

HELL IS REAL

Dispatches from an Anti-Fascist Ohio

In this issue:

02 *The Long Coup: A Timeline of Sabotage*

A special 4th of July issue!

This isn't fireworks and flag-waving.
This is an emergency flare.

For this Independence Day, Hell Is Real dedicates the entire issue to a single, urgent story: how Trump's first presidency laid the rails for the authoritarian machine now roaring to life in 2025.

We're not pretending this all started last year. Or this year. It didn't. The seeds were planted when the "jokes" began in 2016, when the cruelty became policy in 2017, and when every broken law and norm was shrugged off by a public desperate to feel normal again. This issue is a warning. But also a call.

History isn't over. *This is the part where you choose.*
Stay aware. Stay angry.



Visit the Dispatch online at

<https://hellisrealzine.neocities.org>
or scan the QR code

DOWNLOAD AND PRINT
THIS ZINE YOURSELF!



This is not a liberal pamphlet.
This is not a Republican
newsletter.
This isn't about left vs right.
It's about up vs down.

"These are the times that try men's souls."



The Long Coup: A Timeline of Sabotage

By T-Paine

"The greatest danger to liberty is the consolidation of power."

- **Thomas Jefferson**

Happy Independence Day, America. You're not free.

This Fourth of July, while the grills fire and the flags wave, the machine of authoritarianism grinds forward- built in Trump's first term, empowered under Biden's failed watch, and unleashed fully under Trump 45.

You would believe this started this year. But it goes further back.

Every raid. Every ban. Every book pulled from shelves. Every protest criminalized. It all began years ago- with the 'clown president' they said could never really break America.

But he did. And this is the story of how.



Happy Independence Day, America. You're not free.

This Fourth of July, while the grills fire and the flags wave, the machine of authoritarianism grinds forward- built in Trump's first term, empowered under Biden's failed watch, and unleashed fully under Trump 45.

You would believe this started this year. But it goes further back.

Every raid. Every ban. Every book pulled from shelves. Every protest criminalized. It all began years ago- with the 'clown president' they said could never really break America.

But he did. And this is the story of how

2016: The Joke That Wasn't Funny

"He can't win. This is America."
But he did.

Helped by Russian disinformation, Facebook propaganda, and decades of rot in the Electoral College, Trump didn't win the popular vote — but that didn't matter. America's system was already cracked.

- The press decided to "both sides" everything.
- Liberals laughed at MAGA hats.
- The FBI "investigated" Clinton days before the election.
- Voter suppression in key states (Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin) went unchallenged.



Trump walked into the White House on a technicality. But power is power.

- “Lock Her Up” normalized jailing political enemies.
- Alt-right groups (Proud Boys, Oath Keepers) surged — unchecked.
- First hints that ICE would be weaponized.



2017: The Test of Limits (America Fails)

Muslim Ban:

His first act: banning people based on religion. Protests at airports but the Supreme Court let it stand.

“Very Fine People” in Charlottesville:

Neo-Nazis march openly. A woman is killed. Trump sides with the fascists. No consequences.

Lying as policy:

Inauguration crowds. “Alternative facts.” 30,000 documented lies begin here. Truth dies.

Attacks on press:

“Enemy of the People.”

You’re still seeing the effects- journalists jailed and assaulted in 2025? It started here.

ICE raids rise:

Suddenly, Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the tip of the spear. “Sanctuary cities” threatened with funding cuts.

Packing the courts:

Federalist Society pipeline activated. Hundreds of lifetime judges rushed into place. Not a glitch- a plan.

2018: The Midterm Warning Ignored

Children in cages:

Family separation begins. Kids ripped from parents. Hundreds never reunited. America shrugs. ICE learns no one will stop them.

First impeachment warning signs:

Ukraine bribery scandal begins, buried under noise.

Fascist rallies grow:

Proud Boys and militias emboldened. Portland clashes. Unite the Right 2.0. Police stand down.

Brett Kavanaugh confirmed:

Supreme Court slants hard right. Women's rights, labor rights, civil rights, all endangered.



2019: The Fire Smolders

More ICE raids:

Secret detentions. Workplace roundups. Deportations skyrocket.

Trump laughs at shooting migrants:

Crowds cheer. He jokes about "Second Amendment people" stopping political opponents.

Investigations go nowhere:

Mueller Report: no handcuffs, no charges. Trump learns: you can break the law without punishment.

