

## Deconstruction of 'Social Contract': *Confronting the Banality of Evil*

Brij Mohan<sup>1</sup>

Dean Emeritus, School of Social Work, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, USA

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#### \*Corresponding Author

Brij Mohan

E-mail: [swmoha@lsu.edu](mailto:swmoha@lsu.edu)

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### ABSTRACT

From Plato to de Tocqueville to Ronald Reagan, philosophers, pundits, kings, and leaders have attempted varied strategies to design governance against the fear of mass revolt. A triune of ominous forces—Coronavirus pandemic, civil unrest, and white supremacy—brought to fore the tip of a disastrous cultural iceberg: January 6, 2021 which marked a cataclysmic event in the modern history of civil society. As *social contract* and its tenets fell apart and institutional breakdown looked unhinged, civil leaders began to think about apocalypse beyond police brutality and pandemic. Vaccine nationalism has further divided the whole world between haves and have nots. Haves are globally 'white'. American *Whitopia* is hopelessly in search for the soul of a great nation. This article seeks to analyze the crux that characterizes the crisis of modern democracy and its institutional structures that call for constructive destruction.

**Keywords:** Crisis of Democracy; Institutional Disarray; Racism and Injustice; Social Contract.

### Ending the Uncivil War: A Nation in Search of its Soul

"We will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one ... There is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it—if only we're brave enough to be it."<sup>2</sup>

Twenty-Twenty-One has hardly begun. We have had January 6 (2021), another "day infamy". I posted a message on Facebook at 3.06 PM (January 6, 2021) and characterized that surrealistic event as Pearl Harbor II: America was attacked by white supremacist riotous mob incited and empowered by a pathological narcissistic leader who occupied the White House. I remained glued to the tube for nearly twelve hours watching probably one of the saddest days in the annals of democracy.

<sup>1</sup>The author's recent books include *Social Policy on the Cusp* (2020). New York: Nova Pub.; *Future of Social Work: Seven Pillars of Practice*. New Delhi: Sage Pub. (2018), *Global Frontiers of Social Development Theory and Practice: Economy, Climate and Justice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2015), and *Death of an Elephant* (a novella, 2013).

<sup>2</sup>Amanda Gorman read at The Joe Biden's presidential inauguration: [abcnews.com/3bVW0IN](https://www.abcnews.com/3bVW0IN) (retrieved January 20, 2021).

Noam Chomsky described Donald Trump as "the most dangerous man in human history." The Trumpian alternate reality was filled with narcissistic self-centeredness poisonously empowered by unlimited power of an unfit President. "I could shoot anyone on Fifth Avenue," he once said. He demonized every one who disagreed with him. Sadly, however, the twice impeached President became his own nemesis. Such a colorfully vile and nefarious character must be a subject of intensive psychiatric and forensic investigation. Insurrect-in-Chief acting as an impresario of organized sedition and violent revolt against the 'temple of democracy' is not an ordinary creature. His sublimated feral lust for power and control is a case study that will baffle the minds of future politico-psychoanalysts.

Hitler was a Nazi leader who was foolishly inducted into the mythology of "Superman", an anti-semitic fantasy fueled by 'Old European' nightmares. Mao was a Chinese Napoleon masquerading as a Marxist-Leninist avatar for the liberation of millions of Chinese exploited by internal and external enemies. He launched a revolution not unlike the American and Bolsheviks'. His Red Guards indulged in a national psychosis of reform and

transformation but his failures as a leader of his people remain unrivaled in human history. While watching TV broadcasts on January 6, 2021, I noticed a rioter wearing a green sweatshirt back-labeled as “Freedom.” This caught my attention. How could *Freedom Fighters* demolish the iconic US Capitol? I realized, finally, ‘freedom’—not unlike “democracy”—is perhaps the most elusive and prostituted construct in modern history. No one has the “freedom” to annihilate *Freedom* as Trump’s mobs attempted as a *coup d’état*. This brings home the significance of responsibility of citizens in a decent society.

