

2016 Edition

CODE RED:

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COMPUTERIZED

ELECTION THEFT

AND THE NEW AMERICAN CENTURY

ELECTION 2016 EDITION

Jonathan D. Simon



CODE RED is about what has happened to American elections, American politics, and *America* since computers took over the vote counting a few short years ago. It is a compelling call to action, about saving our democracy and our country. Now, before it's all gone.

Jonathan D. Simon is Executive Director of Election Defense Alliance, founded in 2006 to restore observable vote counting as the foundation of American democracy.

There are genuinely difficult problems facing us as a nation and as a species in the years to come: climate change, over-population, food and resource distribution, weapons control, the privacy-versus-security dilemma, . . . just to name a few . . . Compared to these challenges, the basic counting of votes—in an observable way that ensures the legitimacy of our elections—is an easy assignment. We need only to break a spell that has been cast on us—a spell of convenience, passivity, helplessness. We need only remember that democracy is not something that we watch; it is something that we do.

Jonathan Simon, *CODE RED*

A spirited, data-driven argument that our computerized voting system is frighteningly vulnerable to corruption.

Kirkus Reviews

*As a professional statistician, I found *CODE RED*'s data, analysis, and conclusions compelling.*

Dr. Elizabeth Clarkson, Wichita State University

*Jonathan Simon's *CODE RED* is unique, easy-to-understand, and vastly important.*

Andrew Kreig, Justice Integrity Project

Simon dives in with a question-and-answer section that puts the major facts out there for people to examine and evaluate for themselves. We owe it to ourselves and the tattered system we hold dear to do that. The sooner the better.

Joan Brunwasser, *Op-Ed News*

Jonathan writes in a clear, compelling, dramatic style—as befits his passion for the truth.

Richard Charnin, Author of *Matrix Of Deceit*

Jonathan Simon's research is thorough and his case is more than compelling . . . He has provided an important public service.

John Zogby, Founder of The Zogby Poll

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FOREWORD to ELECTION 2016 Edition

The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.

-- Isaac Asimov

This is still, as it was two years ago, a book for everyone who has been wondering what the hell is happening in America and in American politics.

And it still tells the story of how America's electoral system has been corrupted in the most direct and fundamental of ways: vote counting, the bedrock protocol of our democracy, has been computerized, outsourced, and made unobservable. In the darkness of cyberspace, common sense and the experts tell us, the vote count is vulnerable to manipulation—hacking by outsiders, rigging by insiders. And the forensic evidence indicates that the vulnerability has been exploited.

None of this is new. So why a new edition for *CODE RED*?

Election integrity and security is, as news anchors put it, a *developing story*. The “R-word” is being thrown about by, among others, a major-party presidential nominee. Serious articles in our “newspaper of record” warn of potential foreign interference with the vote counts of American elections. Things are moving, and moving fast.

Whatever one's opinion of Donald Trump as an avatar of electoral integrity, it was only a matter of time before *someone*, whether from a place of fairness or from one of self-interest, called into

question a vote counting system that cannot be seen. This emperor has been walking around naked for 15 years now and the real mystery is why it has taken that long for *anyone* to mention the obvious. Nor is Trump the only one speaking publicly of rigging and hacking: the forensically bizarre 2016 primaries triggered such allegations, lawsuits, and a wave of distrust from millions of supporters of the Sanders candidacy.

However you feel about such stirrings, you can sense that the political and electoral environments have undergone a sea change. Our electoral system has failed badly in the translation of public will into electoral outcomes and representative government, and the result has been a rapidly metastasizing politics of disgust and distrust.

Whether and how this may come to a head in November and beyond remains to be seen, but it is hard to imagine a restoration of trust in our elections and our political system without the restoration of an observable vote counting process. The new chapters “**E2014: What Democracy Doesn’t Look Like**” and “**E2016: The Chickens Come Home**” address our recent rapid descent into this hole; “**The Way Forward**” crucially offers a plan of action for digging ourselves out.

