

3 Ways Our Progressive Traditions Will Help Us in the Age of Donald Trump

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Last Tuesday's election result was a historic setback for all those who envision the United States as a welcoming and nurturing home to everyone. This unprecedented outcome flies in the face of the rights and privileges which are the foundation of our democracy and the progressive Jewish values which have served as a lodestar to the Workmen's Circle community.

I grew up with the famous Joe Hill quote: "Don't mourn, organize!" But it wasn't until now that I truly understand and feel the depth of his words. No matter how discouraged we may feel, we must use this moment to organize a new progressive movement to carry us forward. We must take on the mantle of our Workmen's Circle founders, who over a century ago came here to the United States looking for a better world. Founders who fought against prejudice much like we are seeing around us today. We are now charged to rebuild that world, and we can and must empower a movement to do it.

So what's next? What do we tell our children? What do we say to our community?

We tell them that there is hope for the future. We teach them the path to shaping a better tomorrow. And we all set the example of acting on our progressive values. We certainly can't downplay how bad these election results are for

us all, but we must be careful not to give in to defeatism. Because, as of this moment, the new status quo is unthinkable.

In this state of uncertainty, the Workmen's Circle has over a hundred-year history of fighting for workers' rights, for standing together against oppression, and embodied our progressive values. We have fought long battles for the right to organize, for education for all, and for access to affordable healthcare. We have stood as a united community against racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-LGBTQ and anti-immigrant ideologues. And, we have built our work on the Jewish tradition of pursuing social and economic justice.

Today our progressive activist traditions couldn't be more critical to building a future we can all proudly support. So our message to our children and to each other must be multi-pronged:

First: They are going to be safe. America is still a democracy, and our community will stand strong to make sure our democracy continues to function.

Second: We have the unique opportunity to shape a better future. In our community, no one is alone, we will collectively act to change the world.

Third: We will strategically work to forward and share our progressive values with each other and those outside of our activist community.

Today, we must recommit to the hard work of building a progressive movement that will be the architect of a better world for us all.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Forward.