

THE OWL SHOGUN ESSAYS



ON THE REPUBLIC - Part One -

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RES PUBLICA -----

Just this past November, I went on a small trip to my nation's capital of Washington DC for a second time. I was looking to do something totally different for the holidays as spending Thanksgiving in the humidity of Florida year-in and year-out has become a most unfulfilling affair. In DC, I sought to unplug from the monotony of life and to rekindle the flame of my pursuits by aiming to gaze upon things of profound beauty and historical significance. And my Jupiter is this a gorgeous city! Washington DC may not be Kyoto, Rome, San Juan, Paris, Barcelona, or London, but the sheer grandiosity of the buildings there still evoke in me a palpable sense of awe and wonder.

In my tendentious view, Florida is devoid of all things elegant; a land aggressively absent of anything resembling architectural splendor, historical prestige, or the nourishing sophistication of high culture. Seldom will you ever find buildings of immaculacy like in Milan, Florence or Madrid. But neither will you be graced with cities of such stunning magnificence like with Tokyo, Osaka, and Sendai. Aside from all of the commercialized beaches and the sanitized tourism of Walt Disney World Resorts, you will struggle to find breathtaking scenery comparable to the magnitude of Tuscany, Lake Como, Cinque Terre, or Mount Fuji. Always, I am seeking a more permanent escape from this mundane swamp; deprived of the necessary things a creative mind needs to flourish. One day, I *will* leave Florida for good; hopefully never to return as it has become far too religious and conservative for my tastes. But that, my dear reader, is a topic for another day... Back to the DC trip!

Despite having visited this city before, the autumn leaves of gold and scarlet hues contrasted nicely against a

backdrop of marble-white edifices and clear sapphire skies; all conspiring to bestow feelings of enchantment. The bone-chilling frigidity was a treasured delight as I much prefer colder climes to Florida's perpetual and infernal summers.

Of course, the main appeal of Washington DC are the buildings which are absolutely massive and brimming with exquisite detail – each deriving inspiration from the pagan temples of old. The many colossal columns, entablatures, arches, and plethora of statues hark back to the ancient traditions of the Greco-Roman period. I simply could not stop gawking at the sheer artistry of their construction. Certain areas possess such resplendence that I almost felt as if I was back in Rome or London; albeit much cleaner and less crowded. I could imagine myself walking the streets of Lucium as **Velkan Marius Aurelian**.

During my time there, I visited many of the necessary sites such as the solemn Thomas Jefferson Memorial, the illustrious Lincoln Memorial, and our (now questionable) Supreme Court. I ascended up the towering Washington Monument and delved into the vast collections of the grand Library of Congress. I paid respects to the courageous dead in Arlington Cemetery. I also pondered over the sacrifices of our brave soldiers throughout time in other monuments dedicated to past conflicts such as with Vietnam, Korea, and World War II. Along the pristine beauty of the National Mall, I visited as many museums as time would allow. Among them were:

- The Museum of Natural History
- The National Air & Space Museum
- The African American History Museum
- The Asian History Museum
- The National Postal Museum

- The International Spy Museum
- And several more...

In DC, there is just so much in the way of intellectual stimulation and cultural fulfillment that it would require multiple visitations to truly experience all that it has to offer (such as the historical area of Georgetown). Unfortunately, the White House was unavailable this time around as it was in the middle of preparations for a *certain* president-elect and his eventual seizure of power in the coming year.

The National Archives is in my opinion one of the most rewarding places one can visit, not just for Americans, but for all peoples around the world. It is there, in that most venerated of places, that the founding documents which built America – such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution – are on display for all to study and admire. I admit that to stand in front of the very texts written by the founding fathers of my homeland was a feeling beyond my capacity to portray with mere textual descriptions. Even so, the true pinnacle of my time in DC was definitely when I toured inside of the US Capitol Building.

The herculean size and Olympian majesty of this place is beyond words for I could not help but stare with utter amazement. The US Capitol Building is without doubt a powerful symbol of democracy which commands respect from all nations. It is there, in that hallowed ground, where duly elected representatives and senators from all states of the union gather to perform the difficult task of governance. They are each chosen from among the people to work for the people... At least, that's how the theory goes. I could honestly write endless pages on how wondrous the architecture was. But that doesn't compare to the political importance of the Capitol Building's role in global affairs.

