

From where I sit: Fighting Fascism

A view from the Chair - Mike Rawlins, Collin County Democratic Party Chair

October 26, 2021

What can I do?

My last View from the Chair about the ["F" word](#) prompted one very good question: what can we do to fight Fascism? The main answer is simple, and fundamental:

Elect Democrats!

This is so obvious that even prominent Republicans like former New Jersey Governor [Christine Todd Whitman](#) are saying it. It's not enough to have elected President Biden and defeated the previous President. With the "big lie" being perpetuated and allegiance to the 45th President becoming the litmus test for being a "true" Republican, the job isn't nearly over. The truth that many of us have a hard time facing is that it will never be over.

I recently starting getting interested in game theory. It's not about *Dungeons and Dragons* or *Monopoly*. It's a branch of mathematics that studies strategies for how participants deal with each other in competitive situations. Game theory has been applied to a number of contexts including war, business, and even biology. There are some key concepts that are relevant to politics – the differences between a "finite" and an "infinite" game. And the player that has a better understanding of the game that they're in has an advantage over their competitors.

In finite games there are rules that are well understood and observed, there are a finite number of players, and the goal is to win the game. In infinite games the rules can change, the number of players can change, and the goal isn't to win but to *continue the game*. The game ends when one of the players drops out because the player has run out of resources.

Baseball and other sports are examples of finite games. The Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union is often used as an example of an infinite game. We didn't "win" so much as the Soviets couldn't keep playing and dropped out.

Business and the marketplace are more interesting examples. Some companies behave on the assumption that commerce is a finite game, seeking to beat their competition and control a marketplace. On the other hand, there are many successful businesses that only seek to have enough market share to stay in business, to stay in the game.

Politics is even more interesting. It is often thought of as being a finite game. There are a finite number of players for an election (the candidates and their parties), the rules are well established, and there are clear winners and losers. But in the broader, more important sense it is an infinite game. There isn't just one election; there are many and they will never end so long as democracy survives. Our goal is not just to win elections, but stay in the game election after election, electing people who will work for our values and policies.

Too often Democrats focus on the finite aspects – either getting complacent after wins or getting discouraged and disengaging after losses. The forces of Fascism, currently working through Republicans, too often understand that they are playing an infinite game and that gives them an advantage.

While the current Republican Party has embraced Fascism in the form of Trumpism, the party isn't really our main opponent. Thinking that locks us into the mindset that politics is a finite

game. Our main opponent now, Fascism, isn't even a coherent philosophy – it's more a set of values, behaviors, and attitudes that is destructive to values we stand for. We're in an infinite game and we need to act like it.

I know all of you are tired after four years of he-who-shall-not-be-named, an election last year that didn't live up to expectations, and defeat after defeat in the Legislature with the Republicans moving the goal posts for elections, redistricting to their advantage, passing insane restrictions on a woman's personal choices about her reproductive health, and other outrages. But the fight, the game, goes on. We have been taught that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. It is true, and the price of the values we stand for as Democrats – justice, equal opportunity, and the common good – is also eternal vigilance.

The best thing we can do to fight Fascism is to elect Democrats. And that's not just in 2022, it's in that election and every one after that. They're not going to give up. Neither can we.