



HANDS OFF OUR DEMOCRACY!

By Lyn Dockter - Pinnick

Since January 20, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has been given free reign by President Trump at federal agencies and with our data, to include our Social Security data. DOGE has rampaged offices for information, illegally fired valuable federal employees, and ended food programs and life-saving humanitarian aid; all in the name of curbing fraud, waste and abuse.

No one would deny that reform and improvement in our federal government is important. Certainly not BadAss Grandmas who have demanded that our democracy be unrigged for years. But, what we BadAss Grandmas also demand is that our democratic processes must stand firm. We must ensure that individual's rights are protected and we expect that any reductions of staff or elimination of programs are made legally and done for the improvement of our democracy. Americans believe in the rule of law, and many of the administration's current actions have already been found to be illegal. However, we are deeply concerned that the current administration appears to be willing to ignore the rule of law. Current actions evidence callous disregard for the needs of the average American, who depend upon Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid.

Forbes magazine (3.5.25) indicates four critical threats to Social Security; "Uncertainty about timely Social Security Checks; Social Security Service cuts; Elimination of independent research on Social Security; and Insolvency comes sooner under Trump's tax plans." The fourth concern indicates that with Trump's tax cuts for the billionaires, a 21% cut in Social Security benefits could happen as soon as eight years.

When the President is questioned about the raiding of Social Security, he falsely cites "millions of dead people getting benefits." One doesn't have to look far to learn the truth. In the same Forbes article, they include the actual OIG report where these millions of dead people are referenced. <https://oig-files.ssa.gov/audits/full/A-06-14->

[34030 0.pdf](#) Quoting from the outcome of the OIG report: "We are pleased the review did not identify program fraud, and there were only three confirmed instances of employment fraud in the sample of 6.5 million deceased individuals."

THREE confirmed cases among 6.5 MILLION audited. Yet, Trump wants DOGE to access Social Security records, fire staff and close Social Security offices? WHY? Regardless of motive, the end result is that the actions are not for the benefit of we average Americans.

Like many Americans around the country, we BadAss Grandmas say HANDS OFF our Social Security! Across the country on April 5, millions of Americans will rally in state capitals and in Washington, DC. Many national organizations like the League of Women Voters are joining in supporting this national day of action, and so do BadAss Grandmas. **Find your local event** and join BadAss Grandmas in saying HANDS OFF OUR DEMOCRACY.

OUR JOBS OUR WALLETS OUR BODIES
MEDICAID MEDICARE SOCIAL SECURITY
FAIR ELECT LANDS RESE PROTECTIO **HANDS OFF!** **A PUBLIC**
LANDS RESE PROTECTIO **OFF!** **CANCER**
RESE PROTECTIO **OFF!** **MER**
SCHOOLS LIBRARIES FREE SPEECH
IGRTN. RIGHTS IMMIGRANTS COURTS

On April 5, the League of Women Voters and partners are coming together for a national day of action. It's time to show that the people are taking action to stop the corruption and power grab.

Thank you to all our League leaders and members involved in planning, co-partnering, and participating in these April 5 events:

Bismarck: 4-6pm, ND State Capitol Building
Fargo-Moorhead: 4-6pm, Veterans Memorial Bridge
Grand Forks: 2:30-4:30pm, Sorlie Memorial Bridge
Minot: 4-5pm, Minot City Hall

The North Dakota ruling against Greenpeace is a threat to free speech

By Sushma Raman and Anthony Romero – Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 8:00 EDT

Everyday actions like attending a protest, signing a letter of support, or supporting communities at risk should never be considered ‘unlawful’



The first amendment guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. It will have little meaning if multibillion-dollar corporations can sue peaceful protesters for unimaginable sums of money for their speech. Yet, that’s exactly what was decided in a small courtroom in Morton county, North Dakota.

Energy Transfer – a Dallas-based fossil fuel company that is responsible for the Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) – sued two Greenpeace entities in the US (Greenpeace Inc and Greenpeace Fund), and Greenpeace International. Energy Transfer was awarded more than \$660m in a highly watched, month-long case. Greenpeace will appeal the verdict.

The company sued Greenpeace entities simply for peacefully supporting the Standing Rock protests against the Dakota Access pipeline back in 2016-2017. At issue in the North Dakota case are nine statements made by Greenpeace that are alleged to be defamatory. All of the statements at issue are legitimate expressions under the first amendment, and none of the statements in question were original to Greenpeace.

