

TRUMP IS BACK.

 BUT A
RETURN
OF TOTAL
RESISTANCE
WOULD
BE A BAD
STRATEGY.

 A guide for how liberals should
approach the next four years.

ADOBE

BY YASCHA MOUNK

When Donald Trump was first elected president in the fall of 2016, his elevation to the most powerful office in the world seemed like an aberration. He had faced a particularly unpopular Democratic opponent. He had lost the popular vote. There were all kinds of rumors about assistance from foreign powers. And then there was the nature of Trump's electoral coalition: Heavily reliant on older white voters, it was widely interpreted as the last stand of a demographic bloc that was destined to decline in importance over the following years.

All of these factors fed into a particular set of prescriptions about how best to oppose Trump's presidency:

total resistance. If Trump had been elevated to the White House through a series of unfortunate coincidences, then the best way to neutralize the danger he posed to American democracy seemingly was to oppose him in every possible way. The goal of the #Resistance was to stop Trump from taking over our institutions or becoming sufficiently "normalized" to gain a permanent foothold in American politics. If only his opponents could withstand this unique period of acute danger, it was assumed, things would go back to normal.

The paradigm of total resistance inspired a wide range of tactics. Some were self-defeating or outright delusional. During the transition, serious academics called on the Electoral College to elevate Hillary Clinton to the presidency even though she had lost the election. Cable news hosts on MSNBC spent months and years arguing or insinuating that Trump was an actual Russian agent.

Some protest movements tried to win over hearts and minds; plenty of others self-consciously refused to appeal to anybody who might have voted for the president. This was the predominant feeling among many progressives: The people who had voted for Trump, many of my friends and acquaintances told me, were irredeemable racists and bigots. Trying to change their minds was futile, perhaps even morally suspect. The only question would be how to outmobilize them.

Other tactics inspired by the strategy of total resistance were — or at least promised to be — more subtle and effective. For example, there was still a widespread assumption that most Americans held in high regard certain categories of professionals who claimed to be nonpartisan. Many opponents of Trump therefore believed that getting hundreds of former judges or military

RESISTANCE, K4

LA always expects disaster, but no one envisioned this

BY AMY WILENTZ

From childhood, Angelenos know something bad is coming. Something bad is always on its way. You could argue that all children begin to understand this fact about life (that death ends it) from about the age of 5, but here it's different. From childhood, Angelenos feel and see the bad things, like fires and days-long deluges, like earthquakes and mudslides, with a frequency people not from here associate only with news stories from elsewhere.

The big one is on its way. Shrug. We act like we don't care.

I'm new here, only 20 years a resident, and sometimes I behave like this, too. We've been through earthquakes, right? Some people have even told me they actually like an earthquake. It is fun and cool, they claim. A little shake, the frisson of danger, that dizzy feeling for a few seconds as the world disorients beneath you, a couple of glasses and bowls broken, and you regroup and



SAHAB ZARIBAF/MIDDLE EAST IMAGES/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

move on, with maybe a better understanding of nature's power.

Sun combined with impending natural disaster is possibly what has made Los Angeles relentlessly,

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A scorched structure in Malibu.

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MARK ABRAMSON/NEW YORK TIMES

The remains of a commercial area in Altadena.

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stubbornly bright and beach-volleyball cheerful. Such normalizing, though, has been eradicated by the power and horror of this month's wildfires.

People yawn at predictions but not at realities. Until I saw the overfly shots of Altadena and Pacific Palisades after the fires' rampage, I had never seen anything as bad as the Haiti quake on Jan. 12, 2010, in which an estimated 250,000 people were killed, mostly in Port-au-Prince, the capital city. Until now, I'd seen no natural disaster as cruel, as sudden and violent. I walked around Port-au-Prince back then, and now today, here in LA, the landscape looks eerily familiar.

If you grow up with many little earthquakes and lots of brushfires and wildfires in your life, you barely blink at first when something like what's happening today in LA starts up. Even now, LA friends who are lifers are shaking their heads in shock at the sweep of it, the speed, and all the loss.