A French schoolteacher named Samuel Paty was shot dead for his audacity to ask a simple question in his class.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes back a coterie of xenophobic colleagues made a nasty attempt to get my Dean Emeritus title revoked for publishing a letter to the Editor about campus corruption without any personal or institutional reference. This nadir of bigoted white supremacy desecrated the beacon of democracy when Trumpian mobs invaded the Capitol. The legacy of 45th President of the United States (POTUS) will continue to haunt American public, policies and programs. He decried “American carnage” which, in a year of pandemic, manifested itself in civil unrest, police brutality, fake news, violence and protests. Joseph R. Biden Jr., Donald Trump’s successor, called for national unity, war against pandemic, racial divisiveness and manufactured untruths ending “uncivil war.”

President Joe Biden has promised to restore the “soul of the nation”. How did we reach there? Soullessness is a major structural-moral failure of a living system. Edward Felsenthal writes: “The killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade and many more brought about a reckoning with systemic racism, long overdue and extraordinary in scale. Economic inequality deepened. Almost 1 in 8 American adults reported that their household didn’t have enough to eat at some point in November.” (2020: 42).

<sup>3</sup>In an email to staff shortly before his murder, Samuel Paty explained that his class was meant to confront students with the following question: should cartoons of the Prophet not be published in order to avoid violence, or should they be published to keep ‘freedom’ alive? But neither of these questions is the right one. Better to set aside the matter of violence for a moment and ask simply: is contempt a fair weapon for the fourth estate—even a satirical paper—to wield against a minority? *Charlie Hebdo* could not perform this abstraction, but a careful civics class might have done so. Now reintroduce the reality of murderous jihadist acts and ask whether *Charlie’s* war against bigotry and violence was a precision-target offensive, as it imagined, or just the indiscriminate carpet-bombing of Muslim sensibilities. In either case, was the effect to diminish jihadist violence or to increase it? Did *Charlie’s* obstinacy distinguish the enemy from the vast majority of French Muslims, or did it subject their republican loyalty to new kinds of stress?” *Charlie’s War*, Jeremy Harding, in *London Review of Books*, (<https://www.lrb.co.uk/?signup=1> (January 27, 2021).

*A Promised Land* (Obama, 2020) is a well-deserved achievement of presidential power. But it may not be my reality.<sup>4</sup> The prised reality following George Floyd’s cruel murder by three police officers and two black men in Kenosha, Wisconsin<sup>5</sup> dwarfs my pain in insignificance. The chronicle of murder and mayhem and the rise of obnoxious white supremacy raises questions regarding the prospects and visions of “a black future that fulfill a nation’s promise” (Williams, 2020: 75–91). Pharrell Williams curated “conversations and essays exploring America’s oppressive past and visions for a more equitable future” (*Time*, August 31-September 7, 2020: 75–90).

It is inspiring to see how black elites have begun constructive and programmatic conversations. But reality across a divided—painfully polarized—nation speaks volumes of insurmountable barriers to radicalize a systemic transformation. President Donald J. Trump’s speech from the White House—accepting his nomination for the second term made a conspiratorial statement against the future of American democracy. His continued sabotage of his duly elected successor may be within his “power”, but it raises treasonous issues. The fact that 71 million people still believe in his lies and misinformation serve as a mutated virus which has poisoned civil discourse. That is what Whitopia stands for. On the 57th anniversary of Martin Luther King’s historical speech, his granddaughter Yolanda Renee King, invoked her grandfather’s famous phrase as she spoke to the crowd at the March For Our Lives rally in Washington.<sup>6</sup> At no other time in American history, public protests and political divisiveness has prevailed during a pandemic. I will very briefly synthesize why *black life matters* in the United States. The contributions critiqued below signify how systemic inequality breeds racism in America. It’s not surprising to note most poor countries will remain deprived of Covid 19 vaccine during this nationalist stride.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>See my recent article, “Colors of Skin and Covid 19: Plateaus of Post-Enlightenment,” (Mohan, 2020).

