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BY PAUL STREET

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## *The American “System of Governance” is a Lethal Slaveowners’ Monstrosity*



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

**“No Change” Joe: “That Patience Has Been Rewarded for More Than 240 Years”**

Who can ever forget the brilliant oratory of Joe “Nothing Would Fundamentally Change” Biden two nights after Election Day last November? “Democracy is sometimes

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messy,” Joe “No Empathy, Give Me a Break” Biden said two months before Donald Trump’s wild-eyed marauders would descend on the US Capitol. “It sometimes requires a little patience. But *that patience has been rewarded now for more than 240 years with a system of governance that’s been the envy of the world.*”

What wise counsel! “Patience, underlings, your globally unmatched democracy will hear your cries!” What came over those Hunger Marchers and Sit-Down Strikers in the 1930s? What was Rosa Parks thinking when she refused to get up from that bus seat? Surely the great Black American escaped slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass needed to be more *patient* and feel more *rewarded* when he offered these bitter and impetuous reflections on July 4, 1852:

*Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them...At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation’s ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.*

*What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.*

*Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this*

*nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival*

Will we ever break the taboo that protects the United States' absurdly venerated 18th Century United States slaveowners' charter – the national constitution that William Lloyd Garrison, accompanied by Sojourner Truth, and Henry David Thoreau, called “a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell” and then burned along with the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act outside Boston on July 4, 1854 – from the radical democratic criticism and replacement it has long deserved?

### **Blocking a “Marxist” Reform**

The examples are endless of why Garrison's “covenant with death” needs to be transcended if the nation is going to have any chance of achieving popular sovereignty, the US Founders' ultimate nightmare.

Two among many possible instructive lessons are staring us in the face right now: the blockage or dilution of Biden's moderate Build Back Better bill (B4) and the likely coming Supreme Court undoing of women's constitutional right to an abortion (already abolished in the giant state of Texas and seriously rolled back in many other Bible, Lynching, and Gun Belt states) next spring.

A super-majority, 66 percent of the American citizenry supported the original \$3.5 trillion B4, which can't get through the “Tear Down Better” Congress without some major amputations.

The measure's high popularity made sense. Absurdly denounced by the ridiculous Republifascist Senator Mark Rubio (Rf-FL) as an attempt “to create *a socialist, almost Marxist-type economy*”[1], the measure may have fallen far short of socialist requirements but even an unabashed Marxist like myself has to admit that it contained many desirable benefits for ordinary Americans: :

- + A large infusion for Pell Grants (federal college tuition grants for low-income Americans).
- + Childcare and universal pre-K, including a provision to keep the cost of childcare at or below 7% of most families' income.
- + Two years of free community college for all students, regardless of family income
- + Extended child tax credits.
- + Medicare expansion to include coverage of dental, hearing and vision services.
- + Slashing prescription drug prices by permitting Medicare to negotiate drug prices.
- +Comprehensive paid family and medical leave

+Climate change mitigation, including a “clean electricity performance program” to expand renewable energy, enhanced forest conservation, incentivization of electric vehicles and residential weather-fitting, among other things.

While the corporate media and right-wing and centrist politicians constantly chirped about different dollar figures – Biden’s original \$3.5 trillion, \$2.3 trillion, Demublican Joe “Party Boat” Manchin’s \$1.5 trillion – the truth is that the measure would have *cost the public nothing: it was to be paid for with modest increases in taxes on the nation’s absurdly under-taxed rich*. And, as few in the “mainstream” imperialist media will mention, the B4’s ten-year so-called price-tag was less than half the vast corporate welfare largesse the federal government grants on a cost-plus basis to opulent high-tech “defense” (war and empire) firms in the form of the giant Pentagon system.

There’s no mystery about why the measure was so popular. It advanced real and desperately needed help for tens of millions of Americans and would have paid for these benefits with an overdue (if historically small) increase in taxes on the nation’s parasitic upper classes in a grotesquely unequal nation where the top thousandth had nearly as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent even before the pandemic increased the insane upward concentration of American net worth.

