

The Delray Democrat

The Survival of Democracy¹

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Last month the Democratic Club of Delray Beach invited Mark Schneider to discuss democracy and its constituent ramifications in a talk entitled “Is the United States a Democracy? Should It Be?” We are now recognizing that since the election in 2016, the concept of democracy and the part played by the electorate has come under such scrutiny as they have not since the founding of this country.

This topic is a vexed issue among political scientists because, as Steve Levitsky of Harvard University comments, “Today democracies don’t die at the hands of generals, but at the hands of elected leaders – presidents, prime ministers . . . Many citizens are not fully aware of what’s happening until it is too late.” Those who have made a study of government and the dire circumstances Americans face are nevertheless loath to insist that our future is perilous indeed. We are left with issues that have frightening consequences and few solutions.

Members of our Club are only too aware of what is happening and are trying to give this message to our community at large and offer it to the voters who can prevent another and disastrous four years. Is it possible that the psychopath now occupying the White House could or would take action to bring about a coup “similar to those that brought down democracies during the last century?” Realizing the violence and hatred being propagated among his constituents, we need to be mindful that this president and his minions and followers are capable of just such action.

In Florida, Republicans have been trying rigorously to minimize the number of voters who might vote Blue. Ignoring the clear message of voters who overwhelmingly supported Amendment 4, they are focused on preventing returning citizens from registering and expunging from the voting rolls any who do succeed in registering.

In effect, they are seeking to impose the type of poll tax that was made unconstitutional when the Twenty-Fourth Amendment was passed. It is urgent that we prevent that from occurring. Indeed, the goal of Florida’s Amendment 4 was to restore voting privileges to former felons who had completed their sentences and were seeking to return and be integrated into society.

If we do not ensure and uphold these constitutional promises, we risk the great evils that arise from our neglect and apathy. “Democracy dies when there is no support for democracy, when people stop believing in it.” So we are advised by political scientist Hados Aron.

We need to carry these words to Americans everywhere.

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, March 2020, p. 3