

NEVER ON A SUNDAY

Protests and an inclusive resistance

BY TOVA STABIN

I've been attending political rallies and events of one sort or another since I was about 12 years old — so well over a half a century. I've been going to synagogues longer than that. Currently, I belong to the local synagogue Temple Beth Israel and work with the Racial Justice Committee and the Board (all opinions here are my own). I go to temple services for holidays, sometimes on Friday nights and occasionally Saturday morning.

I don't consider myself a particularly religiously observant Jew, but the Sabbath is important to me. Even when I don't go to services, I try to make Saturday be a different sort of day. Maybe I have French toast challah (leftover from the night before), lounge a little longer by a bench at Delta Ponds, read a novel (rather than obsessing about the news), chat with friends, etc. Basically, I try to make it a day where I just let myself "be" instead of "do."

Of course, that's all a lot harder when the world is on fire. So another thing I do, especially recently and surely in the last half century, is attend protests on Shabbat. It really doesn't fit in with my Shabbat observance, thus though it be, and being an introvert, I'm not really thrilled with crowds, but still, it's important right now, especially to show up in numbers. So, I go.

But I always have his nagging feeling. Why are weekend rallies always on Saturday? Why never, or at least rarely, on a Sunday? I've occasionally written letters about this to organizations but have not gotten responses. When I have sometimes expressed this in person (to non-Jews), I sometimes am told that people go to church on Sundays and want the day off. It's usually without acknowledgement that others might have a different day for attending services or a "day off."

And when I am feeling particularly ungenerous, I note that to my knowledge many church services are an hour, some-

times followed by coffee or the like. My Reconstructionist Saturday services — which are shorter than some Orthodox or Conservative congregations — is about three or more hours and frequently a lunch afterward.

To my knowledge, many Christian denominations do not have restrictions particular to the Sabbath in the way Judaism has, such as not riding, writing, cooking, etc. Of course, these are related to how observant one is along with a side of some rabbinic interpretation for certain laws. In some analysis then it would seem less disturbing to have demonstrations on Sundays rather than Saturdays. And yet...

I am appreciative that people fight back against right-wing notions that this is a Christian country. Still, it could be good for us to truly look at ourselves and see in what ways we perpetuate the idea of a Christian nation. When we presume it makes most sense to have major protests, as well as other community-wide events, on Saturdays, we are presuming Sunday is the "natural" day of rest — even for people who don't attend church services.

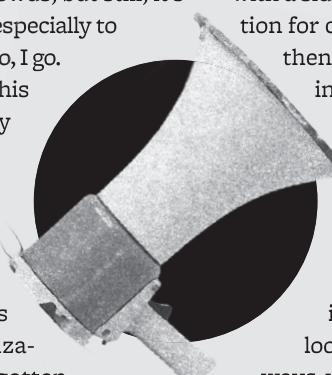
We say, for instance, separation of church and state, assuming the religious institution we all are part of is a church. Try saying separation of synagogue and

state or mosque and state — doesn't seem quite right. And what holiday is an official national holiday? Christmas, which even if celebrated in a "secular manner" is still part of Christian culture, including the word Christ as part of its name. While I would argue that we are not supposed to be a Christian nation, I also want a deeper examination at the ways we are, and what needs to change.

There is much going on that demands attention these days. Maybe having demos and other major events on Sunday is not worth the mention.

But I know what it's meant to be on the receiving end of so-called small gestures of inclusiveness. It can bring me back to hope, sanity, safety; we all need that. Particularly with the rise of antisemitism, how much goodwill could it show to *not* have all the major demos, events, etc. be on Saturdays, to show this sign of inclusivity? How good would it feel to easily ask those who regularly go to Saturday services or who are observant to join me in the streets? To know we are not just looking at surfaces, but for a deeper systemic understanding and a broad inclusivity. Even for an introvert like me, that would be a demo I'd be particularly happy to attend.

tova stabin retired from the University of Oregon but continues as an activist and freelance writer, editor and educator. She is a member of the Temple Beth Israel Board and the chair of their Racial Justice Committee.



