

The Delray Democrat

Chomsky Was Right¹

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Shortly after Donald Trump's inauguration, Professor Noam Chomsky suggested that the Republican Party had become "the most dangerous organization in human history." He immediately acknowledged "it's an extremely outrageous statement" but added, "the question is whether it's true."

What makes the statement outrageous is that human history is littered with savage organizations that might seem infinitely more suitable candidates for the title of "most dangerous." What makes it true is that none of them — not the Nazis under Hitler or the Communists under Stalin or Mao, however odious and murderous — threatened to make vast stretches of the earth virtually uninhabitable by the end of this century. Donald Trump's Republican Party does.

There is simply no debate about the threat posed by climate change or the need to respond urgently. The overwhelming consensus among scientists who have been studying the issue for decades is that human activity is responsible for climate change and that the failure to act quickly and decisively will cause widespread destruction, disease, and death. Has humanity ever faced a more serious threat?

The ten hottest years ever recorded have occurred since 1998, and the five hottest were the last five years. Extreme weather events are occurring more frequently. Polar ice caps are melting at an alarming rate, sea levels are rising dramatically, and coastal communities are already threatened. Each new report issued by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reveals that the impact of climate change is even worse than the previous report had projected.

None of this is surprising to the fossil fuel industry. Indeed, internal reports from Exxon scientists going back to the late 1970s warned that the burning of fossil fuels was leading to climactic changes that would be catastrophic by 2030. Rather than address the threat, the industry responded by pouring billions of dollars into disinformation campaigns designed to create doubt about what was the clear scientific consensus.

Under an economic system that does not reward moral behavior, it was money well spent to protect the trillions of dollars of assets that lay under the earth and sea. By 2016, only half of Republicans believed climate change was a problem, and only one quarter believed human activity was responsible.

It became an act of political suicide for a Republican politician to even acknowledge the reality of climate change. Candidates in the 2016 Republican primary were either outright climate deniers

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, August 2020, p. 5.

or refused to address the issue. Donald Trump, infamously and absurdly, called it a “Chinese hoax.” And shamefully, the moderators of the 2016 debates between Trump and Hillary Clinton failed to ask a single question about climate change.

Since his election, Trump has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Accord, an act of barbarism that met with universal praise by the Republican leadership. He has sought to undermine reporting on climate change, muzzled government scientists, and taken every executive action possible to undermine federal efforts to limit the release of the pollutants causing climate change.

The only way to prevent the Hobbesian dystopia that is mere decades away is to complete Donald Trump’s destruction of the Republican Party as a brand. This goes beyond working to ensure he suffers an overwhelming, humiliating defeat in November, along with his minions, his enablers, and the cowards and hypocrites who allowed him to make a mockery of our institutions, our values, and our democracy.

It means that Democrats, Independents, and Republicans must “vote blue, all the way through” in November. We cannot address the existential threat of climate change while there remains any vestige of Trump’s Republican Party.