We are in a strange and difficult but by no means a hopeless place. We will have to work to restore our democracy and reclaim our sovereignty—work together with grit and tenacity. It begins with becoming informed, then trusting our common sense, communicating, organizing, moving mountains. The inertias are great but so is the strength of a people acting together to overcome them. We possess that strength and we owe it to ourselves and to the future to find it and use it.

Jonathan D. Simon
August 19, 2016 – Felton, California

FOREWORD to Post - E2014 Edition

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.

— *Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities*

THIS is a book for everyone who has been wondering just what the *hell* is happening in America and why American politics has become so increasingly warped as this new century has unfolded.

It is a book for everyone who has wondered what is behind the gridlock in Washington, and the political hyperpolarization everywhere in America.

It is a book for everyone who has been scratching his or her head as election results show voters seeming to be voting against their own interests and contrary to virtually all measurements of their opinions, in the process transforming America into a harsh, mean, and baffling land.

And it is a book for those who cannot quite believe this is the real America they are seeing—who say to themselves, and increasingly to each other, “There’s something wrong with this picture.”

This is also a book I’d rather not write and it is one that I believe most Americans would rather not read. The story it tells is grim and a ‘happy ending’ will depend on an exercise of public will not seen in America within living memory. Yet, if America is to be

rescued from the slow-rolling coup that is turning our nation into an unrecognizable place, this book *must* be written and *must* be read, and such an epochal exercise of will *must* rapidly become a reality.

The grim truth that is so hard to tell and so hard to swallow is that America’s electoral system has been corrupted in the most direct and fundamental of ways: the computers that now count virtually all of our votes in secret can be—and, the evidence indicates, *have been*—programmed to cheat. To override the will of the voters and change the outcome of elections. To steal and hold power that could not be gained and held legitimately. Ultimately to reshape America more effectively than could a junta rolling tanks down Pennsylvania Avenue. The junta would, by its very visibility, at least provoke resistance.

I can only wish it were a fantasy, a fiction, the fevered invention of easy-to-dismiss, get-a-life “conspiracy theorists.” I can’t blame anyone for reflexively wanting to write it off as such, for asking, reasonably, “If this is happening, why aren’t election administrators all over it? If this is happening, why aren’t the losing candidates and/or their party all over it? If this is happening, why isn’t the media all over it?” And I can’t blame some for saying, with great indignation, “America is the world’s Beacon of Democracy—this is the *one thing* that could *never happen here!*”

To which I can respond only by asking you to set that cherished, comforting, and dangerous vision of Exceptional America aside as we take a hard look at the core danger of computerized vote counting and the evidence that its vulnerability to wholesale fraud is being exploited to alter the very nature and direction of our country against the will of the majority of its people. Yes, it will most likely ruin your day. It will, if you’re anything like me, leave you angry. Beyond angry. And I hope therefore ready to act, and determined to keep acting, until we Americans have our democracy back.

I've chosen to present a good part of this book in a Q&A format. I believe it makes things clearer and gets down to brass tacks quicker. There is so much about elections, vote counting, computerization, polling, and media coverage of each of these that is generally unknown or not well understood. Once the questioning process is begun, each question tends to lead to another, until the whole picture seems to take shape. The Q&A precedes an examination of the current state of affairs and an appendix presenting forensic evidence and analyses, and finally an ample bibliography for readers who feel the need to explore further before swinging into action mode.

I am well aware that, much as in the aftermath of the 2008 election ("E2008"), the Obama/Democratic victory in E2012 left the vast majority of potentially skeptical observers believing that *nothing* is rotten in Denmark (if the Right *could* rig, why *wouldn't* it? and if it *did* rig, why would it *lose*?) and that it's perfectly safe to go back in the water. We address this tragically misguided belief and answer those perfectly logical questions. We will see that there is nothing safe about the water and that the Denmark of American vote counting is rotten to its unobservable core.

