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Democrats, Republicans, and the Death Spiral of Hypocritical Pandering

Opinion by Joe Steinberger

I am reading Marx, not the *Communist Manifesto* or *Das Kapital*, but the *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. It's about the 1848 revolution that established the French Second Republic. Marx writes a contemporaneous account as a journalist for a New York magazine.

It took three years to go from a popular revolution against the restored French monarchy, through a dis-functional and helplessly sectarian National Assembly, to the re-establishment of monarchy in the form of Emperor Napoleon III. Marx's sarcastic account of the absurd hypocrisy of the two main parties in the National Assembly pandering to their shifting "base" in a power struggle completely disconnected from any principles, is sickeningly parallel to the hypocritical party politics that are today threatening the future of our American republic.

Before reading the *18th Brumaire*, I thought that Marx would have been shocked to see that today the American party of the bourgeoisie claims to be socialist, while the party of the proletariat professes to favor capitalism. Now I realize that this is nothing new.

Marx would be smirking, but that smirk betrays his hubris. He thought that he knew the answer, but history has shown the stupidity of his conceit.

We who know we are not gods, are left to find a way. For me, that way is democracy, freedom, and equality - the principles that have sustained our American republic for almost 250 years. There is a fourth element though. We might call it fraternity, as the French revolutionaries did. It is a philosophical, and theological, principle: a belief in ourselves, in our shared humanity, and in the mutual respect that, if we follow this principle, will not allow us to be divided and manipulated by appeals to our hatred and disdain for each other.

That hatred and disdain is today driving us toward autocratic solutions. So sure are we of our righteousness, that we are willing to overlook the grossest hypocrisy to get our so-correct way.

Humility is the key, and not so easy to achieve for us victims of the commercial culture that is constantly stimulating our greed and selfishness. Modern advertising has developed extremely effective ways to distract us and sell us things, and beliefs. Life is Coke, or so we are being led.

We need to think as a people, and not allow ourselves to be led by selfish manipulators. Is there hope for us? We could bet against it, but that is a wager we can only lose. We are, in fact, humans. If you are reading this, you are most certainly a human. Our fate is connected - at least it is for those of us who do not have a ticket to another planet.

SHOWING Y'R TRUE COLORS

Opinion by Steve Carroll

Back in the days when pirate ships roamed the eastern seaboard, notorious Captains like Blackbeard were known to sail into a harbor under the cloak of darkness flying the British flag. At dawn they would lower the friendly flag and raise the black & white skull and crossbones moments before the crew would row ashore and plunder the village. This practice became known as "showing your true colors".

Today politicians, senators, congressman and Presidents come into office promising to do great things and make the public's life better, yet once in office they change and "show their true colors". Instead of passing laws that would benefit and improve the lives of American citizens they instead pass laws that improve and enrich their lives and the lives of their generous donors. Joe Biden was swept into office promising to unite the American people. It seems he has done that, just about everyone is in agreement that he needs to find another line of work.

President Trump did unite millions with the promise of "making America great again". His record showed many accomplishments that did improve the lives of Americans. He secured our southern border by constructing a border wall and enforcing our immigration laws like the remain in Mexico law. He strengthened our trade policies to prohibit countries like China from taking advantage of our weak trade policies. Recently Biden suggested he will eliminate tariffs to China. President Trump strengthened our energy independence by approving the Keystone XL pipeline and approving drilling on National lands. This put thousands back to work and allowed America to become energy independent. At that time gasoline was at \$1.80 a gallon and oil was trading at \$20 a barrel (it's now at \$200 and gasoline is over \$5 a gallon). Our economy was flourishing and the stock market was at its highest level ever. At that time inflation was running at 1%.

The glaring difference in my opinion between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, one is a business man and NOT a politician the other is a career politician.

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North Atlantic Blues Festival

review by Kenny Perryman

People smiling, children laughing, and here comes a beautiful lady in a low-cut dress skip dancing through the passageway to legendary Billy Branch jamming out on stage. She meets up with a total stranger, who was dancing in her direction. They start dancing together as if longtime friends. After about two minutes of dancing, they embrace and go separate ways. That is what this atmosphere at The North Atlantic Blues Festival in Rockland Maine is all about, peace love, laughter, and phenomenal music.

There is nothing like a blues festival to get you in the groove and give you that carefree freedom to let loose, let go, and let be. Starting out the show, Anthony Geraci & The Boston Allstars got everyone in the mood to dance and boogie to that upbeat blues rhythm. They were followed by Chris Cain, Billy Branch & The Sons of Blues, Danielle Nicole Band, Ruthie Foster. Sunday featured King Solomon Hicks, Nora Jean Wallace, Albert Castiglia, Tinsley Ellis, and Tommy Castro. The between acts entertainment was provided by Tas Cru and Mary Ann Casale.

Hall-of-Famer Billy Branch and The Sons of Blues received the largest ovation. Billy Branch brought the house down with his legendary Harmonica playing. Billy Branch certainly lived up to his status as one of the best blues players in the world. He received a well-deserved standing-ovation.

