

REMAKING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY: Kick-Starting the Public Powers and Power-Leverage of Popular Assemblies¹

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If we believe that the individual struggle for life may widen into a struggle for the lives of all, surely the demand of an individual for decency and comfort, for a chance to work and obtain the fullness of life, may be widened until it gradually embraces all the members of the community, and rises into a sense of the common weal. —Jane Addams²

The Takedown of American Democracy

The depraved politics of Republican authoritarians³ in our era have perverted America's political culture and institutions and deserted the commonweal.⁴ Given this existential assault on the republic, professional community organizers have a unique obligation:

. . . in 'professing' organizing, we are called to declare ourselves worthy of the *privilege* and *honor* of faithful allegiance to a higher purpose, wholeheartedly accepting its lifetime obligations. But what purpose. . . ? The purpose for organizers in our tradition is that, regardless of our optimism or pessimism at any moment, we profess faithful allegiance to *the individual and collective empowerment of the powerless*. We believe it to be the most promising strategic vision to strengthen both democratic institutions and the moral-spiritual values that fully humanize those institutions.⁵

Therefore, given the present circumstances, our mission embraces strengthening American democracy by organizing to institutionally empower⁶ the demos,⁷ to potentiate a confirmed countermeasure⁸ to authoritarianism, one required for decades⁹ but thought by many of us to be unnecessary or impossible.

Authoritarianism nowadays is operating notoriously as a feature of the Republican-dominated state legislatures and governors, the Republican caucus in Congress,¹⁰ and the right-wing agenda of the SCOTUS¹¹—all of them maneuvering to fleece the party's working-class base.¹² Even so, the party is now steered from the rear¹³ by the Trumpist¹⁴ White grievance,¹⁵ nativism,¹⁶ and Great Replacement¹⁷ rhetoric of the base,¹⁸ which has morphed into the violence-prone¹⁹ MAGA movement, a runaway populist train of reactionary²⁰ nationalism,²¹ inspired by Trump with the imprimatur of the brotherhood²² of billionaires,²³ rolling toward fascist

oligarchy.²⁴ The movement is relentlessly driven by the *non-WASP*²⁵ population's growing size and assertiveness,²⁶ politically, economically, culturally and socially, ensuring the authoritarians' popularity.

Magnifying our peril, the consciousness of the public, diverted from political affairs by the pandemic,²⁷ may cause the end of our democracy²⁸ to pass undefended by most of the electorate.

Internet media and the mainstream press have been awash with predictions that, without a countervailing initiative, the institutions of American democracy will be moribund by the end of the 2024 presidential election. But neither the Democratic Party,²⁹ nor the Congress, nor the President, nor the SCOTUS, nor corporate-America³⁰ has demonstrated the wherewithal or the desire to put the brakes on this runaway train.³¹ Given that its planned route is almost entirely via Republican-controlled state legislatures (since Congress has failed to pass major electoral reform legislation,³² which has been blocked by Republican filibustering), the death of American democracy looms ahead.³³

But even if legislation had been passed in time to slow down or stop the Republican efforts at electoral suppression and subversion, there is no reason to think the SCOTUS would have upheld those reforms when challenged by right-wing forces.³⁴ The likely effect of such legislation, had it passed, would have been to delay but not permanently derail the U.S. from becoming a fascist oligarchy. Although it may sound far-fetched today, it has the potential to become our inescapable future given the forces already in play, especially our "pernicious polarization" following a ". . . demographic shift that poses a threat to the white population that has historically been the dominant group in all areas of power, allowing political leaders to exploit insecurities surrounding their loss of status."³⁵

The Challenge of Social Salvation

We have had a multi-decade demonstration of the futility of political and policy strategies³⁶ to reverse the historic U.S. economic inequality³⁷ and stop the morally unhinged use of the political power it has generated.³⁸ The corruption of the Republican party, the conservative take-over of the SCOTUS, the reactionary villainy of state legislatures, and the conservative control of traditional and Internet media are not incidental developments but the fulfillment of the strategic objectives of the billionaire brotherhood.³⁹ Presumably, the electoral crisis is their win-or-die strategy to transform the nation into the crown of a libertarian oligarchic empire.⁴⁰

Given their attacks on our foundational democratic institutions—think public education,⁴¹ criminal and civil justice,⁴² electoral districting and administration,⁴³ Congressional and state law-making,⁴⁴ public health,⁴⁵ and media monopolization⁴⁶—now waged audaciously on their behalf by the reactionary MAGA-movement’s threats and intimidation tactics,⁴⁷ many of these institutions no longer reveal any likelihood of self-correction, which would seem to require an empowering remedy for the “mass discoordination”⁴⁸ of the demos and a reversal of the country’s economic inequality.

Lacking a plausible alternative,⁴⁹ we have no better hope to revive our democracy and see it thrive than by deepening direct political participation. As K. Sabeel Rahman has noted, “. . . the United States has a civic and political infrastructure that is not oriented towards the *building of capacities for shared self-rule . . .*”⁵⁰ And Benjamin Barber, writing in *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, has observed:

. . . America still has no nationwide system of local civic participation. For this reason, the first and most important reform in a strong democratic platform must be the introduction of a national system of *neighborhood assemblies . . .* in every district in America.⁵¹

This is not a new idea. The focal point of Thomas Jefferson’s visionary corrective for the new republic was his proposal to subdivide the counties into small, independent governments like the New England towns. He envisioned town-like “little republics,” direct democracies that would afford opportunities for every citizen to act *in* government.⁵² Several decades later, Wendell Phillips, an abolitionist, stated what perhaps endures as the most cogent reason to root democracy in directly democratic neighborhood assemblies:

Trust the people—the wise and the ignorant, the good and the bad—with the gravest of questions, and in the end you educate the race. At the same time, you secure, not perfect institutions, not necessarily good ones, but the best possible while human nature is the basis and the only material to build with.⁵³

In other words, to restore commitment to the commonweal, to overcome the threats, will take millions of us working together to build face-to-face organizations of self-governance. Because that’s the only way we can

rebuild trust in one another⁵⁴ and take mutually beneficial political action, without which we will have neither commonweal nor democracy.⁵⁵

Empowering that participation would anchor politics in the verity that there is no better judge of what’s good for the demos than the demos itself; that there is no greater political satisfaction than knowing that what we have, we have chosen for ourselves. That strategic outcome calls for vesting public powers⁵⁶ and power-leverage in the demos, which are the most promising means to demolish the ideology of fascist oligarchy and bring down the reign of the billionaires.

Perhaps the first step to remake our failing democracy by participatory self-governance is to acknowledge that it will not happen through voluntary relinquishment of power or multiple grassroots campaigns on a plethora of worthy issues. History teaches it will only come from the initiative and sacrifice of millions who combine in a multi-decade, unified struggle⁵⁷ to secure the unambiguous triumph of democracy. No transformative American movement for the commonweal was ever built on voluntarily devolved power or in the absence of a widely shared strategic moral vision⁵⁸—not the American revolution, not the anti-slavery movement, not the labor movement, not the populist movement, not the women’s suffrage movement, not the civil rights movement, none of them.

The requisite strategic moral vision necessarily describes a painful path to national salvation, a decades-long struggle against implacable opposition,⁵⁹ to update the structure of American democracy, driven by witnessing either its ongoing decline, a guerrilla-terrorism version of civil war, or much worse.⁶⁰ But it’s also true, “Most countries that were able to avoid a second civil war shared an ability to strengthen the quality of their governance. They doubled down on democracy and moved up the polity scale.”⁶¹

As the takedown of our democracy moves toward the point of no return,⁶² the mission before us is unmistakable, should we decide to accept it: Remake our democracy. Start at the grassroots. Launch the struggle for *direct* citizen control of representative government and the major corporations. Begin the groundwork to end the polarization⁶³ and dethrone the billionaire oligarchs who have raised themselves up on the ruin of the country. Because that’s the least of what it will take to restore the U.S. as a democracy for the commonweal.

The Field of Action

The implied organizing strategy calls for challenging every American to reject the role of consumer cipher and instead to take on the responsibility of *citizenhood*⁶⁴ by participating directly in the institutionalized wielding of the public powers.

Citizens ought not to be advisors, critics, and petitioners but legally authorized discussants, deciders, and actors, because every one of us has an irreplaceable part to play. No one can represent our demands for relief from poverty, oppression, and injustice. No representative can

stand in for our sacrifice and risk-taking to uphold our democracy from love of God, family, community, and nation. And representatives cannot replace our individual will to self-governing freedom, given that, “Representation is incompatible with freedom because it delegates and thus alienates political will at the cost of genuine self-government.”⁶⁵

The urban city stands out as the venue in which to institutionalize direct decision-making in governance as a right of citizenship. It governs closest to the demos, and it is the most politically accessible government with significant public powers, ground-zero of the nation’s poverty, oppression, and injustice, the nerve center of capitalist wealth, and the heartbeat of the global economy. As the urban municipality evolves into the “global city,” scholars of public administration tell us these cities will increasingly dominate information, communication, and manufacturing technologies,⁶⁶ profit-centers that enrich the oligarchs and empower their corruption of democratic institutions.⁶⁷

The directly democratic popular assembly, patterned on the “open-town” governments of New England, stands alone as the most ideal organizing model to remake U.S. democracy radically. This home-grown form of local government can come to life in our cities as the lower tier of two-tier⁶⁸ municipal governance. Imagine the city no longer governed by a handful of elected representatives, exclusively in control of all the public powers and claiming to represent constituencies of tens or even hundreds of thousands,⁶⁹ but that some of those powers have become shared with and accountable to popular assemblies, *neighborhood governments*. The assemblies would have a partnership role in decisions about public safety, public health, public utilities, zoning, and much more.

One of the lessons of the four-century success of the popular assemblies in New England is that “ordinary” citizens can learn the deliberation and decision-making of self-governance, responsibly exercising the public powers. The history of open-town meetings also confirms that self-governance has not been voluntarily devolved by higher authorities; it has resulted from the initiative and participation of citizens prepared to claim their right to it and administer it responsibly.⁷⁰

Doubts about this vision of directly democratic exercise of public powers by neighborhood popular assemblies are numerous and substantial, several of which we will consider below. But mostly they do not reflect distrust of the popular assembly per se or its adoption in a two-tier system of government, as in New England, where the broadly popular open towns operate as a lower tier of government within counties.⁷¹

Moreover, most moderates, liberals, and progressives favor granting some of the public powers directly to the people at large. In fact, the last three-quarters of a century of community and faith-based organizing has been focused on building “people power,” reflecting an unarticulated Jeffersonianism, while resolutely disallowing the necessity or possibility of remaking our political

and economic institutions.⁷²

The Lineage of a Strategic Moral Vision

Does a uniquely American form of local government created centuries ago make sense as a model for directly democratic popular assemblies nowadays, as urban neighborhood governments, to revivify American democracy? We may begin to answer that question by considering the early open-town meetings in New England, which affords insight into their longevity, popularity, and worldwide acceptance as the truest expression of the democratic ideal.⁷³

Looking back to those early years, we can see members of a community working together in what appears to be an unremarkable activity. The settlers are constructing a modest building. It could be a place to satisfy a practical need, like the storage of communal tools. But we learn that throughout their lives it will be their church, where they meet to consider how they are governed by God; and it will be their civic meetinghouse, where they consider how to govern themselves, according to what they believe God requires of them.

Most of the early settlers were Puritans who shared strong moral and spiritual convictions. Persecuted in England for their beliefs,⁷⁴ they emigrated to America beginning in the early 1600s. The settlers were biased against hierarchical authority and favored local lay control; thus they adopted the “congregational” system of church governance. As Alexis de Tocqueville saw it, however, “Puritanism was not merely a religious doctrine, but it corresponded in many points with the most absolute democratic and republican theories.”⁷⁵

The New England towns were founded as self-ruling polities for the sake of the commonweal, according to a moral-spiritual system that would ensure dedication to the commonweal. Their history is a sharp contrast to our own society’s two-track degeneration of morality and politics—that is, our narcissistic devotion to amoral personal autonomy and self-entitlement,⁷⁶ and the corruption of “representative” political institutions, many of which have lost their moral and ethical footing and betrayed the commonweal.⁷⁷

When thinking about the effects of contemporary secularism,⁷⁸ it may be helpful to understand the moral spirituality of the town citizens, since its influence on their self-governance has been fundamental to the success of their assemblies, even though its narrow religiosity had sharply diminished by the eighteenth century.

The early immigrant population of New England had fled from what they regarded as a morally corrupt society, and they possessed a moral vision of achieving a good life. Their ethos embodied a commitment to “civic godliness,” which improved the condition of the poor and increased literacy.⁷⁹

The Puritan legacy in New England includes accountability of officeholders, recognition of the rights of the individual, and the sovereignty of the people, which influenced both civil and religious institutions.⁸⁰ But, of all the attributes of the towns, their “freedom” of self-

governance continues to be the most inspiring. Unlike rule by representatives, it demands face-to-face meetings of the citizens. Regardless of comity or conflict in their interaction, the town meeting was not shaped for the sake of comfortable or convenient participation in civic affairs but for self-rule, perhaps because they intuitively understood:

Men and women who are not directly responsible through common deliberation, common decision, and common action for the policies that determine their common lives are not really free at all, however much they may enjoy security, private rights, and freedom from interference.”⁸¹

Ralph Waldo Emerson described the effect of their freedom: “In every winding road, in every stone fence, in the smokes of the poorhouse chimney, in the clock on the church, they read their own power, and consider the wisdom and error of their judgments.”⁸²

The history of the open-town assemblies shows us how to actualize our freedom. The mutual moral commitments of the citizens, the basis of their trust of one another, nurtured the political will needed to free the colonies from the oppression of the British Empire and, eventually, to establish the government of the United States. “Town meeting fueled the spark that ultimately led to the American Revolution, and was lauded and studied for more than a century to follow.”⁸³

The Admirers & Critics of Open-Town Governance

The nineteenth century observers of the popular assemblies, most notably de Tocqueville⁸⁴ and James Bryce,⁸⁵ were convinced that the open-town meetings were both an ideal form of self-governance and the most perfected “schools of democracy.”⁸⁶

But among modern scholars, there are unabashed critics of the towns. My reading of their analyses raises questions about their relevance to present-day community organizing that looks to the New England town as a model for shared city governance.

Perhaps the best explanation for the end of the praise of open-town government, which was replaced by criticism in the Progressive era, is American industrialization and the shift of the population from rural-agrarian to urban-industrial. Local, direct democracy in assemblies came to be seen as irrelevant to metropolitan governance which, given the size of its constituencies, was deemed necessarily representative. It required the development of new forms of direct democracy, such as the initiative, referendum, and recall.

While the critics mostly do not dispute the date-and-event history of the towns, some fault them as less than true democracies, because majority rule was not always the rule at the outset; women, non-landowners, and non-church members were not enfranchised; and indigenous neighbors were not accepted as equals.⁸⁷ But does a government exist anywhere, regardless of how democratic and inclusive its present form, that would continue to be called a democracy if judged by its beginnings?⁸⁸ The

point is, the open New England towns evolved over the centuries and now they are at least as inclusive as any other form of government in the United States.⁸⁹

Some critics fault the founders of the towns because they were not ideologically dedicated to creating an ideal form of democracy. Such criticism betokens academyopia. Only in the ivory tower does one imply that how actions were intellectually conceived, regardless of their evolved actual effects, somehow characterizes their contemporary rightfulness. Presumably, the early settlers were living within the cultural values of their times, struggling to find the least burdensome, most efficient self-governance to ensure their survival and the success of their communities—which turned out to be open-town direct democracy.

Although the view of the open towns in both the popular imagination and academic literature has gained and lost approbation over the centuries, the consensus of current opinion holds that the assemblies survive as ideal expressions of democracy in action.

The Nitty-Gritty of Doubt

The pivotal question about directly democratic popular assemblies as the lower tier of urban municipal government is whether their adaptation would be successful. We may be inspired by the history of these assemblies in New England, but doubts about their suitability and popular support in our crisis of democracy may leave us far from motivated to champion a movement that would rely on them to vest public powers in the demos. This section is an effort to address some of those doubts, beginning with one of the most recently raised.

