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Community Voices: Who really runs the United States

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Who runs the United States? We are told that "the people" run the country through their votes for our elected representatives. Really? We have seen presidents elected by an obsolete electoral system in spite of losing the popular vote by a large margin. Neither major party seems anxious to get rid of the Electoral College since they may be the beneficiary in the next election.

We like to believe that we freely vote for the best candidate, but how free was our vote? Do we have free will, considering the indoctrination and propaganda we receive in our lifetime from our parents, pastors, rabbis, imams, teachers, peers and various media journalists? Rene Descartes once said that if you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things. One might do this more often. In politics, if you primarily have just one source of news then you are being indoctrinated, perhaps unknowingly, to one point of view that may be controlled by wealthy vested interests.

For example, a cabal of billionaires have been stealthily working for the last few decades to "save" capitalism from democracy; they fear the vote of the general population. They want a return to the halcyon days of Laissez-faire capitalism that existed before the rise of social programs, labor unions and high taxes. You know those days: robber barons, 12-hour work days, child labor, poor pay, cycles of recessions, unsafe working conditions and contaminated food. They only want a government for protecting their property and defending the country from foreign invasion; anything else is an abridgment of their freedom to make money by their own initiative, and if you're not up to the task, that's your problem. Their attitude is that if workers feel exploited at their workplace, they can just look for another job somewhere else.

The Koch brothers, Charles and David, among others, have provided millions to various organizations that provide propaganda for their agenda. These include the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, FreedomWorks, the Tax Foundation, the Reason Foundation and the Leadership Institute. These cabalists have been partly responsible for the introduction of tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations, the decline in union membership from more than 30 percent in the 1950s to less than 11 percent today, and attempts to eliminate welfare and repeal the Affordable Care Act. Their actions encourage Republicans in some states to restrict, by various means, the enfranchisement of the poor and people of color who usually vote for Democrats.

These ultra-conservatives want to take us back to an economic system with little or no regulations. Trade unions are anathema. They want to increase coal production and have helped scrap Obama-era clean-power rules on carbon emissions at the behest of the fossil fuel

industries. They prodded Trump to leave the Paris Accords and consider climate change a hoax, despite the overwhelming evidence and considered opinion of climate scientists.

As for taxes, former Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. stated that "taxes are the price we pay for civilization." To the ultraconservatives, taxes are theft by the majority to take what they have no moral right to: the fruits of another person's labors. However, they fail to realize that they are profiting from a system set up by the framers of the Constitution that favors the land owning and monied class: those with the education and means to exploit the system. Also, they are not cognizant that they are in that position by the luck of the draw; not everyone is born able to compete on that playing field, and consequently the wealthy are ethically responsible to give back to society for the greater good of the country. Failure to do so only leads to more poverty, unemployment, crime and eventually rebellion if things get out of hand.

For the sake of votes, they also embrace people in the religious right with their repressive agenda: prayer in school, school vouchers, proselytizing, anti-evolution textbooks, anti-abortion, Ten Commandments in courthouses, etc. Inauspiciously, if fascism and theocracy comes to our country the ultra-conservatives will be wrapping themselves in the flag and carrying a Bible.