



Rockland Buzz

Capitol Crisis Issue

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The Old School
Fellowship Education

now what?

Joe Steinberger

Wednesday's events in Washington are a clear lesson: the politics of blame lead to violence. Unfortunately, it is not clear that this lesson is being learned. The Republicans are subdued, for obvious reasons, and perhaps they have realized something about the hazards of following Trump's brand of populism, but the Democrats, instead of seeing this as an opportunity for a truce, seem to be ramping up the blame rhetoric for maximum advantage. We need that truce.

Those who stormed the capital clearly had no realistic idea of what they were doing. They weren't shooting people, they had no plan to take over the government. Indeed, what they did made so little sense that their behavior caught the police completely off guard. They pushed through the barriers, broke through the doors, and paraded around the Capitol, into the chambers and offices, taking photos of themselves and then posting them on the internet - with no idea that they were incriminating themselves in the most serious of felonies and likely will end up in prison for years.

It wasn't a lynch mob, though it could easily have been turned into one. It was a wild band of triumphant idiots enchanted by a television reality star. This is what American politics has come to.

Our national politics have become so corrupt that only the bribers have any influence over the choices our elected leaders make. Perhaps that is a slight exaggeration. Indeed, Donald Trump has shown that it is possible to get power through appeal to the masses rather than by sucking up to the "special" interests. Of course he does both, but he has a knack for riling up a crowd. He doesn't do anything for them in the end, but he gives them respect, or pretends to.

The good news is that he is done. The attack on the Congress is clearly the result of his rhetoric. He has pushed himself beyond the tolerance of the majority of his party. Indeed it was never his party. He used to brag, before he was President, that he gave money to both Republicans and Democrats and they both kissed his ass. So true.

But then he won the Republican nomination. The old guard, who had opposed him, mostly got on board. Power corrupts, and so does the desire for power. Trump, for his part, kissed their butts too. Southern racists, welcome; "Christian" fundamentalists, welcome; alt-right conspiracy theorists, welcome. A fine coalition under the Republican banner, well in the lines of Nixon's southern strategy. Evil, really, but convenient for the shysters - a majority, it seems, in both parties.

What we need is a new kind of populism, a new alliance of that great majority of Americans who are the losers in a corrupt system that rewards a privileged minority at the expense of the majority of us. Our new alliance must include both haves and have-nots. And why not? The world is a win-win place if we respect each other's perspectives, and each other's worth, and are willing to compromise in order to share in the huge advantages living in a happy and well-functioning civilization.

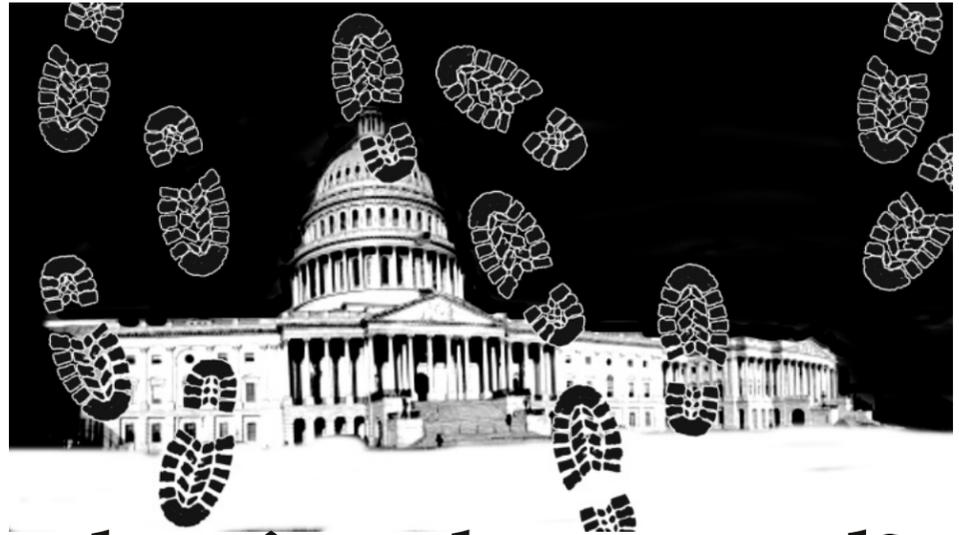
It is not a question of utopian perfection, but of our evolution as a species. We are social animals. History clearly shows that we can progress in the quality of our lives together, but it shows that we can regress too, and become mostly slaves and serfs at the mercy of an all-powerful few.