<sup>5</sup>KENOSHA, Wis. (Reuters) - A Black man shot in the back by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, was left paralyzed and “fighting for his life,” his family and lawyers said hours before protesters and authorities clashed for a third night of civil unrest in the lakefront town. (Retrieved August 29, 2020). This author has lived in Wisconsin in the Seventies. It was the most liberal region in the country as I found as a new emigrant.

<sup>6</sup>“My generation has already taken to the streets — peacefully and with masks and social distancing — to protest racism,” she said. “And I want to ask the young people here to join me in pledging that we have only just begun to fight, and that we will be the generation that moves from me to we.” <https://nypost.com/2020/08/28/martin-luther-king-jr-s-granddaughter-speaks-at-dc-march/> (Retrieved August 30, 2020).

<sup>7</sup>[https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/01/28/vaccine-nationalism-means-that-poor-countries-will-be-left-behind?utm\\_campaign=the-economist-today&utm\\_medium=newsletter&utm\\_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm\\_term=2021-01-28&utm\\_content=article-link-5&etear=nl\\_today\\_5](https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/01/28/vaccine-nationalism-means-that-poor-countries-will-be-left-behind?utm_campaign=the-economist-today&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm_term=2021-01-28&utm_content=article-link-5&etear=nl_today_5) (January 28, 2021).

## DNA of Racism in America: Contextually, Coats, Kendi, Diangelo and Rosenstein

A discussion of certain seminal works helps us understand the structure of racism in America. In the wake of an apocalyptic pandemic, violence against black and brown, compounded by the rise of inequality and fanaticism and populist tribalism, is an unsettling commentary on our contemporary culture.

Ta-Nehisi Coates is writer at *The Atlantic*. Color, character, and conscience have defined much of American public policy practice and debates. What Gunnar Myrdal called "American Dilemma" is in fact embedded in the latent crisis. At no other time in modern history, issues related to racism, inequality and politics have unhinged democratic politics and social practice. Ta-Nehisi Coates' book *We Were Eight Years in Power* is an important essay on the alienated blackness, a continuity of persistent minority culture. *WWEYP* is a brutally honest memoir, a soul-shattering commentary on the black experience. If you can empathize with this saga of a brilliant but initially poor writer, you cannot unread this book.<sup>8</sup>

The backlash against the egalitarian Reconstruction good "Negro Government" was oppressive, racist, and exclusionary. The 1895 constitutional convention simply sought "the restoration of despotic white supremacy" (p. xiv). Recruitment of black soldiers—loyal, brave, and efficient—debunked the whole edifice of slavery. When Barack Hussein Obama became President, "his family and demonstration were a walking advertisement for the ease with which black people could be fully integrated into the unthreatening mainstream of American culture, politics, and myth" (Coats, 2017: xv).

The colorlessness of American myths can't be unhinged from the "whole theory of slavery," which holds that an "entire people carry peonage in their blood" (Coats, 2017: vi). Having been born and raised in India where caste system defines a pervasive stratification of institutionalized hierarchies, I know the power of 'peonage' within and beyond the structures of injustice and oppression. I see commonalities between racism and 'casteism' though most Indian and American scholars tend to reject this comparison. It's, therefore, not a coincidence that I fully empathize with the author of *WWEYP*. I do so—with humility and pride as an Asian-Indian American—both

as a person and writer though my pain pales into insignificance compared to Coats'.

"America is an idea, not a race," Mr. Graham said, according to three people familiar with the exchange on Thursday. Diversity was strength, he said, not a weakness. And by the way, the senator added, he himself was a descendant of immigrants who came to the United States from "shithole countries with no skills."<sup>9</sup>

The anguished senator made a strong statement with no effect. Ta-Nehisi unravels the depths of the American psyche, tradition, and—indeed—foundation. "For African American, war commenced not in 1861, but in 1661, when the Virginia Colony began passing America's first codes, the charter documents of a slave society that rendered blacks a permanent servile class and whites a mass aristocracy. They were also a declaration of war" (Coats, 2017: 9).

