

Putting on Yellow Vests — to Stop Trump’s Throwing the U.S. Constitution over a Wall

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As a long-time activist, I just bought a yellow vest made famous in France by the hundred thousands of the 99% who don them every Saturday. They are finally revolting after [40 years](#) of grinding austerity imposed by successive governments largely benefitting the 1%. Thanks to social media, and the Internet, Yellow-Vests has spread to [25](#) countries also seething under years of austerity imposed on the suffering by the insufferable: Europe, Britain, and Poland, as well as Bulgaria, Serbia, Iraq, Tunisia, and Israel.

It also shook the global 1%, the “world’s financial and political elites” at their annual conclave at Davos, Switzerland, according to [AP](#) observers who said their “economic outlook is darkening.” After all, threat by the Yellow Vests is a simultaneous [bank run](#) in France, perhaps the French banking industry’s—and the European Union’s—“worst nightmare,” as an RT analyst put it.

Another nightmare that could spread globally is a [70% marginal tax rate](#) for incomes over \$10 million suggested by new House member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY). It’s caught fire with credible economists and 59% of U.S. voters so far, particularly with reminders the rate was [91%](#) on \$200,000 during the Eisenhower presidency (1953-61). In today’s dollars, that tax rate, say, in 1955 would affect incomes of only [\\$1.8 million](#), relatively comparable to more Davos’ attendees than \$10 million.

Despite America’s corporate media’s near-blackout of Yellow Vest doings in France, millions of us around the globe have spent 11 Saturdays watching dozens of YouTubes of mostly peaceable amblings and camaraderie of Yellow Vests along the narrow streets and main squares of Paris and villages—all approved by 80% of a long-enraged and, now, obdurate public.

The “Vests” have handed French president Macron a revealing list of [42 demands](#) to change how ordinary people, especially in the provinces, have to survive. The major demand is the Citizens Initiative Referendum (RIC), a mandated national vote on public issues, repealing laws, changing the constitution, each based on at least 700,000 signatures on petitions.

One of the most stirring events of *RT News*’ 24-hour coverage was 100,000 Yellow Vests, amid hundreds of French flags, singing “La Marseillaise” against the backdrop of the Arc de Triomphe. But a shock seen around the world for the once-popular, handsome young president were all the countrywide signs demanding he resign (“Macron Demission!”).

Considering that the Yellow-Vest movement has that kind of power, why not one on

Saturdays in the U.S. initially to stop President Trump's threat to overthrow the U.S. Constitution via the [National Emergencies Act of 1976](#) by circumventing Congress's Constitutional power of the nation's purse. It has refused to give him \$5.7 billion of taxpayer dollars to build a political replica of the "Berlin Wall" to shut off a few thousand Central Americans trying to emigrate. Even Congressional Republicans knew asylum seekers were not hordes of criminals, as Trump insists. From the 1.6 million crossing that southern border in the 1980s, the [Customs/Border patrols](#) reported a drop to 43,000 last year. Most of this [trickle](#) entered *legally* through border posts and were *not* criminals.

In short, Congress did not see the border situation rising to *any* possible level of a national emergency. Trump then retaliated with the [longest federal shutdown](#) in history by refusing to sign the national appropriations bill covering government operations and the paychecks of 800,000 civil servants—until Congress hands over those billions of taxpayer dollars to fund his wall.

In midst of Trump's threats to destroy Congress either by the Emergencies Act or by taking as hostages 800,000 public servants and most government services, I couldn't be the only American watching the Yellow Vest movement and suddenly realizing that the same public rising here could carry the same message ("Trump Resign!!"). All his actions clearly point to his intention to toss the U.S. Constitution—and America's 243 year-old democracy. That is exactly where its precedent might well lead, given Trump's lifelong admiration of dictators like Putin and Kim Jong-un and [others](#). Or the fascist and horrifying military efficiency and pageantry in regimes of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. Too many in Congress seem too terrified to stand up to him on this issue.