Wouldn't an urban popular assembly with public powers, a neighborhood government, be vulnerable to hostile take-overs?

Would the New England-style popular assembly be vulnerable to malevolent take-overs by anti-democratic forces, such as right-wing Republicans intent on electoral subversion and suppression? This concern may be assuaged by familiarity with the inherent strengths of the towns' unique form of government.

Open-town leaders do not make attractive targets for corruption. One of the hallmarks of the towns has been the *advisory* role of their elected leaders, the selectmen (which now includes women). Adapted to urban governance, the selectmen (perhaps renamed) would call regular and special meetings, propose laws and policies, and supervise a range of neighborhood government activities. But while they might plan programs and services and the appropriations to pay for them, those plans would not have the force of law until the citizens “signify their satisfaction” in an open town meeting. Thus, in the history of this model, there is no evidence in the town records of any serious encroachment by selectmen on the prerogatives of the town meetings.

There is no history of corruption of a New England

open-town government. To corrupt the polity, it would be necessary to corrupt most of the citizenry, since every citizen is both a direct producer and consumer of town ordinances, administrative policies, and services, in addition to acting directly on rare occasions to alter the structure of the government itself (e.g., adding finance committees, town managers, and more meeting days). Jefferson believed that given town self-rule, “. . . every man in the state will let his heart be torn out of his body sooner than let his power be wrested from him by a Caesar or Bonaparte.”⁹⁰

Another disincentive for hostile take-overs would be the costs and difficulties versus the prospective benefits. Taking over a state government or urban municipality holds out the promise of commandeering significant powers and resources, and the criminal justice system in this country makes it possible to avoid legal consequences for corrupting public officials.⁹¹ But any one neighborhood government would not possess such attractive powers and resources, and its basic structure and culture would make it invulnerable to corruption as an organization.

Can we recreate New England open-town governments in American cities?

If we establish directly democratic popular assemblies as neighborhood governments in urban areas, undoubtedly they will look and feel very different than the towns in New England. But some of the best features of direct democracy in the towns would follow their adaptation to urban governance, including repudiation of special interests, nonpartisan and non-ideological politics, incorruptibility of elected officials, and a combination of efficiency, equality, and accountability in public administration.

Can neighborhood governments be efficient and effective elements of urban city governance?

Public administration scholars claim that neighborhood governments cannot play a useful role in the governance of urban cities. They regard them as impractical, primarily because they are thought to work only with small constituencies,⁹² and because the demands on urban government arise across district-wide and metropolitan political and economic boundaries.

Notwithstanding these negative views, the potential of urban assemblies to deepen democratic participation has become increasingly attractive on the street, as indicated by the “right to the city,” “new municipalism,” and “sortition” movements,⁹³ and the popular efforts to establish facsimiles of such assemblies in several major cities.⁹⁴

The question of the efficiency and effectiveness of neighborhood government warrants serious investigation. My conclusion is that the academic perspective is mistaken because it fails to consider “vill economics”⁹⁵

and the histories of the U.S. municipal reform and public choice movements⁹⁶ in the context of two-tier governance.

What would be the minimum and maximum size of the citizenry of a neighborhood government in a large city, like Los Angeles, and would those numbers be practicable?

Popular assemblies with smaller populations have obvious advantages. Ideally, they would have under a thousand voting members; but then the total number of assemblies would needlessly divide urban populations that have mutual concerns, artificially inhibiting common action. However, directly democratic assemblies with constituencies of 10,000 are practicable.⁹⁷ In fact, towns in Massachusetts with fewer than 6,000 residents *must* adopt the directly democratic open-town form of government.⁹⁸

In a city like Los Angeles, theoretically we could have more than 400 popular assemblies to encompass the municipal population of just under four million (which is now divided into 15 council districts of about 250-300,000 each), although certainly not every neighborhood would be motivated to form its own government. In any event, at first blush the possibility of hundreds of neighborhood governments in one city sounds preposterous.⁹⁹

When considered at length, that reaction is unsurprising. The early kings and their ministers may have experienced it when facing the demands of the nobles for a larger role in governance; the kings and nobles may have experienced it when facing the demands of legislatures; and now legislators and their patrons may experience it when facing the demands of the demos. In such circumstances, there is the likelihood of a defensive reaction to the devolution of power that will deepen democracy. Typically, in that response, rationalizations of elite-concentration of public powers—justified by “divine right,” “noblesse oblige,” “meritocracy,” “technocracy,” etc. by those in power—become injected into the mainstream culture, so that the fear of radical democratization ironically extends even to the public, which itself has been deprived of any meaningful role in the exercise of the public powers.

The question of whether any number of popular assemblies in an urban city is ideal cannot credibly be answered in the abstract, and undoubtedly not by public administration theorists and practitioners of municipal government. Too often, wittingly or unwittingly, they reflect powerful covert interests served by morally pliant elected officials. Although they are professionals with ethical associations and standards, they nonetheless often remain inert if not complicit in the corruption of urban municipal government,¹⁰⁰ particularly the endemic “soft” variety.¹⁰¹

The question can justly be put only to the residents in the diversity of historical, cultural, racial, and ethnic

neighborhoods, especially those that are middle- to low-income and working-class. They have the potential of citizenship to deliberate and decide whether they want to establish a popular assembly with public powers, one that would operate according to pre-defined citywide ordinances and procedures, based on the New England model of open-town government, and then only after a public education campaign carried out by nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations.

How would the boundaries of neighborhood government jurisdictions to be determined?

Boundaries would be set within the councilmanic districts of the city. They would not be set by geometric design, which would be arbitrary in relation to history, culture, race, and ethnicity, and fixed landmarks, such as rivers, mountains, and freeways. The criteria employed to establish the boundaries should be approved by the citizenry. The traditional method of forming governmental entities seems to be the most appropriate and popular; that is, by petition and election of a self-defined, contiguous citizenry, carried out by an officially recognized and bonded organizing committee of volunteer residents of the proposed jurisdiction.¹⁰²

Limitations established by ordinance through initiative would probably include upper and lower population numbers of proposed jurisdictions, and restrictions against gerrymandering, to prevent manipulated racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, or partisan dominance (which, if challenged, could be resolved by a judge of the Superior Court). Some neighborhoods might embody smaller populations, but probably no less than a thousand,¹⁰³ while others might come closer to ten thousand.

Is it possible to form neighborhood governments in urban areas where identifiable neighborhoods do not exist, where it seems there is little or no connection or commonality among by the residents?

The absence of face-to-face relationships among neighbors is not an insurmountable obstacle to forming a neighborhood government. Experienced base-building organizers know how to initiate community where none exists, while simultaneously developing organization and the capacity for mobilization. This knowledge can, in turn, be taught to active citizens.

Most of the residents who answered doorknocking during my first organizing drive in a Compton (CA) neighborhood didn't know the names of their nearest neighbors. But their lack of community was soon remedied, because one of the first tasks of turf-based organizing is to build or rebuild community, convening residents to begin relationships based on their shared history of punishing conditions and their hopes for a better future.

During the organizing drive, the neighbors began to talk informally among themselves and in meetings of

their organizing committee about the injuries and injustices they were suffering because of problems in the neighborhood. Within a couple of months, by the founding meeting of their newly formed neighborhood organization, which drew about 200 residents from an area with a population of about 1200, they were already beginning to congeal as a community.

The full-fledged community that emerged in that neighborhood coalesced during a successful campaign to reclaim their local park from gangs. They repaired and refurbished the park by successfully holding the municipality accountable to do its part and by their own self-help initiatives. The park, which had been abandoned by the residents, quickly became used as a "community center" for both young people and adults, who gathered almost every evening for pick-up sports, checkers and chess, and just schmoozing.

Wouldn't wealthy neighborhoods secede in effect from the city, leaving the poorer ones to fend for themselves?

This concern may reflect a misconception that governments must be either centralized or decentralized. So one may mistakenly believe that neighborhood governments would be the only means of municipal governance. But they would be part of a web of city, county, state, and federal governments. It would be impossible for wealthier neighborhoods to secede with their resources (tax-base) from the authority of the larger jurisdictions, especially from their taxing, regulatory, and judicial authority. Where distribution of resources for ensuring equity is threatened, state and federal programs, regulatory legislation, and enforcement activities would continue to have a mitigating effect.¹⁰⁴

In the present political-economy of many urban cities, the relationship of wealthy and impoverished districts does not reflect equitable appropriations for city services to low-income areas but tax-exploitation of the poor.¹⁰⁵ Under these circumstances, low-income and working-class residents would have much to gain from limited grants of public powers, acquiring the legal means to manage their own development and resource-claims, without the handicap of neglect and exploitation by much more powerful players.¹⁰⁶

Why should anyone believe that usually apathetic residents would participate in the deliberations and decision-making of neighborhood governments?

We call people "apathetic" when we don't understand their experience and feelings. But it doesn't take much political insight to know that citizens' consistent experience of powerlessness in the decisions of elected representatives leads to their belief in the futility of political participation. Attendance at city council meetings, school board meetings, advisory commissions and neighborhood councils serves to reinforce that conviction.¹⁰⁷ Barber points out: "They are apathetic because

they are powerless, not powerless because they are apathetic. There is no evidence to suggest that once empowered, a people will refuse to participate.”¹⁰⁸

De Tocqueville saw that “. . . the most powerful, and perhaps the only, means of interesting men [and, of course, women] in the welfare of their country . . . is to make them partakers in the Government.”¹⁰⁹ The meeting of a popular assembly with public powers, where every citizen’s will would be officially empowered, presents the possibility of a very different kind of political experience, especially when the assembly’s agenda is directly responsive to the will of the citizenry. Then their wielding of power for the commonwealth warrants their active participation and judgment.

What could motivate the active participation of neighborhood residents? Mutual concerns might prompt their assembly, allied with others, to hold higher government officials accountable; to ensure the safety, security, physical condition, and esthetic character of their neighborhood;¹¹⁰ to take advantage of needed but otherwise unavailable programs and services; and to demand a role in setting the taxes and fees they pay.¹¹¹

Desirable programs and services could include: a low-cost option to install solar panels;¹¹² a low-cost walk-in, neighborhood medical clinic, staffed by a nurse-practitioner or physician’s assistant, to do initial diagnosis and treatment of minor ailments, referral to higher levels of health care, and on-site health education;¹¹³ a low-cost Internet connection and cable-TV service;¹¹⁴ a neighborhood-run public safety program, based on local recruiting and supervising of public safety officers (to deal with domestic disputes, mental health referrals, traffic control, etc.);¹¹⁵ and a low-cost neighborhood mediation service (to resolve disputes between neighbors and between them and various organizations).¹¹⁶

What level of meeting turnout would be needed to establish the “legitimacy” of the popular assemblies?

Is “popular assembly” a sham if only a relatively small number of citizens attend most meetings of the assembly? That’s often the view of academic critics who suggest that a less-than-ideal percentage of residents attending assembly meetings indicates something less than their legitimacy as *popular* assemblies.

But, then, what do they make of the meetings of corporation stockholders? They too vote directly and have the power to change the leadership and direction of the corporation, yet we rarely see more than a handful of shareholders at annual meetings. For them, the question of whether to attend is answered by the items on the agenda, whether they are of sufficient relevance and consequence, and whether there is a likelihood of preferential or damaging decisions. No one suggests that the failure of stockholders to attend the meetings makes those meetings a sham or that the stockholders can’t justify their share of ownership in the corporation.

The history of open-town government, like all organizations that affect the lives of their members and

constituents, confirms that attendance at their meetings goes up and down depending on controversial agenda items that may enhance or threaten the commonwealth. Which may explain why most New England open-town meetings do not have a quorum requirement.¹¹⁷

How can a popular assembly of 10,000 work administratively in practice?

Modern New England open-towns rely on full-time managers, selectmen, and a variety of committees, plus specialist staff responsible for roads, schools, tax collection, planning, etc. Managers, selectmen, and finance committees were not present in the early towns. But they were inevitable innovations because, as already noted, the citizens act as both the producers and consumers of their town’s laws, administration, and practices. If their government becomes onerous, incompetent, oppressive, etc., they have a direct stake and the political wherewithal to cure the defect. The popular assembly thus has the inherent potential of structural self-correction, which cannot be said about representative government.

Urban neighborhood governments would also form committees to study and recommend actions by their assemblies; they too would hire professional managers to supervise their day-to-day operations; and undoubtedly, they would make structural self-corrections in response to changing conditions. For instance, some might decide to allow limited use of the “Australian ballot,”¹¹⁸—that is, voting without attending the meeting of the assembly.

But how is it possible for 10,000 citizens to meet as a “popular assembly”?

We can have a popular assembly with several thousand in attendance if we employ available technology. Imagine that the registered citizens of a neighborhood government have downloaded the app for citizen participation; that they are “warned” of an upcoming assembly meeting, the agenda items set by the selectmen, and the deadline for submitting comments about the agenda items;¹¹⁹ that the relevant committees have reviewed the comments and prepared a summary of the pros and cons (like sample-ballot booklets) to be presented on a large screen as well as on individual smart-phones during the actual meeting (held in a high school or college auditorium, etc.); and that citizens have the option to vote within a set timeframe using their app.¹²⁰

Employing digital technology to manage neighborhood government meetings of outsized assemblies does not change one vital aspect of traditional town-meeting government: Neither the selectmen, nor the committee leaders and members, nor a full-time manager (if one is hired), nor anyone else has the power to implement any proposed ordinance, budget, or policy until it is approved by the full assembly, and every citizen over the age of 18 may vote on such proposals.¹²¹

But doesn't the technologizing of the assembly preclude actual deliberation, civic education, and meaningful relationship-building?

It may seem that the technologizing of the popular assembly means that all the human interaction and relationship-building of the open-town model will be lost, leaving nothing more than a formal process with little or no face-to-face deliberation or shared civic education. But consider: much of the deliberation regarding upcoming business in the meeting, like that of the open town itself, would take place beforehand—across back fences, in homes, carwash waiting areas, market check-out lines, post office queues, parks, libraries, places of employment (like schools, hospitals, health clubs, businesses, etc.), barber shops and beauty salons, and of course, after worship services and other activities at synagogues, churches, and mosques—which may be why some critics of town meetings have mistakenly claimed that the meetings amount to little more than rubber stamps.

Dedicated, secure, online neighborhood chat rooms could also be created, giving hundreds of citizens the opportunity to deliberate about specific issues simultaneously and then become active neighbors offline.¹²²

If all the citizens of an urban neighborhood government were to receive the meeting “warning” on their cell phones, which showed decisions pending that could materially affect their lives, many would talk about them with relatives, friends, and neighbors who would also be affected. And we have reason to think that many residents would attend those assembly meetings with their relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Other organizations that serve the neighborhood would also become settings for conversations about the upcoming assembly agenda, just as they are now regarding items of concern on the agendas of city council meetings when occasionally publicized. If prepared to act, their objective would not be to pressure or logically convince a handful of council members to support their position, but instead to organize educational campaigns to influence most of the neighborhood's citizens.

All this activity would be likely to produce much more face-to-face interaction, discussion, and deliberation regarding the agenda items before the voting on them than is the case for the agenda items of typical city council meetings.

But isn't it true that without face-to-face deliberation in the meetings of the assembly, neighborhood government would be little more than representative in fact?

Citizens acting in their neighborhood government would experience the freedom of self-governance by virtue of personally exercising the power to approve or reject the actions of their government. Still, it may be argued that by removing the deliberative heart of the town meeting—recall the town citizens talking face-to-face in their meetinghouse—what remains is only a marginal

improvement to the representative system. But that claim ignores two factors:

First, there is no assurance that when most voters support a particular issue or candidate in a representative system, their vote will influence a particular policy-outcome. In the U.S., especially in urban cities with large electoral constituencies, voting and government policy have at best become only distantly related.¹²³ Then, too, one's actual policy preferences may never appear on the ballot. For example, most Americans want much more rigorous gun-control laws and much higher taxes on the wealthy, neither of which appear on any ballot. But in a directly democratic popular assembly, the agenda is set by the people themselves and their will determines the law-making, policies, and practices of their government.

