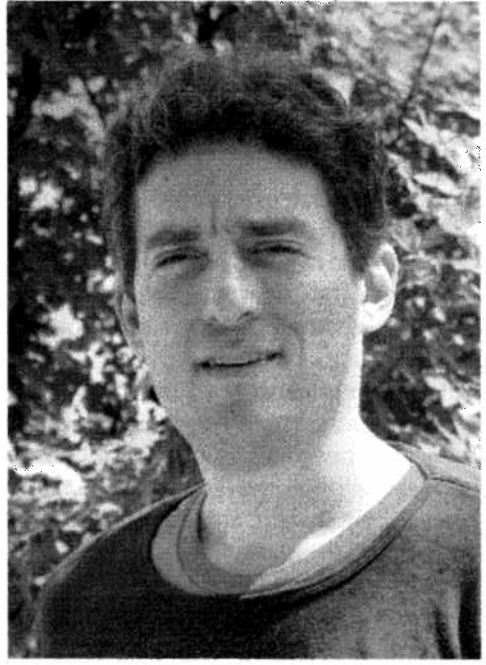


ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Peter Schwartzman

You need to be heard, now



Author's Note: This essay caused me more deliberation than usual. Its content (and ultimate request) is something that I believe is very important, but I am wary of coming on too strongly. I hope some of you will accept my request and join me and others on Tuesday, July 21st, at the Galesburg Public Library.

How are you? Are you adequately fed, clothed, and sheltered? Are you content and satisfied or happy, inspired, and thriving? I often ask readers questions in my writing, but rarely do I receive responses. This time, I would **really** love a response. You see, I firmly believe in you and I want to make Galesburg the best place in the world to live. Why wouldn't I, as I plan to raise my children here. Think it can't happen? Why not? If necessary, hold your cynicism for a moment.

The last ten months have been eye-opening, haven't they? First, after a hotly contested, and often bitter, presidential campaign, the first non-white president of the United States was elected. It only took forty-four tries—although not all of the previous presidents were elected. He, Barack Obama, ran on the themes of "hope" and "change." We also had a major gain in Congressional Democrats: +7 in the U.S. Senate, +21 in the U.S. House of Representatives. Some anticipated that this would mark a huge shift to the left in American politics (something we haven't seen nor do I expect). Yet, before all this "change" happened, Congress bailed out several huge corporations, to the tune of nearly a trillion dollar, and more by some estimates. Now six months into the new President and Congress, we have seen little improvement in our economy and the military machine keeps ticking—with increased involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The future in Asia doesn't look too bright, either; most leaders here and there seemed locked into a solution focused on war and brutality. But just in case you thought things couldn't get any worse, imagine what it must be like in many other countries where food price hikes have made it especially difficult for people to get basic nourishment. In short, things are a mess and not likely to get better soon. Unless, of course . . .

So, what are we going to do about our situation? Are we going to vote again in November, expecting that with this vote we can elect leadership that will get us out of this funk? Or are we going to grouse and moan about how the banks took our money and how (it was just revealed) AIG executives are set to get millions more in bonuses? How about getting involved and trying to better our situation? That's right, I dared to ask if we are going to get off our

duffs and do something about this. Or will we just accept the malaise that has set in?

Did you really think that giving banks, financial firms, and insurance companies billions of dollars was going to restart the economy, the one that has only increased disparity between the haves and the have-nots over the past 30 years? No, I bet you didn't. Did you think that elected politicians would be able to stand up to big business and provide the people (us) better opportunities for meaningful (and adequately paying) work? Perhaps a few will, but will it be enough and will it happen in time?

Don't you think we can solve our own problems? We are surrounded by skillful and good-hearted people. Can we all work together on this? So, let's get involved. But how? Well, here is the deal: a group of committed individuals who, like me, have the audacity to think that Galesburg could be the best place in the world to live, have arranged for a BIG meeting next week. We, known collectively as The People in Galesburg, believe that this meeting will be the start of something new in this city.

It won't be your typical meeting where "experts" tell you what you should be doing and why (and how most of your problems are of your own making and how they can't help you much anyhow). No. It is going to be a meeting (or, if you prefer, a gathering) where you, the people in Galesburg and surrounding areas, are going to be the talkers (and the listeners). It is your/our show, and we have set up the protocol so that everyone gets a chance to speak and be heard, taking the first steps in creating the future we want.

The meeting will be held from 6:00-7:30pm, Tuesday, July 21st, in the Galesburg, Public Library. More information on the meeting can be found at: <www.thepeopleingalesburg.org>. Please come, and bring your family and/or a friend or two.

But why a meeting now? Shouldn't we wait to see what our leaders do first? How long should we wait? Where are the jobs? Where is the food? Where is the health care? Where is the childcare? Where is the living wage? It is time that we decided our own fate and future. We can do this. "We" means "you and me and a number of other caring and passionate people who are fed up with the way things are and all the promises that our experts give us." It is our time. Please, don't miss this gathering. It is going to be fun and inspiring. What else could you ask for?

Also, if you have answers to my original questions; please send them to me to/at: <thepeopleingalesburg@gmail.com> or 123 S Cherry St. We'll keep them anonymous but The People want to know how you are doing.