The rise of QAnon:

Conspiracy becomes mainstream. A paranoid, cult-like mass audience is born. Today's fascist foot soldiers? They got radicalized here.

2020: The Pandemic Proves the Point

200,000 dead by election day:

Trump dismantles CDC, peddles fake cures, mocks masks. Death equals control.

Black Lives Matter summer:

Historic uprisings in every major city. What's Trump's answer? Militarize police. Threaten martial law.

Portland federal stormtroopers:

Unmarked vans. Kidnapping protestors. DHS becomes Gestapo-lite. America yawns.

2020 election sabotage:

Mail slowdowns. Drop box removals. Voter suppression at record levels.

January 6 begins here:

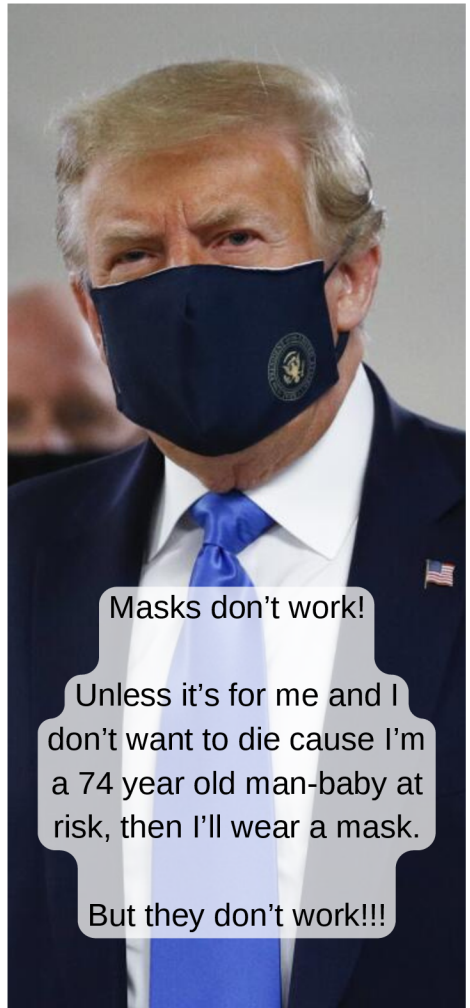
"Stop the Steal" rally lies seeded all year. Capitol attack was planned long before it exploded.

Still think Trump's first term was harmless? The fire was already burning. 2024 was just the explosion.

The Muslim ban, the child cages at the border, the attacks on journalists, the endless dog whistles to white supremacists- none of that was "just bluster." It was the dry kindling piled high for years while the media laughed, while liberals posted memes, while centrists begged for "normalcy."

January 6th didn't come out of nowhere. The rise of election denial, the stacking of courts, the sabotage of pandemic response- these were not accidents or mistakes. They were deliberate, tested tools of authoritarian power.

Trump's first term was the arson. The second is the firestorm.



Masks don't work!

Unless it's for me and I don't want to die cause I'm a 74 year old man-baby at risk, then I'll wear a mask.

But they don't work!!!

The Muslim Ban: Testing the Boundaries of Power

It only took seven days. One week into Trump's first term, the mask slipped. On January 27th, 2017, Executive Order 13769 was signed- better known as the "Muslim Ban." A sweeping prohibition on travelers, immigrants, and refugees from seven majority-Muslim countries, many with no direct connection to terrorism or threats against the U.S.

It was blatant. It was cruel. And it was never really about "security." This was the opening test. How far could executive power stretch before the public snapped? How much panic, how much racism, how much fear could be manufactured, quickly, to normalize collective punishment?

Courts were shocked. Protesters flooded airports. Lawyers camped in terminals, offering pro bono help to stranded travelers- some of whom were legal residents or visa holders suddenly banned from their own homes. And the administration grinned.

Why? Because this was not policy. It was a trial balloon. They were testing us. Testing the courts. Testing Congress. Testing you. Would people shrug? Would airports clear out? Would the media lose interest after three days?

The answer: mostly yes. The ban morphed, tweaked under court orders, but never truly died. Later versions were sanitized, expanded, "legalized" — but the message remained:



This was not an isolated injustice. It was the first brick laid in the authoritarian foundation, you can't build a dictatorship without an internal enemy. This ban made Muslims the first. Notice what happened after: ICE raids increased. DACA was attacked. Refugee quotas slashed. The "others" kept multiplying. It started with Muslims, but it was never going to end there.