### **So NOT a “Democracy”**

So why can’t the B4 be enacted in its original and modestly progressive form in “the world’s greatest democracy”? The first thing smart liberals and Democrats who pay attention to the news will tell you is that (nominally” Democratic US Senators Manchin [WV] and Kyrsten “What Not to Wear” Sinema [AZ] are opposed to the bill’s so-called price tag (unmentionably only for the rich) and the Democrats only have a one-vote margin in the Senate. The second thing such informed Americans will say is that the Manchin (the #1 collector of political money from the coal, oil and gas, and mining industries in the 2021-22 election cycle) and the major Big Pharma funding recipient Sinema garner giant campaign contributions from corporate interests (led by Big Carbon and Big Pharma) opposed to the bill’s “big government” provisions.

Both observations are true. But Manchin’s corruption goes deeper than political finance: a recent report shows that he “earns” \$500,000 a year from coal stock dividends. Like many members of the “permanent political class” today[2], *he’s not just a whore – he’s an oligarch*. (One really must wonder how to calculate the carbon footprint of this planet-cooking parasite’s coming eternal damnation: it promises to be one of the hottest on record.)

At the same time and more to the point of this essay, there's a deeper historical and institutional problem that rarely receives proper attention from commentators and activists: the nation's "system of governance" – to use Biden's phrase – isn't democratic. It isn't democratic at all. And this goes back to the beginning of the country, decades before Frederick Douglass delivered his brilliant and righteous 1852 speech on "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July."

Democracy is not what Biden's beloved 240-year-old "system of governance" was ever about. And this is not just because the nation's plutocratic political rulers are corruptly enmeshed with 21<sup>st</sup> century corporate and financial lobbyists and bankrollers. Much of the difficulty goes back to the nation's aristo-republican Founders and their purposefully and brilliantly democracy-crippling slaveowners' charter.

#### *The Absurd House*

Look at the US Congress. Its lower body, the House of Representatives, is so badly gerrymandered rightward that the Republicans have a good shot of becoming the majority there again in 2023 even though the Republican Party is viewed with approval by just a little over a third (37%) of the populace while the Democrats are approved by nearly half (48%).

That's absurd. Forget for a moment that neither of these capitalist and imperialist parties deserves support from any decent human being. One of the nation's two major and viable political parties gets a thumbs up from nearly half the citizenry and the other such party is endorsed by just more than a third of the populace and the least popular (by far) of the two organization is poised to take back the House of Representatives in 2022/23. Ridiculous, right? But it cannot be understood without factoring in the anti-democratic role of gerrymandering and racist voter suppression conducted at the state level under the rules of a national charter and government that have long granted states remarkable autonomous power to set state and national district lines and other key election and voting rules.

#### *The Absurd Senate*

It gets more pathetically idiotic – from a democratic perspective at least – in the upper branch of Congress. How do the Republicans happen to control half of the extremely powerful US Senate and enjoy a good chance of regaining a majority there in 2023 or 2025 when their party is approved by just a bit more than a third of the populace? And how are the malignant, fossil-fueled reptile Manchin and the sartorial comedian (and onetime Naderite-turned corporatist) Sinema (who had the mind-blowing chutzpah to



fly back to her home state for a fundraiser to vacuum up contributions from companies who oppose the B4 even as the measure was being deliberated upon in Washington DC last week) able to become darkly pivotal historical actors in the first place?

It isn't just about campaign finance, corporate media, and other forms of political class corruption. Almost nobody talks about a big sick historical elephant in the room here: the further *extreme violation of the elementary democratic principle of one person, one vote by the assignment of two US Senators to every state regardless of population size*. This "democratic" absurdity is fully constitutional, for the nation's revered 18<sup>th</sup> Century Covenant with Death grossly exaggerates the Senate voice of the nation's whitest, most reactionary, Republican, evangelical, patriarchal, armed, racist, and proto-fascistic regions. Get this: if bright blue California had the same population-to-US Senator ratio as bright red Wyoming, it would have at least 130 representatives in the upper body of Congress. If progressive *Brooklyn* were a state and US Senators were apportioned there with the same populace-to-Senator ratio as red Wyoming, the New York City borough would have 9 U.S. Senators.

