

Blue Jean Nation "Right turn at the fork"

Written by Mike McCabe, Blue Jean Nation
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The Occupy movement on the left and the Tea Party movement on the right took different paths to effect political change. The new strategic blueprint called “Indivisible” is currently all the rage on the left, but may not be new at all.

ALTOONA, WI - During the [Great Recession](#) — the worst economic downturn in America since the Great Depression — [more than 8 million jobs](#) were lost, [family incomes dropped and poverty spiked](#). Nearly [4 million homes were foreclosed](#) each year.

These traumas brought millions of Americans to a fork in the road politically. Some went right at the fork, others went left, giving rise to two landscape-altering social movements.

The Occupy movement on the left, with its “We are the 99%” catchphrase, changed the national conversation by bringing income and wealth inequality to the forefront of public consciousness. Democrats weren’t focusing on it to speak of, nor were most liberal advocacy groups. Before Occupy, the term “one-percenter” wasn’t part of our political vocabulary and little attention was being paid to how the nation’s rich were getting vastly wealthier while the poor were growing poorer and the middle class was disappearing. Occupy changed that. Occupy made talk of economic inequality commonplace. That’s no small achievement.

The Tea Party movement on the right, with its “Don’t Tread on Me” mindset, changed the Republican Party. In so doing, Tea Partiers changed Congress and state legislatures across the country. They put the fear of God into mainstream GOP politicians. Those politicians were given a choice. Either grant Tea Partiers their wishes, or face their wrath on the campaign trail. A few, like House Republican leader Eric Cantor, took their chances at the ballot box. Most others fell in line, spooked by how the Tea Party [made examples](#) of the likes of Cantor.

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Other than obvious ideological differences, the big distinction between the Occupy and Tea Party movements is that one deliberately steered clear of involvement with elections while the other jumped into elections with both feet. That says a lot about the right and left today. One side is dogged in its pursuit of political power and will go to any lengths to get it. The other prefers to protest and march and picket.

Any honest assessment of the overall impact of these two movements has to conclude that the Tea Party has had the bigger influence on our country's direction. Which suggests the ballot is mightier than the placard. Which calls into question the strategic impulses of the forces gathering in America to resist the turn the nation has taken.

A new strategic blueprint called "[Indivisible](#)" is currently all the rage on the left. The brainchild of some former Democratic congressional staffers, it suggests people on the left can block the Trump agenda by copying tactics the Tea Party used to stymie President Obama's. They claim to offer "best practices for making Congress listen" to the people. Question: If former Capitol Hill staffers know the best practices for making Congress listen to us and now have a fail-safe blueprint for resisting Trump, how did they manage to become so utterly powerless in Washington and why couldn't they prevent the Tea Party takeover of Congress?

A part of the Tea Party's approach — the most important and effective part — is conspicuously missing from the strategy cooked up by these Capitol Hill operatives. Tea Partiers not only condemned Obama's every move, they contested Republican elections. They ended up being unable to deny Obama a second term. But they did end Eric Cantor's career and the careers of a slew of his establishment Republican colleagues. They seized power in Congress to the point where they could dictate terms to House Speaker John Boehner as well as his successor Paul Ryan.

Considering who concocted the left's new recipe and what key ingredient they chose to omit, it looks less like an effort to cook up a Tea Party-style insurrection on the Democratic side and more like an attempt to head one off at the pass.

— *Mike McCabe*