

# Letters

Various Authors

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Send letters to [fe@fifthestate.org](mailto:fe@fifthestate.org) or Fifth Estate, POB 201016, Ferndale MI 48220.

All formats accepted including typescript & handwritten. Letters may be edited for length.

## Voting I

Thank you for finally calling out your fellow privileged white lefties for their, "I choose not to vote," bullshit. (See "In Defense of Tactical Voting," by Bill Weinberg, FE #400, Spring 2018.)

The Sentence Reform and Control Act bill that was pending in Congress, with wide bi-partisan support when the 2016 presidential election went down, would have taken five years off my prison sentence the day Hillary signed it (as she most certainly would have), along with that amount and much more from numerous friends of mine in this scumfuck system.

I don't know anyone in these places (aside from the oddball, toothless meth-Nazi) who didn't want you people out there to vote for that miserable, racist woman regardless of her shortcomings. In fairness, a 3-million person majority of you did, and many thanks.

But, yeah, it must be nice to not have years of your life hanging over your head relative to a presidential election, but there are several thousand of us in the fed system for whom that was and remains the case.

People who call themselves prison abolitionists and bump all this fly-shit about "fire to the prisons," but then turn around and ignore an opportunity to help thousands of prisoners get out many years sooner because in so doing they will somehow have "legitimized the system," are just clueless, bougie assholes striking a pose.

Leo Oladimi,  
US Prison Hazelton  
Bruceton Mills, W.V.

*Bill Weinberg replies:* To be clear: We should be putting forth the idea of prison abolition, and not be content with the few crumbs of progress offered by the system. But we should also be pragmatic and take what we can get, and not be more concerned with our ideological purity than human lives.

Readers may have heard that Trump has pledged to sign a prison reform act that could free thousands. We should be clear that this bill, the "First Step Act" (named to reflect its modest ambitions), is not the same as the Sentencing Reform Act, which now appears dead.

The First Step Act would allow prisoners to finish their sentences in a halfway house or under home confinement if they complete education, job training, and drug treatment programs while behind bars. But it does not include actual sentence reductions.

Which is why the ACLU and NAACP are opposing it.

## Voting II

Regarding Bill Weinberg's article in the Spring 2017 Fifth Estate, "In Defense of Tactical Voting With No Illusions." Who exactly were we supposed to vote for? Hillary Clinton?

Looking back on the first two terms of her dynasty we find support for actions against the Zapatistas, escalation of the Drug War, and for tough anti-crime legislation.

Weinberg wrote about the Zapatistas and for *High Times* during the Bill Clinton administration.

He should know better.

Isabel d'Nihil

Albany N.Y.

*Bill Weinberg replies:* Not only did I write about the Zapatistas for *High Times*, I wrote a book about them (*Homage to Chiapas: The New Indigenous Struggles in Mexico*, Verso Books 2000).

Nothing I wrote suggested that the Democrats and neoliberals are not our enemies. On the contrary, I was explicitly clear that they are. But sweeping they're-all-the-same-ism is deluded, ahistorical nonsense.

The neoliberal order paved the way for Trump-fascism by fueling a backlash against globalism ripe for a demagogue like Trump to exploit. But arguments that fascism is no more dangerous than liberalism (neo or old-school) are not to be taken seriously.

It certainly is not the position of the Zapatistas. They have always maintained their independence from electoral parties (exactly the stance I advocate), but have not advocated abstentionism, and have even allowed polling in their zones of control.

## Trump I

There is something peculiar about your article, "Is Trump the 'Punk' President?" by Brian James Schill in your Spring 2018 issue, FE #400.

Schill writes that punk and anarchist anti-fascism are "the only force equipped to combat fascism at the street level." What?

A 50-year-old music genre is "the only force" that can save us? I'm sorry but as much as I like punk music, I can't give it this much credit and I believe that art and music actually matter.

Is he proposing that a conspiracy is working to invalidate punk?

