

First Steps Under Fascism

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Recognize Responsibility

It's here and you're scared and you don't know what to think and it feels all so completely surreal. You go to work, and you whisper to work friends about how absurd it is, but you get your work done. Some of your colleagues are oblivious. Some might even be excited. You're terrified.

You go shopping and it all feels so... how can people just be shopping? How can I just be shopping? Why isn't anyone yelling or screaming or crying and why doesn't someone do something. You remember what I said before:

You're someone. Do something.

But you still don't know what to do. And you're scared.

It's okay.

It's not okay.

But it's okay to feel this way, which is to say, it's expected. Your brain is scrolling on a loop:

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Fawn

But for whatever reason, your brain can't stick to one. Which means you're stuck in Freeze. You feel like a deer in headlights.

You know you need to do something but you don't know what.

Good.

If you've ever taken CPR training, you likely remember being told that you can't just shout, "Someone call 911!" Instead you must point at someone, get their attention, and you say, "You! Call 911!"

If you shout for someone to call 911, everyone will look around, waiting for someone to do it, wasting precious time, and sometimes no one calls at all until it's too late. But if you direct someone to do it, they now have a sense of responsibility.

And now you see the emergency we're all facing. You're reminding yourself that you are someone. You recognize that responsibility, and you can no longer say you didn't know. It's on you. It's on you specifically to do something.

You can't look around anymore. You must look within. You must. You are responsible for what you do next.

Acceptance and Emotional Regulation

You can't help anyone if you're falling apart. Remember to breathe. Take care of your friends and family. Check in on them. Your marginalized friends are doing far worse. Check in on them. Offer more than words. Offer material support. People can't regulate their emotional needs properly when their material needs are not met.

Accept material support. If you are being offered support, accept it. Don't be stoic. Don't be an island. Be connected. This is mutual aid.

Be honest with yourself about what's happening. Refuse to believe when society tries to gaslight you. Refuse to believe when individuals gaslight you. Accept that you are not paranoid, you are having an authentic and rational response to what is happening and that anyone pretending this isn't what it is, is either lying to themselves in an attempt to feel better, completely oblivious, or they are lying to you because their interests are in opposition to yours.

Lying to yourself won't make you feel better, it will only cause more cognitive dissonance and increase your anxiety. Instead, accept what has happened and the place we have arrived.

Accept what you are seeing with your own eyes.

Education vs Doom Scrolling

Lately, the more you read, the more terrified you get. You see the overwhelming amount of terrible things unfolding and you feel powerless to stop them.

This is by design.

Why would there be so many executive orders all at once? Why are they all so absurd? Why does it feel like they bear no logic?

There are two reasons. Sure, they want to achieve the goals laid out in their actions. But there's something more: it's a psychological trick. This is something people experienced in intelligence operations are very familiar with.

The overwhelming speed, the sheer amount of actions, the absurdity, the lack of logic. It's designed to overwhelm you so that you feel helpless:

- There are too many to read or learn about
- News can't make them all front page
- You spend more time concerning yourself with the illogical language than the impact or their goals
- You spend more time panicking than anything else
- You're getting exhausted
- You're so overwhelmed, you don't do anything else
- You feel such a need to inform yourself that you get stuck in a doom spiral

Pull. Yourself. Out.

You're going to get stuck into the spiral again, because staying informed is indeed important, but remember to pull yourself out. But pull yourself out before you get exhausted and before you've spent all your energy.

Instead, the time you spend educating yourself should be in service of your actions. And you need to be deliberate.

It's too late to read 1984, that's a cautionary tale. Now is not time for caution, but for action. Sure, read it. But that's not the assignment, that's extracurricular.

When you are in a crisis and it's time to read history, don't waste time learning about the oppression itself. Read about what people did in opposition to their oppressors. Read about what worked and what didn't. Read about the revolutionaries. Read about the ones you don't even like or admire, whose ideologies were outright wrong, but who were successful. Learn from them. Learn what they did.

When you choose who to follow on social media, are you following the ones who are yelling about how bad it is? Or are you following the ones who are doing something, who are giving examples of what to do, who are giving hope through action and not thoughts and prayers?

There are people alive today who have been through this, and worse. There are people currently going through worse than we are yet experiencing. All around the world bear the scars of oppression, of colonization, of the same white supremacy that is driving the oppression here.

And even here, Black people, Indigenous people, all People of Color, know oppression far more intimately than white people ever care to know or remember. And they bear knowledge of how to face it in ways most white people will only begin to experience now.

Queer and trans people bear their own complex histories of oppression and genocide, and survival has often been particular for them. But again, queer and trans survival and resistance has often been built on the shoulders of tactics learned from and spearheaded by queer and trans people of color, specifically.

The point is, education is very important, but in a crisis it is critical that your education is focused on serving your actions. How to survive. How to help others survive. How to resist.

Remember, the fascists want you to feel afraid, exhausted, and helpless. They want you to spend all of your time watching it unfold while you struggle to keep up with the tsunami. It is intentional. It keeps you from taking action. It allows them to undergo their terror unopposed. Don't let their tactics work. Don't let them do this to you. Don't let them make you the audience to your own oppression.

This is why social media algorithms designed on hate are so dangerous. The algorithm is designed to do this to you. This is the goal of the owners of these platforms, as it helps them secure their own power and authority within the fascist hierarchy. This is one of the many reasons that platforms like Facebook and X are dangerous.

They're not just censoring information they don't want you to know, they're manipulating your emotions and draining your energy and time. In fact, they're often happy to keep you informed as long as you remain glued to your phone doing nothing, feeding the monster, the algorithm, the fascist takeover.

Planning and Action

It's okay if you don't fully know what to do yet. To flee or to stay. To take action to protect or resist. To educate others or to build capacity.

But it's important to keep putting one foot in front of the other. When you are overwhelmed and feel helpless, don't just distract yourself, but do one small thing to keep making progress:

- Pack a go-bag

- Give assistance to a friend or stranger
- Read an essay on resistance tactics
- Learn safety tactics
- Make a mental list of people you trust with your life, in case you ever need it
- Make an offline copy of all of your contacts
- Memorize some important phone numbers in case you are arrested or separated without access to a contact list
- Make a list of skills you can contribute
- Learn a new practical skill that could be useful
- Volunteer
- Organize

This list is obviously not exhaustive.

But whatever you do, keep everything in the spirit of action, not doom.

And don't forget to take time for yourself to step away from it all the best you can and just enjoy life. Otherwise, what is it all for?

After all, joy is a form of resistance.

no ends, only means

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