

## **Toward Solidarity, Community**

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The day after the election was dreary, but the vegetable garden was still vibrant. My cover crop of rye grass was growing well, and I had spread crushed leaves in other places. As I write in late December, a few nights have been so cold that I have moved the remaining Brussel sprouts and kale to a protected porch with their roots in water. I still have small lettuce and spinach under glass that I hope will survive till March.

This weekend I suggest you make very special long-lasting New Year resolutions that will give you strength and hope for the year ahead! Solidarity and community will have a whole new meaning this coming year.

The election showed the dark side of the American dream: the arrogance of power, the self-indulgent sense of entitlement and the weird myth of exceptionalism, masked as 'greatness', which has been both a strength and weakness of this country. We saw different aspects on both sides and the darker side won. The country rebelled against the rich political elites, and neo-liberal global market capitalism. They elected a demagogue, who encouraged fear and hatred in order to get elected.

Many people are angry and suffering. To quote Naomi Klein: "Under neoliberal policies of deregulation, privatization, austerity and corporate trade, their living standards have declined precipitously. They have lost jobs. They have lost pensions. They have lost much of the safety net that used to make these losses less frightening. They see a future for their kids even worse than their precarious present."

Where this will lead us is still unknown. From the perspective of the global environment, the situation seems at first bleak. The triumph of the beliefs that we have unlimited power, climate change is a myth, and global treaties should be canceled could be a disaster both for the US and the world. It could lead to global sanctions against the US. This political revolution might even lead to chaos and the collapse of the US economy, which would also be bleak. Most likely we will have to survive four years of national paralysis, so start planning regular events, so we can build locally more inclusive communities.

A smooth transition to an efficient renewable energy economy now looks far less likely, although market forces will continue to drive renewable energy in New England, especially here in Vermont. Remember to send your legislators letters of thanks and encouragement for the New Year!

We must hope that the rest of the world will rise to the challenge and move forward with the Paris agreement without the US if necessary. We are ceding global leadership to China, which is taking over the manufacture of the many components of the global renewable energy transition. This will not make our next government happy, but the Earth will be grateful. We can also be grateful that our temporary insanity is not the end of the world.

Keep your sense of humor and be creative with new diktats from Washington. Create elegant solar stickers, "Installed in Vermont" to go over the "Made in China" stickers. When you reorganize your mission statements to emphasize that you are providing jobs for Vermonters, stress that you are using Vermont sunlight to power our homes and protect the climate for our children. Add the asterisk and fine print that says "This will keep Vermont great". I suggest someone catalog the nocturnal tweets: so we can all find a hopeful tweet to chant - should the thought police come. Plan to build some tiny passive solar rooms hidden within your solar arrays for the next underground railroad.

Above all, reconnect with the Earth, and plant more crops in our local soil: it will help keep us all on track. In a month you can plant spinach and lettuce seeds under glass, to sprout in March when you need consolation. It will be a long struggle to reclaim our humanity in the face of darkness, but remember the sun is shining on us all, and we know what we have to do!