

The Delray Democrat

September 2021

New Profiles in Courage Confirm The Time for Civil Disobedience Is Now

June Sandra Neal

*"I became convinced that noncooperation with evil is
as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good."*
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Florida's government's failure to protect its citizens is evil. Fortunately, we are witnessing acts of civil disobedience that call out to the rest of us.

- In the early morning dark of August 23, dozens of doctors and hospital CEOs from across Palm Beach County rallied to protest people failing to get Covid vaccinations, a result of Donald Trump's early marginalization of the threat to protect his presidency. As the light came up, their bright white coats and blue scrubs were eye-catching, their pleas acute. "We are in a real state of emergency...exhausted and frustrated," because intensive care units are full and clinics and doctors' offices are overwhelmed. It's unusual (and often proscribed) for groups of doctors to speak so forcefully, but they couldn't continue watching people suffer and die unnecessarily.
- In August, ten county school boards, representing more than 52% of the state's school children, defied Governor DeSantis' order to prohibit mask mandates in schools, despite his threats to withhold funding.

(Continued on page 2)

Also in This Issue

- Two Takes on Texas . . . 3*
*It Is Class Warfare,
and They've Won 5*
*How I Learned About
Civil Disobedience..... 6*
*Even in a Lineup of the
Loathsome, Rick Scott
Stands Out.....7*
*Hypocrites, Miscreants,
and Morons Unload on
Biden7*
*Putting the Jobs Report
in Perspective.....8*

Upcoming DCDB Meetings (7:00 PM)

September 9: Patrick Ferguson, Esq., Sierra Club Organizing Representative, Stop Sugar Field Burning Campaign

October 14: Meet the Candidates for H.D. 88

"It Don't Mean A Thing if We Don't Win Tomorrow"

Michael K. Cantwell

It was the fourth game of the 2001 World Series. The Arizona Diamondbacks were ahead 3-1 in the ninth and led the series 2-1. The Yankees were down to their last out when Tino Martinez hit a two-run homer to send the game into extra innings. With two outs in the bottom of the tenth, Derek Jeter hit an opposite field home run to win the game and tie the series, sending the crowd into a frenzy.

Interviewed immediately afterwards in the dugout, with a still-screaming crowd as backdrop, Jeter was asked what he was feeling. Dead-serious, he said, "It don't mean a thing if we don't win tomorrow."

They did, and in dramatic fashion again, with Scott Brosius supplying the two-out home run to send the game into extra innings. It was well after 2 AM when the Yankees won in the bottom of the 12th.

As always, Jeter's eyes were fixed on the prize, even if it ultimately eluded the Yankees when Arizona swept the final two games to win the 2001 Series.

We head into the midterms with our democracy in the same position as the Yankees after game 5. Electing Biden in November 2020 and Warnock and Ossoff in January 2021 kept the bastards at bay but it won't mean a thing unless we hold the House and the Senate next year.

Of course the analogy goes only so far. We are dealing (once again) with saving our democracy and our planet, not winning a sporting event. And we are facing foes far more fearsome and malignant than Randy Johnson and Curt Schilling.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 1)

- His actions, rubber-stamped by his Republican-appointed parrots on the Florida Board of Education, were so immoral, so dismissive of science and common sense, that the educators were called to civil disobedience.
- And Mike Burke, only weeks in his new post as PBC Superintendent of Schools, responded to DeSantis' charge that the mask mandate violated state law saying, "No, it does not."

A parents' lawsuit was pending but waiting wasn't an option. School opened on August 10, and, as of August 20, Florida had more children hospitalized with Covid-19 than any other state, "...averaging 54 new admissions a day over the past week," according to the Centers for Disease Control. Children under 12 aren't even eligible for inoculations.

The protestors won a first step. On August 26, a circuit court judge ruled that school boards have the authority to order mask mandates, although parents can opt out for medical reasons. DeSantis will appeal. Nonetheless, the doctors' and educators' actions should be a North Star, guiding us to refuse subordination to egregiously unjust laws.

