

Juneteenth and the Unrealized Promise of “Absolute Equality”

The Editorial Board

President Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, with an effective date of January 1, 1863. Enslaved Texans would not learn of their liberation for nearly two and a half years.

On June 19, 1865, a date subsequently known and celebrated as “Juneteenth,” Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas to notify the populace of the Proclamation. His soldiers circulated throughout town, reading “General Order No. 3,” which explained that henceforth there would exist “an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves.” Not surprisingly, spontaneous celebrations greeted this momentous news.

Official celebrations began the following year and initially involved church-centered gatherings, reflecting the jubilation and the solemnity of the occasion. Juneteenth celebrations spread from Texas throughout the United States and now include parties, picnics, and gatherings with family and friends. Juneteenth is an official holiday or day of observance in all states but Hawaii, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Efforts are ongoing to make Juneteenth a federal holiday.

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The Fraud of “Voter Fraud” The Reality of Voter Suppression*

Michael K. Cantwell

Recently, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy was heard to complain, “I don’t think anybody is questioning the legitimacy of the presidential election.”

He’s twice wrong. First, if true, it would be a cause for celebration that tens of millions of Americans had finally come to their senses. Complaining that not enough people are questioning the 2020 election is like complaining that not enough people believe the QAnon conspiracy that the world is run by a cabal of [Satan-worshipping](#) pedophiles who kill and eat their victims.

Second, there’s been no shortage of crypto-fascists and paid professional liars only too happy to regurgitate Trump’s Big Lie since it first emerged from his

maw. What America *has* lacked are Republicans with the courage and patriotism to challenge the Big Lie and the Big Liar.

As a consequence, [two-thirds of Republicans](#) now believe the election was stolen. They are unaware or unmoved by the fact that more than sixty lawsuits challenging the election were dismissed (many of them by Republican judges) or that election officials in every state (many of them Republicans) certified or upheld the certification of the vote.

To return to the simile begun in the second paragraph, [56% of Republicans](#) also believe that the core QAnon conspiracy theories noted above are either mostly or partially true.

How did tens of millions of Americans become so mad so quickly? Like the proverbial frogs put in a pot of cold water and then slowly boiled alive, they accepted Trump’s Big Lie because they were conditioned by the onslaught of lies Trump has spewed since launching his presidency with the palpably false claim that the rain stopped and the sun came out when he began his inaugural address.

The other answer is that many were already mad. Trump’s Big Lie resonated because it was sown in the fertile ground of another, even more malignant, Big Lie, namely, that “voter fraud” is rampant and threatens our democracy.

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(*Juneteenth*, continued from page 1)

Juneteenth is often compared to the Fourth of July, but the deliverance of an enslaved people from bondage is an even more momentous event than a colonial people's declaration of severance from the mother country. Moreover, America's independence has never been in doubt whereas the "absolute equality" promised in General Order No. 3 has never been achieved.

The Unrealized Promise of "Absolute Equality"

Since then, there have been brief periods when the formerly enslaved and their descendants were led to believe absolute equality *would be* forthcoming, that is, that they would be permitted to share in the rights enjoyed and celebrated by White America on July 4. Such hopes were always dashed, however.

The first such period was the Reconstruction Era that followed issuance of General Order No. 3 and the ratification of the "Civil War Amendments," which ended slavery (*Thirteenth Amendment*); granted citizenship rights and equal protection of the law to anyone born in the United States (*Fourteenth Amendment*); and prohibited the states from denying or abridging the right of U.S. citizens to vote "based on race, color, or past servitude" (*Fifteenth Amendment*).

For a brief period, formerly enslaved people were elected to local, state, and national offices (at one point, 15% of the office holders in the South were Black, a higher percentage than in 1990). Neither the Reconstruction Era nor its advances were long-lived.

