

T.O. Opening remarks – Making Waves for Democracy, 12/10/2023

WELCOME TO the 67th monthly meeting of Making Waves for Democracy....We're heading toward 7 full years of sustaining an ALL-VOLUNTEER political action group. That is cause for celebration right there!

I want to talk about 3 things today:

1. Biden/Harris

2. Burnout

3. Becoming warriors!

Today you'll hear lots more about JOE BIDEN but I just want to say that the handwringing about Biden's age and mental capacity is silly! (and the invisibility of VP Kamala Harris pisses me off!). Right now, Biden/Harris is our ticket, and they're doing a GREAT JOB. Do NOT give in to the Right-wing media machine and doubt it. You'll hear more from Brian Colker and Jeanne Miranda soon....

I recently presented at a Zoom convening of some 350 grassroots activists on BURNOUT and SUSTAINABILITY organized by Robert Hubbell and Jill Bickett who produce a daily newsletter. A recent one says: QUOTE: ".... If MAGA extremists had a positive vision of America to attract others to their cause, they would proclaim it from the rooftops. Instead, they are in retreat, burning bridges and sacking supply depots to hinder their opponent's advance. Do NOT interpret the smoke from burning bridges as a sign of our defeat but as a sign of their retreat, and our inevitable victory...."UNQUOTE. As we've learned from historian Heather Cox Richardson, civic activists have ALWAYS saved our country!

We must all become WARRIORS!

So how do we become our best WARRIOR selves? I'm reminded that in the early 70s, in the formative days of the LGBTQ movement, one activist travelled the country leading a workshop that thousands of us took, called "COME TO YOUR LIFE LIKE A WARRIOR" (OKAY -- I know that some of you automatically are thinking of the next line: "*Come to your life like a warrior; Nothing will bore yer....*" And, for those of you who don't know, those lines are from lesbian feminist 'women's music' singer Cris Williamson's "Song of the Soul"....)

Today, we must all become WARRIORS about the TRUTH – I heard a statistic that there are only some 40,000 media professionals today vs. over 400,000 20 years ago. Politico Simon Rosenberg believes that the Right wing is trying to stamp out EVERY vestige of the INDEPENDENT MEDIA as part of their march toward autocracy. **So, again it's up to us – the citizen or I call them CIVIC activists (not all are necessarily CITIZENS) – to counter their lies and disinformation.**

Frank Bruni, in a recent *New York Times* piece called "It's Not the Economy. It's the Fascism", says about the 2024 election: QUOTE "Which matters more – the easing of inflation or the persistence of prices that many people can't afford....Low unemployment or high-interest rates? On such questions the 2024 election may turn, so the litigation of them is no surprise. **But never in my adult lifetime has that battle seemed so agonizingly beside the point, such a distraction from the most important questions before us.** In 2024, it's NOT the economy. It's the democracy. It's the decency. It's the truth." END QUOTE

Now, I'm a **SOCIAL MOVEMENT PERSON**, and if you are too, I urge you to read **PRACTICAL RADICALS: Seven Strategies to Change the World** by our friend Deepak Bhargava and Stephanie Luce. **Practical Radicals** is a bit academic but has important points – **to win against fascism we need many strategies over many decades; we need, for example, BOTH *disruption* AND *electoral plans*.**

In preparing for that Burnout and Sustainability convening in the wake of reading Deepak and Stephanie's book, I found myself thinking about the fact that *Making Waves for Democracy* is part of a new **PRO-DEMOCRACY** movement – that itself, while engaging **MILLIONS** of new electoral activists in the Resistance to Trumpism, is only one stripe in the larger progressive movement – which has grown since the 60s (and of course is built on the shoulders of previous struggles).

My formative era of the '60s was unusual -- in only 15 years, from 1960-1975 we saw **THREE** radical new movements that changed America forever: **CIVIL RIGHTS, WOMEN'S LIBERATION** and **ENVIRONMENTALISM**. Today's climate and Environmental Justice, **LGBTQ** and Disability rights activists, criminal justice abolitionists – and yes even Black Lives Matter and the pro-Palestinian college activists -- and **MANY OTHERS** grew out of those 3 movements....

BUT we must not make the same mistakes that my generation did – and others before us -- of **IDEOLOGICAL PURISM** and **INFIGHTING** that has always marginalized us good guys. I remember how disappointed I was to learn that this country is conservative and changes slowly – But now, it's democracy or fascism. The stakes are higher than ever.

Unless we CONSCIOUSLY build a MULTI-RACIAL, MULTI-GENERATIONAL, INCLUSIVE coalition movement of civic activists, we will risk NOT winning. The anti-MAGA movement is only a start.

I'm in my 57th year of activism. I can tell you this: there is nothing as powerful as the dynamism and momentum of a progressive social movement. But, new movements are fragile, and require nurturing. YOU ARE PART of a new force that can change the world, IF you are intentional in your organizing, and prioritize building BLUE POWER. It's not the end goal but it's fucking essential to get to that great multi-racial democracy that we know in our guts this country can become.

OKAY, over to our main speaker today. You know and love Brian Colker, like I do. He's the CFO of our partner, Grassroots Dems HQ. He runs a management consulting company as his day job – and he's Susan Sheu's introverted husband.

Over to you, Brian!