Second, the absence of traditional open-town deliberations does not necessarily mean the absence of deliberation, only the necessity to devise new ways to enable it. For example, it's possible to increase the numbers, mandates, and roles of committees, and add requirements for participation in their deliberations by citizens who submit agenda items. Procedures may be adopted to ensure that major issues do not appear on the assembly agenda until they have been reviewed by the appropriate committee and that pro and con views have been fully considered for presentation to the assembly. Housemeetings, inviting deliberation, may be encouraged by designating them priority sources of assembly agenda items. Break-out sessions that precede assembly meetings may be used. If 500 people were projected to be in attendance, the first two hours of a three-hour assembly meeting could be devoted to break-out meetings of ten groups of 50, each talking out their views of their agenda item to be presented to the full assembly. Given the ubiquitous presence of cell phones, we can expect that as proposed agenda items and summaries of the discussions of them are sent to every member of the assembly, conversations about them would ensue all over the neighborhood.

The citywide municipality in a two-tier structure would continue to manage economic spillovers, coordinate overall development, and provide area-wide and vertically integrated services (e.g., water purification, trash collection, rapid transit, detention centers, and costly police laboratory and training facilities). Neighborhood governments would expand influence on and ownership of city policy, increase and improve needed neighborhood programs and services, serve as an institutional mechanism to confront municipal corruption, and potentially emerge as a powerful means of holding higher levels of government accountable. Surprisingly, upon closer consideration, they might also play a useful role in addressing climate change.¹²⁴

Doesn't everything depend on the culture of the population, both in creating urban assemblies and in their success as the “anchors” of American democracy?

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of establishing

urban popular assemblies as neighborhood governments would be cultural. How could we ensure their nonpartisan and non-ideological character, and their commitment to the commonweal, which would be largely unfamiliar to the current generation of urban Americans? How could people come to appreciate that, at least in the popular assembly, they would no longer be the potential victims of elected officials representing special interests but instead the official decision-makers themselves, empowered directly to will action that addresses their mutual concerns? How could they be sure that the initiatives or other legal strategies to establish such assemblies would respect their values?

These questions challenge us to begin conceptualizing the necessary groundwork to create neighborhood governments. In every city, that outcome would require a founding organizing committee, a group of trustees for interim fundraising, expertise in government law and public administration, and a canvass-organizing campaign of grassroots education and popular support. And all these, including the participants in their development and implementation, would have to be committed to creating the culture needed to sustain the movement and ensure its eventual success.

The heart of the cultural challenge would be the call for *citizenhood*, learning to see ourselves acting together as responsible citizens of a community, committed to moderating the inevitable conflict between our own will and the will of others, and prepared to negotiate and live with compromise civilly if not graciously. It would require talking with one another, not for the sake of achieving unity or a voting-majority but simply to uncover mutuality in common action.¹²⁵ That would require empathetically becoming attached to one another despite our conflicts, bound together in pursuit of our commonweal, signifying that citizenship is “. . . the moral identity par excellence. For it is as citizen that the individual confronts the Other and adjusts his [or her] own life plans to the dictates of a shared world.”¹²⁶ It’s a civics morality lesson that would need to be repeated regularly to ensure that from the outset it would merge into the cultural wallpaper of the movement, becoming a universal expectation.

Why should we think such an extraordinary transformation is possible? From the history of the New England towns, from the knowledge of practitioners engaged in community and national development,¹²⁷ and from our faith-based community organizing, we have reason to believe that the moral-spirituality of most Americans’ faith will strengthen them to remake American democracy. We have many decades of organizing experience during which disillusioned members of alienated groups, virtually all more or less believers in the *morals and values* promulgated by the three Abrahamic faith traditions,¹²⁸ talked, decided, and acted together to build organizations for their commonweal.

While the task is daunting, it is familiar to professional base-building community organizers, those of us who have been building organizations with nonpartisan,

non-ideological culture, dedicated to a moral vision of power-building for the sake of the commonweal. Although the results of our work of the last half-century may be disappointing in some respects when compared to what has been achieved by the reactionary right, the *culture* of our organizations should be a source of pride to their members, leaders, and organizers.

The culture of new popular assemblies should not be expected to emerge full-blown at the end of a lengthy process but instead to come to fruition hour-by-hour, day-by-day, over years and decades.

When all is said and done, why should anyone believe that the citizens of neighborhood governments will have any leverage on city, county, state, and national governments, or large corporations?

The usefulness of urban popular assemblies with public powers may seem doubtful if one believes they will never have power-leverage; that in high-stakes conflict, neighborhood governments, even with public powers, even hundreds of them allied on an issue, will not have any leverage on higher levels of government or large corporations.

This imagined limitation may begin to be disabused by knowing more about the formation and the potential of such governments when acting together with common purpose. Their acquisition of public powers, which potentially entails much more than simply achieving a formal change in the structure of governance, offers some insight.

Consider what happened when the residents of one Central California neighborhood discovered they were without a water supply for their homes. The private company that had been providing water had not maintained its equipment for decades, and when the equipment failed, the owner absconded. As a resident of the neighborhood at the time and actively involved in the response of the residents, Khulda Bat Sarah has related her experience:

If someone had asked me before the water crisis: Do you think you and your neighbors have what it takes to form a government and to govern yourselves, at least in regard to the water supply? Or do you really think you have the ability to negotiate the legal process with LAFCO?¹²⁹ I would have answered: no, and why would we want to do that anyway? But after the crisis, after going without water to drink or flush toilets, after standing in line with plastic containers to receive emergency water supplies from a U.S. Air Force tanker, my neighbors and I in our working-class neighborhood decided we would have to put our heads together and figure out, one step at a time, how to proceed. The amazing thing is that, despite the fact that none of us (to my knowledge) had any experience of forming a government, we did.

Under such conditions, we may reasonably infer that, “In direct personal participation . . . people both learn the skills of citizenship and develop a taste for freedom; thereafter they form an active rather than deferential, apathetic, or privatized constituency for state and national representation, an engaged public. . . .”¹³⁰

Certainly, there are limits on neighborhood government activities,¹³¹ regardless of the public powers they may acquire; because, like the special district mentioned above, they would be subject to the laws and judicial orders of higher levels of government. Empowered neighborhoods would not have any possibility of becoming totally outlier, self-directing “constitutional republics” in their own right.¹³²

Nevertheless, because of their potential to achieve a transformation of governance by becoming the lower tier of urban government; plus, their potential for cultural transformation, going from dependency as ignored residents to engaged citizens of neighborhood popular assemblies; there is the prospect that, conscious of the combined strength of their citizenship, they would combine to apply radical power-leverage.

Directly Democratic Power-Leverage

My understanding of bottom-up power-leverage comes from the labor strike, used to extraordinary effect during the first half of the last century.¹³³ The labor movement’s power originated in countless “locals,” established over a half-century at the cost of face-to-face workplace organizing, which was not deterred by unrelenting oppression and physical violence. They eventually unified nationally in an institutionalized structure that combined the might of the CIO industrial unions and the AFL craft unions, which was brought to bear on opponents by the power-leverage of the strike.

Looking back to our founding as a nation, we can identify another power-lever, one which was a tactical innovation and the “key event”¹³⁴ of the Revolution, the Boston Tea Party. It was a rejection by a lower level of government, the colonies with the support of their citizenry, of British Crown authority. *The tactic was a tax-action by governments acting together to effect a negotiated reconciliation with a higher government.*

Prior to the Tea Party, the colonies challenged the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act, which caused the British Parliament to repeal those taxes and, after some time, remove all the taxes except on tea. American outrage was not about the financial burden of the tea tax, which was only pennies a year for the average family, but their lack of representation in Parliament.¹³⁵ Their unreconciled demand regarding taxation, which aimed for some control over the public powers, eventually led to the Revolutionary War.¹³⁶

We can easily see the parallels to the current money-corruption of representative government in the U.S., perverted by massive corporate and billionaire special interests, effectively alienating the demos from the exercise of the public powers.

Individual tax resistance typically aims to make a

principled statement against what is believed to be unjust or illegitimate activity of the national government. The usual outcome is that the individuals are arrested, tried, and sentenced, or at least fined, for their violation of federal law. The picture changes dramatically when we imagine thousands of citizens acting simultaneously through their directly democratic assemblies, which they have already done in New England,¹³⁷ but in the future taking the profound step of negotiating reconciliation of their tax obligations.

Tax reconciliation differs from tax resistance and refusal because it would seek neither to rebel against nor avoid taxation. Instead, the aim would be to negotiate neighborhood government economic support of higher levels of government based on agreement by them to vest in the neighborhoods some control over legislation, regulations, and services. The initial goal would be to reconcile through tax-liability negotiations the demands of the citizenry for a permanent share of control of the public powers.

This David-and-Goliath matchup of neighborhoods determined to pressure municipal, county, state, and national governments may seem ridiculously optimistic. But consider: The earliest American labor strike was in 1776¹³⁸ and it wasn’t until the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) that the right to strike was protected by federal law. Before the NLRA, “Bosses persuaded the courts to issue injunctions to declare a strike illegal. If the strike continued, the participants would be thrown into prison.”¹³⁹ During the nineteenth century, the idea that craft unions would exert power over massive corporate monopolies, like Standard Oil, probably would have seemed ridiculous to most unionists.¹⁴⁰ But the strike, which some union members may have regarded as a futile gesture in the early days, eventually became the irresistible leverage of organized labor to effect local, state, and national policy.

Can we imagine the tactics needed to short-circuit municipal, county, state and federal governments from prosecuting or otherwise harassing thousands or even hundreds of thousands of individuals who refuse to pay their taxes? Won’t homeowners fear losing their homes if they refuse to pay their property taxes? And how can it be possible to avoid paying sales tax?

David Ben-Gurion once said, “All the experts are experts on what was. There are no experts on what will be.”¹⁴¹ We can’t know all the strategic and tactical possibilities today, any more than the organizers and leaders of any movement know at the start the strategies and tactics they will eventually devise. But we do know that necessity is the mother of invention. We also know we will find examples to learn from, not in the history of principled individual tax resistance but in the unprincipled schemes of corporate tax avoidance.

Powerful corporations enhance their power by off-loading their tax obligations through lobbying and tax-liability negotiations with the IRS. In addition to those tactics, governments, even small ones, as Robert Moses so effectively demonstrated with New York’s public

authorities¹⁴² (which are like California's special districts), can also enhance their powers to achieve comparable objectives by initiating highly technical, low-visibility revisions to government codes, thereby sidestepping the some of their initial limitations.

A more direct approach to empower neighborhood governments by way of tax policy was proposed by the late U.S. Senator, Mark Hatfield. Hatfield submitted his "Neighborhood Government Act" in 1973 and for several years after that. The Act, SB2502, was essentially "A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 to provide a tax credit for contributions to a neighborhood corporation and to provide other financial assistance to such corporations under State law to furnish their own neighborhood services."

Hatfield was motivated by "... the imperative to decentralize power ... and the requirement of government, if it is to be democratic, effective and responsive, to be rooted close to the people." His articulate defense of the Act was comprehensive and inspiring. But it was opposed by officials steeped in the municipal reform ideology, which historically was promoted by corporate tycoons;¹⁴³ and lacking an organized movement dedicated to its passage, it came and went without awakening a supportive constituency. When Hatfield died, the *National Review* noted the Neighborhood Government Act was "embraced by many New Leftists ... and libertarians. ... Naturally it went nowhere."¹⁴⁴

Could an urban alliance wage a successful campaign for a city charter reform initiative to authorize the formation of neighborhood assemblies with grants of public powers? Could they reintroduce as state legislation a variation of Senator Hatfield's Neighborhood Government Act, but this time with the support of an organized constituency? Could they eventually deliver a statewide ballot initiative to require that, in qualified directly democratic jurisdictions, a limited percentage of local sales tax must be credited to neighborhood government escrow trust accounts pending "reconciliation" with higher-level taxing authorities?¹⁴⁵ We can imagine taxes paid into such accounts, supervised by the popular assemblies, disbursed in turn to the appropriate governments when negotiated tax reconciliations have been approved by the citizens of the assemblies.

The Rocky Path Ahead

Surely, the remaking of American democracy demands structural change that directly empowers the demos, the only plausible means to overcome our "pernicious polarization" and defeat the metastasizing fascist oligarchy. Our personal experience and history should convince us that, given the corruption that has enervated our democratic institutions, the remedy can't be simple, quick, or

painless. Then, too, as community and labor organizer Jonathan Rosenblum reminds us:

... a potent, sustained movement must rest on more than economic and political principles. It also must draw upon the values that emanate from our deepest human emotions and desires for justice and community. The call for spiritual morality, whether advanced by organized religion or secular humanist yearnings, has played a decisive role in leading struggles throughout history. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s and the abolitionist movement of a century earlier are but two examples of struggles that were propelled forward by powerful calls for spiritual morality. Today, the embryonic movements that fuse direct action with a spiritually based call for justice offer similar promise.¹⁴⁶

Beyond any doubt, to fulfill our hope and vision of a thriving democracy will require much more of us than grassroots power-building:

- It will demand the unflinching faith and hope of both the organizers and those becoming organized, which will be needed to sustain the sacrifices all will be called upon to make for many decades;
- It will depend on rebuilding communities of trust and mutuality, with a commitment to the flourishing of every life as the root and measure of our commonweal; and
- It will direct us on a path not only of enlightened participatory politics and public administration but moral-spiritual goodness.

Our fidelity to that goodness on the path of our social salvation can be reinforced by six guides to action from our sacred religious traditions:¹⁴⁷ Righteousness, Truth, Justice, Freedom, Peace, and Kindness¹⁴⁸—because we can only build historic movement to remake our democracy by relying on a widely shared strategic moral vision of the future.

And isn't that now the call of ethical patriotism?¹⁴⁹

Epilog

A wave of authoritarianism has been sweeping over the world. Despairing national leaders have spoken of their disappointment that American democracy, for so long a model for other nations, has been in decline and may fail entirely. If it is true that the antidote to authoritarianism, short of violent revolution and civil war, is neither politics nor policy but instead, permanently vesting public powers in every individual of the demos, then we can make the renaissance of the popular assembly in urban American a model of flourishing twenty-first century democracy for the rest of the world.

Moshe's note to readers: You deserve an explanation for the large number and length of the following footnotes. This article presents many unorthodox and perhaps unexpected facts, analyses, and conclusions, so it seems important you know that in their particulars they represent not only my thinking but that of reputable scholars and responsible journalists, who have provided us with the benefits of their research and insights.

¹ This article has been updated and expanded from the initial version published in *Social Policy* (Spring 2022).

² From *Democracy and Social Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1902—Kindle edition), loc. 1867.

³ The articles cited below point to the values, motives, objectives, methods, and alliances of the leading Republican authoritarians. We learn they regard contemporary politics as an historic confrontation of good and evil. More than sufficient evidence has emerged, recently in the email correspondence of Virginia Thomas and Mark Meadows, to conclude that they have launched a religious crusade, one for which they claim to have a holy mandate. Thus they uphold White Christian supremacy as a religious certainty, that America is *their* promised land. All who oppose them, especially members of the Democratic Party, they regard as evil because they oppose divine purpose; thus they are not deserving of any consideration—legal, moral, ethical, or practical. They consider all other political actors to be morally illegitimate; so any circumstance that places others in power is, ipso facto, illegitimate. For them, Biden *lost* the election not because it was stolen but because, as a Democrat, he is inherently an illegitimate officeholder, a violator of their moral rights as Americans. Of course, we don't have probative evidence to determine whether for most individuals these grotesque "religious" tenets are genuinely held or simply convenient, cynical rationalizations to satisfy their hunger for authoritarian power. See: Thomas Zimmer, "The real—and far scarier—reason Republicans think Biden is illegitimate," *The Guardian* (March 21, 2022); Jennifer Rubin, "The GOP is increasingly viewing politics with the zeal of religious absolutism," *Washington Post* (March 28, 2022); Danny Hakim et al., "Texts Show Ginni Thomas's Embrace of Conspiracy Theories," *New York Times* (March 26, 2022); Andrew Prokop, "The real Ginni Thomas revelation," *Vox* (March 25, 2022); David French, "The Worst Ginni Thomas Text Wasn't From Ginni Thomas," *The Atlantic* (March 25, 2022); and Michael Gerson, "What the Ginni Thomas text furor warns about an outsize role of faith in politics," *Washington Post* (March 28, 2022). See also Elizabeth Dias and Ruth Graham, "The Growing Religious Fervor in the American Right: 'This Is a Jesus Movement,'" *New York Times* (April 6, 2022).