OF, BY, AND FOR THE PEOPLE

Time for a new political party

BY ALAN COHEN

The United States was intended by its founders to be the answer to an age-old problem: inequality. The founders' solution was first to state the self-evident — that all men are created equal. Then democracy, the balance of powers, and the federal system were all intended to assure, insofar as possible, equality of opportunity, of impact on our government (of, by, and for the people) and before the law. There were the two threats to be protected against: "mob rule" and rule by the rich.

The system worked reasonably well until corporations escaped from their carefully drawn charters after the Civil War. It took the Populists, the Progressives and then Franklin D. Roosevelt to build systems that put the genie back in the bottle. And from 1935-1975 we were the most successful civilization in history: admired, envied and emulated.

Seventy-five percent of us thought our government was doing a good job back then; while for the past 10 years, only 20 percent have.

That's because the business community, especially the corporate elite, began to organize in the 1910s in response to the Progressives. The National Association of Manufacturers developed the "Big Myth" (government bad, business good), and it and its newer allies (Chamber of Commerce, etc.) have patiently marketed that misinformation for more than a hundred years; with increasing success since the 1960s, and with

increasing dominance since 1980.

Large corporations have once again escaped regulation, and this time pretty much control all three branches of our state and federal governments. Both major parties are now parties of the rich, and the countervailing forces, unions in particular, have dwindled.

The corporations have demanded, and are getting, a redirection of funds once dedicated to the safety net, the arts and education to corporate welfare.

The mainstream media and the universities increasingly provide us with corporate narratives, textbooks and research, as they, too, increasingly depend on corporate financial support. And inequality has grown under each administration for the past 50 years.

The two dominant political parties no longer pay any attention to the wishes of their constituents, which is why, when we work to protect flora and fauna or the climate, to improve health care and housing, etc., we have little success. Changes that once were, and could again be, routine, are, according to our present power structure, "unrealistic."

The only viable solution is a third party, not beholden to corporations or the rich and focused on a fair redistribution of our collective productivity, re-establishment of competition and a rejuvenation of government of, by, and for the people.

The extant third parties have failed because they insist on taking positions on controversial issues. That is how the corporations have kept the focus away from inequality — by promoting polarization around controversial issues. Once we again have a prudent

government of, by, and for the people, we can address the controversies as the founders intended — in debates in Congress with executive and Supreme Court oversight, representing the will of the people — or by national referenda (or in nonfoundational cases by letting each state decide).

We The People, a new political party dedicated to representing the will of the people, is on the ballot in Oregon. It plans to elect candidates devoted to the people's needs: candidates who believe in capitalist competition, not monopoly or oligopoly, and so in the appropriate regulation of corporations, plans to promote equality of opportunity and before the law.

The party will not dissipate its energy and support by taking positions on divisive issues (death penalty, abortion, etc.) Along with state and national efforts, we will act locally — to improve quality of life, address excesses and inequalities in the cost of housing, insurance, taxation and utilities; corruption, electromagnetic radiation, parking, zoning, auditing and farming; to gather and share information about judges and candidates for councils and various other offices, many of whom run unopposed, so that we can vote wisely rather than arbitrarily without information.

Democracy is not a fairy tale. No one is coming to rescue us. If we find ourselves too busy and leave the task to others, we will have built not a democracy, but just another authoritarian regime. If demonstrations were sufficient, they would have an identifiable impact; but though governments pay lip service, policies rarely change in response. What is needed is direct political involvement now.

Please join We The People. You need it and it needs you. Ninety-nine percent of us will benefit; and the rich will be saved from their obsessions.

Alan Cohen was chief of Primary Care at the Roseburg VA, based in Eugene, prior to retirement. His poetry has appeared in nearly 100 venues; in 2023, Easy in Harness: A Productive Approach to Hiring a Good Manager was published, and in 2024, Taxonomic Vignettes, a book of poetry; and this fall, Inferno, a novel, will appear. For more information on We The People, see WTPOR.com.

