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Donald Trump and the Rise of Patriotism

Some people were encouraged by the small number of white supremacists who gathered on the anniversary of Charlottesville. It is indeed a good sign that this form of branding is less appealing than it was a year ago. The admirable goal of making racists afraid again may have won in Charlottesville. Alas, a more insidious brand of white supremacy has gripped the country. Look at Portland, Oregon where anti-fascists were attacked by police. Police watched as fascists used violence in Charlottesville a year ago. We know whose side the police are on.

The anti-fascists in Portland were protesting the group known as Patriot Prayer. This ugly group of pro-Trump white nationalists is fairly transparent. When Donald Trump says he is anti-establishment he means that he is against the protections of nature, poor people, peace, immigrants, minorities and women the state has traditionally provided, however lamely.

Donald Trump has replaced the concept of a government with the concept of a fascist oligarch state. The focus of trade deals is “winning”. The number one purpose of the United State government is not to provide for its people, but to keep immigrants out. Environmental protections of the land in the United States are a joke to Trump, as the only purpose is the growth of global business, a.k.a the 1%. Remarkably, many people do not care. Reagan Republicans and Clinton Democrats don’t give you anything much better but it is safe to say Trump supporters are choosing fascism. The only product Donald Trump has delivered on is hate, and this appears to be enough for almost everyone in the Republican party.

Donald Trump has proven that patriotism represents xenophobia, environmental degradation, global oligarchs, fundamentalism, police and the military. There is nothing else he stands for. Yet liberals want to take back patriotism. They reject Donald Trump as “unpatriotic”. Really? The flag is the only principle he really holds true. Nazi and KKK symbols are old hats. The American flag is a far more effective white supremacy symbol. Ironically for Trump supporters, they only support the American flag because it is politically correct. Few are really subversive enough to hold their KKK rallies in public. The American flag is the most politically correct item in America and it is not even close. Hillary Clinton cosponsored a bill in 2005 that would make the punishment for flag burning one year in prison or a fine of \$100,000. Talk about a snowflake! The right has always been the more priggish side of the political spectrum. Imagine what would happen if such a punishment was proposed for someone saying the n-word, as Omarosa has accused Trump of saying consistently. I don’t believe in putting anyone in prison for words, but enforcing such a fine may get Trump and some of his billionaire buddies to pay at least some taxation.

Patriotism remains the most protected form of speech and ideology in the country. If the illusion of the state did not exist, what would stop us from uniting with our sisters and brothers across the globe? The 1% cares little about who is in which country, but they know these divisions can keep people divided.

Donald Trump’s definition of patriotism is certainly sufficient for the powers that be in most senses. No one is willing to give out more handouts to the ultra rich. Trump gives everything he backs an ugly face though. Liberal Democrats fear that Trump’s patriotism will turn some people off of the concept, and they therefore claim it back as their own. Take for example when they accuse Donald Trump of treason because of the Russian scandal. Or when they defend Colin Kaepernick as patriotic. Give the man a little more credit! I don’t think he threw away his career for the American flag. Want more prove that the right are snowflakes? Look no further than Kaepernick’s name being censored from the Madden 2018 video game.

Even some leftists have a soft spot for Trump because he rejects the concept of globalization. Okay, sure. But what does he want to replace it with? A white nationalist militarized police state that only funds the military and global oligarchs while it criminalizes poverty and relies solely on corruption and force to negotiate; all the while giving away even more handouts to the same international elites who have bankrupted us and only challenging the governments in other countries, never the corporations that have

sway over them—which is a strategy that encourages war and never challenges the economic inequality in any of the involved countries. No thanks.

I am using the words nationalism and patriotism interchangeably here because I don't see any difference between them. The most trendy thing to do is to explain Trump through George Orwell, so of course *The Washington Post* took a [stab at it](#). They distinguish between nationalism: All nationalists have the power of not seeing resemblances between similar sets of facts. . . . Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits, but according to who does them, and there is almost no kind of outrage — torture, the use of hostages, forced labour, mass deportations, imprisonment without trial, forgery, assassination, the bombing of civilians — which does not change its moral colour when it is committed by “our” side. And patriotism: “devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world.” (Quotes are from Orwell).

Clearly Trump is a nationalist, in a rather new way. He is focused only on winning and self-interest. He doesn't care about anything else. He barely feels the need to explain any of the awful things he does. They gain merit simply because he does them. Yet, is patriotism any better? It would seem that the only difference between the two is that nationalism is more ahistorical. Trump is really a nationalist machine in and of himself and no matter what he does, his supporters will stand by him. Patriotism on the other hand relies on a certain set of American principles that are historic and understood as a goal by much of the populace. Nationalism is the man, patriotism is the system.

Barack Obama recently warned us of falling for the strong man symbol that Trump clearly represents. Yet is allegiance to the flag any better? Sure one can say the flag represents democracy, freedom and equal opportunity for all. But it never has represented that and it never will. The flag in reality is used as a cover for genocide, slavery, inequality and crimes against the environment. What American values are we really trying to save?

If anything, Trump is worse though. The flag has always represented American values first. What this really means is American capital and American empire first. It is more polite not to say this, and I truly do miss the days when we were more polite. Now it is clear that the American life values more than the immigrant life or the foreigner life. The war on terror and the Deporter in Chief should have proven this, but the naked ideology is worse simply because it normalizes such cruelty. The atrocities in Yemen barely register on the political radar. American led catastrophe in the Middle East is a given now.

There is in theory something to be gained by Donald Trump's patriotism. He seemingly exposes the bankrupt idea for what it really is. But it was a long time ago when Frederick

Douglass asked “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” The parts of the country that have always been left behind have never gotten much value out of patriotism. For the middle class patriotism has only picked up in the age of Trump. As this group of people is squeezed out by the 1%, we return to the familiar act of punching down. We long not to hold the oligarchs accountable, but to Make America Great Again. Middle class liberals long for JFK, while middle class conservatives long for the reinstatement of white supremacy and patriarchy. What both may really want is a return to economic stability. Regardless of which America people want to return to, there was always a global underclass left behind who never fit in with the patriotic values we hold so dear.

As liberal life frightens the Trumpettes, Trump frightens the liberals, and the 1% threatens both, we make a return to patriotism. Liberals and conservatives may have different ideas of what patriotism is. And this is where the political divides form in the established media, academia and pundit circles. The opinion that is always left out is that this whole thing is bullshit. Some want what the gentle America, who delivers freedom to the most vulnerable. Some want the tough America, who shoves freedom down your throat. Good intentions aside, its all propaganda.

There is no hope coming from those establishment Democrats and Republicans trying to restore America to what it once was. There is no hope in the new ultra-nationalist Trump wave that aims to strip America of all of its very limited accomplishments. The hope comes from those who see America for what it is and for what it always has been.

As the American middle class crumbles, we long for a familiar piece of American apple pie. For some, it is comforting just to be on the side of the most belligerent and convicted team of fascists. For others, we long for the bullshit of the good America that provided for the American middle class while we pillaged the world.

Trump surely has proven that electing sexual predators, billionaires and idiots is not the answer, although who would be surprised if we repeated those mistakes again? What Trump hasn't done is end the age of patriotism. One would think his fascist nationalism would prove once and for all that patriotism is nothing to be proud of. Instead we act embarrassed that Trump acts like the dumb and cruel American the world knows us to be. If Donald Trump's ugliness could end patriotism, we should thank him. Sadly, his presence has done the reverse: it leaves people bending over backwards trying to save a concept we never should have created. Donald Trump then is good for nothing and good for nobody. Clearly, things have to get better before they get better, as Donald Trump's extremism has made us all lose our heads.