⁴ The loss of commonweal is described by Adrian Vermeule, "Supreme Court Justices Have Forgotten What the Law Is For," *New York Times* (February 3, 2022): "The common good is no abstract idea; its absence is keenly felt today. In the past few decades, Americans have discovered that individuals and families cannot flourish if the whole community is fundamentally unhealthy, torn apart by conflict, lawlessness, poverty, pollution, sickness, and despair. Gated residences, private schools and Uber have not sufficed to immunize even the affluent against the consequences of living in a decaying, fractured and embittered polity. No family or civic association is an island, and the health of civic society and culture are themselves dependent upon the health of the constitutional order." Recent Republican politics included the promotion of policies that significantly increased morbidity and mortality, lessened worker and public safety, and intensified environmental destruction. Regarding public health, for instance, see: Roman Pabayo et al., "Political party affiliation, political ideology and mortality," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 69(5):423-431 (January 2014); Ethan Nadelmann and Lindsay LaSalle, "Two steps forward, one step back: current harm reduction policy and politics in the United States," *Harm Reduction Journal*, 14(37):1-7 (June 2017); and Justin Kaashoek et al., "The Evolving Roles of US Political Partisanship and Social Vulnerability in the COVID-19 Pandemic from February 2020-February 2021," Social Science Research Network (October 8, 2021) [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3933453].

⁵ See Moshe ben Asher, "Ethical and Moral Demands of Professional Community Organizing," *Social Policy*, 50(3):26-31 (Fall 2020), p. 28.

⁶ Regarding the need for such empowerment as an antidote to the political paralysis of the general public, see: Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3):564-581 (September 2014); and Kay Lehman Schlozman et al., *The Uneavily Chorus, Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁷ As defined by *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 188: "The people or commons of an ancient Greek state, esp. of a democratic state, such as Athens: hence, the populace, the common people: often personified."

⁸ See: Stephen Zunes, "People-Powered and Non-Violent Social Movements: Forcing Gradualist Democratic Reforms in Authoritarian Societies," *Frontiers in Political Science* (February 4, 2022); Nikoli Huke et al., "Disrupting European authoritarianism," Transnational Institute—TNI (April 2018) [<https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/tni-disrupting-european-authoritarianism.pdf>]; Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Stephen Zunes, "Unarmed insurrections against authoritarian governments in the Third World: a new kind of revolution," *Third World Quarterly*,

15(3):403-426 (1994); and Natalia Forrat, “Civic Mobilization in Authoritarian Contexts, Annotated Bibliography, Freedom House (May 2021).

⁹ See: Robert A. Dahl, “The City in the Future of Democracy,” *American Political Science Review*, 61(4):953-70 (December 1967); Milton Kotler, *Neighborhood Government: The Local Foundation of Political Life* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1969); Douglas Yates, “Neighborhood Government,” RAND Corporation (1971) [<https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P4671.html>]; Donna E. Shalala, “Neighborhood Government: Has the Time Come?” *National Civic Review*, 61(4):185-89 (April 1972); Howard W. Hallman, *Government by Neighborhoods* (Washington, D.C: Center for Governmental Studies, 1973); Mark O. Hatfield, “Bringing Political Power Back Home: the Case for Neighborhood Government,” *Ripon Quarterly*, 1(1):19-26 (Summer 1974); Robert B. Hawkins, Jr., *Self-Government by District* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1976); Michael Silver [NKA Moshe ben Asher], “Political Liberty and Neighborhood Government,” *USA Today*, 107(2402):24-25 (November 1978); Michael Silver, “Neighborhood Government Through Special Districts,” *Self-Reliance*, No. 26 (July 1981); Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 261-290; Jeffrey M. Berry et al., *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1993); Shirley Svorny, “Advisory Councils Lack Clout to Effect Change,” *Los Angeles Times* (July 19, 1998); and Bryan Cohen, “Retired ‘neighborhood government’ advocate enters District 3 race as fourth Sawant challenger,” Capitol Hill Seattle Blog (May 6, 2015) [<https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2015/05/retired-neighborhood-government-advocate-enters-district-3-race-as-fourth-sawant-challenger/>].

¹⁰ See Zack Beauchamp, “Call it authoritarianism,” *Vox* (June 15, 2021).

¹¹ See: Richard L. Hasen, “Election Law’s Path in the Roberts Court’s First Decade: A Sharp Right Turn but with Speed Bumps and Surprising Twists,” *Stanford Law Review*, 68:1597-1632 (June 2016); Stephen E. Gottlieb, “How the Roberts Court Undermines U.S. Democracy,” Scholars Strategy Network (January 10, 2017) [<https://scholars.org/contribution/how-roberts-court-undermines-us-democracy/>]; and Jedediah Purdy, “The Roberts Court v. America,” *Democracy*, 23 (Winter 2012).

¹² See: Joseph E. Stiglitz, “The American Economy Is Rigged,” *Scientific American* (November 1, 2018): “Since the mid-1970s the rules of the economic game have been rewritten, both globally and nationally, in ways that advantage the rich and disadvantage the rest.” In the U.S., “. . . the market power of workers, which started out less than in most other advanced countries, has fallen further than elsewhere. This is not only because of a shift to a service-sector economy—it is because of the rigged rules of the game, rules set in a political system that is itself rigged through gerrymandering, voter suppression, and the influence of money.” See also: Josh Bivens et al., “Ten actions that hurt workers during Trump’s first year,” Economic Policy Institute (January 12, 2018) [<https://www.epi.org/publication/ten-actions-that-hurt-workers-during-trumps-first-year/>]; Kevin Vazquez, “The Republican Party Has Nothing to Offer the Working Class,” onLabor (March 22, 2021) [<https://onlabor.org/the-republican-party-has-nothing-to-offer-the-working-class/>]; and Vanessa Williamson, “SCOTUS’s labor decisions: Bad news for working people, and a taste of what’s to come,” Brookings (July 18, 2021) [<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2018/07/18/scotuss-labor-decisions-bad-news-for-working-people/>].

¹³ See Robert Draper, “Michael Flynn Is Still At War,” *New York Times Magazine* (February 4, 2022), which reports: “One year since Trump’s departure from office, his Make America Great Again movement has reconstituted itself as a kind of shape-shifting but increasingly robust parallel political universe, one that holds significant sway over the Republican Party but is also beyond its control.” See also Steve Phillips, “The Party of White Grievance Has Never Cared About Democracy,” *The Nation* (May 26, 2021).

¹⁴ See: Lilliana Mason et al., “Activating Animus: The Unique Social Roots of Trump Support,” *American Political Science Review*, published online (June 30, 2021); and Diana C. Mutz, “Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote,” *PNAS, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 115(19):E4330-E4339 (May 8, 2018). Trump uses the political power inherent in stoking nativism and white grievance by agitating on immigration issues, a widely used method. See Ian Shapiro, “Lecture 1: Introduction to Power and Politics in Today’s World,” Yale Courses (August 29, 2019) [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDqvzFY72mg/>].

¹⁵ See: Bethany M. Coston and Michael Kimmel, “White Men as the New Victims: Reverse Discrimination Cases and the Men’s Rights Movement,” *Nevada Law Journal*, 13:368-386 (Winter 2013); Douglas Schrock et al., “Signifying Aggrieved White Selves: Trump Supporters’ Racial Identity Work,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 8(1):114-128 (January 1, 2022); Forrest Cullings, “Alt-Right Influence on Radicalization of White Nationalists in the United States, According to Significance Quest Theory,” Master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School (June 2020); and Roger M. Smith and Desmond King, “White Protectionism in America,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 19(2):460-478 (June 2021).

¹⁶ See: Julia G. Young, “Making America 1920 Again? Nativism and US Immigration, Past and Present,” *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(1):217-235 (March 1, 2017); Douglas S. Massey (ed.), “Immigration, Nativism & Race in the United States,” *Daedalus*, 150(2):5-214 (Spring 2021); and Yuji Endo, “Nativism in the United States

and President Trump's Anti-Immigration Policy," Harvard Program on U.S.-Japan Relations, Occasional Paper Series, 2020-01 [https://programs.wcfia.harvard.edu/files/us-japan/files/20-01_endo.pdf].

¹⁷ See: Paul Stocker, "The great replacement theory: a historical perspective," CARR—Center for the Analysis of the Radical Right (September 19, 2019) [<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/great-replacement-theory-historical-perspective>]; ADL—Anti-Defamation League, "'The Great Replacement': An Explainer" (n.d.) [<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/the-great-replacement-an-explainer>]; Jacob Davey and Julia Ebner, *The Great Replacement: The Violent Consequences of Mainstreamed Extremism* (London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2019) [<https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Great-Replacement-The-Violent-Consequences-of-Mainstreamed-Extremism-by-ISD.pdf>]; Charles M. Blow, "Tucker Carlson and White Replacement," *New York Times* (April 11, 2021); Michael Kranish, "How Tucker Carlson became the voice of White grievance," *Washington Post* (July 14, 2021); and Mark Potok, "Tucker Carlson Is The Most Dangerous Anchor in America," RANTTMEDIA (October 18, 2021) [<https://rant.com/tucker-carlson-is-the-most-dangerous-anchor-in-america/>].

¹⁸ As described in Ellie Silverman and Karina Elwood, "The uncomfortable leader of an angry crowd: Brian Brase and the 'People's Convoy,'" *Washington Post* (March 18, 2022), and in Charles Homans, "Trucker Protest Moved by More Than Opposition to Covid Mandates," *New York Times* (March 19, 2022), the contradiction between the economic policies of the Republicans and the economic interests of the working class was apparent in the views of the backers and boosters of the "People's Convoy" that carried on a largely White, right-wing protest circling the Capital Beltway. On the political-economics of this contradiction, see Robert B. Reich, *The System, Who Rigged It, How We Fix It* (New York: Vintage Books—Kindle edition, 2021).

¹⁹ See: Joan Donovan, "MAGA Is an Extreme Aberration," *The Atlantic* (January 15, 2021); and Samira Samamo, "The Meta-violence of Trumpism," *European Journal of American Studies*, 12(2), online (Summer 2017).

²⁰ "Reactionary" is defined here as a quest to return to a time of dominant, unselfconscious cultural white supremacy and rule by political-economic white oligarchy.

²¹ See Ganesh Sitaraman, "Countering Nationalist Oligarchy," *Democracy*, 51 (Winter 2019) [<https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/51/countering-nationalist-oligarchy/>].

²² "Brotherhood" is meant to convey that U.S. billionaires have common interests about which they communicate with one another, and a common purpose, plan, and operation, with roots reaching back more than 150 years. Nancy McLean, *Democracy in Chains, The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017) contends that ". . . the single most powerful and least understood threat to democracy today: the attempt by the billionaire-backed radical right to undo democratic governance" (loc. 211). They vehemently oppose ". . . any group or government meddling with the market," manipulating law and policy to insulate themselves and their wealth from government regulation (loc. 36). See also: Kurt Andersen, *Evil Geniuses—The Unmaking of America: A Recent History* (New York: Random House, 2020—Kindle edition); Kristin A. Goss, "Policy Plutocrats: How America's Wealthy Seek to Influence Government," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 49(3):442-448 (July 2016); Chuck Collins and Omar Ocampo, "Trump and His Many Billionaire Enablers," Institute for Policy Studies (January 11, 2021) [<https://ips-dc.org/trump-and-his-many-billionaire-enablers/>]; Vicky Ward, "The Blow-It-All-Up Billionaires," *Huffington Post* (March 17, 2017) [<http://highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/mercercers/>]; Jane Mayer, *Dark Money, The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (New York: Doubleday, 2016); Mateo Gold and Robert Barnes, "Growing array of pro-Trump groups train cross-hairs on GOP lawmakers," *Washington Post* (April 2, 2017); and Adanjesus Marin and Michael Kink, "It's not the 'Freedom Caucus.' It's the Billionaires' Caucus," *The Hill* (June 8, 2017) [<https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/336963-its-not-the-freedom-caucus-its-the-billionaires-caucus>]. For an example of the billionaires' role in the Tea Party, frequently described by the media and its own members as "populist" and "grassroots," see: Amanda Fallin et al., "To quarterback behind the scenes, third-party efforts: the tobacco industry and the Tea Party," *Tobacco Control*, 23:322-331 (2014); Jess Nesbit, "The Secret Origins of the Tea Party, How Big Oil and Big Tobacco Partnered with the Koch Brothers to Take Over the GOP," *Time* (April 5, 2016); and Jane Mayer, "Trump's Money Man: The Reclusive Hedge-Fund Tycoon Behind the Trump Presidency," *The New Yorker* (March 27, 2017). On plutocrats boosting white supremacy, see Clay Risen, "William H. Regnery II, 80, Dies; Bankrolled the Rise of the Alt-Right," *New York Times* (July 16, 2021). See also: Michela Tindera, "Here Are The Billionaires Who Donated To Donald Trump's 2020 Presidential Campaign," *Forbes* (February 19, 2021).

²³ Perhaps the most potent strategy of the billionaires to solidify a reactionary nationalist oligarchy has been explored in detail by Benjamin I. Page et al., *Billionaires and Stealth Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019—Kindle edition), which first defines the basic strategy (loc. 237): "They make large financial contributions to political parties, candidates, and policy-focused causes. They hold political fund-raisers and bundle others' contributions. They establish, join, or lead policy-advocacy organizations. But despite these billionaires' prominence and their easy access to the media—which provides abundant opportunities to say just about anything they want to large audiences—they rarely talk openly about public policy. *Our exhaustive web searches indicate that most billionaires have not spoken up publicly at all, not even once, over an extended period of time—about the specifics of any of the*

major public policies we have studied. Our statistical analyses provide evidence that this silence is often designed to conceal billionaires' advocacy of policies that most Americans oppose. The unpopular policies that some billionaires quietly favor have frequently become official government policies with the force of law." Their stealth activities not only make them politically unequal ". . . but also largely *unaccountable* and *unchallengable* by the American citizenry" (loc. 245). They do not limit themselves to the federal government but include state and local stealth initiatives to win ". . . subsidies, tax breaks, and favorable regulatory treatment" (loc. 280). Sitaraman, *op. cit.*, describes the effects of their reactionary nationalist oligarchy ideal: "This form of government feeds populism to the people, delivers special privileges to the rich and well-connected, and rigs politics to sustain its regime." See also Kenneth P. Vogel et al., "Dissatisfied With Their Party, Wealthy Republican Donors Form Secret Coalitions," *New York Times* (April 6, 2022).

²⁴ See Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, Penguin Random House—Kindle edition, 2018), loc. 267, for the benchmarks: "Revived today in conditions of inequality as a politics of eternity, fascism serves oligarchs as a catalyst for transitions away from public discussion and towards political fiction; away from meaningful voting and towards fake democracy; away from the rule of law and towards personalist regimes." Fascist rule, recognizable in our recent Trumpist history, characteristically fails to manage what happens in the world but excels at managing people's perceptions of what happens. Internally, in place of domestic policy, bad events are blamed on others who are regarded as morally defective. See Timothy Snyder, "Transitions. Empires, Time, and Unfreedom," YouTube (March 14, 2022) [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcAkWBjU90>].

²⁵ I.e., the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority which has dominated American culture, politics, and economy since the founding of the country.

²⁶ As of December 2021, 66 percent of Republicans agree or somewhat agree, "The growth in the number of immigrants in the country means that America is in danger of losing its culture and identity." 49 percent of Republicans strongly agree, agree, or agree somewhat that "The growth in the size of minority communities in the country will likely result in the declining influence of white Americans." See University of Massachusetts Amherst, Department of Political Science, "Toplines and Crosstabs December 2021 National Poll: CRT & Race in America" (January 14, 2022) [<https://polsci.umass.edu/toplines-and-crosstabs-december-2021-national-poll-crt-race-america>].

