

Local Opinion: What preserving our democracy looks like

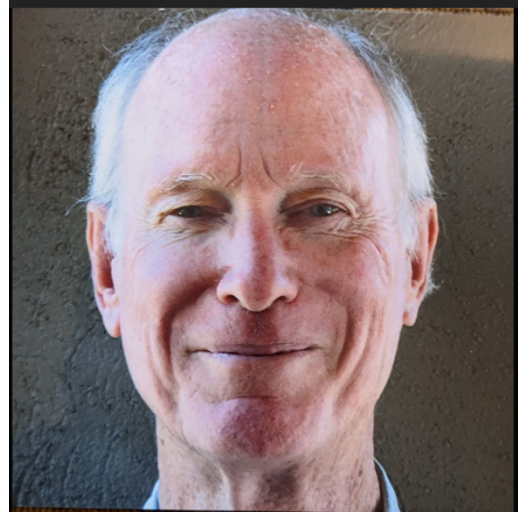
by Phineas Anderson

https://tucson.com/opinion/column/article_c9323189-4b94-4b79-8695-44f5575e74d2.html

The following is the opinion and analysis of the writer:

Four months ago, the Star published an op-ed of mine in which I described why so many people were peacefully protesting the actions, many illegal, that President Trump was taking.

What have Tucsonans done over the last four months, and what should be the focus in the upcoming months to confront Trump's efforts to turn our democracy into an autocracy?



On June 14, No Kings Day (labeled 'No Tyrants' Day internationally) occurred in 51 Arizona small towns and cities with a total of over 79,000 people participating.

Nationwide, the number was 2,100 towns and cities, with over five million people taking part. In Tucson, a Motor March far exceeded expectations. If the cars were lined up single file, they stretched more than fifteen miles. Over 14,000 people participated, with 2,000 of those standing on 22nd Street in 108-degree heat.

On July 17, there was the 'Good Trouble' rally at Reid Park to honor civil rights leader John Lewis and to rebuke Trump's overreach. After listening to a number of stirring speeches, several hundred protesters marched along Country Club Road on another very hot day. Real commitment displayed given such uncomfortable weather.

Throughout the summer, there were numerous protests in front of Rep. Ciscomani's office on Swan Road because he puts loyalty to Trump before his constituents. Rep. Ciscomani voted for the Big, Beautiful Bill that is detrimental to so many people in his district.

A protest and march comprised of many students from the University of Arizona was held in front of two Marriott Tucson properties because the hotel chain went back on its word not to house immigrant families about to be deported.

There was a big Labor Day rally for worker rights; demonstrations at the Tucson VA Medical Center related to staff cuts; and protests at the ICE office on South Country Club Rd.

It is important to note that at the ICE office on Sept. 19, there was a sniper (photographic proof) stationed on the rooftop where 70 people were attending a religious candlelight vigil. Upsetting and inexcusable.

Since the Tesla protests, which started in early February, numerous resistance groups have formed, joining others that have been in Tucson a long time, like Derechos Humanos.

The total number now is around 60+. Though they each may have a specific concern (healthcare, worker rights, due process for immigrants, Ukraine, Medicaid, Gaza, Social Security, reproductive rights, Vet benefits, First Amendment rights, etc.) mostly all agree to four points: One, they are stronger standing together. Two, all demonstrations are peaceful and non-violent. Three, they will not be intimidated or afraid. Four, the overarching goal at this moment in our country's history is to defend our Constitution and to save our Democracy. Implementing those four points is what must be done in the next several months.

On Oct. 18, another nationwide protest will occur called No Kings 2. Go to takeactiontucson.org for a calendar of events.

A Tucson coalition of many groups have come together for Oct. 18. Given the militarization of Los Angeles, Chicago, Memphis and Portland, this coalition is organizing a 'Defend Tucson' rally. A march, speakers, entertainment, and a major press conference will be held at El Presidio Plaza — City Hall from 8-10 a.m. Free parking. The program will end before 'Tucson Meet Yourself' activities begin at 11 a.m.

The protests are having an effect. Many people who voted for Trump and now observe what he is doing to their pocketbooks will unlikely vote for him again.

Reagan Republicans and Independents who prize what our nation stands for now see that Trump is undermining those values (e.g., working with our allies economically and militarily to defend against authoritarian regimes like Russia and China; free and fair elections; helping others in need).

However, nothing can be taken for granted. People must continue to resist, not make excuses for inaction. They must do what they can, be it getting out on the streets with signs, making calls, knocking on doors, giving money, writing postcards, you name it. Then later, when democracy prevails, they can be proud of what they did in preserving all that we hold dear in this wonderful country of ours.

Phineas Anderson, was the former head of Green Fields Country Day School and the president of Tucson Tomorrow, an organization of prominent business leaders and others planning the future of the city.