

Trump and Trumpism



*The Destructive Politics of
American Fascism*

Andrew Kolin

Trump and Trumpism

Trump and Trumpism

The Destructive Politics of American Fascism

Andrew Kolin

LEXINGTON BOOKS
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

Published by Lexington Books
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

86-90 Paul Street, London EC2A 4NE

Copyright © 2024 by The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kolin, Andrew, 1955- author.

Title: Trump and Trumpism: the destructive politics of American fascism /
Andrew Kolin.

Description: Lanham : Lexington Books, [2023] | Includes bibliographical references
and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023045144 (print) | LCCN 2023045145 (ebook) |


ISBN 9781666950366 (cloth) | ISBN 9781666950373 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Trump, Donald, 1946---Influence. | Political culture--United States--
History--21st century. | United States--Politics and government--2017-2021. | United
States--Race relations--History--21st century.

Classification: LCC E912 .K64 2023 (print) | LCC E912 (ebook) | DDC 973.933--dc23/
eng/20231002

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023045144>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023045145>

 The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Politics and the Matter of Choice	9
Chapter 2: After the 2016 Election, Formation of Destructive Politics	23
Chapter 3: Expanding the Destructive Politics of Trump	33
Chapter 4: The Hatred and Violence of Trumpism	65
Chapter 5: A Fascist Dress-Rehearsal	129
Bibliography	153
Index	161
About the Author	173

Introduction

This study of Trump and the phenomenon of Trumpism does not focus on January 6, 2021 or on his legal woes; instead it will focus on how various extremist elements of American political culture were incorporated into his administration's policymaking and the appeals to his base of support. Past precedent and existing forms of hate and violence are the preconditions that inspired the policies and actions taken by the Trump administration, preconditions that have been essential features of the political history of the United States. Trump used hatred and violence against a diverse society to support minority rule and also as a political smokescreen for the clear class bias of his administration. Through the use of extremist hate and violence, Trump and Trumpists formulated and implemented policies that are destructive, expressed as an intention to cause harm to targeted social segments. Diverse social segments, such as people of color, Jews, LGBTQ+, immigrants, and women, who are outside the Trumpian model of white, male, Christian upper-class segments are the object of hate-filled rhetoric and acts of violence in an effort to halt incremental progress made by these groups. Not to be overlooked in the forging of an alliance and the base is his support from parts of the middle and upper classes. The most active and violent part of Trump's base is coming from a segment of the middle class. In a *New York Times* piece by David Motadel, "The Myth of Middle-Class Liberalism," reference is made to historical examples in which the middle classes frequently aligned themselves with illiberal forms of government, especially when there is concern about their loss of privileges and status.¹

The attempted coup of January 6, 2021 was spearheaded by members of the middle class. For example, the QAnon shaman (his real name Jacob Chamsley) was wearing a costume that cost hundreds of dollars, paid for by his job as an accountant. The armed insurgents could afford to pay the \$1,000-plus price tag for an AR-15 rifle. For these middle-class weekend warriors, storming the Capitol allowed them to express their white identity and masculinity by engaging in a conspiracy to overthrow the government. This middle-class segment in support of a coup d'état functions as the backbone of the Trump base, which brings to mind the social composition of

fascist movements. This brand of politics is focused on causing harm to others and on social destruction, a precondition for fascism.

An important segment of Trump's electoral support in 2016 and thereafter came from the Christian right. The purpose of attacking people who differ from the white, male Christian upper-class model was to maintain a rigid social hierarchy. Incremental progress by diverse social segments generated an extreme reaction to push back against these gains. Christian right-wing supporters of Trump expressed what Robert Paxton referred to as the "mobilizing passions" of fascism. These passions, according to Wilhelm Reich and Erich Fromm, form the basis for the social psychology of fascism, which will be discussed in later chapters.

Trump acts like a populist Wizard of Oz, presenting himself as a champion of the masses. But when the curtain is opened, the Trump wizard is revealed as a phony who undercuts his own message through policies that clearly benefit the upper classes. Trump's rantings about elitism and the deep state shift the focus and blame to diverse social segments, blaming them for society's ills. The manner in which Trump makes use of reactionary ideologies and institutions that promote violence becomes a means to further accelerate normalization of violence. In his speeches and rallies, he consistently refers to violent acts. The historical origins that functioned as the essential preconditions for the expression of the destructive politics of Trump and Trumpism were in place prior to the 2016 election. Trump and Trumpism would amplify hateful and violent propensities in American society. Within American political culture, there has been a social acceptance of institutional violence. Trump understood he could, by further normalizing violence, increase its use on these targeted social segments.

American militarism is one of the nation's key institutional foundations of organized violence, which has both foreign and domestic policy implications. In addition to the historical record of military interventions overseas, militarism on the domestic front is associated with the militarization of the police. In addition, there are other indirect ties in American society to the normalization of violence. Football is one example of how violence has been domesticated. Another link between foreign and domestic militarism is American gun culture and the phenomenon of mass shootings. As the middle class has been in decline, a fearful segment of the middle class appears increasingly willing to use violence against perceived threats from groups identified as responsible for middle-class decline. Trump knew how to stoke a part of the middle-class fear of, and anger toward, others. The acceleration of hate and violence was aided by his use of social media functioning as a vehicle for propaganda. Private ownership of media outlets geared toward profit-making made it possible for Trump to use hate speech to attract and mobilize an audience.

All the elements of destructive politics unleashed by Trump and Trumpism can be assessed according to subjective and objective criteria. Objective criteria can be used to assess how destructive politics impacts social segments in terms of evidence of visible harm. Subjective criteria can be used to assess the extent to which policymakers are aware of the harm they are causing. The specific policies and actions by Trump and his base indicate an awareness and indifference to the suffering of others. The expressed hatred along with the idea to stigmatize and criminalize gay and transgender people is associated with increased rates of suicide among these groups. Trump's nominees to the Supreme Court established a majority used to overturn *Roe v. Wade* with the social impact on women, especially women of color and poor women, resulting in forced childbirth. In addition, the bans and policies used to criminalize health care procedures associated with abortion increase risks to pregnant women. Trump administration measures at the border tore immigrant children from their parents, some of whom will never be returned. These and other examples characterize destructive politics aimed at non-Trumpists with the goal of creating a homogenous America through the use of extreme hate and violence.

Trump's fascist inclinations were apparent prior to his election. His admiration of Hitler, his rabid expressions of racism on the infamous Central Park Five case, the promotion of birtherism, his consistent anti-Semitic remarks, and his sexism and misogyny have been consistent over time. This toxic use of hate and violence unleashed in the absence of any legal restraints makes for the potential of a fascist regime. Trump's no-holds-barred hatred of a spectrum of non-whites is, in essence, a hatred of democracy, another indication of his embrace of fascism.

A 2003 article, "Fascism Anyone?" in *Free Inquiry* by Laurence W. Britt and popularized more recently lists warning signs of fascism, many of which apply to Trump. They include obsessive nationalism—Trump was clearly obsessed with a border wall and anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant initiatives; Disdain for the importance of human rights as seen in Trump's support for police state practices; Identification of enemies/scapegoats as a unifying cause which Trump routinely relies on as a way to mobilize the base; Rampant sexism and an adamant-anti-abortion position as seen in Trump's notorious and longstanding treatment of women and his eagerness to pave the way for the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*; A controlled mass media as seen in Trump's association with Fox News and obsessive use of social media; Religion and ruling elite tied together as seen in Trump's alliance with the evangelical right and its authoritarian agenda; Power of corporations protected as seen in Trump's massive tax cut, and the staffing of his administration with people from corporate America and an emphasis on deregulation; Power of labor suppressed or eliminated as seen in Trump's anti-labor policies, including

opposing wage increases, gutting health and safety protections for workers, making it harder to qualify for overtime pay; Obsession with crime and punishment as seen in his unequivocal support for and mobilizing of law enforcement especially during the George Floyd protests.²

These early warning signs of fascism appeared to be evident during the Trump administration, indicating a dress rehearsal for fascism. My view is that, in addition to the other characteristics of fascism that Trump exhibits, the class aspect is key. His fascism is clearly exemplified by how he relates to the middle and upper classes despite presenting himself as a man of the people and a leader of mass mobilization. His fanatical and armed supporters, which include the religious right, come largely from the middle class. His base of electoral support came, in large part, from the more well-off segment of American society. Anthony DiMaggio in “Election Con 2016: New evidence demolishes the myth of Trump’s blue-collar populism,” explained that 35 percent of Trump voters in 2016 had annual income levels of more than \$100,000, with an additional 19 percent earning annual incomes of \$75,000 to \$100,000. That means that 54 percent of Trump’s voters in 2016 earned more than \$75,000/year. And 20 percent of Trump voters earned \$50,000 to \$75,000/year, more than the national median income of \$50,000.³

But what remains to be seen is the extent to which Trump’s fascist measures become permanent. Not to be overlooked is the fact that both during and after the Trump presidency, there has been pushback against such fascistic inclinations. While Trump was able to pack the Supreme Court with justices who then overturned *Roe v Wade*, there is growing opposition to anti-abortion measures. There has been no clear national takeover of the court system by Trumpists. While he was able to utilize Fox as his own personal propaganda platform, Fox has now settled for \$787 million with voting machine company Dominion, which brought the major lawsuit against the company for its election lies. In spite of Trump’s anti-union policies, several major corporations are facing union organizing and a majority of Americans still support unions. Support for unlimited gun ownership rights is on the decline as is Trump’s support from the evangelical right. And Americans continue to express concerns about the health care system and access to it and the younger generation is increasingly and vocally concerned about climate change. So there are tendencies toward fascism in the United States as well as countertendencies.

In many ways, politics is the expression of the foreseen and the unforeseen. It may appear that there are visible indicators of a tendency toward a form of fascism, but it’s difficult to predict how these various tendencies will unfold, due to the unforeseen. The Renaissance political theorist Machiavelli referred to *fortuna*, or fortune, which assumes an important role in the expression of politics. *Fortuna* refers to any number of unforeseen events such as mishaps, luck, and unexpected events that could alter the direction of political events.

What can be foreseen about the varieties of fascism over time is that fascism has a tendency to become dysfunctional. This dysfunction is caused by the inner workings of fascist regimes. One such dysfunction is an emphasis on permanent warfare, as in the case of Germany and Italy during World War II. However, not every fascist state is a warfare state. Fascist Spain endured in the absence of permanent war-making. A contributing factor to the dysfunction of the Trump administration's policies was the overdetermination of hate and violence. As described in DiMaggio's book, *Rebellion in America*, a backlash unfolded against Trump's hate-filled agenda, expressed as support for those who were targeted and who pushed back in a movement that became known by its slogan: "‘Hate can't make America great again.’ This message revealed protesters' empathy with those who are the target. . . . This empathy drove protests of Trump's travel ban, the deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) repeal, and Republicans' attempted repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)."⁴ In addition, Trump's inauguration in 2017 was immediately followed by the Women's March, in which hundreds of thousands of American women protested Trump and his clearly misogynistic policies.

Not to downplay these important public displays of resistance, but the protests are reactive, a response to the administration's initiatives with mixed results and those that were successful were at best, reformist. The concessions that were made serve to preserve the class foundations of America's institutions. While the #MeToo movement and the Black Lives Matter movements brought attention to sexual harassment and police brutality, the institutional reproduction of sexism and racism continued. The proposed reforms tended to advocate addressing violations of peoples' rights without paying sufficient attention to institutional causes. On the upside, these movements have had a cultural impact on attitudes related to race and gender. The social system continues to express a capacity after protests to accommodate reforms without any fundamental institutional transformation.

Another aspect of dysfunction that became evident during the Trump administration was the fact that the idea of a never-ending American frontier was no longer viable. In his book, *The End of Myth: From Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America*, Greg Grandin discusses how the ideology of the always-expanding American frontier is now bumping up against its inevitable limitations. As Grandin put it, "Trumpism is extremism turned inward." This remark has bearing on what motivates fascist tendencies. Examined in the context of US history, expansion, seizure of territory, and militarism were driven by the imperative to have greater control over people and territory. This seizure translated into the acquisition of valued resources, especially fossil fuels. While Grandin discusses the concept of a border wall as a symbol of a closed frontier, it is not actually closed as America continued to move outward. The idea of a wall is representing what can threaten

expansion. In practice, this symbol of a barrier at various geographic locations embodies efforts to keep certain people out. Consider who these people are, often from developing countries, refugees from climate change. The hatred that Trump and Trumpists express toward migrants is based in part on ignorance of what motivates mass migrations, a changing climate.

The most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the most comprehensive on the science of climate change. Among its dire findings is that 2030 is the cutoff by when humankind must cut greenhouse gases in half to be followed by an elimination of these gases by 2050. If not, the planet will confront global climate catastrophes. As the UN Security General Assembly put it, “The climate time bomb is ticking.” The report stated that the rate at which temperatures have risen in the last half century is the highest it’s been in 2000 years and that carbon dioxide concentrations are the highest they’ve been over the same period. At the current global level of 1.1 degrees C above preindustrial levels and rising, the goal of achieving a global warming of no greater than 1.5 degrees C above those levels is unlikely. The global addiction to fossil fuels is the driver of global warming. The intensified expression of hate and violence at the core of Trumpism, making policymaking even more anti-democratic, enhances the drive toward greater acquisition of fossil fuels. On January 20, 2021, the *New York Times* published a story headlined, “The Trump administration rolled back more than 100 environmental rules,” which specified the scale of actions harmful to the environment. The article was based on research published by the Harvard Law School and Columbia Law School. Broken down into distinct categories, the article identified the number of environmental rollback actions taken as the following: air pollution-30, drilling and extraction-12, infrastructure and planning-14, animals-15, water pollution-8, toxic substances, and safety-9.⁵ Even though some of the rollbacks have been challenged in courts by states and environmental groups and struck down, the majority of these rollbacks remain in place. In addition, under the America First plan, the Trump administration expanded domestic production of oil, gas, and coal. From 2017 to 2020, one result was that the United States became one of the world’s largest oil producers and expanded the production of natural gas. One example of the Trump administration’s emphasis on the United States “going alone” on energy policy was its exit from the Paris Agreement under the UN National Framework Convention on Climate Change. There is no way to know for certain to what extent the destructive politics of the Trump administration which contained fascist inclinations could be reversed. One possibility is that there will be a significant progressive backlash, leading to profound institutional changes sufficient to overcome these extreme expressions of social harm. Perhaps this could be, in the words of Machiavelli, the

fortuna, which is at present, unforeseen and unexpected, which could overcome Trump's politics of destruction.

NOTES

1. David Motadel, "The Myth of Middle Class Liberalism" *The New York Times*, January 22, 2022 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/22/opinion/middle-class-liberalism-populism.html>.

2. Laurence W. Britt, "Fascism Anyone?" *Free Inquiry*, Vol. 23 No. 2 Spring 2003, <https://secularhumanism.org/2003/03/fascism-anyone/>.

3. Anthony DiMaggio, "Election Con 2016: New Evidence Demolishes the Myth of Trump's Blue-Collar Populism" *Counterpunch*, June 16, 2017, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/06/16/93450/>.

4. Anthony DiMaggio, *Rebellion in America: Citizen Uprisings, the News Media and the Politics of Plutocracy* (New York: Routledge, 2020) p. 229.

5. Nadja Popovich, Livia Albeck-Ripka, Kendra Pierre-Louis, "The Trump Administration Rolled Back More Than 100 Environmental Rules. Here's the Full List" *The New York Times*, January 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks-list.html>.

Chapter 1

Politics and the Matter of Choice

From an examination of the nature of politics, it is possible to comprehend the origins of the destructive politics of Trump and Trumpism. A starting point is to identify what is unique about politics. From the point of view derived from history, politics develops over time as a solution to chaos. This is the social foundation from which humans make what is essentially a collective decision to proceed from chaos to order. This fateful decision to create the conditions for an ordered life in turn establishes the foundation for a civilized life.