The Big Picture of American politics has become an ugly one and one that will only get uglier with time and inaction. So let's take an unblinking look at what the hell is happening to America and what we still just might be able to do about it.

Jonathan D. Simon

December 21, 2014 – Arlington, Massachusetts

I. INTRODUCTION

*There's something going on here and you don't know what it is,
do you, Mr. Jones?*

– *Bob Dylan*

Who among us would trust an election where the ballots were handed to a man, dressed in a magician's costume, who took them behind a curtain and emerged some time later, claiming he had counted and then shredded them, to tell us who won? What if the man were wearing a "So-And-So For President" button or some other partisan signifier? And what if the results of key and close elections—elections that shaped American politics by determining the balance of power in statehouses and in Congress or by setting the field for November in presidential contests—kept going *that same way*? How many, and what overall pattern of, strange results would it take before we insisted on going behind the curtain with him, or at least sending a trusted representative of our interests, to observe the count?

Nothing should be more self-evident than the simple statement that for an election to have *legitimacy* the counting process must be *observable*. If the votes are counted in secret "behind a curtain," it does not matter how or by whom, no one other than the counter can really know who won and the results therefore lack legitimacy. *If you do not accept this basic statement, you may as well save yourself the time and put this book down now, because nothing else I have to say will make much of an impression.* Please take a moment, indeed as much time as you need, to think it through and decide for yourself. Would you shrug, say "Ah, what the hell," and simply trust the man behind the curtain with the fate of our nation and, given our nation's position in it, much of the

world? Or would you take Democracy seriously enough to demand a vote count that could be observed?

Now let's look at our "real" elections, the ones that determine the leadership and direction of our towns, states, and country. The ones where we rely upon the media to tell us who won (and why). We have long employed the secret ballot process and for most of our nation's history an open, public counting process was the norm. Votes cast in private, counted in public. Makes sense.

But that is no longer the case. In 21st-Century America, aside from a few tiny pockets where ballots are still counted observably in public by humans, vote counting is an entirely secret enterprise, taking place on chips and memory cards concealed inside computers or, worse yet, in servers arrayed along a network, often far distant from where the votes are cast, in the full, impenetrable darkness of cyberspace.

The first alarm sounded by this book is that these elections are in practice no different from the charade of the man in the magician's costume "counting" behind the curtain. Not one of these elections—from presidential to congressional to dog-catcher to referendum—warrants the trust necessary to claim legitimacy. And an electoral system so untrustworthy that it cannot claim legitimacy, whether in a Third-World nation or here in the touted Beacon of Democracy, makes a mockery of the democratic process in which we take such reflexive pride.

Why would a nation install, and why would its people acquiesce in, such a patently untrustworthy process for making its most critical decisions and for transforming the public will into leadership, policy, and direction?

We will return to this question often in the course of this book; it has a number of disturbing answers. But for the moment we think it fair to observe that we live in a time and a place where

convenience is king. Every improvement in speed, each yet slicker technological “advance,” is embraced with reflexive zeal. Our cultural impatience (“Faster connection time! Faster downloads! Faster everything!”) seems to know no bounds.¹ After all, isn’t it obvious that, as the too-cute kids seated at the table with the friendly corporate suit kept reminding us in that brilliant and ubiquitous TV ad for the latest happiness-bestowing smartphone, “*faster is better?*” Moreover, we seem to have a collective affinity for that which *looks* sophisticated—sleek, digital, graphic, multi-layered, multi-colored, rapid and impeccable. Isn’t a glistening iPad, quite apart from its utility, also a comforting symbol to us of how far removed and safe we are from the raw, naked dangers of the pioneer’s cabin, the medieval hut, the prehistoric night?