Since Trump's fascism took root, Americans have suffered a massive assault on our laws and our traditions, which had been as concretized within the American ethos as firmly as our Constitutional amendments. Trump stirred up the sediment of racial and ethnic superiority and blackened both science and reason in an effort to downplay the virus he feared would mar his presidency. Ironically, he'll be known forever for aiding the death of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

DeSantis, salivating for votes from the Trump base, vowed to brook no resistance. And Florida Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran, DeSantis' alter ego, said "We cannot have government officials pick and choose what laws they want to follow."

Oh yes, we can.

Chapters in America's autobiography jump out: The Boston Tea Party, the Abolitionists and the

thousands of college students who ended the war in Viet Nam. And Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s model of non-violent civil disobedience forever changed marginalized people's consciousness of their power.

We'd best draw on it now; the Republicans have already jettisoned basic predicates of American democracy, starting with usurping the powers of the federal and state governments for their own benefit, then violence to subjugate the Constitution. January 6 was only their first salvo.

Right now, the virus precludes the demonstrations and rallies that have been so successful in the past. But there is much that citizens can do.

We can boycott the organizations that donate to the campaigns of DeSantis and Senators Rubio and Scott. Tell them the reason for your boycott. Here are some links:

Florida Department of State:

<https://dos.elections.myflorida.com/campaign-finance/contributions/>

Federal Elections Commission (FEC)

<https://www.fec.gov/introduction-campaign-finance/how-to-research-public-records/individual-contributions/>

Transparency USA, Friends of Ron DeSantis (or any other name)

<https://www.transparencyusa.org/fl/pac/friends-of-ron-desantis-70275-pac>

Open Secrets

<https://www.opensecrets.org>

Also, demand that the State Board of Education members stand up to DeSantis' mask orders and the rest of his un-American laws. Remind them that the issue of school board salaries may be on the 2022 ballot. And that you vote.

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Two Takes on Texas

Michael K. Cantwell

Let Not the Perfect Be the Enemy of the Good Vote Blue, No Matter Who

What happened in Texas was not inevitable but it was predictable. It's what happens when we allow "the perfect to be the enemy of the good." It's a mistake that we Democrats make on a fairly regular basis, devolving into our trademark circular firing squads – it happened in 1980, 2000, and 2016, and it almost happened in 2020. Is it because we have short memories? Or are slow learners? Or both?

I voted for Barry Commoner in 1980, an election from which working men and women are still suffering. The worst consequence of that election was not the replacement of the New Deal with the Raw Deal, however. It was the fact that Reagan appointed three of the five justices who selected George W. Bush in 2000.

Of course, if 538 of the 97,421 Floridians who voted for Ralph Nader had voted instead for Al Gore, we would have been spared Bush's failed presidency and the Supreme Court would have been spared the ignominy of *Bush v. Gore*, one of the most nakedly political and widely denounced decisions in its long history. And Al Gore would have filled the next two Supreme Court vacancies that arose.

Bush's appointments resulted in two precedent-bludgeoning decisions. The first, *Citizens United*, opened the door to dark money in political campaigns. The second, *Shelby County v. Holder*, opened the door to voter suppression laws throughout the South by gutting the heart of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Despite these assaults on our democracy, despite McConnell's announced intention to steal a Supreme Court seat and reverse *Roe*, many Democrats were still unable to appreciate the fierce urgency of the moment. I'm sorry, but to be unable to discern the difference between Hillary Clinton and the rough beast who was her opponent was to be an idiot.

Et sic, Ecce Bestia, followed by Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barret, the three cowards who, with Alito and Thomas, are attempting to reverse *Roe* without suffering the consequences of saying so. Maybe when they unleash their naked judicial activism, those Democrats who missed or ignored the memo will wake up and smell the coffee. That will be too late for the women of Texas but it won't be too late to stop the Republicans from taking back Congress next year.

For those who have not been paying attention, let me remind you that McConnell has already said that if Republicans recapture the Senate he will not give a hearing to any Biden Supreme Court nominee. It's not rocket science. "Vote Blue, No Matter Who" is the only way we save our democracy and our planet.