The backlash was swift and sustained, launching a century of terrorism and oppression. Paramilitary groups of heavily armed Civil War veterans attacked Republican officeholders and suppressed the Black vote through violence and intimidation. Democrats ran nakedly racist races, winning elections by framing the choice as between "["white supremacy" or "Negro rule."](#)" If that sounds familiar, it's because the modern Republican Party took lessons from the post-Civil War Democratic Party. Mitch McConnell always brags he's a student of history.

Having regained control of the reins of government, they passed "Jim Crow" laws and constitutional amendments that effectively disenfranchised most Blacks. (The clause in Florida's Constitution that was revised by Amendment 4 dates from that era.)

They legalized segregation, and the U.S. Supreme Court did nothing, holding in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation was constitutional so long as the separate

facilities were "equal" in quality. It took over 60 years for the Court to rule that "separate but equal" is unconstitutional as applied to education. Even then, *Brown v. Board of Education*, did not explicitly overrule *Plessy*, failing to address segregation in other contexts.

Brown also had limited impact on school segregation because towns across the South created inexpensive private schools to keep Whites from having to attend integrated schools. According to a 2020 [study](#) by the National Center for Education Statistics' National Assessment of Educational Progress, Black children are "five times as likely as white children to attend schools that are highly segregated by race and ethnicity" and more than twice as likely to attend "high-poverty schools."

It took another decade after *Brown* before Congress dismantled legalized segregation with the passage of Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Southern officials reaped political advantage attacking these laws as intrusions on states' sovereignty and Civil Rights protesters as "lawbreakers" because of the civil disobedience tactics used to demand their rights. Of course the real criminals were the racist officials who defied federal laws and beat and murdered peaceful protesters.

Nixon's "Law and Order" campaign and Southern Strategy began the process of turning the "Solid South" from Democratic to Republican. "The War on Drugs," launched by Nixon and expanded under Reagan, has been so disproportionately applied to people of color that it is more appropriately titled "The War on Black People": as Noam Chomsky once commented, "if you've been fighting, and losing, a war for 40 years, the stated purpose is not the real purpose."

The final era of dashed hopes began with the election of Barack Obama, which led to the ridiculous claim that we had become a "colorblind" society. What actually happened is that the election unleashed an unapologetic racism not seen since the heyday of Bull Connor and George Wallace, one that is still polluting our discourse today through the septic tank that is Donald Trump. And absolute equality? Well, that's like the football Lucy keeps pulling away. But like Charlie Brown, we must keep believing.

So we celebrate Juneteenth with the same mixture of jubilation and solemnity that attended the earliest celebrations, for we are as far as ever from that day when, as Bob Marley sang, "The color of a man's skin is of no greater significance than the color of his eyes."

(The Fraud of Voter Fraud, continued from page 1)

Unlike the [77% of self-identified Republicans](#) who believe voter fraud was widespread in 2020, however, Republicans spreading or tolerating Trump's Big Lie are not credulous fools. They know that there is no empirical evidence of voter fraud, for all their efforts to find it have all ended in failure:

- A commission Trump established to “prove” he “won” the popular vote in 2016, led by former Vice President Mike Pence and Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, [disbanded](#) without finding any evidence of voter fraud.
- A [crackdown](#) begun under former President George W. Bush found no evidence of organized voter fraud. The 120 instances it identified nationwide over a 5-year period translated to a *less than one instance per state every other year*.
- The Heritage Foundation's “[Election Fraud Database](#)” trumpets “1,328 proven instances of voter fraud.” Their database extended back over 20 years, so it amounts to slightly over *one instance of voter fraud per state per year*.

The threat to our democracy is not voter fraud – *it is the fraud of voter fraud*. Republican leaders are using a non-existent threat to enact voter-suppression laws because they know that they cannot compete on a level playing field.

According to the [Brennan Center](#), 14 states have enacted laws that restrict access to the vote since the beginning of the year, including SB 90 in Florida. Currently, 12 states have enacted laws to make it more difficult to vote by mail, 8 states have enacted laws that make in-person voting more difficult, and 18 states have voter-suppression laws moving through the state legislature. Overall, Republicans have introduced at least 389 restrictive bills in 48 states in the 2021 legislative sessions.