Perhaps millions of Americans would don yellow vests if they learned for one thing that the Emergencies Act has 123 provisions destroying their freedoms. Most actions are without legal recourse. The most terrifying, listed in the current [Atlantic](#), permit a president like Trump to:

- Ignore the U.S. Constitution.
- Bypass Congress and its laws.
- Freeze American bank accounts.
- Block emails from reaching destinations.
- Control/censor U.S. Internet traffic.
- Invoke emergency powers unrelated to emergencies.
- Use the armed services, National Guard to "suppress insurrections" (i.e., any group assembled to "petition the Government for a redress of grievances," as guaranteed in the First Amendment)
- Invoke martial law indefinitely "until the laws can have their free course."
- Blacklist suspected national "threats" individuals from jobs, housing rentals, healthcare services, buying food.
- Detain indefinitely those suspected of being of national "threats."
- Order the Treasury to take action against any American offering "material support" to asylum seekers, undocumented immigrants inside the U.S.

A pair of alarmed reportorial experts on the Constitution, [Patrick Martin and Andre Damon](#), instantly warned:

"Such an action would concentrate in his hands, and in those of his successors,

a new mechanism for the exercise of unrestrained presidential power. In this fundamentally new political system, the vast resources that are regularly allocated by Congress to the military could be marshaled by the president to carry out actions not just internationally, but within the United States itself. If there is anything that constitutes “high crimes and misdemeanors,” justifying the immediate initiation of impeachment procedures, it is such a threat to override Congress.”

Author and activist [Naomi Klein](#) added that if Trump weren’t stopped, the cost to the nation would be “huge.”

“What further roll back of rights (e.g. curfews, ‘no protest zones’), not to mention intensified state violence and surveillance, become possible under the banner of ‘emergency?’ What is to stop him from declaring emergencies again and again if this works?”

Beyond these staggering possibilities, Trump has increased *real* American domestic emergencies through deliberate neglect by severe budget cuts to programs and especially appointing incompetent cabinet members. And the nation is about to learn of other possible violations of presidential powers—high crimes and misdemeanors—that Special Council Robert Mueller’s investigation and forthcoming report will reveal.

So a subtle nationwide “Trump, Resign” message from millions of Yellow-Vested Americans every Saturday could well make his return to the heady billion-dollar life of a real estate tycoon and TV channel owner seem far more attractive than the least of his White House headaches. A Nixon-like abrupt and dramatic departure would save time, money, effort, and lifetime humiliation in a House impeachment and Senate ouster. Or suffering the betrayal of a majority of the cabinet, applying the 25th Amendment, to notify Congress that he: “is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office.”

Too, articles in progressive websites have begun asking why—given this situation and critical, unmet domestic necessities—American activists weren’t copycatting the Yellow Vest movement (“[Will the U.S. Have Its Own Yellow-Vest Movement?](#)” “[Why hasn’t there been a “yellow vest” movement in the USA?](#)”). After all, pundits asked, aren’t most Americans in the same situation as the French? The federal shutdown over Trump’s wall *does* pale compared to the vast, neglected, and critical *real* emergencies millions of Americans have been facing for years to pay for heavy tax cuts for the rich and set off unquestioned endless wars for raw resources and market monopolies abroad.

Paying for America’s endless wars is chiefly responsible for austerity on the home front.

For instance, some [78%](#) of full-time employees barely survive from paycheck to paycheck, fearing downsizings like GM’s [14,000 autoworkers](#) this year may well happen to them. Or shuddering in empathy to the 800,000 federal staffers and their families in a calamitous budget shutdown. Among authors focused on those catastrophes is world hunger/environmental specialist [Frances Moore Lappé](#):

“If the stress of making ends meet and economic inequality were the distinguishing causal forces, shouldn’t Americans have been the first to hit the streets? In France the top fifth of all earners receive almost [five times](#) more than the bottom fifth. Sounds extreme. But here that gap is [eight-fold](#). Such

contrasts in economic inequality carry with them real differences in the depth of human suffering. Consider that American [babies die](#) at a rate 80 percent higher than French babies; and disparities in [death rates](#) between babies in poor and wealthy neighborhoods is more significant in Manhattan than in Paris. Moreover, our lives are on average [three](#) years shorter than those of the French. In education, American college grads are burdened with student-loan debt averaging almost [\\$29,000](#), whereas in France the cost of higher education is [negligible](#).”