"Texas, Find Yourself Another Country to Be Part Of"

With Texas's defiantly unconstitutional abortion law following close on the heels of its voter suppression bill, it's time to update Phil Ochs's angry anthem, "Here's to the State of Mississippi," and its iconic refrain, "Mississippi, find yourself another country to be part of." Just substitute Texas for Mississippi throughout.

What is effectively a ban on abortion was carefully drafted to omit a "state actor," enabling a profoundly disingenuous Court to avoid addressing *Roe v. Wade*. This well suits the five judicial activists (three of them appointed by Trump) who used procedural legerdemain to avoid a substantive reckoning.

But they are merely postponing that moment when they will be forced to expose their contempt for what has been the law of this country for nearly a half-century and unleash the political backlash that will follow. The state action necessary to trigger constitutional review will occur the minute the vigilantes given power over their neighbors seek the aid of our courts in their jihad against doctors and clinics (and taxi drivers!) who would assist women in asserting their constitutional rights.

(Continued from page 1)

We need to do a better job of trumpeting the accomplishments of the Biden administration and reminding people of the chaos and destruction that ensues when Republicans reign. Here are some of the things we need to be telling people. If you're reading this digitally, click on the links to see the sources.

Democrats Clean Up Republican Messes and Protect the Public

- Democrats have been cleaning up Republican messes since 1929 (from Hoover's Great Depression through W's Great Recession and Trump's Second Great Depression).
- More jobs were created in the [First 100 Days](#) of the Biden administration than in any other administration since records began in 1939.
- In the 7 months after Biden's inauguration, [4,454,000 jobs](#) were added (a monthly average of 742,333).
- Second quarter GDP grew at [annual rate of 6.5%](#), eclipsing its pre-pandemic high.
- At least 70% of American adults and 57% of Americans have received [at least one dose of vaccine](#). After resistance, the fear of Delta variant has caused vaccinations to [rise in Southern States](#).
- A record [31 million Americans](#) are now insured under the Affordable Care Act.
- Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act [saved 19,200 lives](#) in the four-year period 2014-17.

Republicans Crash the Economy and Sacrifice Their Own Voters

- Trump and DeSantis betrayed their constituents. The significantly lower vaccination rates among Republicans, coupled with the fact that the overwhelming majority of those in ICUs with the Delta variant, supports the thesis that their constituents have moved from voting against their economic interest to voting against their very lives.
- Trump presided over the loss of nearly [3 million jobs](#), the [worst record](#) since Herbert Hoover.
- At least [2.3 million Americans and 240,000 Floridians](#) lost health insurance during Trump's first three years in office.
- Florida's "[broken unemployment system](#)," developed under Rick Scott, caused hundreds of thousands of Floridians, many without savings, to suffer lengthy delays in receipt of benefits. Florida pays one of the lowest levels of benefits in the country, and Scott has been [accused by experts](#) of intentionally weakening the system to reduce taxes on employers.
- Although DeSantis complained that the unemployment system he inherited was "[designed to fail](#)," he betrayed Florida's unemployed by withdrawing Florida from the supplemental unemployment insurance program enacted by Democrats this spring, [causing 116,304 Floridians](#) to lose out on the additional benefits and sacrificing over \$418 million in federal funding that would otherwise be spent on the local economy.
- Thanks to DeSantis, Florida is the coronavirus capital of the country. Florida recorded [more coronavirus deaths](#) than California, Texas, New York, and Illinois combined in the week ending July 23. Florida [set another record](#) for COVID-19 deaths in the week ending September 4. The 2,345 reported deaths was 36% higher than the previous week and was more deaths than any state has reported in the last 6 months.
- Republican governors including Scott, refused to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (at virtually no cost to their states), [causing 15,000 unnecessary, premature deaths](#) between 2014 and 2017. The number of preventable deaths in Florida amounted to 2,776.