If politics is to function to enhance life activities, it would, out of necessity, require the inclusion of various viewpoints that can be expressed out in the open, with an understanding that these viewpoints would eventually create a consensus. This process necessitates that everyone is free to express these various viewpoints in the absence of force and violence. Politics is to be understood as an activity in which viewpoints that differ can be reconciled through a process in which various viewpoints reach an eventual compromise. In so doing, politics retains a positive, life-enhancing activity. When politics functions in this manner, politics is oriented toward a common good. Decision-making made with this end in mind translates into politics made by free people who make choices peacefully without the use of violence. This collective decision-making is essential to the functioning of politics, which allows humans to overcome the inability to live alone. It is as if humankind is born into a pre-political state of childlike helplessness and over time, becomes socialized, learning the rules that define political existence. In so doing, politics is the means through which humans learn how to live and develop as human beings over time.

This process is structured in relation to the rule-making developed by those decision-makers who are in a position of authority. This socialization into decision-making takes place in the political unit of the family. Growing up in a family unit, infants and children learn about authority through their interactions with parents. From a state of dependence on the parents, growing up involves recognizing the rules and authority framed by the parents. The

adults have the ability to control the social organization of the household. As this is taking place, the child understands the superior capabilities of parents. Within the setting of the household, the various social interactions involve a socialization of political rule-making. The family unit functions to define politics as a learned activity. From a family unit onto larger social settings outside the family, politics is defined in terms of the formation of what first appeared within families: the concepts of command and obedience.

In various social settings, in particular, the workplace and with the formation of government, the structure of politics is established from the formation of command and obedience. Within the social organization of the workplace and with the formation of government, decision-making unfolds from how the relationship between command and obedience is structured. To issue commands is to occupy a position of authority. The challenge for people in authority is how to get people to initiate activity. A basic requirement from someone in authority is to have a form of political knowledge, to know which commands to issue. A goal is to create a propensity to obey. In so doing, this amounts to creating a general disposition to respond to a command. The specific knowledge, which must be known by someone in authority who is issuing commands, is to select among a larger number of commands so as to create the propensity to obey. If someone in authority issues a large number of commands or conflicting commands, there is a decreased likelihood of obedience. Knowing which commands to order and which are followed creates among those who obey acceptance of the competence of the authority figure. Whether it is the president of the United States or an owner of social media, the institutional setting does create a propensity for those affected to follow commands. Over time, these decision-makers in various institutions become established authority figures. Also, over time in various circumstances, new emergent authority figures appear. These emergent authority figures emerge from various social movements, such as Nelson Mandela, Ralph Nader, or Adolf Hitler. Whether the authority is established or emergent, they must have a knowledge of political subject matter including the fact that time to make decisions is often lacking and these are often life and death decisions. Decisions made under the duress of limited time lack relevant information and, as a result, require inventiveness. Since time is limited, decisions made would not include all viewpoints. This is most apparent in times of crisis, such as in wartime or threats to national security, such as the 9/11 attacks. To compensate for this shortcoming, politics assumes the form of an imposition of will by policymakers on the populace, expressed as a conscious intention to shape the outcome of events.

In sharp contrast to politics as a moral search for a common good, in a time of crisis, politics can also function as an expression of raw power. Power is a tool used by those who practice politics to pursue either justice or injustice. It

is through power that someone in authority imposes their will. It is an instrument used to make people do things whether they want to or not. As a tool, power is employed to remove any obstacle that stands in the way of a desired goal. When used, power takes over as the expression of a will to dominate. When imposed, power eliminates any questioning regarding the how and why of any task. Power is a resource used by those who control material or human resources.

Tracing the historical origins of politics is to trace the search for order. Decision-making develops out of the necessity for order driven by the dual goals of surviving and creating a civilized existence. The conditions for order emerge out of the chaos associated with conflict. Politics also can be understood as a fight over ideas. What becomes political is expressed as a set of ideas that determine which side you are on. These various fights emerge out of the differences in how different groups of people are treated and mistreated. Those differences and how they are perceived generate specific distinctions that translate into the perspectives held by those on the left and right of the political spectrum. Once these political divisions are expressed, politics becomes organized fighting. People are motivated to become political once they become aware and conscious of what is at stake. Whatever the issue and problems may be, whether stemming from racism or climate change or the employment outlook, issues and problems in politics are framed as what sets people apart. To be political is to invent the means by which people organize to address perceived differences in treatment.

How ideas are expressed defines which side of the political spectrum one is on. Politics, ultimately, is about people taking sides. No one is neutral in how they think about politics. Organized political fighting is reflected in the formation of organizations with objectives in mind. Regardless of which side of the political spectrum an organization is on, they adopt methods and strategies, which amount to a fight over ideas. They fight to accomplish short- and long-term goals as mapped out by the leaders and the activists in the groups. These organizations compete with each other. The viewpoints of any political group are based on the degree of support for either preserving or calling into question the status quo.

For example, within groups on the political left, there are distinctions between liberal groups, which tend to take a reformist approach as contrasted with groups that advocate system change and may promote values that are socialist or even communist. On the political right, the goal is typically to preserve the status quo or further strengthen it, even turning back political progress and becoming reactionary. While conflict motivates people to become political, if it is unrestrained conflict, it can turn violent, which can undermine government's function as the institution through which order is maintained. Violence can also generate a toxic form of politics, that, in turn, will target

social segments for specific harms. The limits placed on violent conflict by government indicate an emphasis on integration. In varying degrees, governments have the resources to develop policies that structure social relations in such a way that people become obligated to government. One such example is providing people with social services that they wouldn't have in the absence of government. The other approach is to instill legal limits on what is considered acceptable political discourse. In support of legal limits on violence, the government can employ its own monopoly of violence to rein in violent conflicts. Nonetheless, as much as governments employ the means to suppress violence, they are never fully successful. Violence in some form is ever present in any political system. There exists a willingness to resort to violence when social segments conclude that there are no other options. At best, governments establish specific legal expression for nonviolent competition in order to limit the scale of violent unrest. What policymakers cannot control are any number of unforeseen events that can generate a violent response from people who feel victimized. Over time, the best that governments can hope for is to instill various forms of obligation to the government, to create policies that make people duty bound to obey government and feel connected to it. This is expressed in the form of an expressed agreement to do what is asked for by the government. One form is a contractual agreement from which people receive tangible benefits in exchange for obedience. However, generating forms of obligation to government does not eliminate the means by which policymakers can deceive in order to obtain that compliance. Policymakers often make use of what Antoine Destutt de Tracy in 1796 referred to as ideology.

A useful reference to the function of ideology appears in Jeremy Bentham's often overlooked book, *Handbook of Political Fallacies*, a how-to manual of how policymakers can limit conflict and delegitimize voices that advocate progressive reform. The political fallacies Bentham analyzes are intended to deceive in order to hide an underlying truth. Essentially, fallacies are distortions of the truth. Bentham's understanding of how ideology functions reveals the political divide between the few and the many. He exposes the ideology of elite rule and through various political fallacies he examines how ideology is used as a form of deception. These fallacies misdirect people's thinking in order to maintain the status quo, they manufacture false ideas that serve to legitimate the dominance of elite rule. Through a skillful production of systematically distorting communication, the fallacies delegitimize alternative policies to the status quo. Fallacies that Bentham identifies are: the wisdom of our ancestors; irrevocable law and vows; the no precedent argument; self-assured authority; self-trumpeter's fallacy; and laudatory personalities. Bentham's insight in presenting these fallacies is to demonstrate how politics used by elites is an art of rational deception. He exposes the pseudo-reasoning

in this group of fallacies as the use of an overall formal fallacy, a flaw in the deductive reasoning that renders the argument flawed and untruthful.

The few versus the many is a permanent fixture of politics. In order to maintain elite rule, policymakers in authority invoke the promotion of false ideas. In support of the ideology of elite rule, political fallacies manufacture a false consciousness of political realities, which function to undermine how various segments can arrive at a truthful depiction of their current state of affairs. When effective, such fallacies serve to disorganize social forces that seek progressive reforms. The ideology manufactured by political elites amounts to using their authority to create false arguments in support of the status quo. This arrogance in the use of their power generates unreal threats and dangers in order to halt progressive change. A common tactic has been to make use of parliamentary or bureaucratic procedures so as to delay and postpone discussion of an idea with the ultimate intent to avoid engagement with the idea altogether. Such tactics are directed at deconstructing ideas and policies that promote the public good. Politics, in this sense, works in reverse, as policymakers make decisions that in many ways directly undermine the quality of life of the masses. The ideology of political elites prevents workable solutions to real problems. For the fact of the matter is that the deceptive arguments used by politicians in positions of authority amounts to an unwillingness to solve social problems. This is why, as Bentham points out, arguments made against changes that would uplift the downtrodden make use of the reference to “the wisdom of our ancestors.” This fallacy is founded on the assumption that people in the present lack historical knowledge. It is a denial of the inventiveness and change associated with the practice of politics. The implication is that these ancestors were wise, in contrast with the ignorant masses of the present day. Needless to say, our ancestors have made a fair number of mistakes and their actions can be accurately assessed by their positive and negative contributions. We can learn from the mistakes of our ancestors and the obstacles they faced that stood in the way of progress. Movement toward a better quality of life for all, taking into account genuine solutions, requires overcoming what Bentham refers to as a conservative reverence for irrevocable laws. This is the idea that we are permanently bound by past precedent and without the possibility of altering the present. It is as if there exists a fallacy of vows in which the hands of present and future generations are bound by unforeseen forces. These vows are not to be subject to critical inquiry so that people are simply meant to keep these vows. These various fallacies work in a collective fashion and are mobilized as a means of preventing possible solutions to various problems confronting humankind. The no-precedent argument is a clear example of a political mindset that, if accepted, freezes time so that new ideas cannot be considered. A solution cannot see the light of day for this fallacy prevents any discussion of novel ideas.

In applying these fallacies to the current state of affairs in American politics that has emerged from Trump and Trumpism, it is clear that what has resulted is the ideology of destructive politics. Parts of Bentham's analysis of political fallacies can be applied directly to Trump. The idea of the self-assumed authority applies to Trump's political psychology as someone who presents himself as having innocent motives. Bentham's reference to the self-trumpeter applies to the pathological character of Trump who, as an authority figure can do no wrong due to his overinflated sense of his own intelligence. Trump's alleged superior intelligence is not to be questioned. No one has the right to question him because he is above criticism. Another aspect of Trump's political psychology is what Bentham refers to as a laudatory personality: Trump's policies derive from his noble character. Trump and Trumpism represent a political ideology in which constructive politics are rejected both by Trump and his followers. Politics as a means of solving problems is rejected in favor of politics that are always destructive.

Examples of Bentham's political fallacies were on vivid display throughout Trump's term of office. Meaningful reforms, which were not destructive, were automatically rejected. Bentham's "Imputation of Bad Design" was also demonstrated when Trump rejected immigration reform by calling into question the intelligence of advocates who proposed a more humane solution. Since anyone advancing policies that benefit a social segment must be of bad character, such proposals must be rejected.

During his term, Trump also demonstrated what Bentham identifies as "Imputation of Suspicious Connections." The Black Lives Matter movement with an emphasis on reforming law enforcement was rejected by Trump based on his promotion of the idea that all these activists were associates of any number of bad actors, including Antifa. Throughout his administration, the near-constant racist, anti-Semitic and sexist references are examples of what Bentham describes as authority's use of arguments in order to foster ignorance and fear of others. The political pattern of the Trump administration was evident in its inability to address problems, instead engaging in various forms of destructive politics. This tendency unfolds as Trump instigates his base through Nazi Nuremberg style rallies. During rallies, Trump questions any view contrary to his own, stifling dissent. For Trump, there are no limits to his absolute authority and as a result, he never admits to having made an error in judgment.

When COVID-19 appeared and spread, Trump resorted to what Bentham refers to as "Fallacies of Delay." By denying and then minimizing the spread of the virus, Trump attempted to delay taking action. When Trump began to admit that COVID-19 was present in the United States, he stated that it also would soon disappear. The delay that would cost hundreds of thousands of deaths in the United States is another example of Trump's politics

of destruction. During the height of the pandemic, Trump also made us of Bentham's "False Consolation," which was his insistence that things were rosy and looking up even as the death toll climbed and even despite the evidence to the contrary from his own medical experts. Trump's resistance to more aggressive pandemic measures and his continued delays in acting resulted in Bentham's "Procrastination Argument," in which the authority waits a little and cautions that it isn't yet time to take action. Trump's outrageous suggestion during a press conference that people actually drink bleach as a treatment for COVID-19 demonstrates Bentham's "Fallacy of Artful Diversion" in which attention to a devastating public health crisis is diverted by a magical cure.

Politics is often about choices. These choices often amount to whether to keep things as they are, to preserve and protect the status quo with various forms of destructive politics. A mainstay of the destructive politics of Trump and Trumpism is the production of fear, an appeal to the lowest common denominator, structured in order to ensure that all rational thought is suspended. Starting with Bentham's "Begging the Question," Trump relies on rhetorical arguments that only confuse an issue. Witness his response to the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally and the violence that ensued. His response begged the question when he said there were good people on both sides. In order to confuse people over the issue of anti-Semitism, Trump resorted to Bentham's "Concept of Vague Generalities." He sought to distract attention from the anti-Semitic remarks by referring to his Jewish son-in-law and to proclaim that he is the most fervent supporter of Israel. He then went on to unabashedly make use of anti-Semitic tropes by stating that he only associates with good Jews.

In acting as though as President, he could do no wrong, Trump demonstrated Bentham's "Allegorical Idols." Because he is in office, all judgments of Trump's policies are to be suspended. His emotional appeal to his base falls under Bentham's "Sweeping Classifications," in which any criticism of him equals a criticism of all of the people in the country. Trump's base views him as their collective embodiment. Any critic of Trump can be dismissed through Bentham's "Popular Corruption." It is as if people who criticize him have had their minds corrupted. Critics are to be dismissed as distorted enemies of Trump.

Trump's agenda is guided wholly by the obsession to be in power and to stay there, to preserve his power as more important than serving the needs of the many. Trump's destructive politics flow from what Bentham refers to as "Authority Prejudice," where he sought to impose his interests as being the only interests worth considering. This goes a long way toward explaining why Trump sought the office of the President in order to enrich himself. At its root, his destructive politics were about his role as oppressor. Trump's

specific policies, which will be discussed in the following chapters fit into a dividing line of politics between oppressors and oppressed. His policies and his base seek to dominate targeted, oppressed social segments, with the various policies unfolding as Trumpism functions to dehumanize the targeted groups. The isms (racism, anti-Semitism, and sexism) embraced by Trump and his base produce policies that derive from hatred. The use of these isms is to normalize unfreedom for the targeted groups.

Trumpism's normalization of hate as official state policy demonstrates how politics is about choosing sides. As this hatred is produced and reproduced throughout the Trump presidency, the choice to be made is whether Americans side with oppressors or with the oppressed. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire expressed an understanding of the social division of politics as creating those who play the role of oppressors and those who are subjected to their policies, the oppressed. Through this lens, Trumpism is another example of oppressors and oppressed, which compares to slave owners and enslaved, the colonizer and the colonized, capital and labor.

The ideology of white oppression is a key piece of Trumpism. It is expressed in a novel way through the presentation of whites as victims. Underlying this idea is a fear of diversity, a fear of women, of people of color, and of Jews. Trumpism allows for a form of white grievance to express itself while denying that it is mistreating various social segments. In a perverse application of Freire, Trumpism unfolds as a pedagogy of oppressors who depict themselves as an oppressed group, when in fact whiteness remains the dominant expression of power in American society.

What defines an oppressor is the power to act and to have power over others who are in a position of powerlessness. This powerlessness in relation to white culture is evident in the social positions of those subjected to the isms. The real oppressors, a dominant, white, mostly male upper class, possess the means and resources to prevent the uplifting of the downtrodden. The lack of institutional control by the oppressed is a key indicator of a prerequisite for oppression. There is no denying that there is oppression of white middle- and working-class people, but that oppression differs in intensity from the hatred that is directed toward people of color, LGBTQ+, women, and Jews. White middle and working classes have been spared the intense violence that diverse social segments suffer.

