

Home > Op-Ed > The middle of a conversation

# The middle of a conversation

By Michael McAuliffe - December 2, 2020



The election results should have come as a relief, but it hasn't been the salve I had anticipated. I'm struggling with the fragility of the basic proposition of American democracy, of elected representation that can be determined, or at least experienced, through contorted paths of propaganda.

For the past several years, it's been an intolerant base of Republicanism (morphing into Trumpism) that has immersed itself in a morass of dark falsehoods and fiction to obtain and preserve power. But the dynamic isn't limited to the far right. Both extremes of the populism spectrum are capable of telling tall tales to achieve their preferred ends.

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My brother, a retired DEA special agent, lamented to me over the phone this week that he's lost his belief in our collective national integrity. Trump has robbed -- stripped -- us of our faith in the institutions of government.

Even with our expanded cultural mindfulness, we can't understand how tens of millions of people could observe Trump and his club over the past four years (more if one includes the 2016 campaign) and still cast a vote for more of it.

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I don't know how the political system gets fixed. And if it's not to be restored, but rather to be rebuilt, the process will take years and years of sustained effort.

Except that the middle does feel more relevant now than at any time over the past three decades. We centrists are not everyone, nor should we be, but we may be the binder that keeps the spinning parts from flinging out.

Michael McAuliffe, a part-time resident of Chilmark, is a former federal prosecutor serving as both a trial attorney and a supervisory assistant U.S. attorney at the Department of Justice.

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