

## RESISTING THE TRUMP AGENDA: PUBLIC POLICY DEFENDERS

by Alice Loyd

A majority of people in the United States and many elsewhere are worried about the agenda proposed by Donald Trump as he comes into office. Today the leader of a women's chorus wrote in an email, "I am particularly grateful for our community of heart-song during these post-presidential-election times. I have needed the healing that singing together brings." An online Meet-Up announcement read, "Let's come together and use the Wisdom of the Enneagram to meet what is arising in us and those around us. Now more than ever..." On January 20, 2017, people all over England will drop banners from bridges across the country "to send a simple, hopeful and unmistakable message: [Build Bridges Not Walls.](#)"

This US majority and our well-wishers abroad are opposed to the administrative agenda that is revealed day after day, but as an [article](#) appraising the work of the Occupy movement states, "An effective opposition movement . . . must challenge the structures and forces that brought Trump to power." Another important [article](#) says, "Forwarding a jeering meme to people who agree with you [does] not constitute political action." Gathering support from friends and fostering individual healing is essential at this time, but in addition, most of us are seeking ways to prevent the incoming administration from having its reckless way with us and with the planet.

The following paragraph introduces a *US News and World Report* article, "[The Future of Resistance](#)," which previews the flavor of the messaging of twenty-five groups I've come across in recent days who are engaged in public policy advocacy.

Resistance: The word conjures up romantic images of occupied France during World War II: Citizen-spies eavesdropping on Nazi battle plans, perhaps, or clandestine underground meetings of rebel freedom fighters plotting their next hit-and-run attack. Yet this year "resistance" has taken on a new definition in the US, and it centers on grassroots political warfare against President-elect Donald Trump.

While I "resist" using the warlike language and imagery often employed, I share the sense that we're in a battle. We are in opposition to racism, xenophobia, and misogyny; we defend principles like justice, solidarity, peace, and the conservation of life on Earth. The following brief survey offers a glimpse of what the Trump political resistance may be doing in the next four years and how individuals may participate.

Organizers hope the most visible effort on Saturday, January 21, 2017, will be the [Women's March on Washington](#). The march is a grassroots effort comprised of dozens of independent coordinators at the state level and helmed by four national co-chairs and a national coordinating committee. "We want to ensure that this country knows women are not happy," [said](#) co-founder Tamika Mallory. "And when we get angry, change happens. We make things

happen.” Women (and men) in almost every major city in the United States are planning simultaneous marches for those who can’t be in Washington, DC.

For months the iconic example of public policy resistance has been the tribes at [Standing Rock](#) Sioux Reservation. After the Obama administration denied Dakota Access Pipeline a key permit to finish construction, Native American activists warned that the win was only temporary and that Donald Trump, an investor in the pipeline corporation, would seek to quickly advance the project next year. [Now](#) indigenous activists are focusing on the company’s finances before Trump takes office in an effort to further strain the oil corporation and cause delays that might be disastrous for the project. The operator, Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), wrote in a filing this year that Dakota Access “committed to complete, test and have DAPL in service” by the start of 2017, and if the company did not meet its contract deadline, then its shipping partners had a “right to terminate their commitments.” As of January 1, however, the contracts had not been terminated.

The [American Civil Liberties Union](#) (ACLU) has issued a challenge to President-elect Trump through the voice of Anthony D. Romero, its executive director, who wrote, “[W]e urge you to reconsider and change course on certain campaign promises you have made. These include your plan to amass a deportation force to remove eleven million undocumented immigrants; ban the entry of Muslims into our country and aggressively surveil them; punish women for accessing abortion; reauthorize waterboarding and other forms of torture; and change our nation’s libel laws and restrict freedom of expression. These proposals are . . . unlawful and unconstitutional. They violate the First, Fourth, Fifth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments. If you do not reverse course and instead endeavor to make these campaign promises a reality, you will have to contend with the full firepower of the ACLU at every step.” The national ACLU received more than \$7 million in [donations](#) immediately after the presidential election.