Energy Transfer also claims that Greenpeace made alleged false statements to financial institutions involved with financing the Dakota Access pipeline – and that based on those statements, the financial institutions took action that cost Energy Transfer hundreds of millions of dollars. The financial

institutions, however, had their own commitments and conducted their own due diligence regarding the Dakota Access pipeline.

An initial lawsuit was filed in 2017 in federal court but it was dismissed in 2019. Energy Transfer immediately refiled a virtually identical suit in state court in North Dakota, a conservative state with strong ties to the energy sector. It is a jurisdiction where public sentiment ran against the DAPL protests – which were organized by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Indigenous water protectors.

The ruling in the Energy Transfer case could have wide ranging consequences on first amendment rights in the US. By attempting to hold Greenpeace liable for everything that happened at Standing Rock, the case attempts to establish the idea that, for any participation in a protest, you can be held liable for the actions of other people, even if you’re not associated with them or if they’re never identified. It’s easy to see how this win for Energy Transfer could chill speech and silence future protests before they even begin.

Greenpeace USA was one of many organizations that supported the Indigenous-led resistance. Answering a request for trainings in de-escalation and non-violence, Greenpeace USA supported a delegation from the Indigenous Peoples Power Project (IP3) to travel to Standing Rock and run non-violence trainings. In no way did Greenpeace direct the Standing Rock protest movement, or engage in (or encourage others to engage in) property destruction or violence.

The legal tactic being used against the Greenpeace movement is a classic example of what’s known as a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (Slapp). Slapps are frequently used by wealthy people and corporations – in this case, the oil and gas industry – to silence constitutionally protected free speech.

Rather than a good faith attempt to seek remedies for harm, the goal of these lawsuits is often to bury the defendant in legal fees and waste their time on frivolous litigation. When used to silence criticism – including from whistleblowers, journalists and environmental advocacy organizations like Greenpeace USA and Greenpeace International – they essentially function as a tax on free speech by making it too expensive to speak truth to power. These abusive legal tactics can be used to sue critics into bankruptcy, and they serve as a threat to anyone who may want to speak up in the future.

Although 34 states and the District of Columbia have passed anti-Slapp laws, North Dakota is not one of them. And, while support for federal anti-Slapp legislation is growing in the US, there is currently no federal law on the books. That means that corporations can continue threatening abusive lawsuits in federal court or in states without protections. Without any

provisions protecting public protest, corporate operations that harm the social good can proceed without restraint.

Perhaps equally worrisome, this case is an attack on the type of ordinary advocacy that organizations like Greenpeace and the ACLU – alongside many others – rely on to do their work. Everyday actions like attending a protest, signing a letter of support, or supporting communities at risk should never be considered “unlawful”. Otherwise, the future of everyone’s first amendment rights could be at risk.

If corporations can weaponize the court system to attack protesters and advocates for their speech, then any political speech or cause could become a target. And in an environment where the Trump administration is regularly leading dangerous attacks against our basic rights and liberties, including against the press and activists, this threat is all the more serious.

The right to protest and speak out must be embraced as a core pillar in a functioning democracy – even when that speech threatens the rich and powerful, and even when it’s speech we don’t agree with.

- Sushma Raman is the interim executive director of Greenpeace USA
- Anthony Romero is executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union

This story was submitted by BG4D #4 and respected attorney Sarah Vogel, who attended the Greenpeace trial in Bismarck, ND. She indicates that to her knowledge, the Bismarck Tribune did not publish a single story on the trial or its outcome.



NEWS FROM THE BG4D BOOK CLUB

By Lynnell S Popowski
In March the BG4D Book Club reviewed *ON TYRANNY* by Timothy Snyder. Here are some of the key takeaways from the short but pithy treatise.

Timothy Snyder's lessons in *On Tyranny* carry profound implications for individuals and societies. At their core, these lessons underscore the fragility of democracy and the importance of vigilance in preserving it. Here are some broader implications:

1. **Individual Responsibility:** Snyder's work emphasizes that democracy isn't self-sustaining—it requires active participation from citizens. Each person has the power to stand up to injustice, question authority, and make choices that protect freedom.

