

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

This Is What Democracy Looks Like

Eric · Wednesday, March 1st, 2017

Take a look...

This is what democracy looks like.

At least on February 25, 2017 – in front of the Federal Building in West Los Angeles.

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I haven't been to a political rally or a real protest since 1968 – SUNY Buffalo, where I went to college. It was an SDS rally (Students for Democratic Society), against the Vietnam War, or for civil rights, or for women's rights, or for human rights; there were a lot of people we wanted to set free back in the day. We even had some modest success.

But I didn't even go to the Women's March last month in downtown LA, much to my embarrassment. I was afraid to bring my son for fear that some pro-Trump, anti-women protesters would become violent and cause us some physical harm. It turned out to be a beautifully peaceful and empowering protest of the first order, and it joined Woodstock as another culturally-defining event – that I missed.

But what are we supposed to do now? Post-Women's March? One month into the disastrous and frightening Trump administration? That's the question, isn't it? Instead of feeling somewhere between impotent and enraged every day we turn on the TV, read the newspaper, or scan the ubiquitous anti-Trump online magazines, blogs, and Facebook posts.... *what can we do?*



There are so many of us – afraid, depressed, enraged – it's not like anyone is unaffected. Immigration? Who doesn't know a gardener, a housekeeper, a neighbor, a brother-in-law (mine spent time in Pinochet's stadium in Chile), or a wife (mine is a U.S. citizen who came here from Indonesia 16 years ago) whose status isn't now threatened... by the USCIS hiring thousands of more employees, by ICE rounding up undocumented American residents, following children home from school to identify and deport their parents?

Healthcare? Social Security? Medicare? The Affordable Healthcare Act? Who doesn't know someone who isn't deleteriously effected, if not themselves personally?



Me? I'm retiring after 30 years as a theater professor from a safe and secure job at the University of Southern California. What a time I picked to do it! Right upon the election of MadDog Trump and his hysterical, inconsistent, macho-conservative wave of executive orders and his hiring of the most frightening, plutocratic, pro-business/anti-global, nationalistic Cabinet in American history. Of course we're afraid. What's going to happen to this country — other than be dismantled one day at a time — in such a predictable, frightening onslaught of daily press releases and bad news... for immigrants, poor people, middle class people, doctors, nurses, plumbers, taxi drivers, you name it – we're all terrified.

But what can we do? It certainly seems like we have to do *something*, right? Like *I* have to do something! It's just like the '60s, man, when *my* ass, when all of America's sons' asses, were on the line ? to be drafted. It's once again *personal*. Like, I might lose my Social Security benefits. Lose my Medicare entitlement. Not be able to afford health care for my wife and son.

We just can't stand by and watch this happen.

Solution?

We have to choose a specific issue – or two – and stand up, let our voices be heard. We have to call our Congressmen, show up at the Federal Building...



Do *something*... more than click on Facebook, answer surveys, and send a few dollars which make us think we're making a difference.

My two issues, for the sake of this argument, are health care and immigration. They affect me personally. The results of Trump's executive orders and his reliable threat of changing the laws are not only scary and depressing, they are practical and debilitating. I *have to* write and call my congressmen. I have to show up at the Federal Building and post this blog on Cultural Weekly.

What can YOU do?

Call your state senator and tell them to support SB 562, a bill for single-payer healthcare in California.

Call 855-271-8515 from your phone to be automatically connected to your state senator.

Or call Ricardo Lara, the Congressman in Sacramento who's drafting the bill: 916-651-4033.

TALKING POINTS: WHAT YOU CAN SAY ABOUT WHY YOUR STATE SENATOR SHOULD SUPPORT A UNIVERSAL SINGLE-PAYER HEALTH CARE SYSTEM:

-This bill will save people's lives.

-SB 562 would ensure that every person receives the health care they need when they need it.

-No longer will the cost of prescription drugs and medical procedures be unattainable.

-In the wealthiest nation in the history of the world, people have a right to health care, no matter

their income or medical history.

We have to stand together. Shoulder to shoulder. We have to raise our voices. Protest. Resist. Now is the time. Whether you believe we're on the verge of a dictatorial, new kind of American fascism or not, run by a not-very-intelligent, loose cannon, self-styled, impulsive narcissist, or not... things are definitely, without a doubt, on the line.

We can't wait 2 years for new Democrats to be elected to Congress. We can't wait 4 years for a new presidential election. So much pain and damage can be done right now... in the next week, in the next month, in the next years... We just have to stand up NOW to the horror and misdirection of this administration.

I know, I'm not a politician. Or a wise man. Just an ordinary one who's terrified and disheartened by what's happening in my own country. A man, once a boy, who grew up in a country which believed in itself. Which believed in democracy. In freedom. In opportunity for all.

We can't let go of these beliefs by shipping people out of the country. Democracy was built on, is still built upon, diversity, upon the amalgamation of cultures and ideas. Strength from debate, argument, and differences.

Look again at these pictures.



Join the next line of protest signs. Stand up. Raise your voice.

This is what democracy looks like!



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Trules' new travel blog, "[e-travels with e.trules](#) "

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