Another indication of genuine oppression in addition to the intensity of the violence directed at oppressed groups are the ways in which oppression functions to deny the social needs that make people human. It is a form of dehumanization in which the oppressed see and suffer from the differences between how they are treated and how those who oppress them are treated. Another aspect characteristic of Trumpism expressed by the white base is a failure to recognize the extent to which they themselves are oppressed by

upper-class whites. Instead, they find convenient scapegoats among various diverse social segments. They vent their intense anger at these oppressed groups and, as Sigmund Freud would characterize it, they identify with their upper-class oppressors. The Trump base views Trump as all-powerful and seeks to mimic his oppression. This is not to say that the Trump base does not have some awareness of their oppression. But what the Trump base lacks and what the minorities experience is fear, fear of violence from the Trump base. The violence of white supremacist groups is a reaction to the rising political consciousness of oppressed groups, who are responding to the increasing level of violence of white supremacy. Violence is used by white supremacist groups to enforce the dehumanization of oppressed groups. This violent oppression works to cement this dehumanization and prevent movements toward liberation by those who are oppressed. A key measure of oppression is the level of fear of violence that is experienced by the targeted groups on a day-to-day basis.

White supremacy is an essential part of the politics of destruction, unleashing violence in order to maintain and objectify the oppressed and preventing the oppressed from realizing the benefits of living in a just society. At its core, justice in society cultivates the expression of the common good, where politics is constructive, improves the quality of life, and functions to limit social harms. A common social good can be utilized to overcome divisions that are produced by the ideology of a privatized existence. Trump and Trumpism have promoted a privatized political framework. Trump's constant reference to "winners and losers" and his MAGA promise to make America great again has been a successful strategy to displace class resentment. Trump speaks often of his distaste for the meritocratic elites, for experts, and what he refers to as the deep state. By blaming liberalism with its emphasis on equality, Trump mobilized resentment against what he presented as unseen forces controlling people's lives. For obvious reasons, Trump can't put the blame on capital or capitalism. By his critique of what he labeled a failed liberalism, he tapped into the anger of the middle and working classes. He is able to have it both ways: his message is that the unforeseen hidden forces of deep-state liberalism failed to allow for upward mobility. The grain of truth in Trump's philosophy is that mobility is limited, but what's left out is that the systemic cause is capitalism.

While Trump marshals resentment upward against liberal elites, he also looks downward to identify as the other cause of the lack of upward mobility, a government that favors the members of targeted groups, such as minorities, women, Jews, and LGBTQ+ individuals. In Trump's distorted view, meritocracy fails because it excludes the bulk of white America; therefore, whites are the victims, not the beneficiaries. The Trumpism view is that meritocracy is not applied to those in diverse groups, because according to this

view, members of these groups are reaping the benefits of the social welfare state simply by the virtue of who they are. What is telling is that the anger and violence are never fully expressed against liberal elites, only against the targeted social segments. The result is destructive politics. In the absence of a class analysis and understanding of how American capitalism functions, what remains is anger, hatred, and violence in search of a visible target. All that's left to do is to wreck government and unleash destructive, reactionary politics, to take a wrecking ball to legal norms. In that sense, Trump's statements and policies bear a striking similarity to the writings of German legal and political theorist Carl Schmitt, whose various writings supported German fascism.

Trump's various public statements have made clear that he is not an avid reader. He has remarked that he does not have time to read, stating "I never have. I'm always busy doing a lot. Now I'm more busy, I guess, than ever before." It is safe to assume that Trump has not read the writings of Schmitt, who wrote his most important books during the Weimar Republic and leading up to the Nazi regime. At the root of these writings was Schmitt's emphasis on placing politics above law. According to Schmitt, legality of a particular constitutional order cannot be separated from the specific political system in which it originates. He argued that sovereign authority of the ruler is superior to rigid, abstract legal principles, especially during a crisis, when, he argued, the ruler must be freed from legal restraints. The example Schmitt used to underscore this point was Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, which allowed the concentration of power in the sovereign during an emergency. Schmitt accepted this concept of sovereignty. He joined the Nazi Party in 1933 and supported the regime's anti-Semitic policies from 1933 to 1936.

Schmitt's writings are not especially well-known to the general public, but Trump's actions and thoughts regarding sovereign authority and rule of law parallel much of what he expressed in his book *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, where he presents the idea that "the sovereign is he who decides on the exception." In many ways, this statement defines the essence of Trump's conception of sovereign authority. Schmitt described sovereign authority as embodied in the liberty of the sovereign to act without the formal restraint of law. Many of Trump's statements and actions are consistent with the idea that it is within his sovereign authority to decide when exceptions can be made to legalism. He believes his sovereign authority is not fixed by legal restraints. Like Schmitt, Trump places the ruler above the law; he rejects the concept of universal law, replacing it with situational law, in which he believes he has the authority to decide in which situations exceptions can be made. Also in line with Schmitt's reasoning, Trump cannot understand why there would be any questioning of the sovereign authority because sovereign authority has to be absolute.

Trump also has been consistent in expressing Schmitt's political distinctions between friend and enemy, demonstrating that what is political is a reflection of, in Schmitt's words, "the most intense and extreme antagonisms." For example, Trump's pardon of ex-Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Arizona, provides a powerful example of the dual use of the sovereign exception and the use of Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction. This distinction was also on display after the Charlottesville protests, when Trump excused the neo-Nazis as "fine people," clearly indicating the fascist tendencies in Trump's White House. This neo-fascism amounts to the arbitrary enforcement of legal means in order to enact reactionary policies, such as Bannon's ethno-nationalism and assaults on immigrants, branches of government, and mainstream media.

Trump's actions while in office manifested a governing philosophy that closely follows Schmitt's analysis of sovereign dictatorship. In his book, *Dictatorship*, Schmitt defines its essence as the use of state power without input or mediation from independent institutions. He identifies the sovereign dictatorship in terms of the elimination of "legal restrictions and restraints." Schmitt's justification for this type of government is not designed to ultimately eliminate the constitution, but rather, to provide the conditions for its maintenance. Trump's method of policy formulation reveals his position that only he knows what is legal and only he can be the final judge of rule of law. It should be noted that this tendency did not begin with Trump but while the Obama and George W. Bush administrations sought to legitimize authoritarian measures, the Trump administration saw no need to argue for supporting actions within a legal framework.

Both Nixon and Trump made themselves the final judge of legality, while also disregarding the rule of law. That concept closely follows Schmitt's observation that "The sovereign is he who defines the exception." When Trump vented his extreme disdain for the judiciary and regarded anyone who questioned his authority as an automatic enemy, he was calling into question the foundation of law. So when a judge called into question his administrators' immigration ban, Trump stripped him and the entire judiciary of credibility, calling him "this so-called judge."

As an absolute sovereign authority, Trump was at liberty to unleash policies that appealed to those friends who didn't question his authority while his enemies were those who expressed support for political diversity. Therefore, it was no coincidence that Trump condemned Judge Curiel due to his ethnicity and scapegoated Muslims, Mexicans, the mainstream media, and many others. Trump further demonstrated how he alone decided the exception by breaking from and discarding past legal precedents. For example, he expressed his intention to let the Affordable Care Act "fail" or "implode." He was also willing to withhold cost-sharing payments and eliminate millions

of dollars used to promote signing up for the ACA. He advocated reducing the tax credits under ACA and cutting the individual mandates the law established.

Schmitt's sovereign exception and distinctions between political friends and enemies were also at work in Trump's Muslim ban, which violated the Establishment Clause, the Due Process Clause, and the Equal Protection Clause, again demonstrating Trump's position that his sovereignty was above the law. As the sovereign deciding to make the exception, Trump sent fifty-nine Tomahawk missiles to bomb Syria, ignoring the 2001 legislation that limited authorization for military force to those nations and organizations that had been responsible for the 9/11 attacks. He also overlooked international law and the UN Charter that restricts the use of force to self-defense or actions authorized by the Security Council. Trump's exceptions to law were becoming the norm.¹

The self-destructive elements of corporatism expressed as a form of neo-fascism were in place, as seen with climate change deniers Scott Pruitt heading up the Environmental Protection Agency and Rick Perry heading the Department of Energy. The underlying idea of greater social control causing greater social harm can be seen as motivating the appointment of Betsy DeVos as Education Secretary. With this appointment Trump's goal was to accelerate the privatization of public education by allocating billions into funding vouchers for charter schools, increasing social inequality, and destroying public sector unions. Along with the Republican Congress, Trump sought to establish a national right-to-work law, which would destroy the funding of labor unions and effectively do away with collective bargaining. In 2018, the US Supreme Court stripped from private sector unions their right to remove fees from the paychecks of members who wish to opt out.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump had the support of his friends, billionaires from the worlds of finance, insurance, real estate, and energy, who could expect Trump to propose lower corporate tax rates and other billionaire-friendly measures. His proposal for a massive infrastructure investment turned out to be another handout to the billionaire class through government subsidies and tax credits to the tune of \$137 billion. Billionaires and Wall St. elites were well-represented throughout his cabinet: Todd Ricketts, deputy secretary of commerce had a net worth of \$5.3 billion; Betsy DeVos as education secretary was worth \$5.1 billion; Steven Mnuchin, treasury secretary, was a hedge fund investor and Rex Tillerson, secretary of state had been Exxon's chief executive officer.

Among the most destructive politics unleashed during the Trump administration was the targeted release of violence against social segments. In putting aside legal restraints on the power of government, Trump and his followers embraced, in the words of Walter Benjamin, violence that "could fulfill its

ends only as predatory violence.” In writing the essay “Toward a Critique of Violence,” Benjamin is clear that violence, which is not used to preserve law, “forfeits all validity.” Violence for Benjamin is a manifestation of the instability of law and the legal means to restrain the use of violence. The following chapters will further develop the concept of destructive politics as an intention to do social harm against diverse democratic social segments and toward policies that enhance anti-democratic fascist elements of minority rule.

NOTE

1. The references in the text to Trump and Schmitt first appeared in an article I wrote for *Informed Comment*, published on May 9, 2017, “Politics Above Law: How Trump Channels Far-Right Icon Carl Schmitt Without Knowing It.”

Chapter 2

After the 2016 Election, Formation of Destructive Politics

The pre-conditions of Trump and Trumpism were intensified after the 2016 election. Pre-existing forms of hate and violence expanding in scope and scale were expressed as a manifestation of the Trump administration's form of destructive politics. They emerge out of an obsession with, and intention to, inflict pain and suffering on groups that represent a diverse society. An intention to do harm has its roots in an ideology of hatred. The official production of hateful actions demonstrated complete disregard for the pain and suffering of those targeted. Along with the willingness to inflict pain and suffering, there was an observable pleasure in inflicting this harm on others. The manufacture of this hatred involves a license to create a delusional thought process that justifies targeting the victims. The intense rage experienced by those who hate excuses the haters from having to bear any responsibility for the destructive actions they have taken. While hatred embodies a specific distorted mindset, assembled as a set of prejudiced views, the cold deliberation of hatred eventually assumes the form of an extreme emotional state of rage. Hatred develops in relation to the object fixation in which the haters generate rationalizations that justify the hatred. Over time, hatred grows and will find expression in a mental state of paranoia against those targeted who are viewed as a threat. This paranoid personality finds expression in a heightened state of anxiety.

The mental construct of haters consists of an assessment of their life situation as one of hardship and pain, that has somehow been caused by the targeted victims. This hatred and actions that result from it are carried out in the absence of guilt. Haters wear their hatred as a badge of honor, which explains why their rage is so overt. Fueling the intensity of this hatred is the creation of a set of false beliefs about those targeted, which explains the absence of guilt. Specific groups are singled out for scapegoating and, eventually, hatred. By implication, haters define themselves as distinct from the hated. The net

result is that there is no emotional investment or empathy for the group on the receiving end of the hatred. It follows that indifference to harm inflicted on the hated is a result of how differently the haters view themselves in comparison to the hated. What developed during the Trump administration and what his followers would embrace was a collective culture of hating. “A culture of hatred is a natural community that breeds and encouraged hatred.”¹ Communities of haters inspired by Trump include those focused on racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-immigrant sentiment, and others. These forms of hatred became substitutes for an administration that was incapable of addressing the social issues of the masses in the United States. Because the Trump administration could not take action on genuine issues, what remained was an emphasis on causing harm.

The culture of hatred that Trump magnified began with small segments in American society. It starts with the denial of distinct individual identities of the members of the targeted groups. Broad stereotypes are applied and what follows is the process of dehumanization of targeted groups, a key pre-requisite for subsequent acts of violence. Ultimately, the rage of the haters explodes in a violent outburst against those who have been demonized and presented as the personification of evil. It becomes clear that members of these groups must be destroyed.

The killing of group members is then normalized since causing the most extreme forms of violence is regarded as a positive remedy to the evil that the group represents. Throughout the all-too-common violent attacks during the reign of Trump, followers became indoctrinated to hearing specific threats posed by immigrants, people of color, women, and Jews, to name a few. The violence and in some cases, killing, is carried out against the victims who are seen to be guilty of a criminal offense as defined by the perpetrators. Later chapters will discuss how this hatred and violence was unleashed by groups such as the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, neo-Nazis, militias, and others, that shared this social psychology. Trump’s speeches and various dog whistles provide official government sanctioning, green lighting these groups to clearly display their aggression and superiority over targeted groups, as well as their ultimate intention to eliminate these groups. It is not surprising that the hatred turning into violence is reinforced through social media, which accelerates and further inflames the haters and inspires them to act out violently. The haters believe that they belong to an exclusive, privileged club. In order to become a “member” of this club, they must undergo a process where they construct psychological mechanisms to disassociate themselves from those that they hate. Once this disassociation is underway, the thought patterns create a bias in cognition, where anyone whose beliefs and behaviors differ from one’s own can only be viewed as malevolent. The only alternative is to strike back against the targeted group.

The expression of xenophobic, anti-immigration policies grew out of an obsession with maintaining a homogenous nation of whites. Those who are different were seen as embodying a threat to the very existence of this homogenous nation where white people are dominant. A common, often-used expression among white supremacists is the concept of white genocide, a version of the jungle theory: eat or be eaten. When a threat is expressed as so primal, it becomes understood that it is either them or us. In one sense, it is a perceived loss of dominance, in another sense it is a result of feeling that one's place in society has somehow been diminished and that one will suffer humiliation. Such feelings of vulnerability, promoted within these white supremacist circles, create what they see as the need to strike out with violence. Violence becomes the only way to regain lost self-esteem. Taking control through the use of force helps reestablish dominance. Utilizing violence is part of an ongoing battle for survival of the fittest and part of that requires doing harm to others who are seen as a threat to your very existence.

As acts of violence unfold, perpetrators deny any responsibility, instead holding the victims responsible for the acts of violence. To support violence and even the killing of people depicted as outsiders is to engage in what Aaron T. Beck refers to as groupism, "the collective counterpart of egoism. The person in the group transfers his own self-centered perspective to a group-centered frame of reference. He interprets events in terms of the group's interests and beliefs,"² where individuals translate events only in terms of how they affect the group. Individuals in the group who violently act out are relieved of responsibility since they are acting on behalf of the group. All violent actions are simplified in terms of the means to justify the ends.

In what Walter Lipmann identified as a stereotype, it becomes easy to violently target when the characters that define a group have been simplified. Stereotyping provides violent perpetrators with certainty as to what needs to be attacked. With fixed stereotypes in place, there is no room for nuance or a more complex understanding of the group in question. Hateful minds are closed minds, shut off from contradictory beliefs and reinforced with the perception of false threats posed by a group. With the minds of haters so closed off, what fills up the belief system is the sense of being under threat from unseen forces. The group finds itself seeking to locate hidden, often malevolent, meanings in the actions of those who they believe are conspiring against them. Through the construction of a distinct worldview, the thought process is fixed and unchanging. Such paranoia is the breeding ground for fanaticism. When these perceived threats are heightened to an extreme level, all that is left is to violently act out. The fanatic is fixated on acting against these unforeseen forces and groups that he or she believes are plotting against them.

What appears consistently in the isms from the past to the present are references to how the bodies of people who offend us are offensive because their

physical state disgusts us. Their bodies are viewed as unclean and repulsive. People of color, LGBTQ+ people, and women in particular are defined as having sexual attributes that are seen as threatening. With groups viewed as disgusting or physically threatening, haters conceive that the solution is segregation and isolation of the threatening group, otherwise the dominant group may become consumed or absorbed by the group that is feared and targeted. Once violence becomes the chosen option, the goal is to eliminate the rival. For all the negative stereotypes attributed to a group, there is also along with it a fair amount of envy that the group in question has abilities and advantages that the threatened group does not. The negative stereotype of Jews is that they are good with money; the negative stereotype of people of color is that they are superior athletes. But with envy comes blame. Since Jews and people of color are perceived as having superior attributes that they actually do not have, they must therefore be responsible for the shortcomings of the dominant group.

