
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.

Late Summer 2023 Where We Are Issue Vol. 18 Issue 3

Our Poisonous Political Climate

By Vicki Andrews

“Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country” is a quotation often attributed to Patrick Henry, one of the founders of our country. Others say it was a sentence developed as a typing test in 1867 by Charles Weller, others that it was developed as a typing drill by Frank McGurkin in 1889. It doesn’t really matter where it came from, but it is a good statement to keep in mind as we look at the current political climate in our country. Of course, in modern times, the “good men” phrase is seriously out of date, and we know it should be changed to “all good men and women,” or, better yet, “all good people,” or perhaps “good” should be removed and the phrase should be just “all people.”

There have been violent episodes related to US politics since the beginning of our country, but they are increasing both in number and severity. Part of that has obviously been our mass communication systems and now the prevalence and reach of social media. The fact is that most people get their news from media that leans right or left, and, of course, people watching these stations or reading these papers are strongly influenced by what they see and/or hear. Recent years have shown an increase in distrust, anger, and even threats of violence within our political system. Examples include a million-dollar bounty put on the head of an executive at Dominion Voting Systems by an angry supporter of Donald Trump in the belief that Dominion had interfered in the outcome of the election of Joe Biden as President. Then there was the plot to kidnap Michigan’s Governor Whitmer, and perhaps the most infamous of all—the January 6th attack and riot by Trump supporters in Washington, DC.



It's interesting to note that most of the recent violence and threats of violence have been somehow connected to supporters of Donald Trump. This is definitely not a surprise; the man seems to inspire anger and even encourage violence and has a large and faithful following of people who seem to thrive on this.

A January 2021, *American Perspective* survey found that two subgroups most prone to violence at this time in our country are white Christian Evangelist Republicans and supporters of Q Anon. Separate polls have shown that other subgroups prone to violence comprise those who feel threatened by women and/or minorities.



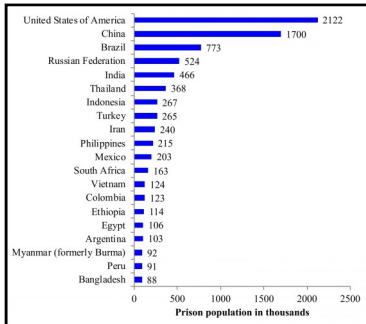
Regardless of how it happens, the critical question to consider is what can be done to lower the temperature a bit. We need to learn to be able to disagree with each other but still treat others with respect and compassion. Easier said than done, that’s for sure. But it can be done. It involves getting to know—and even socialize with—people with different backgrounds and beliefs. It means really listening to each other and considering the other’s opinions. It doesn’t mean we have to agree with them or they with us, but if we can discuss them politely and with a positive attitude, changes may happen. This needs to happen among ordinary people as well as by our political leaders who should be inspiring us. It’s definitely worth a try; the alternatives for our country’s future are not pleasant.



The American Injustice System: Modern Day Slavery*

By Karter Starling

The American prison system is the world's #1 incarceration system. Despite making up close to 5% of the global population, the US has nearly 25% of the world's prison population. While



<https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/703/2020/03/Figure-4-1->

some may suggest that the American justice system is broken, it is quickly becoming apparent that it is, in fact, functioning exactly as intended. As large corporations begin buying up, investing in, and profiting from the prison system and the living, breathing

human beings within it, systemic issues of inequality become undeniably apparent.

Although slavery was abolished in 1865, white America has decades of political and social entrenchment of power and refuses to honor the very idea of what our nation was founded on: that all are created equal. Through the Jim Crow era, the civil rights movement, and into today, slavery still exists. It has just taken on a new disguise. In America today, the only class of citizens that are legally allowed to have their rights taken away are criminals,

especially felons.