Due to "a growing population shift from the agricultural interior to crowded corridors along the coast," the brilliant left constitution critic Daniel Lazare noted five years ago, it had by 2018 become mathematically possible to "cobble together a [Republican] Senate majority with states that account for just 17.6 percent of the popular vote." (And, by the way, the bright blue District of Columbia is home to more people of Wyoming. It is absurdly denied voting representation in either the House or the Senate.)

The US Senate is loaded with giant *de facto* "rotten boroughs" that abhorrently inflate the power of the nation's most reactionary sections. If the Senate were apportioned in accord with the nation's popular geography, a bill far more progressive than the 4B would pass the Senate with ease and "centrist" snakes like Manchin and Sinema would be beside the point.

(Wild iconoclasts might further ask why we have a bicameral legislature, with an "upper house," in the first place. What is *that* about? Most at least nominally democratic countries are quite naturally unicameral. The US Senate, like the British House of Lords, functions as originally designed: an aristocratic check on the more plebian lower house of congress/parliament.)

*"The Peculiar System That Emerged": The Absurd Slaveowners' Electoral College*

The absurdity bleeds over into the nation's preposterous, Monty Python-esque Electoral College method of installing imperial, ruling class presidents. Two hundred and forty-

three years into its “envied” experiment in “democracy,” the United States does not elect its chief executive on the basis of a national popular vote! Because it is weighted heavily by the slaveowner constitution’s reactionary Senate apportionment regime, and because it rewards Elector slates on an all-or-nothing state-by state basis (if a candidate wins Texas by a single popular vote he or she gets all of the state’s 38 Electors), this democracy-flunking “college” requires a Democratic presidential candidate (incumbent or not) to significantly out-perform his or her Republican opponent in the popular vote to win (or keep) the presidency. Since it is *technically irrelevant to win California by five million instead of five hundred votes* under the winner-take-all formula, that candidate must give far more heed to right-wing and “moderate” opinion than would be required if the nation’s presidential elections were based on (imagine!) a popular vote. Along with other factors, including of course political finance and corporate control of the mass media, the undemocratic Electoral College tilts presidential candidates (including incumbents who want a second term) to the right and away from majority progressive public opinion. Demented Republican maniacs who lost the popular vote have occupied the world’s most powerful office for 12 of the last 22 years thanks to this idiotic regime. One of those maniacs was an at least instinctive fascist and a vicious pandemicist. He may come back for a second, potentially terminal reign of destruction in 2025, his re-matriculation coming in no small part thanks in part to the august Founders’ brilliant 18<sup>th</sup> Century college.

(Try to explain the Electoral College to someone from another country, my fellow US-American – it’s hilarious. “How absurd,” foreign correspondents say: “And they call that democracy? Seriously?” Envy indeed!)

The Electoral College traces back to the holy Founders’ need to keep the early republic’s southern slaveowners on board. As law professor Wilfried Codrington III noted in *The Atlantic* two years ago:

*‘The delegates to the Philadelphia convention had scant conception of the American presidency—the duties, powers, and limits of the office. But they did have a handful of ideas about the method for selecting the chief executive. When the idea of a popular vote was raised, they griped openly that it could result in too much democracy. With few objections, they quickly dispensed with the notion that the people might choose their leader.*

*But delegates from the slaveholding South had another rationale for opposing the direct election method, and they had no qualms about articulating it: Doing so would be to their disadvantage. Even James Madison, who professed a theoretical commitment to popular*

*democracy, succumbed to the realities of the situation. The future president acknowledged that “the people at large was in his opinion the fittest” to select the chief executive. And yet, in the same breath, he captured the sentiment of the South in the most “diplomatic” terms:*

*There was one difficulty however of a serious nature attending an immediate choice by the people. The right of suffrage was much more diffusive in the Northern than the Southern States; and the latter could have no influence in the election on the score of the Negroes. The substitution of electors obviated this difficulty and seemed on the whole to be liable to fewest objections.*