This hi-tech, hi-speed ethos is, of course, not entirely new, but the grip that speed, convenience, and sit-back-and-enjoy-the-show choreographed entertainment now hold on our culture is tight and getting tighter every minute. “Progress,” so defined, has become a *habit* and appears to be inexorable. Thus when it comes to elections, there is, in effect, a mandate that virtually every one be decided within hours, if not minutes, of poll closing, and that, in our major biennial elections, the direction that America will be taking be brilliantly and artistically laid out in a *mélange* of pie-charts, blue and red blinking states, and punditory consensus, all before it is time for bed. This is such a *fait accompli*, such a *ritual*, that it is hard to remember that it wasn’t *always* this way and, when it comes right down to it, isn’t really *necessary*—much less to contemplate the price paid for our convenient and entertaining experience.

¹ Perhaps the only real exception to our pan-cultural haste is our embrace of video review in our various sports (now trickling down even to the high school level). We accept these delays because of the importance we have come to place on accurate athletic outcomes and sports justice: i.e., because “football matters.”

The price is simply that we as citizens have no basis for trusting it. Behind this festive TV extravaganza—reassuringly presented as “Decision 20XX”—are those vote-counting computers and computer networks, not one of which is one iota different from the magician behind the curtain, a faith-based enterprise where votes are counted in secret and results announced (and accepted) with the straightest of straight faces. In fact, it is as a prop to this media production and its programmed primetime-slot narrative that the vote counting computers are deemed “indispensable.”

How long this irrational situation has been going on is open to question. Computers in one form or another (initially mainframes using punch cards) have been employed in vote counting since as early as the 1960s, and there is some evidence that they were sporadically being used to manipulate electoral results almost from their first deployment. So even in the “good old days” when the nation watched the votecount numbers rolling up behind such trusted icons as Walter Cronkite or David Brinkley, it did so without any real assurance that there wasn’t a thumb (or two or ten) on a scale somewhere in the pipeline where computers could be programmed to add, delete, or shift votes.²

What has happened since then, however, is that with rapidly advancing technology it has become *infinitely easier* to alter far more election results, with far greater effect, efficiency and precision, and far less risk of exposure. What was once labor-intensive, requiring a good-sized crew to hack punch cards or cover up falsified lever machine check-sheets machine by machine in a single contest, can now easily be accomplished by a single insider or hacker, even one working from outside our borders anywhere in the world. A single individual can change the results of dozens,

² See Collier J, Collier K: *Votescam: The Stealing of America*, Victoria House Press 1992, at <http://www.amazon.com/dp/0963416308>, for the history of electoral manipulation and its cover-up in the early computer age, before the passage of the Help America Vote Act opened the floodgates in 2002.

indeed hundreds of elections, with virtually no risk of detection. With the help of a tiny staff, such an individual can essentially stage an undetectable rolling coup. The system is *that* vulnerable, a piece of red meat lying unguarded in a yard full of salivating dogs.

Too dramatic? Too purple? Study after study, by the most prestigious researchers and institutions, tells us that we can be sure about the red meat, the vulnerability.³ But is it paranoid to imagine the *dogs*, hungry and willing to exploit it? In other words, given the opportunity, who would *want* or *dare* to steal an election, or a nation, that was lying unguarded in the yard? Who would set their sights so high and sink so low?

To answer this, we need first to make a quick sketch of our era, and the ethics of our time. Author David Callahan has done much of this work for us. In his 2004 best-seller *The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead*,⁴ Callahan is hard-pressed to find a nook of competitive endeavor where cheating or rigging to achieve some goal has not become commonplace. From students, to job applicants, to athletes at every level, to financiers, to corporations, to public officials—Callahan takes us on a grand tour of what has been happening where and when no one is looking in today’s ‘just win, baby’ America. It is not pretty. And at every turn the vast majority of us have been, at least initially, very

³ See, e.g., http://brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/download_file_39288.pdf, <http://itpolicy.princeton.edu/voting/ts-paper.pdf>, <http://www.blackboxvoting.org/BBVtsxstudy.pdf>, <http://www.blackboxvoting.org/BBVreport.pdf>, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05956.pdf>. It is of interest that the

comprehensive reviews undertaken by the states of California and Ohio have been removed from the official websites and are no longer available to the public.