So, if a group that the ruling class

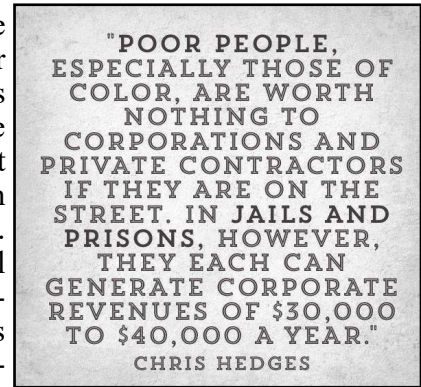


<https://static.prisonpolicy.org/images/jailratesbyrace2018.png>

didn't like earned the right to vote, what would be the easiest way to diminish the voting power of this group? Charge them with crimes. Perhaps this is why African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of whites. In fact, one out of every three black boys born today can expect to be sentenced to prison; this is compared to one out of six Latino boys and one out of 17 white boys. So, if the police unfairly target black people—as we know they do, because a black person is five times more likely to be stopped without just cause than a white person—then suddenly the black vote is drastically slashed.

Having an influx of prisoners also enables the ex-

ploitation of the incarcerated for unpaid labor. In Texas, for example, inmates are not paid for their labor. This creates ample value for the parties that invest in the incarceration of human beings. The Texas penal labor system, managed by Texas Correctional Industries, was valued at \$88.9 million in 2014. Prison labor is also used to clean and maintain the grounds of the Alabama state capitol building. Wages are equivalent to less than \$1 per hour in most penal labor programs with up to 12-hour workdays. The pay scale for federal prisoners is \$0.12 to \$0.40 per hour.



<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/4f/17/4e/4f174ea343c83d27149b4cb6ea92f15---hedges.jpg>

This system of targeting, exploiting, and disenfranchising black citizens has a ripple effect on black communities and our country as a whole. The overincarceration of black citizens has become so prevalent that exonerations have

reached a record level. As of October, 2016, there have been 1,900 exonerations of the wrongfully accused in 2016; 47% of those exonerated were African American. Indeed, a system, which targets citizens based on racial status strips them of their rights and has an exceptional track record of permanently damaging the lives of people later to be found innocent, needs to be rebuilt from the ground up.

*All factual information present in this article is from the NAACP criminal justice fact sheet via NAACP.org.

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Editor: Valerie Conner conray@arvig.net

ITASCA PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS
Chair: Valerie Conner conray@arvig.net

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Leader of the Cult

By Brian Vroman

Donald Trump is a threat to this nation. His supporters, of course, will disagree, but I no longer care about them, because they are a lost cause. They have fallen victim to a fascist “leader cult,” reminiscent of the cultish following associated with Adolf Hitler and other fascist strongmen of the past. They will not change. Like the hardcore Nazis, who, when the Red Army was approaching Berlin, would say “If only the Fuhrer knew,”—as if he didn’t—believing that Hitler would fix everything, Trump’s hardcore followers believe, or at least adhere to, Trump’s assertion that “I alone can fix it.” Only one man can fix it; this belief is a classic symptom of a cult.

Hitler and Nazis believed in the *Fuhrer Prinzip*, the “leader principle,” the idea that in some semi-mystical way the leader embodies the will of the people—or at least the people who count—so that, when the leader acts, he is by definition expressing with will of the people. This is dangerous nonsense. It is a recipe for totalitarianism. If one individual by definition expresses the will of the people, then what need is there for division of power and a system of checks and balances? Any check on the power of the Leader is also a check on the will of the people themselves. So, any competing center of power needs to be flattened or brought into harmony with the wishes of the Leader. In Germany, this process was known as *Gleichaltung* or synchronization. When Trump talks about bringing organizations like the Justice Department or the FBI under his direct and immediate control, this is an example of *Gleichaltung*. Hitler appointed sympathetic judges, brought the German police under his control, and essentially deputized the SA, his “Stormtroopers,” thus ensuring Nazi control of the entire legal system.

