



No Groove, Just One Nation Under a Grip *by Jared A. Ball, Black Agenda Report*

”This grip of the Democrats is no soft hold. It is a death grip.”

A rally for jobs, justice and education that occurs only two years after the election of a president and party who apparently cannot deliver either and which blames not the party in power for those two years but only the fringe elements of the out-of-power right wing, is a rally that even with a George Clinton performance is One Nation under no groove only a grip. And this grip of the Democrats is no soft hold. It is a death grip. It is a strangle hold designed to squeeze the life out of progressive elements within their own party and throughout the rest of the country – indeed the world. In what is being heralded as a largely successful mobilization of a young, energetic, diverse movement led by unionized labor and civil rights organizations was really a carefully manicured slap in the face of those traditions of struggle. Rather than the traditions of each, which include bold, strong irreverent organized acts of disobedience today’s versions are safely cajoled spokespersons of the liberal element of the ruling elite.

For those who have been coming to Washington, DC for decades to attend these kinds of rallies there was absolutely nothing new. First and foremost is that it was yet another march in DC that had nothing to do with the immediate concerns of most of the residents of DC. Secondly, there were the same tributes to organized religion, pledges of allegiance to the United States and a choir-styled national anthem meant to convey a fraudulent grassroots image and inclusion of the Black working class. But mostly it was the same in that it held out no real challenge to power, no threat of a push against liberalism or conservative Democracy. There were the regular co-opted calls of “power to the people,” quotes referencing A. Phillip Randolph’s that enemies of health care, education and jobs are “enemies of the Negro,” comparisons made between the Tea Party and the old Dixiecrats and even an extended reading by several young people of Dr. King’s I Have A Dream speech. But there was only scant reference of King’s own disillusion with his dream or the fact that the Dixiecrats of old are the Democrats of today and that these are still the “enemies of the Negro.”

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But worst of all was the consistent and clear message that the problems we face today are the result of “40 senators” and a rabid right-wing of the country whose persistent responses of “no” have held back our innocent, even heroic, current president. The calls for jobs, peace, health care and education were simply hollow given that the president all of these people elected has done nothing to advance any of these issues in ways that did not more so advance the interests of the very entities who benefit by the currently horrible conditions of each. The proud traditions of labor and human rights struggles in this country and around the world are disrespected by a leadership that simply says to vote for the Democrat who will beautify our oppression rather than end it. The argument coming loud and clear from the podium Saturday was simply that if you don’t again vote for the Democrats and Obama then there was no point in having voted for them in the first place. There was no point then and there is no point now. A banker’s party is a banker’s party no matter the color or gender of the candidate.

There was one white man I heard this weekend who seems to have not completely lost his mind. David Swanson of the Progressive Democrats of America actually called for us to devalue the role of elections and the presidency itself by massive, even disruptive civil disobedience and grassroots organization. He is absolutely correct. Calls that we vote specifically because of the lives given toward achieving that right usually miss the point of what those fighting for the vote actually wanted that exercise to deliver. Marches that only belatedly call for the elected to deliver that which their benefactors have assured they cannot are simply foolishness. New directions with newly-developed methods of popular and public challenges are needed.

For in the end Dick Gregory was right. By consistently voting for the lesser of evil and by never seeking the truth about the assassinations of people we march in honor of we follow the path that leads us to Nazis.

The political exercise at the Washington Mall on October 2 “held out no real challenge to power” and was, therefore, of no use to the powerless. “What is being heralded as a largely successful mobilization of a young, energetic, diverse movement led by unionized labor and civil rights organizations was really a carefully manicured slap in the face of those traditions of struggle.”



“The Green Party is no longer the alternative, the Green Party is the imperative”
~ Rosa Clemente