
COMMON SENSE II

Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today's series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.

January 2021 Picking up the Pieces Issue Vol. 16 Issue 1

America Renewed

By Valerie Conner

From time to time it is necessary to clean out closets or the refrigerator. That way we can get rid of the expired or outdated, the spoiled, or what we'll never need again. This gives room for new and better merchandise. Not everything needs to be discarded, and we may even find a forgotten treasure.



https://farm3.staticflickr.com/2261/2195078706_5becb78735_z.jpg

It seems to me we're in that process now. As we examine the spoilage of the past four years, we can reassess what we really value and what we no longer want or shouldn't have bought in the first

place. I honestly can't think of much from the past administration worth keeping. The vaccine research and hard-learned lessons in democracy's fragility are exceptions.

Let's look at some of those lessons and missed opportunities:

- ♦ Regression on combatting climate has lost us precious time.
- ♦ Destroying Obama's pandemic plans and failing to organize new ones deepened the pandemic's scourge.
- ♦ Weakening labor rights adds to the growing income disparity which diminishes everyone's economic potential.
- ♦ Weakening a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions erodes her contribution to society and the economy and relegates her to second class status.
- ♦ Defiling our natural wonders by encouraging

drilling by an antiquated industry slows the transition to renewable energy and ruins our national treasures.

- ♦ Alienating our allies and cozying up to autocrats weakens us domestically as well as internationally and forfeits our leadership standing in the world.
- ♦ Cruelly separating immigrant children from their parents and compounding that atrocity by not keeping track of where the children are have made us international criminals.
- ♦ Attempting to disenfranchise citizens because of their "otherness" negates the whole idea of democracy.

Those are but a few of the rotten fruit of the past four years. There's not enough baking soda in the world to remove the stench of Trumpism. Some of these policies can be reversed going forward, but the existing damage is largely irreversible. The Biden Administration is working hard and quickly to pick up the broken pieces and move forward. The shame is that instead of building on responsible policies, it has to spend

precious time, money, and effort reversing and repairing the bad government we've just gone through. Republicans traditionally espouse small government with the underlying attitude that government in general is inherently bad. Government is not inherently bad; bad government regardless of its size is inherently bad. Rotten eggs and ridiculous clothing styles have no place in our refrigerators or closet. Having "cleaned house," it's time for us to get behind the new administration and be healthy and well-clothed again.



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This Is Not a Game

By Bob Passi

Well, we have put this off as long as we could. We have been playing this deadly game of “King of the Hill,” keeping score with wealth, power, position, weapons, and wars. While we have been distracted with our games, life continues to be dynamic, changing in response to the realities with which it is presented, and we have continued to present it with unsustainable realities for decades.

The bill is overdue, and the mortgage is being called in now!



https://assets.propublica.org/legacy/images/ngenw-gypsy_image_lead_ngenw_gt_foreclosure_sky_300x200_101122.jpg

Our indulgence has created a planetary reality of destructive climate changes that is unsustainable and threatens our survival as a human species. A childish pretense that we can live in a reality of our choosing changes nothing; it only puts off our action until it becomes too little too late.

As we systematically raided the public health budgets to fund the economic elites, we left our society vulnerable. Our indifference to the health of ordinary people has left us with only ineffective tools and structures to deal with a deadly pandemic.

Our indifference to police abuses in the killings of unarmed black citizens and our willingness to make excuses for the abuses of white power threaten to destroy our democracy, as the recent events at the Capitol has shown.

Life is not a game—certainly not one we control. We can pretend to keep score with money or property or power or armies. But all of that has been stopped in its tracks by the pandemic, and if we do not come to our senses and see that only adult solutions have any hope of saving humankind, we are not likely to succeed. We are all in this together.