Is it not better to love and to share, than to blame and to fight? By what right do we claim to be good people? Surely by who we are and not by who we are not. Surely by what we contribute, and not by what we take.

Greed is a fundamental sin, a danger, an addiction that kills. The greed dealers are our masters. The pursuit of wealth and status is being promoted with fiendish genius on our screens - by the corporations, for profit or not, who, with their government employee allies, control our government.

Can we break free of the spell that commercial advertising has put us under? Can we believe that being a successful human is about enjoying and serving our community, and not about getting rich at the expense of that community? Can we, the relatively affluent, the "educated" people, the "progressives," the "Democrats," find our way to make common cause with the "deplorable" people who have followed Donald Trump out of frustration with our leadership? Must they beg for our forgiveness and live ever despised as our inferiors?

To live well, we must live well together.



what just happened?

by Glen Birbeck

The events just keep piling on. It's the phenomenon of sensory saturation. The nerves just stop adding new stimulation because they've reached their limit. Mine are jangling. Their capacity isn't infinite. And anyway, when things become too much what's the point of measuring them, of quantifying the deluge. What are you going to do about it anyway? The old virus was already enough but we get a new variation that is even more catchy. A chief executive, a creature dredged from Steven King's darkest imaginings, does what is (we hope) his swan song. The people's seat of power, the congress is literally trashed, defiled, by mobs of MAGA mad goons. Elected enablers who swore an oath to the constitution but offered matches and fuel to that mob are back peddling now. They goaded others to the edge of the cliff but don't care to go over the edge themselves. If possible their cynical pragmatism aimed at self preservation is worse than the mob's mindless violence. Where is reason? Principal? Honor? are these just tokens to be invoked now and then? Or do they have meaning? I think they mean something to a few of the elected. I fear that maybe there has been a mechanism of selection based not on merit or ability but rather on thirst for power and status. There are rewards other than the stroking of ego and lining of pockets. Could it be that those rewards are not the motivators that greed is? If you work hard to satisfy insatiable ego your reserves of energy are endless...such is the human animal. The saints are vastly outnumbered by the grasping "what's in it for me" types. In a culture that sees an honest person as weak and an habitual liar as a "go getter" to be admired, why expect better? I hope the rising tide that washed this human flotsam to our door is ebbing. What will we find littering the beach when its fully ebbbed? Will we find the slithery eels that promoted fantasy as a battering ram at the doors of congress? No, they've morphed into another form. They're back in the water regrouping. We will see them again minus their MAGA hats. Their flag buttons will be a bit larger. And they'll be wearing new coats. Like the virus, they know they can evade detection by changing their outer appearance. "Oh, I never really liked Trump" they'll lie. Or, if caught in a rare honest moment, "I didn't dare oppose him". Corona learns and so too do these office holders. Corona has though natural selection changed its coat. Immune systems were wise to its outfit, able to pick it out of the crowd. New strains of the virus are showing up. They are more contagious. It's too much really, way too much. But it isn't really new. What is new is the very idea that it IS a change. News of these challenges is louder, the electronic media is responsible for that...but cynical humans and natural predators are anything but novel. We've always had them. The last seventy years in the USA have made us too comfortable. Didn't seem that smooth at the time but it sure does now. Too much? I keep thinking there must be a comet heading our way. That would pile on worry wouldn't it? If there was any worry left to assign to a dirty snowball hurtling out of the void. Deep in the paper, below the obits, above the crossword...."comet to strike Earth next Tuesday, all life to be destroyed". Ho Hum, better do the shopping today....

by Phyllis Merriam

A Letter from Germany

Dear Joe!

Actually, I just wanted to find out how you are doing. But I'm still too shocked by the pictures of the storm on the Capitol, so that I just have to say something about it. For me it is simply unbelievable what Trump instigated yesterday. How can the president of a democratic country call for a storming of a parliament and fuel the already tense atmosphere with further lies? Trump tramples on everything for which Jack and America with its great democratic tradition stood up: democracy, humanity, human dignity, truthfulness, justice, solidarity, freedom, social awareness. Trump is a disgrace to a country like America, he is a disgrace to politics and he is ultimately a corrupt criminal who only seeks his own gain and in the process leaves a field of desolation and scorched earth. How difficult will it be for the new Biden / Harris government to pacify and unite the torn country and to take the necessary steps towards better, fairer, more ecological and more social policies? I only sincerely hope that yesterday's unrest does not turn into civil war. Fortunately, even leading Republicans have now distanced themselves from Trump and even called for his impeachment. Trump must not get away scot-free for what he has done. He belongs in court.

