

Articles, Articles and More Articles

April 6
Everybody,

I think this piece sums up the current Trump scene pretty well.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2017/04/07/the-kids-take-over-and-turn-trump-into-dubya.html>

Ron

April 8
Hi Ron,

It is right on point!

All,

This is a great issue of Utopian. Thanks to all who contributed to keep me informed.

Sickie

April 8

I found this to be worth reading:

<https://mkaradjis.wordpress.com/2017/04/07/no-us-bombing-of-syria-did-not-begin-today/>

Jack

April 11
Everybody,

This article is well worth reading.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2017/04/11/to-reunite-america-liberate-cities-to-govern-themselves.html>

Ron

April 12

Not much new here except the reference to Commerce Secretary (and vulture capitalist) Wilbur Ross as a key player in toning down Trump's trade / tariff policy.

Five Big Players Steer Trump's Foreign Policy Toward Mainstream

The Wall Street Journal

President Trump's campaign-season chumminess with Russia increasingly is a thing of the past, there has been no instant trade war with China and the Iran nuclear deal hasn't been abrogated. The foreign policy shift is the product of five key players. [Read the full story](#)

Jack

April 12

Jack and Ron,

Interesting research and account, some of it familiar, some less so.

From The New York Times: I Thought I Understood the American Right. Trump Proved Me Wrong. A historian of conservatism looks back at how he and his peers failed to anticipate the rise of the president.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/11/magazine/i-thought-i-understood-the-american-right-trump-proved-me-wrong.html>

Rod

April 12

Interesting analysis. I'm not sure that he's right about Hofstadter, though.

Jack

April 12
Jack and Rod,

Thanks. I saw that. I don't think I read Hofstadter's book on the right/conservative movement, so I don't really know whether the author is right about him. I've always thought of Hofstadter as a liberal, but I believe he had some kind of background as a leftist. I found his other stuff, particularly his essay on Roosevelt and the New Deal, well worth reading.

Ron

April 14
FYI,

Donald Trump's Recent Policy Reversals Reflect Business Influence

The Wall Street Journal

President Donald Trump's reliance on former corporate executives in his White House—and business leaders outside of it—helped shape this week's reversals on several hard-line positions that defined his campaign. [Read the full story](#)

Jack

April 18

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/guess-who-came-dinner-flynn-putin-n742696>

Jill Stein dining in Moscow with Putin, Flynn and a few other solid citizens.

Jack

April 19
Everybody,

Here's some late news on the opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2017/0420/In-conservative-Nebraska-why-farmers-and-ranchers-oppose-Keystone-XL>

Ron

April 25

Hi all:

Sent from the ecological group which Mary and I are members of. The essay cited near the bottom is worth reading.

Wayne

Dear BCJN,

Today, Senator Bernie Sanders and Senator Jeff Merkley will introduce the new '100 by '50' Act in the lead-up to the March for Climate, Jobs, and Justice on Saturday, April 29. The bill calls for a shift to 100% renewable energy economy by 2050. An intense debate is beginning to heat up about the bill... BCJN should grapple with this debate.

In a nutshell, 350.org and other major climate organizations are calling for this legislation to become the "North Star" of the climate movement, while others say the bill falls far short of what is actually needed to avert climate disaster.

Please take the time to read "[The '100 by '50 Act' Cannot Become our North Star](#)" by Ezra Silk in yesterday's Common Dreams for a sense of the debate. BCJN is the Bronx affiliate of 350.org, but this does not, of course, mean that we must always adhere to public positions that 350.org takes at the national level. I'd recommend that we discuss this topic at upcoming BCJN gatherings, and possibly take a formal position at some point soon.

If you have thoughts on this topic that you'd initially like to share on this email thread, please do.

Very best,

Jen Scarlott, BCJN Coord.

April 27
Wayne,

Thanks for that.

What's next, a no-strike pledge and the reinstatement of conscription to fight climate change? How about internment camps for climate change skeptics?

Ron

April 28

Attached is the link to an uncommonly intelligent article in today's *NYT*.

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

[America, From Exceptionalism to Nihilism](#)

BY PANKAJ MISHRA

The U.S. leads the free world in its helplessness before the dissolution of its most cherished values.

Rod

April 28

Here's a link to a longer piece by the same author published last year by the Guardian. I don't agree with all of it, but he is intelligent, articulate, and coherent.