⁴ Callahan D: *The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead*. New York: Harcourt, 2004. See also, Michael Lewis, “Extreme Wealth Is Bad for Everyone—Especially The Wealthy,” *The New Republic*, 11/12/2014 (reviewing West D: *Billionaires: Reflections On The Upper Crust*. Brookings, 2014), in which copious research is presented showing the propensity to cheat to be correlated with increasing wealth.

reluctant to believe the extent of the rot, the malignancy of the tumor.

When 500-foot home runs were flying off the bats of Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, we desperately wanted to believe that healthier diets and better workout regimens could account for it. Few were willing to give any credence to former major-leaguer Jose Canseco's claim that these new supermen were juiced.⁵ Something did seem wrong with that picture—as something seemed wrong with Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme, with credit default swaps, with the anthrax in the vial at the U.N. and the supposed WMD's in Iraq—but it was not something that as a culture we were willing to acknowledge. All that taint was just too much to face, *until we were forced to*. Until we were *made* to look hard at how our high stakes “games” —from Wrigley Field to Wall Street to the White House—were actually being played.

The question we are compelled to ask—by all that once was holy; by Major League Baseball and the Tour de France; by the state-doped and Rio-banned Russian Olympians; by Bernie Madoff and Lance Armstrong and A-Rod; by the signaling cheaters exposed at the top of the impeccably-mannered contract *bridge* world;⁶ by the ring of computer hackers charged with the theft and use of 160 million credit card numbers from the likes of Citibank and NASDAQ;⁷ by the fraudsters at Volkswagen who programmed the

⁵ Canseco J: *Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and How Baseball Got Big*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 2005. *Publishers Weekly*, in describing *Juiced* as “poorly written, controversial,” was typical in doubting whether Canseco “really knows anything about the problem beyond his own use.” Canseco's next book, written three years later when events and investigations had borne him out, was entitled *Vindicated: Big Names, Big Liars, and The Battle to Save Baseball*.

⁶ See <http://www.newsweek.com/big-rich-cheaters-bridge-world-rocked-top-players-busted-375414>.

⁷ See <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-23448639>. One of the ring's members, Mikhail Rytikov, is charged with having the sole role of covering up the ring's tracks. By 2016 such massive cybercrimes have become rather ho-hum,

computers in their cars to cheat on emissions tests, got caught, and have agreed to pay \$14.7 billion in settlement to US consumers alone;⁸ by the apparent foreign-state cyber-inursion manifest in the “Sony” hack and of course the “DNC” hack of 2016;⁹ by the plethora of hacking and rigging schemes that are now accepted as commonplace—is how a computerized US election, vital and vulnerable as it is, could *not* be a target for skullduggery?

Are the stakes anywhere in any endeavor in the entire world ever higher than in a biennial American election? We know of no pot of gold—home runs, capital, fame, power, policy—that can compare to that at stake in American elections.¹⁰ Winning elections confers the power to reward friends and punish enemies, along with the opportunity to set policies that can engender enormous profits. But, just as dogs of many different breeds might find the unguarded hunk of beef irresistible, so those moved to rig elections may be of different breeds and driven by different hungers. Besides the obvious yearning for practical power and

barely generating headlines. Among them the cybertheft of what appears to be the entire US national voter database.

⁸ See <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/business/volkswagen-settlement-diesel-scandal.html>.

⁹ As Ajay Arora, CEO of cybersecurity firm Vera, put it in warning that the DNC hack might be the new normal: “This is a bellwether of things to come. The techniques are advancing. There are strategic attacks, and then there is tactical warfare. There are parties out there now thinking, ‘hey, let’s affect outcome of whole election.’” (<http://www.aol.com/article/2016/07/26/the-worst-might-be-yet-to-come-with-the-dnc-email-hack/21439542/>). Presumably those “parties out there” have grasped that “whole election” includes the part where the votes are counted.

