

Achtung eh!



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By Nate Smelle

Last week instead of tuning into programs such as *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *The Young and the Restless*, Judge Judy, Dr. Phil, and *The Talk*, daytime television connoisseurs found themselves sitting in on the Senate impeachment trial of former U.S. president Donald Trump.

It's not everyday that television networks replace their scheduled programming to provide coverage of a political debate. Likewise, it is not every day that a former president is on the verge of being convicted for inciting an insurrection.

The outcome of the trial - Trump's acquittal by a minority composed of Senate Republicans - was a disappointment for those with any sliver of respect for democracy. Still, at the same time, for those with a reverence for the truth, the trial was a small victory in an ongoing war being fought to decide the fate of the Free World.

Watching the proceedings from start to finish was both infuriating and inspiring. The footage screened by the Democratic impeachment managers was a reminder of the violent and racist intentions of the dysfunctional culprits of the failed coup that took place on Jan. 6. The scenes of "American carnage" that day - the same "American carnage" the leader of the insurrection vowed to end in his inaugural address in 2017 - served as an eye-opener to the fact that we, as always, are living the history which is shaping our future. Recognizing that this is the same history which one day will become the focus of study for future generations it is up to us as individuals to decide what our legacy will be.

Listening to the chanting of the Trump Republican supporters as they invaded the Capitol - "Fight for Trump," "Hang Mike Pence," etc. - the footage from Jan. 6 carved a deep line in the battlefield. With every bit of information about the former president's involvement in the insurrection that surfaced during the trial, this dividing line eroded even further. By the time the trial was over that dividing line had grown into a chasm of unprecedented proportions.

While serving himself as president, instead of building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico as he promised his supporters, Trump constructed an ideological barrier that makes the usual abode of fence-sitters uninhabitable.

With the crowd on one side of the line waving white supremacist flags, wearing neo-Nazi symbols, carrying weapons, and calling for the execution of democratically elected officials, the choice between good and evil has never been more clear. What we have here is more than a debate between conservatives and liberals. What we are experiencing, as we have far too many times in the short history of our species, is the rise of fascism and the fight to suppress it.

Anyone who thinks this war is not being waged on our home turf here in North Hastings needs to open their eyes. In our own backyard over the past year, we have seen: the destruction of 'BLACK LIVES MATTER' signs with the spray painting of homophobic and anti-Semitic symbols; the impotent erection of 'Make Canada Great Again' and 'F-Trudeau' signs; and, the recent removal of our once Conservative MP Derek Sloan by the party that vigorously defended him, for his acceptance of a donation from a notorious Canadian neo-Nazi.

Questioning why this trial was taking place when it was clear beforehand that there were not enough Republican votes to convict, it dawned on me that the reason it was being held was to set a precedent, and send a message to the world.

Texas Democrat Joaquin Castro shone a light on the danger of Trumpism's disrespect for national borders while making his case for conviction during the trial when he highlighted for his colleagues that "The world is watching, and wondering, whether we are who we say we are."

Adding proof to Castro's pudding, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's comments regarding Trump's role in the attack on the Capitol were also served up at the trial. Expressing his assessment of the insurrection and understanding of who caused it during a press conference last month, Trudeau said "What we witnessed was an assault on democracy by violent rioters, incited by the current president and other politicians."

Interestingly and ironically, one of the most succinct and accurate statements emerging from the trial came from one of the senators who voted against conviction, Republican Senate Minority leader Mitch McConnell. Despite his role in handing Trump a 'Get Out of Jail Free' card, McConnell offered this statement to his fellow senators: 'January 6 was a disgrace. There's no question that president Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day. Former president Trump's actions were a disgraceful dereliction of duty.'

At least in this regard, for once I agree with "Moscow" Mitch.

With our own federal election on the horizon, we must pay attention to the harsh truths being illuminated by the recent U.S. Senate impeachment trial if we are to resist the infectious disease of Trumpism. Otherwise, we consciously and tragically invite the chaos and the peril it brings.