Here's the link:

Welcome to the age of anger

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/08/welcome-age-anger-brexit-trump?CMP=Share AndroidApp Copy to clipboard>

Jack

April 29
Everybody,

It appears that in Venezuela, Maduro's base among the poor is eroding. For a look at what's happening:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-venezuelan-government-is-beginning-to-lose-the-poor-its-longtime-base/2017/04/28/c562cb86-2b5d-11e7-9081-f5405f56d3e4_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-cards_hp-card-world%3Ahomepage%2Fcard&utm_term=.7c30b83d11b0

Ron

April 29,

Good article. I have a Venezuelan friend who thinks collapse of the gov't is imminent.

Sandy

April 29

The piece that Ron posted was very illuminating. As I looked at the situation from afar, I had thought this was another US racket (as in Iran 1953, and other places), with US-hired mobs, hostile US media coverage, etc. I guess not, but not sure.

Jesse L.

April 29

Well, it could be a combination of genuine opposition from below and a U.S.-backed regime change operation. I suspect that it is. Maduro sure seems to be a heavy handed (and inept) authoritarian -- no support to him and his regime. But the CIA types wouldn't be earning their pay if they weren't in there looking to influence and place their friends in power.

Jack

April 30

https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2017/04/27/trumps-lies-are-working-brilliantly-this-new-poll-proves-it/?tid=ss_fb&utm_term=.a4caf158a6f2

While polls show that Trump's overall approval ratings are low and falling, those who voted for Trump overwhelmingly continue to support him enthusiastically.

Jack

April 30

Thanks Jack. Bill Maher may be arrogant but he may be right about the stupidity of a huge section of the American population! Enough to make my tendency toward optimism a bit shaky!

Roni

April 30

Yes, but Trump's ratings among Republicans, while still very high, are lower than those of George W. Bush and than Obama's ratings among Democrats, at comparable points in their terms.

Ron

April 30

one small mercy

Robin

April 30

Well, I think that Trump's weakness relative to Bush is amongst affluent suburbanite Republican voters. He has a hard core of fanatic support amongst desperate and angry -- witness the foot stomping adulation at his speech yesterday in Harrisburg. So thus far, this core is holding. I would argue that Bush did not have that, the post-911 patriotism notwithstanding.

Jack

April 30

Robin and Jack,

I agree. Trump has that base, and it is holding. But it is not growing, and that's not nothing.

Ron

April 30

Thank you Ron!

If anything, some of the Trump supporters are going to have to re-think their support once some of the more draconian policies start to trickle down. His supporters are going to face the most economic attacks. Rural southern areas in particular. (What happens when they cut back on food stamps? Poor whites are the majority of food stamp recipients.) Also, farmers are already starting to get nervous.

Here's hoping stupidity is overwhelmed by necessity!

Roni

April 30

Roni,

I hope and believe you are right, but knowing people as they are and have been (and likely will be), I wouldn't place a bet on it (not more than \$5 at any rate).

Ron

April 30

Three points:

1. I expect that some of Trump's core supporters will become disillusioned within the next couple of years, as the effect of his policies hurt them badly. But that's not a given. Trump will blame his failures on others (the Democrats; protesters; immigrants; etc.)

The less that he actually achieves, the more effective that blame may be. For example, if Trump and the Republicans don't get health care adopted, Trump will continue to trash Obamacare and blame the Democrats. This has played well with his base for longer than I expected. And it's been a script for far right movements elsewhere.

2. Trump's core of the angry, the desperate, and the disenfranchised holding together is a bad omen for the future, when a demagogue more able than Trump may arise.

3. Sorry, I have to say this. I can't stand Bill Maher. I think that he's smug, arrogant, elitist, and not half as smart as he seems to think. And as I recall, he helped jumpstart the careers of Kelly Anne Conway and Ann Coulter, both of whom were regulars on his show back about 15 years ago. Ugh. Did anyone happen to watch his interview with Conway shortly before the November election? Repulsive.