In Nazi ideology, the Leader not only expressed the will of the people, but he also was the ultimate source of truth itself. Thus, any potential arbiter of truth was regarded as an enemy. The universities were made to toe the line; scientists and intellectuals were closely monitored for ideological purity, and the press—called by Hitler “the lying press” or at times “the lying Jewish press”—was

forced to regurgitate Nazi views or shut down. According to recent surveys, the majority of Trump supporters will believe their Leader over friends, family members, or even religious leaders. This is an unmistakable marker of a fascist cult.

Fascism typically appeals to fear and identifies a scapegoat. For the Nazis, the Jews were the villains, and all sorts of prejudicial misinformation was spread to demonize them. The Jews, ironically, were said by the Nazis to be behind Bolshevism, centered in Moscow, and “international finance,” centered in New York. The incongruity of these dual assertions meant nothing, because the point was not rational analysis but the promotion of fear and hatred. With the Nazis, it was the Jews. With Trumpism, it is immigrants (they’re “rapists and drug dealers”), LGBTQ people (think of all the nonsense about gay teachers

“grooming” children”), blacks (false assertions about CRT, claims that those involved with BLM are terrorists), and anyone else

who can be vilified in order to pump up unjustified hysteria. Behind all this is a thinly veiled antisemitism expressed in the virulent Great Replacement Theory, anti-George Soros hysteria, and so forth.

Despite his belief in a so-called master race, Hitler never really cared about the German people. When it was clear that Germany was losing the war, in great part due to Hitler’s blunders, instead of taking responsibility, Hitler shifted blame to the German people, asserting that they were too weak. Likewise, Trump does not care at all about his devoted followers. He cares only for Trump. If he is given power, his time in office will be a tour de force of revenge, recrimination, and personal vendetta. Initially, his supporters will revel in this, as Trump sticks it to various groups and individuals they do not like. What they do not realize—and will not until it is too late—is that when all the



<https://www.greenvillegpost.com/wp-content/>



<https://cdn77.pressenza.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/occupy-dot-com.jpg>

They claim to be super-patriots, but they would destroy every liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. They demand free enterprise, but are the spokesmen for monopoly and vested interest. Their final objective, toward which all their deceit is directed, is to capture political power so that, using the power of the state and the power of the market simultaneously, they may keep the common man in eternal subjection.

Henry A. Wallace
33rd Vice-President of the United States

OCCUPY

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checks on power are gone, they will be as vulnerable as anyone else. It will be like an apartment dweller who hates the man in the apartment across the hall rejoicing when that man's apartment catches fire, not realizing that the flames will not stop until the entire building is consumed.

Diehard Trump supporters will not be convinced by any of this. In fact, they will guffaw, lampoon, and sneer. But this piece is not for them. It is for those of us who have not been deluded by the snake-oil, who have not succumbed to the Big Lie. Whether Republican, Democrat, or Independent, we must all stand together to stop America from



<https://mronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Fascism-A-Warning-When-Someone-Claims-to-Speak-for-a-Whole-Nation-...-Greater-Diversity-News.jpg>

falling victim to fascist tyranny. When Trump was defeated last time, he used illegal means, including calling for a violent *coup d'état*, to hold on

to power. If he gains power again, he will never want to relinquish it, and he will destroy our democracy. We must work as never before to prevent this from happening. Everything depends on it.

Time to Play Hardball

By Valerie Conner

Playing hardball in baseball means recruiting the best players and coaching them well, so they can field the balls hit to them. Cheating is stealing signs, throwing spitballs, and faking injuries.

Playing hardball means following the rules and using them to your advantage if possible. Playing hardball means strategically using your players, for example placing them in the best batting order and positions of their strength. Playing hardball is playing hard, clean baseball—win or lose. If you win, do so graciously. If you lose, again, do so graciously. Playing foulball is winning tauntingly and losing bitterly, accusing the umpires of bias and the other team of cheating. A well-played game is fun to play and to watch. A nasty game is a torture to play and upsetting to watch.