¹⁰ Although it is hardly possible to quantify the “net worth” of an election, it bears mention that more than \$7 billion was spent to win federal office alone in E2012 (<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/01/7-billion-spent-on-2012-campaign-fec-says-87051.html>), and, with “dark money” taken into account, E2014 was by far the most expensive midterm election in American history. With lobbyists enjoying a “return on investment” rate of better than 100-to-1, it is not hard to see that, even calculated in cold monetary terms, the value of an election—which of course is concentrated in the relatively few key contests that determine control of the governmental apparatus at various levels—is astronomical.

profit, there is the “true belief” of the political extremist and, at the other end of the spectrum entirely, the climb-Everest-because-it’s-there lure for the conscienceless “pure player,” one who, not necessarily in the service of any genuine conviction but just for the “rush” (and of course the money), would be the human god, the Master of the Dance who from an unseen perch alters politics on the grandest scale—and with it the course of history.

Some true-believers—who now abound in American politics, have made an apparently successful bid for control of the Republican Party, and (as we shall see) dominate the upper echelons of the voting computer industry—are so strongly motivated and inspired by an outcome vision (whether fundamentally religious or secular in nature) that they can thoroughly rationalize an ends-justify-the-means approach to their activities. From the standpoint of such a true-believer, there *are* no ethics as compelling as that true belief. And from the standpoint of a pure player, there are no ethics, period: if you ain’t cheatin’, you ain’t tryin’.

Thus an individual or group might feel justified in, say, sending “Vote Wednesday” informational flyers or making “Vote Wednesday” robocalls to the homes of opposing voters when the election is Tuesday. In fact they *have*, repeatedly.¹¹ Is there a bright line, we must ask, between behavior so blatantly unethical and, say, a more efficient gambit—simply offsetting the zero-counters on the memory cards of voting computers to +X for the candidate you favor and –X for the candidate you oppose, so that at the end of the day (as explained in the next chapter) the vote totals will reconcile with the poll tapes recording the number of voters, the election administrator will see and certify a “clean” election, and you will have stolen a net of 2X votes per machine so rigged? Indeed, it would be hard to resist if you were a “Vote

¹¹ See <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/11/election-dirty-tricks> for a record of this and other dirty tricks recently relied upon to gain electoral advantage.

Wednesday” kind of true-believer who happened to have access to those memory cards, or to the cyber-networks on which millions of votes are now “processed.” And just another day on Mt. Everest for a pure player.

In light of this we must ask a hard question: lip-service aside, just how sacred *are* elections and just how sacrosanct *is* the counting of the votes?¹² And a follow-up: How does the democratic process *per se* stack up against a burning true belief or a boatload of money? Just how deep and abiding a respect for democracy itself, how much pure *principle*, would it take to overcome the tremendous temptation to palm a card or two and *have things your way*, alter the course of history, and create (as George W. Bush was praised for doing) your own reality?¹³ Having made a realistic appraisal of the behavior, mindset, and character of some of the political actors and operatives now on the scene,¹⁴ do we really believe that such deep and abiding respect vests in every player in the game of “democracy” as it is currently being played in The New American Century?

¹² Because a major election is virtually *never* decided by a single vote, the value we place upon a single vote *in actuality* tends to be a good deal lower than our exalted rhetoric would have it. It may be that this low pragmatic value assigned the individual vote in turn colors our laissez-faire attitude toward the voting and vote counting process as a whole.

¹³ There is a chilling and revealing testament to none other than Karl Rove’s fervent embrace of this approach to political action, as captured in an October 17, 2004 article written by Ron Suskind for *The New York Times Magazine*, as part of which Suskind interviews the at-the-time anonymous Rove:

The aide [subsequently identified as Rove] said that guys like me were “in what we call the reality-based community,” which he defined as people who “believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality. . . . *That’s not the way the world really works anymore*,” he continued. “We’re an empire now, and *when we act, we create our own reality*. And while you’re studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. *We’re history’s actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.*” [emphases added]

¹⁴ And adding, with a nod to the likely perpetrators of the 2016 DNC hack and leaks, states and political actors and operatives anywhere in the world who might have more than a rooting interest in American electoral outcomes.