Women's perceived upward mobility triggers envy from certain white males. Envy is a trigger for violence aimed at putting the threatening group in its place. When certain social segments appear to make progress, they are seen as a threat. There is no denying that racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism pre-dated the rise of Trump and Trumpism. What sets the prevalence of these and other isms apart now is not only that they are officially sanctioned with a wink and a nod but so is the violence used to express them. Trump's success in office highlights the nation's historical failure to cement the legal and cultural means of promoting and protecting a diverse democracy. Trump as a demagogue is a symbol and manifestation of attacking an inclusive democracy. Trump's demagoguery emerged from a reduction of politics to its lowest common denominator: from crooked Hillary to slimeball James Comey to Crazy Joe Biden. This demeaning mockery allowed Trump a free pass on debating the issues of the day.

Attacking immigrants fit into the administration's narrative that Americans needed to fight against the threat of white decline. The administration was masterful in using as a rallying cry the danger of the invading hordes of immigrants and the need for white America to fear them and take action. Trump adviser Stephen Miller in particular, worked to manufacture hatred of immigrants as people who were not only stealing good jobs from Americans but also were involved in terrorism. These dog whistles were effectively used to greenlight violence against immigrants. Unless white America fought back, the storyline went, whites would become a subordinate minority; whites could now claim the mantle of victimhood and justify extreme actions including violence. Trump was willing to engage in a pathological pattern of rejecting the truth.

The attitude of the administration toward immigrants was evidence of Trump's obsession with causing harm to others as a way of demonstrating his absolute power and his descent into demagoguery. Early in his administration, it becomes clear that his leadership consists of "emotional manipulation, the stirring up of fear and hatred to bring to the surface the social and political hobgoblins."³ As a demagogue, he often mimicked statements originally made by Steve Bannon that indicated the goal was to dismantle and destroy the institution of government. In the name of eliminating so-called elites from government, the goal was to remove all institutional restraints so that the only leader of government left would be Trump himself. Trump's success as the great destroyer required his ability to mobilize social support through an ideology that said America was now in stark decline and could only be resurrected by Trump himself through his Make America Great Again campaign.

If there was tribal support for Trumpism, its roots can be located in the cultural aspects of class. Large segments of Trump's base came from the anxious and fear-driven parts of America's middle class, which will be discussed in detail in later chapters. It is no coincidence that amid the historical decline of the middle class, Trump's appeals clearly resonated. He used the anxiety of the middle class to his advantage.

This development is in line with the way that fascist movements developed in the twentieth century, when a tribal segment of the middle classes, threatened by economic downturns, puts its trust in an authoritarian leader who promises a return to past glory. Support for the leader is mobilized through the identification of perceived threats from diverse social elements. It is not surprising that blind faith in Trump's policies could be seen among upper-income evangelical fundamentalists, who supported a rollback of the secular state by reversing the advances of women, gays, people of color, and other social groups viewed as threatening. Trump's message was that it would be possible to return to the past and in so doing, the present could be destroyed. To return to the past by destroying the present translates into the need to use violence. The specifics of Trump's policies didn't matter; what mattered was the abstract demonization of his opponents.

Trumpism is thus in line with an element of fascism, in which there is mass surrender and blind adherence to the leader. It's no coincidence that once people give up their freedom to be rational, what becomes the expression of irrationality is the use of violence. Trumpism unfolds in its ultimate manifestation with violence used to silence and repress all alternatives to Trumpism. Violence is justified because, Trumpism claims, America is under attack from diversity. Violence is used to diminish that threat and it starts to be used as a kind of cleansing agent, to wipe the slate clean of undesirable elements. Both violent and non-violent followers of Trump are united in their emotional investment, which creates the cult of Trump. Both wings are self-righteous in

their sense of victimhood, entitled to think and act against anyone that they feel is responsible for their loss of social standing, “whether it’s men’s rights activists fulminating about how feminist women have inverted the scales of gender justice, or the men who interpret their failures in the dating world to be the fault of gold-digger harpies inspiring them to mass murder.”⁷⁴ Lacking an historical perspective of social systems, in particular, capitalism, the anger these white men experience is confined to the available targets, such as women, people of color, LGBTQ+, and Jews. Without taking into account how capitalism divides along class and racial lines, the anger is not directed upward but rather downward toward people to whom they can feel superior. What is ironic is that the anger white men feel is not without merit but is being misdirected. As the middle class has declined over the past decades and the working class has been the victim of the flight of capital overseas, people who differ in terms of their gender, race, and ethnicity are easy targets for these white males.

The disillusionment of America’s middle class which had put its faith in upward mobility is a cause for this intense anger. “Middle-class white American men were the nation’s first and remain its most fervent believers in the American dream: that anyone can rise as high as their aspirations, talents, discipline, and dedicated hard work can take them.”⁷⁵ White men, especially middle-class white men, who over time could not fulfill their masculine role of provider looked to vent their anger. They saw their loss of class standing as a direct result of the social presence and advances made by minorities, women, etc. Middle-class men saw examples of the upward mobility of people other than themselves as happening at their expense. They felt victimized by unforeseen forces that they cannot control. “The new American anger is more than defensive; it is reactionary. It seeks to restore, to retrieve, to reclaim something that is perceived to have been lost. Angry white men look to the past for their imagined and desired future.”⁷⁶

With this mindset, the destructive politics are expressed as a violent dystopian effort to cleanse the present and to erase it. To go back in time would also mean eliminating the social obstacles represented by a diverse society. The violence is the means of attacking whoever stands in the way of a return to a homogenous society. “The downwardly mobile lower middle class has more than just its economic position at stake; the class is defined by its economic autonomy.”⁷⁷ The middle class could see the visible indications of the gulf between themselves and the American upper class. At the same time, compounding the downward slide of the class were the two-wage-earner families with increasing debt, as well as the elimination of fixed pensions.

Their misdirected anger toward women, people of color, and Jews, among others, in many ways demonstrates their narcissism, which is expressed as anger and hatred, depicted by Erich Fromm in *The Anatomy of Human*

Destructiveness as a form of malignant aggression. As the middle class declines and experiences disequilibrium, it seeks a return to a social state of equilibrium, but a return to this state requires causing harm to others. The expression of malignant aggression develops from the anger of the middle class, which engages in acts of cruelty and destruction. As white males who have become downwardly mobile view their suffering as unjustified, they strike out, seeking revenge against those who they believe are responsible and supposedly have benefited from their suffering. From this vantage point, the racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism become justified, generating a cognitive dissonance, an emotional numbing on the part of the group that makes members unable to perceive the pain and suffering of others. During Trump's rallies, attendees are gripped in an almost trance-like state of joyful ecstasy as Trump provokes the crowd, justifying their anger. The rallies become forums for the official sanctioning of hate and destructiveness. As discussed in later chapters, groups such as the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys unleash violence for the express purpose of taking delight in these actions, demonstrating what Fromm calls a sadistic character. These groups have an intense need to control others and to cause physical harm, deriving pleasure from causing harm to those they see as their enemies. Their use of violence arises from

the passion to have absolute and unrestricted control over a living being. . . . To force someone to endure pain or humiliation without being able to defend himself is one of the manifestations of absolute control. . . . The person who has complete control over another living being makes this being into his thing.⁸

Trump, his followers and these violent groups all have a sense of shared grievance because they have been deprived of what they see as the entitlements of their class. It is true that the middle class has been left behind by globalism, a decline in its standard of living and social status. However, in their pro-capitalist outlook, members of the middle class lack an understanding of the class struggle that is responsible for these declines. They end up offering support for an authoritarian version of capitalism which they have been led to believe will foment an assault on political elites and the conspiracies of the deep state. And while the state promotes capital accumulation, it is also providing some limited social welfare functions to the aggrieved middle class. What the middle-class radicals resent is that those social welfare services are also being provided to others. As a social movement, Trumpism expresses the fascist longing for a society that caters to small shopkeepers, lower-level bureaucrats, police, and the military. In the absence of a comprehensive historical understanding of American capitalism as a system, Trumpists can only see the conspiracies of subjective players, such as bankers and Wall Street financiers, controlled by monied Jewish interests.

Trumpism is based on a narcissism that views America with a hyper-patriotism and blind allegiance that requires them to do what they are told without question. This authoritarian patriotism makes no allowance for dissent that deviates from the view of an entitled white male America. Violence is therefore necessary when any group dares to question what Trump's followers see as their birthright, that whites are the only real Americans. From this mindset it follows that other ideologies develop, xenophobia, racism, and sexism flow from the social need to overcome any obstacles to white middle-class dominance. Kimmel is correct in pointing to the partial truths of white nationalists and how they have been marginalized. This does not excuse their false consciousness, and their distorted misinformed view of what's causing middle-class decline. To them, hate and violence become an instrument of social leveling.

Not to be overlooked is the willingness of violent groups seeking to consciously cause harm to the enemies of white culture, a result of the necessary dehumanization of these so-called enemies perceived by Trump and his followers. This process is promoted through the use of powerful images designed to provoke a visceral reaction among followers, what Guy Debord has described as the spectacle in *The Society of the Spectacle*. Trump rallies, for example, are one form of the spectacle, carefully orchestrated and theatrical rituals that work to unify followers to embrace Trump's agenda. Such mass gatherings also serve as a physical setting through which Trump intensifies and maintains power over his followers while identifying which social segments should be seen as a threat. The rally is above all a call to action against these threats, so that a homogenous society can be achieved. Selective concepts, such as the deep state or Make America Great Again identify the threat and what needs to be done to fight the threats. Followers are given a green light to act out violently in service of erasing what they see as the dystopia. Wilhelm Reich understood the mass psychology that Trump tapped into, which motivated segments of the middle class to express its rebellion by reconciling contradictory views of authority. "This ambivalent attitude toward authority, rebellion against it coupled with acceptance and submission is a basic feature of every middle-class structure."⁹ Reich explains it as the attachment of the masses to an authoritarian leader, such as when Hitler inspired Germans to be willing to act in a violent manner.

Similarly, Trump and the MAGA crowd have demonstrated a willingness to normalize extreme acts of violence. In *Escape from Freedom*, Erich Fromm describes how this works as a step toward embracing authoritarianism. The underlying fear of a diverse and mass-based democracy leads to the embrace of violence. Organized violence as the be-all, end-all of Trumpism results in the perception of the victims as what Brad Evans and Henry Giroux referred to in *Disposable Futures* as disposable people. It should be noted

that the violent rage of middle-class people is not far afield from the overall normalization of violence already present as a feature of American culture. Violence is a form of entertainment that Americans are willing to embrace. Some of the most violent sporting events, such as football, boxing, wrestling, hockey, and mixed martial arts offer forms of pleasure derived from human pain and suffering. Violence is an all too commonly accepted part of American culture, from the acceptance of nearly fifty thousand motor vehicle deaths a year and the mass shootings that America is a leader in, to the global impact of America's permanent war-making economy. Violence and death are normalized so long as most people are not directly affected. Trumpism has officially sanctioned the hateful rhetoric that allows violence to be unleashed against diverse elements in American society, building upon the existing normalization of violence. "Violence now mediates all relationships and extreme violence not only informs daily politics, but merges entertainment with a culture of fear such that the line between is increasingly disappearing."¹⁰ Mass violence used against specific social segments takes place often in locations removed from the general public: people of color subjected to violence in segregated neighborhoods; women; victims of domestic violence perpetrated by intimate partners behind closed doors; Jews and Muslims subjected to violence in their houses of worship; members of the LGBTQ+ community in their social clubs; and immigrants targeted along the border under the biased and violent supervision of border agents. This uptick in violence with the intention to cause harm to all these groups becomes official after the 2016 election of Trump. The normalization of violence in forms of entertainment generates a culture of violence, which will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

NOTES

1. William Gaylin, *Hatred: The Psychological Descent into Violence* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2004) p. 195.

2. Aaron T. Beck, *Prisoners of Hate: The Cognitive Basis of Anger, Hostility and Violence* (New York: Harper, 1999) p. 144.

3. Eric Posner, *The Demagogue's Playbook: The Battle for American Democracy from the Founders to Trump* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2020) p. 249.

4. Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2017) p. x.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

8. Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt, 1992) p. 322.

9. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1980) p. 37.

10. Brad Evans and Henry Giroux, *Disposable Futures: The Seduction of Violence in the Age of Spectacle* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2015) p. 124–25.

Chapter 3

Expanding the Destructive Politics of Trump

On January 20, 2017, Donald Trump was sworn in as president at the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC. His inauguration speech revealed the outline of an unfolding politics of destruction. He began his speech by stating that what was taking place that day was not just a transfer of power from one administration to another but a transfer of power from Washington, DC to the American people. Throughout his term in office, Trump prided himself on transmitting this message to his base: “The forgotten men and women of our country will be no longer. Everyone is listening to you now. You came by the tens of millions to become part of a historical movement, the likes of which the world has never seen before.” It would be repeated in speeches and rallies directed to his base of the white victimized majority of Americans. He then referred to America “in decline.”

“Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves. These are just and reasonable demands of righteous people and a righteous public. But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists. Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system flush with cash but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge; and the crime and the gangs and the drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential.” Putting aside how true Trump’s assessment of the current state of affairs was or wasn’t, this statement set the stage for what became the dual message of the Trump presidency. His remark that, “This American carnage stops here and stops right now” was a reference to the decline that he saw.

In contrast to this supposed decline and carnage, in the United States as of January 2017,

violent crime rates had dropped precipitously. . . . More people had jobs in the United States than ever before. Inflation-adjusted wages were higher than at any point in the country's history. The United States remained the wealthiest nation in the world by gross domestic product. And while there certainly were some "rusted-out factories" blighting the landscape of middle America, the manufacturing sector had come roaring back.¹

The obvious question to ask is why was Trump presenting this view of the current state of affairs in America. One reason among many is that Trump functioned as a master of misdirection. His target audience was the segment of white America that felt left out, left behind, in Trump's mindset, in the "carnage" of white America. He continued: "From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this day forward, it's going to be only America first." To overcome American carnage meant that actions would be taken against non-Americans. To demonize non-whites was a recurrent theme of the speech writer Steven Bannon and policy advisor Stephen Miller; making America great again meant creating policies intended to cause harm to immigrants.

While Trump began to make appeals to a minority of white voters, he along with his key advisors began taking action against minorities. Trump had achieved his electoral victory in 2016 with eighty thousand voters in three states and through the mobilization of anger in key states. Trump knew who his base was, and it was not the majority of Americans; in January 2017, his approval rating was 45 percent. From his misdiagnosis of what ailed America, he shifted toward presenting who was responsible for America's decline: The culprits who bore responsibility were non-whites. To cause harm to people of color became a key priority of the Trump administration with racism that was both external and internal. If politics is about choosing sides, the policymakers in the Trump administration clearly sided with racists. The administration sided with the parts of his ruling coalition that intended to cause harm to those various social segments, which were non-white, female, Jewish, immigrants, LGBTQ+, among others. Spearheading the policy initiatives and support to undermine these groups were evangelicals, racists, white supremacists, conspiracy groups, and parts of the middle class. In Trump's first order of business, he declared a "National Day of Patriotic Devotion," which he proclaimed was January 20, 2017.

Not long after, he began a pattern of destructive politics based on exclusion and roll-back politics. On his first official day in office, he signed an executive order to remove the mandates of the Affordable Care Act and issued another executive order to remove Federal Housing Administration mortgage discounts for low-income home buyers. Instead of reversing the so-called American carnage, Trump was enacting policies to create carnage

by targeting people of color. Whatever else can be said about his policies, he was consistent. On January 25, 2017, he carried out a campaign promise by signing the executive order to construct a two-thousand-mile wall along the southern border of the United States, with a cost estimated between \$10 and \$20 billion. Two days later, Trump signed the Muslim Travel Ban.

In Trump's words, the rationale was to keep "radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America." The ban was to have the immediate effect of denying entry for ninety days into the United States to anyone having an immigrant or nonimmigrant visa from seven Muslim countries: Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In addition, worldwide refugees were banned from the United States for 120 days and there was a permanent ban on refugees from Syria. The policy was one example of how destructive politics are also dysfunctional:

the nation's airports were seized by turmoil. Customs agents had received conflicting directives on how to enforce the directive. Airplanes were landing, carrying visitors from countries on the List, as the order was being distributed around the government. The confusion resulted in the detention of travelers arriving at US airports in a number of major cities.²

Rollback and the causing of harm were evident in other Trump initiatives.