*Behind Madison’s statement were the stark facts: The populations in the North and South were approximately equal, but roughly one-third of those living in the South were held in bondage. Because of its considerable, nonvoting slave population, that region would have less clout under a popular-vote system. The ultimate solution was an indirect method of choosing the president, one that could leverage the three-fifths compromise, the Faustian bargain they’d already made to determine how congressional seats would be apportioned. With about 93 percent of the country’s slaves toiling in just five southern states, that region was the undoubted beneficiary of the compromise, increasing the size of the South’s congressional delegation by 42 percent. When the time came to agree on a system for choosing the president, it was all too easy for the delegates to resort to the three-fifths compromise as the foundation. The peculiar system that emerged was the Electoral College.’*

As historian Carol Anderson shows in her important new book *The Second: Race and Guns in a Fatally Unequal America*, “The [slave] South had no problem in walking away from the [1787-88] Constitutional Convention and the United States” if it didn’t get what its ruling slaveowners wanted, including the right to count three-fifths of their slaves’ populations towards the determination of how many representatives they could send to the lower house of Congress and an amendment guaranteeing state militias designed and managed to crush slave rebellions. (Even during the so-called American Revolutionary War, Anderson shows, southern slaveowners were willing to sacrifice national independence if necessary to block the military enlistment of Black Americans for fear that armed Blacks might take up their weapons against slavery.)

Designed to *appease southern slaveowners*, the US Constitution (William Lloyd Garrison’s “agreement with Hell”) and the rest of the nation’s astonishingly archaic governance structure, inherited from the time of Louis XVI, now helps *appease*



*neofascism* and is setting us up for a remorseless return of the white nationalist Amerikaner Party of Trump to full national power in 2023 and 2025.

### **Judicial Review**

It is true of course that the morally criminal conduct of reptilian politicians like Joe “Coal Stock” Manchin and Kyrsten “Drug Lobby” Sinema is related to the political dollars they rake in from capital – from corporate interests, business lobbyists, and other deep-pocketed political investors. But this money-politics corruption is inexplicable without reference to Joe MBNA Biden’s treasured 24-decade “system of governance.” Noxious prostituted real or wannabe dollar Dem oligarchs like Manchin and Sinema *can only become swing-vote policy royalty and thereby boost their political finance profiles* (election investment is all about impacting policy in the funders’ interest) *because of the absurd level of disproportionate minority rule power the reactionary Senate apportionment system grants the nation’s rightmost major party.*

At the same time, the Slaveowners’ Constitution grants an absurdly high level of Simon Says policymaking (and policy-breaking) “judicial review” power to the US Supreme Court, an aristocratic appointed-for-life body that has ruled in two key decisions (*Buckley v. Valeo* in 1976 and *Citizens United* in 2010) that there can be no serious government limits placed on the “free speech” right of concentrated wealth to influence (purchase) American elections and thereby shape (dominate) US policy. What current House member Jamin Raskin (D-MD) and his onetime fellow Harvard Law student John Bonifaz once cleverly labeled “the wealth primary” – the requirement that one either possess great wealth or access to it to run a viable campaign for higher office – is not an act of God. It’s an act of policy enforced by the absurdly powerful US Supreme Court, invented by the US Founders as one of many aristocratic checks on the menace posed by their ultimate enemy, democracy.

The Supreme Court, endowed with God-like powers of judicial review – the sacred high temple of democracy that ruled in 1857 that African Americans were not and never could be citizens of the United States. What a glorious and sage example of benevolent wisdom that was, clear proof that Joe “Come on, Man” Biden is right about the wonderful rewards that accrue to those who patiently let the glorious American “system of governance” work its egalitarian wonders. Just what was it about that marvelous system of popular self-rule that Frederick Douglass couldn’t wrap his mind around five years before the Dred Scott decision?!

