

# The Country Trump Seems Dead Set on Imitating

The police state of my birth is a nightmare for workers and a paradise for the ultra-wealthy. Is it any wonder Trump’s been heaping praise on it?

Since the start of his second presidential term, Donald Trump seems to be inspired by the country of my birth: the United Arab Emirates.

On his first day in office, Trump announced his goal to end the United States’ practice of birthright citizenship. Soon after, his administration began criminalizing immigrants’ right to free speech and deploying plainclothes officers to arrest them.

As a result, foreign students across the U.S. are censoring themselves, and immigrant workers are terrified of calling out labor abuses for fear of deportation. Meanwhile, the Trump administration has begun offering wealthy foreigners the chance to emigrate to the U.S. if they fork over \$5 million for a so-called gold card — an alternative to the “green card” reserved for wealthy foreigners.

This is precisely the dynamic that’s played out in the UAE for generations. Not only does the Gulf Arab state deny birthright citizenship to the babies of immigrants born on its soil, but it also has a vast police surveillance system to keep foreign workers in a constant state of insecurity over anything from political protest to labor activism.

Immigrant workers make up nearly 90 percent of the UAE’s population, but there are few options for low-income foreigners to reside legally there beyond employment visas. In contrast, wealthy foreigners can obtain a so-called “golden visa” and enjoy many perks besides.

When I was born in Dubai as a child of Indian immigrants, I was denied Emirati citizenship and grew up hearing warnings from elders and friends to watch my words in case “secret police” overheard conversations deemed dangerous to the monarchy. Even today, I cannot discuss the crackdown on dissent with friends who live in Dubai for fear of electronic government surveillance.

Very little of the UAE’s dark underbelly is visible to the American public beyond the ubiquitous “Fly Emirates” jerseys on soccer players or advertisements featuring U.S. celebrities for tourism in Dubai, the nation’s most populous city and emirate.

Trump is unsurprisingly attracted to this paradise for the ultra-wealthy, where money is speech, labor is suppressed, dissent is criminalized, and a monarch holds all power.

In a gauzy promotional video published by the White House, Trump called the UAE “an amazing country, a rich country,” and addressed its rulers as though they were family friends: “I know you’ll never leave my side.” He added, “We’re going to treat you — as you should be — magnificently.”

Beyond its aspirational value, the UAE is Trump’s personal business partner. Weeks before Trump’s visit to the Gulf monarchy, UAE authorities announced they would pay for a multibillion-dollar private deal using the Trump family cryptocurrency — a move that could make the first family hundreds of millions of dollars richer.