The President reinstated and toughened the Mexico City Policy, which eliminated US funding for international non-governmental organizations that perform or promote abortions. He rescinded Obama's protections for transgender students to use preferred bathrooms in public schools. He signed legislation that routes federal money away from Planned Parenthood.³

These actions were welcomed by the pro-life evangelicals, an essential part of Trump's coalition who embraced a dominant, white, male patriarchy. Trump had the support of 81 percent of evangelicals.

In August 2017, Trump chose sides in the Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally. This gathering of neo-Nazis, neo-Confederates, and right-wing militia members and Klansmen was present at the rally against the removal of Robert E. Lee's statue from Lee Park. Marching with lighted torches, the marchers made it clear exactly who they considered a threat: "You will not replace us," they chanted, "Jews will not replace us." In his remarks, Trump was providing cover for the anti-Semitism and racism of the marchers. He spoke of "blame on both sides" and said there were "very fine people on both sides." Trump expressed sympathy for the marchers, noting that the effort to remove Confederate monuments was an attempt "to change history." His actions often spoke even louder than his words. In late fall 2017, Trump pardoned Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who had been found guilty of criminal contempt

and mistreatment of prisoners. He expressed outrage over NFL players kneeling to protest racism, advising owners in one case about one player who kneeled, to “get that son of a bitch off the field right now.”

Trump was consistent in siding with the aggressor who harms others. He went out of his way to defend Roy Moore, the Alabama US Senate nominee against whom there were multiple allegations of child abuse. Targeting people of color, Trump also terminated the DACA program that prevented undocumented minors from deportation. Trump also favored the passage of the December 20, 2017 Tax Cuts Act, a \$1.5 trillion tax reform bill that cut corporate taxes from 35 percent to 21 percent and lowered the individual rate from 39.6 percent to 37 percent while an October 12, 2017 Quinnipiac poll stated that Trump wasn’t fit to serve as president—55 percent to 43 percent.

In so many ways, hate was the calling card of the Trump administration. Trump favored the upper classes and expressed disdain and racism against people of color. During a bipartisan meeting on immigrant reform held at the White House, Democrat Dick Durbin said that Trump had described African nations as “shithole countries.” In the absence of any effort to construct a common good, Trump and his followers functioned to divide by using hate to frame a narrow agenda, implemented through the generation of justifications to cause harm to selected segments of the population. Trump created a political culture in which it was acceptable to hate openly. This official normalization of hate for Trump policymakers gave it an equal moral equivalence to other ideas, a false relativism where hate is no better or worse than any other idea.

An extension of that was the trivializing of the violence and even killing of political outsiders.

The Public Religion Research Institute American Values Survey from 2020 found overwhelming majorities of white evangelical Protestants saying that police killings of African Americans were “isolated incidents” and the Confederate flags and monuments are symbols of southern pride rather than racism.⁴

Given the fact that police shootings of people of color are widespread and white supremacists embrace the Confederate flag as their symbol, this kind of disingenuous attitude speaks volumes as to the indifference and inability among Trump supporters to even acknowledge how any incident of police killing an African American sends shock waves of fear throughout these communities. It reflects how Trumpists closed their minds to the broader historical patterns of institutional racism in the United States. Denial of systemic harm and violence to the real victims of racism was ignored and replaced by the idea that non-whites were victimizing whites. Victims of racial injustice

were transformed into the enemies of whites in a perverted narrative of dehumanization which in turn, functioned as a justification for violence.

Trump's personal bodyguard punching a pro-immigrant demonstrator in the head and Trump supporters assaulting or shouting at Black demonstrators ("Shoot him!" "Sieg heil!" "Light the motherfucker on fire!") at Latino protesters ("Mother-fucking tacos go back to Mexico") at the mention of Hillary Clinton ("Hang that bitch") and the mention of Obama ("He's a monkey!")⁵

A selective and distorted learned ignorance closes the minds of racist haters. They give themselves a license to manufacture consistently negative racist stereotypes, which are a form of sadistic mocking. This appears in all characterizations of non-whites.

Early in his presidential campaign, Trump used a fake accent and broken English to describe his dealings with Asian negotiators. As president, he made loops around his eyes with his fingers to mock the eyeglasses worn by visiting delegates from China.⁶

To these haters it is not the thoughts and actions of racist whites that cause harm, rather it is the thoughts and actions of non-whites, such as Muslims, a consistent target of Trump's racism. The Muslim ban on immigrants is one example where Trump depicts Muslims as presenting threats to others:

After a Muslim American man killed forty-nine in an Orlando gay night club, Trump claimed "thousands of shooters like this" in the American Muslim community, hidden by their congregationalists, were prepared to do the same and speculated that the trouble could be "their religion."⁷

There is evidence that Trump is aware that his hateful rhetoric is intended to motivate others to act. Consider what Trump said in an interview with Bob Woodward and Robert Costa during the 2016 presidential campaign, "'I bring rage out,' he said, 'I always have.'"⁸ There is a relationship between Trump's remarks and the actions of his followers. There were the pipe bombs that a supporter sent to prominent Democrats and members of the media; there was the Tree of Life synagogue massacre in Pittsburgh; there was the killing of the woman at the Charlottesville march.

Trump openly encouraged white racism. During the protests after the killing of George Floyd, he attacked the protestors, threatening them, and immediately insinuating, "When the looting starts the shooting starts." On the other hand, during the pandemic, he celebrated the "good people" who armed themselves and invaded the Michigan capital with the express intent of intimidating the legislators at the very least. There was a striking difference

between how Trump spoke of white and non-white protesters, with strong support for white violence. And he was consistent in his support of violence as creative destruction. He gave what amounted to an official government sanction to violence against those who dared call into question Trump's policies or were identified as his enemies, such as unarmed immigrants at the border. He also routinely encouraged violence at rallies against not just against protesters but members of the media as well.

These and other remarks revealed how Trump was openly embracing a culture of white violence to harm and destroy perceived threats. Violence was used as a cleansing agent, a virtuous action to silence and impose the dominance of a segment of white culture. White supremacy was going to dominate, and it would be implemented through violence. This was evident when Trump quoted Mussolini, "better to live one day as a lion than 100 years as a sheep." Ironically, Trump expected his followers to act like sheep. "Trump had supporters at one rally raise their hands in a loyalty pledge that the former head of the ADL called a 'fascist gesture.'"⁹

Trump supporters were expected to surrender their freedom to their authoritarian leader, to follow without question the irrational wishes of their leader. In this context, violence is understood as the means to a fixed goal that eliminates any questioning or resistance to Trump. The goal of Trump's rhetoric, translated into violence, is to replace a heterogenous America with a homogenous one. Violence becomes a method to create a dystopia where there is mass conformity to the dictator of white America. It becomes a tool to do what Michel Foucault called body controls, where violence is employed to seize and control those bodies viewed as a threat. This is what happened in the spring of 2018, when policy advisor Stephen Miller and attorney general Jeff Sessions implemented their "zero tolerance" policy at the southern border. "Meant to deter families from crossing into the United States illegally, the program resulted in nearly two thousand migrant children being separated from their parents in one six-week stretch alone."¹⁰ This policy of actively separating children from their parents is a striking example of the seizure and control of bodies through the use of force, a twisted idea that these children and their parents were foreign invaders intent on doing nothing less than subverting the white race.

Trump's obsession with America being taken over by non-whites was nothing new. It goes back to his "birther" fixation that created skepticism about whether President Obama was actually an American citizen. Trump had claimed to have investigated Hawaii to verify whether or not Obama had been born there. He knew there was no basis for this claim but understood that during the campaign, the more he raised doubts about Obama's citizenship, the more his GOP presidential polls rating moved upward. And in his June 16, 2015 announcement that he was running for president, he stated that

he intended to keep out undocumented Mexican immigrants. Trump knew who his intended audience was, which he called a silent majority, the parts of white America that he knew would be receptive to fear, racist appeals, and his scapegoating of non-whites, given the anger of this segment of white America at being left behind. He was pushing a dominant view of white supremacy implemented through violence. In verbal and violent assaults across the spectrum of non-white people, Trump understood that in mobilizing certain segments of white America, he could generate enough support for his exercise of absolute power. “It was truly us versus them. Undocumented Latino immigrants, Muslims, the Black community, and the elites who protected or coddled them—he was against all of them.”¹¹ Or, as Steve Bannon put it, “we didn’t win an election to bring the country together.”

Lacking any constructive vision of where Trump expressed the nation should be going, what he had to offer was his own hateful destructive vision of American politics. Trump articulated his scapegoating with his trademark flair for marketing: selling this destructive vision of an America in decline and who could be blamed for it. At the same time, his politics, reflecting a total lack of interest in well-thought out policies were always very much about his narcissism, at the root of which was Trump’s very fragile ego. Trump was well-aware of this, and he would comment on his narcissism as “one of my strengths.” This was reflected in the way he could change his view based on which viewpoint was at the moment more opportunistic. He would promote sound bites based on what he thought would appeal to a certain segment of American society.

But there was no denying that he was consistent in his expression of racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism. His use of these isms varied depending on which hatred he thought would be most useful. He had an intuitive sense about the most effective timing for expressing hate through Twitter and at his rallies. His anti-intellectualism was evident throughout his daily routine. He was obsessed with watching television, which took up 60 percent of his calendar, known as “executive time,” or TV time. In response to media coverage, Trump went about mass marketing a stream of sound bites often filled with rage-driven vitriol against the target of the day. Trump is credited with inventing and mass marketing his concerns through social media as a means of disseminating repeated messages that amounted to a propaganda campaign. He created an image of himself as a successful businessman despite the fact that his wealth was largely inherited from his father. Trump failed at business after business and went into bankruptcy several times.

During his presidency, he advertised his concerns over and over on a twenty-four-hour cycle, often repeating the same messages, which is a hallmark of propaganda. He knew which words to use to manipulate emotions to motivate his white male base and to offend the groups subjected to his

isms. The overall goal of Trump's extensive use of Twitter was to develop group conformity, a bandwagon effect that required suspension of reason. He had an instinct in writing his tweets as to what would appeal to the subconscious fears of his base. He used heated and hateful rhetoric to inspire his followers to take action, to target those receptive to the idea that diversity, i.e., LGBTQ+, women, immigrants, Muslims, Jews, people of color, are a direct threat to white America. Through a divide and conquer strategy, while social segments are targeting each other, the American upper class was left untouched by Trump. He was the political ringleader who manipulated his audience by appealing to the lowest common denominator, much the way reality show hosts like Jerry Springer, did the same. Trump knew all too well how to use social media to manipulate people. Twitter allowed him to fully express his anti-intellectualism in a setting where he could vent against experts and the meritocracy while keeping his base whipped up and ready to take action against his perceived enemies. On Twitter, Trump constructed his own version of reality, where there was no fact-checking and no facts.

With no political agenda that could promote a broad, common good, Trump's politics amounted to attack. His obvious authoritarianism doesn't tolerate any questioning of his authority so he needed to label the mainstream media as "fake news," which, simply put, was any news that didn't agree with Trump. When contrary views challenged his positions, he would fight back by banning certain news organizations from covering his rallies. He embraced any outlet that was pro-Trump, such as Fox News and Breitbart News.

Trump's destructive brand of politics was guided by an intention to cause harm to others, and he enlisted like-minded individuals to implement destructive policies, best personified by policy advisor Stephen Miller:

In addition to the family separations, he would push to expedite deportations, crack down on asylum claims, penalize so-called sanctuary cities that resisted existing immigration authorities, and enact a "public charge" regulation barring immigrants from obtaining green cards if they received government benefits or might in the future. He pressed the administration to force hundreds of thousands of people from crisis-torn countries like El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti granted theoretically temporary residency in a special program to be sent back home even if they had been in the United States for decades and exhibited productive lives while their home countries remained dangerous.¹²

As a main architect of Trump's hate-filled politics, Stephen Miller constructed a means of demonizing and targeting immigrants, which was also intended to appeal to the xenophobia of Trump's base. There is no denying that Miller and Trump understood the pain and suffering caused by their border policies. They had a meeting of the minds in terms of dehumanizing those

trying to get into the country in order to justify actions that were being taken against them. “From the campaign trail to the White House, Miller helped Trump conjure an ‘invasion of animals’ come to steal American jobs and spill American blood.”¹³ The two had a symbiotic relationship: Miller became a part of Trump’s 2016 campaign and began appearing at campaign rallies. A key feature of Miller’s view of migrants was to criminalize them. He created a weekly publication called *Victims of Immigrant Crime Engagement*. He instructed “the communications teams to showcase photos of alleged criminals. He was especially interested in seeing their gang tattoos.”¹⁴

Miller was responsible for framing an executive order for the Trump border wall. This policy fit into the conception of this mass of invading migrants seeking entrance into the United States. Miller chose to ignore the Flores settlement, which limited to twenty days the amount of time that migrant children could be held by border agents; at the same time, he separated these children from their parents for indefinite periods of time. He also canceled the humane Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program, that had protected more than two hundred thousand Salvadorans, fifty thousand Haitians, and thousands of Nicaraguans among others.¹⁵ It took a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union and a ruling by the US Circuit Court for the Northern District of California to halt this cancellation through a court injunction.

The worst example of anti-migrant policy, which was both cruel and harmful, was the seizure of more than 2,700 children taken from their parents under the zero-tolerance policy. There were no plans by the Trump administration to reunite them with their parents. In response to the public outrage over these migrant children being housed in overcrowded Customs and Border Protection holding cells, the administration responded with a half-hearted endorsement of the family unit but with no plan to unite the families. In another program designed to mistreat migrants, the administration unveiled the Migrant Protection Protocols, which, simply described, was a program to keep migrants in Mexico. Asylum-seekers who were qualified and could be interviewed were sent back to Mexico to await their hearings.

These anti-immigrant policies reflected how hatred and prejudice informed immigration preferences. Trump spoke about bringing in more white immigrants while limiting those who were non-white. These preferences revealed a core element of the administration’s xenophobia, as it

identifies and dehumanizes “bad immigrants” as those who come without authorization, take jobs from Americans, do not assimilate, rely on welfare, and hate America. Meanwhile the “nation of immigrants” identifies and disciplines “good immigrants” as those who come in the right way, behave, conform to American needs and desires, assimilate and accept the status quo unquestioningly.¹⁶

Nonwhites are bad immigrants in contrast to white immigrants who are good. Here again is how the administration's immigration policies constitute a form of destructive politics intended to cause harm. "Undocumented immigrants and their children lived in fear of being deported and separated. Americans with families stuck in refugee camps despaired that they would never be reunited."¹⁷

This xenophobia promoted by Trump and Miller provided white supremacists and white nationalists with official sanction from the US government. It fits into the ideology of Trumpism as a dysfunctional divide and conquer of pitting people living in the United States against those who are foreign-born. Even long-term residents were stigmatized as disloyal foreigners. The resulting violence from parts of Trump's base stemmed from a fear-driven us vs. them mentality, with roots in a deceptive understanding of the history of immigration in the United States. The obvious historical fact is that America has never welcomed immigrants with open arms.

The United States has never been "a nation of immigrants." It has always been a settler state with a core of descendants from the original colonial settlers, that is, primarily Anglo-Saxons, Scots, Irish, and Germans. The vortex of settler colonialism sucked immigration through a kind of seasoning process of Americanization.¹⁸

Trump and Miller understood this well. Their racist depictions of migrants point to an ugly strand of nationalism centered on the hysteria of an alien invasion.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a glaring example of Trump's total disregard for any kind of human suffering. When he first heard about it in January 2020, he expressed the idea that he could just will it away, demonstrating an utter indifference to how this emerging threat would impact people's lives. At the same time, he was hostile to people wearing masks, which he viewed as a sign of weakness. He completely minimized the threat, telling interviewers that the virus was totally under control and that it all came from one person from China, and everything was going to be fine. What did concern him as the virus spread was how it would affect his popularity, his narrative, and eventually his prospects for winning the 2020 election. What preoccupied him in the early phases of the pandemic was how to keep the count as low as possible. When cruise ship passengers became infected, he suggested that they be sent to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, thinking, out of sight, out of mind.