2. **Historical Awareness:** By drawing on 20th-century history, Snyder reminds readers that the mistakes of the past are often repeated when societies fail to learn from them. Understanding history provides tools to identify warning signs of authoritarianism.
3. **Community and Solidarity:** Snyder highlights the importance of forming alliances and supporting institutions that uphold democratic values. Working together strengthens resistance to anti-democratic forces.
4. **Global Perspective:** Though Snyder focuses on lessons relevant to the United States and Europe, the principles he lays out apply worldwide. Tyranny can emerge in any context, and the defense against it is universal.
5. **Cultural Legacy:** Snyder's lessons challenge individuals to think about the legacy they leave behind. Will future generations inherit a society that values truth, justice, and equality, or one that succumbs to authoritarianism?

Ultimately, *On Tyranny* serves as both a warning and a call to action. Its broader message is that freedom is never guaranteed and must be continuously fought for.

Here are some actionable steps:

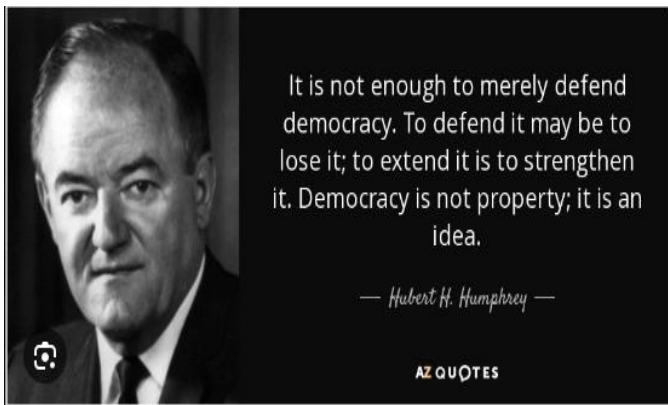
1. **Stay Informed and Support Journalism:**
 - Regularly read news from reputable, independent sources to stay informed about current events.
 - Consider subscribing to trustworthy media outlets to support their work.
2. **Engage Politically:**
 - Vote in every election, and encourage others to do the same.
 - Attend town halls or community meetings to stay connected with local governance.
3. **Speak Up Against Injustice:**
 - Call out misinformation or hate speech when you encounter it.
 - Advocate for those who might not have a platform to speak for themselves.
4. **Strengthen Your Community:**
 - Build strong relationships with neighbors and local organizations.
 - Volunteer for causes that promote democracy, equality, or human rights.
5. **Defend Institutions:**
 - Be vocal about the importance of fair courts, free press, and other democratic institutions.
 - Support watchdog organizations that monitor threats to democracy.
6. **Practice Critical Thinking:**
 - Fact-check information before sharing it.
 - Teach others how to distinguish truth from propaganda.
7. **Prepare for Unexpected Challenges:**

- Consider having a plan for peaceful activism or civil disobedience if necessary.
 - Be ready to stand up for your values even in difficult situations.
8. **Live Your Values Daily:**
- Resist the normalization of unethical behavior, no matter how small it seems.
 - Be an example of integrity and courage in your everyday life.

Taking small, consistent actions in line with these ideas can make a meaningful difference.

The BadAss Grandma's book club meets at 6:30 pm Central on the last Thursday of each month. The next book to be discussed is also by Timothy Snyder, *On Freedom. On Tyranny* discusses what to watch for; *On Freedom* addresses what to do.

JOIN US for great discussions.



If you can keep it

A letter from America's former lawyers

Trump's attacks on law firms are an attack on our legal system

1,300+ ALUMNI OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
MAR 31, 2025



We, the undersigned, are alumni of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) who have collectively served both Republican and Democratic administrations. While some of us were political appointees, many others were

nonpartisan career civil servants who served multiple administrations. Each of us strongly condemns President Trump's and the Department of Justice's recent campaign of intimidation and retaliation against lawyers and law firms, including the Executive Orders targeting Perkins Coie, Covington & Burling, Paul Weiss, Jenner & Block, and WilmerHale; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission investigations specifically targeting particular law firms; and recent threats against lawyers who appear opposite the federal government. These executive actions are an affront to the Constitution and the rule of law. They undermine our legal system, the pursuit of justice, and our democracy.

