

## IF WE ARE NOT CONCERNED, WE'RE COMPLICIT

Ken Olson

Trump won this time around; we know that by the complete lack of signs of an upcoming violent insurrection. But incredibly, Trump and his co-conspirators continue pushing the Big (humongous) Lie that he also won the 2020 election. Tough-guy Trump merges his image with Hulk Hogan's to compensate for a fragile ego devastated by having then been "a loser." So, the first requirement for appointees in his new administration is --to be election deniers. It's impossible to overstate just how radical and Orwellian this is. It's even part of the screening questionnaires: not competence, not integrity, truthfulness, nor the ability to accept reality: instead, a willingness to swallow and promote enormous lies. As in the old tale, his complicit acolytes do not dare mention the ugly fact that The Emperor has no clothes; instead, they must praise his fictitious finery.

Alexander Hamilton, eloquent promoter of the Constitution, was realistic about human nature. In *The Federalist Papers* (# 6) he reminds us that, all too often, "men are ambitious, vindictive, rapacious, ...sacrificing the national tranquility to personal advantage or personal gratification." Therefore, he helped design a constitution that could cope with the likes of Richard Nixon, who said, "I am not a crook" but was. Whether it can deal both with Trump's more virulent criminal mindset --he has said he wants to "shred" parts of the Constitution-- and his Putin-like propaganda that he is above the law remains to be seen. In addition, there are his threats that amount to taking wrecking balls and flamethrowers to time-honored institutions of health, education, and justice. It should all be of huge concern.

Albert Einstein was another realist. In a 1932 letter to Sigmund Freud, he wrote, "Man has within him a lust for hatred and destruction. In normal times, this passion exists in a normal state. It emerges only in unusual circumstances. but [then] it is comparatively easy to raise it to the power of a collective psychosis." He watched that develop in Germany leading up to WWII. Naturally, our situation is different, but far from entirely. ALL our presidential historians are extremely concerned for our democracy.

Trump has started many proverbial fires; then, when others point to the flames, his defenders quickly cry, "Trump Derangement Syndrome!" That's distraction but is also what's known in psychology as projection: pinning on others a label for a state of mind that actually applies to oneself. It also works as a name for Trump's own delusions of grandeur. (An obese old guy in a golf cart likes those portraits of himself as Braveheart on a prancing steed --now, that's TDS!)

Ask the experts. In his first term, several thousand (!) mental health professionals were concerned enough to sign petitions that Trump was unstable, unfit, and dangerous, something even more obvious now. Recall forensic psychiatrist Dr. Bandy X. Lee writing of Trump, "I have interviewed a thousand just like him: they were all locked up!" Those with common sense pay attention to alarms. Those in denial --"The fire's not real!"-- do not. And that is to be complicit.

Trump has given many darksome speeches denigrating our country as “a total disaster,” just so he can then present himself as rescuer, first-responder, firefighter. When out of office, did he ever say that America is already “great” for the many ways in which it is truly good? No, because then he could not take credit. All about getting, not giving, this small man’s dictionary is miniscule, too. His vocabulary is vacant of terms like honor, integrity, kindness, generosity, sacrifice, love, hope, values, and all the rest of that large store of immaterial and spiritual treasures that inspire goodness in people and by which they live and move and have their being.

In the words of philosopher and journalist Walter Lipmann in his 1929 book, *A Preface to Morals*, “[Some] leaders have no real authority in morals, because they themselves have few standards. ...They exercise an almost autocratic power over department at the country club. But what they believe about God, salvation, or the destiny of America nobody knows, not even themselves.” That such emptiness of mind and heart will again be ensconced –and empowered-- in the White House is reason to be profoundly concerned. If we are not, I suggest that something is seriously wrong. Some sort of syndrome, perhaps?

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