

The Opinion Pages | OP-ED COLUMNIST

# The Anti-Inauguration

Charles M. Blow JAN. 5, 2017

The inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States is just two weeks away, so now is the time to begin making plans to send him the strongest possible signal that your opposition to the presidency he has foreshadowed will not be pouting and passive, but active and animated.

Now is the time to begin making your plans for the anti-inauguration.

Exclaiming your resistance, while necessary, is insufficient. Resistance is a negative position. While negativity in the face of this menace is justified and admirable, negativity alone is a fractional response. As with most things in a fully articulated life, balance is required. You need to augment your outrage with actions that are affirming, behaviors that reinforce principles and values.

When politics seem out of your control, remember that community and culture are very much in your control. We help shape the world we inhabit every day. A life is a collection of thousands of decisions, large and small, made every day. Make those decisions with purpose and conviction, especially for Jan. 20.

The point is not necessarily to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power, but rather to deprive it of oxygen and eyeballs; to plant a flag of resistance firmly at the opening gate. This doesn't mean that people won't attend or watch. They will. But every

station that carries it, as many will, should feel the impact of your absence.

Just because succession of power in our fragile democracy isn't denied by dictator or compelled by coup does not mean that the majority of Americans who voted for someone other than Trump, and view his ascension as an offense, should feel any pressure or compunction to bear witness to the pomp and pageantry surrounding the installation of a demi-fascist and full-blown demagogue as president.

This ceremony is part of a governmental apparatus meant to project a picture of seamless continuity and normalcy to Americans and the world.

But making Trump appear normal is contingent on public cooperation, which must be denied.

Here are some ways to make your opposition felt and bring forth some light on the impending Day of Darkness.

### **Protest.**

Protests are being organized all over the country, including in the capital itself. Join in. One group, under the banner "Not My President," is even planning a silent protest at the U.S. Capitol. Then of course there will be the Women's March on Washington the day after the inauguration. With more than 100,000 people saying they will attend on Facebook, and organizers estimating that they could get 200,000, this could be the largest anti-Trump rally yet.

### **Volunteer.**

If you can't travel to Washington or if there are no protests being organized in your area, volunteer at an agency or nonprofit that serves a community or advocates on an issue that has been directly targeted by the incoming president. These range from women's rights, to civil liberties, to immigrant outreach, to environmental protection.

### **Donate.**

If you can't find a way to volunteer, donate. These groups will need as much funding as possible to defend themselves and their positions from a hostile

administration and compliant Congress.

### **Subscribe.**

Coming from me this may sound self-interested, but please try to look over my obvious and admitted conflict to see that the press, even with all its flaws — particularly those exposed during this election — is one of the last lines of defense against corruption and a slide toward autocracy. Trump’s hostility to, and delegitimizing of, the press is a deliberate tactic meant to shield him against future discovery and disclosure.

As Frank Sesno, director of the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University, said on CNN’s Reliable Sources last month:

“If Donald Trump is trying to inoculate himself in advance, it’s like giving himself a vaccine, to prevent the illness that’s going to come when the media turn on his tax returns if they get another leak on it, when they look at some of the business dealings as he’s talking to foreign leaders. There are all kinds of stories that you can imagine, that have already been written, some of them, and what he’s trying to do here is, as I say, sort of inoculate himself by demonizing media. So, don’t believe anything they say.”

### **Read.**

Spend part of the day reading about the rise and fall of empires and how it always seems far-fetched and inconceivable until it actually happens. There are many books that address this topic, but if you want something shorter, try Andrew Sullivan’s “Democracies End When They Are Too Democratic,” a counterintuitive meditation on how tyranny can spring from populism, or my colleague Paul Krugman’s “How Republics End.”

But, by all means, read something. That is oppositional in and of itself when facing a frightening man who seems constitutionally averse to intelligence — from national intelligence to individual intelligence — and who is apparently, how shall I say this, far from a voracious reader.

### **Watch.**

If you must watch something on Jan. 20, try to find specific anti-inauguration counterprogramming. CNN this week reported one such effort:

“A group of entrepreneurs have banded together to create Love-a-thon, a Jerry Lewis-style telethon for the digital age. Love-a-thon will be a three-hour Facebook Live broadcast, beginning at 12:30 p.m. E.T. on Inauguration Day, January 20. The move is a part of an effort to raise money for three organizations — the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, Planned Parenthood and Earthjustice.”

### **Write.**

If you don't already know, find out who all your representatives in government are, from the local level to the national level, get their addresses, and send them a letter or an email expressing your views and explaining in no uncertain terms what you expect from them going forward. Warn that if they let you down, you will remember your disappointment at the polls. Public pressure has a very real impact on political power. Don't be silent. Don't be invisible. Make them remember your name.

### **Connect.**

Reach out to your friends and family — the people in what I call your “great sphere of influence.” First, let them know that you love them. This may seem mawkish, but in the wake of Trump's hateful rhetoric, expressions of love and support are necessary. But beyond that, make sure that they too have an anti-inauguration plan. If they don't, have them join you in yours. Also, make sure that everyone in your sphere is registered to vote.

You have the power to make anti-inauguration day an enormously effective first step on the path forward through an arduous four years, which promise to be difficult to navigate. Affirmative actions must be as much your guide and solace as resistance is your fuel and fire.

Remember your pre-Trump ideals and make sure that they survive into a post-Trump world.

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