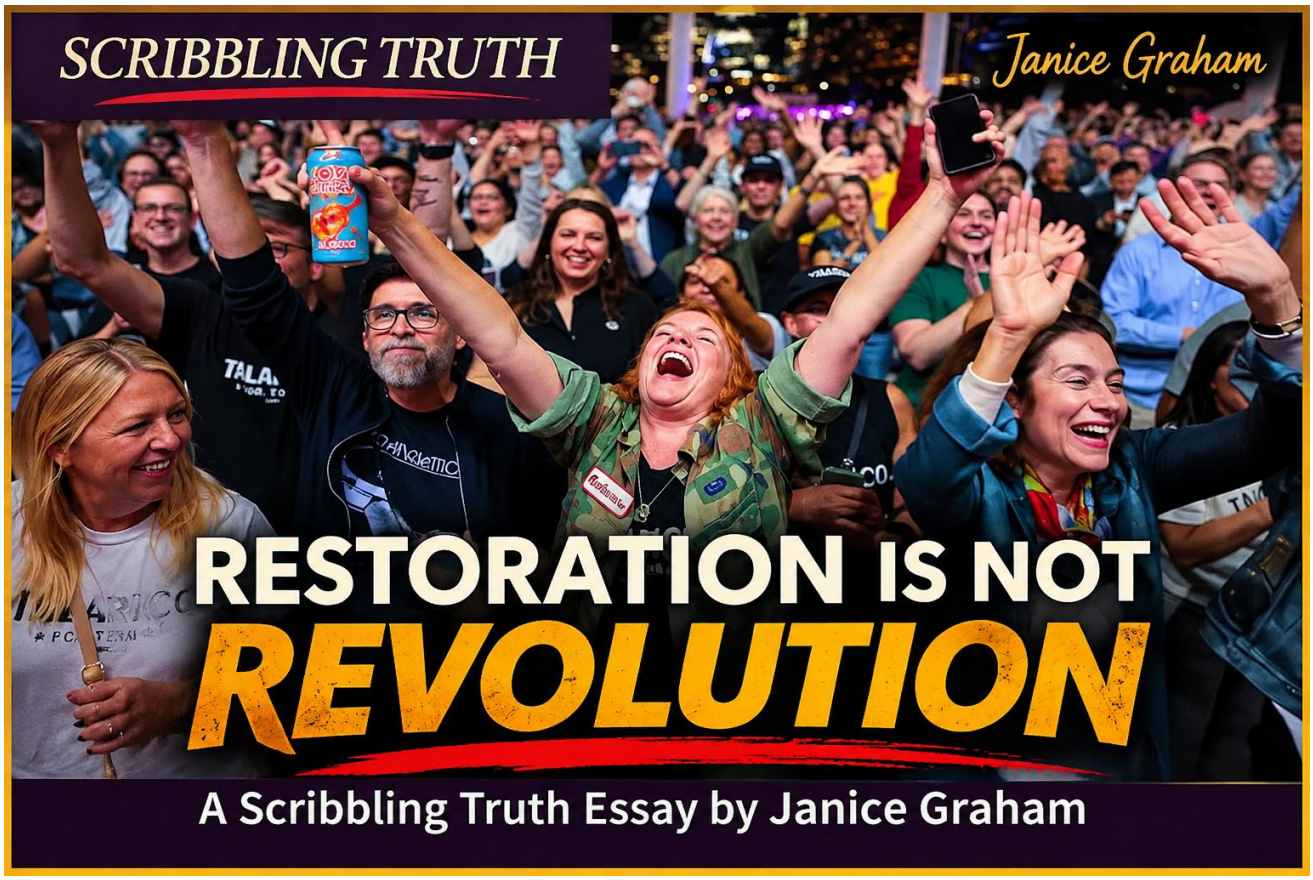
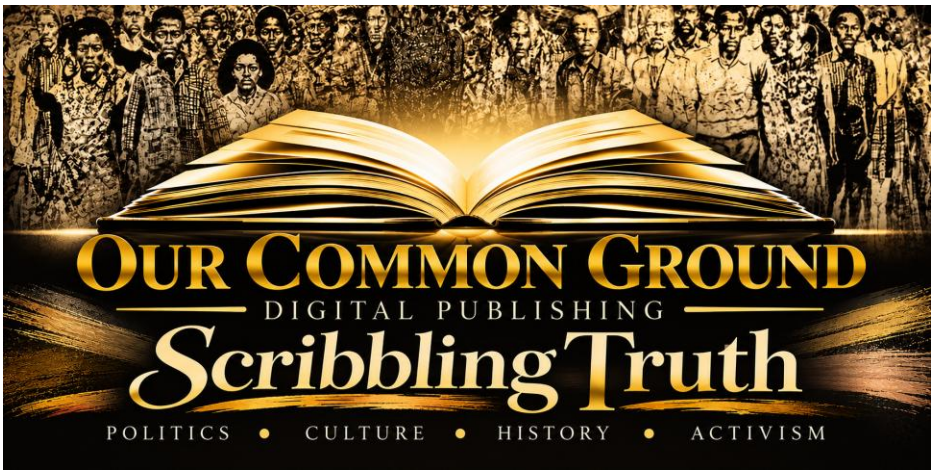