Jack

April 30

Roni, Robin, Jack, Ron and All,

I tend to think of Trump's base, in its broadest definition, as the approximately 25% of the 18 and over population who voted for him (46% of 55%); this leaves out 14-17 year olds who are not without their views--and are overwhelmingly anti-Trump. Of that generous 25%, somewhere between, say, 15% to 25% of it voted for Trump for a variety of reasons we can all cite as not hardcore 'Trumpism.' Let's say that number is 20%. That reduces his base to 20%. It is difficult to say what percentage of the people who didn't vote in the election might be considered hardcore Trump supporters, but if we simply straight lined it, based on the people who voted model, it would give him another 15%, making his base 35%, or a 2-1 minority.

I find this useful because it leads me to agree with all sides in the preceding discussion. Those who emphasize that Trump has done nothing, or virtually nothing to expand his base, and that his approval ratings are decidedly and historically low, are correct to see significance in this, given the (relatively) small base he started

out with. Those who emphasize that Trump has done things that will likely erode elements of his base, such as having embraced China, compromised on NAFTA, hinted at regime change in Syria, fired Flynn and seemingly pushed Bannon, to the periphery) are right to see significance in this, again because the base was small to begin with. Additionally, although this is where factors start to support the "his base is (rabidly) right there with him," side of the discussion, it seems reasonable to conclude that Trump's failures (no wall, no immigration ban, no repeal of ObamaCare), along with the degree to which some his policies proposed and yet to be proposed, are a direct attack on elements of his base, have eroded, or will erode his base to some degree.

That said, I agree with those who note that his core base--minority though it is--is remarkably ready to ignore failures and incompetence, not yet ready to recognize who is being played for a fool, and, most importantly, cares far less about actual policy than the "America First, us versus them, take our country back" rhetoric. This element seems to remain rock solid. Whatever its percentage (my own, perhaps overly optimistic guess puts it at 20% or less), we should be the last to deny the power of a fired up, motivated (and perhaps one day organized and armed) minority of significant size and support. In this light, Jack's characterizations of the unity, venom and strength of the PA rally, and Jesse's observations of its 'Nuremberg style' (perhaps a literal overstatement, but the closest thing to it in mainstream US politics we've seen) seem important in dispelling any notion that the Trump Presidency is 'collapsing.' And, in fact, if it legally collapses (Russia connection; emoluments; whatever), this hard-core base will further radicalize to the right, with significant elements rejecting an electoral strategy and turning to a 'direct action in the street (and alleys) against enemies of America ' strategy.

It is unfortunate that those who fear this alternative the most seem to be the people most willing to turn to the Democratic Party for salvation. It seems lost on them that the superficial harmony and 'good lovin' of the Obama years led directly to the current situation, and more broadly, the policies of Clinton/Obama/Clinton turned much of the working class over to the right wing. This time will be different?

Rod

April 30

Everybody,

Here is another take on Trump's thankfully not-growing base, from a year ago:

<http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/donald-trump-2016-authoritarian-213533>

Peace,
Bill

April 30
Everybody,

More noteworthy info on this subject:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2017/05/01/why-did-trump-win-new-research-by-democrats-offers-a-worrisome-answer/?hpid=hp_no-name_opinion-card-a%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.05a73ed0907d

Ron

May 1

In that regard, see the editorial in today's NY Times:

<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/05/01/opinion/the-cost-of-barack-obamas-speech.html?smid=fb-share&referer=http://m.facebook.com/>

They are clearly worried that working people are no longer taken in by the Democrats, but rather see them as a party of Wall Street.

Jack

May 1
Everybody,

The Romance of American Stalinism continues:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/29/opinion/sunday/when-communism-inspired-americans.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region®ion=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region&r=0>

Only she forgot to mention: the colossal ignorance, the insufferable arrogance, the lying and the deceit, the justification of unbelievable crimes, the rabid denunciation of all who disagreed with them or even raised questions, the use of their own blacklists, the support for the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the support for the prosecution of the SWP under the Smith Act, the no-strike pledge during WWII and the turning in of names to the FBI of those agitating to strike, etc., etc., etc.

Ron

May 1

This is a link to the author's web page and is the same article. Much better for perusing and forwarding:

<http://abetterhumanstory.org/2017/04/18/a-better-human-story-understanding-what-we-humans-are-and-the-path-that-brought-us-here/>

Brian

May 1

From the Washington Post
Opinion | Trump's 100th-day speech may have been the most hate-filled in modern history

By Michael Gerson

For those who claim that Donald Trump has been pasteurized and homogenized by the presidency, his sour, 100th-day speech in Harrisburg, Pa., was inconvenient.