As I traversed this sacred ground, I felt as though I stepped into the very heart and soul of western civilization. I know! I can hear my European readers reeling. But as of this writing, it is America, *not* Great Britain, France, Germany, or Italy, who leads the western world (for now). Ergo, I feel that it is appropriate to make such statements.

Standing within the US Capitol, you're inundated with the glory of a continuous historical tradition dating back to the ancient days of Cleisthenes. During his life, Athens was perhaps the center of what we might anachronistically call "**Western Civilization**". That mantle was eventually passed on to the Romans and their eternal city. When the western empire finally fell, that torch was once more bequeathed to Constantinople for a brief time. And not too long from our present day, London could have been considered the heart of the western world when it still commanded a vast empire.

When I was born on the 10th of July in 1994, I doubt that there were many who might have argued against the notion that the United States of America, once a small group of fledgling colonies, was the rightful center of the western world. Standing inside of the Capitol Building stirred me in ways I had not felt since my visit to England in 2023.

Back then, my stalwart companion and I took a lovely tour to explore the Palace of Westminster where the UK Parliament meets in the form of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. During our brief time there, we were immersed in the rich and proud history of Great Britain whilst also admiring the sublime gothic architecture that has made it one of the most enduring symbols of democracy on Earth. By the end of our tour, I was almost proud of being a British citizen despite possessing no such legal status; much to my despair.

My tour throughout the US Capitol Building yielded a similar sentiment in me; albeit of a more fundamental and high spiritual nature. I've mentioned in previous works that I am in no way religious. I do not believe in God nor in an afterlife. I place more trust in the scientific method than in the sermons of unreliable prophets or the dubious texts of scripture. That being said, I would describe my experience in the Capitol as something akin to a religious one.

This intangible and profound state of ecstasy followed me into the rotunda which connects the Senate Chambers with the House of Representatives. Above me was the utterly magnificent dome. Upon this ellipsoid ceiling is a dramatic painting by Constantino Brumidi which depicts our first president sitting amidst the heavens. Known suitably by the striking name of '*The Apotheosis of George Washington*', this masterful painting served as the crowning moment in the tour. In that instant, I felt as if I had stepped on holy ground.

WE THE PEOPLE -----

A little over a decade after the original thirteen colonies declared independence from British rule, a great and crucial moment in human history was underway. In attempting to address the issues which arose from the arguably insufficient Articles of Confederation, fifty-five delegates from across the land gathered in Philadelphia. The result was the framing of a brand-new document which would determine the ultimate destiny of a nation, and the world.

Today, we know it simply as the Constitution of the United States of America. As of this writing, it still serves as the oldest (active) surviving charter on official governance and has become the basis of inspiration for many forward-thinking countries across the globe. It's timeless opening

phrase of “**We The People**” still resonates in the hearts and minds of folks all over the planet with the promise of a government whose sole duty is to its citizens.

Among the esteemed delegates who helped draft this most illustrious of documents were George Washington, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and many more. On the final day of the Constitutional Convention, inventor and diplomat Benjamin Franklin was asked by a civilian as to what new form of government they had just adopted. Did they establish a monarchy like those in the old world? The astute doctor replied with “A Republic, if you can keep it.” This exchange comes down to us from a diary written by Irish immigrant James McHenry who was one of the many signatories of the constitution. He happened to record that fateful interaction the day after it occurred.

A Republic... **If** you can keep it.

Those very words kept echoing in my mind as I stood there beneath the Capitol Dome. I can still clearly recall the day of January 6th, 2021 as the entire world bore witness to that insurrection – spurred by the beckoning of a vile man refusing to surrender power while he waited to see if his treasonous supporters could actually overturn a legitimate election. I recall sitting in front of the television screen frozen with rage and shame over what had befallen my country... A coup? Here? In *America*?

It is already common knowledge that the American people are deeply divided over a vast range of issues. Much of this schism is a product of decades of social engineering and billionaire propaganda derived from the news media to keep us debating each other while the patrician elites take

more and more of our share of the nation's prosperity – all with the blessings of Uncle Sam. But make no mistake, this polarization only worsened under Trump's regime. Even so, few could have predicted that such a disgraceful event could occur in our nation's capital in the manner that it did.