The Midterms Offer a Path to Restoration. But Will They Translate into Revolution?

November 4, 2026



The voters have spoken. The 2026 midterm elections have delivered an undeniably remarkable shift in American political power. Democrats have reclaimed both chambers of Congress, and new leadership has emerged in states where the possibilities for political change seemed remote only a few months ago. There will be celebrations, congratulations, speeches about democracy saved, and declarations that America has found its way back.

But back to what? That is the question we need to answer before the champagne goes flat and the newly elected begin settling into their offices. Restoration is necessary. It is certainly preferable to the continued dismantling of constitutional protections, the abandonment of public responsibilities, and the normalization of executive power without meaningful accountability.

Restoration is not revolution; it is simply a rescue. Returning this nation to the conditions that existed before Donald Trump's second presidency cannot possibly constitute a cure for what has happened to American democracy. It does not offer the defenses needed to thwart betrayal and corruption. Nor will it repair the broken places that made the Trump era possible.

Nor does it acknowledge the flaws, fractures, and longstanding failures concealed beneath the nation's promises and its façade as a democratic republic. Those conditions helped make his return possible. We cannot afford another political season in which victory is mistaken for transformation, congressional hearings are mistaken for accountability, and the restoration of familiar political leadership is mistaken for the reconstruction of democratic government.

The voters have opened a door. The question is whether the Democratic Party will walk through it carrying the same old furniture or arrive with the architectural plans for an entirely different house.

Jon Ossoff Understands the Assignment



On election night in Georgia, Senator Jon Ossoff offered something far more consequential than the customary celebration of political victory.

He understood that defeating a political adversary does not necessarily resolve the underlying conditions that made the adversary's rise possible.

In his November 3 victory speech, Ossoff declared:

"That this moment is an opening not for restoration, but for reformation."

He called upon Americans to "heal the brokenness beneath."

Those words deserve attention. Ossoff was speaking not merely about the defeat of Donald Trump's political agenda but about the deeper failures of American political and economic institutions.

He challenged the influence of corporate and secret money in politics, the power of major industries over public policy, the failure to guarantee healthcare, and the political indifference experienced by working families. He spoke about confronting problems that existed long before the current administration and will remain after it.

Watch and read Senator Jon Ossoff's November 3, 2026 victory speech: https://electjon.com/watch-sen-ossoffs-victory-speech-on-election-night

Ossoff calls for reformation. I am asking whether the circumstances demand something even more ambitious: a revolution in democratic governance, carried out through constitutional authority, institutional reconstruction, and sustained public accountability.

The distinction matters.

Reformation may correct abuses within existing structures. Reconstruction asks whether those structures themselves must be changed.

And revolution, as I contemplate it, demands that we reconsider the political assumptions, institutional arrangements, and power distributions that have repeatedly prevented American democracy from fulfilling its promises. We should not be satisfied merely because the political machinery that produced the destruction has changed operators. We must examine and disassemble the machinery itself.