Additional specifics came from long-time progressives [Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers](#):

“Many of the problems the French people suffer are also felt in the United States. The US economy has been designed for the wealthy for decades and billionaire President Trump-era policies have made that reality worse. People never fully recovered from the 2008 economic collapse when millions lost houses and jobs, got lower income and higher debt. The globalized economy that has been designed for transnational corporations has not served the people in the United States well. The fly-over states of the Midwest have been left hollowed out. Rural hospitals are closing as the economy disappears. In urban areas across the country, decades of neglect and lack of investment have created impoverished conditions. Racist and violent policing have been used to prevent rebellion and contain the unrest. People are struggling. Addiction and suicide rates are up. There is vast hopelessness and despair.”

These conditions, as well as Trump’s chaotic presidency, undoubtedly explain the greatest turnout ([118,049,275](#)) for midterm elections since [1914](#) (50.3% vs. 50.4%, respectively). Candidates who seemed to champion progressive change did well.

With the rumble starting for 2020 presidential candidates, millions of Americans who also believe we are in a domestic and foreign emergency could put on yellow vests every Saturday to force them to listen to us, not the special interests who control *them*.

But for once let’s not do it in street demonstrations or at town halls or house parties. Most Americans tend to avoid them because they involve time, energy, money—and fear of violence

Instead, why not just wear a yellow vest when going outside the home for the next successive Saturdays. If a sea of thousands of women in pink pussy hats all around the country could unnerve Trump, timid lawmakers, and shadowy Deep State rulers, think of the visual effect of a Yellow-Vest movement springing up in this country to stop the President’s efforts to undermine the U.S. Constitution and create a police state—to say nothing of ignoring the country’s well-being.

Think also of the impact on the nation’s “[summer soldier and sunshine patriots](#)” — and Trump’s base — when their neighbors, friends and even families go about their Saturdays in yellow vests. They would equal a thousand lawn signs declaring quietly, and firmly, the super-strong message that neither Trump nor any future president can destroy our governmental system.

Think also of the other benefits of neighborhood Yellow Vests.

Such a “demonstration” would require no organization, but, rather, heavy promotion on Social Media, the Internet, and in stemwinder speeches (“Put on a yellow vest and follow

us!”) by such Congressional newcomers, say, as Ocasio-Cortez and/or 2020 candidates for state, local, or federal offices.

Yellow-Vest Saturdays would cost neither time and energy, nor gas/bus fare. It would keep streets free of smashed store windows, overturned and burned-out cars and tear-gas residue. It would prevent police violence leading to deaths and major injuries tying up hospital staffs and beds, and the ruinous expense of insurance claims.

Public expenditures would be significantly reduced for police outlays of rubber bullets, tear gas, tasers, Flash-Balls®, gas and water for water cannons—and budget-breaking overtime pay. The Establishment paymasters for Black Bloc/Antifa provocateurs would hesitate to let them start trouble at backyard barbecues or harass tenants lugging groceries to upstairs apartments.

Six months after the start of *our* Revolution against the British, [Thomas Paine](#) wrote that those were “the times that try men’s souls.” But so are *these* times when a president now or in future believes he can overthrow the U.S. Constitution and rule by whim or whimsy, backed up by police and the Pentagon.

Paine’s words in *The American Crises*, inspiring the colonists, still are the clarion call to stop Trump from using self-proclaimed, flimsy crises to please his base by employing the Emergencies Act. Or ignoring blatant domestic priorities. Paine gave us a rallying cry suited for dealing with him—or any future president with dictatorial ambitions:

“Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.”

Let it start with people wearing yellow vests for the next few Saturdays to demonstrate to Trump—and Congress—that ultimately the power of the people will defend the Constitution and provide the real needs of the commons if these two branches of our government fail to do so.

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