

The Kagans Are Back; Wars to Follow

Exclusive: The neocon royalty Kagans are counting on Democrats and liberals to be the foot soldiers in the new neocon campaign to push Republicans and President Trump into more “regime change” wars, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The Kagan family, America’s neoconservative aristocracy, has reemerged having recovered from the letdown over not gaining its expected influence from the election of Hillary Clinton and from its loss of official power at the start of the Trump presidency.

Back pontificating on prominent op-ed pages, the Family Kagan now is pushing for an expanded U.S. military invasion of Syria and baiting Republicans for not joining more enthusiastically in the anti-Russian witch hunt over Moscow’s alleged help in electing Donald Trump.

In a Washington Post op-ed on March 7, Robert Kagan, a co-founder of the Project for the New American Century and a key architect of the Iraq War, jabbed at Republicans for serving as “Russia’s accomplices after the fact” by not investigating more aggressively.

Then, Frederick Kagan, director of the Critical Threats Project at the neocon American Enterprise Institute, and his wife, Kimberly Kagan, president of her own think tank, Institute for the Study of War, touted the idea of a bigger U.S. invasion of Syria in a Wall Street Journal op-ed on March 15.

Yet, as much standing as the Kagans retain in Official Washington’s world of think tanks and op-ed placements, they remain mostly outside the new Trump-era power centers looking in, although they seem to have detected a door being forced open.

Still, a year ago, their prospects looked much brighter. They could pick from a large field of neocon-oriented Republican presidential contenders or – like Robert Kagan – they could support the establishment Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, whose “liberal interventionism” matched closely with neoconservatism, differing only slightly in the rationalizations used for justifying wars and more wars.

There was also hope that a President Hillary Clinton would recognize how sympatico the liberal hawks and the neocons were by promoting Robert Kagan’s neocon wife, Victoria Nuland, from Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs to Secretary of State.

Then, there would have been a powerful momentum for both increasing the U.S. military intervention in Syria and escalating the New Cold War with Russia, putting “regime change” back on the agenda for those two countries. So, early last year, the possibilities seemed endless for the Family Kagan to flex their muscles and make lots of money.

A Family Business

As I noted two years ago in an article entitled “A Family Business of Perpetual War”: “Neoconservative pundit Robert Kagan and his wife, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, run a remarkable family business: she has sparked a hot war in Ukraine and helped launch Cold War II with Russia and he steps in to demand that Congress jack up military spending so America can meet these new security threats.

“This extraordinary husband-and-wife duo makes quite a one-two punch for the Military-Industrial Complex, an inside-outside team that creates the need for more military spending, applies political pressure to ensure higher appropriations, and watches as thankful weapons manufacturers lavish grants on like-minded hawkish Washington think tanks.

“Not only does the broader community of neoconservatives stand to benefit but so do other members of the Kagan clan, including Robert’s brother Frederick at the American Enterprise Institute and his wife Kimberly, who runs her own shop called the Institute for the Study of War.”

But things didn’t quite turn out as the Kagans had drawn them up. The neocon Republicans stumbled through the GOP primaries losing out to Donald Trump and then – after Hillary Clinton muscled aside Sen. Bernie Sanders to claim the Democratic nomination – she fumbled away the general election to Trump.

After his surprising victory, Trump – for all his many shortcomings – recognized that the neocons were not his friends and mostly left them out in the cold. Nuland not only lost her politically appointed job as Assistant Secretary but resigned from the Foreign Service, too.

With Trump in the White House, Official Washington’s neocon-dominated foreign policy establishment was down but far from out. The neocons were tossed a lifeline by Democrats and liberals who detested Trump so much that they were happy to pick up Nuland’s fallen banner of the New Cold War with Russia. As part of a dubious scheme to drive Trump from office, Democrats and liberals hyped evidence-free allegations that Russia had colluded with Trump’s team to rig the U.S. election.

New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman spoke for many of this group when he

compared Russia's alleged "meddling" to Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor and Al Qaeda's 9/11 terror attacks.

On MSNBC's "Morning Joe" show, Friedman demanded that the Russia hacking allegations be treated as a casus belli: "That was a 9/11 scale event. They attacked the core of our democracy. That was a Pearl Harbor scale event." Both Pearl Harbor and 9/11 led to wars.

So, with many liberals blinded by their hatred of Trump, the path was open for neocons to reassert themselves.

Baiting Republicans

Robert Kagan took to the high-profile op-ed page of The Washington Post to bait key Republicans, such as Rep. Devin Nunes, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee who was pictured above the Post article and its headline, "Running interference for Russia."