The Democratic Party Must Reconstruct Itself First



The Democratic National Committee should begin immediately with the construction of an entirely new Democratic Party Strategic Plan. Not another campaign document designed to carry candidates through the next election, but a governing blueprint that defines what the party intends to build, what it intends to dismantle, and how it will measure the restoration of public trust and citizens' agency.

I would bring Florida State Representative Angie Nixon into a central leadership role in directing that undertaking. Nixon represents the kind of political experience that too often receives insufficient attention from national party leadership: organizing communities, confronting entrenched power, developing political relationships beyond election cycles, and speaking with clarity about the material circumstances of working people.

Bring together organizers, policy scholars, experienced public administrators, labor leaders, community institutions, civil rights advocates, and people who have spent their lives confronting the consequences of failed public policy.

This cannot be another gathering of consultants explaining how Democrats should communicate more effectively with voters who have already explained what is wrong. The party needs to define its own objectives, establish a clear governing agenda, and how governance should be translated differently.

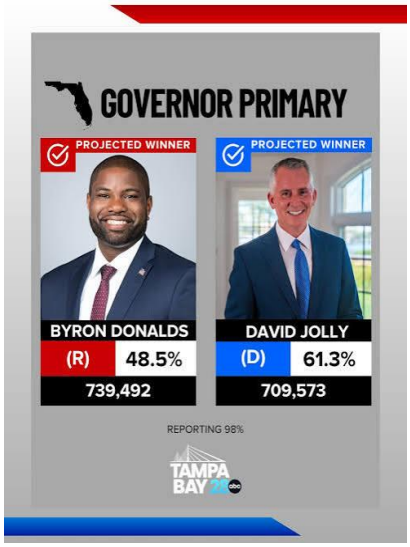
What does economic justice look like when translated into federal and state budgets? What does voting rights protection require beyond litigation after the damage has been done? What would it mean to reconstruct federal agencies around their statutory missions rather than the ideological preferences of whoever temporarily occupies the White House?

And where is the strategy for rebuilding the Democratic Party as a permanent civic institution, rooted in communities rather than activated every two years to harvest votes?

A revolution in democratic governance requires more than a new message. It requires a new governing discipline.

Florida: The Cost of Political Timidity





Florida offers a different lesson, and the Democratic National Committee, along with the national Democratic campaign organizations, should be required to confront it.

Angie Nixon and David Jolly entered the general election confronting a Republican political establishment with enormous financial resources, substantial organizational advantages, and years of consolidated political power.

But they also demonstrated that Florida was not necessarily the political wasteland national Democratic strategists had come to regard it as.

Nixon's primary victory was itself a challenge to conventional political calculations. She defeated a substantially better-funded opponent through grassroots organizing, established community relationships, and an unmistakable political identity.

Jolly, a former Republican member of Congress, demonstrated that a Democratic gubernatorial campaign could attract meaningful support even in a state where Republicans had dominated statewide politics for decades. Yet national Democratic investment remained constrained by calculations about where money could most safely produce electoral victories.

In early October, reporting described national Democrats as hesitant to invest in Florida because of repeated defeats and the expense of campaigning across its media markets. On October 20, with fewer than two weeks remaining before Election Day, the Democratic Governors Association announced a $1 million investment in Jolly's campaign.

By the close of the October 29 reporting period, the financial disparity between the gubernatorial campaigns was enormous. Donalds had raised approximately $173.6 million through his campaign and affiliated political committee, compared with approximately $26.9 million for Jolly through his corresponding accounts. Donalds had raised more than six times as much. Yet on election night, Jolly finished approximately 108,000 votes behind Byron Donalds out of more than 8.2 million votes cast, according to Florida's unofficial election-night returns.

I want to know what might have happened had the national party made a serious investment in Florida months earlier. Could Nixon and Jolly have won? I believe they had a genuine opportunity. But the more important question is why national Democrats were unwilling to invest sufficiently to test that opportunity.

