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When 'Stop the Steal' becomes your motto

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There is a good chance that Donald Trump's polling lead in the 2024 presidential election will be more fragile than it looks.

The most immediate problem for him is the fact that he's on trial in a criminal case. Even if Trump isn't convicted, the trial keeps him away from the trail.

There is also the issue of the campaign itself, which is a smaller affair than his 2020 effort, with fewer resources. "The situation has alarmed GOP officials in key states, like Arizona, Georgia and Michigan, who have yet to receive promised funding, staff or even briefings on the new plans since the Trump team took control of the Republican National Committee in March," the Washington Post reports.

Trump could very well hold his lead through the summer and into the fall but still fail to turn stated preferences into actual votes. What he looks solid in the numbers could turn out to be ephemeral in the final tallies.

It's much too early to say whether the polls are right or wrong. What we can say, however, is that the former president and his allies are already laying the foundation for an effort to contest — or even try to overturn — the results of the November election if voters don't return Trump to the White House.

For Trump, a man who seems to live in the eternal present, "stop the steal" never actually ended. He maintains, as he did Nov. 3, 2020, that he won the presidential election that put Joe Biden in the White House. Last month, he told an audience in Wisconsin, "We won this state by a lot." (He lost it by 20,682 votes.) He told Time magazine, in a recent interview, that he "wouldn't feel good" about hiring anyone who believed that Biden was the legitimate winner of the last presidential election. Asked if he would accept the results of the 2024 election, Trump said that he would, "if everything's honest."

Of course, for Trump, if he doesn't win, then it isn't honest. But if it isn't Trump priming Republican voters to reject the results of the November election if Biden prevails. His allies are doing the same.

Sen. JD Vance of Ohio told CNN on Sunday that in a race and fair election, "he and every other Republican" will enthusiastically accept the results. Meaning that if Trump doesn't win, then the election will not have been free and



Former President Donald Trump holds a campaign rally on the beach in Wildwood, N.J., on May 11.

fair. Vance, who is so eager to serve as running mate to Trump that he made a pilgrimage Monday to the Manhattan courthouse where the former president was on trial for paying hush money to cover up his affair with a porn actor, has also said that if he were vice president in 2020, he would have told states to submit alternate slates of electors.

Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., has said that she will accept the results if they are "constitutional," and Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., has said that he will accept them if "there's no massive cheating."

Now what, for this crowd, would constitute an unfair, untrue, unconstitutional election in which the results were shaped by "massive cheating?"

Recall that after the 2016 presidential election, Trump blamed a wave of illegal voting for his popular-vote defeat. "In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally," he said on Twitter.

Illegal voting was a useful bogeyman for a president-elect who ran

on the fantasy that the United States had been besieged by illegal immigrants. It remains a useful bogeyman as the former president revs up his supporters with spite-flecked attacks on immigrants, who he says are "poisoning the blood of our country."

If one set of Trump allies is spreading the notion of an unfair election, another set is building out what that might mean by placing the specter of illegal voting by migrants and immigrants living in the country without legal permission at the center of their rhetorical agenda.

We all know intuitively that a lot of legal immigrants are voting in federal elections, but it's not been something that is easily provoked. House Speaker Mike Johnson said last week at a news conference that he called to support a new bill that would ban immigrants living in the country without legal permission from voting in federal elections. This is already illegal under existing federal law, but Johnson insisted on the measure as necessary prevention in the face of what information?

Johnson, who voted in 2021 to overturn the results of the 2020

presidential election, was joined at the news conference by Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, and Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, two so-called constitutional conservatives who initially urged the White House to try to contest and overturn the 2020 results in the weeks leading up to Jan. 6. "We owe it to ourselves, to each other, most importantly to the American people, to make sure that those making decisions on behalf of our government and who's going to serve in government in elective office are indeed empowered to make those decisions," Lee said, validating the fiction that recent U.S. elections have been shaped, even stolen, by rampant illegal voting.

Also present was Stephen Miller, the MAGA apparition behind some of the former president's most vicious anti-immigrant rhetoric, who railed against noncitizen voting in characteristically apocalyptic fashion. "Democracy in America is under attack," he said of the "wide-open border and obstruction of any effort to verify the citizenship of who votes in our elections."

With all of this, we are getting a first look of sorts, at the next "stop the steal." Yes, Trump could win the November election outright, in which case, there is no need for an elaborate conspiracy to explain the results. The election, as Vance said,

will have been "free and fair."

