

Protest Speech, Sept. 1, 2025

Welcome and thank you for coming out. I'm Maura Mandyck, and I'm a teacher and a librarian.

Happy Labor Day!

A lot of government websites are badly compromised now and serve as mere advertisements for the current regime. But they apparently haven't gotten around to the website for the US Department of Labor yet, because it still says this: "American labor has raised the nation's standard of living and contributed to the greatest production the world has ever known, **and the labor movement has brought us closer to the realization of our traditional ideals of economic and political democracy.** It is appropriate, therefore, that the nation pays tribute on Labor Day to the creator of so much of the nation's strength, freedom, and leadership – the American worker."

So happy Labor Day, my fellow American workers. And like the Civil Rights movement, the labor movement can be an inspiration to us in these times.

Something else notable about Sept. 1: as of today, the White House is no longer offering tours, and won't be for an indefinite period of time. Do you know why? The White House, the people's house, is now closed to the people for the construction of Donald Trump's new ballroom.

This is one among hundreds, even thousands, of warning signs not that we are descending into authoritarianism but that we have already arrived there.

Authoritarians seize the culture as well as the economy, the military, and the courts. It seemed nonsensical when Trump declared himself head of the Kennedy Center, but it was a move out of the authoritarian playbook; even the creativity and imagination that is represented by the arts must be bent to the leader's will. Our national memory too is being reshaped to conform to Trump's distorted conception of reality; the Smithsonian Institution has been told it will undergo a comprehensive review of its holdings, and anything Trump doesn't like will be subject to censorship. And it's worth noting on this Labor Day, that while the Department of Labor's website is so far untouched, the Department of Labor itself is now draped with an enormous banner featuring Donald Trump's face, scowling like he did in his mug shot, and reading (ironically) "American Workers First."

This is what authoritarians do. They self-aggrandize and make themselves inescapable. They spread lies and conspiracies, they ignore checks and balances, they make up emergencies in order to seize powers they are otherwise not entitled to, they demonize their opponents and the media. They attack the rights of the vulnerable in order to terrorize everyone, they blame minorities and so-called "outsiders" for the nation's problems (problems they define and amplify), they reward loyalists and punish defectors, and they claim that only they can restore us to some former fantastical national glory.

They also encourage and condone violence in order to advance their political goals. Donald Trump is creating a private army out of ICE agents (who are

essentially mercenaries), the Department of Homeland Security (“homeland” is a buzzword with authoritarians), the FBI, the National Guard and the United States military, and he told the DC police, now under the control of his private Attorney General Pam Bondi, that they can do “whatever the hell they want.” Trump has also said that he can do whatever he wants, that he has that right as President of the United States.

So this is all pretty depressing.

However, here we all are. And we are the ones who can change it.

On August 23rd, we held a training on an initiative created by the national Indivisible group, called One Million Rising. The goal of that training was to learn the phases of resistance, recognize the signs of authoritarianism, and to develop strategies of noncooperation that have successfully toppled previous authoritarian regimes. Then the goal is for everyone who attended that training to hold their own training and so on and so on, so that more and more people understand the seriousness of what we are facing and also the power of the people to fight back.

I’ve recently discovered an anthropologist named James Greenberg, and he posted this on Facebook about how we fight back:

We do not need to invent new tools. We need to put proven ones into practice where we live: aid networks that blunt fear, boycotts and strikes that hit where leverage is real, marches that defend institutions in plain

sight, lawsuits that hold the line in court, professional codes that set limits, and a thousand small refusals that never make the news but make it harder to govern by threat.

Similarly compelling was a comment on a long Facebook thread about how to resist authoritarianism. The commenter, Anne M. Cochez-Lind, said, “Authoritarianism only works if the population becomes numb. Docile. Gives up. So .. don’t.”

Your presence here today says that you haven’t given up. But if you are wondering what you might do to have even more impact, we invite you to sign up for one or more of the **campaigns of noncooperation** that we are organizing. They include protests and pushback against Fox News and its affiliates, helping to share the work of the Election Truth Alliance which has found anomalies in the 2024 election, the Card Campaign for Democracy in which you print and post informational cards in public places, targeted emailing to get the right message to the right people in power, and postcard-writing parties where you write directly to voters in districts where their vote will have the greatest effect. You might also like to attend our next One Million Rising training session and get a deeper dive into some of what I have shared here today. We have sign-up sheets over here, so if you still need to get on our email list and subscribed to our newsletter, I hope you will give us your name and email address in any case, but you can also indicate which campaigns you would be interested in.

We need captains for these initiatives, but we also need foot soldiers, so even if you don't consider yourself a leader or you don't have much time to spare, I hope you will consider joining one of these efforts. Please take care of this before we march to Govt. Plaza, but if you miss the opportunity, you can always find us on Facebook or Linktree and ask to be added to the list.

On this Labor Day, we can say "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" But then the Republicans will have the proof they need that we are Communists, haha. So let's say, people of the United States, unite! You have nothing to gain but your nation.

Thank you.