Kagan wrote: "It would have been impossible to imagine a year ago that the Republican Party's leaders would be effectively serving as enablers of Russian interference in this country's political system. Yet, astonishingly, that is the role the Republican Party is playing."

Kagan then reprised Official Washington's groupthink that accepted without skepticism the claims from President Obama's outgoing intelligence chiefs that Russia had "hacked" Democratic emails and released them via WikiLeaks to embarrass the Clinton campaign.

Though Obama's intelligence officials offered no verifiable evidence to support the claims – and WikiLeaks denied getting the two batches of emails from the Russians – the allegations were widely accepted across Official Washington as grounds for discrediting Trump and possibly seeking his removal from office.

Ignoring the political conflict of interest for Obama's appointees, Kagan judged that "given the significance of this particular finding [about Russian meddling], the evidence must be compelling" and justified "a serious, wide-ranging and open investigation."

But Kagan also must have recognized the potential for the neocons to claw their way back to power behind the smokescreen of a New Cold War with Russia.

He declared: "The most important question concerns Russia's ability to manipulate U.S. elections. That is not a political issue. It is a national security issue. If the Russian government did interfere in the United States' electoral processes last year, then it has the capacity to do so in every

election going forward. This is a powerful and dangerous weapon, more than warships or tanks or bombers.

“Neither Russia nor any potential adversary has the power to damage the U.S. political system with weapons of war. But by creating doubts about the validity, integrity and reliability of U.S. elections, it can shake that system to its foundations.”

A Different Reality

As alarmist as Kagan’s op-ed was, the reality was far different. Even if the Russians did hack the Democratic emails and somehow slipped the information to WikiLeaks – an unsubstantiated and disputed contention – those two rounds of email disclosures were not that significant to the election’s outcome.

Hillary Clinton blamed her surprise defeat on FBI Director James Comey briefly reopening the investigation into her use of a private email server while serving as Secretary of State.

Further, by all accounts, the WikiLeaks-released emails were real and revealed wrongdoing by leading Democrats, such as the Democratic National Committee’s tilting of the primaries against Sen. Bernie Sanders and in favor of Clinton. The emails of Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta disclosed the contents of Clinton’s paid speeches to Wall Street, which she was trying to hide from voters, as well as some pay-to-play features of the Clinton Foundation.

In other words, the WikiLeaks’ releases helped inform American voters about abuses to the U.S. democratic process. The emails were not “disinformation” or “fake news.” They were real news.

A similar disclosure occurred both before the election and this week when someone leaked details about Trump’s tax returns, which are protected by law. However, except for the Trump camp, almost no one thought that this illegal act of releasing a citizen’s tax returns was somehow a threat to American democracy.

The general feeling was that Americans have a right to know such details about someone seeking the White House. I agree, but doesn’t it equally follow that we had a right to know about the DNC abusing its power to grease the skids for Clinton’s nomination, about the contents of Clinton’s speeches to Wall Street bankers, and about foreign governments seeking pay-to-play influence by contributing to the Clinton Foundation?

Yet, because Obama’s political appointees in the U.S. intelligence community “assess” that Russia was the source of the WikiLeaks emails, the assault on U.S. democracy is a reason for World War III.

More Loose Talk

But Kagan was not satisfied with unsubstantiated accusations regarding Russia undermining U.S. democracy. He asserted as “fact” – although again without presenting evidence – that Russia is “interfering in the coming elections in France and Germany, and it has already interfered in Italy’s recent referendum and in numerous other elections across Europe. Russia is deploying this weapon against as many democracies as it can to sap public confidence in democratic institutions.”

There’s been a lot of handwringing in Official Washington and across the Mainstream Media about the “post-truth” era, but these supposed avatars for truth are as guilty as anyone, acting as if constantly repeating a fact-free claim is the same as proving it.

But it’s clear what Kagan and other neocons have in mind, an escalation of hostilities with Russia and a substantial increase in spending on U.S. military hardware and on Western propaganda to “counter” what is deemed “Russian propaganda.”

Kagan recognizes that he already has many key Democrats and liberals on his side. So he is taking aim at Republicans to force them to join in the full-throated Russia-bashing, writing:

“But it is the Republicans who are covering up. The party’s current leader, the president, questions the intelligence community’s findings, motives and integrity. Republican leaders in Congress have opposed the creation of any special investigating committee, either inside or outside Congress. They have insisted that inquiries be conducted by the two intelligence committees.