The Democratic Party cannot continue to make its political decisions exclusively through calculations of probability. In Florida, the consequences of that political timidity extend well beyond the loss of another gubernatorial election.

The state has now elected Byron Donalds, a political ally of Donald Trump whose rise has been closely associated with Trump's influence and endorsement. In my judgment, Florida has effectively placed Trump's political agenda in the governor's mansion. Donalds's political debt to Trump raises serious questions about whose interests will take precedence when the demands of that alliance conflict with the interests of Floridians.

This is the cost of treating political risk as something to be avoided rather than something to be managed in pursuit of a larger political purpose. The numbers are important. They tell us where we stand. They do not necessarily tell us what is possible when we decide to change the circumstances that produced them.

If the party invests only where victory already appears sufficiently probable, it risks surrendering the very states and communities where long-term organizing is most urgently needed.

Florida should force an examination of how national Democrats allocate resources, when they make investments, and whether their political calculations have become substitutes for political imagination.

There is a larger issue here than campaign financing.

Every time Democrats retreat from their own political message because they fear that message will be unpopular, they weaken the public's understanding of what the party represents.

Every time they subordinate their stated agenda to the calculations of consultants, they invite voters to question whether those commitments are principles or merely campaign language.

And every time they abandon difficult political territory because the numbers appear unfavorable, they make the next election in that territory even more difficult.

A party cannot construct a political transformation while organizing its strategy principally around the avoidance of risk. It must know what it stands for before deciding where it can win. And it must be willing to build where victory is not yet assured.

Risk is not the enemy of political transformation. The refusal to take necessary risks may be one of its greatest obstacles.

Georgia: Give Stacey Abrams the Keys to the Workshop



Georgia presents an extraordinary opportunity for transformation.

With Keisha Lance Bottoms elected governor and Jon Ossoff returning to the Senate, the state has the potential to connect federal leadership, state government, and the organizing infrastructure that helped produce these victories.

One of the most consequential decisions Bottoms could make would be to bring Stacey Abrams into a central strategic role with broad responsibility for democratic reconstruction, voting access, civic participation, and institutional reform.

I would make Abrams chief of all things related to constructing Georgia's democratic future. If it were up to me, Abrams would be Attorney General of the United States. But that's just me.



Not a ceremonial appointment. Not a consolation prize. Give her the authority, resources, and institutional access to develop a comprehensive program that reaches from election administration and voter access to education, economic opportunity, rural development, and the machinery of state government.

Abrams has spent years studying, organizing, and confronting the barriers between citizens and political power. That experience belongs inside the construction process.

Georgia could become a working demonstration of what democratic reconstruction looks like when political organizing is connected to the actual exercise of governing authority.

And the opportunity extends beyond Georgia. Across America, newly elected leaders have the opportunity to demonstrate that government can be something more than an administrator of inherited problems.

They can become architects of institutional change. Will they? Or will they fall back into the familiar difficulties of challenging the political machinery they have inherited?

Michigan: Reimagining Urban America



In Michigan, I would like to see Senator-elect Abdul El-Sayed initiate and sponsor a National Commission on Reimagining Urban Policy and Development through his Senate office. That would be an exercise in substantive national leadership.

Not another commission whose findings gather dust, but a serious, multidisciplinary undertaking that examines what decades of federal, state, and local policy have done to American cities.

Housing, public health, transportation, infrastructure, municipal finance, environmental exposure, education, and the concentration of poverty are not separate problems simply because government assigns them to different departments. They are interconnected consequences of political choices. El-Sayed's public health background offers an important perspective for examining those connections. Bring urban planners, economists, historians, public health specialists, housing advocates, municipal leaders, and residents together to construct an integrated framework for urban reconstruction.

Imagine what could emerge from a commission that begins with the actual conditions of urban life rather than the jurisdictional boundaries of government agencies.

What would Detroit look like if Michigan's investment priorities, housing policy, healthcare, transportation, education, and economic development were constructed as parts of one comprehensive strategy?

What could that teach us about Cleveland, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and cities across America?

The purpose would not be to produce another inventory of urban suffering. It would be to construct a different urban future.