Vending at the show was amazing with food for every taste. I enjoyed Uncle Sean's Fish N Chips for lunch, and they certainly did not disappoint. Of course, I wasn't going to stop there. I mean, how can you go to a festival and not get ice cream especially when you are with a 10-year-old. You know, it's all about the kids. You want them to enjoy a nice bowl of ice cream on a waffle. So, I had to take one for the team and eat another one. Okay, okay, okay, I admit it. Truth be told, I used her as an excuse to get a second helping of ice cream. You gotta do what you gotta do!

I went to the show on Saturday with my co-host Stonia Taylor from The Jolly Jungle representing WRFR-LP 93.3 FM. We brought 10-year-old Stella Taylor, who is writing an article about the show. It is always interesting to get a kid's perspective on events such as this, so look out for that.

I hope you were able to attend this magnificent event. If you missed it, make sure to look for it again next year. You will be glad you did.

Three Chords and the Truth

by Jim Gibson, WRFR show host

As I walked down Main street, headed toward the North Atlantic Blues Festival, I could feel the buzz in the air. I was suddenly amongst a steady stream of people, all heading in the same direction. People of all ages and all walks of life were going to the festival. Lots of folks wearing their souvenir festival T-shirts from past years. Plus, people wearing their favorite T-shirts, of their favorite bands, guitars, bars, and blues artists.

The pace quickened as we got closer to the gate. The line to get in went smoothly, and we were greeted with big smiles from the ticket takers and festival staff. Once inside the concert area, people were very calm and polite as they went about selecting their special spot to catch the show.

The Vendors were all in place and people were already getting refreshments for the show. The stage was all set up and very impressive. I spotted the festival promoter, Paul Benjamin and his crew taking care of last minute details to insure that all the Artists, vendors, sound company, and guests had everything they needed to make this a wonderful event.

Right on schedule the first band took to the stage. Like clockwork, as soon as the band played their first note, people started moving to the music. They were bopping their heads, tapping their feet, moving and grooving. That's the power of a blues shuffle! It immediately strikes a chord in your heart and you just can't sit still. You got to move, you can't help but feel it throughout your body and being. You don't need look for a dance partner, because everyone is your dance partner.

I had met a group of people the night before the festival, at a gig I was playing at, a local restaurant/bar. They told me that they had all met at the North Atlantic Blues Festival many years ago. They decided to stay in touch with each other and made a pact to meet up every year, here in the beautiful town of Rockland for this festival. They came from New Jersey, New York, Boston, Georgia, Florida and New Hampshire. They wouldn't miss it.

The Bands were all top notch and delivered a great show. Each and everyone of the acts came ready to play and give it everything they had. They left it all on stage. The bands responded in kind, to the wonderful reception that they were receiving from this great group of blues lovers.

It's been said that "Blues is three chords and the truth". Well, I say Amen to that. A big thanks to all who those who attended and supported live music. Special thanks to Paul Benjamin, his staff, his crew, the volunteers and all the sponsors that made The North Atlantic Blues Festival a success.

Steve Carroll *True Colors*, continued from p. 1)

Trump did "show his true colors" by doing what he promised, the Biden administration has done nothing they promised and instead proceeded to fulfill their own agenda. He wants to eliminate Fossil fuels, wants open borders and wants to fund endless wars on foreign lands.

President Biden has corrupted the rule of law by defunding the police and turning justice against anyone who disagrees. He has put the interests of American citizens last and the interests of the Washington elites first even going as far as selling millions of gallons of oil from the strategic oil reserve to a Chinese company with ties to his son. He shuts down American oil while begging the Saudis for a share of theirs.

No matter what you think of Donald Trump he put our interests first and was severely punished for doing so. This president is systematically disassembling the fabric that holds us together. We can not survive another two years under this administration. Joe Biden has shown us all "his true colors"



DUCKS IN THE TURBINES

by Phil Crossman

As near as anyone has been able to tell so far, there were ever only two water powered granite polishing mills in the world (one may have been in Springfield, Mass.), and only one powered by tidal water. The latter was on Vinalhaven and it was powered by big iron turbines contained in three ingeniously conceived and laboriously constructed granite cisterns. The genius of the stoneworkers who first understood the inherent potential of the millions of gallons of water rushing in to and out of Carvers Pond twice a day is evident for all to see. Their achievement was extraordinary, not only because such a mass of stones, carved to form the circular cisterns, was so artfully and practically assembled but also because such a sophisticated understanding of how to maximize the site's potential was brought to bear.

Nearly every spring one or another impatient duck emerges from Carver's Harbor at low tide and waddles up the nearby railway, several ducklings in tow. She continues, proprietarily and untroubled, through traffic and hops up onto the bridge sidewalk on the other side of the street. Gathering her little charges, she jumps into a calm little eddy on the east side of the channel. She treads water and quacks to her brood gathered above. Within seconds the bravest one or two jump in to join her and gradually, usually within a minute, so do the others. Then they all paddle up the narrow band of calm water and into Carver's Pond.