“Yet the Republican chairman of the committee in the House has indicated that he sees no great urgency to the investigation and has even questioned the seriousness and validity of the accusations. The Republican chairman of the committee in the Senate has approached the task grudgingly.

“The result is that the investigations seem destined to move slowly, produce little information and provide even less to the public. It is hard not to conclude that this is precisely the intent of the Republican Party’s leadership, both in the White House and Congress. ...

“When Republicans stand in the way of thorough, open and immediate investigations, they become Russia’s accomplices after the fact.”

Lying with the Neocons

Many Democrats and liberals may find it encouraging that a leading neocon who helped pave the road to war in Iraq is now by their side in running down Republicans for not enthusiastically joining the latest Russian witch hunt. But they also might pause to ask themselves how they let their hatred of Trump get them into an alliance with the neocons.

On Wednesday in The Wall Street Journal, Robert Kagan's brother Frederick and his wife Kimberly dropped the other shoe, laying out the neocons' long-held dream of a full-scale U.S. invasion of Syria, a project that was put on hold in 2004 because of U.S. military reversals in Iraq.

But the neocons have long lusted for "regime change" in Syria and were not satisfied with Obama's arming of anti-government rebels and the limited infiltration of U.S. Special Forces into northern Syria to assist in the retaking of the Islamic State's "capital" of Raqqa.

In the Journal op-ed, Frederick and Kimberly Kagan call for opening a new military front in southeastern Syria:

"American military forces will be necessary. But the U.S. can recruit new Sunni Arab partners by fighting alongside them in their land. The goal in the beginning must be against ISIS because it controls the last areas in Syria where the U.S. can reasonably hope to find Sunni allies not yet under the influence of al Qaeda. But the aim after evicting ISIS must be to raise a Sunni Arab army that can ultimately defeat al Qaeda and help negotiate a settlement of the war.

"The U.S. will have to pressure the Assad regime, Iran and Russia to end the conflict on terms that the Sunni Arabs will accept. That will be easier to do with the independence and leverage of a secure base inside Syria. ... President Trump should break through the flawed logic and poor planning that he inherited from his predecessor. He can transform this struggle, but only by transforming America's approach to it."

A New Scheme on Syria

In other words, the neocons are back to their clever word games and their strategic maneuverings to entice the U.S. military into a "regime change" project in Syria.

The neocons thought they had almost pulled off that goal by pinning a mysterious sarin gas attack outside Damascus on Aug. 21, 2013, on the Syrian government and mousetrapping Obama into launching a major U.S. air assault on the Syrian military.

But Russian President Vladimir Putin stepped in to arrange for Syrian President

Bashar al-Assad to surrender all his chemical weapons even as Assad continued to deny any role in the sarin attack.

Putin's interference in thwarting the neocons' dream of a Syrian "regime change" war moved Putin to the top of their enemies' list. Soon key neocons, such as National Endowment for Democracy president Carl Gershman, were taking aim at Ukraine, which Gershman deemed "the biggest prize" and a steppingstone toward eventually ousting Putin in Moscow.

It fell to Assistant Secretary Victoria "Toria" Nuland to oversee the "regime change" in Ukraine. She was caught on an unsecured phone line in late January or early February 2014 discussing with U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt how "to glue" or "to midwife" a change in Ukraine's elected government of President Viktor Yanukovich.

Several weeks later, neo-Nazi and ultranationalist street fighters spearheaded a violent assault on government buildings forcing Yanukovich and other officials to flee for their lives, with the U.S. government quickly hailing the coup regime as "legitimate."

But the Ukraine putsch led to the secession of Crimea and a bloody civil war in eastern Ukraine with ethnic Russians, events that the State Department and the mainstream Western media deemed "Russian aggression" or a "Russian invasion."

So, by the last years of the Obama administration, the stage was set for the neocons and the Family Kagan to lead the next stage of the strategy of cornering Russia and instituting a "regime change" in Syria.

All that was needed was for Hillary Clinton to be elected president. But these best-laid plans surprisingly went astray. Despite his overall unfitness for the presidency, Trump defeated Clinton, a bitter disappointment for the neocons and their liberal interventionist sidekicks.

Yet, the so-called "#Resistance" to Trump's presidency and President Obama's unprecedented use of his intelligence agencies to paint Trump as a Russian "Manchurian candidate" gave new hope to the neocons and their agenda.