Please, excuse me if I write myself so in a rage, but I'm so upset that I just can't help but vent.

May the New Year bring something better for America, but also for the world and not least for you. Stay healthy and get through these depressing times well.

In connection
Hans-Jürgen

Editor's Note: Hans-Jürgen is a family friend. He has built a museum honoring the lost Jewish community of Bad Kissingen, where my father Jack lived until he fled the Nazi's and came to America at age 14. Jack died a few weeks ago, at 99, and Hans-Jürgen has been kind enough to keep in touch with me and other members of my family.

Joe Steinberger

The Revolution Begins.

Washington's response: "nothing to see here."
an opinion by Steve Carroll

Congressional leaders and National Media pundits denounce the actions of "terrorists" condemning their violent overthrow of the nation's capital. Well by now we all know what happened, but what seems to be unclear is why it happened. Has anyone questioned why thousands of American citizens would travel hundreds of miles to protest on the steps of the Nation's Capitol? Much like the protests we have seen in Tiananmen Square, Hong Kong, the storming of the Bastille in 1789 which came to symbolize the French revolution, the Boston Tea Party a precursor to the American revolution. All of these revolts were symbolic of the unrest brewing within the nation. This is not just about a group of Trump followers, this angry mob is made up of Americans young & old, farmers, blue collar workers, veterans, teachers and many from all backgrounds combined in their belief that their government has let them down. A government that can spend billions on war, billions in foreign aid and yet find \$600 to support the American public. While other developed countries have supported their citizens throughout this Pandemic, the richest country in the world has only found "crumbs" for their people. During this terrible pandemic our leaders will not even discuss Medicare-for-all as many citizens lose their jobs, their healthcare, and their homes. Thousands have declared bankruptcy and thousands have died. Many suffer from food insecurity and lines at food banks go on for miles. Hundreds of small businesses have permanently closed while Amazon & Walmart announce record profits. Yet our congressional leaders exhibit the arrogance of the rich. Tell me how this is different from the French or Russian revolution. These people are poor and broken, many are desperate for a solution and have little to lose. These angry peasants will not be ignored, set aside or "go home and shut up". The angry crowds are here to stay and are only going to get louder. They will not be dismissed by so much rhetoric. The unrest in this country that brought about Trump will not diminish just because he leaves office. This disease runs much deeper. History will repeat, a new revolution is beginning. Unless our leaders take steps to eliminate this rot in our society they may well find themselves in the same place as Marie Antoinette, who lost everything from the neck up in 1793.

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Lots and lots of fantastic New Year's Eve firecrackers launched off Dick's Beach in Owls Head to light up the last hours of 2020. The anonymous, generous firecracker people shouted, laughed and joyously gave a gift of light and hope to others. What a privilege to just step outside my home for a lightshow and the Doppler effect of sound over the harbor to welcome in the New Year 2021. Excitement and rare fun.

MY 2020 COVID ALPHABET

- Aerosols
- Baseline
- Covid-19
- Doctors
- EMTs
- Fauci
- Ground Zero
- Hope
- Isolation
- Jumpstart
- Karma
- Lungs
- Mutation
- Nurses
- Oxygen
- Pandemic
- Quarantine
- Respiration
- Science
- Triage
- Upsurge
- Vaccines
- Warp Speed
- X-ray
- Yearning
- Zoom



Let compassion and hope thrive. I feel so fortunate to have a compassionate family and compassionate neighbors. Karen and Heather have donated almost 8,000 homemade masks to local charities -more than the total population of Rockland. They win "The Compassion Award."

As I finish my Notes, domestic terrorists have stormed and taken over our nation's capitol. In watching shocking unprecedented images on news coverage, I grieve for our country and fear for our democracy. As if the pandemic isn't bad enough, now we have sedition. What more will 2021 bring? Abraham Lincoln must be weeping

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