

Facing Fascism: Crisis, Resistance, & Opportunity

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After working so long in life-and-death, large-scale humanitarian crisis & disaster and international politics, there's something valuable I learned to recognize. Most people don't ever recognize it, and among the ones who do, a fair amount of them are malicious. Some of them take advantage of it. Some of them even *manufacture* it.

And some use it as an opportunity for resiliency and solidarity in the face of what they will and already have experienced.

Each crisis has its own arc. There is a loosely organized pattern laying within a chaotic framework. It's delicate, but there are predictable qualities.

Recognizing a pattern where others see chaos creates opportunity.

I discussed recently how the speed and methods by which current changes are being issued are designed to make you confused, to overwhelm you, to make you lose direction and sense of hope, to exhaust you to the point of inaction. I described how to take your First Steps Under Fascism.

Eventually the chaos will become more structured, and a new ordering of everything will begin to take shape. This moment of chaos won't last long, but it's still within your grasp... if you act quickly.

Let me describe to you how others utilize chaos, as well as what you can do to take action.

How Others Utilize Chaos

Let's get this out of the way. Some people take advantage of crisis and chaos for personal gain. They exploit people. They prey on people. While everyone else is outside riveted as they helplessly at the train wreck, malicious opportunists sneak in to rob the safe. They swoop in to buy land for pennies on the dollar after a natural disaster. Be aware and be vigilant during times of crisis, but *these are not the topic of discussion here.*

I'd like to recommend a book and concept by Naomi Klein. The book and concept are both called *Shock Doctrine*. I recommend the book if you actually have the time and head space for it, but at the very least, I want you to understand the underlying concept.

Essentially, as the concept applies here, the idea is that those in authority, regardless of political affiliation, exploit times of crisis to take on increased powers and authority while citizens are distracted and overwhelmed. They often do this under the guise of the need for *emergency powers*. These powers are rarely, if ever, rescinded.

One touchstone that should be easily recognizable to most Americans— recall that the Patriot Act was meant as a temporary emergency power in a time of crisis. The Patriot Act has become a foundational piece of US spying, law enforcement, and global violence and coercion. It vastly expanded surveillance, even of US citizens, now a simple fact of life. It allows for indefinite detention without trial, it allows for the search of your property and records without your consent or knowledge. The Patriot Act only recently expired (after multiple extensions), but the powers essentially have remained intact and commonplace.

If you're wondering why the term *emergency powers* might evoke a certain feeling as you read it or hear it uttered, let me extrapolate. Since Project 2025 and the current regime have explicitly been using a Nazi playbook, I will draw your attention to the Enabling Act of 1933, the "Law to Remedy the Distress of People and Reich." These *emergency powers* are what enabled Hitler to secure authoritarian power.

Simply put, Hitler cleared all political opposition, people in government who would challenge him. He took away civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and due process. Similar to US Congress, the German parliament had two bodies, an upper and lower house. One of these, the Reichstag, had the ability to rescind emergency powers, the ability to stand in his way. But that ability, and the Reichstag, was made defunct by the passage of the Enabling Act.

I'd like to note that currently in the US Congress, the House is controlled by the GOP and lock-step with Trump and the fascist agenda. In the Senate, there is only a 7 vote difference between the GOP and the Democrats/Independents who have the ability to filibuster the passage of a bill. Only 7 people standing in the way of essentially a complete takeover of all three branches of government.

If your history is rusty and this narrative is still too much, remember that in *Star Wars*, Palpatine was a senator before being deemed Supreme Chancellor and granted powers under the *Emergency Powers Act*, and eventually renamed as Emperor. This was meant to be a temporary issuance of powers that he promised to relinquish. Instead, he enacted terror, genocide and perpetual oppression. George Lucas was not being subtle when he created this reference.

In any crisis you can expect some in authority to exploit the situation to obtain greater authority. The Patriot Act, our touchstone example, is a horrific and opportunistic example of authority taken *in reaction* to crisis.

But in the cases of Hitler or Palpatine or Trump, remember, they haven't just *exploited crisis as a reaction*. They have *manufactured* the same crisis under which they have worked to take authority. The crisis is intentional. In the case of Trump, I have already told you, sowing discord, confusion, distraction, and overwhelming the population are all the point. As crisis ensues, he creates an atmosphere under which there is *justification*, however misplaced, to take increased authority. He will *continue* to manufacture crisis until he has achieved his goals. And even after achieving his goals, if he is allowed to achieve them, he will *continue* to manufacture crisis, because this is how authority is maintained in the face of discontent and opposition from within.

It took 53 days for Hitler to completely dismantle the democracy of the Weimar Republic. Trump knows this number and so do all the fascists and Nazis who surround him and support him. Do you ever wonder if maybe he wants to beat that number?

How to Take Action

As I said, each crisis has its own arc. This is the first one. If there is enough resistance, this will be his *last* crisis. However, I don't think you are betting on that. We can hope, and please maintain your hope, but *hope is not a course of action*.

There are two primary things you can do, and should do, during this stage of the arc of crisis, and they go hand in hand. And remember these for every crisis that may follow.

Resist

I firmly believe that the most revolutionary act is the refusal to be complicit.

Some people say, *do not obey in advance*, which is *right* and *true*, but it's a baby step to what everyone needs to be prepared to do which is this: *Do not obey*.

Do not obey. At all.