These laws are despicable and anti-democratic and are an admission that Republicans cannot win elections honestly. If, as intended, they allow Republicans to retake Congress in the 2022 midterms, the overthrow of our democracy that we narrowly averted on November 3, 2020, and again January 6, 2021, will just have been postponed. And that is the “steal” that must be stopped.

Weaponizing Ignorance

Rob Resnick

We seem to be in an era of pervasive ignorance sweeping the US; at least I hope this is unprecedented, suggesting it is temporary and fixable. School curricula throughout K-12 overwhelmingly fail to include sufficient education on American history and government. Many adults then choose willful ignorance rather than to be informed citizens. At best many carefully select and limit their news sources to avoid even considering differing views, options, and a more accurate factual background. Consequently, we are currently suffering through a persistent, incredibly dangerous period of divisiveness wherein Americans, who would otherwise be good neighbors, resort to baseless and foolish demonization of anyone who even thinks slightly differently.

This period of dehumanizing those with different views, ignoring their more important positive qualities to treat them as an enemy that must be destroyed presents a bigger threat to our democracy and future as a nation than any enemy we have faced. These sinister forces also mix in racial and religious differences, not just politics. Extremist

militias and supremacist groups are widely responsible for this perilous climate. They, and they alone, thrive on this divisiveness. The Republican Party, in lockstep with these groups and ongoing Trumpist domination, has effectively weaponized this ignorance. They no longer stand for any ideology or set of political principles to govern the nation. It is all about absolute power and control.

They have one goal – to obtain and maintain power at all costs, even going so far as to steal elections, disenfranchise eligible voters, and use violence. Their base voters blindly believe every baseless lie and conspiracy theory presented to them and worse, they act accordingly, to include violence, election fraud, and obstructing the workings of government at all levels. Although all sides have engaged in negativity and vitriolic rhetoric, Republicans for decades have shamelessly attempted to falsely portray Democrats as enemies of the state, people who do not value freedom or the Constitution. In so doing, this “dehumanizing” effect makes it easier to control their voters, have them resort to violence, and disenfranchise those who they have been misled

to believe do not deserve to have their votes counted. To accomplish this, they keep in power such underserving, incapable representatives, and reprehensible liars as Marjorie Taylor Greene. They will take anyone who supports their authoritarian aims. The key for them is fomenting chaos to enable eroding democracy and establishing their power.

Donald Trump's "Big Lie" about the 2020 Election being stolen from him is a clear example. Biden won the Presidency, both popular and electoral vote. He

choose to ignore the facts, they shun any effort to provide them with the truth, all in blind servitude to a charlatan with a life history of defrauding people. More importantly, at least for many, the extremists oppose American values and seek to institute an alternate regime. You cannot make this up. However, instead of watching the dystopian future of Gilead on "A Handmaid's Tale," these groups are trying to establish something very similar here in the real world, at least as far as authoritarian control. Even the non-Trumpist Republicans seem to prefer this future to keep power rather than to uphold the Constitution they swore to protect and the principles

They have one goal - to obtain and maintain power at all costs, even going so far as to steal elections, disenfranchise eligible voters, and use violence.

won even without Georgia and Arizona, but those states joined the repudiation of Trump's anti-American authoritarianism. The message should have been to eliminate Trumpism from the Republican Party and the nation. Instead, Republican legislatures in multiple states are engaging in widespread efforts to support the Big Lie. They use it to enact obvious voter suppression laws to make sure they do not lose again by preventing communities who normally would oppose them from even voting. They held hearings and phony recounts to perpetuate this fraud on the American people.

Over two thirds of Republicans believe, at least what they say in polls, Trump won reelection, despite the fact that there is no evidence whatsoever that was true. Every one of the many claims and court cases was dismissed because they had no factual basis at all. Yet these voters choose to be ignorant. They

they claimed to serve.

