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**Democracy in peril**

The last twelve months have seen unprecedented assaults on American democracy, starting with a sitting president claiming the only way he could lose was if there was major rigging of the presidential election.

Throughout the months leading up to the November 2020 elections, Trump continued to sow doubt about the elections, even before a single vote was cast. And when the election was over, he refused to accept the results. Aided by a chorus of rightwing media, he has managed to create an alternate universe for his supporters.

Now almost three months after Joe Biden was inaugurated as the 46th American president, Donald Trump and his supporters refuse to go away, continuing their assault on key pillars of the democratic system. More than 60 cases filed by the Trump campaign were rejected by courts across the country. This would have been enough for any reasonable people. But these are not reasonable people. More than half of all Republicans continue to believe that Trump won the election, and that it was stolen from him. This is a party that has mastered the art of creating alternate facts. This process of undermining trust in the truth didn't start with Trump but he has turbocharged it.

So here we are. Living in a country where a sitting president who incited a violent, armed attack on the US Congress is given a pass. It is shocking to hear presenters on Fox News say that the attackers on January 6 were in fact supporters of the Democratic Party, who had just donned Trump paraphernalia to make him look bad. Facts don't matter, video evidence doesn't matter, truth doesn't matter.

And we are now starting to see the adverse effects of the ‘great lie’, that the election was stolen. Having realized they cannot win if all eligible voters are able to cast their vote, Republican-led states are now starting to pass legislation that will make it harder to vote, disproportionately affecting poor and minority voters who typically support the Democratic Party.

Results from the state of Georgia were particularly hard for Republicans to digest. This previously reliably Republican state voted for Democrat Joe Biden, as well as gave both of their Senate seats to Democrats in 2020. Not surprisingly, Georgia became the first state to pass voter-suppression laws including strict voter ID requirements, and greatly curtailed mail-in voting.

That wasn't enough. They banned early voting on Sundays, when many African American churches organize voting trips for their congregations. People waiting in line to vote are not allowed to be assisted, even given water. We can surely expect to see very long lines at the next election in minority and urban areas. Faced with inordinate delays, many voters will be forced to abandon the lines and go home without voting. More than 25 states are considering similar voter suppression laws in the name of making elections more secure.

Facing criticism, Republicans have latched onto a new line of reasoning, saying people who are not highly motivated to vote shouldn't be encouraged to do so. They probably aren’t knowledgeable enough to vote, the reasoning goes. Such language brings us back full circle to the founding days of the Republic when only white, property owning men were allowed to vote. ‘They are more vested in the country and therefore will vote wisely’, the reasoning went.

There are enough barriers to voting already that barely half the eligible voters in the US bother to vote. One can only wonder how many more will be discouraged in future elections. Sadly, the US is no longer an example for the world’s democracies to follow.

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