The Muslim Ban set the precedent Trump's allies- and his future self- rely on. State violence can be legally disguised. Public cruelty can be normalized. The courts can be bent. The public can be tired out.

Family Separation & the ICE Camps: State Cruelty as Policy

In 2018, the United States government *kidnapped children*. Let's not soften that. Let's not call it "separation" like the headlines did. Under Trump's "Zero Tolerance" immigration policy, border agents seized children from their parents- toddlers, infants- and locked them in detention camps. Some were lost in the system. Some died.

Why? Deterrence. Fear. A warning to anyone who dared seek refuge: cross the line, and you will suffer. For the Trump White House, this wasn't an accident or a mistake. It was a deliberate spectacle of state violence- calculated to break asylum seekers, to scare off future migrants, and to thrill the base voters who wanted punishment disguised as policy.

Photos leaked. Crying children in cages. Shivering under foil blankets on concrete floors. And when asked about this cruelty, Trump's people- from Jeff Sessions to Kirstjen Nielsen- smiled. They called it law enforcement. They called it "order."

But this was something else: a message. Not just to migrants, but to you. To the country. This is what we can do. This is how far we can go. The Nazi regime started this way. Demonize the "outsider." Break up families. Call it national security. Dehumanize the targets until the public looks away.

And here's the truth: America looked away. The headlines faded. The outrage died down. The camps stayed open. Children stayed missing. This was the moment the authoritarian state showed its true face. Not paperwork. Not court rulings. Barbed wire. Steel cages. Government-sanctioned terror against the powerless.

Those camps never closed. ICE grew stronger. Its budget swelled. Its presence spread- to cities like Cleveland, to counties like Portage. Immigration raids became normal. Neighbors reported neighbors. Fear spread like rot. And the lesson?

A government that can steal children to make a point will do anything.



My favorite game to
play: ICE camp or
Nazi camp?

The War on Truth: Lies as Governance

Trump's most dangerous weapon was never the military. It wasn't ICE. It wasn't the courts. It was the lie.

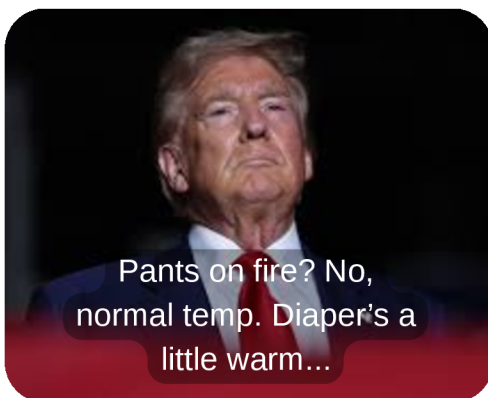
From his very first day- claiming his inauguration crowds were the "biggest ever" (they weren't)- Trump declared war on reality itself. And every day after, he kept pushing:

- The Mueller probe was a "witch hunt."
- COVID-19 was "a hoax" that would "disappear like magic."
- Bleach might cure the virus.
- The election was stolen.

Thousands of lies. Documented. Catalogued. Denied anyway. But this wasn't about stupidity. This was strategy. Flood the public mind with nonsense until truth becomes impossible to find. Until facts no longer matter. Until the world feels so confusing, so chaotic, that power can do anything- because no one trusts anyone anymore.

This tactic wasn't new. Fascists in every era understood the power of narrative over truth. Stalin had his show trials. Hitler had his propaganda films. Trump had Fox News, OANN, Breitbart, Truth Social- entire media ecosystems built to blur fact and fiction.

And when that wasn't enough? Call the press the "enemy of the people." Encourage violence at rallies. Attack judges, whistleblowers, scientists. Turn the machinery of government against anyone who questioned the myth. This was the state's greatest victory under Trump 43: Not tanks in the streets- but reality itself melting into fiction.



School boards banning history books. Statehouses censoring LGBTQ content. Cops claiming protestors are "terrorists."

In Ohio, we've seen this lie spread: from anti-trans fearmongering to election denial to COVID conspiracies shouted by politicians. It's the same tactic- kill the truth, rule the ruins.

Authoritarian Friends: Cozying Up to Dictators

For all his waving flags and talk of “America First,” Trump admired one kind of leader most: dictators. Strongmen. Tyrants.

He said so himself- over and over.