In that tour, I was standing on the very grounds where more than 2,000 insurrectionists stormed the capitol. They had defiled that sacred soil; desecrating the sanctity of our democratic process. This blatant disregard for tradition and decency was all in the name of a man who thinks himself an autocrat in the same vein as Caesar. Still today, there are many hapless fools who believe in the dangerous rhetoric spewed by that traitor and hail him as though he were the second coming of Christ.

The irony is that Donald Trump is much closer to the prophesized Antichrist as described in the Epistle of John in the New Testament. The religious zealots of this nation have certainly made him to be a kind of messianic figure who will somehow usher in a new golden age. In the campaign trail, he proclaimed his intention to be dictator on day one. Like Hitler and Mussolini, he has embraced fascist rhetoric and threatened to punish any of his political opponents; further cementing that he is a danger not only to America, but to the wider world. This is not the same Trump of 2016. This new Trump is bent on vengeance and control. He will not bring into the White House competent experts to steer the ship of state. Instead, he'll flood it with sycophantic loyalists who will obey the whims of their aspirant monarch.

But my apprehensions are not limited to the frivolities of religious delusion. As of this writing, we might bear witness to the brazen dismantling of the very institutions which define our Democratic Republic – all in the name of

billionaire oligarchs who seek to reduce America into a corporatist dystopia with theocratic tendencies. Convicted criminal Donald Trump and his co-consul Elon Musk will most likely suppress all those who may challenge their bid for greater power; even if it means undermining the courts, congress, and the press.

But if the results of this disastrous election has proven anything, it is that we are a nation of fools. While it's still too early to tell for certain, based on his campaign promises, we can expect a dark era in our history that may existentially challenge our Republic in ways never before seen since the Civil War. And by extension, the current world order may inexorably change by the end of the new Trumpian regime. Gone may be the days when we acted as the paragons of wisdom, justice, and virtue. Gone may be the days when we ruled over the world as a semi-benevolent hegemon.

Domestically, hatred and bigotry will be given a larger platform to proliferate amongst the vacuous members of our citizen body. Decades of social progress such as women's, civil and LGBTQ rights may be upended to satisfy the prejudices of lesser men. Abroad, I worry that, under the dictates of a vengeful president, we might end up becoming a genuine menace to the world; bullying our closest allies whilst eroding decades of trust and good will.

If his last term has taught us anything, it's that Trump has little interest in multilateralism. He also has no qualms in renegeing on prior commitments to international treaties. It's feasible that, from 2025 onward, we could very well see the unraveling of our position as leader of the free world. It may also be an end to the current international order which we ourselves had established during a time when America was shepherded by more sensible and pragmatic stewards.

By now, some of you might be considering me as an unhinged fear-mongering lunatic. Some of you are nodding your heads in nervous agreement. Some of you may even want to hang or shoot me for spewing such blasphemy. MAGA occultists would certainly deem me as un-American for writing such slander against their precious leader. But I assure you; I do not hate America. It *is* my homeland, after all. I must emphasize the fact that I *do* believe America is a great nation and, as of this writing, still one of the greatest ever conceived by mankind.

More than fifty years ago, the United States of America sent astronauts to the moon; a feat no other nation has ever replicated thus far. America has won more Nobel Prizes across every field than any other country on Earth. Our popular culture, from film and television to books, music, and video games, is consumed globally. Our stories have reached and inspired billions of people. Our technology ultimately defined the 20th century and ushered in the current information age and the internet. We, the American people, have built and achieved what the ancient Greeks or Romans could NEVER have dreamed of. Following the aftermath of World War II and the ensuing Cold War, we would eventually defeat the Soviet Union and bring forth a genuine golden age for western civilization which lasted for the remainder of the century with the Pax Americana.

But like with all great empires, golden ages do not last forever. A common refrain from my fellow countrymen is that America shall always remain number one for we are exceptional – a shining city on a hill. I'm sure that the Romans felt the same and assumed that *their* empire would endure for the ages. To suggest that the Imperium Romanum would one day end, only to be replaced by various Germanic

kingdoms, would have been deemed unfathomable during the 1st century CE. We Americans are just as guilty in our thinking that this privileged position in history will persist for eternity. Without our constant vigilance, our Republic is no more infallible than those of the Romans.