As former DOJ officials, we each proudly took an oath to support and defend our Constitution and faithfully execute the duties of our offices. When we faced vigorous, spirited, and hard-charging opposing counsel in the course of our work, we did not shrink from that challenge; we welcomed it. That is because the job of lawyers who represent the United States is not to win convictions or lawsuits, but to see that justice is done. Each of us knew that zealous opposing counsel, who were themselves bound by the professional standards that govern all lawyers, were necessary and helpful to us doing our job and to ensuring a just outcome.

Strong opposing counsel play a critical role in our justice system, ensuring that the rights of the accused and all parties in litigation are preserved, that those in need of legal representation are adequately served, and that government actions that may violate laws or constitutional rights are properly challenged. Without such counsel, our adversarial process does not function, those who exercise power in the name of the government cannot be held accountable, and DOJ lawyers cannot follow their oaths and do their jobs.

In short, vigorous counsel who oppose the United States government in litigation are not a bug of our legal system, but a necessary feature. Punishing lawyers for representing their clients in opposition to the government — or for taking positions that the president disagrees with — undermines this fundamental basis of the rule of law.

Make no mistake: the Trump Administration's punitive and unjust actions are wrong even if — *especially* if — they prove effective at silencing lawyers. Might does not make right. Indeed, these actions are particularly dangerous when they succeed in intimidating lawyers into abandoning their fundamental role in our justice system.

All lawyers must condemn these actions targeting the legal profession and stand up for the rule of law. Doing so is essential to keeping ours a country of laws, not of men.

See the list of 1,300+ signatories [here](#). If you formerly worked at the Department of Justice, you can sign this letter [here](#).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BadAss Grandmas are active in protecting democracy; and we love to feature a letter that BadAss Grandmas have submitted to their local newspapers – please share YOURS. We'd love to print it.

ON DEI

With all the news about DEI these days, I have to wonder if people really understand what it stands for and the changes it has brought to our society. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs and policies are all about Access; to education, employment, credit and banking services, sports, public spaces and buildings, commercial businesses and medical facilities, family leave, protection against sexual harassment and bullying of any kind. The list goes on.

Examples of policies implemented as a result of DEIA policies include: sidewalk cutouts for wheelchair access, ramps for access to public and commercial buildings, accessible bathrooms, closed captioning, marriage equality, pay equity for similar work, Individual Education Plans and Special Education programs, girls/women's sports, accurate historical records of the contributions of people of color and women, representation of all the people of the United States in books, film, media and art forms, and protection for pregnant women against firing. The point is although people may have concerns about a small percentage of policies under the "DEIA" umbrella, most of what has been done is not controversial. Who will stand up and oppose these obvious signs of progress?

And yet, the Republican administration has dismantled and essentially outlawed efforts to continue our progress towards equality of access for all. They are making every effort to remove the experiences of half our country's citizens. They are scrubbing Pentagon databases and websites to remove all references to people of color and women in the military through the use of artificial intelligence. I heard from a federal grant recipient that they had to go through their application and remove any reference to "female" because it was being flagged by the AI algorithm. They have even removed the prohibition against federal contracts being offered to companies that segregate their workers. Segregation? It's 2025 and we are the United States of America! Let's act like it.

The people in support of Project 2025 are trying to take us back to a racist, sexist past. Hell No - We Won't Go!

Lynnell S Popowski
Warsaw, ND



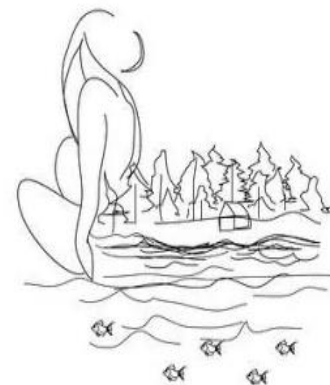
March is Women's History Month

The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum are commemorating and encouraging the study, observance and celebration of the vital role of women in American history. Check out their websites for remarkable information. Of particular interest, please note the extraordinary and profound information on "Women of Five Wars" found on the Library of Congress website. And, to all you phenomenal women out there, keep on being BadAss. Keep wearing those pearls. We salute you.

what's the greatest lesson a woman should learn?

*that since day one. she's already had everything
she needs within herself. it's the world that
convinced her she did not.*

- rupi kaur



Rupi Kaur, Milk and Honey

A FINAL THOUGHT:

SEVEN IDEAS TO REDUCE POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND SAVE AMERICA FROM ITSELF.