Last week it happened again but this time it attracted a spectator who followed the assembly a little too closely, snapping photographs. The eight chicks found this pursuit disconcerting and, after mother had jumped into the eddy but before any of her offspring could muster the requisite courage, the chicks were herded along the waterside walkway where, frantic to get away from the pursuer but eager to rejoin Mom, they jumped into the boiling current instead of the eddy. It was clear to those assembled that this was the end for the chicks. The raging current would carry them to the cisterns which would carry them, alive or already drowned, swirling downward to their certain end.

One of the spectators, however, watchful and unwilling to abandon these precious little lives, called the attention of others to the fact that three of the ducklings had managed to cling to some seaweed on the side of the raceway before being swept away. He and two others clambered down onto the granite waterworks and one waded toward the three chicks, but the trio panicked and jumped into the current and were swept into the cisterns. Climbing out the rescuers looked down into the turbines and there, swirling madly counterclockwise like feathered ping pong balls, were these three chicks plus two others. They were chirping frantically but could do nothing to save themselves. One of the rescuers leaned into the turbine with a pail, the other holding his feet, and grabbed each baby as the swirling water carried it inexorably into the pail. As each was rescued, it was passed upward, where it was tucked into the shirt of one of the others. Mission accomplished, they were climbing off the granite works and congratulating themselves for having at least rescued five of the eight, when further chirping caused them to look on the ocean side of the dam. The final three had been swept down through the cistern, spit out into the Harbor and had swum back to cling to some seaweed there and cry for Mama. They were too far down to reach. A nearby ladder was not long enough so a kayak was launched back at the railway and paddled to these last three which were too exhausted to resist. The entire brood was then carried to a safe place in the Pond and set adrift in hopes Mom would recognize their cries and take up where she left off.

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WEEK ONE HUNDRED-TWENTY-THREE

COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

A relative and her son were sitting on her deck enjoying the sights and sounds of a fine July day when a herring gull flew like a kamikaze straight into a tree trunk. This highly unusual event resulted in a stunned gull that couldn't move from its landing spot. My relative called Avian Haven to rescue the bird but they were short on volunteers and suggested calling the local Maine Warden, who said they would respond when they could. Both agencies warned not to touch the gull that likely had avian flu. In the meantime, my relative put out food for the gull. The warden showed up on a Sunday with a large net, and safely captured the sick gull, saying it likely had avian flu and sadly would have to be euthanized. My relative said the warden was such a kind man. At least the gull was saved from death by a predator. Bye, bye Jonathan Livingston Seagull.

Covid-19's more immune evasive sub variant, BA.5 is causing 120,000 new, daily Covid cases and an increase in hospitalizations in America. Locally, I'm frequently among the four or so grocery shoppers wearing a mask. There remains the possibility of developing long Covid even if one is asymptomatic or had mild Covid.

I remain mostly sheltering and masking when I do necessary errands. I know people much younger than myself, who having had their four jabs, are still being infected.

Tonight I saw a single firefly. In my youth, I remember our lawn was full of what seemed like hundreds of fireflies that we called "lightning bugs." I would gather some carefully and put them in a glass jar with a punctured lid and some dewy grass. I would take the jar to bed and watch their magical blinking until I fell asleep. Then I'd release them in the morning. What a vivid childhood memory while other memories are amorphous or remain irretrievable in my hippocampus.

Mid-July has brought sizzling, humid weather to our mid-coast that has me sheltering inside most of the time while I keep hydrated and take a nap. I find humidity debilitating and another July week of it is predicted. We're fortunate compared to huge portions of Europe with three digit heat waves, hardly any AC, raging wild fires, and many deaths.

We are lucky with our living room AC where we can hang out, read

The humid heat doesn't deter the Breakfast Crows. Broken Wing and her cohort compete with one gull for the leftover hamburger meat I offer this morning.

I haven't seen the grey fox for days now. But a neighbor reported seeing it for the first time in her yard. The fox passed through quickly, like some will-o-the-wisp.

Our neighborhood, backyard property boundaries are thick with trees and shrubs making for a perfect environment for the grey fox and at least one deer family. My husband has a book, "Fox and I: An Uncommon Friendship" by Catherine Raven, a biologist. It beautifully details science, the Montana environment and an unlikely relationship between a human and a wild animal. The fox would show up at Catherine's cabin every afternoon at 4:15 pm. She would bring her camp chair as close to the fox as she dared and began reading to him from Saint-Exupery's "The Little Prince." I have some hope myself of getting closer to the Rockland grey fox.

I know change is constant and part of life. But not all change is for the better. Our Rockland used to be a working waterfront town - sometimes gritty but always real and a community. Then it morphed into an art and blues festival mecca. Now, it's becoming the refuge of the rich for second seasonal homes, mega yachts and large cruise ships. One home, on what is now known by locals as "Millionaire's Row," used to be the modest, well-kept home of a hard workingman and veteran, who heated with wood, rode a bicycle, and suffered such loss when his wife died. After his own death, their waterfront home was razed for a new seasonal home. So much history of ordinary, honest lives is lost when properties change hands.

It was so warm in the kitchen we had popcorn and cold watermelon for supper.

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