

# DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF WILLOW VALLEY

## NEWSLETTER

### January 2025

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## Addressing the Issues

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# Say No to Cynicism

## Say No to Cynicism

Steven Beschloss from America, America <[america@substack.com](mailto:america@substack.com)>



(Photo by Lyubov Smirnova via Getty Images)

We can endure and overcome the coming onslaught, but that requires not being overwhelmed or seduced by defeatism.

**This moment might seem** different—one that is absent of guardrails, careening toward authoritarianism. Yes, we’ve never had a convicted felon, adjudicated rapist and lead insurrectionist about to occupy the White House. We’ve never had a president-elect who’s nominated such a dangerous collection of billionaires, reckless incompetents and miscreants to advance his desire to plunder the nation’s riches and dismantle our democratic government. We’ve never had a president-elect step to the side while he urges the richest man on the planet to exploit his resources and proximity to power to bully elected members of Congress to serve his interests. It’s enough to make some among us give up fighting for what’s right.

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## Say No to Cynicism (cont'd)

But we must remember: We've lived through a version of this before. We witnessed Donald Trump come into power, sow conflict, spread chaos, stoke fear and fuel doubt—and then escalate the violence and lies when he was voted out. We have already experienced plenty of corruption and criminality, reckless incompetence, self-serving billionaires and spineless members of Congress applauding it all or refusing to stop it.

Trump's plan to pillage and plunder the country this time will be more methodical, more aggressive and more destructive, especially since it's more explicit and organized than before. These years will be appalling and tragic in their naked cruelty, greed, hostility and theft. But let's not doubt our capacity to survive and overcome it.

Yes, Elon Musk's threat to primary any elected official who does not bend to his demands—with billions of dollars to fund those attacks himself—surely will defeat the cowardly and weak-willed. The threats by Trump and his sadistic henchman to pursue prosecution, imprisonment and financially crushing lawsuits surely intimidates critics and other political opponents who fear retribution; the kowtowing without a fight by ABC News and others in the media surely exacerbates the danger of fascist control over our free press and other fraying democratic institutions.

**But I see another danger emerging** that risks accelerating Trump's hostile takeover. That's the cynicism of people at every level who should know better. There's nothing they can do about it, they say. It's all over, they say. Trump and the billionaires have won, they say, and maybe all they can do is turn off the news, forget politics and flee the country. They wrap their defeatism in a white surrender flag, hiding their demoralization with know-it-all cynicism about the state of our nation. Many of these Americans should be a part of the pro-democracy opposition, flexing their capacity for courage, but they've decided they know better and refuse to stand up or speak out.

I'm not quick to condemn this cynical crowd because I understand there's a price to be paid for honesty, decency and rejecting those in power. I understand how powerful a motivator fear can be; I'm surely not immune to its nasty grip on one's psyche. But the only way we get through this period is by the majority sticking together, supporting elected officials and others in power who can reject the hostile attacks on our democracy and progressive way of life, amplifying the voices of journalists and other media members who are truthfully chronicling what's happening, and fighting back when we see injustices leveled against immigrants and other vulnerable populations.

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## Say No to Cynicism (cont'd)

This is a time when we need to advocate for independent thinking, for actions that strengthen the common good, and against the coming escalation of lies and hate.

**Let's rewind for a moment** to May 27, 2022, when I pondered the topic of burnout and the World Health Organization's depiction of three related symptoms: "Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; reduced professional efficacy."

In an essay titled "[Burning Down the House](#)," I acknowledged that I sometimes suffer feelings of exhaustion—and who doesn't? "But rather than feeling disconnected or deterred by 'negativism,' which would undermine my ability to write and do my job, I remain tapped in, committed, driven." Part of what sustained me then—and still does now—is "a sense of urgency about the state of our country."

Re-reading that essay reminded me that the moment we were in then is not all that dissimilar to what we're facing now. Here's what I wrote:

I have noticed in recent weeks that the constant drumbeat of bad news, driven by the feverous pitch of bad actors bent on burning down our house—by stripping human rights, attempting to overthrow our government, refusing to act after more children are gunned down, remaining silent after yet another racist mass murder, siding with Vladimir Putin, allying with other shameless nationalists and extremists, and shoving our democracy toward the ash heap of history—has begun to tire me out.

At least a little. At least enough to notice that, lately, I can be more interested in turning the TV off than in learning one more thing.

Usually, I don't struggle to find something to say. But there have been moments when I've wondered whether there really is anything else to say that can break through and make a difference. Is that a form of burnout—or at least my version of it?

More than two years later, we are still here, still standing, still speaking out—and, yes, still worrying about our capacity to withstand the coming onslaught. That this dangerous threat has not abated and has instead worsened might be a reason for cynicism and resignation to a terrible fate.

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## Say No to Cynicism (cont'd)

But the fact is that cynicism and resignation are exactly what the reckless incompetents and miscreants, the self-serving billionaires, the fascists, the sadists, the Trump sycophants, the pillagers and plunderers who despise our system of self-governance are counting on. The more we indulge ourselves in fear, doubt and feelings of exhaustion, the easier it will be for them to win. This is not just the danger of [obeying in advance](#), but obeying permanently so that they can win without a real fight.

I'm reluctant to use hyperbolic or sensational rhetoric such as "we're a nation at war," but there is little doubt that the battles with enemies of democracy, equality and justice—people who still call themselves American citizens—will be ongoing. These battles didn't stop, by the way, after America elected a Democrat president in 2020—not with increasingly extremist Republicans in state legislatures working energetically to suppress the vote; the Supreme Court and other Trump-installed judges exploiting their power to strip away rights like reproductive freedom; and a sociopathic, felonious demagogue gathering together drunkards and misfits, militia members and other advocates of political violence, plus once-conservative Republicans bent on getting and keeping power by spreading lies and rejecting the nation's once-sacrosanct commitment to democratic rule. The danger may be epic in scale, but we win a better future one day—one battle—at a time.

