Hope in Trumpland

Aside from fears of a nuclear wipeout (Remember the movie, Dr. Strangelove) and other irrational activities that are possible actions of President Trump, there are many silver linings.

As New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd wrote: “He has breathed new zest into a wide range of things: feminism, liberalism, student activism, newspapers, cable news, protesters, bartenders, shrinks, Twitter, the A.C.L.U., "S.N.L.," town halls, George Orwell, Margaret Atwood, Hannah Arendt, Stephen Colbert, Nordstrom, the Federalist Papers, separation of powers, division of church and state, athletes and coaches taking political stands and Frederick Douglass.”

It was heart-warming to see the massive worldwide demonstrations supporting women’s right take place the day after the presidential inauguration.

A few days later the nation erupted opposing the poorly thought out executive order banning movement into the country by people with ties to several Muslim nations.

There is also the movement opposing Trump’s plan to build a wall along the Mexican border. Along with this is Trump’s promise to deport “illegal” aliens.

The more the world and the USA witness the Trump presidency, the more we see a demagogue playing on people’s fears, while offering simplistic solutions in a complex world. Trump and the GOP are not conservatives. They are reactionaries! The calls to REPEAL Obamacare, STOP Muslim immigrants, RETURN undocumented workers, BAN abortions, END NAFTA, promise a return of the world (and nation) to life a half a century (or more) ago. These absolutist statements are authoritarian, do this, stop that, and so forth.

The reactions to Trumpist edicts are heartening. Americans will not be pushed around. The various movements cannot wait for Democratic politicians to take up leadership. As the Clinton campaign demonstrated, the Democratic Party is just one branch of the capitalist elites. To effectively protect the USA from Trump and the GOP minions in the House and Senate, We will need to do more than to take to the streets!

To stop a bully one must find ways to scare them. The “Day Without an Immigrant” was a good start.

Actions must be well thought out, as they must not only intimidate the ruling intimidators, but also needs to educate the public of their abuses. This is tough, many of us instinctively want to punch the fat cats and hired guns, who support the obnoxious and misguided efforts to dominate and abuse working people.

We have already witnessed the billionaire Trump act like a victim of an evil corporate media, or the most downtrodden in society, like Hispanic and Muslim immigrants. Daily we see “fake news” pictures of refugees from the mess that is Syria and Iraq. The refugees are victims of the “Islamic State” (IS) and authoritarian governments supported by Russian or USA posturing. Watching the efforts to remove the threats of terrorism presented by IS, we see the wholesale destruction of large cities by bombs made in the USA or Russia and dropped by these countries or their stooges. We are not saving anybody, we are rendering people homeless and often stripping them their wealth. While Turkey, other parts of the Mideast and Europe have opened refugee camps or an opportunity to escape the insanity, the USA has made the road to safety more and more difficult thanks to the fear purveyors representing the corporate elites!

We need to study the works and writings of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Non-violence is the most effective weapon for promoting change. Violence leads to martyrs and results in greater oppression. The immediate objective is to intimidate the capitalist bullies, therefore minimizing their damage. Then from the obstructionism, we need to use the ballot box to insert our own political representatives into the decision making process. We need to demonstrate that most solutions to the tyranny are compatible tenets of DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM! DS

Words for thought

"We’re, waist deep in the Big Muddy . . . And the big fool says to push on.” Pete Seeger

“If you make yourself a sheep, the wolves will eat you” Ben Franklin
Beyond Identity Politics

The answer lies in the simple fact that those of us who despise racism, sexism and other forms of overt bigotry overlooked the fact that skin color, gender, sexual preferences are only part of people’s experiences and personality. We have been overlooking the role of class. While there is much discussion about racial segregation, and gender discrimination (especially in the workplace), class (economic) segregation is still the most common form of discrimination and segregation in the USA. While analysts see differences in educated whites and less educated whites political activity, the same analysts overlooked the fact there are differences among educated African Americans, Hispanics, women and those less fortunate to obtain an education. Education is often a good indicator of ones economic health. So is geography. Why did states which have suffered the most from the global economy favor Trump (remember he did not get the most votes, but he did get an overwhelming number of electoral college votes which are based strictly on geography.

As cartoonist Clay Bennett tries to show in the accompanying cartoon, using identity politics, we fail to see the real evil (guns) and instead focus on the symbolism of the Confederate flag. We cannot save or improve the world if we get hung up on symbols and overlook the real evils.

While Bernie Sanders did a remarkable job of introducing democratic socialism to the Democratic Party and pushed Hillary Clinton to adopt more progressive positions, he was unable to change the heavy reliance on identity politics. Clinton and most Democrats (including major media institutions like the New York Times, Washington Post, or Public Broadcasting and many others) have repeatedly slighted Sanders and his ideas as unrealistic.

To continue what Sanders started, those advocating for democratic socialism have to focus on the most important problems facing the typical American. We need to unite the workers of the USA and the world! While identity politics is an important in helping assure a more equality and a better life for all, identity politics, also, offers a way to divide and conquer, a long-standing practice of any ruler!

Trump’s primary appeal is that he is an outsider and not afraid to say whatever he thought would be a winning sound bite. Such carelessness is reckless and dangerous. We must also recognize that his appeal rests on taking advantage of the divide and conquer aspects of identity politics.

As DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS we must remember the call of Marx and Engels: Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains! Democratic Socialists must also continue to look forward and adapt to the realities of today, almost 2 centuries after Marx and Engels issued their first call to action! DS

Walker’s False Frugality

Last month, the Vanguard exposed Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker’s incompetence related to road construction and maintenance. In Walker’s budget this stupidity is glaring along with recent revelations about the Department of Transportation’s handling of road construction contracts that are frequently resulting in massive cost-over runs, as many preliminary estimates are absurdly under-estimated when being reviewed for approval. Walker is suggesting placing several projects that have been started on hold, thus extending traffic delays and disruptions.

After many years of ‘lock-em up and throw away the key’ strategy for combating crime, it seems that even the GOP is recognizing the folly that such strategies do not make us safer and that prisons are downright expensive. Walker is calling for a cut back by replacing the state’s parole board with a single worker. Eight civil servants would be eliminated in favor of one appointed by the Governor. The proposal would likely create a backlog in reviewing cases of prisoners eligible for parole. According to the Prison Ministry Project of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Madison the state currently spends more than $15 million a year to house parole eligible inmates. Many of the parole eligible inmates already routinely travel outside of prison for work, so housing them is an unnecessary expense and does not protect the public. WISCONSIN CANNOT AFFORD WALKER!