Texas: Reconstructing Federal Policy at the Border

In Texas, Governor-elect Gina Hinojosa has an opportunity to initiate a Commission on Federal Operations at the Border, bringing together state and local officials, legal experts, humanitarian organizations, economists, and border communities.

The commission should examine how federal immigration enforcement, detention, border security spending, federal-state conflicts, and the treatment of border communities have affected the region.

How much has been spent? Who received the contracts? What were the measurable outcomes? What happened to constitutional protections, due process, local economies, and public accountability?

Border communities must no longer be treated merely as the backdrop for national political theater. Their experiences and expertise should inform the construction of federal policy.

The commission should also examine the relationship between federal enforcement operations and state and local responsibilities, identifying where cooperation is necessary, where authority has been abused, and where constitutional protections require stronger safeguards.

Its findings should produce proposed legislation, administrative reforms, financial accountability measures, and recommendations for a more coherent national approach. These state-level initiatives should become part of a larger national undertaking. The opportunities for transformation are not confined to Georgia, Michigan, and Texas. Every state contains institutions, communities, and public responsibilities that require examination. The purpose is not to impose one political formula upon the country. It is to establish a national framework in which states can develop, test, and demonstrate new approaches to democratic governance.

Congress Must Become an Instrument of Accountability



When the new Congress convenes in January, the work should begin with a comprehensive inventory of the injuries inflicted upon federal governance during the Trump administration.

Every congressional committee with jurisdiction should be involved. Every federal department should be required to account for its actions, expenditures, policy reversals, personnel decisions, and compliance with statutory obligations.

I am particularly concerned about the Departments of Defense, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice.

At Defense, Congress should examine procurement decisions, contracting, deployment authorities, expenditures, and the relationship between military operations and civilian constitutional oversight.

At Health and Human Services, the examination should reach public health infrastructure, research funding, healthcare access, civil rights enforcement, and the consequences of administrative decisions for vulnerable populations.

At HUD, Congress should examine fair housing enforcement, affordable housing programs, civil rights compliance, community development funding, and the treatment of communities historically excluded from federal housing opportunities.

At Justice, the examination must address the independence of federal law enforcement, the use of prosecutorial authority, civil rights enforcement, political interference, and the integrity of the department's constitutional responsibilities.

And these are only the beginning.

The purpose is not to conduct investigations for the satisfaction of political retaliation. It is to establish an evidentiary record of government conduct, identify violations of law, determine the consequences for the public, and pursue remedies supported by the evidence.

Subpoenas should be issued where justified. Witnesses should testify under oath. Inspectors general and the Government Accountability Office should be central to the process. Findings should be referred to appropriate enforcement authorities when warranted.

And Congress must follow through.

The American public has witnessed enough hearings that conclude with solemn expressions of outrage and little institutional change.

Follow the Money. Then Recover What Is Owed.

We should demand a comprehensive financial accounting of federal expenditures, contracting decisions, grants, transfers, and other uses of public resources during the administration.

Bring in forensic accountants, federal budget specialists, auditors, procurement experts, and investigators capable of following complicated financial transactions across agencies, contractors, and beneficiaries.



Identify expenditures that were unauthorized, improperly diverted, fraudulently obtained, or made in violation of federal requirements.

Where public money was unlawfully obtained or misappropriated, determine who is legally responsible for returning it. Then pursue recovery.

The federal government has mechanisms for recovering improper payments, pursuing contract remedies, imposing civil penalties, and referring suspected fraud for prosecution. Those authorities should be used where the facts and law justify their application.

The public deserves more than a report announcing that billions of dollars were wasted or improperly spent. It deserves a serious effort to recover funds that can legally be recovered and prevent the same failures from recurring.

There must also be a distinction between policy expenditures with which we disagree and expenditures that were unlawful. That distinction is essential to credible oversight.

Accountability must be grounded in evidence, not political convenience.

Every Day Must Be a Day of Reconstruction







The incoming congressional leadership should establish a public reconstruction agenda with identifiable objectives, deadlines, committee responsibilities, and regular progress reports.

