

The Delray Democrat

These Buttons Never Went Out of Fashion¹

Michael K. Cantwell

It's a testament to the depravity to which this country has succumbed since Donald Trump first announced his candidacy that George W. Bush and Dick Cheney are treated as elder statesmen and not war criminals.

Cheney was praised for sitting with his daughter, the only Republicans to attend a House ceremony marking the one-year anniversary of the storming of the Capitol and attempted coup on January 6, 2021. There was no mention of his suborning the deliberate lie behind America's illegal invasion of a country that had neither attacked nor posed a threat to the United States. And there was no mention of his support for the use of torture, again in violation of international humanitarian law.

Similarly, when George W. Bush recently bungled his condemnation of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, referring instead to the "wholly unjustified and brutal invasion of *Iraq*," his audience responded with genial, polite laughter. Forgotten were the 4,431 American soldiers who had died and the 31,994 who were wounded, many grievously, in that unnecessary and illegal war. Forgotten too were the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians who died and the millions more who were displaced. And that brings us to two of my favorite political buttons from the early Aughts.



The first button distinguished the sins of the president and vice-president (although both belonged in the dock in The Hague, along with Donald Rumsfeld, Condi Rice, and Colin Powell). The second is a riff on the salute gladiators gave to Caesar as they entered the arena to face their death: *Morituri Te Salutamus*, that is, "We Who Are About to Die Salute You."

A story goes with this button, which I had custom-made and began life as a poster I carried to one of the early anti-Iraq war marches in New York City. Having "little Latin and no Greek," but

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access to the internet, on the morning of the march I posted a query asking for the Latin word for “we curse.” Within minutes, someone from Cambridge University responded, “*Malediceremus.*”

It was not until recently that I learned the Latin meant “*Let us curse,*” not “*We curse,*” but as my cousin, David Kulick, pointed out that morning as I was putting the final touches on my homemade poster, “not one in 10,000 people will know what that means.”

I responded, “So I’ll tell them,” and I did . . . several times over, to a variety of fellow marchers and people watching from the sidewalks as we walked from mid-Manhattan down to Washington Square Park. As we neared the park, a bystander came out of the crowd and clapped me on the back, saying, “Latin scholars for peace!” I turned to David and said, “you see!” He didn’t miss a beat. “So I was wrong. It was 1 in 100,000.”

Republicans are no longer killing civilians in Iraq, but their refusal to support sensible gun legislation is killing Americans right here at home. No one is safe from the random gun violence engendered by the NRA and abetted by Republican lawmakers.

But that atrocity pales before the ecocide for which our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will rightly condemn them: Noam Chomsky nailed it — with Trump’s ascendance, the Republican Party has become “the most dangerous organization in human history.” Neither the Nazis under Hitler, the Communists under Stalin, nor Genghis Khan’s Mongols, however odious and murderous — possessed the power to destroy the planet. “We who are about to die curse you.”

Perhaps my favorite button was suggested by the elderly woman carrying a handwritten sign at the first anti– Iraq war rally I attended in Washington DC in October 2002. It was the day after Paul Wellstone died in a private plane accident that might not have been an accident and the sign read:



We dodged bullets in 2008 and 2020, but our time is running out. *The New York Times* observed in an editorial titled [Every Day Is Jan. 6 Now](#), published on January 1, 2022:

Over the past year, Republican lawmakers in 41 states have been trying to advance the goals of the Jan. 6 rioters — not by breaking laws but by making them. Hundreds of bills have been proposed and nearly three dozen laws have been passed that empower state legislatures to sabotage their own elections and overturn the will of their voters, according to a running tally by a nonpartisan consortium of pro-democracy organizations.

Unless we win by margins big enough to prevent Republican apparatchiks from stealing the next two elections, no one will need to ask, "Is It Fascism Yet?" It will be obvious, although no one will be able to say so publicly.

So, as my friend Molly Fitzmaurice pointed out with her own handwritten sign carried at the "Bans Off Our Bodies" March this past May 14 in Salisbury, Connecticut, civilization's only hope is to

