

MASS DEMONSTRATIONS ARE NOT A STRATEGY

A Democratic Strategy Forum Essay

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As we confront the rising fascist threat in the United States and globally, mass demonstrations have become the most visible and most favored tactic.

They can energize people, build solidarity, and make opposition visible in public space. All of that matters. But visibility is not victory, turnout is not strategy, and spirit by itself does not blunt authoritarian power.

Those participating in No Kings, May Day actions, and similar mobilizations have every right to ask a basic question of organizers and convenors: *how does this action fit into a broader plan to weaken, isolate, and ultimately defeat the neo-fascist movement now advancing in the United States?*

This is not an argument against mass action. It is an argument for strategic clarity. Demonstrations matter when they are part of a larger campaign—when they recruit new people into organizations, strengthen coalition ties, shift public understanding, pressure institutions, and prepare the next phase of collective action. They matter far less when they become recurring public rituals that absorb enormous energy, time, and money without making clear what comes next.

At this stage, every major mobilization should be accompanied by a shared plan of action, public explanation, and visible sequence of next steps.

What participants should demand from organizers

- A clear statement of the larger strategy the demonstration serves
- Specific next steps distributed in leaflets, speeches, websites, and social media
- A realistic explanation of what the action is meant to accomplish politically
- A timeline showing what follows in the days and weeks after the demonstration

What organizers should make public

- How the action is expected to affect the authoritarian Right or disrupt its agenda
- What resources, alliances, and structures are in place to sustain the campaign
- What sequence of actions comes after the demonstration
- How the event connects to organizing in workplaces, communities, campuses, unions, and local institutions
- How people can stay involved after the rally ends

There is another issue that cannot be avoided. If these mobilizations are truly national in significance, then where are the large, national organizations representing labor, Black and Brown communities, women, LGBTQ people, environmentalists, peace forces, educators, scientists, and public health workers?

Many of the current coalitions are important and often impressive, but they are also frequently made up of smaller, newer, or more loosely connected groups.

That can be a strength, but it also reveals a larger weakness: the absence of a visible, coordinated, national democratic front with broad social representation and a shared strategic center.

That is why the movement must now move beyond demonstration alone and toward something closer to a national popular-front coalition. Such a coalition would not eliminate differences, but it would create a shared anti-authoritarian framework, common public education, and a visible plan of action.

Millions of participants and hundreds of organizations need more than a calendar of events; they need a common analysis, a sequence of campaigns, and a way to understand how each action contributes to the larger struggle. Education and transparency are not secondary. They are part of strategy itself.

What a broader anti-authoritarian front should begin to build

- Representation from all major pro-democracy and anti-authoritarian constituencies
- A shared public plan of action
- Regular communications explaining what is being done and why
- Public-facing forums, briefings, or media events that give people strategic orientation
- Ongoing channels—yes, even a YouTube channel or similar platform—where organizers can report, teach, coordinate, and invite public input
- A structure that turns demonstrations into recruitment, training, coalition-building, and long-term democratic capacity.

The corporate media will not do this work for us. It will continue to trivialize the voices of working people while amplifying the most absurd and poisonous rhetoric of the Right. But that only means democratic movements must take public communication more seriously. We need organizations, media events, and informational forums that demand attention. We need regular public explanation of what the authoritarian Right is doing, how democratic forces are responding, and what role ordinary people can play.

A movement that appears in public only on demonstration days will not build the durable power needed to defeat fascism.

The question, then, is not simply how many people we can bring into the streets. The question is what those people are being invited into. If demonstrations are part of a larger, shared, transparent anti-authoritarian strategy, they can be powerful.

If they are not, they risk becoming impressive but repetitive displays of concern. In this moment, democratic forces cannot afford symbolism without sequence.

We need action, but we also need a plan.

Please share this essay with organizations, colleagues, and others who may find it useful.

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