



Letter: The people who really control our government

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During this political year, we have been witness to an assault on our democracy. I do not speak of Russia or any other foreign power, but from within our own nation. We have seen the debasement of the presidency, and the crass partisanship of the Republican Party in Congress. We have watched as progress in the areas of healthcare, human rights, economic opportunity, global diplomacy and the standing of the United States of America summarily rolled back by an administration and legislature with no regard for the people they represent and every consideration for personal and political power.

What may not be as obvious is an insidious movement, its origins in the founding of our nation. The founders sought to make moral accommodation to the gentry in the southern states who benefited from the peculiar institution of slavery. It persisted through the Jim Crow era and manifested in ways such as the privatization of the state school system in Virginia in order to avoid compliance with the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*. It invoked states' rights as the means to disenfranchise citizens based on racial and economic standing. Even with setbacks, the movement grew over the years and has imposed itself in debates over religious freedom, women's rights and union organizing. It is supported by a conservative media, not through truthful proclamation of policy but with dissemination of lies. It has used its financial power to buy its way into state houses and legislatures, into the federal courts, into our Congress and now it has a willing accomplice in the White House. We hear the scripted messaging about the will of the people, but the overwhelming majority of Americans play no part in the plan.

It has adopted such historic models as Pinochet's Chile, where civil and human rights were forfeited in the name of economic liberty, though that liberty was extended only to the privileged. It makes accusations of voter fraud while concealing its efforts at voter suppression. It denies acceptance of the environmental hazards it has wrought. It advocates a healthcare system that provides healthcare to only those who can afford it. School and prison privatization are just revenue streams. It has hidden behind such names as the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the American Enterprise Institute. They suggest support for the advancement of American ideals and the oath of "liberty and justice for all", but this could not be further from the truth. It employs stealth, division and deception to advance its cause.

The term “class warfare” has been used to describe resistance to the dismantling of our social structure, when in fact it is the privileged minority that imposes its will on the majority. The ultimate goal is to rip apart the checks and balances built into our Constitution and construct in its place an assurance of control of all levers of government by oligarchs. If you look at the evidence of monetary influence on our political system, you’ll know this is not paranoia, but a fact we ignore at our own peril.