His denial that the virus was spreading was shattered when a woman in California, who had traveled abroad, tested positive. Even when it was no longer possible to deny that the virus was spreading, he addressed the country

noting that “tough measures” would be successful and that the virus would simply disappear. His remarks are a classic example of his lack of feeling or compassion for the suffering of others. As the spread of the virus escalated, and parts of the country had to shut down, putting millions of Americans out of work, Trump was far less concerned about the impact on humans than he was with the impact on the economy, with a clear eye toward how it might affect his reelection. He noted famously, that while people also die every year from the flu, a significant economic downturn would be far more harmful. Contrary to the medical advice from government experts like Anthony Fauci, he pushed to eliminate the lockdowns and reopen the country.

Trump’s self-serving decisions were dysfunctional and destructive not to mention hugely divisive politically. In numerous states, his base became more and more vocal in support of reopening the country; in Michigan for example, Operation Gridlock took to the streets, creating massive traffic jams to protest Gov. Whitmer’s “Stay home, stay safe” executive order. Other protests challenged her order against employers mandating that employees report to work. When Whitmer responded by prohibiting all public and private assembly, thousands of armed militia members descended on the state capitol in Lansing in order to deliberately intimidate legislators. The protests spread to other parts of the country. The ideological narrative fits into an essential part of the anti-government talking points of Trumpism, in which any restriction on business represents big government’s encroachment on liberty. Trump recognized the significance of Operation Gridlock and immediately announced his support, tweeting that it was time to also Liberate Minnesota, Liberate Michigan, and Liberate Virginia. He advanced the idea that Whitmer should negotiate with the protesters, in his words, that she should “give a little” and put out the fire. His overall concern was not over the social cost but the political cost if he did not advocate reopening. He knew he needed the support of his base to win reelection. His appeal to his base undermined a comprehensive COVID policy and cost many thousands of lives. He understood that mobilization of his base was essential at this point in time. He had the support of armed militias that were present at many of the anti-mask rallies. In an odd Orwellian twist, constructive politics, which would have protected people from the virus were seen as causing harm while destructive politics become beneficial.

Throughout the pandemic, Trump and his base were clearly engaging in cognitive dissonance, with the most striking example being Trump’s support for the use of hydroxychloroquine. Not only did it turn out to be ineffective against the virus, but it also caused severe harm to some patients. Trump was obsessed with finding a magical cure for COVID-19, no matter how far-fetched, going to such lengths that he even suggested that people drink bleach, clearly something that would prove severely harmful at a minimum.

The companies that produce Clorox and Lysol were swift to warn people not to consume their products. Trump then backpedaled, noting that he had just been joking. And during the first year of the pandemic, racial inequity made COVID-19 much more lethal in communities of color.

In the records of six hundred thousand US COVID-19 victims between January 22 and May 30 that included details on race and ethnicity, 33 percent were Hispanic, and 22 percent were Black . . . more than 50 percent of the cases affected groups that represented roughly 30 percent of the US population.¹⁹

Lack of adequate health care made these groups more susceptible to obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes, which in turn were risk factors for more severe disease from COVID-19. In addition, institutional racism meant that Hispanics and Blacks had jobs they could not perform remotely. As the 2020 midterm election drew near, Trump further distanced himself from the virus, disbanding the COVID-19 task force and shifting his rhetoric to provide more red meat to the base with calls for violent crackdowns on Black Lives Matter and related protests. He made the outrageous claim that testing for the virus should stop so that the number of cases would drop. And, in the midst of the pandemic, Trump named the virus the “Kung Flu” branding it with one of his classic racist tropes. To further advance a pushback against legitimate medical advice, Trump’s contribution to the human misery associated with COVID-19 was his appointment of Scott Atlas, a radiologist with no expertise in infectious diseases. Atlas lauded Sweden, which hadn’t imposed any lockdowns, as a model to follow. The Swedes did recommend masks and social distancing, but Atlas conveniently ignored that, pushing back against concerns about reopening businesses and schools. Without any supporting medical evidence, Atlas said that children were essentially risk-free from contracting COVID-19. In the meantime, Trump’s party line at rallies—where both masking and social distancing were absent—was that the outbreak was over. In a last-ditch effort to use the virus to his political advantage, Trump focused on a vaccine that would be available before the election. He publicly pressured the FDA to approve it before the election. Then, after Trump had ignored the virus, minimized it, and resisted taking it seriously, one month before the 2020 election, he became one of its victims. And in Trump’s twisted frame of mind, after becoming severely ill, and receiving, of course, top-notch medical care, he became even more convinced that getting infected wasn’t so bad. What was in so many ways destructive about his mindset and policies during the COVID-19 outbreak was that it contributed to widespread dysfunction in various institutions, promoting division and conflict.

Trump created an environment that preyed on a population with diminished trust. Trust in our institutions, trust in our state and federal leaders, trust in the media, trust in each other. Trump and many of his aides prioritized individual liberties over collective action that could have stemmed the spread of the disease.²⁰

Throughout his presidency, Trump's ability to market himself, which he perfected while doing the TV show *The Apprentice*, served him well in terms of his ultimate goal of mobilizing his base. He presented, in essence, two public faces: one was directed at inspiring the rage and violence of his base while the other was the more constructive "Make America Great Again" face. Critics see in these two faces the personification of Trump as demagogue. A fundamental ingredient that Trump used successfully both in the campaign and once in office was his ability as a salesman to understand that hate sells to a vocal segment of white America. As a demagogue, Trump understood that as a seller of hate, he had to market to a receptive audience, provided by Twitter and his rallies. One of the key elements of Trump's role as a demagogue was to overwhelm his audience with an ongoing twenty-four-hour repetition of simple propaganda messages. In so doing, he was able to drown out competing messages. In so many ways, without knowing it, Trump was making use of one of Jeremy Bentham's political fallacies: demean the person in order to demean the viewpoint. With name calling, whether it was "low-energy Biden," "crooked Hillary," or "lying Ted," etc. Trump put the focus on personality not policy. He had an instinct for understanding that the perceived psychology of a candidate can often be more important than any policy statement. When character assassination is insufficient, Trump engages in the rapid production of multiple messages to confuse and prevent any assessment of the messages. This method is, in part, intended to make Trump's supporters blindly follow his lead. When he realizes that his rhetoric has negative consequences, he then tailors his messages in such a way so that his base can act out in provocative and violent ways. Trump had a deep understanding of how demagogues can affect their audience. He was well aware of how Hitler had used his voice, body language, and gestures to control the emotions of his audience.

By attacking institutions, Trump could make his anti-elitist appeal to the crowd. He mobilized and gave expression to a segment of white America that felt left out, in so doing, intensifying divisions between white and non-white America. The rage of white Americans stems from what they see as their victimization by non-whites who, they are told, have been favored by political elites. Above all, what Trump understood was that his rhetoric would make white nationalism respectable without admitting to it. He often spoke in a kind of code that was well-understood by his white nationalist audiences. At

times when he appeared to disavow white nationalism, he did so in order to neutralize criticism of his tacit support, giving cover to the non-racists among his base and allowing them to deny his racism. It was all a matter of timing for Trump: when to send coded messages to racists, which they understood and when to distance himself from the racists; his denials allowed for some ambiguity. He would say something while also appearing not to say it.

His use of paralipsis made it possible for him to appeal to the unconscious fears of his followers who fully understood his meaning. At a rally in January 2016, he read a poem called “The Snake,” which told the story of a woman who found a dying snake and rescued it. Once it recovered, it bit the woman and killed her by injecting its venom. The snake told the woman, “You knew I was a snake when you rescued me.” Trump knew his audience understood its meaning. Later that year he mentioned the snake again and made the clear and unmistakable analogy between the snake and immigrants, stating plainly how the “wrong people” shouldn’t be allowed into the United States. Obviously, the migrants arriving at the border were the dangerous snakes. It was necessary to keep them out through any means necessary. The narrative fit neatly into the way that Trump used fear to cultivate hatred of migrants, eventually leading to mistreatment and violence against them.

In order to motivate the base to express its anger, he developed a theory of conspiracy. He associated America’s greatness with American exceptionalism and presented it as though both were under threat. Essential to his theory of conspiracy was the fact that it was being perpetrated by behind-the-scenes actors, such as the Deep State, the promoters of fake news, specific journalists, and liberal elites. According to this conspiracy, American greatness was being undermined by what Trump presented as various Trojan horses, such as the hordes of immigrants and the government’s favoring of minorities through social welfare programs. Through Trump’s divide and conquer strategy, pitting segments of white America against all others—women, Blacks, LGBTQ+, Jews, immigrants, and others—amounted to an all-out assault on the essence of democracy. With his consistent messaging of the threat, Trump’s politics was moving in the direction of destroying democracy. His destructive politics amounted to a zero-sum game of winners and losers.

As a demagogue committed to monopolizing political discourse, Trump worked to deny a common public good in favor of words and deeds that shut out other viewpoints. He set himself up as the final arbiter of political realities, to reject other viewpoints by distorting them, employing negative sound bites and disinformation. Trump was appealing to white nationalists and encouraging them to take action. To create destructive politics, Trump mastered the fine art of bonding with his followers as an entertainer who was masterful at manipulating the emotions of his audience. At the rallies, he acted as the leader of a three-ring circus, using words to shock and awe

those in attendance. He dared to speak the unspeakable as he entertained. Interviewed by Chuck Todd on *Meet the Press*, Trump was pleased to compare himself to P.T. Barnum. In shocking his followers and then getting them to join with him in making various shocking statements, he effectively bonded with his followers.

The starting point for Trump's rhetoric is the verbal assault and the vivid description of the manufactured threats. This works to ramp up the anger of his audience, leading to a demand for action and violence as the solution. Violence becomes the means of silencing other views. Trumpists see violence not as a vice but as a virtue as expressed by the use of weapons, which are a definition of self-expression and one's identity. This eventual outcome of Trump followers using violence to impose a view of their whiteness is related to how Trump markets hate. Other than his tax cut, Trump had no other significant legislative proposals.

In so many ways, Trump is all form and no substance. Like an advertiser selling a product, Trump filled his administration as if it was a Hollywood casting call, he "sought 'the look,' a fixation in keeping with the beauty pageants he had once run."²¹ Trump's lack of depth applied to how he viewed people of color, women, immigrants, and Jews. He applied his prejudicial stereotypes based on how they looked. With these negative attributes in mind, Trump defines people in terms of distorted physical images. For example, when Megyn Kelly interviewed Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign, and her questions upset his fragile ego, Trump later referred to her with a not-so-subtle image of blood coming out of various parts of her body. When Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland dared to criticize Trump, Trump fired back with reference to Cummings' majority Black district. "If he spent more time in Baltimore, he could help clean up this very dangerous and filthy place," said Trump, referring to the city as "a disgusting rat and rodent-infested mess."

The reality of Trump as a hate-filled divider who spews out ignorant, dehumanizing stereotypes sharply contrasts with his own deluded view of himself as a very stable genius.

In a July 2019 morning tweetstorm that covered everything from the Democratic presidential primaries to the pledge of allegiance, Trump wrote of himself, "What you have now, so great looking and smart, a true stable genius!" On a Saturday morning in September 2019, Trump quoted himself on Twitter by writing: "A very stable genius! Thank you." And in October 2019, as he defended his conduct, Trump remarked, "There are those who think I'm a very stable genius, okay?"²²

His extreme elevation of his mental state provides an opportunity to debase the mental states of other people. Trump contrasts his alleged superiority with the inferiority of others. Conservative critic attorney George Conway became so alarmed by Trump's behavior that he consulted the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in order to identify Trump as exhibiting the criteria for what the manual calls narcissistic personality disorder. Trump's sense of self as characterized by the manual is an identity that is dependent on feelings of superiority, solidified by his hatred of others. When Trump felt threatened by the thoughts and actions of demonstrators protesting the death of George Floyd, he took action. In a meeting with his advisors, he wanted decisive action because in his words, "We look weak. We don't look strong." In no uncertain terms, Trump wanted to send a message to the demonstrators. In talking to governors, he said, "You have to dominate. If you don't dominate, you're wasting your time. They're going to run all over you, you look like a bunch of jerks. You have to dominate."²³

Trump would not accept the peaceful protest at Lafayette Square in close proximity to the White House. In a violent display, after consultation with Attorney General William Barr, he instructed the Capitol Police to clear the area of protesters. Police used pepper spray and tear gas to remove protesters so Trump could walk through Lafayette Square and have his photo op where he held a Bible in front of St. John's Episcopal Church. What took place at Lafayette Square was just one example of how Trump justified actions that harm American democracy and the right of peaceful dissent. Instead, Trump rationalized a violent attack on peaceful demonstrators by engaging in "what-aboutism." Trump defended his actions at Lafayette Square as a response to what he depicted as violent Antifa demonstrators. It was an obvious fallacy of false equivalents. Trump is also a master of gaslighting, portraying criticism as nothing more than the incoherent rantings of lunatics. In so doing, Trump wants to appear as an innocent victim of people with questionable motives. One end result is to allow Trump to distort reality, which amounts to a gross indifference to the pain and suffering of others. Trump gave credence to a false reality, as seen in his appearance on *InfoWars*, where he alleged that the massacre of children at Sandy Hook Elementary School was nothing more than "a false flag."

His overall political narrative is to disparage those he considers to be powerless victims, who are, for him, losers. People who suffer various forms of injustice deserve what they get. This mindset motivates how Trump believes that people who think differently from him should be punished. Days after Heather Heyer was hit by a car driven by a white supremacist, Trump retweeted an image of a train hitting a person wearing a CNN logo. In contrast, he embraced in subtle and overt ways support for white supremacists. Trump has retweeted the posts of a user with the handle White-GenocideTM,

which is chockful of explicit anti-Semitic material and references to the threat from minority groups attempting to undermine White America. “In early July 2016, as the Republican candidate, Trump tweeted an image of Hillary Clinton surrounded by piles of cash with a stylized six-pointed star that looked awfully similar to the star of David.”²⁴ He attacked peaceful dissent by people of color against white racism, as evident when Trump called Colin Kaepernick a “son of a bitch,” indicating that anyone who dared to kneel during the national anthem should be terminated. His destructive form of politics fosters division, calling people who dissent unpatriotic and translating as a message of do not question his authority.

Trump’s nepotism was another sign of his inability to accept independent advice. “Trump is using unqualified family members as his main advisers. Every major decision President Trump has made in almost a year in office has been influenced by two relatives with no government experience, no understanding of policy nuance and no real expertise.”²⁵ Trump’s daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner were powerful simply because of their familial relationship to Trump, a clear sign of Trump’s incompetence in office. The role he assigned to Kushner was particularly problematic.

Trump put him in charge of just about everything. Mockingly referred to as the secretary of everything, Kushner was tasked with: bringing peace to the Middle East, criminal justice reform, serving as a liaison to Mexico, acting as a point person for China, solving the massive opioid crisis decimating rural America, and reforming the entire federal government.²⁶

It wasn’t expertise, official roles or careful selection that mattered, only one’s personal relationship to Trump. Unsurprisingly, Trump’s hatred was rooted in his ignorance. Even many of his hand-picked advisors and policymakers in the White House were well-aware of Trump’s intellectual shortcomings.

His former national security advisor John Bolton called him “stunningly uninformed.” . . . His advisor Sam Nunn called him an “idiot;” his Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and two of his chiefs of staff, Reince Priebus and John Kelly, reputedly did as well . . . H.R. McMaster, the national security advisor who preceded Bolton allegedly said that Trump had the intelligence of a “kindergartener.”²⁷

His lack of curiosity was evident during an interview with Megyn Kelly of Fox News when she asked Trump to discuss the most recent book he read and Trump replied, “I read passages. I read areas, I read chapters. I don’t have any time.” Tony Schwartz, who knew him well as his ghost writer for *Trump: The Art of the Deal*, said he had doubts that Trump had ever read a whole book

straight through. While Trump hardly read anything of significant length, his ex-wife Ivana spoke about the one book Trump had kept and read. It was *My New Order*, a collection of Hitler's speeches.