Life and reality have their own rules which are dynamic and are not of our making. Remember that we live in a universe filled with dark matter and dark energy that accounts for over 90% of the universe, providing both the structure and energy for the existence of the universe, the Earth, and our own beings. All our knowledge accounts for about 5% of this reality. That alone should remind us to be humble in the face of life and reality. It should remind us that all human explanations, all ideologies, and even all religions are limited to this sliver of human knowledge and insight and are at best tentative guesses. All these things are helpful but humanly limited; they do provide some possible suggestions but certainly not ultimate answers or solutions.

We are simply left to try to find out how to survive within that framework of the existing reality. We are given guidance by attending to the realities that surround us in nature and in our lives. They will provide a guidance if we have the humility to follow them. As we get into more abstract explanations of how life works, we tread on thinner ice. The threat to our humanity is the temptation of hubris, the pretense that our limited knowledge is greater than it is and that we can proceed, godlike, to an imagined future. We are simply a part of some great web of life that we partially understand but which provides us guidance of how to survive within that framework. We found the uses of fire long before we understood the science of it.

Much of life is just a journey: one step at a time, and one day at a time, with faith in a future we only partially control. We can proceed knowing full well that we will have to continue to review and adjust as the realities of life change and grow as we also do.

No matter how we might think about life, there is something sacred and unknowable about it. That is OK; we must have a basic faith in it and honor it.

The judges, referees, and arbiters are outside of human control. The scoring is about survival.

It is time for a kind of redemption of the human spirit, acknowledging our vulnerability but realizing that we are a part of some grander purpose in the universe, that we are each a piece of some universal puzzle which none of us understands. It is a time for cooperation, for willingly sharing whatever resources we may have, for accepting differences, and realizing that only a unified effort can hope to deal with the obstacles we face.



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We need to put aside our differences and our childish desire for competition. We need to work together, accepting that the whole range of human characteristics exists in every age group, every region, every nation, every race, every nationality, every religion, every ideology, every lifestyle, and every gender. None is superior nor has cornered the market on honor, goodness, or morality. We need to accept the help of everyone who is concerned about the current realities: a coalition of the willing.

Life is not some game, and it never was. As adults we must accept the present realities and challenges, it is clear how we must proceed while having faith in the human spirit to guide us to our sustainable place in the web of life on this planet and trusting the universe not to forsake us if we do.



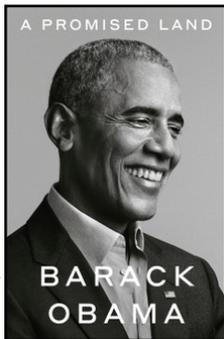
Progressive Caucus Book Nook

The Promised Land of Obama

By Stephen Fuller

I do a lot of reading, mostly stuff that I get from *The New York Times*, *Politico*, *The Atlantic*, and Bill Moyers for example. In this last year of social distancing and self-quarantine, I've read a few books. One I read recently is Barack Obama's latest memoir, *The Promised Land*.

It is a rather long book, and it took me more than a month to read, but I'm a slow reader, often distracted and needing to re-read passages—sometimes more than once. I like President Obama's style; it reads more like conversation than a lecture, and he included enough personnel stuff about Michelle and the girls that it seemed like a letter from a relative.



He begins his story before he got into politics when he was a lawyer in Chicago working for Michelle at a big prestigious firm. Soon he became a community organizer where he discovered how the poorest and most disenfranchised got by. Eventually he ran for a city government office in what was supposed to be an open seat and got thumped. Undeterred, he ran for the state legisla-

ture—again for an open seat—and won. By this time he and Michelle were married and had started a family. He relates that Michelle wasn't exactly on board, but she wasn't going to throttle his ambition.

That ambition prompted him to run for the U. S. Senate. During the campaign he learned that white folks and brown folks basically want the same things and that white folks and brown folks have many of the same obstacles.

The book covers the campaigns. He is good at profiling his staff, giving the reader a little background on who these men and women are and where they came from. The time he spent in the Senate is not covered well, because it seems he had already decided to run for President. Michelle wasn't exactly thrilled, and he whined a little about not seeing the girls; yet it did not slow him down. As we all know, he won.