It Is Class Warfare We've Been Losing for a Half-Century

Michael K. Cantwell

Complaints that multimillionaires and multinationals don't pay their fair share of taxes are met with cries of "socialism" and "class warfare." Of course the socialism is for the obscenely rich, who have been practicing and winning class warfare since 1970, as the chart below makes abundantly clear. Not only has the share of all income going to the bottom 90 percent shrunk dramatically since 1970, but in the top 10%, the higher a taxpayer ranked the more his or her slice of the economic pie grew:

	Bottom 90%	90-95%	95-99%	99-99.5%	99.5-99.9%	99.9-99.99%	Top 0.01%
1970	67.10%	11.10%	12.70%	2.80%	3.50%	1.80%	1.00%
2017	52.44%	12.53%	16.97%	4.20%	6.19%	4.43%	3.24%
Change	-21.85%	12.88%	33.62%	50.00%	76.86%	146.11%	224.00%

Source: Perfectly Legal, by David Cay Johnston, based on data provided by economists Thomas Piketty and Emanuel Saez and updated in personal email by Mr. Johnston.

The burgeoning inequality is largely a function of under-taxation of the wealthiest Americans. The top tax bracket under Eisenhower was 91%, dropping to 70% under JFK, 28% under Reagan, and then bouncing between 31% and 39.6% under the next five presidents. After the Trump tax cut, it is 37%.

Further contributing to economic inequality is the favorable treatment afforded dividends and capital gains, which comprise the bulk of income earned by

the uber-wealthy but little if any of the income earned by ordinary Americans (who generally don't benefit from tax deductions for yachts and private planes).

In the chart below, the tax rate decreases as the income increases. The top 1% are taxed at a higher rate than the top tenth of a percent, who pay a higher rate than the top hundredth, while the top thousandth pay the lowest rate of all of the megarich.

Percentile	Average Income	Average Tax Rate	"Buffet Rate"	Contribution to Treasury if Taxed at 30% Buffet Rate
Top 0.001%	\$121,450,346	20.98%	30.00%	\$250,474,176,700
Top 0.01%	\$28,359,690	22.98%	30.00%	\$460,570,178,600
Top 0.1%	\$5,990,129	24.79%	30.00%	\$718,837,089,400
Top 1%	\$1,225,357	24.90%	30.00%	\$1,410,805,487,900

Source: <https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-individual-statistical-tables-by-tax-rate-and-income-percentile>

Indeed, as David Leonhardt [reported](#) in *The New York Times*, in 2018 the top 400 taxpayers paid a lower rate than almost anyone else.

This is not altogether surprising. Consider that the Social Security tax of 6.2% is only assessed on the first \$142,800 of income. Workers on salary earning under that cap pay the full 6.2%. Even the "poorest" of those in the above chart pay a small fraction of

that, and the rate paid by the top-thousandth of a percent is a mere 0.00729%, a rounding error. And that's why Warren Buffet famously claimed that he paid a lower tax rate than his secretary.

The average salary of an executive secretary to a CEO is \$83,161, resulting in an effective tax rate of 16.9%. Add 6.2% and that's a higher rate than either the top hundredth or top thousandth of taxpayers pay.

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How I Learned About Civil Disobedience. A Personal Story

June Sandra Neal

“No one is coming to save us. Mass civil disobedience is essential to force a political response.”

George Monbiot, columnist, *The Guardian*

I was struck by Monbiot’s provocative essay in *The Guardian* titled, “Only rebellion will prevent an ecological apocalypse.” Substitute America’s political apocalypse. We’re not going to save ourselves with traditional political weapons. Or with people believing “it can’t happen here.”

As Monbiot put it, “Underlying these excuses is a deep-rooted belief that if we really are in trouble, someone somewhere will come to our rescue: ‘they’ won’t let it happen. But there is no they, just us.”

Just us.

I was a teenager when the country was convulsing with outrage against an ignoble war, and with hatred for those opposing it. “Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?” “America, love it or leave it.”

Introduction to Civil Disobedience. I got my first teaching job near Litchfield County, CT, and bought a magnificent, converted barn built in the 1700s on five acres of meadows and trees. But I really didn’t know where I’d landed. I discovered the rich and famous lived in these secluded towns like Roxbury and Washington, in stately, old colonials. When I, rube-like, asked about a carpool to help get my eldest son to school in Kent, I was told to try Rebecca Miller, daughter of the famous playwright, who went to the same school. What had I done?