If there is a pivotal lesson to take from history, it's that no empire, no matter how vast or mighty, lasts. All powers fade into the annals. I just wonder if it is now *our* turn to experience such a decline. As we have seen, the American people are too misinformed and too apathetic to perform their sacred electoral duty or, despite all appeals to reason, have become utterly enamored with the falsehoods and inane ramblings of the MAGA cult; much to the danger of our democracy.

Once Biden leaves the White House and Trump regains power, I see our government entering into a war with itself. The checks and balances which have kept our system strong and enviable by the entire world will now be under siege by wealthy patricians who believe in the unitary executive theory and the acquisition of greater power without any credence to constitutional law. It remains unclear how Elon Musk's involvement will affect the federal government, but I can't see anything good coming from it. There is no doubt in my mind that he purchased his way into power by offering Trump enormous sums of money to influence the election.

With each passing day, we learn more and more about what Trump and his billionaire cronies intend to do with our glorious nation. It boggles the mind how any sane individual can honestly find their plans remotely acceptable. The thought of this nation being run by billionaires fills me with a dread I've not felt since the Pandemic of 2020. The greatest irony is that this coming oligarchy, whose loyalty is

not to country but only to themselves and to their own enrichment, will have been legally elected into power by the very plebeians they seek to disenfranchise and exploit.

When the Heritage Foundation, an extreme right-wing conservative thinktank (founded by billionaire corporatists) unveiled their unnerving **Project 2025** handbook, people were rightfully alarmed. Their vision for America was like that of the old dystopian novels such as George Orwell's "1984" or Margaret Atwood's "*The Handmaid's Tale*". For the entirety of his campaign, Trump fervently denied awareness of Project 2025. But given his reputation of lies and deceit, I was and still remain unconvinced; especially given the sort of friends he keeps close to his side. (After all... He was a friend and confidant to Jeffrey Epstein, known for his child sex slavery operations.) Project 2025 was written specifically with Trump in mind to become a kingly figure who would transform America into a sort of Christo-Fascist state. It was Kevin Roberts himself, president of the Heritage Foundation, who openly said:

"We are in the process of a second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it."

Perhaps this was always the goal? Their first attempt at a coup d'état failed on January 6th. Now, they're making another go at it and this time, they might just succeed. The most disheartening part of this whole situation is that, despite Trump's every blunder and unwavering devotion to unwittingly diminish America's leadership on the world stage, the people of this nation have fully embraced his odd and repugnant cult of personality – much to the disbelief of many in the international community. I too would include myself among the ranks of the baffled.

- Obstruction of Justice
- Racketeering
- Election Fraud
- Fundraising Fraud
- Sedition & Conspiracy

These are but a few of the numerous crimes committed by Trump during his first term which disgraced the oval office of the presidency. If only our Justice Department had functioned as intended, then the man we know as Trump would be rotting in a prison cell for the rest of his miserable days like the traitor he is. If our elected representatives had performed their duty, adhering to their constitutional oath, then that wannabe dictator would be locked behind bars. Had our shameful judicial system functioned as designed, then this dung hole of a man would be rendered forever disqualified from reentering the halls of government.

January 6th, 2021 should have been the end of Trump and his cult of traitors. The MAGA movement is certainly that; a cult with objectives and beliefs that border on the precipice of fascism. In 1923, the Nazis also made an initial attempt to overthrow the Weimar Republic. This failed coup, known to history as the Beer Hall Putsch, served only as a catalyst for the next coup. If force would not make Germany yield to the Nazis, then they would do so through legal means, destroying democracy and her institutions from the inside. Years after the putsch, Adolf Hitler was voted into power legitimately by a desperate German public. It wasn't long before the Nazis razed their democracy to the ground; leveraging the fears and insecurities of the people to acquire absolute control of the state.

By 1934, Hitler had become dictator with free reign to impose his perverse ideology on all; plunging the continent

into war. It would take the combined efforts of the allied nations to finally defeat Hitler and liberate Europe from the tyranny of the Third Reich. Our ultimate triumph over evil at the conclusion of World War II remains one of the great chapters of human history; one which still makes me proud to be an American... And yet... Here in Florida and in other states across this vast union, there are degenerates who dare wave nazi flags in public. Trump and his conspirators seem to delight in the support of such scum; which sends a very worrisome message.

