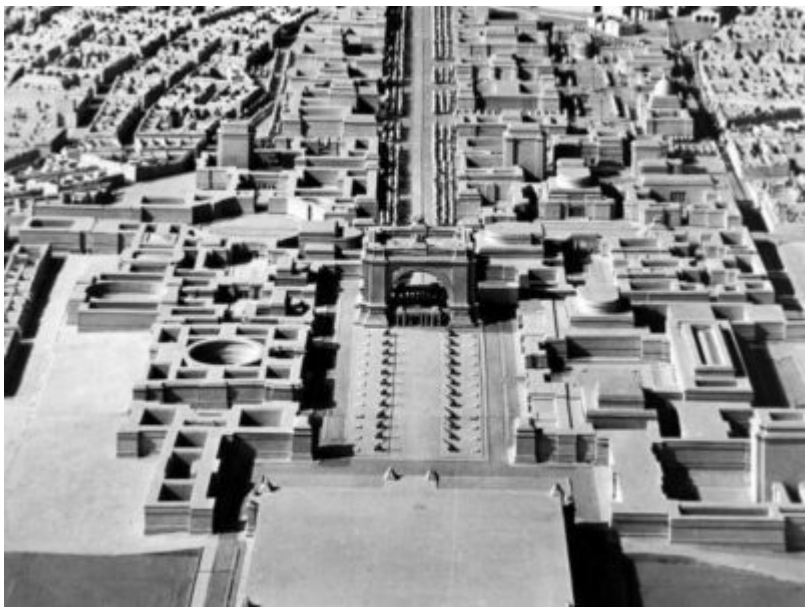


Hitler’s Welthauptstadt Germania: Donald Trump’s Vision for DC

You might have missed it, but while most normal Americans were celebrating the New Year, Donald Trump continued his serial ransacking of public spaces and buildings. On New Year’s Eve, the Administration announced the cancelling of leases of three DC golf courses, with the intention of transferring the leases to the Trump Organization. As golf reporter Kevin Van Valkenburg noted,

> This hasn’t resonated yet outside golf, but what this administration is essentially doing is taking over a national park for invented reasons so that the Trump Organization can run it and profit from it. Imagine if Yellowstone suddenly cost $1,000 but mostly served lobbyists.
>
> If you don’t care about golf [*this includes me – JZ*], that’s fine. If your politics differ from mine, that’s totally fine too. Some issues can involve politicians but still be above politics. There isn’t any justification for this beyond a transfer of public land use to a wealthier class of people.

Because populism, of course.

It didn’t stop there. The Oval Office Occupant announced that his building of his new triumphal arch in DC will begin in around two months.

Now, Donald Trump is a constant bullsh*tter (in the Frankfurtian sense): he just says things if they sound good and make him feel good. He doesn't care whether they are true. And in the latter case, his action is likely illegal (as was his purporting renaming of the Kennedy Center). Although with the current, comically-corrupt Supreme Court, one as always is tempted to ask: what is this legality of which you speak?

This is straight-up Nazi stuff. That is not hyperbole. As I explained a few months ago, this is pretty much what Albert Speer tried to do to Berlin: rip out people and make it full of monuments to the Reich.

In addition to lawsuits, What Is To Be Done?

Let me introduce you to Donald J. Trump State Park in the Hudson Valley. Huh?



Turns out that a quarter century ago, Trump attempted to build a golf course and resort on the site, and – always on-brand – proposed doing so by filling wetlands and despoiling the local environment.. After resistance from neighbors and environmental laws, he gave up and “donated” the property to the state.

In typical fashion it involved fraud:

> Despite the purchase price of $2.75 million, and a county assessment of $5.5 million at the time of the donation, Trump's 2016 campaign said in a list of charitable donations published by The Washington Post that the land was worth $26.1 million.

Then-Governor George Pataki agreed to name it after him, although as far as I can tell that was not a requirement. Trump, of course, boasted that it would be the greatest park in the state.

And as with all of Trump's boasts, it didn't turn out that way. A local television station reported in 2019 that

> An hour's drive north of Manhattan, Donald J. Trump State Park is what New York euphemistically calls a "passive park," meaning it has no trails, picnic tables or other amenities. The state stopped maintaining it in 2010, and the land lies covered in brambles, mud and rocks.

In 2017, an article on website *The A.V. Club* framed the park as an "abandoned wasteland", with "muddy fields, overgrown tennis courts, and dilapidated buildings" and a swimming pool in disrepair."

And there it sits. So now the New York Legislature has the chance to do a very funny thing and rename it. Trump is acutely sensitive to what he perceives as personal slights: at times, I think he doesn't really have a personalities, but just a series of impulses, bigotries, and grievances. Time to kick him in the tender parts.


Judge Jane Bolin: Deserves A Park

Who to rename it after? The touchstone for me is what would enrage Trump the most. That would suggest an African-American or a woman or both. There already is a Shirley Chisholm State Park. Here's an idea: Jane Bolin (1908-2007), the first Black woman to serve as a New York State Judge, was from nearby Poughkeepsie. Or perhaps a certain former President, despite his lack of connection to the area.

In any event, now is the time. I mean, except for all the other times that different legislators have talked about it, gotten press for claiming it should be renamed, and then nothing happens. Back in 2023, blogger Michael Balter wrote a thoughtful post noting that legislators had made a big deal about changing the name, but when you look at the fine print, it just proposed a commission to ***study*** the name change:

> This does not look, to me, like a serious attempt to give the people of New York a nice park that is not named after a terrible man. It looks like an attempt by local Democrats to generate a little publicity and then hide behind some lawyer's cowardly interpretation of the law to throw up their hands and say, we tried, but nothing can be done. That would continue to save the state the money it has not spent on the park every year since 2006, and provide a great excuse to keep on not spending that money.

It all reminds me of one of my favorite musicals, *1776,* a dramatization of the

creation of the Declaration of Independence. It's terrific, and hilarious, and bears little resemblance whatsoever to actual history. One of the funniest subplots is that throughout all the tense political battles and arguments, the New York delegation never votes on anything. It always abstains, no matter the issue, no matter the stakes. The delegation head, Lewis Morris, always rises and "abstains, courteously." Which, after weeks and weeks and dozens of abstentions in an increasingly hot and humid (not to mention "foul, fetid, fuming, foggy, filthy") Philadelphia, leads to this colloquy between Morris and Congress President John Hancock:

> Lewis Morris: [*as John Hancock is about to swat a fly*] Mr. Secretary, New York abstains, courteously.
>
> [*Hancock raises his fly swatter at Morris, then draws back*]
>
> John Hancock: Mr. Morris,
>
> [*pause, then shouts*]
>
> John Hancock: WHAT IN HELL GOES ON IN NEW YORK?
>
> Lewis Morris: I'm sorry Mr. President, but the simple fact is that our legislature has never sent us explicit instructions on anything!
>
> John Hancock: NEVER?
>
> [*slams fly swatter onto his desk*]
>
> John Hancock: That's impossible!
>
> Lewis Morris: Mr. President, have you ever been present at a meeting of the New York legislature?
>
> [*Hancock shakes his head "No"*]
>
> Lewis Morris: They speak very fast and very loud, and nobody listens to anybody else, with the result that nothing ever gets done.
>
> [*turns to the Congress as he returns to his seat*]

Lewis Morris: I beg the Congress’s pardon.

John Hancock: [*grimly*] My sympathies, Mr. Morris.

Enough. It’s time. Rename the park.