It has taken them a few months to reorganize and regroup but they now see hope in pressuring Trump so hard regarding Russia that he will have little choice but to buy into their belligerent schemes.

As often is the case, the Family Kagan has charted the course of action – batter Republicans into joining the all-out Russia-bashing and then persuade a softened Trump to launch a full-scale invasion of Syria. In this endeavor, the Kagans have Democrats and liberals as the foot soldiers.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

Reasons for Rise in Anti-Semitism

Anti-Jewish vandals have defaced cemeteries and other Jewish targets, raising the question of whether anti-Semitism is on the rise in the Age of Trump, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

There is an upsurge in anti-Jewish hatred in America. It has manifested itself in criminal and violent acts and threats of still more violence. Jewish cemeteries have been vandalized, and Jewish educational and cultural institutions have received death threats.

The obvious increase in such incidents leaves no doubt about the existence of intense anti-Semitism, and about how it persists in the United States and not just elsewhere. This hatred and prejudice should be vigorously condemned. All Americans should realize that while Jewish citizens are those most directly vulnerable to harm, such hatred and prejudice offends American values that benefit everyone.

We must ask about the hatred: why? Not just why in general, but why now. The correlation that immediately comes to mind regarding the rise of this vile phenomenon is with the political rise of Donald Trump, through the time of his candidacy and campaign and now the opening weeks of his presidency. We must be careful with any correlation not to be hasty in attributing cause and effect.

In this case, we should be aware of two ways of looking at Trump regarding this entire issue. On one hand is his strategy of appealing to the prejudices of a white nationalism in which anti-Semitism is not far below the surface, and sometimes visible on the surface. Trump relies on, as his most influential adviser, Stephen Bannon, whose Breitbart News has [provided a forum for anti-Semitic sentiment](#).

Another senior appointee in the Trump White House proudly wears a medal [associated with the wartime Hungarian regime that collaborated with the Nazis](#). Trump himself has come close to denying that the cemetery attacks were a

manifestation of anti-Semitism by suggesting that they were false flag operations.

On the other hand is the Donald Trump who talks about his Jewish son-in-law, his daughter who converted to Judaism, and the Jewish grandchildren they have given him. This Donald Trump also gets the endorsement of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said when visiting the White House last month, “There is no greater supporter of the Jewish people and the Jewish state than President Donald Trump.”

One always needs to approach the subject of anti-Semitism gingerly. Let us approach it by disaggregating the two subjects the Prime Minister mentioned – a people and a state – and note how different folks have responded differently to the dichotomous Donald Trump described above. Some are sufficiently and appropriately offended by the anti-Semitic connections to condemn them, regardless of whatever else they may like about Trump and his policies.

The Anti-Defamation League, for example, has, to its credit, spoken out forcefully against the Bannon appointment. Some others, however, including some groups that might be expected to be especially disturbed by any indications of anti-Semitism, have given Trump a pass on the issue because they give overriding priority to Trump’s support of the Israeli government and its policies. They only seem to care about Trump being less on that government’s case about the occupation of Palestinian territories and the continuing Israeli colonization of the territories than the Obama administration was, and about how Trump has appointed a far-right ambassador to Israel who is in bed with the settlement movement and how Trump makes other supportive noises such as talk about moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem.

Giving Trump a Pass

Netanyahu himself, during his recent visit, gave Trump a pass by not speaking out about the upsurge in anti-Semitism in the United States even after Trump, in his joint press conference with the prime minister, indecorously swatted aside a straightforward question from an Israeli journalist about the rash of incidents.

Still others recognize the dichotomy explicitly and express conflicted feelings. Samuel G. Freedman writes of an “anguishing reality” for “the vast majority of American Jews”: “To support Israel when it is cross-branded with Trump’s intolerance is to avert their eyes from a threat right here at home.”

Similar anguished dissonance about Trump coming to power is expressed by many observers in Israel. The conflicted feelings arise because a couple of false equations are being made by those having the feelings. One is to equate the

well-being of Jewish people with the standing of a particular state. Even some movements within Judaism don't agree with that, and the two subjects involved are in fact two different things.

Even more damaging and disorientating is to equate either the well-being of Jewish people, or the standing and strength of Israel, with the policies of the government that is currently in power in Israel and that is a coalition of right-wing parties that have dominated Israeli politics in recent years. There is no more validity to that equation than there would be in equating criticism of Trump and his policies with being anti-American, or being prejudiced against white Protestants or any other ethnic or religious identity associated with America. Although Netanyahu spoke of support for the "Jewish state," he really meant support for "my government."

