



WORLD HOLIDAY Imagining a Truly Global Celebration

TOWARD THE END of December 1969, I was visiting my friends Kirsten and Michael in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where I had grown up, trying to enjoy the festive season of the birthday of the Prince of Peace – a tough assignment, with the Vietnam War raging, giving me nightmares and making nightmares of the lives of millions of people. The depressing quality of the times was on all our minds, prompting us to wonder if there wasn't a better way to have fun and celebrate our cherished personal insights about peace, hope, and commitment to a better future.

In the midst of a lively assessment of our faith in humanity, someone said,

"Well, what would a real holiday be like anyway?"

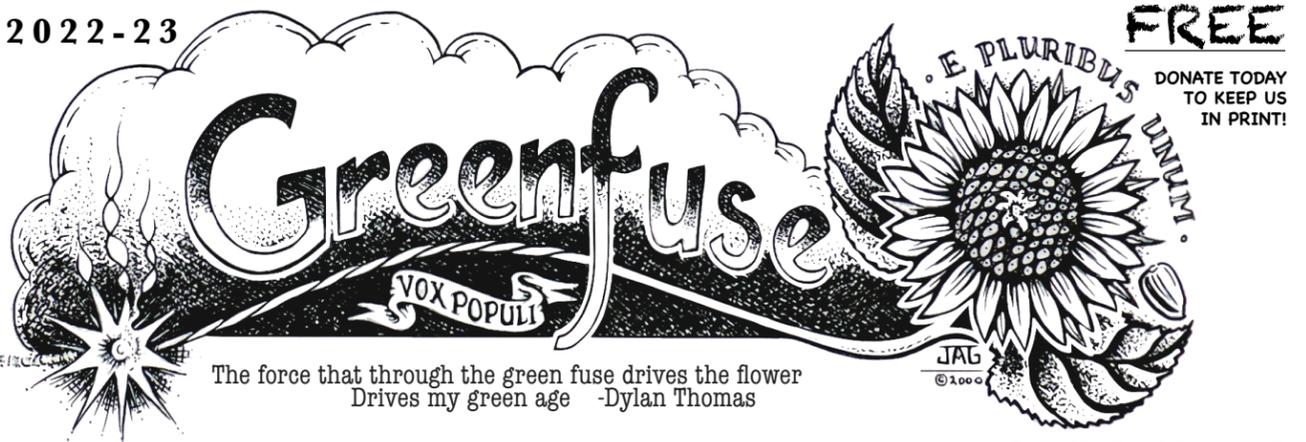
First of all, we agreed, a real holiday would have to be for everybody. And we meant everybody. Enough of nationalism, commercialism, ethnocentrism, species-centrism – away with self-centered exclusivity of all kinds! Early in our conversation, Michael noted that the word "holiday" looked like "holy day." A dictionary disclosed the relationship to the Greek word "holos," meaning "all." So there was nothing too radical in our idea that it should be for everybody.

Then we asked ourselves what we would do at such a time. Many of the ideas that came rapidly to mind were well-established in present religious, national and ethnic holiday traditions: To rededicate ourselves to understanding the purpose of our existence and our place in the world – perhaps even the universe – both as individuals and as members of the human race; to create and enjoy music, poetry and art; to pray, recite, meditate on the theme of peace; to give gifts (a good idea but much too often commercialized); to gather joyfully with others.

We realized a lot was going on in our great traditional holidays and in other large events, both good and bad – the moon shot, John Kennedy's assassination. Such events as fairs, expos and Woodstock, such mass outpourings of the human conscience as the civil-rights marches of the '60s, undisputedly were powerful tools of communication and education (or propaganda). People in large numbers use great occasions to spread their values, to entrench or reexamine their traditions, to reinvigorate their sense of purpose. Could we redirect these great events and holidays to focus on balance with nature and peace with each other?

"Nah – give up on them," said Michael. "Let them be. They aren't designed to do what needs to be done. It's not in their nature. They are all in-group oriented, the initiated setting themselves apart. We need to create a new holiday." But who could possibly do that? Us?! Three people of rather fitful means sharing another low-to-moderate-income Christmas? Not likely.

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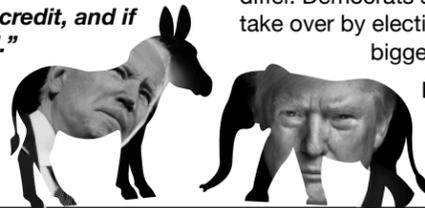
THE RED WAVE - Was a Pink Splash

On average, since 1934, in mid-term elections the president's party has lost 28 house seats. This turn-over was anticipated by the president's low approval rating, but, even as Don Jr. tweeted "Bloodbath," it appears this time if the house majority changes it will be within single digits.

A majority of Republican state and federal candidates were "election deniers"; 160 of them won. But Trump-endorsed candidates severely underperformed in state after state and district after district, losing in key races across the country. This wasn't a bad outcome for Republicans in general – but was more specifically, a rejection of pro-Trump candidates. The gap between "normal" Republicans and the "I won't challenge the election if I win" gang is glaringly obvious. Republicans with minimal MAGA baggage who distanced themselves from Trump did fairly well. The hundreds of candidates Trump franchised with his brand, his favorites, faced overwhelming losses. The Senate majority remains Democratic. Trump, ever the master of self-aggrandizement, said in an interview on election day:

"I think if they win, I should get all the credit, and if they lose, I should not be blamed at all."

