

- **We-Uns**

21 January 2017

It was exhilarating to be on the march in Tucson yesterday. 15 thousand people, four times the organizers' prediction (like the overwhelming numbers in cities all over the world). It was inspirational and aspirational. It was fun.

Marches have been part of my life from the beginning. The first ones, on my father's broad working-class shoulders at Labor Day parades in Detroit and Toledo.

The most recent one, when HW Bush bombed Iraq. (That one was memorable for many reasons. I had been having dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Washington with some colleagues after our meeting with other grassroots anti-pesticide activists from around the world. When we finished dinner, stepping outside we were met by thousands of marchers on their way to the White House, candles in their hands and tears in their eyes. A death march, a few minutes after the bombing started. We of course joined them, tears in our own eyes, aware that our hopes that the Vietnam Era (when we had last marched) was over were ill-founded, and that in fact the hawks (Republican and Democrat) were even more in power than they had been, and now--with so-called smart bombs and media-savvy and a commander-in-chief who had been head of the CIA--knew better how to do it.)

Yesterday was a welcome respite from the weight of the campaign and its dire result. The homemade posters were mostly a delight (two of my favorites: "Do No Harm/Take No Shit" and "Make America Think Again").

But all of the uplift of solidarity and strength in numbers was tempered by awareness that there was a kind of false optimism going on too. For all the chanting affirmations of sisterhood and brotherhood, all the objections to misogynistic, racist, plutocratic power, had some of the same blindered wishful thinking we've heard ad nauseam and continue to hear in Trump's juvenile tweets and rants.

The pronoun "we" is very slippery. As Cornel West adroitly points out in this analysis (see link below) of the semantic coding of Trump's inaugural speech, it has been a tool of fascist demagogues.

As every politician (even, presumably, a blowhard like Trump) is aware when using the first person plural in addressing an audience, "we" is a two-edged word, both inclusive, and automatically exclusive.

As Jefferson was well aware in a country fissured by deep economic, political and ideological divisions and volatile factions when he penned "We, the people."

So for all the sense of unity yesterday, those who were not on the streets must not be forgotten. It must not be forgotten that this a deeply divided nation and that majoritarian politics cannot heal

to rift. Whether or not the election was rigged (or stolen), whether or not the popular vote indicated a majority of those who voted being in favor of the defeated candidate, however out-of-date the electoral college mechanism is, the fact is that the "we" celebrated yesterday is a "we" that must be very clear about who that "we" is: a "we" that is only part of the 99%, a "we" with the difficult task before it of constructively engaging in dialogue that other "we" who was not on the march, who voted the other way, who are very much part of "We, the people."