There should be a continuous, coordinated program of legislative proposals, investigations, oversight hearings, financial examinations, and institutional reforms.

Every day should bring evidence that the work is underway.

Not necessarily a press conference. Not another carefully staged confrontation designed to produce a viral clip. Actual work that the public can follow, evaluate, and understand.

What was investigated? What was discovered? What corrective action is proposed? Who is responsible for implementation? What has been accomplished? What remains unresolved?

Citizens should be able to see the machinery of democratic government operating in their interest.

And the work must extend beyond Congress. Governors, state legislatures, municipal governments, universities, professional associations, community organizations, and independent civic institutions all have responsibilities in this undertaking.

Congressional power is substantial, but it is not unlimited. Presidential veto authority, judicial review, statutory restrictions, and the separation of powers will constrain some of these efforts.

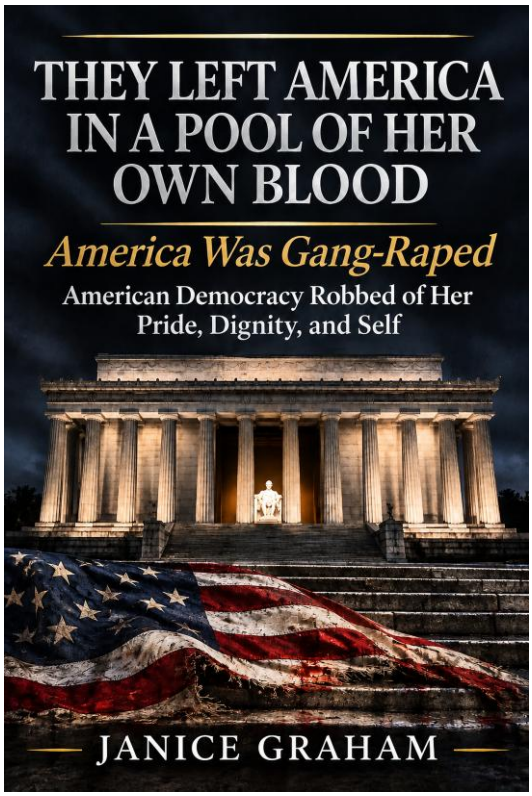
That is precisely why the reconstruction program must distinguish between actions Congress can undertake immediately, legislation requiring broader agreement, and reforms that demand sustained public engagement.

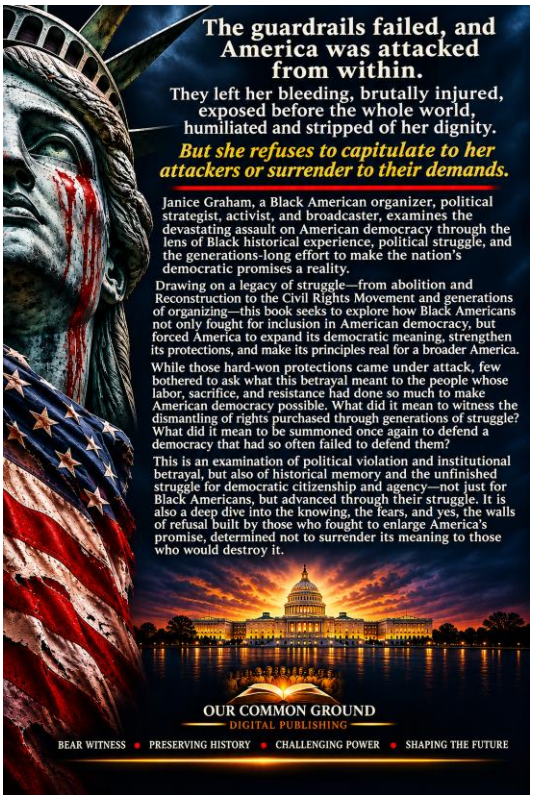
The revolution I am describing is not the abandonment of constitutional government. It is the reconstruction of democratic governance through constitutional means.