Above all, "slavery was war on the black family" (Coats, 2017: 8). The Moynihans of American public policy have brazenly blamed the black family for all its tangled pathologies. America invented the *modern west* with all its contradictions. European society and culture were feudal and aristocratic culminating colonial-imperial power. America's founding fathers sought escape from evil and adopted constitutional democracy to ward off oppressive institutions. Coats' contention is that the Civil War was a "sideshow": a chilling truth seldom understood and rarely explained considering the naked truth:

"The Civil War is a story for white people—acted out by white people, on white people's terms—in which blacks feature strictly as stock characters and props" (p. 76). For realists, the true story of the Civil war illuminates the problem of ostensibly sober minded compromise with powerful, and intractable, evil. For radicals, the wave of white terrorism that followed the war offers lessons on the price of revolutionary change" (Coats, 2017:80).

The Civil Rights movement under the legendary leadership of Martin Luther King heralded a revolution. It's said that a revolution often devours its own children. The consequential outcome today is a White House, which is less than democratic and egalitarian than any time in modern history. America's *modernization* has thus come full circle.

The author, an enlightened author-correspondent with prestigious *The Atlantic* and recipient of a MacArthur

<sup>8</sup>A review of *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (New York: One World Publishing, 2017; Hardback, 367: ISBN 978-0-399-59056-6) is published elsewhere.

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/us/politics/trump-immigration-congress.html?emc=edit\\_th\\_180113&nl=todaysheadlines&nid=72603810](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/us/politics/trump-immigration-congress.html?emc=edit_th_180113&nl=todaysheadlines&nid=72603810) (01/13/2018).

Fellowship has uncanny ability and unmatched intellect to theorize history from the standpoint of truthful, objective, reality. He critiques Bill Cosby's conservatism, analyzes the Obamas' audacity of *hope*, rationalizes the "legacy of Malcolm X" and exposes the myths of American literature, journalism, and policy makers.

The critique, as I read, is a subtle but ingenuous commentary on American politics, academics, and the culture that breeds the pernicious chimaeras of diversity, PC, and hope.

On his 1st State of the Union address to the Congress, President Donald Trump, rather sarcastically, quipped: "American are dreamers too!" This was about the democrats' call for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals' (DACA). An American Dream without due recognition of black history, experience, and struggle is a racist nonsense. Richard Rosenstein's new book *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (2017) reminds how public and social policy determine patterns of segregation. History is an unforgivable creature: If you forget it, it will force you to relive.

New white tribalism has been unleashed by America's latent inheritance: Rebirth of white supremacy, birtherism, "alt-right", and tea-partiers et al. Calling Donald Trump "America's first white president," Ta-Nehisi observes: "Trump has made the negation of Obama's legacy the foundation of his own" (Coats, 2017: 344). This is quintessential *whiteness*. "[T] construct of 'white race' is the idea of not being a nigger" (Coats, 2017: 344). His brilliantly concludes:

"Indeed, the alleged glee with which liberals call put Trump's bigotry is assigned even more power than bigotry itself. Ostensibly assaulted by campus protests, **battered by theories of intersectionality**, throttled by bathroom rights, a blameless white working class did the only thing any reasonable polity might: elect an orchish reality television star who insists on taking his intelligence briefings in picture-book form" (Coats, 2017: 345).

In *The Color of Law*, Rothstein empirically brings out the fact that "... *de jure* segregation began with explicit racial zoning as millions of African Americans moved in a great historical migration from South to the North" (2017). This 'color of law' by design, Coats argues, is quintessential 'whiteness'. The following words amply clarifies his thesis:

"All politics are identity politics—except the politics of white people, the politics of the blood heirloom .... The first white president in American history is also the most

dangerous president—and made more dangerous still be the fact that those charged with analyzing him cannot name his essential nature, because they too are implicated in it .... [M]oral high ground is neither biological nor divine .... In the global context, perhaps, we American are all white .... I see the fight against sexism, racism, poverty, and even war finding their union not in synonymity but in their goal—a world more humane" (Coats, 2017: 362–367).