In 1956, congress passed an unfortunate joint resolution declaring that the phrase "In God We Trust" was to become the national motto of the country. As an atheist, I find this phrase unhelpful. The prior motto of "**E Pluribus Unum**" was far more succinct in expressing what this nation is all about. E Pluribus Unum is Latin for "Out of Many, One". It is a beautifully simple phrase of profound significance.

There are many forces at work which seek to keep the people disjointed and in constant antagonism against each other. The current culture wars is perhaps no more than a fabrication by wealthy benefactors who want to distract us with peripheral issues in order to avoid the emergence of class consciousness among the proletariat population.

Donald Trump's historic victory over Kamala Harris, while devastating for some (myself especially), was not too surprising considering how the average American fairs on a day-to-day basis. People are struggling, can barely afford groceries, and are beset on all sides with financial hardship. Many are teetering on the verge of ruin and bankruptcy. In short, life really sucks right now for the great majority of people and they're all rightfully mad as hell. In a waning nation filled with frustrated citizens who feel both unheard

and unsupported, who was likely to be voted as president? Admittedly, Kamala Harris represented the status quo and more of the same. Donald Trump, despite his glaring faults and lack of redeeming qualities, seemed to offer people a vision of a better tomorrow – no matter how incorrect and misguided it may have been. Obviously, we all know who America ended up choosing in the end. In a few short days, Trump will be president of the United States... Again.

Discouragingly, countless Americans (far too many in fact) utterly refused to vote in this most critical of elections because they either disagreed with or felt unrepresented by both primary candidates. Many were tired of always having to choose the “lesser of two evils”; a persistent quirk of our two-party system. I know of some who later professed to me that they refused to participate in the recent election due to America’s undying support for Israel and their unrestrained genocide of the Palestinian people.

THE GAZAN GENOCIDE -----

I will not go too deeply regarding my own views about the ongoing conflict in the Gaza strip... But... Suffice to say, I tend to question the probity of a nation who willfully and fervently massacres 46,000 civilians (and counting!) while engaging in the wanton destruction of homes, schools and hospitals. Then there are the multitude of Israeli settlements forcefully and illegally encroaching upon Palestinian land in the West Bank which has been repeatedly condemned by the United Nations. Their repetitive blocking of humanitarian aid does not really help to engender any sympathy from the international community either.

Indeed, it appears that Israel is conducting an ethnic cleansing effort to remove the Palestinian people from their

own native and sovereign land with the ultimate goal of annexing Gaza into greater Israel. I'm certain that Trump will happily assist Netanyahu's evil regime and empower them to fulfill their mandate of erasing Palestine from the face of the Earth. After all, he (Trump) has a deranged evangelical base to satisfy. In their eyes, the bible is the only supreme arbiter of truth. I should know, for I have such brainwashed people in my own extended family.

In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if Donald Trump wants to build a damned golf course on the ruins of Palestine just to stroke his ego. I suppose it is no different to what we already did to the Native Americans in our early history. We slaughtered and forced them off of their ancestral lands for the sake of manifest destiny. History may not necessarily repeat, yet it sure rhymes.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where folks seem to be incapable of harboring nuanced ideas. Therefore, I feel compelled to affirm that I am NOT in any way or form espousing antisemitic views. That would imply that I hate Jewish people which is simply untrue. I see all humans equally. Jews are no more or less valuable than any other Homo Sapien walking the Earth. That their holy scriptures elevate them to the status of "God's Chosen People" is irrelevant to an atheist like me. That I have issues with the Israeli government and their expansionist and apartheid policies has nothing to do with the scientifically disproven notion of race theory. It's a matter of humanitarianism.

The reason I feel it necessary to make this distinction is in observance of the current political climate imposed by the powers that be. Speaking against Israel does not equate to bigotry and intolerance, secularly speaking. But in the minds of hopelessly religious conservatives, there is only a binary

perception. To them, you are either pro-Israel, thus aligned with God's divine plan, or against Israel and in opposition to their entire belief system. Whenever someone points out the atrocities committed by Israel or comments on policies which are vehemently condemned by the international community, the common refrain of the ultra-far-right is to associate the naysayer with the nebulous concept of "antisemitism".