But let's say Biden receives lost ground. Let's say he wins the Electoral College with narrow victories in key swing states as he did in 2020. Let's say that a few of those margins are exceptionally slim — a few thousand votes here, a few thousand votes there. We know what will come next. Trump will cry out "illegal voting," and most of the Republican Party will follow suit. They'll say that Democrats encouraged it with "open borders" and demand that states overturn the results. And Trump, notably, has not ruled out the use of violence to get what he wants.

If the Republican Party could, for a moment, break itself from Trump's influence, it would see that there's a much easier explanation here: that Trump, for all of his bombast, is not actually an electoral juggernaut and that the solution to this problem is just to put him out to pasture.

Most of the time, when standard-bearers can't close the deal with the voting public, U.S. political parties move on. Not so with this Republican Party. It can neither move on from Trump nor accept that he's a divisive and unpopular figure for a large part of the American public.

Some of this, it's true, comes from the fact that much of the party is caught in the snare of the former president's cult of personality. But some of it runs much deeper: The Republican Party never moved on from Richard Nixon's "silent majority" from the notion that alone represents the supposedly authentic people of the United States. Democrats, no matter how many votes they get or how many elections they win, cannot, in this view, legitimately claim to represent the nation.

From the Tea Party to Mitt Romney's "47%," to Trump's make-believe tales of fraud and illegal voting, Republicans treat Democrats voters and Democratic majorities not as quite right — not quite real, not quite American. No matter how many votes they earn or how many elections they win, Democrats cannot, in this view, legitimately claim to represent the nation.

We should not expect a Biden victory, if it comes, to end the threat to American democracy. With or without Trump, a Republican Party that cannot share this country with its political opponents is a Republican Party that will always look for one way or another to stop the steal.

Obituaries



Diane Booth

In Loving Memory

Kearns, Utah—Diane B. Hornor Booth, age 74, Passed away May 15th 2024 after a 6 week battle of leiomyosarcoma cancer. Born April 11th 1949 in Denver Colorado. Daughter Carol and Bill Hornor.

Diane (Mrs. BEE) was a kind hearted unique woman. Known for her love of her life Mark Booth. She married for 32 years for her love of her life Mark Booth. Preceded in death by her parents and her cherished daughter Melanite (Richard) and sister Carla & grandson Ashton. Survived by her husband Mark Booth, Sister Marilyn & Brother Billy. Daughter Jeannine (Dan) Rob Tyree & Son John Legg. Grandchildren James, Gabby, Nicolette & Bridgette. Janell, Marissa and many beautiful great grandchildren along with nephews and nieces. Many people who considered her Nana and a great friend. She will be missed by many and remembered for her outspoken spirit and colorful nature.

Viewing will be held May 20th 11:00 AM, Saturday, to follow at Valley View Memorial Park and Funeral Home 4335 W 4100 S West Valley City Utah.



Barbara K. Schwartz

In Loving Memory

Passed away Monday 4-22-24. Known fondly as Bobbie, Mom, or Granny, was born Dec. 29, 1938, in Bremond, Texas to Joseph Schwartz and Kathleen M. Hughes. She moved to California in her teens, she later met Alfred Schwartz whom she married. She was an amazing waitress and then helped David in his business of Big Al Oil Company. She was loved by everyone, and she could never remember a joke to tell correctly for barrel snipers: Daughter, Tammy Christine (Bobbie), and grandchildren: Katie Smith (Ben), Bridgette Turner (Curtis and Zayne), her sisters: Shawn de Moss (David), Connie Ragland (Fred), also Helen Davis and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband, Alfred Schwartz, and son Jimmy Schwartz.

Services: Saturday, 6/17/2024 @ 1:00 PM at St. Thomas More Catholic Church, 3015 East Creek Road, Cottonwood Heights, UT 84093

Kelly Sue Palmer

1964-2024

West Jordan, UT—Kelly Sue Palmer passed away after many years of battling illness and chronic pain. Born on May 19, 1964, to Kathy Pack-Palmer and Kelly grew up in Riverton and West Jordan, Utah. A 1982 West Jordan High School graduate, she was known for her beauty, popularity, and athletic prowess.