What most obviously and saliently identifies that government, as distinct from other strands in Israeli politics, is what most identifies it in the eyes of the international community and accounts for nearly all the tensions with that community. This is the policy of holding on to territory conquered in war a half century ago that was long inhabited by another people, a people who have since been in a subjugated state and denied self-determination. The combination of colonization of the conquered territory through construction of settlements, and repression of Palestinian life through demolitions of homes and countless other measures, yields a combination of apartheid and ethnic cleansing. It is, in short, a major program of forceful discrimination against an entire people identified by their ethnic or religious identity.

Many of the official policies and practices in the territories exhibit an attitude toward the subjugated community that is one of disdain for people of that ethnicity and treatment of their lives as having much less value than those of the dominant ethnicity.

Unofficial actions, including violent actions, by members of the dominant ethnicity against the subjugated community embrace similar attitudes. The official policies and the vigilante activity both play upon and stoke broader attitudes of Jews toward Arabs that feature not just bias and disdain but hatred. Visceral hatred of Arabs has visibly risen among Jewish Israelis in recent times, coincident with the political rise of the right-wingers who now control the government.

Here is where we cannot only see that there is not really a tension in how to regard Donald Trump but also understand the basis of anti-Semitism in the United States and its recent surge. Any form of hateful prejudice says much more about the bigot than about the target of the prejudice. Through the centuries, Jews have disproportionately suffered as targets of hateful prejudice for reasons

that can be analyzed in terms of such historical factors as demographic patterns, envy of success, and why certain stereotypes and scapegoats have been popular at certain times.

Much Broader Targets

But the drivers of this specific manifestation of prejudicial hatred are essentially the same as those that have driven other forms of it. In the United States, anti-Semitism is tapping some of the same roots of fear, resentment, and ignorance that also have underlain waves of prejudice against Irish-, Chinese-, Japanese-, and African-Americans.

The contemporary Trumpian version highlights Muslims and Mexicans, but that's not because they both start with M or for any other reason that sets them apart from other groups that can be, or have been, targets of prejudice and hatred. They happen to be convenient targets because of perceived connections to certain other salient issues of the day, but the underlying attitudes can be directed just as easily at Jews or other targets defined in terms of religion or ethnicity.

The number of active hate groups in the United States has risen markedly since the beginning of the Twenty-first Century. The numbers dropped for a while during Barack Obama's second term, but in the last two years the numbers have increased significantly again. Anti-Jewish incidents are part of an overall rise in prejudicial hatred. Anti-Jew has gone hand-in-hand with anti-black, anti-Muslim, and anti-whomever.

The coincidence of timing between this trend and the political phenomenon of Donald Trump is not merely coincidence. The political themes that Trump has ridden to the White House play directly upon, and stoke further, the sorts of prejudices that can take violent forms and that may be manifested in overturned gravestones in a cemetery.

This pattern parallels the pattern in Israel. The details about the target groups are different, of course, and for obvious reasons, Jews are not the prime target of those who support the people with political power (although it is easy to find anti-Jewish hatred among Palestinians). But the basic dynamics involving ignorance, fear, rhetoric, political power, and hateful prejudice are essentially the same.

We should have gotten a clue about this from the vocabulary used. Although the term *anti-Semitism* long ago became equated with anti-Jewish prejudice, Arabs are Semites, too. It is highly likely that those responsible for desecrating cemeteries and sending threatening message to Jewish institutions would not be

nice to Arabs, either.

So there should be no conflicting feelings in thinking about Donald Trump in connection with these issues. His bromance with Netanyahu is one founded on a common approach to fear and prejudicial policies. The parallels between their policies, along with the foundations of fear and prejudice, extend even to wall-building. The shared political strategy of the two governments promotes the sort of bias and hatred that is bad for Jews, bad for Israel, and bad for the values of tolerance and fairness that the vast majority of American Jews embrace.

The false equations may have contributed to this problem from another angle. The alacrity with which some defenders of the rightist government of Israel whip out the anti-Semitism card as a response to criticism of that government's policies not only represents a grossly inaccurate characterization of much criticism that has nothing to do with anti-Semitism and is offered in the best interests of Israel.

It also complicates efforts to counter real anti-Semitism. For one thing, it means taking our eyes off the ball that is the real thing while holding debates about the false version. For another, it cheapens the currency. If observers in the United States perceive that anti-Semitism is something that involves policy wonks arguing over what is going on in the West Bank, most observers are not apt to conclude that it is something worth spending their time and attention worrying about.