Obviously, there are genuine racists with a deep hatred for Jews. But that is NOT what I'm talking about. The term antisemitism, in the context of American political discourse, is thrown around casually as a catch-all phrase to win arguments and decimate political rivals who do not conform to the prevailing narrative. It is a weaponized term used much like the word "Communism" in that it is loaded with assumptions yet ultimately meaningless in application.

I can push for aggressive political reform that taxes the rich to empower the poor yet be labeled a "*communist*" by the Washington elites. I can preach for the need of universal healthcare initiatives yet be labeled a "*radical leftist*". I can denounce the unfettered greed of billionaires only to be viciously condemned as a "*socialist*". And you know what? This actually works. For some reason, the American psyche has a deeply irrational and cultural fear of the political left in ways that borders on the insane. The usage of such distorted words to attack progressives and the mere association with such terminology is enough to end careers.

The word "antite" is used in a similar manner. It is a bludgeon meant not to point out genuine acts of racism, but to delegitimize and dehumanize any and all who might be addressing real and tangible issues that merit consideration. In the coming Trumpian era, we may even see a new wave of McCarthyism which unjustly targets journalists, teachers,

students, foreigners, and ordinary citizens who are brave enough to stand up and rightfully criticize what Israel is doing. And in terms of the wider world, I'm sure that the international community will recognize that what Israel is doing is indeed a genocide. But whatever UN resolutions may come from multilateral dialogue, it will be swiftly undone by America's abuse of the veto. The United States and its leadership, purchased by Zionist organizations, has always supported and enabled Israel no matter who inhabits the White House. We are all complicit in this genocide. So long as America lives under the shackles of religion, we may never liberate ourselves from Israel's hold.

Even with all this said, I fully expect conservatives to make it their supreme mission in life to smear and attack me in any which way they can. Yet while we must never forget the sobering lessons of the holocaust, we must not delude ourselves. We must recognize that just because a people have been subjected to enormous tragedies in the past, it does not give them license to commit future evils and atrocities in the present. That the Jews were once victims of the Nazis is no longer a valid excuse in the year 2025. Genocide is genocide, regardless of who commits it and who is recipient to it.

Did Hamas deserve a military response for their attack on October 7th? Of course! And they have indeed been met with justified retaliation for kidnapping innocent hostages. But as of this writing, the Israeli response has gone well beyond reasonable taste and their self-proclaimed cause for retribution is no longer balanced. Too many have died. Too much has been lost and destroyed. The lives of the hostages cannot equal the tens of thousands of Gazans murdered by American-funded Israeli missiles. Let us also not forget the decades of Israeli policies preceding this which has left too

many in the West bank stripped of dignity and hope. Hatred does not exist in a vacuum. This violence will only sow the seeds for tomorrow's terrorism. Contrary to the conservative mindset, standing in moral opposition to Israel today isn't the same as opposing jews all across the world. Many Jews disagree with and condemn what Israel is doing. Many Jews don't adhere to the beliefs of Zionism. Benjamin Netanyahu and his war-mongering Knesset does *not* have a monopoly on the international Jewish experience.

I only hope that a ceasefire can be reached so that the people of Gaza and the West Bank can start the process of rebuilding their ruined lives. And perhaps one day, the ancient state of Palestine can be properly recognized by the international community. But with America in the picture, It's difficult to imagine a future timeline where Israel is held accountable and punished for their crimes against humanity. In the absence of Pan-Arabic unity, Israel may continue to play the role of aggressor in their colonial bid for becoming hegemon of the Middle East.

So long as America continues to fund and support Israel with unwavering devotion, (mostly in accordance with our false religious beliefs) they will continue to be absolved of consequence. We will shield Netanyahu like the Republican party has always shielded Trump from the fallout of his many treasons... Any roads... Let us return to the pressing concerns of AMERICAN democracy!

ON DEMOCRACY -----

While I respectfully consider the Republican party to be a group of ultra-religious zealots with archaic views and a penchant for empowering billionaires at the expense of the working class, it must also be said that the Democratic party

has failed the country; effectively abandoning the righteous cause of the people. The democratic party elites, themselves having become wealthy patricians, are so out-of-touch with the real lived experiences of the proletariat masses that they no longer understand our plight. Though Republicans are brutish and bigoted in both their views and actions, the Democrats are acutely weak, incompetent, and impotent... And the American people sense this.