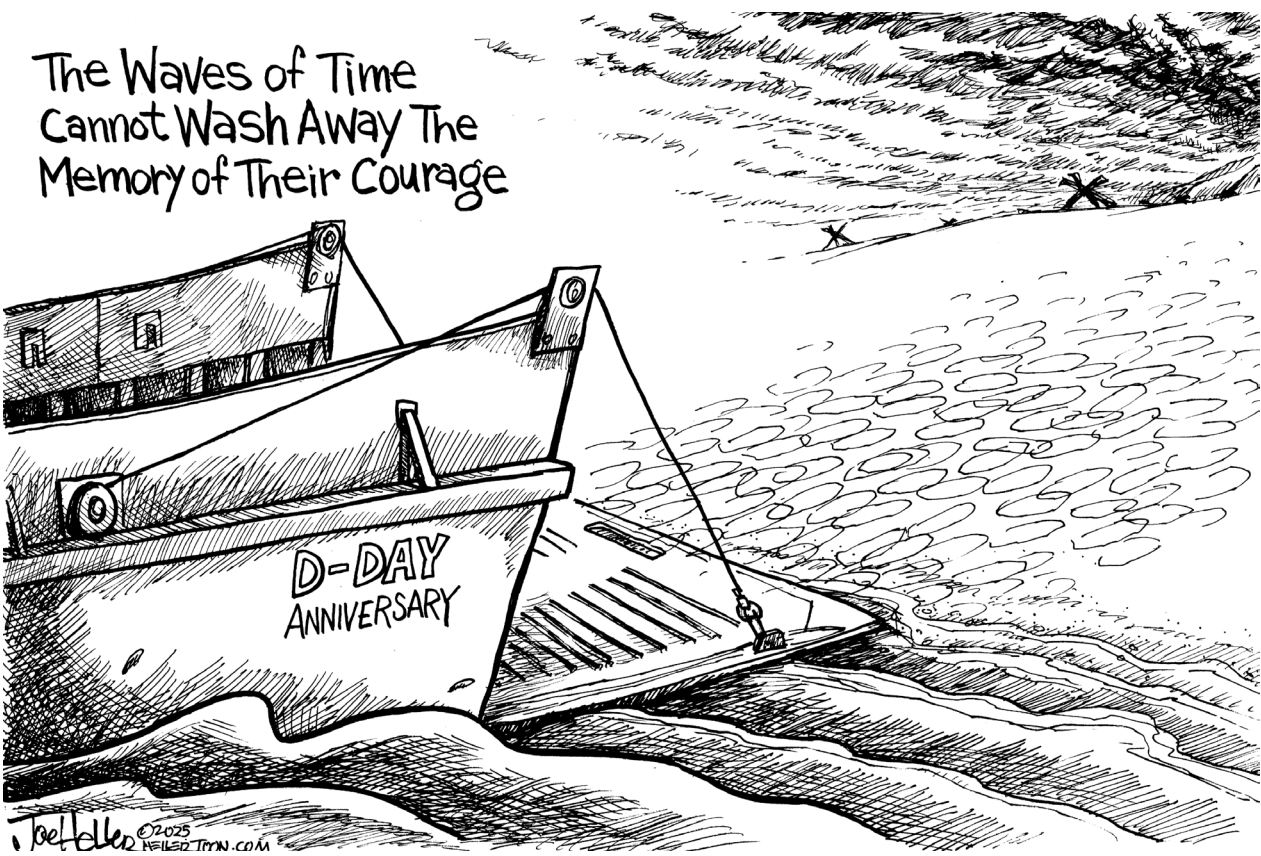
If Trump fulfills his quest to remake the U.S. in the UAE’s image, it’s helpful to consider what we’re in store for. Without the same rights as citizens, members of the UAE’s vast immigrant workforce are often abused and exploited. They’re housed in crowded labor camps and their passports are held by their employers, rendering them captive.

My uncle, an Indian national, lived and worked in such conditions for years before a work-related foot injury left him unable to continue his job. Disabled, he was forced to return to India where his foot required amputation. He was never compensated by his employer, an American firm operating in Dubai.

No one in my family talked openly about the abuse my uncle faced until we were outside the UAE’s borders — for fear of government surveillance and retaliation.

This is the nation in whose image Trump is attempting to reshape the United States. If he succeeds, I can tell you from personal experience, it won’t be pretty.

Sonali Kolhatkar is host and executive producer of Rising Up With Sonali, an independent, subscriber-based syndicated TV and radio show. She’s an award winning journalist and author of Talking About Abolition: A Police Free World is Possible, and Rising Up: The Power of Narrative in Pursuing Racial Justice. This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.



## We the People: We Cannot Trust Parchment Barriers Against the Encroaching Spirit of Power”

by David Adler

David Adler  
The ongoing efforts of federal judges to contain President Donald Trump’s usurpation of congressional authority reflects an enduring theme: the fundamental conflict between power and law underlies the entire scope of political history. For as long as men and women have sought to shape and limit executive power through regulations and laws, the weakness of the cause has been repeatedly exposed. The conflict was brought into sharp relief on November 13, 1608, in a dramatic confrontation between King James I and Sir Edward Coke, Chief Justice of the King’s Bench and patron saint to America’s founders for championing constitutionalism and the rule of law.

On that day, Lord Coke asserted the supremacy of the law. King James I was offended by Coke’s contention and declared that because all judges were but “his shadows and ministers,” he could take any case he chose, remove it from the jurisdiction of the courts and decide it in his royal person. Lord Coke replied that “the King in his own person cannot adjudge any case,” and added that cases should be determined by courts of justice, “according to the law and custom of England.”