Ibram X. Kendi's recent two resented prize-winning best sellers—*Stamped from the Beginning* (2016) and *How to be an Antiracist* (2019)—are relentlessly authentic, unsettling, and liberating. Rivetingly, Kendi unfolds the history of ideas and practices that have institutionalized racism in America. Russell Rickford, a professor at Cornell University observes:

"... *Stamped from the Beginning* reveals the heritage of ideas behind modern dialectic of rave-denial and race-obsession. By historicizing our entrenched logic of racial difference, Kendy shows 'why I don't see color' and other professions of post-radicalism remain inexorable alibis for white supremacy." (Cited, Kendi, 2016).

Racial disparities "are older than the life of the United States." Kendi writes:

"For nearly six centuries , antiracist ideas have been pitted against two kinds of racist ideas: segregationist and assimilationist. The history of racial ideas that follows is the history of these three distinct voices—segregationist, assimilationist, and anti-racists—and how they each have rationalized racial disparities, arguing why Whites have remained on the living and winning end, while Blacks remained on the losing and dying end." (2016: 2).

What Senator Patrick Moynihan called the "tangled web of pathology," Gunnar Myrdal called Negro culture "a distorted development, or a pathological condition". Doubtless, the *American Dilemma* has been perverted into a Whitopean crescendo to silence, marginalize, and repress all voices of protest and dissent as 'Law and Order' problems which, they contend, only Donald trump and his racist policies can fix. *License to Kill* (Blacks another non-white 'aliens') is the new Jim Crow. Kendi, masterfully, unravels a hideous archeology of the Original Sin: Racism. But I contend, it goes far back than s/he thinks: The Hindu (Vedic) *Vedas* laid down the foundations of human hierarchies some 10 to 12 thousand years ago. Indic scholars see this as the Holy Grail of human ingenuity and Hindu's primordial superiority. I see this as the beginning and end of the age of possibilities. The point is: Myths that institutionalized hierarchies are basic foundations of evil, i.e., human

proclivities for cannibalistic sadism justified by predatory ideologies which blind us all.

Kendi's analyses of Cotton Mather, Thomas Jefferson, William Lloyd Garrison, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Angela Davis is both American History 101 and the last simmering footnote to our Original Sin. I taught part of this history at the Louisiana State University during my tenure (1976–2009) as a professor. How social work, its organization, and pedagogies have changed is on no one's mind when monstrous hurricanes, Covid 19, and scandals around the Tiger Stadium loom large?

As an "antiracist," I can only read, write, and speak since Louisiana's Social Work Education Licensing board has not certified me as a "Licensed" social worker to teach.

*How to Be An Antiracist* is Kendi's electrifying endeavor toward achieving a just and equitable society, a manifesto that I share with him. In my own right, at an exceedingly high and personal cost, I have made a small contribution in this direction. I am buoyed by the daily messages that I receive from distant shores—thanks to digital messengers, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, etc. But Kendi's work is especially remarkable: "The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it" (2019).

I am unsure if the vestiges of racism in America (as 'casteism' in India and elsewhere) can ever be dismantled. It is simply unsettling to know 'why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism' (Diangelo, 2018). Robin Diangelo's call for societal change is angelic at best, 'utopian' at worst. As White, Robin Diangelo is making a noble but innate effort to liberate us from ourselves. I share her dreams. But the future of my un-white 2 children and 3 grandchildren keep me sleepless at eighty-one. God, if there is one, help America, a country of my dreams. I was not born American; I became one.