For our democracy to survive, we must find the cure to this "illness of ignorance." The Trumpist Republican Party relishes the hate, division, and willful ignorance of its voters. Not everyone has to closely follow the news, but we cannot tolerate the abject dishonesty tactically being used to manipulate people, not only for their vote, but to commit violence and criminality in the name of their cause. There is a difference between opinion, with which we are all free to agree or disagree, and falsehood, which is not subject to debate. The hate, prejudice, bias, and division permeating society all stem from ignorance and are drastically enhanced by those perpetrating its weaponization and the spread of lies. We can and should have honest debate; we should soundly reject the escalation of ignorance. Our future depends on it.

By the Numbers:

Average Tax Rate Paid by Billionaires During the Years 2014-2018

0.10% Warren Buffett

0.98% Jeff Bezos

1.30% Michael Bloomberg

3.27% Elon Musk

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“I’m Not Calling Mr. DeSantis a Racist, I’m Simply Saying the Racists Believe He’s a Racist”

Michael K. Cantwell

Ron DeSantis launched his 2018 campaign against Andrew Gillum with a warning to voters not to “monkey this up” by electing Gillum. DeSantis was asked about his dog-whistle appeal to racists at their final debate, as well as his affiliation with figures who’d made racist comments. He became testy, refusing to accept responsibility for everything his supporters might have said and attacking “political correctness” rather than racism.

It was a pretty pathetic defense, and Gillum’s demolished it: “I’m not calling Mr. DeSantis a racist, I’m simply saying the racists believe he’s a racist.”

That’s the issue as we fight to retire DeSantis next year. Dog-whistle racism worked in 2018 and DeSantis is at it again, with his phony crusade against the teaching of “critical race theory.” Many voters are unaware that critical race theory is not even being taught in Florida schools, so that DeSantis is creating an issue where there is none. And few voters understand the meaning or impact, and more importantly, what is not the meaning or impact, by the term “critical race theory” or “systemic racism” and “White Privilege” or “White Advantage.”

Anyone who has been paying attention and is honest must acknowledge that Blacks are profoundly disadvantaged vis-à-vis Whites in America. They possess 10% of the wealth of Whites, are disproportionately arrested and jailed, and are far more likely to be killed in interactions with police. Being informed of these facts does not create racial

divisions where none exist, but rather seeks to end the racial divisions that do exist by defining the problem.

Being informed that the “absolute equality” promised to the formerly enslaved at the end of the Civil War has never been granted to them does not mean that a White mother sending her child to a public school in Palm Beach County is being forced to educate her child to be “ashamed of her race.” Being informed that White people are more likely to obtain mortgages or job offers than are Blacks in similar economic circumstances or with similar resumés is not blaming the White person who receives the mortgage or job. It is only asking her to understand what it means to be a Black person in America today.

But now DeSantis has his issue, and it is a powerful one, just as Republicans used peaceful BLM protests to baselessly frighten voters in 2020. It didn’t help Trump but it cost Democrats many seats in Congress and it helped State Representative Mike Caruso, who raised money for his reelection [campaign](#) by claiming that the City Commission was defunding the police (it was not) and that this was sending “a [signal to ANTIFA](#) to come on down.”

Just as they demonized “Defund the Police,” Republicans are demonizing “critical race theory,” “systemic racism,” and “White Advantage.” To beat DeSantis we must explain and detoxify these terms and, above all, stand firm and stand together.

Rubio Should Resign*

June Sandra Neal

Sen. Marco Rubio is a coward. He has abdicated his responsibility to the people of Florida and to the Constitution. He refused to convict Trump after he tried to blackmail the president of Ukraine. He backed down when Trump was impeached for inciting a crime against our country in the shameful Jan. 6 insurrection, although the whole country saw and heard the Liar-in-Chief do just that.

Now Rubio has voted against a commission to study how the riot came about. The Senate is the most powerful legislative body in the world and those who hold the honor of serving are obligated to uphold the Constitution and stand up to anyone who violates it.

The Republicans who cower before Trump are despicable. They see Trump is an immoral megalomaniac who has already caused significant damage to our democracy, yet they continue to enjoy their status, perks and paychecks. Senator Rubio, have you no shame?