Chapter One. Fortunately, I met Tom and Candace Powers. Tom was an author and intelligence expert and a joy to talk to. He was working on a story about the Weather Underground, a militant sect of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) whose signature tactic was placing bombs in government buildings to protest America’s support of the invasion of Laos. On March 6, 1970, three members of the group were killed when the bomb they were assembling exploded, including Diana Oughton. She was 28.

Candace called to tell me Tom won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for his articles about

Diana. With my still-inchoate worldview, I asked, does violence have any value? Is there a moral equivalence between the activists’ bombs and the cluster bombs our military was dropping?

Chapter Two. Arthur Miller, of Roxbury, had written *The Crucible*, using the Salem witch trials as a metaphor for the Red Scare and the House Un-American Activities Committee. When HUAC subpoenaed him, Miller refused to disclose names of friends who were pro-communism. He was found guilty of contempt and sentenced to a \$500 fine or 30 days in jail. His conviction was later overturned.

William Styron, living not far down the road, wrote *The Confessions of Nat Turner* and *Sophie’s Choice*, searing portraits of racism and bigotry and, along with other writers such as James Baldwin, signed a pledge not to pay taxes in opposition to the war. I wondered, did these forms of CD have any effect on the decision makers? There was no way to calculate.

Advanced Civil Disobedience Course. I moved, quit teaching to stay home with my newborn, filed theater reviews while he napped and took him along while I volunteered to work on a school busing project and to help resettle Jewish emigres from Russia. New friends and perspectives, unyielding beliefs that success comes when we must put ourselves in the game and the greater the problem, the greater the personal investment.

King’s strategies worked. An organized group exponentially multiplies each individual’s strength beyond the laws of mathematics. And critical mass needn’t be a huge number. Harvard Kennedy Professor Erica Chenoweth says we need only 3.5 percent of the population to succeed, or about 11.5 million people. “Could you imagine if 11.5 million people — that’s about three times the size of the 2017 Women’s March — were doing something like mass noncooperation in a sustained way for nine to 18 months? Things would be totally different in this country.”

Even in a Lineup of the Loathsome, Rick Scott Stands Out

Michael K. Cantwell

It is difficult to stand out in the pack of grifters, miscreants, toadies, vermin, traitors, and cowards that comprise the modern Republican Party, but Rick Scott manages to get noticed. Just last week, he tweeted:

“After the disastrous events in Afghanistan, we must confront a serious question: Is Joe Biden capable of discharging the duties of his office or has time come to exercise the provisions of the 25th Amendment.”

The claim’s absurdity is heightened by its source, a lackey of the former Imbecile-in-Chief who proposed ingesting or injecting household cleaners as a way to combat the pandemic he’d allowed to run wild. America lost 3.3 million jobs and 400,000 lives during Trump’s ruinous presidency. His inability to discharge the basic duties of his office brings to mind Sybil Fawltly’s classic smackdown:

I have seen more intelligent creatures than you lying on their backs at the bottom of ponds! I've seen better organized creatures than you running around farmyards with their heads cut off!

That was Trump. This is Joe Biden: 4.1 million jobs were created in the 6 months since his inauguration, and GDP is eclipsing its pre-pandemic high. He has overseen the [full inoculation](#) of 81.4% of Americans over 65 years and 62.8% of Americans over 12 years of age, impressive numbers considering the hostility of Republican voters and officials in the South.

Hypocrites, Miscreants, and Morons Unload on Biden

Michael K. Cantwell

When 241 Marines died in Beirut, the country rallied behind Reagan. When the lives of 2,977 people were tragically cut short on 9/11, the country rallied behind Bush. But when 13 Marines are killed in a terrorist attack as President Biden seeks to extricate the country from the quagmire that is Afghanistan, it’s difficult to find even Democrats willing to defend President Biden.

Why is that? It’s certainly not because Biden was more at fault than Reagan or Bush. The marines in Beirut occupied an exposed area and had been prevented, for political reasons, from maintaining a secure perimeter. Richard Clarke warned Condoleezza Rice on nearly a daily basis of the threat posed by Al Qaeda, and a month before the attack the President’s Daily Brief bore the headline, “Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in US.” The CIA put it in the title because W had ignored their prior warnings.