Why Restoration Cannot Be the Cure

I have spent a considerable portion of this year writing commentary about the American political landscape, informed by more than four decades of conversations with Black people through OUR COMMON GROUND with Janice Graham. Over those years, I have interviewed some of the finest Black minds in this country—scholars, activists, authors, historians, political analysts, and community organizers whose knowledge and experiences helped illuminate the political forces shaping our lives.

I am now bringing those commentaries, observations, and decades of accumulated political understanding into a book scheduled for publication in February 2027.





COMING FEBRUARY 2027

THEY LEFT AMERICA IN A POOL OF HER OWN BLOOD

America Was Gang-Raped: American Democracy, Robbed of Her Pride, Dignity, and Self

I undertook this work because I understood that many of the fractures and vulnerabilities threatening American democracy did not begin with Donald Trump. They were already present in the institutions, political arrangements, and unfulfilled promises of a nation that has never fully reconciled its democratic ideals with its historical practices.

For decades, my guests and callers identified and challenged those contradictions. They understood that what appeared to be isolated political controversies, constitutional disputes, and failures of leadership were often manifestations of something deeper: longstanding structural weaknesses that threatened the integrity of democratic government itself.

They warned us. They explained what was happening. They identified the dangers. And far too often, their warnings fell on deaf ears.

What we are witnessing today did not emerge without warning. Nor can it be explained entirely by the ambitions of one political figure.

I saw something more consequential: the systematic violation of democratic institutions, the weakening of constitutional protections, and the theft of citizens' agency by those entrusted with preserving it.

Through an extended and deliberately disturbing allegory, I portray American democracy as the “she” we sing about—a woman brutally violated and abandoned by the very institutions charged with protecting her. Donald Trump is portrayed as the principal aggressor, but the narrative examines the accomplices, beneficiaries, institutional failures, and calculated silences that enabled the assault.

I wanted to confront not only what happened, but how it was allowed to happen.

And I ask what becomes of a democracy when the institutions charged with protecting her become participants in her injury or witnesses unwilling to intervene.

The midterm elections make that question more urgent, not less.

Because stopping an assault is not the same as healing its victim. Restoring the locks does not answer who surrendered the keys. Replacing the guards does not explain why they abandoned their posts. And returning the victim to the same circumstances without confronting the failures that endangered her is not a cure.

Operating under the assumption that restoration alone will protect her is an invitation to repetition.

Restoration Is the Beginning. Reconstruction Is the Work

I do not underestimate what voters accomplished in this election. Electoral victories can interrupt harmful policies, restore oversight, change governing priorities, and create opportunities that did not exist the day before.



But opportunity is not accomplishment. Voting is not restoration.

A change in congressional leadership cannot, by itself, restore public trust, reverse every administrative action, recover improperly spent public funds, repair damaged institutions, or guarantee that the next administration will respect democratic boundaries.

Those outcomes require deliberate construction.

The Democratic Party now faces a question larger than how it will use its newly acquired power. It must determine whether it intends merely to administer the government it has inherited or undertake the difficult work of changing the structures that permitted so much damage.

And the public has a corresponding responsibility: to insist upon measurable results rather than accept the symbolism of political victory.

This is where the lesson of Florida returns.

A party that refuses to risk losing may also refuse the very opportunities through which political transformation becomes possible.

A party that retreats from its own agenda whenever the numbers become uncomfortable may ultimately leave the public uncertain about what it believes.

And a party that celebrates electoral victories without constructing a governing program capable of surviving the next election has not completed the work of democratic reconstruction.

The revolution I am asking about is a revolution in public accountability, institutional responsibility, political imagination, and democratic agency.

It is the difference between repairing the visible damage and confronting the conditions that made the damage possible. The midterms have provided a path toward restoration.



The Democrats will fail the people who have given them this opportunity if the debate continues to be framed as a choice between “Dream Big” and “Just Win.” This election cycle has not resolved that argument. But on November 4, 2026, the meaning of “Just Win” must extend far beyond winning elections. It must mean accepting responsibility for what comes next.

Will they meet that challenge?

Will those entrusted with this opportunity have the vision, courage, and discipline to construct a revolution as the cure?