This is the first midterm election in two decades where the party that holds the White House didn't get hammered. And Democrats have Trump to thank for that.



In the United States, with an entrenched two-party system, it's impossible to oppose one party without lending support to the candidates and policies of the only other party.

Both parties strategically attempt to harden their "bases", but tactically they are locked in a cheerleading battle between two disparate halves of the country. Elections are being decided by fear of the other, rather than by debate and rational argument. This perpetual battle means that control of the White House and Congress teeters back and forth between two parties with radically different priorities, and apparently world-views, making it exceedingly difficult and cumbersome for the Federal government to enact meaningful long-term plans that benefit the electorate.

This also means that when either party wins, it does so without much of a mandate, and neither party is motivated to regroup, reflect or reform after a humiliating defeat.

'Democracy is on the ballot' was the tag line for this mid-term election, but when asked what this means opinions differ. Democrats said they are worried about a Republican take over by election-denying candidates. But Republican's biggest stated fear was election fraud.

Despite reality, 65% of GOP voters don't believe the certified results of the 2020 presidential election were true.

Democracy, what a concept.

LULA RETURNS

Voters in Brazil have elected Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, known as Lula, president, replacing right-wing, ecocidal leader Jair Bolsonaro.

Lula, held the presidency from 2003 to 2011. In office, he launched programs to end hunger, strengthen family agriculture, provide housing, and protect Brazil's rain forests.

Bolsonaro followed Trump's playbook to rise to the presidency in 2018, governed as Trump did, and worked to delegitimize Lula's victory even before voting began, repeatedly casting unfounded doubts on the voting system.

Combative statements from the president such as that "only God" could remove him from office - meant that there had been a tense wait for him to appear in public in the days following the election.

Democratic leaders around the world congratulated Lula shortly after election officials declared him the winner, in part to head off the losers refusal to accept the results of the election. In late August 2021,

Bolsonaro vowed he would win the 2022 election, be arrested, or be killed.

Hundreds of blockades began immediately after the presidential elections ended, when far-right truck drivers and activists began demanding a "military intervention" arguing that Lula da Silva fraudulently won the presidency.

With all the votes counted, Lula had 50.9% of the valid votes against Mr Bolsonaro's 49.1%.

When he finally appeared in public, 44 hours after the election result was announced, Mr Bolsonaro's statement lasted only two minutes and he did not take any questions from the assembled reporters.

Right-wing figures in the U.S. had urged Bolsonaro to fight. Inveterate Trumper Steve Bannon insisted that the vote was rigged and that he "cannot concede," right-wing agitator Ali Alexander, who helped to organize the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, used the hashtag #StopTheSteal when he noted,

"In Brazil, the MILITARY has the right to insert itself into an election where there is suspected FRAUD. We must have an AUDIT NOW!"

For his part, Lula has promised an inclusive government that will try to heal the nation's political divisions.

"I will govern for 215 million Brazilians...and not just for those who voted for me. There are not two Brazils. We are one country, one people – one great nation," Lula told a crowd after his election:

"It is in nobody's interests to live in a country that is divided and in a constant state of war."

Housing: A Human Right

Or, is it a privilege affordable only to those who have made it under our unfair system of market capitalism?

The cost of homes is skyrocketing, putting homeownership out of the reach of most Americans. Strong house price inflation has combined to significantly increase the typical monthly mortgage payment. And, as the Federal Reserve has started to increase interest rates, homebuyers are being stuck paying an increasing share of their mortgage as interest.

Rental costs are similarly skyrocketing. As of this Spring rents had jumped 17% from the previous year. Rents are up by nearly 20% over the past two years, rental prices are likely to remain high. Trade organization, **realtor.com** does "expect some cooling from the recent accelerated pace." In other words, at some point, rents will increase so much that people will stop being able to rent altogether, which will then lead to lower rents. **Some day. Maybe.**

The current housing crisis is the result of the corporate control of our housing system where for-profit investors and for-profit landlords are at the root of our country's affordability crisis. And the federal government has enabled this speculative behavior in the housing market.

It's not simply that the federal government is leaving it up to the private market to ensure all Americans are housed. It is going much further, by intervening to privilege corporate buyers of homes and rental units. For example, when the housing bubble burst in 2008 as a result of predatory lending practices, thousands of people lost their homes to foreclosures. Instead of helping people remain in their homes, the government sold many of these foreclosed properties to Wall Street investment firms at deep discounts.

These firms now control a significant portion of the rental market in the United States, raising rents in the service of turning profits. They continue to receive tax breaks and subsidies that are far greater than the amount of money the government spends on low-income housing. In other words, the federal government has adopted policies to ensure wealthy corporate interests trump housing needs – instead of the other way around.

We don't have to live like this. And increasingly, government officials and lawmakers are being pushed to embrace the idea long championed by housing rights activists, that "Housing is a human right."

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