Many observers have begun to question, and often deplore, the “new madness” of American politics.¹⁵ Taking in the current hyperpolarization, the intransigent hyper-radicalism of the Right and what seems to be its poll- and explanation-defying endorsement at the ballot box by a traditionally moderate electorate, many have wondered what is happening in America. Witness Thomas Mann’s and Norman Ornstein’s 2012 bestseller, *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks*.¹⁶ Many explanations are offered up, from clever messaging to voter suppression and gerrymandering to the role of money. Pundits, after all, are not paid to be stumped. But there remains a nagging disquiet, a sense that all these explanations don’t quite explain enough. There’s still something happening that defies not only conventional political wisdom but plain old common sense, as if the Political Universe had been taken over by some new asymmetrical non-Euclidean geometry. There seems to be a missing force, an X-factor analogous to cosmic dark matter or dark energy, that is needed to explain what is happening here in America.

We will present comprehensible and compelling evidence that the X-factor is the electronic manipulation of votecounts and that, all other factors notwithstanding, what is happening here in America would *not* be happening in its absence.

For anyone persuaded by the evidence, presented in the chapters that follow,¹⁷ that the electoral process in America has been subverted, or even that it is merely vulnerable to and perhaps

¹⁵ See, e.g., *New York Review of Books*, 9/27/2012, cover headline: “OUR WEIRD POLITICS NOW,” featuring separate pieces on the theme by Andrew Hacker, Ezra Klein, Jacob Hacker, and Paul Pierson.

¹⁶ Mann TE, Ornstein NJ: *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks: How The American Constitutional System Collided with The New Politics of Extremism*. New York: Basic Books, 2012.

¹⁷ Election forensics is not, for better or worse, the stuff of soundbites; but neither does it have to be eye-glazingly abstruse and obscure. I have sought to balance comprehensiveness with clarity and have provided links and references for additional exploration as appropriate.

teetering on the brink of such subversion, our predicament takes on a nightmarish quality—one of those dreadful dreams where you are running without moving while the locomotive speeds on to its inexorable impact with the child who has wandered onto the tracks.

Virtually everything about the situation is surrealistic and absurd. Election integrity activists are told to produce “a smoking gun,” when all such “hard evidence” materials are strictly off-limits to investigation; statistical evidence, no matter how copious and consistent, is received with a dismissive shrug; reform proposals such as hand-counted paper ballots for federal and statewide elections are shot down as ludicrous nonstarters; “rogue” journalists and whistleblowers are cowed, exiled, silenced, or ignored. America seems hell-bent on sticking with its faith-based election system, no matter how vulnerable it is shown to be and no matter how weirdly distorted our politics becomes.

And yet . . . and yet, America is one examined memory card (however obtained), one white-hat real-time election hack (“Mickey Mouse gets 4 billion votes!”), one open and honest recount, one “Opscan Party” (where citizens form a ring around an optical scanner and demand a public, observable count of the voter-marked ballots within), or even one serious article in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* away from *critical mass*, from the sudden explosive recognition that something thought too ghastly to imagine (even *worse* than the idea that *baseball* was not the wholesome Norman Rockwell game it seemed) will *have* to be imagined and then dealt with.

Given how unimposing the civic duty of public, observable vote counting is in actuality,¹⁸ the problem can be dealt with easily

¹⁸ It has been calculated that hand counting the federal and statewide races would require a *maximum of four hours per lifetime from each American voter*, a civic

enough. The real challenge is not in the dealing with, but in the collective imagining.

There are some indications that the American *people* at least—after a generation-long embrace of the private, and rejection of the public, sphere—are ready once again to invest in the common good, and perhaps even to part with a few of the expedients and conveniences that are now being seen to do us individual and collective ill.¹⁹ There is an emerging, priority-reordering, “anti-seduction” culture that could come to support a demand for reform of our voting system and could be mobilized to let our representatives know that we are ready to serve and determined to protect our democracy.