*So What if 62% Percent Support Roe?*

Speaking of the Supreme Court, it seems likely that it will soon reverse *Roe v. Wade* and thereby eliminate women's constitutional right to receive abortions. This will impose forced motherhood and de facto female slavery across the United States (The ridiculously powerful high court has recently signed off on the full abrogation of *Roe* in Texas by refusing to intervene against a toxic Christian fascist bill with national mercenary and vigilante reach analogous to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act). So what if 62% of Americans want to keep *Roe* intact? The Supreme Court has an absurd 6-3 Republican majority, far to the right of the US populace, achieved through fully constitutional means: the appointment of high court justices (including three selected by the malignant pandemo-fascist beast Donald Trump) by right-wing Republican US presidents who were installed by the Slaveowner Constitution's anti-democratic Electoral College system and approval by a US Senate that badly overrepresents the nation's most reactionary regions and states. Constitutional Simon Says! Yet more reward for patient faith in a glorious democratic "system of governance" that has made the world green with envy for 240 years!

### **Still Slaves to the Constitution**

The US Founders' holy Covenant With Death was only passed through a grotesque series of bargains struck with the South's merciless, arch-racist owners, exploiters, and torturers of Black slaves: the putrid Three-Fifths Compromise (letting the slaveowners count three-fifths of their slave populations towards the size of their delegation in the US House of Representatives), the Fugitive Slave Clause (granting slavery extra-territoriality by stating that fugitives from slavery must be sent back to the South if captured in the North), continuation of international slave trading for two decades, the Senate apportionment regime (which significantly over-represented slave states relative to the nation's free population and electorate), the Electoral College, and the Second Amendment, upon which slaveholders insisted to assure themselves of a fighting force willing and ready to suppress slave insurrections.

Two hundred and thirty-three years after its ratification, we are still slaves to the undemocratic US Constitution in a very concrete institutional sense, with disastrous outcomes for ordinary people and livable ecology at home and abroad. The story of how and why this crippling aristo-republican slaveholders' document has survived as the nation has moved from merchant capitalism to industrial and corporate capitalism, through America's rise to global hegemony, and into the current neoliberal (and perhaps neofascist) era is a topic worthy of further investigation. The astonishing, highly atypical

durability of this 18<sup>th</sup> Century charter has yet to find its critically inclined historian, but it seems clear that the nation's underlying class dictatorship of capital has seen fit to retain this horse and buggy era deed with the Devil since it is still paying dividends.

Don't get me wrong. The class dictatorship of capital compromises and indeed crushes genuine popular sovereignty in all "bourgeois democracies" (an arguably oxymoronic phrase unless it is understood to mean *democracy for capital*), regardless of form. But the American constitutional order – Joe Biden's "system of governance" that has supposedly been "the envy of the world" for 240 years (89 of which were marked by Black chattel slavery) – is quite distinctively reactionary, canceling even modest reforms considered mainstream and centrist in other rich capitalist nations. It ought to be considered *long past its expiration date*. Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema richly deserves the worst imaginable earthly and spiritual punishments and capitalism must be radically replaced with ecosocialism on the path to communism, but national charters and governance structures matter and the US-American charter and structure is now and has long been an indefensible and authoritarian atrocity leading us to disaster in numerous ways I have only partially touched upon here.

### **Special Nullification Measures Still Required for Republifascists**

And yet all this is not enough for the Nazified Republicans of 2021. Future US historians, should they exist, may someday marvel at how determined the nation's rightmost major party, the neofascist Republicans, are to rig the constitutional game even further in their own favor through next generation gerrymandering, voter suppression, and (now) blunt election denial and nullification. The forefront of the Trump party's current assault on bourgeois electoral democracy is the constitutional art and science of not counting votes, throwing out votes, overthrowing elections, and preventing the certification of Electoral College slates that don't go Republicaners' way. Red states are currently and all-too constitutionally moving not just to suppress and gerrymander Democratic votes but to cancel, deny, de-certify, and nullify them. It's all meant to be done "constitutionally" with no street thugs, repression, and bloodshed required – at least not until people take to the streets to protest the coming theft of the 2024 presidential election.