Few countries face polarization as deep as America's. Democrats and Republicans used to disagree on policy issues — that's the normal, useful tension that drives democracy. Today, each side fears the other will destroy the nation if they achieve power. Partisanship becomes equated with patriotism, and destroying the other side becomes the ultimate goal. This is how democracies fall apart.

How can we heal our country's toxic polarization? Here are seven research-backed ideas for pundits, politicians, reporters and regular citizens to bring down the temperature.

1. Call out your own party. Humans are social creatures — we want to belong, and are highly attuned to popularity. We look to those with status to tell us what it takes to be part of the in-crowd. That means if politicians, pundits and ideological leaders stand vocally against polarizing and hateful language and actions (as Virginia's Republican leadership did by declaring they wanted no "white supremacist garbage" at their gun rally), it can change partisans' perceptions, by making such behavior appear unacceptable to that group.

Professors at New York University, Harvard and UCLA have found that it is most influential to criticize one's own "tribe," since critiquing one's own group signals what is acceptable to group members in a way that potshots at the other side doesn't.

2. Avoid bad jokes. You might never dream of condoning partisan murder, but you might still share a really funny meme that makes the point. Watch it: jokes have a particularly strong effect on normalizing prejudice — far more than an overtly prejudiced argument. Particularly dangerous are jokes that employ violent rhetoric or dehumanize by comparing people to animals or insects. A slew of research shows that dehumanizing language removes inhibitions to perpetrating violence, especially when the language cultivates pre-existing grievances and the speaker is respected by his or her group.

3. Make social media kinder. You may not be able to alter someone's deeper beliefs, but there are three ways regular people on social media can get others to remove hateful messages, reduce the spread of hateful memes, and curb prejudiced or polarizing speech. Learn to defuse hateful speech. First, reminding users that online speech has real-world, off-line consequences (both to the writer, since employers can see posts, as well as to the person or group targeted) can lead users to recant a post. Second, making a personal or empathetic connection with the speaker can have the same effect. Finally, humorous words or images that make fun of the original idea can also defuse the spread of hateful speech.

Downplay the fringes and highlight the median. Americans are more polarized emotionally than ideologically — we actually disagree on policy far less than people think. Stunningly, a majority of Americans agree on the broad strokes of abortion, immigration and gun legislation. Because partisans

tend to have distorted views of who composes the other party and how many people believe stereotypical views attributed to that party, providing real information that overturns these beliefs can reduce polarization.

5. Emphasize disagreement within parties. Reminding people that partisans have a range of opinions can dial back polarization. Immigration policy can be framed as left versus right, or as a complex issue that pits some right-wing business owners against others, some left-wing unions against more progressive activists, established immigrants against newer arrivals, and so on.

The Difficult Conversations Lab at Columbia University found that when people read nuanced articles on policy issues that underscored this kind of intra-party disagreement, their conversations with people from the other party were of higher quality.

6. Help others imagine empathy. Helping people to imagine a disliked group in an empathetic way can reduce malicious beliefs about that group. Thus, stories that encourage people to take the perspective of or empathize with the other party can reduce people's prejudice.

Research in Europe and America on immigration found that even stories that simply linked immigrants to cultural issues, such as cooking, rather than border-crossing, decreased negative attitudes, while stories that linked immigrants to crime were polarizing.

7. Avoid repeating misinformation, even to debunk it. Repetition leads our brains to think things are true, regardless of the accuracy of the information being repeated. This tendency is even stronger when people want to believe a piece of false information, because our brains seek out information we want to hear. So, if people read that "Obama is not a Muslim," many will remember "Obama is Muslim, maybe?" **The best way to avoid deepening misinformation is to simply state alternative information:** "Obama is Christian."

Many hoped the coronavirus pandemic would unite us. Instead, deep divisions over race and the role of government are intensifying and could even lead to political violence. The polarization we face today isn't just about believing the other side is wrong. Partisans now see opposition party members as malevolent, immoral forces.

Can America fix itself? The stakes are high. As a start, let's give these seven ideas a try.

Rachel Kleinfeld is a senior fellow and Aaron Sobel is a James C. Gaither Junior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in the Democracy, Conflict and Governance Program.

This article was published in the USA Today in 2020. Does that matter? Is it still relevant? We would welcome your input.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH OUR NEWSLETTER? LOOKING FOR A VOLUNTEER. Email Lyn.