Yet there continues to be a great political disconnect and realistically, *absent a galvanizing catastrophe or a complete media about-face*, there have been few signs that such reforms are in the offing. In this, vote counting reform is not alone: think gun safety, climate change. *At least as now represented by our elected leaders*, we are a conservative nation, reactive rather than proactive, simultaneously smug and insecure, paradoxically hubristic yet with a fragile self-esteem giving rise to much denial.

If, in one way or another, a massive electoral theft *were* exposed beyond all cover-up and forced upon the public consciousness, it would of course be technically and pragmatically possible to quickly restore hand counting or at least a comprehensive and

burden far less onerous than jury duty, one that Americans of previous generations assumed and one that Canadians, Germans, and Australians, among others, perform today.

¹⁹ Apart from the bevy of books and blogs blasting Wal-Mart culture and its corporate-serving anomies, we can look around us and see the regrowth of participatory communal foci such as farmers’ markets and food co-ops. While alienation, speed, convenience, and self-interest clearly remain the dominant cultural modes, it appears that a turning point may finally be in sight.

effective auditing protocol. Neither is beyond our capacities and both cost a tiny fraction of what we have recently spent bringing “democracy” to foreign soils.²⁰

Whether it would be *politically* possible would remain to be seen. If by that point majority control at critical levels were held by those who had achieved that control through years of systemic fraud, could they be expected to willingly institute honest elections and so inevitably surrender power and go gentle into that good night? Or even if a majority of officeholders thought quite reasonably, “Why mess with a system that has worked for *me* by putting me in office?” What form and intensity of public pressure would it take to move our successfully elected lawmakers and officeholders? Would marches and sit-ins and massive demonstrations persuade our leaders to restore our sovereignty or would these simply be ruthlessly suppressed in the name of security and domestic tranquility? Would it come down to massive voting boycotts and general strikes? Would the simmering subliminal battle between the newly awakened public and its newly exposed oppressors come shockingly to a turbulent and violent head?

It is grim to speculate on these scenarios. *But I think it is fair to say that the later in the game this critical mass of public awareness and outrage is reached, the less likely that a political remedy will be possible.* So the first thing to be done is to engender awareness,

²⁰ It is perhaps worth recalling here that our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will end up costing the United States a total of about \$5 trillion (see <http://time.com/3651697/afghanistan-war-cost>), an *average* of nearly \$7 billion *every week* (www.costofwar.com) since their inception. A *single month* worth of those wars would pay (at \$20/hour per counter) for hand counting our *American* ballots for a minimum of 45 biennial election cycles, or fully *three generations*.

Why, it must be asked, can't we do this? Why, for that matter, is our computerized voting equipment, in addition to being so corruptible, also aged into obsolescence and dysfunction? Why are we so lavish with our *global* democracy-promotion follies and so ridiculously, and it would appear intentionally, cheap with our *own* democracy?

and that right soon. Thus the urgency of this writing. It is a CODE RED.

I'd like to think this story will have a happy ending, that history will review in appreciative terms the struggle of a few activists—Cassandras really—to prod leaders and public alike to scale the towering Never-Happen-Here Wall Of Denial so that they can then act together to restore the essential process of observable vote counting to our nation. Most truths eventually come out. All we can do is keep trying in every way possible to help this one find its way into the light.

We will, in the series of questions and answers to follow, examine computerized election theft from many angles, and explore motive, means, opportunity, and, of course, the evidence for such a ghastly criminal enterprise. We will also explore why it continues to remain hidden, the quintessential Big Lie corrupting our nation and its democracy. We will look unblinkingly at democracy down and ask realistically whether there is any chance that it can get back up. We will ask *you* to override the powerful “naaaah” reflex and be among the first to scale with us that towering Never-Happen-Here Wall Of Denial.

It will be a rough ride we are taking. For ourselves, our children, and the life that shares the Earth with us, it will be a lot rougher if we refuse to take it.

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