So why? Is it because Biden is a Democrat and Reagan and Bush were Republicans and Democrats generally put country before party while Republicans always put party before country? Or — and this is the most troubling — because the media just got tired of reporting on the stream of Biden’s economic and legislative successes and were looking to change the narrative?

Whatever the reason, it is long past time to stop bloviating and sensationalizing and instead get behind a decent man who has done a hell of a job so far and now needs and deserves the unqualified support of the American people.

Biden engineered passage of The American Rescue Plan without a single Republican vote and is on the verge of signing the bipartisan infrastructure act that eluded Trump. Nor would I rule out passage of the critical “human” infrastructure plan or legislation to redress the dozens of voter suppression bills passed by Republican state legislators who fear nothing so much as democracy.

This is not the record of someone who is suffering from dementia or is otherwise unfit for office.

Indeed, the claim is so ludicrous, so spectacularly stupid that Scott was a serious contender for our **Moron of the Month**. But while Scott may be a reprobate, he is no moron. A moron couldn’t have presided over a company that committed what was then the [greatest Medicare fraud](#) and walk away with a [\\$300 million](#) golden parachute. A moron couldn’t have implemented an unemployment benefits plan so complicated that people simply [gave up](#) applying for unemployment insurance, allowing him to brag about his low unemployment numbers.

Scott is comfortable making a claim only credulous fools and ignoramuses could believe because that is his intended audience. It includes the multiple millions of our fellow citizens who resemble the Brownshirts of the prior century’s Twenties. Do not believe “It can’t happen here.” It *will* happen here unless we hold Congress next year.

Putting the “Disappointing” Job Reports into Perspective

Michael K. Cantwell

Republicans are in a frenzy and the corporate media in a dither over the fact that the August job numbers fell short of estimates. But only a fool or a paid professional liar would fail to notice that the 235,000 jobs reported in August are still significantly higher than Trump’s pre-pandemic monthly average (180,200 jobs) and infinitely greater than Trump’s numbers over his full term, during which nearly 3 million jobs were lost. Trump is the first president since Herbert Hoover to leave office with fewer jobs than when he entered, and Biden’s monthly average (636,285) easily surpasses his three predecessors. Who’s your daddy, Donald?

	George W. Bush	Barack Obama	Donald Trump	Joe Biden
Total	1,357,000	11,557,000	-2,876,000	4,454,000
Monthly Average	14,135	120,385	-59,917	636,285

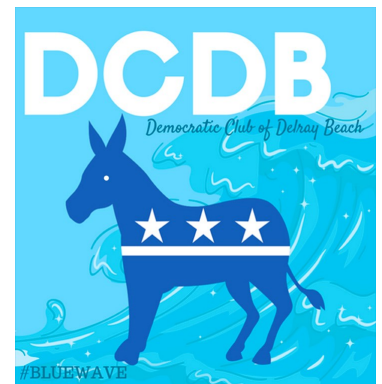
It is agreed that the spike in COVID cases is a major reason the jobs number fell so short of expectations. The principal contributor to the spike is Republican intransigence, leading *New York Times* columnist Jamelle Bouie to ask, [Do Republicans Actually Want the Pandemic to End?](#) The question answers itself:

Rather than work with him to vaccinate the country, Biden’s Republican opposition has, with only a few exceptions, done everything in its power to politicize vaccination and make refusal to cooperate a test of partisan loyalty. The party is, for all practical purposes, pro-Covid.

The article is worth reading, and every Republican quoted in it is a finalist for Miscreant of the Month. But the malignant hypocrisy of the failed governor who is responsible for Florida becoming the coronavirus capital of the country attacking a man whose shoes he is not fit to shine makes one’s gorge rise: “You know, he said he was going to end Covid. He hasn’t done that . . . At the end of the day, he is trying to find a way to distract from the failures of his presidency.”

The most appropriate response to a man who one hopes will someday have to answer for the lives lost on his watch is to quote Lin-Manuel Miranda’s tweet to Trump: “You’re going straight to hell . . . No long lines for you . . . Someone will say, ‘right this way, sir.’ They’ll clear a path.”

Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2021 Membership Application and Renewal



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