

The Delray Democrat

Inoculate Yourself Now Against Stockholm Syndrome¹

June S. Neal

I overheard three neighbors, all Democrats, react this way to Trump's recent flouting of the 14th Amendment and to his cruel treatment of immigrants: *maybe he is right*. After all, we can't have (thousands, millions, fill in whatever crazy number gets floated around) of illegals coming into the country. Or people giving birth here just to claim citizenship for their kids. Some "man on the street" TV interviews picked up similar sentiments. These people are showing signs of Stockholm Syndrome.

Stockholm Syndrome is a maladaptive psychological disorder. It's a way of coping with unbearable and seemingly insurmountable circumstances. It involves suppressing reality and viewing one's oppressors as friends or champions, or at least as their being on the "right" side.

You're more likely to be "infected" if you have no contact with people dealing with reality and facts. That's the musty, closed environment Trumpers have lived in since 2015. One of the most famous sufferers was Patty Hearst, the young heiress to the Hearst newspaper dynasty, kidnapped in 1974 by the Symbionese Liberation Army, who later became part of the group and participated in their armed bank robberies. She was caught and sentenced but later pardoned by President Bill Clinton, who believed she was coerced into participating in the robberies, although many analysts thought she suffered from Stockholm Syndrome.

People who voted for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz are vulnerable to infection. Now, living in a world of ineffable sadness and confusion, controlled by a stupid, immoral man and his gang of cowardly ass-kissers, they may feel hopeless. How to save democracy? Trump's fascists control all three branches of the federal government, and he successfully nominated 234 federal judges, including three for the US Supreme Court. He has the backing of a majority of Republican governors, as well as the billionaire CEOs of some of our biggest corporations, including Meta, X and Space X; it seems there's no way to right the ship.

Although the architecture of a democracy remains, it's sclerotic; our government can't be responsive to the American people since it's been arrogated by those determined to kill it in favor of a dictatorship. Trump's election was particularly stunning because he had already demonstrated his sociopathy during his first term in office and in the preceding and subsequent years. But here we are. What to do?

First, history is our friend. The French revolutionaries faced a corrupt monarchy and won. Dictators in nations over the world have been toppled. We may not see a way out now, but, as Bob Dylan said, almost, the times are always changin'. America saw the end of slavery and the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Women won the right to vote. It was the unarmed college students facing

¹ [The Delray Democrat](#), February 2025, page 2.

up to police with guns and batons that ended the war in Viet Nam. Richard Nixon was forced to resign when he discovered he didn't have Republican support on the Senate Watergate Committee. (Their fidelity to democracy made stars out of Democrat Sam Ervin and Republican Howard Baker, Chair and Ranking Member of the Committee.)

Next, now is the time to mobilize. There's much we can do. First, we must support the Democrats in Congress and in our state legislatures. Write and call them about the issues that concern you. They're only human and we need to let them know we're behind them in the frustrating job they face. Second, put pressure on the Republicans for every vote. They're aware of the calls and letters they receive. Right now, their fear of Trump overrides their doing what's right, but they all have egos, so we've got to remind them how history will record their actions. (Just think of Josh "Legs" Hawley running from the mob on January 6 or Rudy Giuliani's press conference in front of the Four Seasons Total Landscaping business.)

If you haven't done so, join an advocacy group for immigration, gun control, abortion, the environment or the integrity of our voting system— or whatever you're most passionate about. If there's a subject not being addressed, call a few friends or neighbors and start your own group.

You have tools. They include boycotts and strikes, letters to the editors, and attendance at government hearings and school board meetings. Donate to groups like the American Civil Liberties Union. Even a small amount will make you feel you are part of something that's doing important work.

If you're depressed, you're tired. If you can't get enough energy to head out for a meeting, use a buddy system to encourage one another to attend. Think of yourself as a soldier reporting for duty.

Even one meeting a month can make a difference. Of course, you can participate via Zoom meetings, but there's no energy tonic like in-person sessions with friends and neighbors.

Once a movement aimed at ending injustice has started, it can grow exponentially. And when that happens, things begin to change.

Above all, don't forget all the reasons you voted for the Harris-Walz ticket. The inhumanity of Trump's mass deportation program. Or the negative effect on workers if our government interferes with the autonomy of unions. Or how many women could die or have their lives changed forever when denied reproductive health care.

And how can we ignore Vladimir Putin's invasion of our voting process, the guy Trump called "a genius" for invading Ukraine? Will we allow the death of decades of successful public education by allowing a religious group to dictate the public-school curriculum?

Just a few months ago, the answers were "we can't and we won't." But hopelessness and lassitude are taking hold, and some are in danger of Stockholm Syndrome.

Don't give in. Think of what the colonists, the abolitionists, the women's rights' groups and others achieved. And although these groups had extraordinary leaders, they were made up of ordinary people who found the strength to stick their necks out, to become soldiers for justice and human rights. That's the task before us now and the vaccine to fend off Stockholm Syndrome.