²⁷ See: Roni Caryn Rabin, "Overdose Deaths Reached Record High as the Pandemic Spread," *New York Times* (November 17, 2021); Tara Parker-Pope et al., "Why 1,320 Therapists Are Worried About Mental Health in America Right Now," *New York Times* (December 17, 2021); and Christina Caron, "All Children 8 and Older Should Be Screened for Anxiety, U.S. Task Force Says," *New York Times* (April 12, 2022). But also see Kevin B. Smith, "Politics is making us sick: The negative impact of political engagement on public health during the Trump administration," *PLOS ONE* (January 14, 2022).

²⁸ Barbara F. Walter, *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them* (New York: Viking Press, Crown, 2022—Kindle edition), loc. 284, posits that it may be more accurate to refer to our system as an "anocracy," neither an autocracy nor a democracy ". . . but something in between," something transitional, moving toward autocracy, in which "Citizens receive some elements of democratic rule—perhaps full voting rights—but they also live under leaders with extensive authoritarian powers and few checks and balances." See, also, Sarah Repucci, "From Crisis to Reform, A Call to Strengthen America's Battered Democracy," Freedom House Special Report (March 2021) [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/US_Democracy_Report_FINAL_03222021.pdf].

²⁹ A radical interpretation of the Democrats failure to achieve internal "party discipline" on electoral and tax legislation (the political means of the continued empowerment and enrichment of themselves and their patrons), is offered by H.R. Shapiro in *The Bureaucratic State: Party Bureaucracy and the Decline of Democracy in America* (New York: Samizdat Press, 1975), who wrote: "Political parties are not and can never be instruments of representative government. The ideal never-achieved goal of party leaders is to render themselves, through their mutual cooperation, utterly immune to the citizenry and to reduce all politics to the self-serving machinations . . . which means the death of politics and the permanent rule of irresponsible power." Current opinion on the left seems to be that the outcome of the House Select Committee investigating the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol will be something like "the truth will set us free," although none of the truth revealed over the past five years, in multiple hearings, news features, and two impeachments, regarding Trump and his MAGA-enablers and followers, have had any effect whatsoever to slow down their anti-democracy momentum. Perhaps we're at a turning point, but possibly not, because the threat to white supremacy and privilege seems not to be diminishing. Then, too, if the investigation of the January 6 attack leads to a referral to the AG for criminal prosecution of Trump and his co-conspirators, which the AG acts on, the upshot may not be MAGA-disillusionment with Trumpism but increased right-wing mendacity, civil unrest, and violence.

³⁰ See Carl Rhodes and Peter Fleming, "Forget political corporate responsibility," *Organization*, 27(6):943-951 (June 2020).

³¹ See Elizabeth Dias and Jack Healy, "For Many Who Marched, Jan. 6 Was Only the Beginning," *New York Times* (January 23, 2022).

³² In the absence of such legislation, Matthew A. Seligman, “A Realistic Risk Assessment of the Presidential Election of 2024,” SSRN (January 26, 2022) [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4018380] outlines a plausible scenario in which the 2024 election is stolen by Trump.

³³ If this expectation seems hyperbolic or simply in error, the primer on the subject is historian Timothy Snyder’s *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017). Snyder lays out the history of the road to tyranny and calls for a recalibration of the existential threat to our democracy. Any remaining doubt should be removed by the five-alarm-fire statement of 200 scholars of democracy. See New America, “Statement of Concern, The Threats to American Democracy and the Need for National Voting and Election Administration Standards” (June 1, 2021) [<https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/statements/statement-of-concern/>]. For a comprehensive legal and constitutional analysis of the incremental loss of democracy, see the treatment of “constitutional retrogression” by Aziz Huq and Tom Ginsburg, “How to Lose a Constitutional Democracy,” 65 *UCLA Law Review* (2018), in which the authors describe in detail what “. . . occurs more slowly through an accumulation of piecemeal changes, each perhaps innocuous or even justified in isolation” (pp. 83-84); and for a projection of alternative outcomes of the present anti-democratic trend, see Alan Waring, “Future Scenarios for Radical-Right Influence: Grim or Grimmer?” CARR—Center for Analysis of the Radical Right (November 16, 2021) [<https://radicalrightanalysis.com/2021/11/16/future-scenarios-for-radical-right-influence-grim-or-grimmer/>]. See also: Timothy Snyder, “The American Abyss,” *New York Times* (January 9, 2021); and Brian Klaas, “Why Republicans won’t learn anything from their defeat in Georgia,” *Washington Post* (January 7, 2021). Perhaps the most disturbing threat in relation to American democracy is described in the scholarly assessment of our current vulnerability to an outbreak of civil war. See Walter, op. cit. For a thoughtful review of Walter’s book, see David Remnick, “Is A Civil War Ahead?” *The New Yorker* (January 5, 2022).

³⁴ During the last decade, as enumerated by Ian Millhiser, “Republicans Have an Ambitious Agenda for the Supreme Court,” *New York Times* (March 30, 2021), “. . . the Supreme Court dismantled much of America’s campaign finance law; severely weakened the Voting Rights Act; permitted states to opt out of the Affordable Care Act’s Medicaid expansion; expanded new religious liberty rights permitting some businesses that object to a law on religious grounds to diminish the rights of third parties; weakened laws shielding workers from sexual and racial harassment; expanded the right of employers to shunt workers with legal grievances into a privatized arbitration system; undercut public sector unions’ ability to raise funds; and halted Mr. Obama’s Clean Power Plan.” Stanford Law professor Nathaniel Persily, a constitutional law scholar and former counsel at the NYU School of Law Brennan Center for Justice, has stated that he “. . . would be surprised if newly enacted voting restrictions are struck down,” since “The Supreme Court has not sent a signal they will protect the right to vote.” See David G. Savage, “How the Supreme Court tilted election law to favor GOP,” *Los Angeles Times* (June 5, 2021). For a preliminary confirmation of Persily’s expectation, see: Adam Liptak, “Supreme Court, in 5-4 Vote, Restores Alabama’s Congressional Voting Map,” *New York Times* (February 7, 2022); Robert Barnes, “Supreme Court sides again with Wisconsin Republicans, throws out Democratic-drawn maps favorable to Black residents,” *Washington Post* (March 23, 2022); and Linda Greenhouse, “The Supreme Court Has Crossed the Rubicon,” *New York Times* (February 9, 2022). For a worst-case scenario of SCOTUS overriding the outcomes of democratic elections, see Harry Litman, “Why the Supreme Court is one of the biggest threats to American democracy,” *Los Angeles Times* (August 24, 2021).

³⁵ See Jennifer McCoy and Benjamin Press, “What Happens When Democracies Become Perniciously Polarized?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (January 18, 2022) [<https://carnegieendowment.org/what-happens-when-democracies-become-perniciously-polarized/pub-86190>], whose research reveals that “The most common outcome of episodes where democracies reached pernicious levels of polarization was some form of major democratic decline.” Timothy Snyder, “Racism, Antisemitism and the Radical Right,” YouTube (September 28, 2017) [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rRW7EvWqZk>] provides an historical insight into the polarization: He conceptualizes politics within an overarching framework of *time*, proposing that over time there is a shift from the “politics of inevitability” to the “politics of eternity,” from expecting good things to inevitably emerge, to the belief that things never change, which occurs when “. . . you face dramatic, stupefying inequality and the story of progress no longer makes sense and you fall into a different kind of story, one of cycles. But it can also occur when you’re shocked . . . what happens to a lot of Americans in 2016.” When immersed in the politics of cycles, “If you look hard, there’s actually only one thing that ever happens over and over again, and the one thing that happens over and over again is that the perverted, aggressive outsider tries to penetrate the ineffable virtue of us,” which is characteristic of fascist politics. The politics of eternity creates a fictive purity of national history, such as MAGA in the U.S., which not incidentally was a time of all-around White supremacy, now facilitated by “memory laws” (e.g., outlawing teaching about CRT in the U.S. and Putin’s memory laws), which eventually can lead to the politics of catastrophe (e.g., the Russian invasion of Ukraine or right-wing violence here). However, ironically, the politics of inevitability can also lead to nihilism and unfreedom when belief in the inevitability of eventual goodness becomes intellectually vacuous. See Timothy Snyder, “Tore Browaldh Seminar 2022. Transitions. Empires, Time, and Unfreedom,” YouTube (March 14, 2022) [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcAkWBjIu90>].

³⁶ Snyder, op. cit., “Racism, Antisemitism and the Radical Right,” reminds us: “. . . you can’t reform the state [through politics and policy] because the people who engineered the radical inequality are the same people who control the state, and that makes reform not only impossible but literally unthinkable.” To oversimplify, the alternative means to restructure the state, then, are variants of war with a foreign power, violent revolution led by a vanguard party, and bottom-up popular action to develop self-empowering infrastructure (e.g., the American labor movement and open-town directly democratic popular assemblies in New England). Regarding the ideology of the bottom-up option, see Gather the People, “Opposing Ideologies of Infrastructure Sponsors: [Bottom-Up and Top-Down]” (2018) [https://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/INFRASTRUCTURE-SPONSOR_IDEOLOGIES.pdf].

³⁷ Michael J. Thompson, *The Politics of Inequality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), notes: “. . . progressive responses to inequality remain weak and ineffectual” (p. xi). “To protect their gains, economic elites have captured enormous political power in national and state governments, and the problem of oligarchy has now become a concern for mainstream social scientists” (p. xii). William W. Franko and Christopher Witko, *The New Economic Populism, How States Respond to Economic Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), describes limited empirical data that states are acting to reduce economic inequality, but evidence exists that some are acting to make inequality worse by limiting union power and enacting regressive tax cuts (p. xii). As reported in Mackenzie Mays, “New push to tax ‘extreme wealth,’” *Los Angeles Times* (February 21, 2022), even in a progressive state like California, a proposal to place a 1 percent tax on those with a net worth of \$50 million and a 1.5 percent tax on those with net worth more than \$1 billion can’t make it to legislative committee hearings, despite a Democratic supermajority in the legislature. Although scholars explicitly recognize that “. . . the authoritarian tendencies growing out of right-wing populist politics is partially a consequence of economic inequality,” they fail to go beyond constitutional and political policy proposals, sidestepping consideration of their strategic feasibility. For example, see Rosalind Dixon and Julie Suk, “Liberal Constitutionalism and Economic Inequality,” *University of Chicago Law Review*, 85(2):369-402 (March 2018).

³⁸ See: Linda Faye Williams, “The Issue of Our Time: Economic Inequality and Power in America,” *Perspectives on Politics* (December 1, 2004) [<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/abs/issue-of-our-time-economic-inequality-and-political-power-in-america/A222EBE4FE4E1DAB8CEA54A2CC227BE0>]; Kate Andrias, “Separations of Wealth: Inequality and the Erosion of Checks and Balances,” 18 *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law* 419 (2015-2016); and Peter Coy, “Wealth Inequality Is the Highest Since World War II,” *New York Times* (February 2, 2022).

³⁹ McLean, op. cit.

⁴⁰ Ibid., “Putting the [reactionary] intellectuals in the lead, the [libertarian Mont Pelerin] society set out to shift the tide of history—to ensure lasting peace and prosperity by freeing markets worldwide from the collective action and government planning that its members believed so perilous [to their economic liberty]” (loc. 1222). By 1997, Charles Koch “. . . sought not reform, but a world-historic transformation” (loc. 4031). “It is hard to imagine such a clan upending the known world within a few decades, but chance won them a wider hearing. It came with the troubling economic events of the mid-1970s, which undercut the credibility of the prevailing approach to political economy” (loc. 2945). On the international extension of libertarian economics—to permanently entrench the capitalist class in power worldwide—the American capitalists extended their outreach to authoritarian wannabes. For instance, their initiatives in Chile, which were “. . . evidence of . . . increasing international stature” (loc. 3429). See: Ethan B. Kapstein, *Exporting Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022); and Doug Stokes, “The Heart of Empire? Theorising US empire in an era of transnational capitalism,” *Third World Quarterly*, 26(2):217-236 (2005).

⁴¹ See Richard Neumann, “American Democracy in Distress: The Failure of Social Education,” *Journal of Social Science Education*, 16(1):5-16 (Spring 2017). Regarding monied libertarian influence on public education, see the Cato Institute (<https://www.cato.org/education>), the Reason Foundation (<https://reason.org/topics/education>), and the Heritage Foundation (<https://www.heritage.org/education>).

⁴² See: Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church and Kiely Barnard-Webster, “Understanding Corruption in Criminal Justice as a Robust and Resilient System,” The Fletcher School, Tufts University (December 2017) [<https://sites.tufts.edu/his/files/2018/02/Understanding-Corruption-in-Criminal-Justice-as-a-Robust-and-Resilient-System.pdf>]; Oguzhan Dincer and Michael Johnston, “Measuring Illegal and Legal Corruption in American States: Some Results from the Corruption in America Survey,” Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard University (December 1, 2014) [<https://ethics.harvard.edu/blog/measuring-illegal-and-legal-corruption-american-states-some-results-safra>]; Rocío Avalos et al., “California Justice Gap Study,” Executive Report (2019), The State Bar of California [<https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Portals/0/documents/accessJustice/Justice-Gap-Study-Executive-Summary.pdf>]; and Mark Hamilton, “Auditor faults state on corrupt lawyers,” *Los Angeles Times* (April 15, 2022), which reveals that the state bar has “. . . failed to rein in attorneys with problematic records.”

⁴³ See J. Gerald Hebert and Marina K. Jenkins, “The Need for State Redistricting Reform to Rein in Partisan Gerrymandering,” *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 29:543-558 (2011).

⁴⁴ See: Evan Osnos, “Turning the Focus on America’s Oligarchs,” *The New Yorker* (March 7, 2022); Benjamin I. Page, “How Money Corrupts American Politics,” Scholars Strategy Network (June 19, 2013) [<https://scholars.org/how-money-corrupts-american-politics>]; Jeffrey A. Winters and Benjamin I. Page, “Oligarchy in the United States?” *Perspectives on Politics*, 7(4):731-751 (December 2009); Jonathan Shaw, “A Radical Fix for the Republic,” *Harvard Magazine* (July-August 2012); and Dean McSweeney, “Parties, Corruption and Campaign Finance in America,” in (Robert Williams, ed.) *Party Finance and Political Corruption* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

⁴⁵ Republicans in state legislatures are now restricting public health authorities from requiring masks, ordering business closures, and other steps to mitigate the spread of disease. See: Network for Public Health Law and National Association of County & City Health Officials, *Proposed Limits on Public Health Authority: Dangerous for Public Health* (May 2021) [<https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Proposed-Limits-on-Public>]; and Frances Stead Sellers and Isaac Stanley-Becker, “As coronavirus surges, GOP lawmakers are moving to limit public health powers,” *Washington Post* (July 25, 2021).

⁴⁶ The Future of Media Project, “Index of US Mainstream Media Ownership,” Harvard University (May 2021) [<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/futureofmedia/index-us-mainstream-media-ownership>].

⁴⁷ See: National Terrorism Advisory System, “Summary of Terrorism Threats to the U.S. Homeland,” Bulletin, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (February 7, 2022); Henry J. Gomez, “Fueled by Trump-inspired grievance, attempts to terrorize public officials escalate,” NBC News (November 21, 2021); Lisa Lerer and Astead W. Herndon, “Menace Enters the Republican Mainstream,” *New York Times* (November 16, 2021); Catie Edmondson and Mark Walker, “One Menacing Call After Another: Threats Against Lawmakers Surge,” *New York Times* (February 9, 2022); Michael Hiltzik, “The anti-vaxxers’ campaign against public health advocates gets scarier and more rabid,” *Los Angeles Times* (April 6, 2022); Jeff Martin, “Bomb threats made to historically Black schools across US,” AP News (January 31, 2022); and Carolyn Thompson, “Schools Step Up Security in Response to Threats on TikTok,” U.S. News & World Report (December 16, 2021). For a specific example, see Mary Papenfuss, “Lawsuit Says Armed Pro-Trump Canvassers Are Going Door-To-Door With Big Lie ‘Intimidation,’” HUFFPOST (March 22, 2022). See U.S. District Court, District of Colorado, case 1:22-cv-00581 (filed 3/9/22): Colorado Montana Wyoming State Area Conference of the NAACP, League of Women Voters of Colorado, and Mi Familia v. United States Election Integrity Plan.

