

ACTIVISM

United States: To Fight Trump, Take to the Streets!

Sunday 21 July 2019, by [POLLITT Katha](#) (Date first published: 15 July 2019).

The Trump administration gets more malicious, harmful, and absurd every day. So why aren't many of us outside protesting?

Remember 2017? Those were the days. In Trump's first year, we [marched and demonstrated constantly](#), for women's rights, for immigrants, for science, for the planet, and for the release of his tax returns. We jammed the airports to protest the Muslim travel ban, subscribed to civic action sites like 5 Calls, and made phoning and [postcarding](#) part of our daily routines. We confronted Republican lawmakers at their [town halls](#) and even [picketed the homes of Democrats](#) like Senator Chuck Schumer, who seemed too eager to compromise with Trump.

Inevitably—and rightly—protest turned into politics and the patient, sometimes frustrating local organizing that electing new leaders requires. We took back the House and made important progress in the states, including Virginia, New Mexico, New York, and Maine. Black voters mobilized, and so did the Democratic Socialists of America, Indivisible, and VoteRunLead. On the ground, going door-to-door, the mostly suburban, mostly white women of the resistance (mocked by a self-described dirtbag leftist as middle-aged hysterics) [sought to outmobilize](#) the 52 percent of white women who voted for Trump in the first place. These efforts achieved wonders, including the election of the charismatic Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and victories for black House candidates in mostly white districts, such as Lucy McBath, Lauren Underwood, Jahana Hayes, and Antonio Delgado. Among [the many local progressive triumphs](#), Chicago elected Lori Lightfoot as its first openly gay, black mayor. There are now [no fewer than six DSA members](#) on the 50-member Chicago City Council.

All this is crucial. But what happened to the fierce urgency of now that barely 24 months ago sent us pouring into the streets at a moment's notice? Two and a half years into his term, Trump has not moved an inch. He is the same cruel and ignorant liar, bigot, and bully he has been since his youth. He has learned nothing in office: He still lacks a grasp of the basic civics and government that we were taught in eighth grade, such as [what tariffs actually do](#). He just keeps pushing the limits, always on the attack and holding his ridiculous rallies, sending out his [bizarre and misspelled](#) spiteful tweets, [blaming the Democrats](#) for things he himself is responsible for, and appointing weirdos and randos to important positions. (His chief of protocol, Sean Lawler, just resigned in the wake of reports that he intimidated staffers and carried a whip in the office.)

None of it makes a dent. As I write, a Washington Post/ABC News [poll puts Trump's approval rating](#) at a record-high 44 percent—amid the children in cages, [the restrictions on abortion](#) and birth control, [huge tax cuts for the rich](#), an [erratic foreign policy](#) that may get us into war with Iran, and somewhere between 16 and 24 women accusing him of sexual assault or misconduct, including, per E. Jean Carroll's [remarkable essay](#) in New Yorkmagazine, outright rape.

In France the Yellow Vests have come to Paris for 35 consecutive Saturdays to protest an increase in gas taxes, rally against a lowered speed limit on country roads, and ask for a raise in the minimum wage, to name just a few issues. [They won on all those demands](#). In Hong Kong [one in seven residents took to the streets](#) over a law permitting extradition to mainland China. The bill has been shelved, and Carrie Lam, the territory's chief executive, [apologized](#).

This weekend saw protests around the country against ICE's raids, deportations and inhumane conditions in detention camps. On Friday night, there were [Lights for Liberty](#) vigils in hundreds of cities and towns. But we're far from levels seen in France or Hong Kong.

p>Sure, there are activists who inspire awe with their dedication and courage, like the volunteers who [risk arrest in the Arizona desert](#) to provide migrants with water, food and shelter. There are wonderful organizations [like RAICES](#) that provide them with legal aid and other help. There's #MeToo, which, far from having run out of steam, gets a new life every time a case of assault or rape makes headlines. (Carroll wrote that it inspired her to come forward after more than 20 years.)

But protests aren't yet what they used to be and need to be. In May, I went to a rally in downtown Manhattan against the abortion bans sweeping Republican-controlled states. There might have been 300 people there—far from the thousands you'd expect, given the circumstances. And how many were out in the streets of Atlanta, St. Louis, and Birmingham, Alabama, where virtual abortion bans may soon be in effect? Then on July 2, I demonstrated at Representative Rosa DeLauro's office in New Haven as part of a nationwide movement against the government's atrocious treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers. Maybe 200 people showed.

Why is that? Maybe people have their eye on the long game and the next election is already absorbing our attention, but it feels as if a certain energy is gone. My daughter thinks it's Trump fatigue, that we've been beaten down by the sheer weight of what's gone wrong, from the [mountain of lies](#) and scandals to the [dismantling of regulatory measures](#) and the [packing of the courts](#) with energetic reactionaries.

I'd go further: We've internalized a tiny Trump who lives in our heads and jeers at our puny efforts, our letters, our clever memes, and our belief that facts are stubborn things. After all, everyone knows facts are just "fake news." But this is no time to go quiet—or to argue about language, as so many have over Ocasio-Cortez's use of the words "concentration camps" to describe migrant detention facilities. The term is controversial because it compares America to Hitler's Germany, when we're still far from it. But perhaps the message is less about Hitler than about those millions of "good Germans" who didn't do much to stop him. The Nazis controlled society from the ground up and were violent to the point that leafleting could get you executed. We have far less to fear, and absolutely no reason to resign ourselves to Trump's cruelties. What are we waiting for?

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P.S.

• THE NATION. JULY 15, 2019. [JULY 29-AUGUST 5, 2019, ISSUE](#):
<https://www.thenation.com/article/trump-protest-march-revolution/>

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