

Is 21CAR Really a Revolution?

Why do we call ourselves revolutionaries and not just political reformers or activists?

The answer is founded on four certainties:

1. the extent of the current threat to American democracy;
2. the failure so far of our institutions to constrain that threat;
3. the inevitability of a death-struggle between Trumpism and the Constitution's governance architecture and Bill of Rights; and
4. our commitment to the Rule of Law, which is not always the same as lawfulness, when, as now, we confront unjust laws and government actions.

First, a threat assessment. President Trump and his political allies are creating the conditions for a non-democratic seizure of power.

Trump is undermining democratic mechanisms (e.g., free press, independent judiciary, Congressional oversight). He has colluded with a hostile foreign power to subvert our elections and political discourse. He has threatened social media companies against enforcing their own editorial rules against him and his apologists. His frequent lying and associated propaganda is meant to intimidate Americans from making political decision based on facts (rather than mindless political allegiances). He has trampled on democratic norms and forestalled the possibility of bipartisan cooperation. Working with unprincipled allies, his Administration has frustrated efforts to strengthen our elections infrastructure against foreign hacking. He is trying to subvert an apolitical census. He has obstructed justice on numerous occasions, seeking to squash investigations into illegal and unconstitutional acts. And he is cultivating and normalizing political violence by his supporters.

This is not a politician we disagree with. This is a snake steadily choking the air from American democracy.

Second, the failure of our institutions to combat electoral malfeasance and constrain Trump as President to a degree adequate to the national emergency.

The Obama Administration failed to predict, prepare for, forestall, or levy sufficient consequences for rigging of the 2016 campaign and election by a foreign power. Senate Majority Leader McConnell in effect connived with that foreign power by threatening to

block parts of the Obama Administration response. The Federal Elections Commission and state elections administrators behaved irresponsibly. Social media companies, with so much power to use for good or evil, chose corporate profits from extremist “engagement” over truth, and became cesspools of fraud and hate. Mainstream media were either active accomplices to undemocratic behavior or covered the campaign in ways that advantaged it. Constitutional scholars failed to create pressure to amend unclear, obsolete, or problematic sections of the Constitution, such as (one example) the confusion about whether a sitting President is entirely immune from prosecution and civil suit. Legal scholars failed to challenge in court the opinion by the White House’s Office of Legal Counsel that asserts a sitting President is effectively above the law. The Supreme Court has decided recent political cases (Bush v. Gore, Citizens United) in a partisan and malign manner. Republican Members of Congress serve as Profiles in Cowardice, regularly choosing partisan interest over patriotism. And Special Counsel Robert Mueller, by all accounts a decent human, found evidence of Presidential conspiracy and obstruction of justice but then wrote a report that obscures that finding and pays obeisance to that outrageous OLC memo.

Third, the inevitability of a fight to the death between Trump’s proto-fascism and our Constitutional heritage of civil and political rights. We need to understand what Trump understands: he cannot cede power.

Given voluminous evidence of law breaking (and criminal/civil immunity only while in office), Trump cannot count on a happy retirement. Given Trump company financial fraud, he will be stripped of wealth if he becomes a private citizen. To control potential witnesses against him, he knows he cannot relinquish two Presidential prerogatives: the ability to shut down federal prosecutions and the power to pardon. This is why he prepares the political ground for an assertion of an extended Presidential term (it was no joke). This is why he has been unwilling to commit to respecting an election result if he loses. This is why he spins conspiracy theories about enemies subverting him. This is why he continues to seek illegal foreign support. This is why he is preparing his followers for violence against political opponents.

At this time of grave national peril, the normal work of political reform organizations (and we strongly support them!) is necessary, but not sufficient.

Finally, we are revolutionaries because our goals are strategic, not tactical. We do not work for incremental improvements, but fundamental reform.

Flaws in the Constitution must be amended, and domestic political rigging (e.g. voter suppression, partisan gerrymandering, census manipulation) must be outlawed and punished. The political system must be freed from the pernicious influence of dark money and corrupt lobbyists. Foreign adversaries must pay a heavy price for meddling in our democracy. We must substantially augment the resources available to those enforcing laws that protect our democracy. And we must dramatically expand civic education as an antidote to foolishness.

President Trump must be removed from power, prosecuted, convicted, and jailed.

There must be legal consequences for supporters of his un-Constitutional ambitions. The Republican party must be resurrected under leadership respectful of the Constitution, or consigned to perpetual electoral defeats. For generations hence, schoolchildren must be taught that in the early twenty-first century, America narrowly missed a takeover by a traitor named Trump.

To these tenets, we, members of the Rabble, pledge our lives, fortunes, and sacred honor. That is what makes us revolutionaries.