Republican plotters see January 6<sup>th</sup> and the broader multi-pronged attack on the 2020 election (the Capitol Riot was a last-ditch Hail Mary in this assault) as an exhibition game, a practice run, and a warm-up. It's just a prologue to something far more sophisticated and serious in 2024-25. No more Beer Hall Putsches for these openly authoritarian white nationalists. They are getting all their legal and constitutional ducks in a row, coordinating

election-theft and vote-nullification strategies between the state and federal levels. The table is being set for a new shot at fascist consolidation, American style, all quite “constitutional” in design. The fascist mob and gendarme violence will come after the election is expertly pinched by red state governments, the US Congress (which should be back in Republican hands), and perhaps the disproportionately right-wing federal courts. Clearly the Amerikaner Party of Trump (the Republican Party) does not see the Founders’ charter as sufficient to guarantee the final solution they crave. Extra vote-suppressing and (worse) election-nullifying measures are required in their view because of demographic changes underscored by the 2020 Census – non-Hispanic white Americans’ declining share of the US population on the road to become a minority of the nation by 2050 if not before. Having moved from the neo-Nazi margins to the mainstream center of Republican media-politics culture, Fascist Replacement Theory (FRT)[3] is intimately linked to the Big 2020 Election Lie in fueling the coming right-wing coup of 2024-25.

### **“We Need the Storm”**

Slavery was ended and basic civil and voting were first constitutionally (and inadequately) extended to Black Americans only through the revolutionary war and southern reconstruction that southern slaveowners’ intransigence forced on Abraham Lincoln, 180,000 Black Union Army soldiers, Ulysses S. Grant, and Congressional Republicans between 1861 and 1877. Frederick Douglass’s 1852 words were born out: “*We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.*” It took a Civil War that claimed 750,000 lives to amend the Founder’s holy slaveowners’ charter in some all too historically incomplete and transient accord with democratic principles. Here we are now on the precipice of final societal and ecological collapse being inflicted on the nation and world by capitalism-imperialism, a system with no single greater national headquarters than the imperial United States. Calm patience with “our” (their) 240-year-old “system of governance” should be the very last thing on our political and moral agendas

There are no non-radical resolutions of the dilemmas facing this fatally unequal nation. The current trajectory is toward the radical right path of constitutionally consolidated and then repressively enforced and ecologically disastrous neofascism that imposes ruinous capitalist oppression. The only viable alternative is a radical people’s eco-socialist revolution that fully confronts the underlying class dictatorship of capital and struggles to put humanity on the path to many-sided liberation from all forms of oppression other than those imposed by natural existence itself.

We don't need kayak-paddling beggars trying to speak truth up to Manchin's power yacht. We need the storm that sinks his vessel in the turbulent seas of an actual revolution. We need the whirlwind. We need the earthquake. We need "the radical reconstruction of society itself" that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., identified as "the real issue to be faced" shortly before his execution. Maybe the attempted imposition of neofascist female slavery (forced motherhood) in the world's most powerful state can be a spark.

### **Endnotes**

+1. This led Paul Krugman to cleverly quip that the *Communist Manifesto* called for "Workers of the world [to] unite to spend 1.2% of GDP on popular programs over the next decade!"

+2. University of Kentucky history department chair Ronald Formisano's latest book is titled *American Oligarchy: The Permanence of the Political Class* (University of Illinois, 2017). By Formisano's detailed account, U.S. politics and policy are under the control of a "permanent political class" – a "networked layer of high-income people" including Congressional representatives (half of whom are millionaires), elected officials, campaign funders, lobbyists, consultants, appointed bureaucrats, pollsters, television celebrity journalists, university presidents, and executives at well-funded nonprofit institutions. This "permanent political class," Formisano warns, is taking the nation "beyond [mere] plutocracy" to "the hegemony of an aristocracy of inherited wealth." It: "drives economic and political inequality not only with the policies it has constructed over the past four decades, such as federal and state tax systems rigged to favor corporations and the wealthy; it also increases inequality by its self-dealing, acquisitive behavior as it enables, emulates, and enmeshes itself with the wealthiest One Percent and .01 percent ...[It engages in] the direct creation of inequality by channeling the flow of income and wealth to elites [while]... its self-aggrandizement creates a culture of corruption that infects the entire society and that induces many to abuse positions of power to emulate or rise into the One Percent ...[and as it] contributes to continuing high levels of poverty and disadvantage for millions that exceed almost all advanced nations."

+3. Special thanks to the clever English professor Clark Iverson for this play on the white nationalist right's bogeyman "CRT" (Critical Race Theory).

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

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