Hannah Arendt was a survivor of the Holocaust, and the opinion of many, one of the most insightful political theorists of the 20th century, and someone you will hear from me about more in the future. She describes a distinction between *power* and *authority*. She describes the idea that *power* is a collaborative capacity that exists between people. *Authority* on the other hand, stems from the absence of *power*, utilizing *violence* and *coercion* in its place.

I believe this to be true, but I want to add that it's not simply that in the presence of *authority* that *power* between people ceases to exist, it's that the violence of *authority* coerces people into using their own *power*, their collaborative capacity, in ways that are complicit.

Authority cannot function when people refuse to be complicit.

Whatever form your resistance takes to oppression and authority, ultimately, the first and most important foundation for any resistance is not what you do, but what you *refuse to do*.

As I hope you have seen repeated elsewhere, do not simply obey unlawful and unconstitutional executive orders just because he signed and issued them. He is not a king or dictator, despite his intentions. There has been no act granting him emergency powers or any other mandate or ability to take these powers. Yes, they essentially control all three branches of government, but *do not make it easy for them*. Make every inch have its cost.

If and when he does gain that level of authority, *still* do not obey simply because it is law. "I was just following orders," was not a justifiable excuse at the trials at Nuremberg and it will never be an excuse, ever.

Remember, if you make it through this, and I dearly hope you do, remember that you will always be looking back on what happened during this time. Can you live with yourself for being complicit in the harm and suffering that they have already begun to inflict, and will continue to inflict? At what price can someone purchase your dignity and sense of character?

Will you be satisfied with your legacy?

The time to resist is now. The time to resist is always, but it is especially now. If enough resist, the fascist onslaught can be stopped. If nothing else, you must *refuse to be complicit*.

If it can't be stopped, it can be slowed. Slowing the onslaught provides time and opportunity.

Organize

As I said, the chaotic stage of the crisis arc does not last long. People are still uncertain about the future, myself included. You may be still asking yourself if this is really happening, or if you are having a fever dream. I will remind you as I have been. You can accept that what you are witnessing is real. You can believe what your eyes are seeing. Accept it, because the longer you stand in confusion and anguish, the less opportunity you have to take whatever action you need or to establish a plan of action. Your oppressors are taking action. They are not waiting.

At this stage of confusion and uncertainty, in the midst of chaos, because they have yet to fully take authority, their abilities to silence, intimidate, and enforce increasingly oppressive actions against you are limited. Exercise the rights you currently have before they are taken from you.

At this stage, people are still willing to share their knowledge, their resources. They still have the feeling that this is terrifying and must be opposed and they don't have the feelings of normalization and that resistance is futile. They still have hope and desire to resist, even if they don't know what to do. They're scared, but they don't feel the full weight yet. And no one, and no threat, is stopping them from organizing. They don't have the confidence that what they say

or do is certain to get them in trouble because it hasn't yet reached that stage. The consequences are not yet realized in the mind or in the world, even if they feel secure in the idea that this may come to fruition.

Now is the time to reach out to people. Don't wait till later when people are afraid to speak. Reach out now. If for no other reason than out of compassion and to let them know that you are there for them in solidarity, friendship, or love.

If you wait until later to reach out and organize, when authority has been secured, they may feel it's too dangerous and too much of a risk to speak, offer help, or get involved. Once they've begun to get involved, however, even now, they are invested. In for a penny, so to speak.

If you believe it's *at least a decent possibility* that it could get to a point that you would need to do something that *breaks the rules* to get people's needs met or to get them to safety or resist or speak in any way, I urge you to begin assessing your own skills, assets, and abilities. I urge you to make a mental list of people you trust with your life and imagine what their skills, assets, and abilities might be. I urge you to reach out to them *now*.

Be safe. Use secure channels. Talk in person without devices if you can. No electronic device is completely secure, but I use Signal for almost all chats now with anyone I know. Consider setting up a safety protocol of some sort, if necessary. I plan to do another post on Operational Security, but I don't know how soon, and there are plenty out there if you can do a search. Don't provide thorough details if you don't need to. Don't share names of others. Be vague, but be intentional. Plausible deniability matters. It keeps people safe.

But you can't exist in a vacuum.

You must reach out.

Reach out to people in your communities and to those far away.

Now is the time to lay at least the basic framework for what you would need to do if you were going to help people evacuate. If you were to hide people. If you were to resist by *breaking the rules*. Who you would trust. If we all *build our networks now*, we will *have stronger resistance now*, and *greater resilience in the face of oppression later*.

Do not let them divide and conquer by failing in this step.

And even if you don't know how to plan, what to say, what you would do, or what to think about all of this... even if it's been years, but you feel deep in your heart that they would protect you with their life, and you theirs, reach out. Just acknowledge that all of this sucks so much, and that you just want to let them know that you're thinking of them, and that you want to offer your solidarity. Say the important things that you believe, and echo theirs when you believe them, too, so that you know going into this that there is a basis of trust.

Compassion, empathy, friendship, and love, these are all revolutionary. These are all forms of resistance to hate. This is the basis of solidarity. As Ursula K. Le Guin put it in *The Dispossessed*, a phrase I have thought on almost every day for years,

You cannot buy the revolution. You cannot make the revolution. You can only be the revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere.

The ability and responsibility to resist is within you. When you share that ability with others, that collaborative ability becomes power. That power, in the spirit of revolution, is solidarity.

Solidarity is the only way we get through this.

Build solidarity now.

no ends, only means

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