They *should* worry about it. It has been said, with good reason, that Jews are the canary in the coal mine as far as prejudice and sometimes lethal hatred are concerned, because they often have been the first to suffer from it. But if the cause of the suffering remains, others will suffer as well.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is author most recently of Why America Misunderstands the World. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

Greens' Stein Faults Two-Party System

Some Democrats blame Jill Stein for "siphoning off" crucial votes from Hillary Clinton and thus helping to elect Donald Trump, but Stein insists that the two-party straitjacket is the real enemy of democracy, reports Dennis J Bernstein.
By Dennis J Bernstein

Former Green Party presidential candidate, Dr. Jill Stein, remains undaunted in her belief that the only real and significant change in U.S. politics will come through a third party that can finally break the headlock that the Democrats and Republicans hold on the electoral system.

Stein, who has been running for state and federal office since her unsuccessful run for Governor of Massachusetts in 2002, has yet to win an election and received about 1.4 million votes (or about 1 percent of the total) in the presidential election of 2016.

I spoke with her on March 10 about what comes next for her and the Green Party, as well as her thoughts on the policies of both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Dennis Bernstein: You are here in San Francisco, doing a bunch of things. But you're going to be participating a little bit later in an action in support of Standing Rock and indigenous rights. And I want to ask you for your gut reaction to seeing that almost the first thing that Donald Trump did was go after the indigenous communities, and get those pipelines pumping heavy crude.

Jill Stein: It's a sign of what we're up against: this incredibly authoritarian, neo-fascist, anti-human rights predator, and who has pretended to be a friend of the working people, and who has really been revealed in all of his glory with his billionaire cabinet composed of people who are attacking the very cabinet departments that they are said to be head of. Who is enlarging the military, expediting the pipelines, expediting all sorts of destructive fossil fuel projects, attacking immigrants. It's really reigning down on all sides.

The issue of indigenous rights, and pipelines and Standing Rock, brings so many of these issues together. With incredible courage, and vision, and passion, that so engaged the hearts and minds all across America, that we all saw that we are all Standing Rock. That this is where democracy... our rights to protest, indigenous rights, human rights, and our right to air, and water, and the climate that we can live in. They all converge.

And, it's like the match here that lit the fire is just the passion of our indigenous brothers and sisters who are ready to stand up. Not just for them: they're standing up for us all. And that passion is not going away. They may be evicted for now, but the fight is going on. It's continuing in court. It's continuing in the local struggles against, I guess, what's called the Klamath River Pipeline [Pacific Connector Pipeline], and LNG [liquid natural gas] Pipeline, that's going to go under the Klamath River, and put it at great risk.

The important thing here is that we've been successful in stopping fossil fuel

projects over the past two years. That has really put the fear of God into this industry. They are in the process of becoming stranded assets. They're trying to hurry up and get them built before they are no longer financially viable.

DB: The price is so low, they can't even sell the stuff.

JS: And so, the important thing here is for us to just... to double down. And to be strengthened, to be encouraged, to get past their propaganda of powerlessness, and to know that we still have the numbers, in spite of the election of Donald Trump, which was an obvious distortion of the system.

But even more than that, it's a system that's become so toxic, so predominated by big money, corporate money, and corporate media, that it's become unhinged. We have an unhinged, toxic political system. Donald Trump represents, really, the breakdown of this bi-partisan system that people have lost faith in.

Polls last year, well, early on in the election, showed 90% of Americans have lost confidence in our political institutions, in the bi-partisan system in Congress, the Executive, and the Judiciary. You can't get more explicit than that, 90%.

At the other end, at the very end of the election, it was 80% of the people who described their feelings towards the election as one of disgust. And the American people are ready to move on. Had we... we were like one open debate from totally throwing out the bums, and moving forward to the future we deserve.

And everything that we're hearing now, both in what the extraordinarily destructive actions of Donald Trump, but it's like the neoliberal runaway that he launched from, the deportation of three million immigrants, the meltdown of the climate, where the White House was signing an end to the export ban of fossil fuel. They were actually signing the dotted line to end that ban. In other words, to enable the export of fossil fuels again, while the Paris Accords were being signed. So, with one hand they're claiming this great environmental world, with the other they're just massively increasing.

So, the point here is we need to move forward. We need to break up with this abusive political relationship. We need to go forward with the future we deserve, because we're out of time, and it's on us. We're the ones we've been waiting for. We have the power, people are standing up, joining in. Follow the example of Standing Rock. We can fix these problems.