In today's political game, the Republicans, especially the Trumpians, are making the game a torture to watch and to play. They recruit marginal candidates who are unable to articulate what they want to do for—not against—their constituents. That may be because the national party doesn't even have a platform other than getting elected by any means possible. The Republicans are cheating by rigging the voting laws and opportunities, for example, by making it harder to register to vote, by making sure certain precincts have insufficient numbers of voting machines, and by accusing any

outcome not in their favor of being corrupt.



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It's time for the Democrats to fight the good fight by govern-

ing and campaigning well and calling out the Republicans' cheating ways and showing how things are supposed to be done. By winning a clean, well-played game, they can catch all the foul balls.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date /Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Thursdays 2:00-5:00	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday 6:30	DFL Headquarters
DFL Social Club & Lunch	1st Wednesday Noon	DFL Headquarters
Volunteer at Food Bank	2nd Wednesday 1:30-3:30	Second Harvest
Itasca Area Indivisible	1st Thursday 7:00	Zoom
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	December 1, 2023	conray@arvig.net

An American Mess

By Bob Passi

The state of American politics can only be described as a mess. This question hangs in the air:



<https://awesomelylurvic.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Biden-Clean-up-trump-White-house-788x350.jpg>

“Can we find a solution in time?” with its ancillary question, “Can we conjure up the political will to institute any real solution?” The recent likelihood of an open trial about the Hunter Biden allegations adds another element to the growing mess and leaves little room for any clear and helpful resolution before the next election. It is a quandary.

Not that American politics—and perhaps any politics—has ever been pristine, but over the last several decades we have watched American politics devolve into something that can now only be described as a huge mess. It has become such a mess that American democracy seems to be on life support



<https://0.wp.com/fabiusmaximus.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/america-politics2.jpg?ssl=1>

and nearly ready for the last rites.

We can watch this mess beginning in the 1960s with the three assassinations of democratizing political leaders: John F Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy. That became a period filled with mass protests, racial uprisings, and finally the police riot at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. At that point the Republicans saw an opportunity to step in with Nixon and the “law and order” solution. The 1970s were also a time when the Powell Memorandum to the American Chamber of Commerce weaponized American business to enter politics and become a dominant political force for the growth of free market capitalism. At that point the attempts at political manipulation began to become increasingly blatant as was shown when the Watergate trials exposed a plot to subvert the entire electoral process to secure the permanent dominance of the Republican Party. From then on, the manipulation and corruption of American politics

became more and blatant while big money became central to the political process, and conflicts of interest began to be normalized.

We watched that growth through the Reagan and Bush years with the destruction of unions and the change of the tax structure from progressive to regressive. We saw the rise to dominance of the economic and financial sectors of the economy. We saw rising financial corruption from the savings and loan scandal to the political abuses of Iran-Contra.

Much of it came ahead with the coming of the new millennium when the Supreme Court installed George W. Bush to the Presidency, with another tax cut for the rich and powerful, and the growing corruption with the debacle of the second war in Iraq.

Fast forward to the present situation. Our news cycles, which are now 24/7, have been dominated by Donald Trump, the new P. T. Barnum, and his shenanigans since somewhere in 2015. The corporate media fell in love with the entire spectacle, which led to his Presidency, and it has grown to become the best watched soap opera in the nation and perhaps in the world.



<https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-S9kaAKEJYU/XCZZZPVX0I/>

The Democratic Party, not to be left out, had its own measure of drama and manipulation undercutting the candidacy of Bernie Sanders in the 2016 election in favor of the candidacy of Hilary Clinton with all her baggage and the blessing of the corporate Democrats.

We saw the result. Although she won the popular vote, Hilary Clinton not only lost the electoral vote but had absolutely no coattails, as the nation became bright red, and the Democratic Party was left as wreckage beside the campaign trail. Their only response was to search far and wide for someone, or something, to blame for her loss. As in cases like that, they looked everywhere but inside the party. It was Russia; it was Bernie Sanders supporters; it was Wikileaks and whistleblowers. Finally, above all, it was the basic corruptness of Donald Trump.

