

T.O. Opening Remarks: Making Waves for Democracy Oct 22 (747 Words)

WELCOME to our 65th meeting! And thank you for attending last month's in-person meeting with our speaker Manuel Pastor -- although it seems a lifetime ago now!....

I want to talk about three things today: how the Right Wing wants us all to give up AND the Israel-Hamas war AND – finally -- FDR's Four Freedoms. First, the war.

***A confession:* I've made it my business to know lots about lots of issues but for decades now I've stayed away from knowing anything about the conflict in the Middle East because it's too hard (especially in recent years since the two-state solution seems dead). It's too complicated. Although I'm not Jewish, I grew up strongly pro-Israel. But, I knew the Palestinian writer and icon Edward Said in college, and have lots of friends who align with the Palestinian cause. And I know a ton of pro-BOTH Israel and Palestine folks who identify as Mideast peace activists, mostly Jewish.**

But this week it was impossible to opt out. So I learned a lot, and still am.

In the past week, I have met with two of you – both here today -- whom I love -- one who likes the Anti-Defamation League and can't get those ugly images of Hamas' victims out of her mind -- and one who sent me an article she likes with the subhead "End Israel's Colonial Occupation and Apartheid System."

Here's what I know: We can condemn the barbarism of Hamas AND the Israeli blockade of the West Bank and Gaza. We can separate Hamas from the Palestinian people; as Harold Meyerson noted in the American Prospect, neither Israel nor Hamas allow democracy and self-determination for Palestinians, who haven't voted in Gaza in over 15 years.

Jeanne's reaction of sadness is the right one. My heart today goes out to all those affected by the brutality of war.

That leads me to my second topic:

“DON'T GIVE UP” was the title of a recent column by one of my favorite pundits, Robert Hubbell. QUOTE “...We are living through an extraordinary time. The world is being rocked by multiple overlapping crises: The terrorist attack on Israel on October 7; Israel's subsequent declaration of war on Hamas; protests throughout the Middle East sparked by the missile strike on a Gaza hospital; the ongoing war against the Ukrainian people by Putin; the inability of the House Republicans to elect a Speaker; the possibility of a government shutdown before Thanksgiving; upcoming elections in Virginia and Ohio that will serve as bellwethers for 2024; the hottest year (2023) and the hottest month (July) since scientists began keeping climate records...UNQUOTE

He goes on to say: QUOTE “That's a lot. It's easy to feel overwhelmed, to withdraw, to look away...Don't. Emotional exhaustion and intentional disengagement are the goals of bad-faith tactics used by Republicans to undermine democracy.....Our generation has one job: TO ENDURE, TO ABIDE, TO KEEP THE FAITH UNTIL THIS MOMENT OF REACTIONARY EXTREMISM SUBSIDES. IF WE CAN DO THAT, WE WILL LEAVE OUR HEIRS A HEALTHIER, STRONGER DEMOCRACY.....” (UNQUOTE)

When you get the opportunity to sign up for action in our polling later, remember that: EXHAUSTION IS THE POINT OF MAGA EXTREMISM... They WANT you to be too tired to act.

So let's not let them. Let's remember our motto:

Action is the only antidote to fear and despair.

Let's turn off the news and lace up our sneakers. We can take back the House from the do-nothing, stand-for-nothing, mean ol' Republicans. Our job is to FLIP 27 and HOLD 47. And we will.

ONE THING: Please buy and read historian Heather Cox Richardson's new book, DEMOCRACY AWAKENING, for hope and inspiration....I wanted to quote from it today, but I gave my copy away already....It's great!

So my last thing is today is: I was buoyed this week by listening to Simon Rosenberg, who's best known for predicting there would NOT be a Red Wave in 2022 and always says "I'd rather be a Democrat than a Republican right now." (JUST GOOGLE Simon Rosenberg or HOPIUM, his column.)

His rap highlights that the Republicans are in decline, the GOP has descended into MALEVOLENCE, as he puts it. And the Democrats have the vastly superior record on even issues that Republicans pretend they own such as ECONOMICS.....Little known fact I learned this week: 48 million of the 50 million new jobs created over past 30 years were under a DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENT?

I want to end with what Simon ends with, a reminder of what we fight for. Here are FDR's Four Freedoms:

**Freedom of Speech
Freedom of Worship
Freedom from Want
Freedom from Fear**

Sounds good to me! Back to you, Barrie!

30-30-30