⁴⁸ See Matias López and Joshua K. Dubrow, “Politics and Inequality in Comparative Perspective: A Research Agenda,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 64(9):1199-1210 (2020).

⁴⁹ Many published articles and reports describe laws and policies needed to sustain U.S. democracy, some of which were written decades ago, including: Task Force on US Strategy to Support Democracy and Counter Authoritarianism, “Reversing the Tide,” Center for Strategic & International Studies, McCain Institute, Arizona State University (April 2021); Nancy Bermeo, “Reflections: Can American Democracy Still Be Saved?” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 681(1):228-233 (January 2019); and American Political Science Association Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, “American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(4):651-66 (December 2004). These publications offer useful proposals; but they fail to propose a feasible strategy either to reverse the malevolent political power entailed in our economic inequality or to effectively counter the political influence of the MAGA movement of White grievance, nativism, and Great Replacement rhetoric, which is driven inexorably by the growth and assertiveness of the non-WASP population.

⁵⁰ Rahman, “Realizing Democracy,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Winter 2020), posits that “A structural approach to democracy reform . . . would focus on eliminating . . . systemic drivers of our democracy crisis and building the rules, associations, and institutions we need to ensure a more equitable balance of political power and a more inclusive economy” (pp. 4-5).

⁵¹ Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 269, however, proposed that the assemblies initially have an advisory role, a period of building participation, only acquiring public powers after a time of development. Since he was writing in the early 1980s, if he were still alive (d. 2017) he might agree that now, after four decades of community organizing and development, encompassing hundreds of unofficial, advisory citizen councils, it’s time to grant public powers to popular assemblies.

⁵² In a letter to Governor John Tyler, as if anticipating the need for two-tier urban government at the metropolitan and neighborhood levels, Jefferson mentions the subdivision of the counties and general education as “two great measures . . . without which no republic can maintain itself in strength.” Six years later he declared, “. . . the article nearest my heart is the subdivision of the counties. . . .” See: Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Governor John Tyler, May 26, 1810, in (Albert Ellery Bergh, ed.) *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907), p. 393; Letter to John Adams, October 28, 1813, in (Paul Leicester Ford, ed.) *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 11 (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905), pp. 343-46; Letter to John Taylor, May 28, 1816, in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 11, p. 529; Letter to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816, in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 12, p. 9; Letter to Samuel Kercheval, September 5, 1816, in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 12, p. 16; Letter to Major John Cartwright, June 5, 1824, in (Thomas Jefferson Randolph, ed.) *Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies, from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830), p. 396.

⁵³ From Phillips 1857 Phi Beta Kappa address at Yale College on “The Republican Scholar of Necessity an Agitator.”

⁵⁴ David Brooks, “America Is Having A Moral Convulsion,” *The Atlantic* (October 5, 2020), reminds us that responsible citizenship reflects mutual trust based on reciprocal moral behavior, or in his words, “. . . [such] trust is a collective moral achievement.” That dynamic is well-known to community organizers. My first organizing in south-central Los Angeles began after a neighborhood organizing drive in an area with about one-third Anglo, one-third Latino, and one-third Black residents. When talking with them at their front doors about their concerns for the neighborhood, many spoke of the others as horrible people who were ruining the neighborhood. After the organizing drive, a founding meeting of the neighborhood organization, and much informal talk among neighbors, nearly a hundred residents came together in a church basement for a Christmas party. The good fellowship could be cut with a knife. The warmth and excitement were palpable. They had come to recognize that they shared moral outrage at the gang killings in their neighborhood and that they valued the virtue of working together. They built relationships and trust in their dedication to their commonweal. That was my experience many times in the past 50 years.

⁵⁵ In some quarters there is a belief that the unity of the American people in support of the defenders of Ukrainian democratic freedom and sovereignty will spill over to our domestic political divisions, reawakening widespread belief in democracy and overcoming our “pernicious polarization.” For example, see Jennifer Rubin, “Putin could do for American democracy what he did for NATO unity,” *Washington Post* (March 14, 2022). But such a rapprochement seems improbable, short of an attack on the U.S. by an external enemy, such as Russia, if we directly intervene in the war in Ukraine. Craig Shirley and Scott Mauer, “The attack on Pearl Harbor united Americans like no other event in our history,” *Washington Post* (December 7, 2016), proposes that, “Throughout the 240 years of U.S. history, we have only been truly united twice”—on December 7, 1941 and September 11, 2001.

⁵⁶ “Public powers,” which are the powers of governments, controlled by those we regard as “in power,” include the power to enact civil and criminal laws and regulatory policies, to tax, to spend public monies, to police (i.e., take rights and property without compensation for the public’s health, welfare, and morals), to take property by eminent domain (with fair-market compensation), and to market tax-free bonds.

⁵⁷ Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 263, notes: “Historically, the great reform movements have been organized around a series of innovations whose radical character lay in their common vision and force.”

⁵⁸ See Moshe ben Asher, “Moral-Spiritual Infrastructure: Touchstone of Movement-Building Community Organizing,” *Social Policy*, 50(4):55-64 (Winter 2020).

⁵⁹ At the outset, we have the warning of Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and The Discourses* [1513] (New York: Modern Library, Random House, 1950), p. 21: “It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order, this lukewarmness arising partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the laws in their favour; and partly from the incredulity of mankind, who do not truly believe in anything new until they have had the actual experience of it.”

⁶⁰ According to Walter, *op. cit.*, locs. 2345 and 2357: “If America has a second civil war, the combatants will not gather in fields, nor will they wear uniforms. They may not even have commanders. They will slip in and out of the shadows, communicating on message boards and encrypted networks. They will meet in small groups in vacuum-repair shops along retail strips, in desert clearings along Arizona’s border, in public parks in Southern California, or in the snowy woods of Michigan, where they will train to fight. They will go online to plan their resistance, strategizing how to undermine the government at every level and gain control of parts of America. They will create chaos and fear. And then they will force Americans to pick sides.” On the other hand, Paul D. Eaton et al., “3 retired generals: The military must prepare now for a 2024 insurrection,” *Washington Post* (December 17, 2021), warns that “The potential for a total breakdown of the [Army] chain of command along partisan lines—from the top of the chain to the squad level—is significant should another insurrection occur. . . . Under such a scenario [a contested election with loyalties split] it is not outlandish to say a military breakdown could lead to civil war.” See also Rachel Kleinfeld, “The Rise of Political Violence in the United States,” *Journal of Democracy*, 32(4):160-76 (October 2021).

⁶¹ Walter, *op. cit.*, loc. 2761.

⁶² Huq and Ginsburg, *op. cit.*, describe in detail the loss of democracy entailed in legal ramifications not as an event but a gradual process, one comprised of individual steps that in themselves may appear reasonable.

⁶³ Wade Rathke, “Opportunities and Challenges of Devolution: Lessons and Warnings from the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom,” *Radical Community Work Journal* (January 2015) acknowledges that “Political reality in the United States has now become twisted so that the time honored pledge of ‘one people indivisible under God,’ underlines the God-part, while trying to look the other way when thinking about the population as ‘one people,’ leaving ‘indivisible’ more a snicker than a slogan”—which signposted the emerging White Christian supremacy that would have to be overcome to remake our politics and institutions.

⁶⁴ “Citizenhood” denotes one’s *action* as a citizen; “citizenship” signifies the *status* of being a citizen.

⁶⁵ Barber, op. cit., p. 145.

⁶⁶ See: Saskia Sassen, “The Global City: Introducing a Concept,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 11(2):27-43 (Winter/Spring 2005); Josefina V. Cabigon, “Cities in Globalization,” *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, 6(2):73-102 (April 2006); Juan Pablo Pérez Sáenz and Katherine Andrade-Eekhoff, “Local Development in the Global Economy,” NACLA—North American Congress on Latin America (September 25, 2007) [<https://nacla.org/article/local-development-global-economy>]; and Sarah Colenbrander, “Cities as engines of economic growth,” Working Paper, IIED—International Institute for Environment and Development (October 2016) [<https://pubs.iied.org/10801iied>].

⁶⁷ The corruption of urban municipal government is neither unusual nor typically held to account legally. If the fundamental purpose of representative democracy is to serve the commonweal, then the widespread slavish accommodation of private and corporate special interests, which is usually hidden from public view, can only be regarded as ubiquitous corruption, typically rationalized in the name of trickle-down economics. Sheila R. Foster and Christian Iaione, “The City as a Commons,” *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 34(2):281-349 (2016), contend that, “As public officials relax local regulations and other rules to accommodate the preferences of powerful economic interests, the poor and socially vulnerable populations are being displaced by an urban development machine largely indifferent to creating cities that are both revitalized and inclusive” (p. 281).

⁶⁸ For an introduction to the “two-tier solution,” see Robert L. Bish and Vincent Ostrom, *Understanding Urban Government: Metropolitan Reform Reconsidered* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1973), pp. 12-15; and Vincent Ostrom, *The Political Theory of a Compound Republic: Designing the American Experiment* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987). On the two-tier metropolitan and small cities model, Roy W. Bahl et al. (eds.), “The Decentralization of Governance in Metropolitan Areas,” in *Financing Metropolitan Governments in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2013) [https://www.landinstitute.edu/sites/default/files/pubfiles/2308_1648_FMG_Ch04_The_Decentralization_of_Governance_in_Metropolitan_Areas_0.pdf], pp. 85-106, posits: “If sentiments about home rule are strong, a jurisdictionally fragmented system, or a two-tier metropolitan government structure with a strong bottom tier, is more likely than a dominant metropolitan government” to effect “. . . greater influence of an individual voter on budget choices” (p. 86)—“. . . it keeps government close to the people” (p. 88). Unfortunately, the literature on the two-tier model does not include studies of governance by urban municipal government and directly democratic neighborhood jurisdictions, presumably because no such two-tier government exists.

⁶⁹ Joshua Kalla and Ethan Porter, “Correcting Bias in Misperceptions of Public Opinion Among American Elected Officials: Results from Two Field Experiments,” OSF Preprints (July 7, 2019) reports findings that strongly suggest the speciousness of such claims of representation. The experiments revealed that legislators and their staff “. . . systematically misperceive their constituents’ opinions on salient public policies.” Those who had the benefit of access to opinion data were equally off-base in their perceptions. The experimental evidence “. . . portrays such officials as immune to our non-partisan efforts to correct those misperceptions, possibly opening the door to influence from others, such as likely voters, co-partisans, political activists, lobbyists, or donors.” Writing for public consumption in “Politicians Don’t Actually Care What Voters Want,” *New York Times* (July 11, 2019), Kalla and Porter were not reticent about their findings: “What we found should alarm all Americans. An overwhelming majority of legislators were uninterested in learning about their constituents’ views.”

⁷⁰ See Moshe ben Asher [né Michael Silver], “New England Town Government: A Model for Popular Assembly in Two-Tier Metropolitan Government,” *Gather the People* (1980, 2020), p. 1 [https://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/TOWN_GOVT.pdf].

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Historian Lawrence Goodwyn (d. 2013) pointed out several decades ago, based on his classic study of Populism, that even committed reformers accept the idea that their reforms will not significantly transform the structure of power-inequality. See *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. xi. In *Democratic Promise, The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 531, Goodwyn writes that after the election of 1896, “The idea that serious structural reform of the democratic process was ‘inevitable’ no longer seemed persuasive to reasonable reformers. . . . A consensus thus came to be silently ratified: reform politics need not concern itself with structural alteration of the economic customs of the society. . . . The reform tradition of the twentieth century unconsciously defined itself within the framework of inherited power relationships.”

⁷³ See: Frank Bryan, William Keith, James Kloppenberg, Jane Mansbridge, Michael Morrell, and Graham Smith, “Collective Interview on the History of Town Meetings,” *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 15(2): Article 8 (2019); and Frank M. Bryan, *Real Democracy, The New England Town Meeting and How It Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁷⁴ See Michael Walzer, “Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology,” *History and Theory*, 3(1):59-90 (1963). Walzer notes that the Puritans were revolutionaries in their aim to transform society according to their own means of salvation. In New England, they destroyed the hierarchy of the old order, replacing it with “. . . collective control of

themselves, of each other. . .” (p. 89). There they lived with “the fear of sudden and violent death” (p. 79). What they feared most, however, was social disorder, and “. . . righteousness was a consolation and a way of organizing the self for survival” (p. 83). Puritanism was thus a way of coping, “. . . self-confident and free of worry, capable of vigorous, willful activity” (p. 84). The Puritans viewed political activity as “. . . a form of work: it required systematic application, attention to detail, sustained interest and labor” (p. 85).

⁷⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville (Henry Reeve, trans.), *Democracy in America*, Vols. I and II (1835-1840—Kindle edition), loc. 1184.

⁷⁶ See: Joshua D. Miller et al., “Narcissism and United States’ culture: The view from home and around the world,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109(6):1068-89 (December 2015); Dennis Shen, “A rise in narcissism could be one of the main causes of America’s political and economic crises,” LSE Phelan US Centre (June 28, 2017) [<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2017/06/28/a-rise-in-narcissism-a-root-of-americas-crises>]; and Jon Sverre Owrenn Remme, “Narcissism and Morality: A study of morality with regard to individualism and inter-subjective concern,” UiO:DUO Research Archive (Master thesis, 2002) [<https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/24956>].

⁷⁷ See: Matthew M. Yalch, “Dimensions of psychological narcissism and intention to vote for Donald Trump,” *PLOS ONE* (April 15, 2021) [<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0249892>]; Brooks, op. cit.; and Michael Gerson, “The moral decay of our politics,” *The Spokesman-Review* (October 9, 2019).

⁷⁸ The characteristics of twenty-first century secular American society include commercialization of almost every aspect of life, rampant materialism, and widespread narcissism; the decline of traditional values, such as fidelity, loyalty, honesty, and productivity; the growing rejection of traditional institutions, such as family, church, and community; and the commonplace abandonment of responsible citizenship. Dr. Robert Lustig’s research demonstrates that four major crises of American well-being—the healthcare crisis, the Social Security crisis, the opioid crisis, and the depression crisis—have a shared provenance: “The systemic confusion and conflation of *pleasure* with *happiness*.” Virtually all the *pleasure*-producing activities, focused as they are on sensuality and materialism, commonly lead to addictions that are self-destructive and damaging to others in one’s marriage, family, community, commerce, and nation (the last, given the economic and national security consequences of metabolic syndrome diseases). See Robert Lustig, “The pursuit of pleasure is a modern-day addiction,” *The Guardian* (September 9, 2017) [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/09/pursuit-of-pleasure-modern-day-addiction>], in which he observes: “Too much dopamine and not enough serotonin, the neurotransmitters of the brain’s ‘pleasure’ and ‘happiness’ pathways, respectively. Despite what the telly and social media say, pleasure and happiness are not the same thing. Dopamine is the ‘reward’ neurotransmitter that tells our brains: ‘This feels good, I want more.’ Yet too much dopamine leads to addiction. Serotonin is the ‘contentment’ neurotransmitter that tells our brains: ‘This feels good. I have enough. I don’t want or need any more.’ Yet too little serotonin leads to depression. Ideally, both should be in optimal supply. But dopamine drives down serotonin. And chronic stress drives down both.” More definitively, see Robert H. Lustig, *The Hacking of the American Mind* (New York: Avery, 2017).

⁷⁹ The beneficial confluence of nonpartisan political purposes and moral-spirituality should be familiar to community organizers by virtue of their extensive faith-based organizing and by the support they have received from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the Jewish Funders Network, Lutheran Services in America, and many other denominations, and more broadly, from the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization. See: Mark R. Warren and Richard L. Wood, “Faith-Based Community Organizing: The State of the Field,” *comm-org* (January 2001) [comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2001/faith/faith.htm#iii]; and Brad R. Fulton and Richard L. Wood, “Interfaith Community Organizing: Emerging Theological and Organizational Challengers,” *International Journal of Public Theology*, 6:398-420 (January 2012).

⁸⁰ See Erik Owens, “The Boisi Center Interviews: David Hall,” The Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, Boston College (October 18, 2011) [<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/Boisi/pdf/fl1/63%20Hall%20Interview.pdf>].

⁸¹ Barber, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

⁸² From Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Historical Discourse” (at Concord), in (Edward Waldo Emerson, ed.) *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Miscellanies* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1904), p. 49.