*Originally published in The Sun-Sentinel, June 6, 2021.

As Governor, Nikki Fried Says She'll "Break the (Republicans') Rigged System"

June Sandra Neal

Florida's Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried wants to be Florida's next governor and isn't afraid to take on Ron DeSantis, who she describes as an "authoritarian dictator." If elected, she'll end two decades of disastrous Republican rule. And she will make history as Florida's first woman governor.

With Congressman Charlie Crist already running, our state has two high-profile, bright, and exciting gubernatorial candidates. Both are committed to restoring democratic principles to Tallahassee, and there's never been a greater urgency. A Democratic win in the upcoming elections is life or death for American democracy as we know it.

After DeSantis signed his new voter suppression bills behind closed doors, and for Fox News only, Fried said he did it "...because the only way they've been able to win elections is through lies, misinformation, fraud, and now voter suppression." Fried called DeSantis' administration "borderline fascism." When DeSantis ordered state flags lowered to commemorate the death of Rush Limbaugh, Fried refused. "We will not celebrate hate speech, bigotry, and division."

Although Fried's the only Democrat elected statewide since 2012, Crist has better name recognition. Fried offers a broad knowledge of Florida's overarching issues. At the same time, her agency oversees Florida's second-largest industry, along with having jurisdiction over many of our everyday, kitchen table problems.

This includes food safety, landlord tenant laws, the licensing of concealed weapons and the registration of charities — you can find out how they spend your donations. This is the place to go with complaints about business scams and fraud.

She proudly displays her medical marijuana card and is fighting the Republicans' efforts to weaken the 2016 Constitutional Amendment that legalized its use. Their plan to limit the potency of the marijuana sold through licensed dispensaries is terrible "for patients that need it most."

The good news is we know both Fried and Crist will fight for democracy, something we haven't seen for a very long time.

Dumber than Dirt

Covid vaccines magnetize you! "I'm sure you've seen the pictures all over the internet of people who have had these shots and now they're magnetized. They can put a key on their forehead. It sticks. They can put spoons and forks all over them and they can stick, because now we think that there's a metal piece to that." Dr. Sheri Tenpenny, speaking to Ohio legislature.

A Solution for Climate Change! "And so, is there anything that the National Forest Service or BLM can do to change the course of the moon's orbit or the Earth's orbit around the sun? Obviously, that would have profound effects on our climate." Rep. Louis Gohmert, R-Texas. to Chief of US Forest Service at House subcommittee meeting. June 7, 2021.

(Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif. offered his own solution to Gohmert on Twitter, suggesting that Marvel Comics' character Captain Marvel could do the job.)

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Is Charlie Crist Our Joe Biden?

Michael K. Cantwell

Just as Ron DeSantis is a peanut-sized reflection of Donald Trump, the 2022 gubernatorial race is likely to mirror the 2020 presidential race. Nearing the size of the 2020 presidential primary field, seven Democrats have filed to run against DeSantis, and another seven are listed as potential candidates. Congressman and former Governor Charlie Crist and Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried appear to be the clear frontrunners.

Mariane Kulick, my aunt and founder of our Club, always had a soft spot for Crist, even when he was a Republican. What impressed her was his treatment of former offenders seeking clemency when he was governor. Although it was against his self-interest, as a substantial majority of the prison population consisted of Democrats, he granted clemency and restored the voting rights of 155,000 former offenders during his 4 years in office.

That is twice as many as received clemency under Jeb Bush during his 8 years as governor. Of course, neither Bush nor Crist comes close to the execrable Rick Scott, who granted clemency to fewer than 2,500 applicants during his 8 years. DeSantis is likely to win this race to the bottom, having granted clemency to fewer than 100 petitioners since being elected. He infamously refused to pardon Desmond Meade, a man with more humanity in his little toe than DeSantis possesses in his entire body.

Few of us who belong to what Paul Wellstone pointedly called “The Democratic Wing of the Democratic Party” supported Joe Biden in the 2020 primaries, and it’s fair to say that few will be lining up behind Crist in the primaries.