Beyoncé Knowles once remarked: "It's been said that racism is so American that when we protest racism, some assume we're protesting America" (Quoted by Dyson in Diangelo, 2018: xi). Michael Eric Dyson concludes his Foreword to this powerful book:

"White fragility is an idea whose time has come. It is an idea that registers the hurt feelings, shatters egos, fraught spirits, vexed bodies, and taxed emotions of white folk. In truth, their suffering comes from recognizing that they are white—that their whiteness has given them a big leg up in life while crushing others' dreams, that their whiteness is the clearest example of the identity politics they

claim is harmful to the nation, and that their whiteness has shielded them from growing up as quickly as they might have done had they not so heavily leaned on it to make it through life" (Diangelo, 2018: xii).

I am in full agreement with Diangelo's main conclusion and premise: "All progress we have made in the realm of civil rights has been accomplished through identity politics" (xiv). But political correctness and identity-interest-groups have perverted the soul of identity movement. My profession thrives on this deviance with vengeance in the name of "diversity": *exclude* and *include* whoever is conveniently best suited to your interest. I believe we have reached a tipping point. Group-based—identity perverts political correctness in the name of "diversity." No wonder why Hannah Arendt was against "academic feminism."

In *A Promised Land*, President Barack Obama, reminds that "democracy is not a gift from on high but something founded on empathy and common understanding and built together, day by day" (2020). America populates one-fifth of humanity while her death rate has been highest in the world. More than 400 thousand Americans have died during this plague. "What a particle a ten-thousandth of a millimeter in diameter has taught the inhabitants of a globe 120 billion billion times its size?"<sup>10</sup> Several trillion dollars of federal assistance cannot heal the wounds that this pandemic, carnage, and mayhem have caused.

Eric Foner, a distinguished American historian, in his essay "This guilty land" (2020) critiquing two important books<sup>11</sup> on Abraham Lincoln in *London Review of Books*, Comments:

"In *The Zealot and the Emancipator*, H.W. Brands has written a dual biography of Lincoln and the abolitionist John Brown, who in 1859 led a band of 22 men to seize the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in the hope of sparking a slave insurrection. The divergent paths chosen by Brown and Lincoln illuminate a problem as old as civilization itself—what is a person's moral responsibility in the face of glaring injustice?"<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>[https://www.economist.com/international/2020/12/22/lessons-from-the-pandemic?fsrc=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=the-economist-today&utm\\_medium=newsletter&utm\\_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm\\_term=2020-12-22&utm\\_content=article-image-2&tear=nl\\_today\\_2](https://www.economist.com/international/2020/12/22/lessons-from-the-pandemic?fsrc=newsletter&utm_campaign=the-economist-today&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm_term=2020-12-22&utm_content=article-image-2&tear=nl_today_2) (*The Economist*, retrieved 12/21/2020).

<sup>11</sup><https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n24/eric-foner/this-guilty-land> (*LRB*, 42, 24, December 20, 2020); retrieved December 22, 2020. 12 Vol. 42 No. 24 · 17 December 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Vol. 42 No. 24 · 17 December 2020.

## Freedom and Tyranny:

“Most of the power of authoritarianism is freely given. In time like these, individuals think ahead about what a more repressive government will want, and then offer themselves without being asked. A citizen who adapts in this way is teaching power what it can do.”

*Timothy Snyder (2017: 17)*

Edmund Burke, reflecting on the French revolution, warned against the dangers of mob rule. Philosophers have expressed concerns about mobocracy. Both Plato and Aristotle had deep insights. *The Economist's* International summarized rather eloquently:

“For Plato the only viable alternative to mob rule was the rule of a caste of guardians: philosopher kings trained from infancy to control their emotions and put wisdom before instinct .... Aristotle ... distinguished between three legitimate forms of government: kinship, aristocracy, and democracy. He argued that they each have their dark shadows: tyranny, oligarchy, and mob rule. ... [D]emocracy becomes mob rule when the rich hog the society's wealth.” (January 16, 2021: 46)

The Founding Fathers of America devised checks and balances, and certain restraints to regulate mob. Citizens' rights, ownership of property, and secure terms and life-time appointments constituted a system that would prevent a mob rule. What Donald Trump unsuccessfully tried amounted to a subversion of this system of balances. By using incitement and insurrection, he thuggishly invoked *Whitopean* fantasy amongst the alienated, rural, and estranged masses. Kautilya (Chanakya), Machiavelli, Edmund Burke, Lenin, Alexis de Tocqueville, Benjamin Disraeli, J.S. Mill, Walter Bagehot, Seymour M. Lipset, Mao Zedong, and Samuel Huntington have advised rulers at different times to deal with the “rebellion” of masses. Mass-man, “the average man”, is a product of Western democracies' failures. José Ortega y Gasset wrote a classic on the subject (1932).

