

One-to-One-to-One...for 1/21/21

By Larry Kleinman¹

January 21, 2021. The first day of the next administration.

Day One, post-Trump.

Of course, there's no taking that for granted. But even as we are fully devoted to making 1/21/21 *actually be* the first day of the post-Trump Era, we'd do well to gradually prepare ourselves along the way for how we want and need to show up then.

The Post-Trump-Presidency road—the path for *restoring, repairing and re-building*—will likely occupy most of the 2020's. On Day One, though, we and our communities will feel great urgency to halt attacks and lower fear.

One way to prepare ourselves is to anticipate, visualize, and start conversations about key dynamics and events that we're likely to encounter over the next two years...and on January 21st 2021.

We can start those conversations *today*: one to one to one.

Threshold assumptions: Trump will seek re-election, will *lose*, and will *never concede*

People can and probably will legitimately take issue with those three core assumptions, especially the middle one. For those who think Trump won't run, or who consider it premature to entertain the notion that Trump will fail to win a second term, or who think it's more likely that he will run and *win*, "1/21/21" has a completely different import. For them, this essay, admittedly, has much less to offer.

A second, less contentious assumption is that the **2018 mid-term election results are seen and, to a degree, will serve as a political shift**. A decisive majority of voters in the November 6th Election's impressive turnout installed Democratic control in the House of Representatives to operate as some kind of "check" on Trump and as a rejection of his politics. Though the Senate remains a bit more firmly in Republican hands, the Democrats' string of governor pick-ups, especially in the Midwest (Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and...Kansas!) and the Mountain West (Nevada, New Mexico), plus many down-ballot successes, reinforces a narrative and analysis that Trump's electoral path to re-election now tilts more sharply uphill for him.

Third, unless Trump resigns—a longshot at best, he will press on undeterred throughout the next two years, continuing and escalating his Administration's lacerating policies and

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the divisive politics he relishes, exacerbates and exploits.

And following his presumed November 3, 2020 re-election loss, we can expect that Trump, with the Fox Network in tow, will likely continue to feed his narcissistic addictions by embarking on an “I Was Robbed” roadshow of open-ended duration.

The terrain on the path(s) to 2020

Our “1:1:1” conversations to visualize and prepare for 1/21/21 can start by anticipating the headline-grabbing actions that Trump and company are likely to pursue, such as:

- Declaring a border “state of emergency” and forcing a showdown with military leaders skeptical of indefinite deployments at scale;
- Forcing a protracted government shutdown over border wall funding;²
- Taking executive action to rescind the 14th Amendment birthright citizenship (as he announced to regain the spotlight after the October 27th Pittsburgh massacre);
- Directing the U.S. Department of Education to abrogate undocumented student access to K-12 education, thereby inviting litigation and Supreme Court action to reverse its 1982 *Plyler v Doe* ruling that access is constitutionally guaranteed.

With apologies to Malcolm X, the Trump Administration watch-words will increasingly be “*By Any Mean(nes)s Necessary*”.

Beyond the realm of immigration, the path ahead could include an economy that wobbles, broadly and/or selectively, under inflation pressures plus the strains of trade war retaliation and uncertainty. There could be an actual or supposed major terrorist attack, some kind of international “incident” or even an alleged assassination attempt.

The path to 2020 will also like include congressional or media investigations unearthing mounting evidence of past and ongoing corruption and abuses of power.

And, resources permitting, the progressive base organizing and coalition building which catalyzed major 2018 turnout will be sustained and poised for expansion. We can count on Trump to feed that by continuing in constant campaign mode, as he has since 2015.

2020 political posture and our message framework

As others have no doubt observed, the essential ingredients for Trump’s defeat will be accumulated anger, outrage and alarm—driving high anti-Trump turnout—combined with increasing pockets of “swing” voters who can’t endure *another* four years of it all

² This essay was originally drafted in late-November. A month later, Trump forced just such a shutdown, the longest in US history and possibly only the first in 2019 and 2020.

and/or who blame Trump for disregarding or jeopardizing their own core interests. The Democratic ticket will need considerable authenticity, discipline and finesse to simultaneously attract and/or motivate those Trump has harmed, has alarmed, and has disarmed. That's hardly a sure thing. The thrust of a winning campaign will likely include some blend of "*Enough!*" plus "*Is this working for you?*" and "*my priority is to improve/restore protections for you*" (be they health care access, dependable markets, family-wage jobs). Call it the "*results, not insults*" approach.