Trump used his high office to pursue divisive grudges (Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer is a "bad leader"), to attack the

media (composed of “incompetent, dishonest people”) and to savage congressional Democrats (“they don’t mind drugs pouring in”). Most of all, Trump used his bully pulpit quite literally, devoting about half his speech to the dehumanization of migrants and refugees as criminals, infiltrators and terrorists. Trump gained a kind of perverse energy from the rolling waves of hatred, culminating in the reading of racist song lyrics comparing his targets to vermin. It was a speech with all the logic, elevation and public purpose of a stink bomb.

On a selection of policy issues (Chinese currency manipulation, NATO, the North American Free Trade Agreement), Trump has been forced to accommodate reality. But those who find the president surprisingly “conventional” must somehow dismiss or discount this kind of speech, which George Wallace would have gladly given as president. They must somehow ignore the children in the audience, soaking up the fears and prejudices of their elders. They must somehow believe that presidential rhetoric — capable of elevating a country — has no power to debase it.

It is not sophisticated or worldly-wise to become inured to bigotry. The only thing more frightening than Trump’s speech — arguably the most hate-filled presidential communication in modern history — is the apathetic response of those who should know better.

For vigorous and insightful criticism of Trump, we should turn to someone who is not an American at all. He is a Czech intellectual, playwright and politician — who also happens to be dead.

President Trump reassured cheering supporters at a rally in Harrisburg, Pa., April 29 that he still plans to build a wall along the border with Mexico. President Trump addressed supporters on immigration at a rally in Harrisburg, Pa., on April 29.

I viewed Trump’s speech immediately after reading Vaclav Havel’s essay “Politics, Morality and Civility” (in an edition recently issued by the Trinity Forum). Havel surveyed the post-communist politics of his time and found leaders willing “to gain the favor of a confused electorate by offering a colorful range of attractive nonsense.” Sound familiar? His diagnosis continues: “Making the most of this situation, some characters with suspicious backgrounds have been gaining popular favor with ideas such as, for instance, the need to

throw the entire government into the Vltava River.”

The great temptation, in Havel’s view, is for people to conclude that politics can’t be better — that it “is chiefly the manipulation of power and public opinion, and that morality has no place in it.” This demoralized view of politics would mean losing “the idea that the world might actually be changed by the force of truth, the power of a truthful word, the strength of a free spirit, conscience and responsibility.”

“Genuine politics,” argues Havel, “is simply a matter of serving those around us; serving the community, and serving those who will come after us.” And this responsibility grows out of a moral and spiritual reality. “Genuine conscience and genuine responsibility are always, in the end, explicable only as an expression of the silent assumption that we are observed ‘from above,’ that everything is visible, nothing is forgotten.”

Any kind of serious social renewal begins, in Havel’s view, with each of us. “That is: in all circumstances try to be decent, just, tolerant and understanding, and at the same time try to resist corruption and deception.” But political leaders can and should carry this work forward. “I feel that the dormant goodwill in people needs to be stirred. People need to hear that it makes sense to behave decently or to help others, to place common interests above their own, to respect the elementary rules of human coexistence.”

Read the whole essay — a Czech giving voice to real Americanism. It is certainly not the spirit of Trumpism, which exemplifies the moral and spiritual poverty Havel decries: the cultivation of anger, resentment, antagonism and tribal hostilities; the bragging and the brooding; the egotism and self-pity. All is visible. None will be forgotten.

The alternative to Trumpism is the democratic faith: that people, in the long run, will choose decency and progress over the pleasures of malice. The belief that they will choose the practice of kindness and courtesy. The conviction that God blesses the poor, the hungry, the weeping and the stranger. Faith in the power of the truthful word.

It is the job of responsible politics to prepare the way for new

leaders, who believe that all of us are equal in dignity and tied together in a single destiny. But this can take place only if we refuse to normalize the language of hatred.

Robin

May 1

<https://youtu.be/SmpjD7yUqsw>

On April 15, I spoke at a workshop on funding public education, part of a conference held at UC Berkeley. My presentation starts about 11 minutes into the video.

Jack

May 3

Everybody,

Here's the latest on the fight against the gangster/Stalinist Chavista-Maduro regime in Venezuela:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/03/opinion/chaos-in-venezuela-nicols-maduro.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region®ion=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region&r=0>

Ron