DB: I love that poem by June Jordan, put to music by Sweet Honey in the Rock [...] and I notice that that was sort of the anthem that played in the beginning of the Women's March, in Washington, D.C. June Jordan is of this community, contributed to this show. So, we're happy that she is still being evoked.

Well, let's talk about what's happening today. You have some expertise. We all saw the dangerous possibilities of the ObamaCare program. We're seeing something else go on now. You have some knowledge here, you want to talk about this?

JS: Sure. So, ObamaCare was a very mixed bag. We should have had Medicare For All, a single-payer system. Healthcare is a human right. ObamaCare was basically RomneyCare, writ large. It was essentially a national roll out of what we did in Massachusetts, under Mitt Romney, who launched that RomneyCare movement in order to stop single-payer. That's really where all of this originated, because single-payer was going like gangbusters in Massachusetts. We very nearly won a referendum that was only beat back by about two percentage points, having been outspent by 30 – 1 or 50 – 1, whatever it was, by the industry.

DB: It got really close.

JS: It was, and that's why they came up with this diversionary measure. So, it expanded Medicaid, that was great. It did some other things, no pre-existing conditions, etc. It made care affordable for people who were poor.

But for working people it created this mandate. You shouldn't be funding health care for some people on the backs of other people. We should be funding health care through the incredible abundance of this country. We are not a country of scarcity. We are not a country of austerity.

We are a country that is being bankrupted by a military budget that has just gone hog-wild, which Donald Trump wants to further expand. But it's pretty toxic to start with. It's over 50% of our discretionary dollars. It's almost half of your income taxes going for what? For wars, and regime change that has created failed states, mass refugee migrations, and worse terrorist's threats.

So, this doesn't fix the problem. More of a catastrophic policy of militarism – we're about to go into Syria now, with ground troops – that's not going to make it better. This, again, is yet another reason why this is a Hail Mary moment [a desperate effort with little chance of success].

And it's not only that our water is at risk, our climate is melting down, and in fact, that melt down is accelerating. An entire generation of young people are locked in debt, jobs are just not sustainable when average wages for workers are barely at the poverty level. We're not going to get out of here alive.

DB: [...] What do you think is going to happen here? What's your best assessment of... we know where the Republicans are going with this. They're hell-bent on passing this stuff. There's going to be some resistance but essentially they're going to be able to get whatever they want. What are the implications?

JS: Well, it's not clear that they will. And back to the subject on the table about TrumpCare. There's not agreement about this, at all. It may not pass either House. And Trump is not a uniter, in spite of what he says. It's very clear he's not a uniter. He doesn't bring people together, doesn't have, kind of, higher order passions and visions.

DB: I haven't seen him smile once since he's been elected.

JS: I know.

DB: You notice that? God, they're disappointed they won.

JS: Not him, and not his wife either, who really looks miserable. The two of them on Election Day... [and] ... on Inauguration Day it looked like they were at a funeral. They did not expect this. Now, he's being progressively cornered. He's had to lose some of his key advisors, he's lost some key cabinet positions, his ratings continue to plummet. They were rock bottom to start with. He is a land mine of liabilities: legal, constitutional and ethical liabilities. There's just case after case, lawsuits against him. His immigrant policy is about to be stopped again, for the second time. So, this is a guy who should not be in office. He's being stopped.

I think it's important for us to remember Richard Nixon, one of the most corrupt and authoritarian presidents in our history. What did we do under the rule of Richard Nixon? We brought the troops home from Vietnam. We established women's right to choose, from a very conservative Supreme Court. We got the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, OSHA, protecting workers' health and safety. How did we do that? We did it because we were out in the streets with a passion knowing that our lives were on the line, because our brothers were being sent to die, to Vietnam.

Well, guess what? Now, we've woken up to find our lives are on the line again, whether it's from poverty and homelessness; a generation locked into unpayable student debt; from the expanding war which is blowing back at us with a vengeance; from the climate [warming] which is now accelerating, given the news last week that the meltdown of permafrost is well established, and is moving forward at horrific speed. And all the dire predictions from Jim Hansen, that we could see 10 or 20 feet of sea level rise, as soon as 2060. That's not far away.

Well, guess what? Those predictions are coming far closer now, because those models did not include the impact of methane. We didn't know when this was going to hit. The meltdown of the permafrost, for those who aren't familiar, it's basically frozen, organic debris, like dinosaur flesh, and plant matter, and stuff like that. It's just... the organic matter, the living creatures and plant

life, of the ages, that's been frozen. It's becoming unfrozen. That means it turns into methane, which is one of the most powerful greenhouse gases. This is a major accelerator of climate change.

