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It's Time for a Second American Revolution

By Jill Stein

July 4, 2016

On July 4, politicians declare their love for the American Revolution and democracy, while doing their best to oppose both at home and abroad.

The 2016 Presidential election provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to win independence from the rule of the 1%. The two 1% nominees – Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton – are the two most disliked politicians in US history. And those who plan to vote for them don't support their agenda – they just want to vote against the other candidate. Voting against your fears is not what democracy is about.

A movement for democracy and justice is sweeping the planet – from Occupy Wall Street to anti-austerity uprisings and the Black Lives Matter movement. People are rising up to halt the neoliberal assault, calling for an America and a world that works for all of us. While this movement is winning important victories – notably for living wages and against fossil fuel infrastructure – the economic elite have only tightened their grip. People are realizing that if we want to fix the rigged economy, the rigged racial injustice system, the rigged energy system and more, we must also fix the rigged political system.

The toxic 2016 Presidential election is yet another manifestation of the desperate need for deep change. Many have flocked to the banner of socialism and equality raised by the Sanders campaign, while conservative voters have rejected the illusions peddled by Republican elites.

The groundswell for Donald Trump was created by the economic misery of NAFTA and Wall Street deregulation – policies promoted by both Clintons. Neoliberal Clintonism caused the rise of Trump. Another Clinton presidency will only make things worse. The Democratic electoral strategy of promoting the lesser evil merely paves the way to the greater evil.

The extreme concentration of wealth in the top 1% undermines democracy, as economic power translates into political power. Both main parties have colluded over the last four decades to transfer wealth to their super-rich donors, while ensuring that no meaningful reforms take place to our electoral system. The U.S. leads the industrial nations in income inequality because our electoral system is the least democratic among those countries that profess to be democratic.

The first American revolution of course failed to create democracy. While it ended our status as a colony of Britain, it reserved voting power to the privileged few, mainly white male property owners. It created powerful institutions such as the US Senate, Supreme Court and the electoral college to protect against the “rule of the mob.” And the founders’ fear about the dangers of a standing army were discarded after WWII, leading to the creation of the most powerful war machine the planet has ever seen, accumulating an increasing share of the nation’s political power and resources.

The US electoral system of winner-take-all leads to the domination by two parties, one center-right and the other far-right. Hillary is the advocate for the billionaire club, and Donald is a member of it. The two establishment parties keep opposition candidates off the ballot and out of the debates, while the corporate media keeps them out of the press. No other democracy offers voters such limited choices on Election Day.

We need to overhaul our electoral system – public campaign finance reform, proportional representation, ranked choice voting – and stop voter suppression by enforcing the guaranteed right to vote. We need to override the Supreme Court’s lunacy that gives corporations and the rich the right to buy elections.

It is long past time to extend the concept of democracy to our economy. The economic dictatorship of the wealth-owning class needs to be replaced with an economic democracy where the people making up the economy decide how the economy works. This must include options for community and worker ownership, where the wage scales, disposition of profits and decisions about technology and environmental impact are made by the people who have to live with those decisions.

The clock is ticking – on the next Wall Street collapse, the climate meltdown, the expanding wars, the slide towards fascism, nuclear confrontation and more. This is the time to stand up with the courage of our convictions, while we still can. Forget the lesser evil. Fight for the greater good – like our lives depend on it, because they do. The corporate parties will not fix this for us. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.

On this Independence Day, it is time to declare our independence from the oligarchy of the super-rich and their bought and paid for political representatives in the Democratic and Republican parties. The oligarchs have two parties. It’s time we had one of our own.