Erich Fromm challenged people to have “the courage to be human” (Funk, 1982). In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt (1975) details the dynamics of totalistic power. Why some ancient kings, emperors, and modern Hitlers—from Mussolini to Donald Trump—behaved as they did, is puzzling and disturbing. The pathology of power and control invokes deeper analysis. Human destructiveness, as Erich Fromm, wrote is both banal and malignant (1973). The nature of modern tyranny and terror, as Hannah Arendt wrote, is different from the old patterns of domination. The random suddenness and impersonal ubiquity of terror is the hallmark of

contemporary malaise. From 9/11 (2001) to January 6, 2021, we have seen facets of this banal evil.

“A fundamental difference between modern dictatorships and all other tyrannies of the past is that terror no longer used as a means to exterminate and frighten opponents, but as an instrument to rule the masses of people who are perfectly obedient. Terror as we know it today strikes with any preliminary provocation, its victims are innocent even from the point of view of the persecutor” (1975: 6).

Freedom is a phenomenon that has not been defined in a singular direction. The organized anti-democracy protestors called themselves *Patriots*. Someone shouted, “Donald Trump is Emperor.” Much of my work has paradigmatically laid down varied dimensions of a freedom-oppression framework. Freedom is neither liberty, nor liberty is freedom. Ideological underpinnings define the nature of this phenomenon.

“The age of democratic naivety died on January 6<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>13</sup> The 21st century, as I see, offers two main lessons: One, the fragility of democracy and freedom will remain a challenge so long as inequality and injustice continue to characterize our society and culture. Secondly, the fissure of *social contract* will deepen along with institutional meltdown. Society and civility will have to be rediscovered beyond the perils of monstrous freedom (Mohan, 2021). In a bold statement, Y.N.Kly called ‘social contract’ “anti-social contract” (1989).

“... America is only starting its history. It is only now that its trials, its dissensions, its conflicts, are beginning. ... America is younger than Russia. I have always maintained, though in fear of exaggeration, that it is a primitive people camouflaged behind the latest inventions. And now Waldo Frank, in his *Rediscovery of America*, declares this openly. America has not yet suffered; it is an illusion to think that it can process the virtues of command.” (y Gasset, 1932: 139)

## Competing Interest Statement

The author has read and approved the manuscript and takes full responsibility for its contents. The author declares that no competing interest exists.

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<sup>13</sup>*The Economist*. 2021. January 16: 47.

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## Biographical Statement of Author

**Brij Mohan**, Dean Emeritus & Professor of Social Work, Louisiana State University, USA, is an internationally renowned Scholar with expertise in social philosophy, social welfare, public policy and international social development.



He is the author of 24 books and over 400 articles, papers, and reviews. His most recent books include: *Development, Poverty of Culture and Social Policy* (Palgrave, 2011), *Climate, Economy and Justice* (Palgrave, 2015), *The Future of Social Work* (Sage, 2018) and *Social Policy on the Cusp* (Nova, 2020). Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith honored him with a Doctor of Letters (*honoris*

*causa*) and the National Association of Professional Social Workers in India awarded him the *Life-Time Achievement Award*.

Currently, he is working on two new books, including his memoirs.

### **Brij Mohan**

Dean Emeritus  
Louisiana State University  
LSU School of Social Work  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808. USA  
[www.Brijmohan.org](http://www.Brijmohan.org)

**E-mail:** [brijmohan128@gmail.com](mailto:brijmohan128@gmail.com)