**This essay will be my last missive** before the New Year, unless political realities intervene and I feel compelled to reach out. For your sake and mine, dear reader, I'm counting on us all taking a break from the madness, enjoying our families and friends, recharging our batteries and readying ourselves for the battles to come. Soon enough, the fourth anniversary of the Jan. 6 Capitol attack will come thundering to our doorsteps, quickly disrupting whatever peace and calm the preceding days will have provided.

I know we'll all have plenty to say and fresh thoughts about what we can do as we reflect on the disturbing reality of Jan. 6, which is why I hope that the coming days give you comfort and solace, joy and peace. And if that's not possible, I hope the people you love will remind you that human connection, our shared community and giving to others make this life worth living.

**Wishing you the warmest of holidays!**

[https://open.substack.com/pub/america/p/say-no-to-cynicism?r=19iva&utm\\_medium=ios](https://open.substack.com/pub/america/p/say-no-to-cynicism?r=19iva&utm_medium=ios)



# How to Survive in '25



Jan 1

There's no way around it: it's 2025. And that means we're just days away from Elon Musk's presidency.

If you're feeling anxious about the U.S. government being run by a man whose rockets regularly explode on the launching pad, I understand.

I want to help keep you sane this year—and the next four.

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# How to Survive in '25 (cont'd)

I'm not recommending that you disengage from the world, swallow fistfuls of gummies, or go on a four-year hot yoga retreat. I'm offering advice to make you calmer and stronger—and better equipped to do the important work ahead.

A few weeks ago, I published an essay called [In Search of Sanity](#), in which I recommended, among other things, the Serenity Prayer:

*God give me the serenity to accept things which cannot be changed; Give me courage to change things which must be changed; And the wisdom to distinguish one from the other.*

TBR community members contributed many insightful responses to my essay. Here are some of them:

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The Serenity Prayer is really a recap of Stoic thinking (sorry, Christians).

Epictetus: "There is only one way to happiness and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power of our will."

Old Epi (as his friends were wont to call him) was keen on the notion of "what is up to us, and what is not up to us." Sweat the stuff that you can do something about; getting overwrought about the rest of the nonsense is futile. Do you really think your worrying is going to change Trump suddenly from unhinged to "hinged"?

Figuring out the difference is not all that hard, but it takes some work, for sure.

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I'd only add to your serenity recipe some of the prescriptions from Timothy Snyder in his pocket-sized book, *On Tyranny*: *"Stand Out. Be Careful With Language & Listen for Dangerous Words. Investigate. Get Outside. Make New Friends and March With Them. Be As Courageous as You Can."* And—*support institutions that count, whether they be journalistic, non-profits, local government or whatever makes sense. We can't afford to sit back. Ever.*

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## How to Survive in '25 (cont'd)

I have a suggestion which I'm trying to get myself to take a little more often: instead of listening to NPR on your earbuds or your home radio, put on MUSIC. Do you remember music? It's wonderful! Try it sometime.

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I would add that, in the end, we have as individuals more power over and access to change than we often realize. Look how South Korea just dealt with the martial law situation! Mika and Joe now defend their trip to grovel at Trump's feet with "That's our job!" I leave it up to MSNBC and the network to accept that as a proper validation of their FL trip (love your note that their show is "Fox for vegans"). The viewers took flight and if they stay away the ad dollars will follow suit. This type of action/reaction goes for any well thought out strategy to "defend" our rights, our liberty and our Democracy. It just takes a little bit more thinking and a proactive rather than passive (as in victim) attitude!

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I'm 66, and have a lifetime of anxiety and depression behind me with lots of trauma. Along with many years of therapy, you don't want to know how many, I started mindfulness meditation training with the Headspace app three years ago. And the main point of mindfulness, is that all we have is right now. The past is gone, and the future never arrives. None of us know what's going to happen, we absolutely do need to focus on the micro, and do what we can to change our small corner every day. For me that means being kind, helping others when I can, and doing my best to live in the moment. Simple, but not easy.

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I've been trying to tell my mourning friends that they're mourning before the body's dead. I believe Trump will cause great damage, and hurt a lot of people, but I have hope that the midterms will dull the pain, and in four years the Trump era will slowly start to diminish. I don't think Vance or certainly not DJ Jr. have the personal charisma to keep his rabid followers as riled up. I could be wrong, but history shows us that most political movements reach a peak, then subside. Hell, even the Berlin wall fell.

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# How to Survive in '25 (cont'd)

How about Epictetus? Basic premise:

There are only two things in life that matter:

First: Figure out in any situation what is the best thing to do.

Second: Do it.

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And if none of that helps, perhaps this photo of my handsome friend Cookie will:  
Happy New Year, my friends! We're going to get through this. Together.

Love,  
Andy



[https://www.borowitzreport.com/p/how-to-survive-25?utm\\_campaign=email-half-](https://www.borowitzreport.com/p/how-to-survive-25?utm_campaign=email-half-)

## **Coming Events (cont'd)**

### **Understanding Our Democracy**

**Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> @ 10am**

**Cultural Center Education Room**

#### **The State of American Democracy: Our Democracy At Risk**

**We will look at what two scholars of democracy say about actions of elected leaders around the world that paved the way for democratic failures. Using their framework, we will review the history of our democracy. We will look at how the actions of our leaders over the last 30 years have put our democracy at risk ... and what we should do to restore the guardrails of our democracy.**

**We hope that you can join us. Everyone is welcome.**

### **Join our General Meeting**

**on Tuesday, January 28th 2025**

**1 PM Cultural Center Education Room**

**for our first meeting of the year.**