Obama's short experience as a Senator did not really prepare him for major league politicians. His short tenure as a Senator did not prepare him for this next level of politics and the men and women who are the rock stars in Congress. In the book he spends a lot of pages on the bailout and tries to convince the reader that he had chosen the best people available to guide him on the economics of getting through the crisis. He wasn't able to convince me. Then he addressed the Affordable Care Act. By the time he was done, it is clear that Senators Grassley and Baucus had played him.

The book ends with the story of finding and killing Osama bin Laden, relating all the thought that went into the preparation and the actual mission. Overall the book is a good read with enough detail to make it sound like insider information but not so much to bore the reader. Enjoy it; it is worth the time.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date /Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Closed	DFL Headquarters
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday	Zoom
DFL Social Club & Lunch	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
Working Families Alliance	Suspended	Dutchroom
Earth Circle	Suspended	GR Public Library
Circles of Support	Suspended	811 NE 4th St. GR
Haven: A Place for All	Suspended	Kiesler Center
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	February 12, 2021	conray@arvig.net

Why We Haven't Stopped Global Warming

By Eric Grimsrud

First, let's make the point clear that human beings are very probably smart enough to solve the global warming problem. Over the last couple of centuries, we have developed a very high level of understanding of how things work including the details of the complex natural systems that populate our planet and how they have evolved over time in response to changing conditions.

That store of knowledge is now sufficient as to enable us to maintain human friendly conditions on our planet for a very long time—if we decide to do that. In other words, it is not a lack of intellectual knowledge that will limit the duration of livable conditions for humans on our planet. It is another force that threatens to do that; it's that other force that will be discussed here.

In an all-encompassing nutshell, the strongest force that prevents us from doing what needs to be done is what has been appropriately called “the tyranny of the contemporary.” During the fossil fuel era in which we have lived since the onset of the Industrial Age, we have learned how to raise our standards of living immensely by the use of the energy released when a fossil fuel—such as coal, oil, or natural gas—is combusted by oxygen thereby producing the seemingly harmless substance of carbon dioxide and water vapor. Over that period of use (or should I say overuse?), so much fossil fuel has been burned that the carbon content of the biosphere, into which the released CO₂ goes, has dramatically increased well above the natural level it previously had throughout the preceding 10,000 year period of the human-friendly era known as the Holocene. One of the most important details of this is that the CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere has been increased by 45%, and that number is continuously rising. This, in turn, is causing the retention of extra heat on Earth because atmospheric CO₂ acts as a heat insulator making Earth's temperature significantly greater than it would otherwise be. If we continue to live in this fossil fuel driven manner, we might be able to continue to enjoy the “good life” of the recent past but only for a short period of time as our planet becomes progressively warmer and less inhabitable.

Our present dilemma is primarily a moral one: which generation's welfare, that of the present or that of the future, will dictate the actions we take today? That is, will we continue our use of fossil

fuels for the energy production as many in the present generation prefer, or will we honor the obvious preferences of future generations whose very survival requires that we move on to completely different ways of producing the energy we need? An important and probably determining factor in making this decision is that many of those who will be living in future decades and centuries do not presently vote, of course, in our contemporary political system. In addition, a huge portion of our younger citizens today are not even mature enough yet to understand the global warming issue.

Thus, we can now understand the apt expression “the tyranny of the contemporary” in dealing with climate change. This is, indeed, a tyranny in that the dominant preference of the existing inhabitants of the Earth has generally been to continue our business as usual ways provided by our still abundant fossil fuels. While we might acknowledge the problem of global warming and continue to “talk the talk” concerning it, when it comes to actually doing meaningful things about it, we have invariably chosen to kick that can down the road for future generations to deal with at a later date when the problem will be even more difficult to solve. We have there-

by shown that so far we have not been ethically good enough to take our intergenerational responsibilities sufficiently seriously as to embrace a more comprehensive plan of action that will effectively solve the problem for future as well as present generations. Instead, we have simply wished our future generations “good luck” in solving

this problem at some later date, which by then will be even much more difficult to do.