Environmental groups are understandably in the forefront of the resistance. The [Climate Reality Project](#) website in late December read, “[N]ow President-elect Donald Trump has nominated a list of oil industry insiders to serve in key cabinet positions responsible for the nation’s public lands, environment, and potentially even foreign policy. And we can’t trust them to put us or our health and environment first.” The website of [American Rivers](#) states, “We have ambitious plans for 2017 but we know we face serious challenges. As a candidate, President-elect Trump announced plans to weaken environmental safeguards, threatening efforts like ours. And he just announced Scott Pruitt—who has a record of opposing clean water safeguards—as his choice to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.” An email from [350.org](#) on December 17, 2016, bore the subject line: “Resistance everywhere.” The body read, “We’ve been sending you a lot of emails about Trump, and about how we’re going to fight his agenda of climate denial and fossil fuel expansion at every step.” A more recent email reflects a possible consequence: “Our colleagues and allies in other parts of the world have told us that the charitable status of organizations like ours is often the first thing to go when authoritarian regimes bent on squashing dissent (and propping up extractive industries) take over.”

Trump and his vice president, Mike Pence, have been open about wanting to get rid of [Planned Parenthood](#) and opposing abortion, although Planned Parenthood is mainly involved in preventative primary care rather than providing abortions. The organization contracts with Medicaid to reimburse the reproductive health care services it provides to low-income patients, including birth control, cancer screenings, and sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment. In a series of [focus groups](#) involving Trump supporters conducted through an independent research group across Arizona, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, participants expressed dismay over the anti-abortion and anti-Planned Parenthood agenda being pushed by the man they elected into office. “I’m astounded,” said one Trump supporter in Phoenix, upon hearing about Pence’s anti-abortion record. “I guess I’ve been living in a bubble. He sounds like a tyrant.” According to a Politico [poll](#) conducted a week before the election, 58 percent of voters—and slightly more than half of all Trump voters—oppose stripping reimbursements from the nation’s largest family planning provider. Planned Parenthood [reports](#) they received hundreds of thousands of donations in the week following the election. 20,000 of those were made in Mike Pence’s name.

At the end of December President and CEO of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People \(NAACP\)](#) Cornell William Brooks reported that 13,204 Americans had joined or donated to the NAACP since the “shocking election results came in.” The North Carolina Chapter of NAACP has been leading the [Forward Together Moral Movement](#) focused on abuses of power by the General Assembly of that state. Just before Christmas the Republican legislature enacted what the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, NC NAACP president, called “a modern-day political and policy coup d’état”—voting to strip executive powers from incoming governor, Democrat Roy Cooper, and from the NC Supreme Court, after an African American won the supreme court race by nearly 350,000 votes. The Rev. Dr. Barber, known nationally for his [speech](#) at the Democratic convention, said, “In fact, according to the Electoral Integrity Project at Harvard University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Aarhus in Denmark, legislative power in our state no longer depends on the ballot; instead, one party has won roughly half of the votes but gotten one hundred percent of the power.” An article by one author of the Electoral Integrity Project is entitled, “[North Carolina Is No Longer a Democracy.](#)” Activists are working to prevent a similar power grab in other states and at the federal level.

As the national leaders of the [Black Lives Matter](#) Global Network said in early December, their mandate remains unchanged in the wake of “the election of a white supremacist to the highest office in American government.” The statement continues, “What is true today—and has been true since the seizure of this land—is that when black people and women build power, white people become resentful.” Answering the rhetorical question “how do we reconcile our vision for future generations’ prosperity with the knowledge that more than half of white voting Americans believe a white supremacist can and should decide what’s best for this country?” the statement responds, “We organize.”

[Lambda Legal](#) is the oldest national legal organization dedicated to fighting for the rights of the LGBTQ community and Americans living with HIV. It works through litigation, education and

public policy work. Its website also offers an important tool for understanding the legal protections LGBTQ people have in each state. An [article](#) on the site begins, “In the weeks since the presidential election, we have heard from many who want to know what this new era of conservative domination in the federal government will mean for the transgender community. [W]e can make an educated guess. The coming years likely mean heightened vigilance, resistance and struggle.” The organization does not charge clients for legal representation or advocacy work.

The [Council on American-Islamic Relations \(CAIR\)](#) is a Washington-based Muslim civil-rights advocacy group dedicated to promoting a positive image of Islam and Muslims in the United States. With Trump threatening a national Muslim Registry (although that is not on his first-100 days list and will be harder now that President Obama has abolished the existing registry) and hate crimes against minority groups increasing dramatically in the days after the election, organizations like CAIR are committed to protecting Muslims in the face of institutionalized discrimination.