I was wrong about Biden, and I think that it would be wrong to dismiss Crist. A major factor in Biden’s success was the public’s perception of a race between a competent, decent human being and an incompetent, heartless miscreant.

The same contrast could play out in a Crist-DeSantis race. DeSantis can try to conceal his cruelty and incompetence, but it’s a thin veneer. The nightmares faced by Floridians applying for unemployment last year after Covid-19 caused massive layoffs can and must come back to bite him. So should DeSantis’s announced cutoff of the federal government’s \$300 supplemental benefit this year as well as his botched vaccine rollout. By contrast, Crist was viewed as a competent governor and a decent man.

DeSantis ridicules Crist’s two subsequent statewide losses, but the district Crist represents in Congress had been Republican for 60 years before he flipped it in 2016. That’s three times as long as Republicans have held the governor’s mansion. This is a race Crist can win. It is also a race we must win, whomever we nominate. *Vote Blue, No Matter Who.*

(Some of) What We’re Reading

John Nichols, [Florida’s Ron DeSantis Wants to Cancel Education About Systemic Racism](#): “[DeSantis] is spewing a slurry of false premises in order to attack the idea that systemic racism has informed the laws of a country that began by permitting human bondage, then imposed violent segregation, and now continues to witness brutal inequality.”

Charles Blow: [Demonizing Critical Race Theory](#): “Critical race theory was simply an analytical tool, but to some white people, the fact that white supremacy was overtly used to infect America’s systems of power with both racial oppressions and racial privileges is too much to handle. It is discomfiting. It unravels the American myth.”

Maureen Dowd, [Fat Cats on a Hot Tin Roof](#): “Given what this country has been through with Covid, given all the corrupt bankers who got off scot-free after the economic collapse, and given how hard it is to earn a buck, this new glimpse into inequities is genuinely disgusting. Paging Madame Defarge: Where do you get your knitting needles?”

Kareem Abdul Jabbar, [Every GOP candidate is wrong about political correctness](#): “Our country was founded on principles of inclusion, which means acting compassionately toward the many different people who make up our nation. Almost every group who immigrated to America was at one time the outsider — mistreated, abused and taunted. Maturity means not having to relive our mistakes of the past, but learning from them and doing better. Our country needs more sensitivity, not less.”

Upcoming Meetings

July Meeting, Democratic Club of Delray Beach, July 8, 2021, 7 PM: “Civic and Civics Education,” with Guest Speaker Christene Campbell-Gabor, League of Women Voters PBC.

August Meeting, Democratic Club of Delray Beach, August 12, 2021, 7 PM: Guest Speaker Omari Hardy, Florida State Representative District 88 and candidate for Florida's 20th congressional district to succeed the late, great Representative Alcee Hastings.

Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections Site Has Moved!

As a result of the greater security available to the government entities at the .gov top-level domain, the PBC SOE’s website has moved to www.votepalmbeach.gov. Please update your bookmarks.

Quotable

“Public relief is a sacred debt. Society owes maintenance to unfortunate citizens.” *Paragraph 21 of the 1793 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*—the ultimate statement of the ideals of the French Revolution.

“One major difference between GOP and Dems is that [Republicans] leverage their right flank to gain policy concessions and generate enthusiasm, while Dems lock their left flank in the basement [because] they think that will make Republicans be nicer to them.” *Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*

And Last but Not Least

If you like what you’re reading, please don’t forget to join or renew your membership in the Democratic Club of Delray Beach—and if you were a member in previous years, and haven’t yet renewed for 2021, please renew!

Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2021 Membership Application and Renewal



Date _____ New _____ Renewal _____

Name/names of household members _____

Address _____

Community/Condo Name _____

E-mail Address _____ Phone number _____

(E-mail addresses are shared with the Palm Beach County Democratic Party so our members will be kept abreast of the latest County Democratic Activity. If you do not wish to receive this information, please initial here ____ and we will not share your E-mail address.)

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