So yes, we are indeed still immobilized today by a “tyranny of the contemporary,” a fact that might very well turn out to be the greatest tragedy of the human experience on this planet. This is needlessly so because the fields of science and engineering have provided us with both an understanding of climate changes and the technologies required to combat them. What is needed is needed for more appropriate actions to be taken is an adjustment of our ethical standards so that our intergenerational responsibilities are taken much more seriously than they have been so far.

So the central questions remains: Will humans suddenly and uncharacteristically become ethically “good enough” to do the right thing for the preservation of their own species on this planet? Your guess is as good as mine. All I know is that the time allowed for effective corrective action is almost gone, and the tyranny of the contemporary continues.



SAVE OUR
FUTURE

<https://genreportunesco.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/save-our-future-logo-en.png?w=640>

The Cult of Trump

By Nancy Rudd

After the January 6th sedition at the Capitol and Joe Biden's and Kamala Harris' inauguration, Trump still has a hold over most of the "Republican Party."* I keep hearing the cult of Trump and people using the phrase "drank the Kool-Aid."

Those two items reminded me of the Jonestown massacre. On November 18, 1978, a total of 918 members of an American cult called the People's Temple died in a mass suicide. One third of them were babies and children. Jim Jones had laced a type of Kool-Aid with cyanide and with armed guards standing by ordered his followers to drink it. Jones had a woman friend; it isn't known which one committed murder and which committed suicide.

Jones wasn't like Trump in many ways, but their personalities have similarities. Jones believed in racial justice; Trump is a racist. Jones ran free medical drug rehabilitation programs, provided help for the needy, and had a diverse group of followers; Trump wouldn't think of giving free programs to anyone in need, and his followers are mostly white.

Most assume that cults are religious in nature, but Jones was an agnostic. Trump says he's a Christian but hasn't acted as such. A cult can be defined as a group or sect bound together by the veneration of the same person, thing, or ideal. So cult leaders can vary, and the ideals that they venerate can be very different.

Some people from Jonestown survived including his son Stephen who was away from the commune that day at a basketball game. He lost everything that day. He's had to deal with the legacy of his father as a leader of a doomed cult. Stephen Jones described his father as dripping charisma, engaging, charming, and enthralling. This would explain the large number of his followers. He told his followers of the need for peace and global harmony while using isolation and violence to maintain control.

Their personalities and personal needs are where Jones and Trump are similar. His son says that he sees so many similarities between his father and Trump. They are both narcissists and used the same manipulation techniques. According to <https://medium.com>, the similarities are even eerier when considering these: They were both per-

suasive, paranoid, and power hungry and had a complicated relationship with their fathers. They thrived on attention, adoration, and adulation. Both were grooming their children to take over the family business, plotted against their enemies, held grudges, and cheated on their wives. In addition, they were equal parts bully and charmer. Stephen Jones said, "My father would meet someone, quickly read what you feared most and what you wanted most and convince you that he was the one to save you from one and give you the other." Stephen believes that both his father and Trump relied on similar manipulation.

Another Jonestown cult member escaped a year before the mass suicide. She is now a captain in the San Francisco Police Department and says that Trump's rhetoric is "so similar" to that of Jim Jones.

Trump and his rallies have created a group with a leader that goes far beyond what we call partisan division. I've listened to interviews of the people who attend these rallies, and their adoration of Trump could be considered cult-like. Whatever he says, they believe. They believe that HE called them to storm the Capitol on January 6th. I wonder

how many people realize how close we were to losing our democracy on that day had the mobs succeeded or on Election Day if Trump had won. He had said he was joking when he said that he would stay on as President for more than four years when he won the election. His niece, Mary Trump, and his former fixer, Michael Cohen, both say

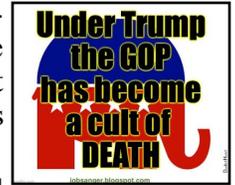
Trump doesn't joke.

