Are Democrats Sleepwalking Toward Democratic Collapse?" Faris seems to think that it wouldn't matter if the Democrats were awake given the structural barriers posed by Senate apportionment rules (two U.S. Senators per state no matter how small the state's population) and the refusal of two key "moderate" Democratic Senators – Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) – to vote down the filibuster rule. For Faris, who ought to have anticipated the Republicans' "unapologetically authoritarian turn" (since the turn was well underway long before 2020) the only hope is that Republicans might develop some conscience as they take power back in 2024 and 2025:

'One thing I would ask Republicans: If it goes that way, what is it that you think you will have won? What are we even fighting about at this point? You got your corporate tax cuts. You got the Supreme Court. What is the purpose of this? Why do you want the power if it means alienating half the country and potentially breaking it up? I guess I just hope that there will be some introspection among party leaders when we're approaching that precipice.'

This is a remarkable comment, emblematic of the fascism-denial that continues to be rife across the dominant political, media, and intellectual culture. Professor Faris doesn't get it: tax cuts for Big Business and plutocratic control of the nation's high court are not the only

things the matter to the current day GOP. The Republican Party today is a neofascist, ecocidal, white-supremacist, and patriarchal, post-parliamentary Amerikaner organization that views white nationalist power as a glorious “America First” goal in and of itself. It is perfectly happy to “alienate,” “break up,” and then repress “half the country” in defense and advance of white nationalist male power.

Meanwhile the underlying, inherently inegalitarian and chaotic capitalist system, seedbed of neofascism, heightened pandemic risks[1] and the related but even more dire (strange as it feels to write) threat of ecocide, churns along, distributing wealth and hence power ever further upward. As “Sleepy” Joe “Nothing Would Fundamentally Change” Biden himself noted in his April 2021 address to Congress, dedicated to enhancing American “competitiveness” in the world capitalist and imperial system:

‘According to one study, CEOs make 320 times what their average workers make. The pandemic has only made things worse. 20 million Americans lost their jobs in the pandemic – working- and middle-class Americans. At the same time, the roughly 650 Billionaires in America saw their net worth increase by more than \$1 Trillion. Let me say that again. Just 650 people increased their wealth by more than \$1 Trillion during this pandemic. They are now worth more than \$4 Trillion.’

But of course. Having long ago “left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest,” “drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation,” and “resolved personal worth into exchange value,” capital has recurrently turned crisis and disaster to its advantage. Mere democracy and the common good, including livable ecology, have never been its concerns.

The breathing space afforded by the demented orange crime boss’s defeat and departure is welcome and worth celebrating. But modest adjustments of tax rates, bringing them back to George W. Bush levels, can no more save us from neoliberal-era fascism than modest reductions in carbon emissions can rescue us from climate disaster. The solutions lay beyond the ideological purview and institutional reach of what the nation’s two major parties, either neoliberal-fascist (the Republicans) or neoliberal-constitutional (the Democrats), are willing or able to consider. As Dr. Joan Benach counsels, a major, mass, prolonged, dedicated, mobilized, and coordinated intervention against the capitalist-imperial order (including that order’s arcane constitutional rules in the U.S.) and on behalf of the common good is urgently, existentially required. To repeat, we organize for radical

societal reconstruction and transformative (eco-) socialism or its “barbarism if we’re lucky.” The imperative is indeed, “revolution, nothing less.”

Endnote

1. See also Paul Street, “Coronavirus Capitalism and ‘Exceptional’ America,” *Counterpunch*, April 29, 2020, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/04/29/coronavirus-capitalism-and-exceptional-america/>

Paul Street’s new book is *The Hollow Resistance: Obama, Trump, and Politics of Appeasement*.

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