

THE Skanner

Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now

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Opinion

Activists Can Learn from King's 'Creative Disruption' Tactics

When Dr. Martin Luther King envisioned the Poor People's Campaign in 1968, he envisioned all kinds of people descending on our nation's capital, bringing demands to federal agencies. He envisioned people pushing for affordable housing, for quality education, for better health care, for minority business development programs, and more. He envisioned them demanding these things, and occupying government offices until these things were produced. Unfortunately, Dr. King's death and the curse of disorganization prevented the Poor People's Campaign from being exactly what Dr. King imagined. But it still made a difference, and people still refer to its conception as brilliant.

The Poor People's Campaign was a paradigm shift in our manner of protest. It wasn't just marching, and it wasn't just protest. It also involved the creative disruption that would come if thousands of people sat in federal offices and demanded change. Can this kind of creative disruption be useful in the age of Trump? After all, Mr. Trump has already told us what he thinks of most of the American people. His nomination of Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.)



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as Attorney General is a flash of the middle finger to men of color, especially the Black men who have been tossed around as cavalierly as the term "law and order." It is a

“Trump seems to do little more than create a cabinet of billionaires who are as far removed from the way ordinary people live

slap in the face to the immigrants and women who have already seen what Sessions stands for. And it is not as if other Trump appointments are better.

Indeed, not a single Trump appointment passes the centrist smell test or suggests a willingness to reach across the aisle. Indeed, Trump seems to do little more than create a cabinet of billionaires who are as far removed from the way ordinary people live that the public policy they attempt to create will be little more than self-serving.

None of them seems to understand the concept of public service. They don't think

they should have to release their financial information, and they shrug off the notion of conflict of interest. Contrast them with Dr. King who only got a big paycheck when he won the Nobel Peace Prize, and he gave "every penny" of the \$54,000 that he won in 1964 to the civil rights movement.

Dr. King was extremely clear about those he identified with. He once said:

*"I choose to identify with the underprivileged,
I choose to give my life for the hungry,
I choose to give my life for those who have been left out of the sunlight of opportunity...
this is the way I'm going.
If it means suffering, I'm going that way.
If it means dying for them, I'm going that way,
because I heard a voice saying
DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS."*

Our President-Elect has also heard a voice, but the voice he heard said: "Do Something

for Me, Myself, and I." Absent a sense of service or of social/public consciousness, Mr. Trump seems to believe that his own personal richness makes America great again (hate again, sick again). His swaggering dismissal of anyone who dares ask a question that challenges suggests that he thinks he is ascending a monarchy, not leading a democracy. And the tone-deaf lemmings that surround him, some (like Kellyanne Conway) called "Trump whisperers" must be sweet nothings, because the behavior modification so many expected has not yet happened.

Still, we who are progressive play ourselves cheap when we respond to his smug tweets. We play ourselves cheap when we moan and whine. The time for whining is over now. This is the time for a paradigm shift in the way we respond to institutional stupidity. This is the time for us to consider creative disruption whenever, wherever, and however. What does that mean? Let's channel the energy of the Poor People's Campaign. Let's show up in those federal offices. Let's carry demands; let's ball up our fists. Let's get it on!

It's Time for the Democratic Party to Wake Up

Everyone appears to have figured out that a dangerous, stupid fascist with no knowledge of how the federal government works is now the President of the United States. Everyone, that is, except members of the Democratic Party, now serving in the 115th Congress.

You have to wonder how many dangerously incompetent, racist and blindly ideological decisions the executive branch have to make before the Democrats in the United States Congress, who are supposedly in the opposition party, wake up. What is the strategy? What is the plan?

Be certain to take note of the Democrats who vote in favor of Trump's cabinet nominees for Treasury, Education, Labor and Health and Human Services.

Senate Democrats have unified against exactly zero of Trump's cabinet nominees. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) who is allegedly a progressive leader, voted in favor of Dr. Ben Carson to lead a department he has no qualifications to run. Senator Cory Booker (D-N.J.), who has great Instagram posts of food, voted with Republicans to raise prescription drug prices.

Senators who have no re-election fears whatsoever



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in 2018 are lying down and showing no signs of resisting Trump when the easiest show of resistance is a simple "thumbs down" on the Senate floor.

“Take note of the Democrats who vote in favor of Trump's cabinet nominees for...Treasury, Education, Labor and Health and Human Services

Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), who took over as Democratic Leader from retired Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.), so far, has decided to vote in favor of almost all of Trump's nominees. What makes this even more confusing is that the messaging of Democratic leaders is the opposite of the action. The Democratic Party is at its lowest point in four decades in terms of seats held in the U.S. House of Representatives, governors' houses and seats in state legislatures. With Trump's arrival and no strategy to be seen, there has never been a better argument for younger and newer lead-

ership. The decision between Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) and former Labor Secretary Tom Perez for Democratic National Committee Chair will be a crucial benchmark for the party.

Over a million people took to the streets to participate in marches around the world, the day after Trump's Inauguration, which drew far lower numbers than President Obama's historic inauguration in 2009. Protesters fig-

ured out there needed to be resistance to Trump before he took office, but Democrats standing on the floor of the U.S. Senate and House remain asleep.

Last weekend, Trump signed an executive order that blocked entry of all refugees to the U.S. for 120 days and barred Syrian refugees from entering the U.S. indefinitely. The order also blocked entry to anyone from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — all Muslim majority countries. After confusion and protest at several major airports across the U.S., federal Judge Ann Don-

nelly granted a temporary stay so those in transit taken into custody could continue their travels.

On the evening of January 28 it was learned that Trump had installed his racist, anti-Semitic political advisor Steve Bannon as a member of the National Security Council (NSC). The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, four-star Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford was removed from the NSC.

This happened a day after the Trump White House released a Holocaust Remembrance Day statement that omitted the words "Jewish" or "Jews" from it and avoided mentioning that of one of the worst mass murders in history happened because of the faith of the victims. Then Trump officials said that not mentioning Jewish people was intentional because "others were killed too."

On the day of Barack Obama's first inauguration on January 20, 2009, top Republicans met for dinner to discuss strategy against his agenda. That strategy was eight years of obstruction against Obama's agenda and it worked. Whether Democrats in the Senate and House like it or not, they are the first line of defense against the Trump Administration.