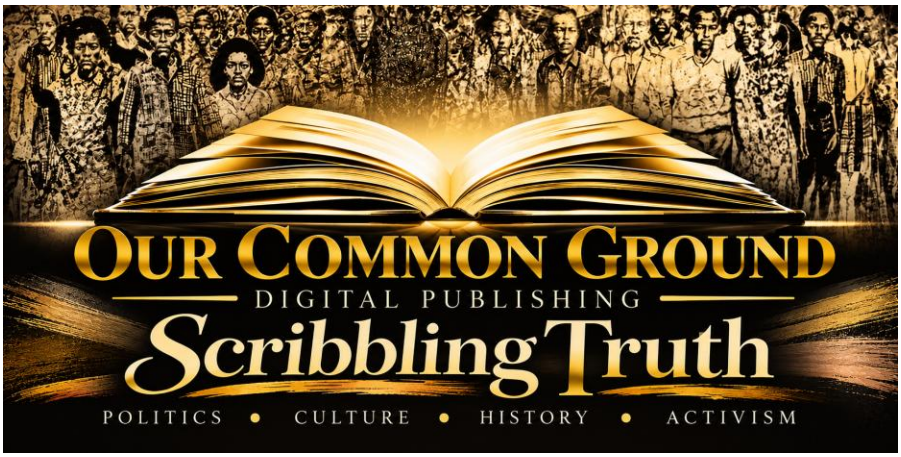
Because America cannot afford to confuse surviving the injury with recovering from it.

And she certainly cannot afford to be left bleeding again.

Janice Graham

Footnote: On the morning after the midterm election, a prominent Republican official posted on a social media platform, “DEI IS BACK !” Yeah, Wench, it is; this is America.”

Transforming Truth to Power, One Broadcast At a Time.



ABOUT SCRIBBLING TRUTH

Scribbling Truth is a political essay and analysis series published by OUR COMMON GROUND with Janice Graham, part of OUR COMMON GROUND Digital Publishing.

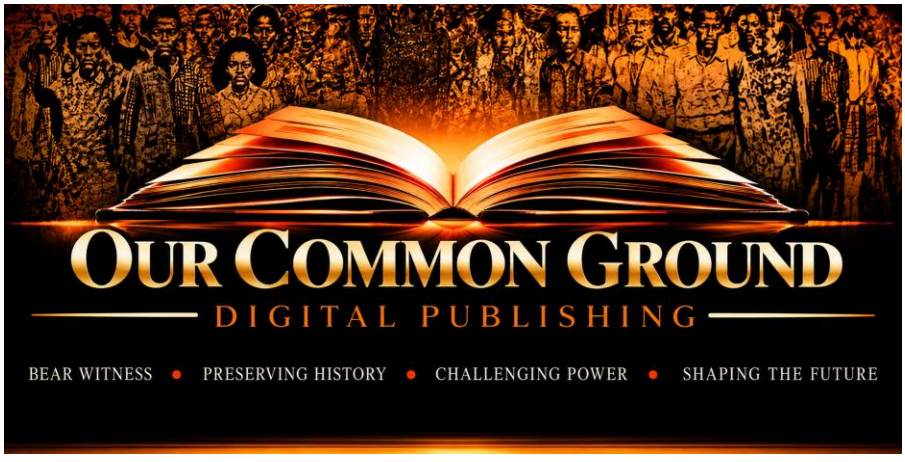
COMING FEBRUARY 2027

THEY LEFT AMERICA IN A POOL OF HER OWN BLOOD

America Was Gang-Raped: American Democracy Robbed of Her Pride, Dignity, and Self

A provocative political allegory examining the assault on American democracy through the lens of the American Black experience. Drawing upon more than four decades of Black-centered political conversations through OUR COMMON GROUND, Janice Graham explores the betrayal of constitutional responsibilities, the theft of citizens' political agency, and the forces that enabled democracy's violation. The book asks what it will take to reclaim her dignity, restore her power, and prevent another assault.

An OUR COMMON GROUND Digital Publishing release | Scribbling Truth



Read the original article: https://ourcommonground.com/ocgscribbling-truth/restoration-is-not-revolution/