The alt-right partially developed out of Internet forums like 4-Chan which often specializes in being as obnoxious and offensive as possible. There has always been an element in punk, as well, of adopting offensive, reactionary positions as a Rorschach test. Fear did this long ago as satire, in a way similar to GWAR.

Some non-satirical boneheaded aspects of punk include The Eaters (a '77 UK band) who released the single, "Get Raped," and large sections of the Boston hardcore scene were and are similarly boneheaded.

The problem with transgression and shock tactics is that they can function like passive nihilism leaving a terrain that can be reterritorialized by reactionary ideologies.

Jason Rodgers

Albany N.Y.

*Brian James Schill replies:* Thanks for reading, Jason. In retrospect, I can appreciate the critique that including "punk" in that sentence about punk and anarchist antifa being the "only force equipped to combat fascism at the street level" is problematic.

So, strike "punk" from that sentence. My point was that aside from the various—and important—women's marches since DT took office, there has been little by way of street-level resistance to the current administration's agenda in the US outside of the organized antifa movement, which contains many self-identified punks.

But, yes, much of punk is right of center, and we cannot escape the fact that there are ways in which DT is “punk” tactically, as the dudes at trumpispunkrock.com argue.

I suppose you could add the incredibly important NoDAPL movement that occurred before DT was in office in North Dakota in 2016 as a site of resistance, but the resistance there was less the DT agenda specifically than neoliberalism and multinational capitalism generally.

To the DT-is-punk point, then, the bigger question is, as you imply, if punk is now in the White House, then punk either won, or if DT is not punk, then punk was already ineffectual as a resistance movement. That is, 40+ years of resistance to neoliberalism, etc., still couldn’t stop Hillary, Trump, LePen, climate change, and so on.

In either case, it’s hard not to draw the conclusion that punk should just go away, that it is and has been dead for a long time.

As Rimbaud, and, I guess, Refused, put it, “We need new noise.”

## **Trump II**

The world decries the Trump presidency. The American democratic process, sick with multiple infections of plutocracy, kleptocracy, and stupidity, teetering on wobbly legs, bought into Trump’s brash, clownish, populism.

Grasping at the straws that perhaps here was a man who could change the course and restore power to the people. Pollyannas. Dumb Shits. Now, look what they’ve got. But as bad as things are, watch out folks, it’s gonna get worse.

Trump is too volatile and stands a strong chance of imploding. Even if his term doesn’t go down in flames, his reelection is highly, highly doubtful. He’s pissed off way too many fat cats who call the shots and failed to construct a political Pretorian Guard.

Yes, his darling, the Military Industrial Complex, has received kisses and hugs from Trump, but these bad hom-bres are fickle, and they well know about shoving lose cannons over the side.

No doubt they’re already auditioning for the real thing. Trump is just the opening act, the funny man who warms up the audience. The main attraction is on his or her way.

This one will have charm, intelligence, large hands and quite possibly a host of brown-shirts.

Gary Ives

Marble Falls, Ark.

## **Trans Name Change**

Along with the Austin Community Law Center and the Trans Pride Initiative, I am mounting a constitutional challenge to a Texas statute prohibiting incarcerated people from changing their names.

This statute has no rational purpose, but functions to disproportionately impact incarcerated trans people.

If we prevail in Texas, we will mount similar challenges to the many other states with similar prohibitions. A positive outcome for those who wish to adopt gender-affirming names will benefit those who wish to change their names for religious or other personal reasons.

Our approach to this litigation is not only to challenge the state prohibition, but to de-pathologize the discourse that prevails in legal writing about trans people. We believe this litigation will yield positive results, regardless of the outcome at the trial court level, and are prepared to fight this battle in the courts for as long as it takes to get legal recognition of the basic right to self-determination via control of your own name.

We are raising a modest amount of money to cover things like filing fees, and medical testimony. Our goal is \$5,000.

Here is a link to our fundraising page. [103.tpride.org](https://103.tpride.org). Your support, including sharing this link on your social media, is greatly appreciated by us and our clients.

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