- He called Kim Jong-un “a great guy” and bragged about “love letters” from the North Korean despot.
- He fawned over Vladimir Putin, doubting his own intelligence agencies in front of the world.
- He praised China’s Xi Jinping for abolishing term limits and making himself president for life.
- He excused Saudi Arabia’s crown prince after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Every time a brutal regime killed, jailed, poisoned, or crushed its people- Trump smiled. Admired. Envied.

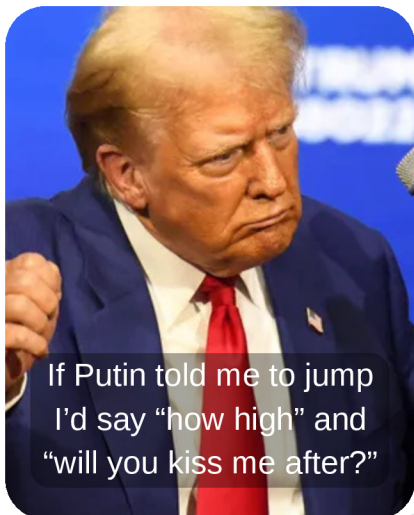
While past presidents at least pretended to defend democracy abroad, Trump openly made excuses for tyrants. “They’re strong.” “They’re smart.” “They control things.” That was the point.

Those friends are still out there. Putin in Moscow. Kim in Pyongyang. Trump’s allies in Hungary and Brazil. And his admirers here- in Ohio, in Congress, in the statehouses- learned the lesson: democracy is for suckers. Power is permanent if you want it badly enough.

In 2025, Trump promises “retribution” against enemies. “Ending the deep state.” “Taking control.” What do you think that means? Not policy. Not law. Raw power. The kind that kings and dictators crave.

When the next leader praises tyrants: believe them. When they jail critics, silence press, threaten judges: believe them. When they promise “total control”: believe them.

We’ve seen this before. In history books. In faraway countries. It can happen here.



The Coup That Almost Was: January 6th and the Soft Launch of Dictatorship

"This is how liberty dies... with thunderous applause."

- George Lucas

January 6th, 2021, was not a protest. It was not a riot. It was a test run. A soft launch for American fascism. When the mob stormed the Capitol, they didn't come on their own. Trump summoned them. Trump directed them. Trump told them the election was stolen, that the government had betrayed them, that they needed to "fight like hell" or "lose their country."

And they listened. Armed. Maskless. Carrying zip ties. Chanting "Hang Mike Pence." Searching for Nancy Pelosi. Hunting for lawmakers to take hostage- or worse.

The gallows outside wasn't a prank. It was a threat. This was a real coup attempt, in real time, on live television. And for hours- *hours*- Trump sat in the White House, watching, smiling. He refused to call them off. Refused to send help. His people begged him. His aides panicked. His own Vice President fled for his life. Trump did nothing.

Because this was the plan. A violent mob. A frightened Congress. An election overturned by force. The only reason it failed? Luck. A few brave Capitol police officers. Cowardice among Trump's inner circle. Unprepared rioters who didn't know what to do once inside.



Proud Boys: stand back,
stand by, stand clueless
in cargo shorts

January 6th was the dress rehearsal. The next attempt may not be so sloppy. It may come with uniforms. Court orders. Friendly governors. Loyal National Guard units. A "legal" justification already written.

The blueprint was printed in blood on the Capitol steps: Lie. Stir fury. Deploy mobs. Break the system. Blame the victims. Stay in power.

They learned from the coup that almost worked.

Get Involved / Stay Loud / Make Your Own

Liked what you read? Think you can write it better? Good. Do it.

This zine isn't a brand, it's a tool. Copy it. Print it. Remix it. Hand it out. Leave it in laundromats, libraries, cafés, bathrooms, bus stops.

Make your own version. Or make your own zine.

If you want to contribute, write a rant, report local news, or send a letter to the editor send it here:

hellisrealtpain@protonmail.com

(Encrypted mail preferred. Use PGP if you know how.)

Print. Share. Resist.

- Print this PDF.
- Leave stacks at record stores, campuses, coffee shops.
- Post QR codes.
- Email it to friends.
- Slip it into library books.

No permission needed. No copyright claimed. This is free press, the old way. Because resistance should never stay digital.

Want Your Voice Here?

- Local reports?
- Op-eds?
- Personal accounts?
- Art? Comics? Poems?



Send them in. You can be anonymous. You can use a fake name. You can start your own zine.

This space is yours, and ours, to keep open.

(Letters to the Editor coming soon. Maybe yours.)

Hell is real, but you don't have to go quietly.