During a 2018 trip to Paris, in order to commemorate the 100th anniversary marking the end of World War I, Trump, in a private conversation to his then-chief of staff John Kelly, remarked, "Hitler did a lot of good things." As a way to overlook Kelly's references to Hitler's mass killings, Trump wanted to present Hitler as having done good things for Germany, in particular, its economy when Hitler became chancellor. Kelly replied, "the German people would have been better off poor than subjected to the Nazi genocide."²⁸ An all-too-common sentiment expressed by anti-Semites is presenting a so-called positive side of Hitler. There is another troubling implication of this distorted view: this whitewashing of Hitler by Trump and Trumpism contributes to a normalization of fascism. It is no coincidence that there are similarities between Hitler and Trump as well as between the Nazis and Trumpism. In an insightful article by Thomas David Kehoe, "Thirteen Similarities Between Donald Trump and Adolf Hitler," he compares the fascist leadership styles of both as well as the Nazi movement and Trumpism. Most striking are the political climates in Nazi Germany and the United States today. Kehoe identified the extreme polarization of viewpoints in Germany in the 1920s and in the United States before and after Trump was elected. He compares post-WWI Germany to the United States, noting how economic downturns in both countries contributed to the rise of street fighters expressing anti-government views. Kehoe points to an obvious similarity in the speeches of Hitler and Trump, emphasizing the idea of restoration to an ideal past. Throughout the 1920s in Germany and during and after the 2016 election, the dissemination of conspiracy theories and scapegoating of minorities became all too common. Kehoe points out that both the Nazi party and the Republican party developed the means to undermine democracy and the rule of law. He also compares the psychologies of Hitler and Trump. "Adolf Hitler was not good at administration. His management style was to put off decisions . . . Donald Trump is also not good at administration and his management style is to foster a chaotic environment."²⁹ Both Hitler and Trump mastered ways to use the media of their day to manipulate the masses. Kehoe describes how Hitler started with speeches in beer halls, then shifted to print media and then to the radio whereas Trump started with his own reality TV show, then was the first major politician to move on to master social media. Both Hitler and Trump exhibit extreme forms of narcissism, demonstrating an inability to take into account viewpoints that differ from their own. They also demonstrate a similar malevolent intelligence expressed as an obsession with policies intended to cause harm to social segments that do not conform to their racial and social stereotypes. They both viewed themselves as rulers above the law and worked

to eliminate legal restraints on their willful exercise of power. For both leaders, their power originates in the blind obedience of their followers.

Neither leader was self-made; they were mere opportunists, who, at certain points in time seized the historical moment and succeeded in spite of their psychological shortcomings. For example, Trump had a notoriously short attention span.

Trump won't read anything—not one-page memos, not the brief policy papers; nothing. He gets up halfway through meetings with world leaders because he is bored. To brief a man with such a severe case of book hesitancy, his aides resorted to a throwback from the Reagan era, putting on shows, featuring graphs, maps, photos, and other word-free visual aids.³⁰

Trump is an example of someone who becomes President of the United States in spite of himself, someone who is not self-made, inheriting his father's money, and was in many ways a failure, had had bankruptcies, created a fake university and a joke of a football team. So what explains why Trump became president? It was his uncanny knack to self-promote, which he showcased with *The Apprentice*. He is a classic example of the power of advertising in the United States. He was marketing a product that appealed to a segment of American society. Much of what he presented as the politics of destruction he honed while in his role on *The Apprentice*. The big lie used against people of color, women, immigrants, and Jews was used with great effectiveness to mass market Trump as something he was not. He kicked off the first episode with a big lie: "My name's Donald Trump, and I'm the largest real estate developer in New York." He understood that, as host of *The Apprentice* for fifteen years, he could repeat untruths and they would eventually be accepted as truth. *The Apprentice* presented the image of a "can-do" Trump. Redefining reality as he did in *The Apprentice* prepared him for redefining reality once he became president; in both cases he created a monopoly over messaging. A day after Trump's inauguration, the strategy of monopolizing the message was defined by Steve Bannon as "flooding the zone" with short messages and images, designed to generate fear. They took a page from George Orwell's 1984, where what is unreal becomes real. Over time, with repetition, the most extreme ideas become accepted as real.

The rise of Trumpism was in many ways, a class-specific movement. It is a misconception that people who are less educated are more likely to be misinformed and deceived. But there is a partial truth that those who lack access to multiple sources of information cannot analyze various viewpoints because they aren't exposed to them. Trumpism developed with people who could claim to know better. Those who become misinformed in the face of complicated issues could be seen as victims of the "smart idiot effect," which

is produced primarily by a class bias. The Trumpists emerged most strongly from segments of the middle class, who actively seek out reasons to support their way of thinking, what academics refer to as confirmation bias, that is, the search for information that can be used to interpret and support the group's class identity. In support of confirmation bias, information is gathered through a selective lens. In an attempt to protect class identity, the filtering amounts to adopting supportive ideas and rejecting those that are contrary to class identity. America's middle class collectively understood that Trump was prescient in understanding its collective sense of being under threat. The conditions that created the middle class after the end of WWII were no longer present. Decline in the professions was decreasing mobility, while increased debt and the need for two wage earners in a household contributed to a collective sense of a class in decline. "In 1970, three in every five Americans lived in a middle-class household, and they enjoyed a proportionate share of the nation's income. Today, only half are in the middle class and their share of income has shrunk to 40 percent."³¹

In creating a destructive politics, Trump was making an appeal to segments of the middle class. Make America Great Again (MAGA) was a message that in many ways was tailor-made to these segments. Distorting the reasons why the middle class was in decline was essential to his divide-and-conquer political strategy. What Trump lacked in intellectual curiosity, he made up for in knowing how to create a false reality from which he could then manipulate his targeted audience. The distortion and manipulation of middle-class fears were a crucial part of the message, which allowed for Trump's scapegoating and pointing the finger at those who weren't part of the white middle class. In particular, white middle-class males were a key target. He emphasized their powerlessness and the loss of their masculinity to women, non-whites, LGBTQ+, people of color, Jews, immigrants, etc. This tapped into a part of the American electorate, which responded and reacted to a more diverse America with unease and fear. "The resistance to change was strongest among white people who felt economically precarious; changing demographics heightened the fear of falling from their place a few rungs from the bottom of the ladder, a phenomenon."³² The middle class sensed that it was shrinking, and Trump tapped into the fear that white people felt that future generations of whites would become a minority. The white middle class was searching for ideas that would allow them to return to their past glory. Trump mastered mobilizing this fear into hatred and this hatred into violence. His destructive brand of politics was expressed as normalizing extreme acts of violence against diverse segments in the United States. He knew who his target audience was.

As early as May 2016, exit polls and other data showed that Trump supporters earned an average of \$72,000 a year, while supporters of Hillary Clinton

averaged \$11,000 less. Two-thirds of Trump's supporters had incomes higher than the national median—sometimes, as in Greenwich, much higher.³³

Trump would succeed in unleashing from elements of the white middle class what Richard Hofstadter called a “paranoid style,” paranoid about LGBTQ+, Blacks, women, immigrants, Jews, etc., all viewed as a threat to the future of the middle class.

Hofstadter noted that in America, unlike the rest of the world, political violence rarely involved poor citizens rising up against a powerful state; more often, citizens attacked one another, and usually the attackers were established Americans—white Protestants, in many cases, turning on minorities, immigrants, Catholics, radical workers, and labor organizers.³⁴

Trumpism evolved as a predatory, often violent, attack on those who are vulnerable in society. So much a part of Trump's destructive politics are evident in the examples Adam Server provides in his book *The Cruelty is the Point*.

The Trump administration was seeking to ethnically cleanse more than 193,000 American children of immigrants whose temporary protected status had been revoked by the administration, that the Department of Homeland Security had lied about creating a database of children that would make it possible to unite them with the families the Trump administration had arbitrarily destroyed, that the White House was considering a blanket ban on visas for Chinese students, and that it would deny visas to the same-sex partners of foreign officials.³⁵

These and other policies indicate the association of Trump's hatred with the mobilization of the white male middle class. At the height of violence from Trump's base, the insurrection of January 6, 2021, consider the class profile of those who stormed the Capitol. “Of the 501 for which we have employment data, more than half were business owners, including CEOs, or from white-collar occupations, including doctors, lawyers, architects, and accountants.”³⁶ What took place that day represented a novel kind of violent movement of so-called normal Trumpists of the middle class not directly tied to the extremist right. A significant majority of January 6 suspects had no association with the organized violent wings of the white supremacist movement. Only a small segment could be classified as members of militias or militia-type groups such as the Proud Boys, Three Percenters, and Oath Keepers. “89 percent of the arrestees have no apparent affiliation with any known militant organization.”³⁷

While parts of the middle class were storming the Capitol, instigated by Trump's fiery rhetoric, they were not the beneficiaries of Trump's \$1.9 trillion

Tax Cut and Jobs Act signed into law on December 22, 2017. Trump falsely repeated over and over that “the rich will not be gaining at all from this plan.” He went so far as to say this legislation was going “to cost me a fortune.” He deceptively sold the tax cut as “one of the greatest Christmas gifts to middle income people.” So while middle class white men stormed the Capitol, Trump’s tax cut was taking effect. The upward movement of benefits to the well-to-do and corporate America continues as the tax bill generated a wind-fall to the 1 percent. But,

the real benefit, \$1.35 trillion, went to corporations—and by extension to their top executives and shareholders. Securing a massive tax cut was the feature of the tax bill that Trump personally insisted on. . . . Under the new code, the effective corporate tax, what companies really pay after taking advantage of loopholes, fell from an already low 17.2 percent to just 8.8 percent.³⁸

Above all, for all the misdirected anger and violence targeted to vulnerable groups, “The tax cut’s benefits to middle-income earners worked out to be \$65 a month.”³⁹ Trump’s phony populism bolstered by his false promises was part of an elaborate political con. While the upper classes and corporations reaped the benefits, Trump engaged in divide-and-conquer politics. What he accomplished was to magnify society’s existing underlying hatreds.

Trumpism is realized through various organizations that unleash hatred in the form of force and violence. During the Trump presidency, racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism and other hatreds were openly expressed and normalized. Trump and Trumpism are linked as a reactionary response, acting as a hateful, violent backlash against incremental progress in the areas of race, gender, and ethnicity. Trumpists were reacting to what they saw as a looming threat to the power exercised by the white minority. Middle- and upper-class whites were seeking to preserve their social positions against changing social demographics. Nevertheless, those demographics by themselves, are insufficient to overturn white minority politics. “Protesting against racist power and succeeding can never be mistaken for seizing power.”⁴⁰ The various racist organizations that are an essential part of Trumpism focus their views of race on the prejudiced traits of people of color. Racist organizations have developed at certain points in time when certain events make parts of white America fearful. Whether it was the period of Reconstruction, the civil rights movement, or the election of President Obama, symbolic and actual progress generates a backlash in the form of these racist organizations. While the Trumpists are a manifestation of a reactionary backlash, there are also the liberal enablers of racism, who advance the idea of a post-racial and colorblind America; this was particularly the case after the election of Obama. The emergence of the Tea Party, for example, completely contradicts that view, claiming to be

a fiscally conservative anti-tax movement but which was also a movement growing out of the white backlash against the progress symbolized by the election of Obama. The Tea Party movement helped lead to the mainstreaming of latent and overt racism.

White supremacy has proven to be remarkably durable throughout American history, based on the persistent belief and practice that Black bodies should be owned and controlled. Since the Civil War and right into contemporary times, American racism has been linked to the control of Black bodies, which are regarded as commodities. When people of color organize to reclaim their lost humanity, white supremacy elements strike back with organized violence. What is truly perverse is that internalizing racist ideas justifies white violence, which is employed to push back against any efforts to undermine white privilege. Violence is the ultimate expression of white power, which will dispossess any gains made toward greater racial equity. Trumpist organizations use violence as a means of demonstrating the superiority of the white race and the inferiority of races of color. It is by embracing in various ways Trump's racism that the white racists give themselves permission to use violence. While Trumpist groups act in support of white racism through the expression of violence, their actions stem from larger cultural norms from which the ideology of racism operates. Trumpists assumed the role of policing threats to the proper functioning of institutional racism. When those threats escalate, and whites see competition for jobs coming from people of color, Trumpism unleashes violence to prevent the realization of those threats. The message behind the violence to people of color is that they must accept their inferior status. Trump's message appealed to a certain subsection of the middle class who had embraced the culture of racism. Joel Kovel, in his insightful psychohistory of white racism locates the source of white rage that Trump had tapped into: "for all its malevolence, racism served a stabilizing function in American culture for many generations. Indeed, it was a source of gratification to whites, facilitated a sense of virtue in white America—a trait which contributed to America's material success."⁴¹ Trump's MAGA message about an America in decline also attracted the attention of this subset of the middle class, which felt a threat to the racist cultural norms that had what they say, as Kovel pointed out, a stabilizing effect.

Long before he sought the presidency, Trump's questioning of Obama's legitimacy as president, which became the birther movement, confirmed the fears of white racists. For the most avid racists, like David Duke, this was clear evidence of the decline of the white racial power structure and of white civilization. To the racist, Obama symbolized Black progress because he was a Black person who had moved into and was occupying a heretofore white institution. It's no coincidence that the racist violence unleashed during the Trump administration emerged out of the growing resentment and racism that

intensified when Obama took office. Trump's election, in part, was a backlash against the election of Obama; this isn't to say that there weren't other factors at play, but racism was certainly an element. The Trumpist organizations, whether they were the KKK, neo-Nazis, Proud Boys, or QAnon, all personified to some degree political paranoia, a term used by Robert Robins and Jerrod Post in their book on *The Psychopolitics of Hatred*. The authors point to several elements that are factors in political paranoia: extreme suspiciousness, centrality, grandiosity, hostility, fear of loss of autonomy, projection, and delusional thinking. Suspiciousness plays a key role especially in QAnon, which focuses on hidden conspiracies. With centrality, racists feel threatened by any advances made by non-whites. Grandiosity is reflected by the projection of force, with the wearing of body armor and conspicuous display of weapons. These people also reflect hostility as they are "belligerent and irritable, humorless and extremely sensitive to slights, combative and quarrelsome, tightly wound and bristlingly defensive."⁴² Whites exhibit political paranoia when they engage in projection, referring to the alleged violence of groups like Black Lives Matter and Antifa when in fact the Trumpists are the ones perpetrating most of the violence. The clearest example of delusional thinking among the Trumpists is QAnon, whose members have a license to invent, engaging in cognitive dissonance to create a nonexistent reality and to obsessively believe the reality of any event that the group fabricates without question.

While there is some value to the concept of white fragility as espoused by Robin DiAngelo, who defines it as "triggered by discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement . . . a powerful means of white racial control and the protection of white advantage,"⁴³ the racism of whites can be better understood in relation to class divisions. It is the fragility of middle-class segments that produce some of the most intense violent outbursts of racism. My contention is that class divisions generate racism. Also, racism among whites varies between the intense class-based racists of the middle and upper classes and the less intense racism of the working class. Not all whites are equally racist. Their degree of racism is shaped by how they react to capitalism organizing social relations and the structure of class divisions. Through institutional racism, upper-class whites can maintain racism through non-violent means. In varying degrees, racism perpetuates the class structure. Capitalism relies on racism to use people of color as sources of cheap labor. The reproduction of class divisions means the reproduction of racial divisions. One's class identity will, in turn, define their view of race and racism. This isn't to say that there is no racism among the working class. What I argue is that racism is far more prevalent in the middle and upper classes. Among working class whites spanning the history of the labor movement, there was no denying exclusion from unions on the basis of race, especially

those that had an emphasis on business unionism, such as those in the AFL-CIO. However, there are also many examples of the white working class being inclusive of people of color especially in the progressive labor unions.

Trump's MAGA appeal was primarily aimed at mobilizing parts of the middle class, it wasn't primarily targeted to the working class. When the working class appears to be embracing racist ideas, it is because in the words of Paulo Freire, they have not fully understood their pedagogy of oppression. When the working class achieves a greater political consciousness, there is a shedding of racist attitudes. The racism felt and at times accepted by the working class is an ideology that is imposed on the working class. The production and reproduction of racism which is built into the culture and institutions is nonetheless mediated by movements which either support or oppose racism.