During the course of writing this controversial *"essay"*, I often wondered if our experiment in democracy is now beginning to fail or if, at the very least, is in real danger of failing. But how in Father Washington's divine name can we quantify such a radical and alarmist statement? Failing by what metric, exactly? Democracy is a loaded term thrown around by politicians both left and right; like the devil quoting scripture to serve his own purposes. Yet, I believe that it was our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, who said it best. In the midst of a bloody civil war, Lincoln gave his famous Gettysburg Address on November of 1864. It was then that he popularized the eternal phrase:

"Of the people, by the people, for the people."

A democracy is defined as a government that is **of** the people, **by** the people, and **for** the people... Plain and simple. And the best way to judge the health of a democracy is to see whether that government has succeeded in lifting up the people and raising their quality of life. Are people happy? For a time, this is precisely what the United States did and with truly exceptional results. But perhaps no longer. We may have high-tech gadgets, smart phones, and other clever means to distract ourselves from the rigors of live. But underneath this veneer of entertainment and leisure, there is

a rot festering deep within the society. And if we do not self-correct soon, I fear for what may befall us.

As of the start of this year, the richest 1% of Americans own more than 30% of the wealth while the bottom 50% of people own less than 3%. During the Covid Pandemic, the wealth of the ultra-rich multiplied by many factors while numerous ordinary folks became demonstrably poorer as a result. We are the richest nation on Earth and the wealthiest in history, yet many are not benefitting from this supposed prosperity.

Too many of us have been left behind to wither and diminish under the oppressive weight of rising inflation while corporations boast record profits as if merely to spite us plebeians. Technological advances have raised worker productivity by multiple factors, yet wages remain stagnant or stubbornly inadequate in meeting the rising costs of living. We are also being overworked and under-rewarded for such labor.

Even easy access to meaningful healthcare remains a harrowing challenge for millions of people who can't afford life-saving medication or to even pay off medical debts. For reasons that will forever dumbfound me, America still does not consider healthcare an essential human right; a damning departure from the more enlightened nations such as Japan or our European allies.

Most insulting is that, despite my generation being the most highly educated group of youths in history, we are categorically worse off than our parents and grand-parents. Our prospects for the future are also put into question with Big Tech's mandate to forcefully push artificial intelligence onto everyone regardless of the consequences which may befall the working class – eroding even our viability to exist.

And rather than reap the benefits of our labor, billions of our taxpayer dollars go to fund wars and subsidize patrician elites who leech off of the working class like the cancerous parasites that they are.

Something is clearly wrong with this country in the most fundamental of levels. And despite the resilience and overwhelming dynamism of the American economic engine, the American PEOPLE aren't always the recipients to such excess bounty. The robustness of our stock market does not necessarily translate to food on people's plates or lower prices at the grocery store. But WHY is this the case? A functional democracy much be receptive to the needs of the citizenry. Do we not consistently voice our thoughts to our representatives? Do we not cast our votes in the ballot box? How come, despite performing all of the rituals necessary for a democracy, things seem to be getting much worse?

Whether you are indeed a Republican, a Democrat, or Independent, we can all agree that the wealth divide grows ever wider. I don't like to rely on the standard dichotomy of Republicans versus Democrats as I find this simple-minded dualism to be more harmful than useful. The tired contest between these supposedly distinct parties has only fueled internal strife and factionalism amongst the electorate in a time where we need unity and collaboration, not intolerance and infighting.

There is a very real battle for the heart and soul of America, and it is not our neighbors whom we must direct our rancor, but the very patricians who've sought to divide and conquer us. At the end of the day, both political parties, Democrats AND Republicans, tip their hats to the same corporate masters. Many in congress have relinquished their oath to the people in favor of coin; eagerly prostituting

themselves for the highest bidder. While I recognize that there are *some*, such as Vermont senator Bernie Sanders and New York state representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who work tirelessly in service of the people, their efforts are overshadowed by wealthy oligarchs like Elon Musk who, under Trump, may be given free rein to run the country as they see fit. This circus is thanks mostly to the Republican party who are all complicit in enabling the ascension of this would-be tyrant.

The voices of the people, the vox populi, are drowned out by the vast sums of money flowing into the pockets of senators and congressmen who fail to heed the call to action. The whims of affluent elites and organized special interest groups are given preferential treatment over the needs of the average citizen. I'm sure that to these corrupt politicians who accept such significant campaign donations, the needs of the people must seem a most trivial thing.

