



P E R S P E C T I V E S

by **Rinaldo S. Brutoco**

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Charles Blow is Right!

Today's "Paul Revere Moment"

Many of you are probably familiar with one or more editorials crafted by New York Times columnist Charles M. Blow. While not as uniformly progressive as some would like, and never a doctrinaire conservative, he usually strikes a tone of being thoughtful, reasonable, and everything but alarmist. Hence, his column from October 17th stands out as an incredibly important piece that all of us ought to consider, evaluate and then act upon if we wish to preserve our democratic republic. For it is at terrible risk this very moment.

In the column, Blow argues that President Biden must bring the conversation about the Build Back Better bill to an immediate conclusion. If he can't get it passed, Blow urges Biden to put it aside in favor of a much more critical piece of legislation: voting rights. Whether it is the Manchin-crafted legislation, H.R. 1, or the John Lewis Voting Rights Act makes less difference now than that the Congress act immediately. "Donald Trump and the Republican(s)...have elevated the lie of election fraud," what many commentators label "the Big Lie", as a battle cry to engineer voter suppression on a scale not seen since the Civil War. Even worse, in several states the Republican legislators have given themselves the power to either not count all votes, or to override election results by appointing the winner.

That, of course, would mean the end of our democratic republic and we would then be fully within the grasp of Trump as an autocrat who will seek to leave his daughter in power, as all self-aggrandizing monarchs do, after he dies. Make no mistake about it, Trump has never made it secret that he believes he is entitled to rule, almost as in the "Divine Right of Kings" and intends to do so by actively leading the coup that will shred our form of government in the 2022 election cycle. Blow isn't being hyperbolic. He's basically alerting our political leadership that we are now out of time if we want to have the opportunity to save our democracy. Nothing is more important, no economic package he observes, is more important than passing voting rights protections. It shouldn't be our highest priority, he argues, it should be the only priority until it is passed. "...Even if you have glistening infrastructure in a fascist state, you are still in a fascist state." Similarly, a bill that guarantees two years of free college, or getting more people broadband access, won't be of any use if those people live in a fascist state.

Another thoughtful observer of American politics and culture, Dan Rather, has joined Blow's clarion call, even if he has done so with less forcefulness and more appeal to history.

Dan Rather belongs in the pantheon of incredible journalists, alongside Walter Cronkite, Edward R. Murrow and a handful of individual reporters, in the true sense of the word, willing to "call them as they see them." Some of these journalists, like Cronkite and Murrow, ended their careers as legendary guardians of a better time. Others, like Rather, saw themselves marginalized to the periphery of society as their careers waned, a vantage point from whence one is free to express thoughtful opinions. And a lucky thing for us all, Rather chose to utilize his prescient recollections and fine mind to post a blog the other week, *Undermining Democracy*, with "a reminder that democracy is fragile."

In looking at the same facts as Blow, Rather is ringing a similar alarm bell with the perspective of a national newsman who grew up in an era where: 1) racism was accepted state policy, 2) unequal opportunities for people of color was accepted as inevitable, and 3) government ensnared by the power of major corporate and personal fortunes was powerless to deliver a higher quality of life for all its citizens. In an introspective personal reverie, Rather encapsulated the same issue as Blow from his unique perspective as follows:

“The news hit hard, once again. A reminder that democracy is fragile, very fragile... Images flash across my mind of the long struggle for enfranchisement in America, which stretches back to the tragic imperfections under which this country was founded. These injustices defined the society of my youth, one of state-sponsored segregated society. When I started my career as a journalist, bearing witness to voter suppression across the South was one of my first assignments. I would later see it in different forms across the rest of the country.”

He recounts the battles he observed in the fight to make the basic freedoms of participatory democracy free and fair, to underscore again, how fragile the slow progress yet remains. He writes, “The time for sugar coating reality has long since passed. We have large sections of our citizenry eager to undermine the most fundamental mechanism for a free just and accountable government. These forces have been stoked by a divisive autocrat who bent the Republican party to his whims and needs.”

In Rather’s opinion, simple racism nor bigotry do not explain the efforts to roll our country back to a time of massive disenfranchisement. “As with back then, this is about power, raw power...” writes Rather, who continues, “Those who had firmly felt themselves in the majority see (their) America slipping away. Rather than modernize, they would rather retrench with a steel-eyed political calculus: if you can’t win a majority of voters, you must construct a system that allows for minority rule.”

Blow and Rather are sharing their collective insights and fearsome warnings that liberty, our very governmental structure for which we have fought so valiantly, is now hanging by a thread. We’re one minute from midnight, and it isn’t clear if we will survive the current crisis in 2022—forget about 2024 – as there will not be another honest election after 2022 if we don’t protect voting rights now. As Blow’s piece concluded: “Protecting ballot access is the only thing that matters right now (emphasis supplied).”

The World Business Academy shares this Blow-Rather perspective and goes one step further. These two, and there are millions more patriots like them, are literally co-creating a “Paul Revere Moment.” Then, the threat was a young nation being overtaken by a monarchy from abroad. Today, the “monarch” has arisen amongst us and, with no hesitation, would see himself be king.

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