

# What Can We Do Now?

From Elizabeth Warren

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Today should be about honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The heart and hope of the civil rights movement — Dr. King's dream shocked the conscience of our nation and challenged us to live up to our highest ideals.

That hope for a better America is Dr. King's legacy — and as heirs of that legacy today we are called upon to take a stand against racial and economic injustice.

That's what I'll be thinking about today. I'll be at the inauguration — I believe it's important to see it with my own eyes. This is a serious look-in-the-mirror moment for our country.

**Donald Trump's swearing-in will initiate an era where our nation will be tested at every turn. It's also the starting block for what Democrats will need to do over the next four years to limit his damage and win back working people.**

Look, if Trump's recent promises to bring down costs for working families and unrig our economy are legitimate, then I'll do anything it takes to see those promises follow through.

But I've seen this one before.

During Trump's 2016 run, he swore he would drain the swamp. He talked the talk of economic populism and rooting out corruption. That version of his presidency didn't come to pass.

In reality, he surrounded himself with the lobbyists and billionaires who run the swamp and feed off government favors. Trump and his circle collectively control billions of dollars of wealth. While running the government, they had the power to scratch each other's backs and turn those billions into hundreds of billions more.

In reality, the \$2 trillion in tax breaks he passed was mostly sucked up by billionaires and giant corporations — and offered the very worst of trickle-down economics. Our tax code today allows the 1,000 billionaires in America to pay an average federal tax rate that's far less than the vast majority of Americans pay.

He turned the keys to our government over to a group of Wall Street insiders, billionaires, and CEOs.

All while giving a wink and a nod to right-wing extremists and white supremacists — his version of making *America great*.

He described the participants of a deadly white supremacist rally in Charlottesville as very fine people.

After a violent mob of domestic terrorists — incited by Trump — attacked the Capitol and tried to overturn the results of a presidential election that he lost, he called it a beautiful thing, a day of love.

He made one racist remark after another, and applied that rhetoric to racist policies — from the “total and complete” ban on Muslims entering the country to his ongoing effort to build a monument to hate on our southern border.

He did everything he could to 1) tip the economic scales toward billionaires and corporations and 2) stir up racial hatred in this country. Then he turned those two initiatives into a political strategy.

Donald Trump’s central message is that if there’s anything wrong in your life, if you’re struggling to get by, you should blame “them” — and “them” means people who aren’t the same color as you, weren’t born where you were born, don’t worship the same way you do, or don’t live their lives the way you would.

So today, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a day where we are called upon to uphold his legacy and take a stand against racial and economic injustice, we will inaugurate a man who is a walking antithesis of that legacy.

What can we do now?

There will be no shortage of horrifying initiatives over the next few years. But as the party out of power, there are still levers Democrats can pull to limit the damage of this administration — from Congressional oversight to the courts.

While we do that, we must earn back the trust of working people to start to chart a different direction for our country.

We do that by embracing bold economic policies that will make a considerable difference in the lives of working people. We know these ideas are popular. American voters showed up for Democratic economic policies last year — approving ballot initiatives to raise the minimum wage in Alaska and guarantee

paid sick leave in Missouri, for example. We've got to keep championing those ideas and not shy away to avoid upsetting corporate billionaires.

For inspiration, think back to Franklin Roosevelt. When FDR said he would take on corporations and Wall Street, he didn't mince words. He called out the "privileged princes" and "economic royalty" running corporate America. And when the titans of commerce went after him with vicious attacks, he didn't back down. Instead he declared, "I welcome their hatred."

What did we get out of this approach? Social Security. Unemployment insurance. Abolition of child labor. Minimum wage. The right to join a union. Even the very existence of the weekend.

All we need today is that courage. Courage to stand up to billionaire and corporate donors. Courage to make the wealthiest and most powerful people in this country a little uncomfortable. Courage to shake off any instinct to show how eager we are to compromise and stand by a half-baked plan.

At every turn, Democrats need to expose the hypocrisy between what Trump says he'll do for working families, and what he actually does. Like how he made big promises on the campaign trail last year to make groceries less expensive, and then, after getting elected, he began to say it would actually be "hard" to bring down grocery prices.

And we need to be unwavering when it comes to standing up for immigrant families, trans people, patients seeking an abortion, and everyone else who will be targeted by this administration.

To everyone who is afraid of what happens next, I share your fears. But we need to remember that the political position we're in is not permanent.

Every step toward progress in American history came after the darkness of defeat. Abolitionists, suffragists, Dreamers, advocates for marriage equality, and marchers for civil rights behind Dr. King all faced impossible odds, but they persisted, and they won. What we do next is important, and I need you in this fight with me.

Thanks for being a part of this,

Elizabeth