[Americans for Immigrant Justice \(AI Justice\)](#) is a non-profit law firm committed to protecting and fighting for the basic rights of immigrants. Representing immigrants from all over the world, AI Justice provides “a unique combination of free direct services, impact litigation, policy reform, and public education at local, state, and national levels.” The website says “Our lawyers have represented thousands of vulnerable immigrants from the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia—traumatized children alone in this country, newcomers trafficked into slavery, and asylum seekers who would face persecution in their homelands.” Such work is especially important in the atmosphere of fear surrounding Islamic and now Syrian refugees in particular—a fear unjustified, as [reported](#) by the Cato Institute, a conservative-leaning think tank, which found that “the chance of an American being murdered in a terrorist attack caused by a refugee is 1 in 3.64 billion per year.”

Immigrant-supportive groups are also mobilized for increased struggle. For three decades, [Border Angels](#) have advocated for immigration reform, human rights, and social justice. The volunteer-run, non-profit group provides water, food, and clothing for immigrants along the border, and offers free legal assistance on Tuesdays at its San Diego office. [United We Dream](#) is the first and largest national immigrant youth-led organization fighting for relief and fair treatment for all undocumented immigrants. After Trump was elected, United We Dream declared “a state of urgency and resilience for our communities.” In the past, the organization has encouraged undocumented youth to apply to DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). Since the election there has been an [increase](#) in the number of DACA recipients who are seeking to leave the country under advance parole in order to legally re-enter the United States and get on the fast track to citizenship. Advance parole was originally reserved for “urgent humanitarian reasons,” but the Obama administration expanded the grounds for advance parole approval to include educational, employment or humanitarian purposes. This change allows any DACA recipient to gain advance parole then take a semester abroad or claim they have an interview, conference, or training overseas, and upon their return be paroled back

into the United States and thereby be eligible to adjust to legal permanent resident status. The person can then receive full citizenship after five years.

[National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health \(NLIRH\)](#) works to make abortions more accessible, as well as to find better health and preventive services, for Latinas. Started in 1994, NLIRH is “dedicated to advancing health, dignity, and justice” for 26 million Latinas in the United States. Cultural and linguistic differences often make Latinas the last to know about contraceptive options that are available. Additionally, because Latinas have the highest rate of being uninsured, seeing a provider and accessing affordable contraception is often not an option. The NLIRH focus is on three critical and interconnected areas: abortion access and affordability; sexual and reproductive health equity; and immigrant women’s health and rights.

[Working Families Party](#) members across the country are launching #ResistTrumpTuesdays to defeat Trump’s nominees. The organization works to elect progressive candidates at the state and local level “who will fearlessly resist Trump and fight for an America that works for all of us.” On November 10 in Providence, RI, an anti-Trump resistance [event](#) organized by party activists drew 1,000 attendees.

And finally, a document entitled “[Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda](#)” has been making the rounds online and serves as a blueprint for informal grassroots groups as they interface with the three elected officials who represent each citizen in the US legislature. These members of congress (MoCs) pay attention to constituents primarily in order to be re-elected, says the Guide written by former legislative assistants who offer the suggestions as volunteers. These officials don’t want to be embarrassed in public or give the impression they don’t care what voters want. The advocacy model is the Tea Party, with its emphasis on defense rather than offense. “[L]ike it or not, the Tea Party really did have significant accomplishments—facing more difficult odds than we face today,” said Ezra Levin, one of the writers, “and it’s worth thinking about what parts of their strategy and tactics really enabled that.” MoCs in red states are unlikely to change their positions when we raise questions or criticize their votes, but the more loudly we put forward our priorities to them, the more we’ll be educating the public about these issues as well.

Space doesn’t allow more than a listing of the [Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund](#), [ProPublica](#), [National Resources Defense Council](#), [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), [Interfaith Power & Light](#), [Our Revolution](#), [MoveOn.org](#), [Fight for 15](#), [Sierra Club](#), [minority members of Congress](#), the high school students’ walkout the day after the election, or resistance by cities and states—not to mention the thousands of entrepreneurs working to bring in the clean energy shift in opposition to the incoming administration’s fossil-fuels program. The climate section of “The Chronicle” in this issue of *CES Musings* describes how scientists are stepping out of research facilities into the public policy arena.

These defenders face a Trump administration backed by a Republican-controlled congress flanked by thirty-one Republican state governors and thirty-two Republican-controlled state legislatures, but activist organizations seem to be gaining strength in proportion to the

challenge. What matters is that resistance to unjust, unwise, and possibly illegal policies be expressed clearly by a growing number of Americans. Political leaders and ordinary people need to hear from progressives in order to learn more about choices and their consequences. From all indications, that objective is headed for success.