⁸³ See AnnMarie French, “The Evolution of Town Meeting,” *Town & City Magazine* (February 2007) [<https://www.nhmunicipal.org/town-city-article/evolution-town-meeting>], a publication of the New Hampshire Municipal Association.

⁸⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *American Institutions and their Influence* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1851).

⁸⁵ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 601: “The town or the township with its primary assembly is best . . . it is the most educative of citizens who bear a part in it. The town meeting has been not only the source but the school of democracy.”

⁸⁷ William S. Simmons, “Cultural Bias in the New England Puritans’ Perception of Indians,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 38(1):56-72 (January 1981), relates that in Puritan society it was normative to believe “. . . in God, Satan, demons, witches, the moral significance of plagues, and other-worldly intervention in personal as well as national affairs” (p. 57). It’s not surprising, then, that the Puritans who settled in New England believed that “. . .

the Indian inhabitants . . . worshipped devils . . . and that the Indians themselves were bewitched” (p. 56). On the other hand, Daniel R. Mandell, “Indigenous People and the New England Town Meeting: Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1730-1775,” *Participations*, 15(2):123-147 (2016) reports that Mohicans “. . . participated in town meetings and elected ‘traditional’ leaders to typical New England offices.” Meetings were “. . . conducted in the Mohican as well as the English language. . . .”

⁸⁸ For example, see Donald Ratcliffe, “The Right to Vote and the Rise of Democracy,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 33:219-254 (Summer 2013).

⁸⁹ See Joseph F. Zimmerman, *The New England Town Meeting, Democracy in Action* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999), p. 185: “The leitmotifs of the primary assembly are openness and equality. Majoritarian government is possible at any time. Even the most apathetic voter is invited to participate, as there are no legal barriers to participation, and his or her vote is weighted equally with the vote of a regular attendee.”

⁹⁰ “Thomas Jefferson [letter] to Joseph C. Cabell, 2 February 1816,” *Founders Online* (National Archives) [<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-09-02-0286>].

⁹¹ See: Peter J. Henning, “It’s getting harder to prosecute politicians for corruption,” *The Conversation* (February 16, 2018) [<https://theconversation.com/its-getting-harder-to-prosecure-politicians-for-corruption-91609>]; and Leah Litman, “The Supreme Court Says Sorry, It Just Can’t Help With Political Corruption,” *The Atlantic* (May 8, 2020).

⁹² For example, see Graham Smith, *Beyond the Ballot, 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World* (London, UK: The Power Inquiry, May 2005), p. 78, which concludes that “. . . the use of open [directly democratic] meetings is limited to relatively small-scale settings.”

⁹³ See: Mark Purcell, “Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City,” *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 36(1):141-154 (2013); Bertie Russell, “Beyond the Local Trap: New Municipalism and the Rise of the Fearless Cities,” *Antipode*, 51(3):989-1010 (2019); and John Gasti and Erik Olin Wright (eds.), *Legislature by Lot, Transformative Design for Deliberative Governance* (London & New York: Verso, 2019). More generally, see Graham Smith, *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Democratic Participation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁹⁴ For examples, see: Juliet Musso et al., “Toward ‘Strong Democracy’ in Global Cities? Social Capital Building, Theory-Driven Reform, and the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Experience,” *Public Administration Review*, 71(1):102-111 (January/February 2011); and Alberto Corsín Jiménez and Adolfo Estalella, “The atmospheric person—Value, experiment, and ‘making neighbors’ in Madrid’s popular assemblies,” *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3(2):119-39 (2013).

⁹⁵ See Moshe ben Asher [né Michael Silver], “Vill Economics,” *Gather the People* (1978) [https://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/VILL_ECONOMICS.pdf].

⁹⁶ See Moshe ben Asher and Khulda Bat Sarah, “Directly Democratic Metropolitan Government: Envisioning Beyond Oppression, Rebellion, and Reform,” *Social Policy*, 46(1):6-19 (Spring 2016).

⁹⁷ Barber, op. cit., p. 269, proposes, although without explicit justification, that “Neighborhood assemblies can probably include no fewer than five thousand citizens and certainly no more than twenty-five thousand. . . .”

⁹⁸ Massachusetts Constitution, Article LXXXIX, 192nd General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts [<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/Constitution#amendmentArticleLXXXIX>].

⁹⁹ We might similarly think it would be preposterous for a state to have hundreds of counties, but Texas has 254. It would be surprising if given the opportunity, the citizens of those counties would vote to dissolve any of them. Of course, the standard to determine the ideal number of counties is the will of the people according to the degree of “home rule” they want, not an expert’s opinion on “best practices” of local government, which at best typically reveal monied-elite bias toward efficiency and economy at the expense of equity, equality, and accountability.

¹⁰⁰ Regarding municipal corruption generally, see Richard Fausset et al., “‘It’s the Human Way’: Corruption Scandals Play Out in Big Cities Across the U.S.” *New York Times* (February 5, 2019). Specifically, in my city of Los Angeles, “Generations of Los Angeles leaders have fostered a corrupt political culture in the city, centered on real estate development.” See Editorial, “The Englander indictment,” *Los Angeles Times* (March 11, 2020); and for more on the recent corruption of city officials, see also: David Zahniser and James Queally, “DA’s office will review campaign contributions from donors with ties to Sea Breeze developer,” *Los Angeles Times* (October 31, 2016); David Zahniser and Emily Alpert Reyes, “City Hall facing a crisis of trust,” *Los Angeles Times* (April 2, 2020); David Zahniser, “L.A. City Councilman Jose Huizar charged in federal corruption probe,” *Los Angeles Times* (June 23, 2020); Steve Lopez, “Arrest at City Hall. Ho-hum, say Angelenos,” *Los Angeles Times* (June 23, 2020); Michael Woo, “L.A. Needs New Corruption-Fighting Tools,” *Los Angeles Times* (June 25, 2020); Matt Hamilton, “Former L.A. County Assessor John Noguez again faces corruption charges,” *Los Angeles Times* (July 28, 2020); Susan Shelley, “Corruption, legal and otherwise, at Los Angeles city hall,” *Daily News* (May 4, 2021); Soledad Ursúa, “Corruption? In Los Angeles?” *City Journal* (November 2, 2021); and Editorial, “Another L.A. City Hall mess,” *Los Angeles Times* (February 27, 2022). At the time of these reports, California was not even in the top ten states for political corruption. See Statista, “The Worst U.S. States For Corruption” (February 20, 2020) [<https://www.statista.com/chart/federal-corruption-convictions-per-10000-inhabitants>]. For the history of L.A. corruption, see:

squaremile, “How crime and corruption built modern Los Angeles” (April 23, 2018) [<https://squaremile.com/features/los-angeles-dark-city>]; and Charlotte Jansen, “Crime, corruption, and sin: the dark underbelly of Los Angeles in the 1920s-1950s,” *Wallpaper* (May 21, 2018) [<https://www.wallpaper.com/los-angeles-crime-photography-1920-1950>].

¹⁰¹ See: William E. Schluter, *Soft Corruption: How Unethical Conduct Undermines Good Government and What To Do About It* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017); James McCusker, “We have to address ‘soft corruption,’ and it won’t be easy,” *Herald Business Journal* (November 8, 2019) [<https://www.heraldnet.com/business/we-have-to-address-soft-corruption-and-it-wont-be-easy/>]; and David Plymyer, “A culture of ‘soft corruption’ in Baltimore County,” *Baltimore Sun* (January 3, 2022).

¹⁰² In California, this tradition has been replaced by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), county-level agencies empowered by state law to review and approve or deny the major structural changes proposed for local governments, which does not include municipal charter reform that does not affect overall boundaries. They may make absolute or conditional orders, and their decisions are not subject to review by higher agencies of government. Membership normally consists of five persons, two appointed by the county supervisors from among their own number, two appointed by a committee of representatives from cities within the county, and one representative of the “general public” appointed by the other four members. Under certain conditions a LAFCO may expand its membership to seven with representatives from special districts. LAFCO policy favors annexation and opposes formation of new public organizations. While they are not county agencies, the counties must pay their operating costs. The commissions are also dependent on the counties for staff, facilities, legal counsel, and other support. Withal, it is hardly surprising to find them biased toward the county viewpoint. Moreover, with four-fifths of their members tied to the interests of existing cities and counties, the arrangement approaches a cartel: the decision to allow entry of an organizational competitor is placed in the hands of confirmed monopolists.

¹⁰³ Minimums may be set to ensure that a handful of citizens in an area dominated by corporate headquarters or manufacturing facilities cannot form and dominate a neighborhood government.

¹⁰⁴ Notable examples include Head Start services, and the American Rescue Plan that provides comprehensive support for children and families to “address system inequalities.” See Office for the Administration of Children & Families, “Office of Head Start” and “American Rescue Plan,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2021) [<https://www.acf.hhs.gov>].

¹⁰⁵ Regarding long-term inequities in city services, see: James J. Feigenbaum and Andrew Hall, “How High-Income Areas Receive More Service from Municipal Government: Evidence from City Administrative Data,” SSRN (August 13, 2015) [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2631106]; Mitchell F. Rice, “Inequality, discrimination, and service delivery: A recapitulation for the public administrator,” *International Journal of Public Administration*, 1(4):409-433 (1979); Ben Poston and Peter Jamison, “Inequity is ‘baked in’ when it comes to L.A. city services; where you live matters,” *Los Angeles Times* August 28, 2015); and Jessica Trounstone, “Minority groups perceive unequal treatment from local governments,” LSE Phelan US Centre (March 11, 2014) [<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usapblog/2014/03/11/minority-groups-perceive-unequal-treatment-from-local-governments/>]

¹⁰⁶ A typical advantage for a low-income or working-class neighborhood would be to have a share of the public powers in the form of a veto of municipal zoning decisions that environmental impact reports confirm represent a threat to the health or life of residents or that can be affirmed judicially to be racially, ethnically, or socio-economically biased. Both of those conditions currently apply in Houston’s largely Black and Latino Southwest Crossing neighborhood, which is threatened by the construction of a propane storage facility located 500 feet from homes. But as things stand, the residents’ options are limited to protests of one kind or another, which are unlikely to have much effect in energy industry-dominated Texas. See Xander Peters, “How Texas’ Energy Woes Are Derailing Life In This Houston Neighborhood,” *Huffpost* (April 9, 2022). See also Wendy Russell, *Regaining Control: Community Development and Self-Determination in Fort Albany First Nation* (Doctoral thesis: McMaster University, July 1998) on the advantages of an oppressed indigenous Cree community of 2,031 gaining direct control of their own development, which had previously been controlled by a regional Roman Catholic Mission supported by the Canadian government.

¹⁰⁷ As Barber, op. cit., p. 236, explains: “Of course, when participation is neutered by being separated from power, then civic action will be only a game and its rewards will seem childish to women and men of the world; they will prefer to spend their time in the ‘real’ pursuit of private interests.”

¹⁰⁸ Barber, op. cit., p. 272.

¹⁰⁹ De Tocqueville, op. cit., loc. 5111.

¹¹⁰ Problematic neighborhood conditions significantly affect both urban and inner-suburban neighborhoods. See Ilhamdaniah Saleh, “Measuring Neighbourhood Hardships and Neighbourhood Change between 2010-2015 in Suburban Neighbourhoods of Buffalo Metropolitan Area, New York,” *Geographica Pannonica*, 25(2):102-112 (June 2021).

¹¹¹ “Perhaps the first tax revolt in North America occurred in 1631 when members of the Congregational Church in Watertown near Boston protested a tax to build fortifications to protect the colony. The Watertown minister and congregation objected when the General Court [i.e., state legislative body] enacted the tax without the consent of the people.” See Constitutional Rights Foundation, “Puritan Massachusetts: Theocracy or Democracy,” Bill of Rights in Action (Fall 2013) [<https://www.crf-usa.org/images/pdf/gates/puritans-of-mass.pdf>].

¹¹² See Useful Community Development, “Neighborhood Solar Solutions Could Be Cost Effective” (2017) [www.useful-community-development.org/neighborhood-solar.html]; and for additional perspective, see U.S. Department of Energy, “A Guide to Community Solar: Utility, Private, and Non-profit Project Development” (2010), [www.nrel.gov/docs/fy11osti/49930.pdf]. In addition to developing their own solar enterprise, neighborhoods would have the option to negotiate for discounted rates with private companies.

¹¹³ See: Jennifer E. DeVoe and Rachel Gold, “Community of Solution for the U.S. Health Care System: Lessons from the U.S. Educational System,” *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, 26(3):323-26 (May-June 2013); Andrea Kline Tilford et al., “A Description of Nurse Practitioner Practice,” *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 26(1):69-74 (2012); Nan Liu et al., “A new model for nurse practitioner utilization in primary care: Increased efficiency and implications,” *Health Care Management Review* (January-March 2014); Medical Group Management Association, “NPP [non-physician practitioner] utilization in the future of US healthcare,” *MGMA Research & Analysis Report* (March 2014) [<https://www.mgma.com/Libraries/Assets/PracticeResources/NPPsFutureHealthcare-final.pdf>], which cites David Gans (MSHA, FACMPE senior fellow) to note: “In primary care practices, they [NPPs] can provide 80 percent or more of services with equal or better patient satisfaction at a lower cost than a physician” (p. 15); C.M. Brown et al., “A neighborhood-based approach to population health in the pediatric medical home,” *Journal of Community Health*, 40(1):1-11 (February 2015); A. Feinberg et al., “Launching a Neighborhood-Based Community Health Worker Initiative, Harlem Health Advocacy Partners (HHAP) Community Needs Assessment” (December 2015), A joint report by the NYU-CUNY Prevention Research Center, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York City Housing Authority, and Community Service Society [<https://www.med.nyu.edu/prevention-research/sites/default/files/prevention-research2/final-may-2016-hhap-neighborhood-based-comm-report.pdf>].

¹¹⁴ For an example of the practical benefits of town public powers, see Editorial Board, “Corporate giant tries to kill small Maine town’s broadband plans,” *Press Herald* (November 23, 2021).

¹¹⁵ For the advantages of neighborhood-based public safety forces, see Elinor Ostrom et al., “Do We Really Want to Consolidate Urban Police Forces? A Reappraisal of Some Old Assertions,” *Public Administration Review*, 33(5):423-432 (September-October 1973), which concludes: “(1) small police departments can provide higher levels of service than larger departments, and (2) high degrees of specialization and professionalization are not required for effective police services. On the basis of this, we believe more serious attention should be paid to proposals for creating small jurisdictions within large cities to provide generalized patrol services while enhancing opportunities for community control. At the same time, a large-scale police jurisdiction in the same city may be needed to provide the more technical services which require specialization of personnel and equipment. Conceptualization [of] reform as *either total consolidation or total decentralization* may not lead to better police services in metropolitan areas. Conscious use of overlapping jurisdictions of varying sizes may be necessary to combine the advantages of both small and large scale” (p. 430). See also Eric Lack, “Bill De Blasio Still Loves New York,” *The New Yorker* (February 20, 2022), in which the former mayor describes Bill Bratton, the former New York police commissioner: “. . . his overall impact has been profoundly progressive, because he understands most essentially that you cannot create public safety without the community. That’s what neighborhood policing was, and neighborhood policing will eventually be understood as the model that works.”

¹¹⁶ Wendy E. Hollingshead Corbett and Justin R. Corbett, “Community Mediation in Economic Crisis: The Reemergence of Precarious Sustainability,” *Nevada Law Journal*, 11(2):458-480 (Spring 2011) notes: “The premise of community mediation is simple: to provide the public with a voluntary way to resolve conflict in a productive, collaborative manner that relies primarily on self-determination. Community mediation strives to keep justice in the hands of the people and provide a receptive forum for their enhanced voices. Over the past several decades, the unique grassroots-orientation of community mediation has proven to be highly effective in resolving interpersonal conflict at the local level. Community mediation is a grassroots, neighbor-to-neighbor form of alternative dispute resolution that has seen growing acceptance nationwide since its inception in the mid-1970s. The premise of community mediation is simple: to provide the public with a voluntary way to resolve conflict in a productive, collaborative manner that relies primarily on self-determination. Community mediation strives to keep justice in the hands of the people and provide a receptive forum for their enhanced voices. Over the past several decades, the unique grassroots-orientation of community mediation has proven to be highly effective in resolving interpersonal conflict at the local level.”