From a young age, Kelly found joy in school sports and church activities. Her vibrant spirit and humor left a lasting impression on everyone who knew her. Kelly's love for her cats and her unwavering friendship with her closest and dearest friend, Denise Eggen, brought her comfort and joy. She spent many years in Las Vegas, where she loved the sunshine and warm weather. Kelly enjoyed scenic drives, camping, and hiking, and she loved listening to Stevie Nicks and Wynonna Judd, among other bands. She was giving and welcoming when anyone came to visit her and made the best vanilla bean ice cream. Kelly always had a lot of hope and compassion and was a very good-hearted and appreciative of whoever she knew.

Kelly is preceded in death by her sister, Bobbie Dee Palmer. She leaves behind her loving mother, Kathleen Pack-Palmer, siblings Shawn (Dan) Palmer, Tammy Lynn Smith, Tiffany (Al) Aldous, and Jason (Brittany) Palmer; and numerous nieces, nephews, aunts, and cousins, all of whom will miss her dearly.

The family will arrange a graveside memorial later this year. The family will miss her dearly. Kelly is remembered as an angel in heaven, watching over those she loved. Her spirit, love, and resilience will forever be in the hearts of those who knew her.

Bernardo Beltran Gutierrez

1942 – 2024

Bernardo Beltran Gutierrez Aka Junior, Born January 14, 1942 passed away peacefully on Tuesday May 14, 2024 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Bernardo is survived by his children: Brenda (Gary) Hillyard, Rick Gutierrez, and Daniel Gutierrez; 11 grandchildren; and 10 great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his loving wife Bonnie Gutierrez, and his daughter Laurie Gutierrez.

Those who knew Junior best can recall his larger than life stories about his adventures in Africa and the Conka Conka's, his love for hunting, a sweet tooth that could only be satisfied with candy and pastries. He loved a good bargain and would always say it's not what you make it's what you know. He also enjoyed watching his old western movies and of course his oldies music. A viewing will be held Wednesday, May 22, 2024 from 6:00-8:00 pm at Memorial Murray Mortuary, 5850 South 900 East Murray, UT. Funeral services will be held Thursday May 23, 2024 at 11:00 am at Memorial Murray Mortuary with grave side services immediately following at Murray City Cemetery.

Peggy Ann Pearson-Griffe

1950-2024

Sandy, UT—On Sunday May 19th, following a 5-year battle, Peggy lost her fight with metastatic breast cancer.

Peggy was born on April 11, 1950 in Salt Lake City, Utah to George and Louise Pearson. She was the third of four children. (Nannette, Sandy, Joe and Steve (Mardi)).

Peggy was raised in Salt Lake City in the Sugarhouse area where she attended Garfield, Clayton Jr., and Highland High Schools.

During her life, Peggy married three times, first to J.R. Barney, then to John Newborn and finally to Daniel Griffe. Daniel and Peggy spent 38 years together.

In 1971, Peggy accepted a job with Travelers Insurance, not knowing that this would lead to a lifetime career in the Medical industry. She retired in 2020, finishing out her career at EMI Health. Along the way, she made many close friends. She loved teaching and mentoring. She was admired and respected by her peers.

She loved taking her family on adventurous camping and boating trips. Spending time in southern Utah, especially Canyonlands was one of her favorite places to relax and enjoy the beauty.

Peggy adored her children, Sons, Trent, Adam (Karl) and Michael (Trish), and daughter, Natalie (Kelley). Her family expanded to include thirteen grandchildren who she warmly expanded to.

She also loved and adored her furry friends who brought many happy memories.

Peggy is preceded in death by her parents and her brother Roger.

She is survived by her husband, Daniel, sons Trent, Adam (Karl) and Michael (Trish), daughter, Natalie (Kelley), sister Sandy (Mongold (Joe), brother Steve Pearson (Mardi), and sister-in-law, Nannette Pearson. She is also survived by her 13 grandchildren: Brinn, Kelley, Jayce, Keira, Aubri, Gabi, Nate, Luke, James, Gregory, Anna, Veda and Nora.

It was with great sorrow that we have lost an irreplaceable Wife, Mother, Grandmother, Sister, Aunt, Cousin, Niece, and Friend. Peggy will always be in our hearts and remembered forever.

Funeral services will be held at Larkin Mortuary, in Sandy Utah, May 17th at 1pm

Ray Kelly

1927-2022

Holladay, UT—Dad, Of course today (May 21st) is all about YOU, a day that celebrates your nut cake, eclairs and lots of candy! We love and miss you and Happy Birthdays to: Janet, Robin, Patti, Mike & Lisa

MEMORIAL
MONUMENTS & CREMATORIES

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