

Excellent FB post by Rick Steves

Dear travelers and fellow Americans,

I've long appreciated the concept of "solidarity" to describe the collective power created by people coming together to defend their freedoms — whether they be shipyard workers in Poland breaking away from the USSR or poor farmers in Central America rising up against authoritarian regimes to fight for civil liberties. But I never imagined that we, as American citizens, would need to deploy the tool of solidarity to stand up for embattled freedoms here in our own homeland.

But sadly, a perfect storm of political conditions has left American democracy in an existential struggle. We have a president who wants to literally replace our system of government — a system which has inspired freedom-lovers across the planet for nearly 250 years — with an oligarchy... a dictatorship. The excuses? Fentanyl, illegal immigrants, paper straws, trans athletes, and the cost of eggs. And now, solidarity is vital for the cause of American freedom.

It's hard to imagine our rule of law, our constitution, and our time-honored checks and balances could be endangered. With all the chaos, alternative facts, and rope-a-dope of daily surprises in the news, the step-by-step dismantling of our democracy can be hard to notice. But Project 2025 is an effective blueprint for the establishment of autocratic rule in the USA. It's much like the playbook that dictators from Mussolini to Erdoğan have followed...only smarter and more formal.

You know that sinking feeling you get at the card table when you and your friends are playing Hearts, and you realize that someone is about to "shoot the moon"? That's how I feel watching Trump: He has the necessary cards, and he may be unstoppable.

But it's not too late. We can all speak out, not as Democrats or Republicans...not as liberals or conservatives...but as patriotic American citizens. When I speak at rallies, I wear a purple shirt — not blue, not red, but D and R mixed together. To be honest, I miss the constructive back-and-forth between practical Republicans and idealistic Democrats to find workable compromises that are good for the fabric of our society. And there will be time again for respectful partisan debate. But the challenge we face today is deeper and more urgent than partisan politics. It is fundamental: Is the United States of America a democracy that stays loyal to a constitution and the rule of law? Or are we loyal to Donald Trump? Are we government by, for, and of the people... or a corrupt kleptocracy that uses public funds to fill the coffers of our president and his billionaire buddies — a broken democracy that enriches the 1% at the expense of the 99?

While we don't have a lot of tools left, we do have our voices. So many of our representatives in Congress are motivated by one thing: staying in power. And they can bow to pressure from Mar-a-Lago, or they can bow to pressure from pro-democracy voters. So, on June 14, at "No Kings" rallies and marches across our nation, let's come together to let these "representatives" know that ultimately, the people are still more of a threat to their power than our president's Versailles.

Mobilizing on June 14 is not America-bashing. It is America-loving. Please, put on your purple. See it as patriotism. And join me on the streets and in the squares of our great nation, raising our voices in solidarity for good governance, the rule of law, and democracy. Find out more and check the map for the #NoKings event closest to you at www.nokings.org. I'll be with you in spirit, and I hope you'll be with me.