We drove to dinner two nights ago at a friend's house. In the car as we drove along the uncongested 10 freeway, I turned to my husband and said, "Wait ... where do they live again?" He replied nonchalantly, "Santa Monica." But I knew, from endless scrolling on maps on Watch Duty, the fire app, that a good bit of Santa Monica was under evacuation warning.

"We're driving into the fire," I said. What I meant was that we were driving *toward* it. This was the Palisades fire.

"We're fine," he said.

The Palisades fire and the Eaton fire in Altadena have put the fear of Fire into me in a new and profound

way, both because they're especially capricious as well as vicious and superhot but mostly because some of our very close friends have lost their houses and all their contents and memorabilia. My own house, which Angelinos like to tell me is safe because it's in "the flats," is made of wood and looks like it would ignite and disappear in seconds, though apparently the stucco of the Spanish-style houses burns pretty well in these conflagrations, too.

Because we've had time to witness the tragedy of others, some of our "important" stuff is already packed up and ready to go, in case. But in spite of my friends' terrible losses, I can still feel inside myself a little human (I trust) flicker of the kind of disbelief that lets you stay when you're ordered to evacuate or lets you flee your endangered house with just a toothbrush and a change of clothes because ... because of course you assume that you'll be back tomorrow and that your house will still be there, with everything in it.

That night at dinner in Santa Monica, as the Palisades fire raged on and we sat just maybe a dozen blocks from the evacuation warning zone (though I didn't realize it at the time), the hostess, who'd grown up here, regaled us with wildfire stories from her childhood.

She had never had much sense that wildfires were really dangerous, she said. There was just fire season every year, with its rituals, like the winter holidays. Even though her family lived up near the top of Topanga Canyon, a notoriously fire-prone area of Los Angeles County, she found fire season fun as a kid. The whole family would pile into the family car. She had no idea what the grownups brought with them, but the kids had PJs and toothbrushes, and they'd go down to the house of a friend that was more or less safe — the same house every year — and there they'd have an ongoing house party

with adults and kids and food and fanfare and singing, the old Russian émigré who owned the house presiding tyrannically over the fire bacchanale. And then it would be over, the fires would go out, and the families would go home to find their houses much as they had been before fire season. Disaster was to be expected, she felt growing up, and it was never really disastrous.

I realized this was why my friend was so relaxed about having guests for dinner while the fire just above us was only 12 percent contained. Habit made her confident. She had a little "to-go" bag packed at the front of the house, and a handbag. While I ... it was just hard to imagine how we would pack up all the "to-go" stuff we'd put in my son's room — plus us and our dog.

Although this great city will probably survive the terrible losses of the fires, no one in LA today will pretend in the future that this was nothing, a mere meteorological glitch, a fun fire season. As each story of another friend or acquaintance who has lost a house comes in, or photos of people in their still-standing but lonely houses appear, or reports of elderly, ill, or handicapped people who died are published, or drone footage of formerly leafy, now ashen and flattened neighborhoods reels along — we'll call it historic, and our hearts will break, and it won't become just another wildfire season to remember. And we'll wonder too, recalling the 2025 fires, if we can ever again be cavalier or fancy-free or just plain quotidian in this whirling, phantasmagoric city.

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WILL DOWD

By skipping meals and pawning their clothes layer by layer, the 12th-century Chinese poet Li Qingzhao and her scholar husband



amassed an extensive library of rare manuscripts, calligraphy scrolls on scented paper, and rubbings taken from the mossy walls of ancient tombs.

After her husband's death, Li Qingzhao strove to preserve their collection.

But most of their artifacts were confiscated, stolen, or turned to ash in city sackings.

The poet began to wonder if her late husband was dragging their library piece by piece into the afterlife.

With the years and the ink left to her, the heartbroken Li Qingzhao continued to write, earning a reputation as one of the great poets of the Song dynasty.

Only scattered fragments of what she wrote survive today, the rest having been lost in the 870 years between then and now —

claimed, perhaps, by her beloved husband for their collection on the other side.