¹¹⁷ Galvin, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁸ Legal limitations may be placed on use of the Australian ballot, such as specifying a limited number of uses in any year, used only to elect officers, etc. Accommodations could be made for those who are hospitalized, home-

bound or restricted to congregate living. Those who could not afford cell phones might be assisted in obtaining them from charitable sources; those unable to use cell phones because of age or disability, might be paired with another member as a citizen-enabler, who could be recruited, trained, and assigned through various faith communities.

¹¹⁹ The “warning” is a requirement of New England open-town procedure. In Massachusetts, “Two hundred registered voters or 20% of the total number of registered voters, whichever is less in number, may request a special Town Meeting,” which the selectmen must call within 45 days. The “warrant” for a town meeting, issued by the selectmen, sets the time, place, and agenda. However, a minimum of 10 registered voters signing a written request may insert articles in the warrant. For details of Massachusetts town procedures, see William Francis Galvin, “Citizen’s Guide to Town Meetings,” Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (n.d., retrieved online January 31, 2022) [https://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cispdf/Guide_to_Town_Meetings.pdf].

¹²⁰ Digital technologies in directly democratic popular assemblies seem unlikely to extend very far beyond this type of application. Norbert Kersting and Karen Mossberger (eds.), *Studies in Digital Politics and Governance* (Gewerbestrasse, CH: Springer, 2020), note that, “. . . far-reaching expectations of a fundamental reform of modern democracy, through the application of online tools for political participation and public discourse, are vanishing after two decades of e-democracy. . .” (pp. 2-3). Earlier, Graham Smith, op. cit., p. 10, who surveyed “. . . democratic innovations that might increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process,” concluded that “E-democracy is not going to replace existing modes of engagement.”

¹²¹ Contrary to this directly democratic process, the risks of much more extensive digital innovation in governing institutions has been inadvertently suggested by Hélène Landemore et al. (eds.), *Digital Technology and Democratic Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021), which proposes going beyond the digitization of existing forms of government to new democratic institutions based on a different theory of democracy, an “alternative paradigm” called “open democracy” (loc. 1717). Despite their paeans to democracy, the authors seemingly failed to see the irony in their description of “. . . myriad randomly appointed small groups deliberating independently, with their inputs aggregated up to a final level of decision-making, or simply fed to a central decision-making body with ultimate sovereign power” (loc. 2059)—which approximates the USSR’s totalitarian “democratic centralism.” As described, their conception of “open democracy” has three remarkable shortcomings, which serve as caveats regarding the application of digital technology to governance: its digital futurism is devoid of an explicitly democratic social strategy to reach the future; it fails to offer a plan to counter the potential for corruption of an elite technocratic digital regime; and it treats the question of algorithm curation only from a top-down perspective—that is, it explores how the “news” will be filtered down in an “open democracy” but ignores the question of how the deliberations and preferences of citizen will be filtered up to the central decision-making body that controls the public powers. The irony of this imagined digitally perfected democracy is that it would replace political intermediaries with technocratic intermediaries, leaving the demos alienated as ever from the public powers, despite all the rhetoric extolling democracy.

¹²² One of the unexpected outcomes of online meeting places has been described as the “social street.” Neighbors initially introduce themselves online but their connections transition to the streets where they greet each other and begin to talk about what’s happening in their lives. These “social streets” in Europe, Brazil, and New Zealand numbered about 400 in 2015. See: Gaia Pianigiani, “Italian Neighbors Build a Social Network, First Online, Then Off,” *New York Times* (August 24, 2015); and Niccolò Morelli, “Creating Urban Sociality in Middle-Class Neighborhoods in Milan and Bologna: A Study on the Social Streets Phenomenon,” *City & Community*, 18(3):834-852 (September 1, 2019).

¹²³ See: George Tyler, *Billionaire Democracy: The Hijacking of the American Political System* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2018); Samar Khurshid, “Experts Target Influence of Big Money, Voter Apathy,” *Gotham Gazette* (April 10, 2015) [<https://www.gothemgazette.com/government/5676-experts-target-influence-of-big-money-and-voter-apaty>]; Steven Rogers, “Electoral Accountability for State Legislative Roll-Calls and Ideological Representation,” *American Political Science Review*, 111(3):555-571 (August 2017); and Shane Goldmacher and Rachel Shorey, “Billionaires Big Checks Shape Battle for Congress,” *New York Times* (February 1, 2022).

¹²⁴ Benjamin R. Barber, *Cool Cities: Urban Sovereignty and the Fix for Global Warming* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017) observes that “. . . Climate change is the most urgent challenge facing humankind . . .” (p. 1). His proposed alternative to the mostly failed efforts of national states and political parties is “. . . a politics of participation that devolves power back to the people closer to where they actually live: back to cities. Shift the focus down to municipalities and over to civil society . . .” (p. 10).

¹²⁵ Barber, op. cit., *Strong Democracy*, p. 185. We have a demonstration of this genre of community-building in the work of Braver Angels (<https://braverangels.org>), whose mission is to “. . . bring Americans together to bridge the partisan divide and strengthen our democratic republic.” See Jane Jacobs et al., *Better Angels, Participant-Identified Effects of Better Angels Experiences* (October 2019) [<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kkpwt59p7Ci6jhtOaAI-YFr0cqy4QOAY9/view>] for a report on their successes, a summary of which is available at <https://braverangels.org/evaluation/>.

¹²⁶ Barber, op. cit., *Strong Democracy*, p. 224.

¹²⁷ See: Paul M. Bisca and Renekka Grun, “Higher power to deliver: The overlooked nexus between religion and development,” Brookings (February 25, 2020) [<https://brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2020/02/25/higher-power-to-deliver-the-overlooked-nexus-between-religion-and-development>]; Jenny Lund, “The Role of Religion, Spirituality and Faith in Development; a critical theory approach,” *Third World Quarterly*, 30(5):937-951 (2009); Rachel M. McCleary, “Religion and Economic Development,” *Policy Review* (April & May 2008) [<https://www.hoover.org/research/religion-and-economic-development>]; and Anne-Marie Holenstein, “Role and Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Development Co-operation,” Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation SDC (March 2005) [<https://s3.amazonaws.com/berekley-center/050300HolensteinRoleSignificanceReligionSpiritualityDevelopmentCooperation.pdf>].

¹²⁸ The research reported in Philip Schwadel and Sam Hardy, “Faith still shapes morals and values even after people are ‘done’ with religion,” *The Conversation* (June 16, 2021) [<https://theconversation.com/faith-still-shapes-morals-and-values-even-after-people-are-done-with-religion-160328>] confirms that “. . . the religion residue effect is real. The morals and values of religious dones [*sic*] are more similar to religious Americans than they are to the morals and values of other nonreligious Americans.” Peer-reviewed research confirms that traditional values persist. See Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker, “Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values,” *American Sociological Review*, 65(1):19-51 (February 2000). Although the values persist in cognitive form, they may seem to have disappeared because they often remain unexpressed in action without prospective positive reinforcement, such as the anticipated benefits that accompany participation in organized social action. See Moshe ben Asher (né Michael Silver), “Social Learning Theory and Community Organizing,” *Gather the People* (1978, 2021) [https://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/SOCIAL_LEARNING_CO.pdf], p. 17.

¹²⁹ The Local Agency Formation Commission, an independent regulatory commission created by the California Legislature to control the boundaries of cities and most special districts. (See related note above.)

¹³⁰ See Hanna Fenichel Pitkin and Sara M. Shumer, “On Participation,” *Democracy*, 2(4):43-54 (Fall 1982), p. 51.

¹³¹ For a review of the forms of neighborhood empowerment, see Stephen R. Miller, “Legal Neighborhoods,” *Harvard Environmental Law Review*, 37(1):105-166 (2013).

¹³² For the absurdity of such fantasies, see Kyra Gottesman and Jennie Blevins, “Oroville is now a ‘constitutional republic’—what does that mean?” *East Bay Times* (November 12, 2021).

¹³³ For a definitive enumeration of strikes from the first until the 1930s, see: Florence Peterson, “Strikes in the United States, 1880-1936,” U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 651 (August 1937). On the history of “The Mine Wars,” see: PBS WGBH, “Labor Wars in the U.S.,” *American Experience* (n.d.) [<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/theminewars-labor-wars-us>]. See also: Joe Burns, “Reviving the Strike: Lessons of the 1930s for Today’s Labor Movement,” *In These Times* (June 6, 2011) [<https://inthesetimes.com/article/reviving-the-strike-section-title-part-1>].

¹³⁴ See Boston Tea Party Historical Society, “Boston Tea Party, the Key Event for the Revolutionary War,” (2008) [<http://www.boston-tea-party.org/essays/essay6.html>].

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ American society was also divided at that time. “The American Revolution, while not often called a civil war by modern historians, was referred to as a civil war in its first year. . . .” See American Battlefield Trust, “What is a Civil War?” (n.d.) [<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/what-civil-war>]. Patriots reacted to “. . . statements and other persistent acts of British sympathizing by . . . Loyalist families [which] caused them to be subjected to public humiliation and violence. Property was vandalized, and homes were looted and burned.” See, SAAM, “Loyalists and Patriots,” Smithsonian American Art Museum (July 2014) [<https://americanexperience.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Loyalists-and-Patriots.pdf>].

¹³⁷ For examples, see: Nancy Shulins, “Vermont Towns Vote to Prohibit Nuclear Plants,” *Lewiston Evening Journal* (March 2, 1977); and David Scribner, “Resistance to gas pipeline spreads across Western Mass.,” *Berkshire—The Edge* (July 2, 2014) [<http://theberkshireedge.com/resistance-gas-pipeline-spreads-across-western-mass>]. Collaboration of New England towns for policy advocacy and provision of services has been furthered by organizations such as the Massachusetts Municipal Association and the Southern Maine Solar Collaborative.

¹³⁸ See Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 12: The printers “. . . ordered a time-out and forced their employers to grant an increased wage.”

¹³⁹ See *ushistory.org*, “Labor vs. Management,” U.S. History Online Textbook (2021) [<https://www.ushistory.org/us/37b.asp>].

¹⁴⁰ Strikes were not an early craft-union tactic. See Wolfgang Streeck, “Labor Unions, Union Organization and Union Growth,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2d ed. (2015), pp. 199-204 [<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/protest-movements>].

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Shimon Peres, “In Homage to Ben-Gurion,” *New York Times Magazine* (October 5, 1986), p. 104.

¹⁴² See Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974).

¹⁴³ See Samuel P. Hays, “The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 55:157-166 (October 1964), quoted by John J. Harrigan and Ronald K. Vogel, *Political Change in*

the Metropolis, Seventh Edition (New York-San Francisco-Boston: Longman, 2003), p. 85. For a contemporary study on the policy preferences of the wealthy in contrast to the general public, see Benjamin I. Page, “Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(1):51-73 (March 2013).

¹⁴⁴ See Reihan Salam, “Mark Hatfield’s Neighborhood Government Act,” *National Review* (December 13, 2011).

¹⁴⁵ Although modifying tax law by statewide initiative is not new, the proposal here might be in doubt long before it would be made publicly. Currently, the California Business Roundtable is collecting signatures for a statewide initiative that would make it much more difficult for local governments to introduce or increase taxes and fees. See Michael Hiltzik, “Anti-tax initiative would help its donors,” *Los Angeles Times* (March 2, 2022). How such an initiative, if passed, would affect newly created public entities is unknown; but it seems unlikely that the courts would prevent new municipalities and special districts from levying taxes to meet their needs. One possible judicial remedy would be to require the public jurisdictions to get approval for tax and fee changes by a ballot initiative.

¹⁴⁶ See Jonathan Rosenblum, “Unions in the Trump Era,” Tikkun (email broadcast 1/2/17) [<http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/unions-facing-the-trump-era>].

¹⁴⁷ A survey of the world’s seven great religions and several secular organizations, including the American Atheists, American Humanist Association, and the United Nations, confirms numerous universal moral values, including truth, justice, and compassion. See Richard T. Kinnier et al., “A Short List of Universal Moral Values,” *Counseling and Values*, 45(1):4-16 (October 2000). The Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—promulgate the values of righteousness, truth, justice, freedom, peace, and kindness, although each with its own unique theological interpretation and practice. Nonetheless, they share convictions in the application of these values to civil society. Although their theological views of “truth” and “justice” vary, the belief that public officials have a moral duty to be truthful and to treat all people equally is widely shared. For their particulars, see: Sam Berrin Shoukoff, “Pursuing Righteousness,” *My Jewish Learning* (n.d.) [<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/pursuing-righteousness>]; L. Nelson Bell, “Righteousness,” *Christianity Today* (June 9, 1958); Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed of Qadian, “Righteousness,” Chap. 11 in *The Essence of Islam*, Vol. II (London Mosque, 1981) [<https://www.alislam.org/books/essence/chap11/chap11.html>]; Rabbi Louis Jacobs, “Truth and Lies in the Jewish Tradition,” *My Jewish Learning* (n.d.) [<https://myjewishlearning.com/article/truth-and-lies-in-the-jewish-tradition>]; John Caldwell, “What Is Truth?” *Christian Standard* (March 1, 2021) [<https://christianstandard.com/2021/03/what-is-truth>]; Quran Explorer, “Speaking Truth In Islam,” *Education in the Light of Sunnah and Qura’an* (February 1, 2021) [https://www.quranexplorer.com/blog/education-in-the-light-of-sunnah-and-qura’an/speaking_truth_in_islam]; Rabbi Toba Spitzer, “Tzedek: The Jewish Value of Justice,” *My Jewish Learning* (n.d.) [<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tzedek-the-jewish-value-of-justice>]; Smith Hopkins, “Justice and the Christian,” *Olive Creek Church of Christ* (January 20, 2018) [<https://www.olivecreek.org/blog/2018/1/20/justice-and-the-christian-what-is-justice>]; Yasien Mohamed, “More Than Just Law: The Idea of Justice in the Qur’an,” *Yaqeen Institute* (February 7, 2020) [<https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/the-idea-of-justice-in-the-quran>]; Encyclopaedia Judaica, “Freedom,” *Jewish Virtual Library* (2008) [<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/freedom>]; Michael A. Milton, “What Is True Freedom in Christianity?” *Christianity.com* (June 29, 2011) [<https://www.christianity.com/Christian-life/the-true-believers-declaration-of-independence-11634198.html>]; Abdul Sattar Kassem, “The Concept of Freedom in the Quran,” *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(4):165-173 (April 2021); *My Jewish Learning*, “Jewish Ideas of Peace and Nonviolence,” (n.d.) [<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/jewish-ideas-of-peace-nonviolence>]; Volker Stümke, “The Concept of Peace in Christianity,” *De Gruyter* (2021) [<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110682021-002.pdf>]; Juan Cole, “The Idea of Peace in the Qur’an,” *Scholarly Work at the John W. Kluge Center* (August 19, 2016) [<https://blogs.loc.gov/kluge/2016/08/the-idea-of-peace-in-the-quran>]; Rabbi Maurice Lamm, “Day to Day Judaism: Kindness,” *aish* (n.d.) [<https://www.aish.com/jl/i/i/48944871/html>]; Stephen Witmer, “Kindness Changes Everything,” *desiringGod* (September 4, 2016) [<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/kindness-changes-everything>]; and Muhammed Habib, “What does Islam teach about kindness?” *medium.com* (December 6, 2019) [<https://medium.com/@muhammed.habib121/what-does-islam-teach-about-kindness238977edf35d>].

¹⁴⁸ It is not only the moral-spiritual power of these particular values for so many people that draws us to them, but the integrated character of their effects—because where there is no righteousness, there is no truth; where there is no truth, there is no justice; where there is no justice, there is no freedom; where there is no freedom, there is no peace; and where there is no peace, there is no kindness.

¹⁴⁹ Ethical patriotism emphasizes a country’s “moral identity and integrity” to create a “just and humane society” [in contrast to the current ubiquitous performative patriotism]. See “Patriotism,” 2.2.5 Ethical patriotism, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (December 16, 2020) [<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/patriotism>].

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