So, it means that it's time to stand up. It means that we are out of time. It means it's time to take action, now. So, people are getting out, knowing that our lives are on the line, for all these issues. On account of immigrant deportations, and the attack on women, and all the rest.

DB: Let me just stop you there, because that's the other issue I want to hit. I'm referring to it [the bulk-up of US Border and ICE agents] as Trump's jobs program for ex-military. And I was joking when I said to the audience the other day that, I swear, I know I'm going to open Stars and Stripes, the U.S. Army newspaper, and see major ads.

So I got a call right after the show, from a listener who said, "Are you kidding me? Look at page 9, Stars and Stripes, huge, double page ads, \$10,000 and \$9,000, special courts and expanded private prisons." This is really the cutting edge of, if you will, the new civil rights movement.

If we have a responsibility, it is in terms of the incredible attack on brown people in this country. Undocumented workers who do the hardest work, and, of course, the whole Middle East. Anything darker than John Wayne, and you're in trouble. And we're seeing Sikh, the other day, a Sikh man was assassinated, because he was like Osama Bin Laden, or something.

JS: Yes, you're right. And this is where immigrant rights come together with unbridled militarism. Because this refugee crisis... it's a refugee crisis, it's not an immigration crisis, it's a refugee crisis. We create that crisis through our military policies, not only in the Middle East, but also [by] overturning democracies: Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador. Where we, [...] through our U.S. trained death squads, or through the outright overturning of democracies, we've created this culture of violence that forces people to flee over the border. So militarism, economic exploitation, and the role of NAFTA, which was awful for workers here, as well as farmers south of the border.

These are fixable problems. They can only be fixed together. To my mind, that's what a political party is. A political party is a coalition that's going to work together around an explicit agenda for people, planet and peace, over profit. The time has come. We have to stand up, like our lives depend on it, because they do.

And, now, this is sort of the silver lining behind this awful scary thunder cloud here that has just descended all over us: That our lives are on the line,

so we gotta stand up and do it, in the way that we did under Richard Nixon. And then we impeached him. Trump's days are numbered.

We just saw the president of South Korea impeached, today, upheld by the courts. Why did this happen? In part it was millions of people getting out into the street. It happened in Guatemala, two years ago. In East Germany, Chris Hedges tells the story, he was there as an investigative reporter. And the democracy advocates were meeting and saying "How are we going to get rid of this awful, authoritarian government?" And they said "Maybe in ten years." The next week the wall came down, because people came out.

We've just... we're at the breaking point, and we're also at the wake up point, right now. And so, this is going to accelerate resistance. We're not only creating sanctuary communities, but we're actually now building sanctuary institutions, where people will be kept safe, where the ICE agents can't even go. And, there are other plans that may be in the works with some indigenous tribes, and the role that they can play. Because they are essentially independent nations.

So, there are very exciting things here. In the same way that the Muslim community stood up for the Jewish community and raised money in the face of these anti-Semitic attacks, and all the bomb threats that are going on. We're seeing these wonderful, just life-affirming, humanity-affirming alliances. And, as we wake up to the fact that our days are numbered right now, and that it is in our hands. It's only us, we are the ones we've been waiting for. The time has come, enough of the lesser evil. It's time to stand up, and fight for the greater good.

And even this issue of spoiling elections, and splitting the votes. Well, hello, there's a system called ranked-choice voting which Greens have been promoting forever. The state of Maine just passed it by voter referendum.

[California Governor] Jerry Brown just vetoed it [in California]. There was enabling legislation that was passed by the Legislature and Jerry Brown vetoed it because Democrats are at war with the liberation of our votes. They rely on extortion. They rely on intimidation, and fear, in order to hold people back. Why do they do that? Because they know that they can't earn your vote.

Ranked-choice voting calls their bluff. It allows you to actually rank your choices. If your first choice loses, your vote is automatically reassigned to your second choice. That's a win-win on our democracy. There are win-wins for every issue that faces us.

Right now we're looking at a lose-lose [situation], with this corporate-

sponsored duopoly. The Democrats might give us ten more years than the Republicans would, of survival, under Democratic policies. But it's a sinking ship, with the duopoly. It's time to get off the ship. Our lives depend on getting off that ship and launching the lifeboat. We've got it, let's make it happen.

Dennis J Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.