Therefore, I must again propose this perinate question: is the United States of America a failing democracy? When oligarchs have greater impact on public policy than citizens, is that a democracy? When corporate lobbying overrides the will of the people in favor of legislation that prioritizes big business at our expense, is that a democracy? If laws meant to protect the wider population from the more corrosive forces of unfettered capitalism are eroded, is that what we might call a democracy?

As Donald Trump and his billionaire cronies plan to dismantle our institutions in favor of patrician dominance, will we still be able to consider America as a country run by a government *for* the people? Or, as I fear, will we see the beginning of a rapid process that leads to a real plutocracy – that being a government of, by, and for the patricians?

But perhaps the most bitterly disappointing aspect to this entire situation are the fellow youths of my generation. False is the assumption that young people are naturally of liberal or progressive disposition. Their savviness regarding political issues is grossly misstated. Too many young men in particular have become ensnared by the great crimson wave washing over this country as popular ultra-far-rightwing influencers like Ben Shapiro, Tucker Carlson, Charlie Kirk, Joe Rogan, and Jordan Peterson – all of them contemptible manipulators and harmful propagandists – have contributed to the mass indoctrination of America’s youths; poisoning their minds and corrupting them into the willful thralls of our rising plutocracy... It honestly frightens me.

If the young will not vote in their best interests or are incapable of determining what those interests even are, then who will? If the young cannot navigate the vast maelstrom of misinformation and propaganda constantly directed at them, then what hope is there in our future? Will we see the revocation of due process or the total suspension of habeas corpus where people are abducted and imprisoned without trial or legal rights? Will we see posse comitatus blatantly ignored as our free cities become occupied by active military personnel like in fascist Italy or Nazi Germany? Will this all lead to an uptick in political violence coming from the ever-radicalizing MAGA cult?

I can’t believe that I’m even writing about this. When I graduated college in 2014, this would have been deemed ludicrous. But considering what’s going on now, and what may indeed come to pass, I’m not so sure anymore. To my closest confidants, I’ve always told them *this* for years:

“The strength of a democracy is directly proportional to the intellectual and ethical fortitude of the citizenry.”

From what we can see thus far, I can only conclude that a great number of the American people are fundamentally too stupid and/or lack the moral fiber to properly function as rational members of the body politic. Our democracy cannot thrive with an electorate of such poor quality. I suppose our failing education system is partly to blame? There's just too many causes to point to at this time. Even more off-putting is that many conservative voters seem more concerned with the schadenfreude of making their fellow Americans suffer for being "liberal" than demanding sensible public policy on matters that affect everyone equally. Shortsightedness and petty cruelty is quickly becoming our defining trait.

I find it incomprehensible how my fellow Americans can ignore all of the obvious warning signs and red flags. I am utterly flabbergasted that they would vote for a man like Donald Trump... Or... Should we be more preemptive and refer to him as his royal majesty, Emperor Trumpus? He had already fervently attacked journalists during his first term. I can only imagine how total and absolute his assault will be on the first amendment. What new scapegoats or imagined enemies will he utilize to justify the revocation of our most sacred of human rights? Immigrants? Teachers? Leftists? More frightening to me is the very real possibility that the news media, rather than fight and resist him, will capitulate. If the fourth estate falls, then what left is there to combat tyranny save for a nationwide revolution?

Either way, **pain** may be the *only* thing that can teach the wayward plebeians of America as to the errors of their ways. But how many must suffer and die before the end? A man like me with deviant and leftist views has no place in Trump's America – doubly so given his divisive vitriol of "The Radical Left" which he so demonizes to stellar effect.

There was once a time, not too long ago in fact, when I harbored aspirations of entering political office so that I could serve my country as a lawful agent for change and progress... But no more... Perhaps the time has indeed come to act upon my instinct to flee this withering Republic in favor of safer shores where I can finish my books in relative peace. And among all the nations of the world, there is ONE I can think of who, despite all the criticisms, detractors, and hostilities from the west (much of it manufactured right here in America), has demonstrably succeeded in uplifting their people. Within a single lifetime, they have made immense strides in their civilizational development and may one day become a new model by which the rest of the world can emulate: CHINA (中国).

(To be continued in **Part Two**...)