There are those, including some "Republican" Senators and a large contingent of "Republican" House members, who think the election was stolen from Trump. They all are putting our representative democracy in peril for a man who asks everything of them and gives nothing in return. So, if Trump is the leader of the cult, what are the ideals that his followers crave? Anything he tells them. He and they are not going away.

*I put the Republican Party and Republican in quotation marks, because they are moving further to the right. Prior to the election besides the Democrats, there were three groups endorsing Biden: The Lincoln Project (traditional Republicans), Republicans against Trump, and Vote Vets. The Vote Vets are mostly Republicans who endorsed Biden. All of these groups think that Trump has ruined their party and taken it too far to the right. There were countless individuals who were Republicans who endorsed Biden as seen at the virtual convention. The battle for the true Republican Party continues.



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6f/Jim_Jones_in_front_of_the_International



<https://didiyouheckfirst.files.wordpress.com/2020/10/>

...Yet

By Gary Burt

In the process of recycling old papers, I came across the November 11, 2020 opinion page where I read, “Worth noting: 70 million plus disappointed Americans and not a single city is on fire. No broken glass. No riots. No spitting on cops. No frantic breakdowns. No safe spaces. Anyone want to tell me what the difference is?” Colleen Deery, Hudson, WI.

It occurred to me that one word could be added to



<https://www.ac2news.com/wp-content/uploads/Screen-Shot-2020-08-13-at-1.51.38-PM.png>

the end of almost every sentence in her statement to make everything true: “Yet.” Her assumption was eminently clear. And eminently wrong. There are reasons for the divisions between people in our country. I believe the following is a primary one.

According to the now deceased Washington *Post* syndicated columnist Sydney Harris, the base of an authoritarian male like Trump “doesn’t want a leader; they want a Messiah. They want someone who will give them the ‘Word.’ And the Word will be one that is very agreeable to them, that appeals to their preferences and prejudices, so they can follow the ‘Word’ wholeheartedly.”

What Trump’s base is looking for is neither a true leader nor a true Messiah but a false Messiah—a man who will give them oversimplified answers, who will justify their arrogant and dysfunctional ways, who will castigate their “enemies,” who will reinforce their selfishness as a way of life, and who will make them comfortable within their prejudices and preconceptions.

Harris goes on to write, “Indeed, this is the difference between a

false Messiah and a true one. A false Messiah—such as Hitler, in past times, [and Donald Trump currently]



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caters to and inflames the fears, hates, angers, and resentments of his people and drives them to destruction rather than to salvation or self-realization.”

A true leader tells people hard truths, gives them a difficult path to follow, calls upon their highest qualities, not their basest instincts. A true leader does not tell us what we want to hear but what we ought to hear. A true Messiah, such as Jesus, rebukes his people, shows them their errors, makes them want to be better—not stronger or richer—and asks them to make sacrifices for the common good and for the good of their own souls.” Has Trump EVER been a healthy or rational leader?

Trump did his best to tap into his base’s fears. Hatred and anger are derivatives of that kind of fear.

Most of Trump’s base seem to have undiagnosed or buried fear issues of which they’re in denial. Once in denial, fear-based personalities feel



<https://orinocotribune.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Em2WZUUA0vYU-800x445.jpeg>

free to blame others for their emotional responses. Once they’ve blamed others, they feel like it’s then okay to demand that others change, because “they’re the problem; I’m not the problem.”

As long as Trump and his base can blame others, they don’t have to face the fact that most of the problems they’re now dealing with are a result of choices they’ve made in life and that they really have no one to blame for their problems but themselves. That’s the dilemma they’re afraid to face. In continuing to blame others, Trump allows his base to avoid facing that internal conflict.

Editor’s Note:

We’ve spent the last five years railing against Trump. With this issue I hope we can move on to discussing issues and policies that we think can truly make us great again after Trump ruined us and make us greater yet.

COMMON SENSE II is published by the Itasca Progressive Caucus in Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Editor: Valerie Conner conray@arvig.net

ITASCA PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

Chair: Jeanne Newstrom itascaprogressive@gmail.com
Assoc. Chair: Valerie Conner conray@arvig.net

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