In some ways the national Democratic Party has been wandering in the desert ever since looking for the oasis, the water to slake their ravaging thirst for revenge and retribution. Their primary goal has been to discredit Trump and find ways to

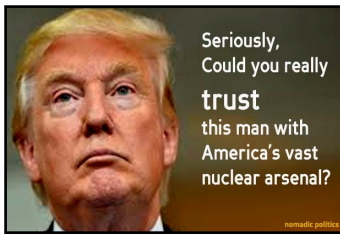
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prove his corruption. Now it has ended up in the courts.

Most recently, all eyes have been on Donald Trump and his legal issues—the final comeuppance of that person who caused Hilary’s demise. Finally, the courts will do what the Democratic Party could not do over the last seven years.

But wait, this is the legal system known for its slow working, especially for powerful defendants,



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and it is very likely that much of it may not be resolved before the 2024 election. In any case, the appeals might finally end up at the rogue Supreme Court with all its Trump appointed justices

and economic corruption. Another scenario is Trump could be elected, leave our democratic heritage behind, pardon himself, and purge the government of all who oppose him.

To the Republicans—now thoroughly dominated by Trump—this whole legal mess is seen simply as a political scheme by the Democrats to discredit a Republican candidate so the Democrats can win the election.

There seemed to be a sliver of moral high ground for the Democrats to stand on to declare their moral superiority. But breaking news! The Hunter Biden plea deal did not pass muster, and now it will all very likely go to trial. Any hopes for a quiet settlement of his issues under the radar and before the campaigning begins are dashed.

So, in the midst of an upcoming Presidential campaign, which some polls before the Hunter Biden bombshell were showing a dead heat between Biden and Trump, we will now be in the midst of dueling trials of varying degrees of corruption, with a whole raft of red and blue spectators and the 24/7 news sources commenting and giving a play-by-play analysis of the entire process. It will be like the Super Bowl of American politics. What sport! What spectacle! But it has become as Shakespeare said, “A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” We are left with an empty and meaningless spectacle. It is a mess.

The reality is that American politics, especially on the national level, has become a debased spectacle like two teams mudwrestling for a prize pig. Meanwhile, what are the results of the current mess?

- ◆ A totally dysfunctional Congress.
- ◆ A rogue Supreme Court.
- ◆ The increase of dark money, with its corrupting influences.
- ◆ All kinds of attempts to manipulate voting rights.
- ◆ Unresolved racial tensions.
- ◆ Growing normalizations of political violence.
- ◆ Unresolved immigration issues.
- ◆ Growing income inequality resulting in obscene wealth for some an unnecessary poverty for others.
- ◆ A proxy war with Russia in Ukraine.
- ◆ Global warming and environmental crises on the back burner.
- ◆ A nation becoming more and more polarized.
- ◆ And the list goes on.

Much of America is tired of the entire mess. But how do we find a solution? How do we find our way out of the morass? Is there a way to rise above the fray?

If we look to the usual political suspects, we find that they are all complicit—directly or indirectly—in the corrupting political process that now defines American politics.

Can we find someone above the fray, who is mature enough to understand America and its politics, who has some degree of wisdom about what a democratic society should be, and who is untainted by the mudwrestling, someone who is a bright and shiny option, someone almost in the mold of Eleanor Roosevelt?

Whoa! Such a person does exist: someone who is above the fray, someone who could offer a clean option to save our electoral process, someone who could remind us of our noble heritage as a nation founded on democracy, a nation which had been a beacon of hope for the world, and someone to reunify the nation and begin to rebuild that legacy of democracy again.

Who is that? It is Michelle Obama. She stands above the mess, above the fray. It is time for the nation to draft her to become a unifying, fresh candidate for the Presidency.

It’s time to listen to our better angels. It’s time to start the campaign to draft Michelle Obama. #draftmichelle.



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