James I, according to Coke, “was greatly offended.” James said, “this means that I shall be under the law, which it is treason to affirm.” Coke’s assertion of the supremacy of law was wholly inconsistent with the King’s pretensions to absolute power and James nearly banished Coke to the Tower of London, where he would have perished and would not have achieved the historical influence that he wielded in the minds of our nation’s founders.

The answer to the soaring claims of unbridled executive authority, delegates to the Constitutional Convention believed, lay in the enumeration of powers, fortified by the separation of powers and checks and balances. James Madison, in Federalist No. 48, recognized the vulnerability of this enterprise to constitutional corruption. Simply to provide in the Constitution that each branch should wield its own powers would be “to trust to parchment barriers against the encroaching spirit of power.” Reliance on officials’ adherence to written words—the text of the

Constitution—would be inadequate as a means of restraining governmental agents from “overleaping their boundaries.” More was required. Checks and balances, constructed on the principle, as he pointed out in Federalist 51, that “ambition should counteract ambition,” implied that those in positions of power would jealously guard their constitutional turf and defend it from usurpation by those in other branches. The interest of the man, Madison, explained, would fit the interest of the place, creating a symbiotic relationship that, in theory, would be strong enough to maintain the enumeration of powers.

The founders’ working assumption explains the willingness of the judiciary, thus far, to restrain President Trump’s acts of usurpation through issuance of temporary injunctions, for if judges acquiesced in his aim to be the chief interpreter of the laws and the Constitution, they would be complicit in the surrender of the rule of law and handmaiden to tyranny.

But this assumption seems not to apply to a feckless Congress that has acquiesced in the face of Trump’s aggrandizement of its chief constitutional powers—appropriations, lawmaking and appointments, among others. How to explain this abdication of powers and duties among

members of Congress? Madison assumed that “ambition” meant ambition to excel, that is, achievement of success, significance, stature and legacy through exceptional policymaking and lawmaking, not ambition to make a career which, sadly, seems to be the preoccupation of many members. Careerism renders members vulnerable to partisan political jabs, attacks and means of coercion, including those unleashed by an authoritarian who intimidates and threatens members with primary opponents. It must also be emphasized that when party leadership is subordinate to the president, as the GOP is now, Congress will be weak. In this case, party allegiance blurs and even obliterates the separation of powers and checks and balances. And then there is the desire of members to ascend to the presidency, which compromises the performance of their duties and responsibilities. In many cases, we should conclude, the difference in behavior between judges and congressmen just might be found in backbone, the courage to carry out one’s oath of office and the willingness to do the right thing which, in our time, is the constitutional thing.

*Sponsored in part by Humanities North Dakota. [www.HumanitiesND.org](http://www.HumanitiesND.org)*



Devils Lake Journal, 155-940 is published Tuesday and Thursday at 516 4th Street NE, Devils Lake, ND 58301

Periodicals postage paid at Devils Lake, ND 58301

Postmaster: Send address changes to: Devils Lake Journal, 516 4th Street NE, Devils Lake, ND 58301

**DEVILS LAKE JOURNAL**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE OFFICE HOURS**  
MONDAY -THURSDAY 8-5  
Friday 8-3  
**CONTACTS:**  
Kathy Svidal, Publisher: [ksvidal@devilslakejournal.com](mailto:ksvidal@devilslakejournal.com)  
Louise Oleson, Editor: [loleson@cmpapers.com](mailto:loleson@cmpapers.com)  
Deb Toso, Advertising: [dtoso@cmpapers.com](mailto:dtoso@cmpapers.com)  
Jen Schwab, Classifieds: [classifieds@devilslakejournal.com](mailto:classifieds@devilslakejournal.com)  
Kris Olson, Legal Notices: [kolson@devilslakejournal.com](mailto:kolson@devilslakejournal.com)  
Joseph Hill, Sports Writer: [jhill@devilslakejournal.com](mailto:jhill@devilslakejournal.com)  
Subscriptions: [carlien@devilslakejournal.com](mailto:carlien@devilslakejournal.com)