There will, of course, be many perils on the campaign trail. Trump will be endlessly provocative and the Democratic nomination process will uplift strategy tensions between dwelling on Trump's despotic, proto-fascist embrace of white nationalism and looking past it to a vividly specific description of what must supplant and succeed it. Some candidates in the 2018 election—though not running head-to-head against Trump—showed real deftness in handling this "resist/remove/replace" continuum. Possible 2020 slogans might include "*Health Care Before Wealth Care!*" or a call to put threats of "National *Integrity Risk*" on a par with National *Security Risk*.

Our 2020 challenge also includes holding the House and re-taking the Senate. The 2020 Senate opportunities are not extensive: Colorado, Arizona, and North Carolina, plus possibly Montana, Iowa, Georgia and Maine. We must win at least three seats, or four if we lose a difficult defense in Alabama where Democrat Doug Jones, who improbably won a special election in 2017, may face Jeff Sessions' attempt to win back "his" seat.

The mental and emotional 79-day walk across political hot coals

Truthfully, we have no certainty about how Trump would respond to losing re-election, nor how he'd act during the 79 days from Wednesday, November 4, 2020 thru Tuesday, January 21, 2021. What we *can* safely predict, however, is that, for most of us, a feeling of dread—ranging from vague to intense—will pervade *every one of those days*. "*What outlandish executive order will Trump issue today?*" we'll wonder. "*What (inter)national crisis will he instigate or conjure?*"

As the Inauguration Day countdown hits single digits, we'll contend with a gnawing and terrifying doubt: "*Will Trump actually leave the White House?*" Trump may well choose to organize rallies to protest alleged fraudulent voting by the millions of "illegals." He might even suggest a need for a nationalist insurrection.

Our mindset for the 2020's

Given the energy rightfully devoted to fend off ongoing and impending assaults, it seems premature for now to formulate detailed plans for 2020 and for the immediate post-election period. It's *not* too soon to begin steeling ourselves for new levels of turbulence.

Counterintuitively, we can draw strength from visualizing the long arc of recovery and renewal. For starters, that means preparing to dedicate *the entire decade* of the 2020's to restoring progressive standards and policies that Trump-ites removed, to repairing ones they trashed, and to re-building others that they damaged beyond repair.

Throughout this process, we will find opportunities for *transformative* change—instituting something completely new. This will likely require some kind of reckoning with the abiding grip of racism and sexism aggravated by Trump's demagoguery and cruelty. We will have to peer more determinedly into our deepened doubts that any kind of reconciliation is possible. If Trump chooses to endlessly stoke a more energetic form of permanent backlash, our souls and our resolve will be mightily tried.

Visualizing January 21, 2021 and the first few weeks of a new era

The actions, tone and demeanor of the new Administration's early days can manifest and signal a fundamental pivot. Our prospects for maximizing that pivot are better if we've prepared ourselves, those around us, and the leaders we'll support.

For immigrant communities, immediately lowering fear is paramount. One such measure would be a *broad pause in removals*. The humanitarian and due process case for it is strong, but politicians will fear Trump's predictable and relentless assault on it as radical and dangerous. If we are to achieve such a pause—and defend it coming off the post-election period's ample anxiety, we do well to start laying the groundwork now.

And that's only a first step in halting and reversing the War on Immigrants of color, the War on Immigration, on Citizenship, on Benefits. We'll work to quickly re-focus "emergency" response from the false narrative of a country "overrun" to the genuine emergencies of opioid overdose and criminal justice over-incarceration, among others.

The "one to one to one" contribution to 1/21/21

We can count on Hurricane Donald to bluster through our political discourse and to flood our constitutional structures. There's no "evacuation route", even at Category 5 levels.

We have to find—and stick with—ways to help each other bear up. We can strengthen our relationships and reinforce our unity. We can share with each other the genuine security—protection, place, belonging—which we visualize, even as we struggle to hold the line against seemingly boundless insecurity.

Though the storm winds will send time flying by, each of us, engaging in our midst one-to-one over many months, can reach the dedicated nonvoter, the wavering politician, the overwrought community organizer, and the drowning co-worker. We can be united by our common and ever-closer destination and duty of showing up on 1/21/21.