The concept of white fragility does explain how anger and rage create the means through which racist violence is expressed. Trumpism made it obvious that it was no longer possible to exercise what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls "color-blind racism," which is when there is an absence of clear racist directives but where institutions operate along racist lines. This kind of color-blind racism is invisible and yet integral to the functioning of various institutions, a kind of conscious and yet subconscious understanding of how racism operates. Trumpism rejected the idea of color-blind racism and eagerly embraced openly racist attitudes. The police shootings of unarmed Blacks, such as Samuel DuBose, Freddie Gray, Natasha McKenna, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Rekia Boyd, and so many others are a clear indication of the absurdity of color-blind racism. Nevertheless, even while Trumpism might have emerged in part, as a response to the perceived threat embodied by the Obama presidency, Obama while in office, did little to address racial divisions and in many instances, sided with white corporate America. If anything, Obama was the personification of a post-racial view, a symbol of someone who had gone beyond his skin color. Trump and the Trumpists did not accept Obama's depiction that race is no longer a big deal. Trump played it both ways, sending out racist dog whistles, while denying that his views were racist.

Trump also employed anti-Semitism to expand his base, using anti-Semitic tropes that resonated with both the violent and nonviolent parts of his base. The term anti-Semitism was invented in the 1870s by a German journalist, Wilhelm Marr. It would become a body of knowledge, a form of specific group hatred, assuming over time different religious and secular manifestations. In writing about the history of anti-Semitism, Robert S. Wistrich calls it the longest hatred. His summary of the various religious and secular forms of anti-Semitism illustrates the scope of this hatred and its purpose as a fixation to scapegoat and hate Jews.

They have been charged with deicide (the killing of Christ), with piercing holy communion wafers to make them bleed (desecration of the host), with the ritual murder of Christian children at Easter; they have been held responsible for poisoning wells and for the Black Death during the Middle Ages; for practicing witchcraft, forging an alliance with the mythical antichrist and conspiring to destroy Christendom . . . that Jews are striving for world domination by achieving control of the international financial system, for promoting revolutionary socialist ideologies, or through the alleged machinations of Zionism and the state of Israel.⁴⁴

Trump and Trumpists repeated the anti-Semitic stereotypes that have appeared over time. His subtle and overt anti-Semitism was used by violence-prone organizations and resulted in the murder of Jews. At the same time, nonviolent segments of the middle class also were expressing anti-Semitic attitudes, a result of their fear of losing their middle-class standing. Expressions of anti-Semitism make them feel somewhat less insecure. They also take a sadistic delight in having the ability to exercise power over others, whom they identify as being responsible for their problems. With his various anti-Semitic tropes, he allows followers permission to act out and to freely express anti-Semitic stereotypes. In this way, Trump creates a simplified view of reality in terms of us vs. them. In so doing, without claiming responsibility, with a wink and a nod, he gives permission to Trumpists to cause harm to others and take a vicarious thrill in spewing this hatred, the end result of which is violence. Trump never admitted to encouraging criminal acts but his rhetoric inspired criminality.

In the absence of anti-Semitism, the anti-Semites in Trump's base lacked purpose and a group identity but with it, they acquire the power to define Jews and trap them in this invented and derogatory definition to justify their hatred and potential violence. As far as the anti-Semite is concerned, there can be no escape from their definition of a Jew. "To be a Jew is to be thrown into—to be abandoned to—the situation of a Jew; and at the same time it is to be responsible in and through one's own person for the destiny and the very nature of the Jewish people."⁴⁵ For Albert Memmi, the idea of Jewish identity was forged in a fate of historical misfortune caused by oppression. If not consciously, then unconsciously, Jews possess a collective memory of being oppressed. "Anti-Semitism openly borrows the language, the images and the obsessive theme from the society in which it lives. And when anti-Semites go so far as to commit murder, that is because they believe they have been given permission."⁴⁶ An example of this is the QAnon reference to conspiracies based on age-old anti-Semitic tropes, such as child abductions and ritual murders. This idea of an historical eternal Jew, a Jew for all time as fixed in this kind of mythical portrayal functions to justify oppression. "The

anti-Semite's portrait of a Jew is nothing but an accusation: it exists in the mind of the anti-Semite. Far from enlightening us about the Jew, it shows up in the psychology of the stupidity and the injustice of other men."⁴⁷

In an odd twist, an all-too-common perception of Jews is that they are too successful. Of course, the truth is more complicated. While a percentage of Jews have succeeded, the anti-Semite views any success of Jews as a threat. A positive is turned into a negative.

Anti-Semitism consists of negative attitudes toward Jewish people; individually or collectively; conduct that reflects these attitudes; and ideologies that sustain them . . . it means hostility toward Jews, including thoughts that are not acted upon and actions that are not fully thought out. As a set of attitudes, it ranges from mild disdain to virulent loathing. As a form of conduct, it embraces hostility toward individual Jews, Jewish institutions, and Jewish collectivity. As an ideology, it provides a way to make sense of the entire world and all of history.⁴⁸

A representative sample of Trump's anti-Semitic tropes illustrate the dog whistles to those followers and groups who become inspired to take action against Jews. In 2020, *Washington Post* reporter Greg Miller reported that Trump had said after having a conversation with Jewish leaders that "they are only in it for themselves."⁴⁹

During the presidential campaign of 2016, Trump made use of an anti-Semitic trope of Jews having power over American politics. He tweeted an image of Hillary Clinton surrounded by money, depicting her as the most corrupt candidate ever with a six-point star in the shape of the star of David. In another example, Trump remarked "Jews better get their act together before it is too late," a reference to Jews having dual loyalties. He claimed they were disloyal for supporting Democrats. At an Israeli American Council meeting, he addressed the Jews this way disparaging them with reference to their moneymaking, "A lot of you are in the real estate business, because I know you very well. You're brutal killers, not nice people at all."⁵⁰

All of these messages serve to mobilize Trump's base to take action against the excluded, non-whites, Jews, immigrants, women, and others. The aggressors' privileges are to be protected through their aggressive actions,

stressing the real or imaginary differences between the racist and the victim, assigning values to these differences, to the advantage of the racist and to the detriment of the victim. Trying to make them absolutes by generalizing from them and claiming that they are real. Justifying any present or possible aggression or privilege.⁵¹

To the oppressor, the oppressed appear as an alien race. When thought and action unite in this way, it is in service of the interests of the few, to serve

minority politics. In the chapter that follows, I will explain how the violent Trumpist groups manifest what Memmi refers to as “heterophobia,” a fear of people who are different, pointing out that racists construct the meaning of difference to their advantage. The devaluation of people who are different results in harmful, destructive politics. The racism amounts to an all-out verbal and often violent assault on the elements that make up a diverse society. As a form of social oppression, racism undermines the functioning of a diverse society in favor of policies that promote a homogenous society, largely white, male, and upper class. Racists in Trump’s base have an instinct for targeting the most vulnerable groups. As some of Trump’s followers arm themselves, they use violence to fight the groups that are struggling against oppression. Through thought and action, racism assigns blame to the victims of racism. The racists’ enemies must be confronted and eventually overcome by violent means. Since the aim is to overcome the enemies the racist perceives, when aggression leads to violence it bears a resemblance to waging war.

Women also are in the crosshairs of Trump and Trumpism. Trump objectifies women’s bodies through sexist remarks and his reputation for promoting and engaging in violence against women. The infamous Access Hollywood tape in which Trump explains to anchor Billy Bush how he goes about assaulting women in shocking yet unabashed detail: “I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it, you can do anything . . . grab them by the pussy.” In other words, he assaults women because he believes he has a complete license to do so. He was reported to have commented to *Maximum Golf* magazine, while catching sight of a young woman entering his Mar-a-lago club, that “There is nothing in the world like first-rate pussy.” When he participated in beauty pageants, he was clearly inspecting the women and judging them in terms of their sexual appeal and their potential to be “first-rate,” clearly dehumanizing them into nothing more than sex objects. During a presidential debate when asked why he calls women “fat pigs, dogs, slobs, and disgusting animals,” he responded simply by saying he only referred to Rosie O’Donnell that way.⁵² For Trump, women’s physical attributes are to be keenly inspected and judged, but the same standard to his appearance does not apply. He is clearly obese but nevertheless consumes a diet of unhealthy junk food, he dyes his hair and artificially tans his face.

Trump’s overall animosity toward women reveals his need to physically dominate women’s bodies; this had political implications once he took office. In December 2019, his administration made changes to specific parts of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which would adversely affect previous insurance coverage for abortion services. A year earlier, the US Department of Health and Human Services put in place rules that expanded religious exceptions for employers, universities, and insurers opposed to coverage for contraception. Those exceptions were upheld on appeal by the US Supreme

Court. His administration also required the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to stop monitoring pay data to determine if there was discrimination based on gender. In March 2019, the administration undermined Title X, a family planning program that provides a range of health care services. They included a “domestic gag rule,” which mandated that health care providers that receive Title X funds could not refer patients for abortion services or for information about health services. In another form of sex discrimination, the Trump administration undercut section 1557 of the ACA, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, natural origin, sex, age, and disability. In particular, this negatively impacted LGBTQ+ individuals seeking abortion services.

Of course, Trump’s most egregious assault on women’s bodies came with his fulfillment of his campaign pledge to pack the US Supreme Court with extremist judges drawn from the Federalist Society who could be counted on to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. With the *Dobbs* ruling, the Supreme Court set the stage to initiate a state takeover of women’s bodies. In the post-*Roe* era, the immediate effect was an outright ban in eleven states with a total of twenty-six of fifty states becoming jurisdictions where new abortion restrictions were put in place. The intent to cause harm to women’s bodies was realized through trigger laws and legislative bans. Doctors in Idaho who performed abortions could now be charged with a criminal offense even if a pregnancy threatened the life of the woman. In Texas and Indiana, a legal abortion ban was also placed on medication abortions. In addition, nineteen states mandated that physicians were prohibited from using telemedicine as a means of prescribing medication abortions. The Trump administration was extraordinarily effective in realizing one of its main goals, causing harm to women and making the assault on women’s bodies and choices a permanent fixture of American politics. The visible evidence of the harm his administration has continued to cause even though it is out of power include the following:

the ten-year-old rape victim who was denied an abortion in Ohio and was forced to get one in Indiana, resulting in a near-total ban in that state as well; a women who was forced to spend weeks dangerously carrying a dead fetus in Texas; a Louisiana woman who carried a fetus without a skull that would die within minutes of birth traveled 1,400 miles to New York to end her pregnancy after her hospital refused to perform an abortion; a woman in a prohibition state who was unable to get an abortion after miscarrying had to endure hours of painful labor because doctors refused to perform the necessary procedure; hospitals in prohibition states have instructed doctors to dangerously delay treating ectopic pregnancies; instead of promptly removing a fetus with no chance of survival, prohibition state doctors send pregnant patients home if their water breaks too early, putting them at risk of life-threatening infection and the loss of their

uterus; forensic nurses treating rape victims in prohibition states will no longer provide morning-after contraception out of fears that it will be considered an abortion drug; poor women and girls are being compelled to give birth to children for whom they cannot adequately provide care and in a striking ironic example, a Florida court ruled that a sixteen-year-old girl was too immature to have an abortion but mature enough to become a mother.⁵³

These reasons actually surpass the intent to cause harm to women's bodies, resulting in a politics that aims to destroy them. An example of this is the criminalizing of miscarriages since abortion medications are needed to vacate the uterus after a miscarriage. Out of a fear of prescribing these medications and the possible legal consequences in post-Roe America, doctors are delaying the treatment of miscarriages until women with extreme complications are determined to be sick enough that their lives are in danger so they can be treated and even then, sometimes they aren't. The state of Texas goes so far as to require that pregnant women with cancer become even sicker because in order to qualify for an abortion, they must be at risk of death.

Women who must cross state lines in order to access abortion are also at risk because they can't afford to travel or it will take time to get the money to travel, increasing wait times which can make abortions even where it is legal, unobtainable. In particular, women of color are a special target of the intent to cause harm. Racial inequality means that Black and Indigenous women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy than their white counterparts. The overall consequence of abortion bans is that American women are being forced to carry their pregnancies to term. Women in these states have completely lost their bodily autonomy. The burden will fall disproportionately on young women, the working poor, and people of color.

NOTES

1. Tim Alberta, *American Carnage: On the Front Lines of the Republican Civil War and the Rise of President Trump* (New York: Harper, 2019) p. 424.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 430.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 431.

4. Dana Milbank, *The Destructionists: The Twenty-five Year Crackup of the Republican Party* (New York: Doubleday, 2022) p. 233.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 285.

10. Alberta, p. 206–7.

11. David Corn, *American Psychosis: A Historical Investigation of How the Republican Party Went Crazy* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2022) p. 292.
12. Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *The Divider: Trump in the White House 2017–2021* (New York: Doubleday, 2022) p. 275.
13. Jean Guerrero, *Hate Monger: Stephen Miller, Donald Trump and the White Nationalist Agenda* (New York: Harper Collins, 2021) p. 4.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
16. Erica Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2021) p. 324.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 332.
18. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Not a Nation of Immigrants: Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy and a History of Erasure and Exclusion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2021) p. 270.
19. Yasmeeen Abutaleb and Damian Paletta, *Nightmare Scenario: Inside the Trump Administration's Response to the Pandemic that Changed History* (New York: Harper, 2022) p. 306–7.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 427.
21. Philip Rucker and Carol Leonnig, *A Very Stable Genius: Donald J. Trump's Testing of America* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2021) p. 17.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
23. Katherine Faulder, Justin Fishel and Alexander Mallin, "Trump, Barr Tell Governors to 'Dominate' Streets in Response to Unrest" *NBC News*, June 1, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-barr-governors-dominate-streets-response-unrest/story?id=70994362>.
24. Brian Klass, *The Despot's Apprentice: Donald Trump's Attack on Democracy* (New York: Hot Books, 2017) p. 134.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
27. Andy Borowitz, *Profiles in Ignorance: How America's Politicians Got Dumb and Dumber* (New York: Avid Reader Press/Simon & Schuster, 2022) p. 180.
28. Michael C. Bender, "Frankly, We Did Win This Election" *The Inside Story of How Trump Lost* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2021) p. 133.
29. Thomas David Kehoe, "Thirteen Similarities Between Donald Trump and Adolf Hitler" *Medium.com*, September 18, 2020, <https://tdkehoe.medium.com/thirteen-similarities-between-donald-trump-and-adolf-hitler-3a97a8055dde>.
30. Borowitz, p. 183.
31. Thomas Patterson, *How America Lost Its Mind: The Assault on Reason That's Crippling Our Democracy* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019) p. 53.
32. Evan Osnos-Weidland, *Wildland: The Making of America's Fury* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2021) p. 230–31.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 377–78.
34. *Ibid.*, pp 306–7.

35. Adam Serwer, *The Cruelty Is the Point* (London: One World Publishing, 2021) p. 101.
36. Robert Pape, “The January 6th Insurrectionists Aren’t Who You Think They Are” *Foreign Policy*, January 6, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/06/trump-capitol-insurrection-january-6-insurrectionists-great-replacement-white-nationalism>.
37. Robert Pape and Keven Ruby “The Capitol Rioters Aren’t Like Other Extremists” *The Atlantic*, February 2, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/02/the-capitol-rioters-arent-like-other-extremists/617895/>.
38. Tim Dickinson, “How Trump Took the Middle Class to the Cleaners” *Rolling Stone*, October 26, 2020, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/trump-covid-response-economy-jobs-taxes-inequality-1080345/>.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2017) p. 510.
41. Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) p. 4.
42. Robert S. Robins and Jerrold Post, *Political Paranoia: The Psychohistory of Hatred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) p. 10.
43. Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018) p. 2.
44. Robert S. Wistrich, *Demonizing the Other: Anti-Semitism, Racism and Xenophobia* (Philadelphia: Routledge, 1999) p. 1.
45. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p. 89.
46. Albert Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971) p. 52.
47. Ibid., p. 262.
48. Kenneth Marcus, *The Definition of Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) p. 192.
49. Greg Miller, “Allegations of Racism Have Marked Trump’s Presidency and Become Key Issue As Election Nears” *Washington Post*, September 23, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/trump-race-record/2020/09/23/332b0b68-f10f-11ea-b796-2dd09962649c_story.html.
50. “Meagan Flynn, Trump Accused of ‘dipping into a deep well of anti-Semitic tropes’ during speech to Jewish voters” *Washington Post*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/12/09/trump-israeli-american-council-anti-semitic-claims/>.
51. Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968) p. 186.
52. Marc Cugnon, “Slobs, Dogs, Pigs: 7 Women Donald Trump Egregiously Insulted” *USA Today*, August 10, 2015, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2015/08/10/donald-trump-women-insults-megyn-kelly/31407363/>.
53. Paul Street, “The Post-Roe Horror is a Bipartisan Production” *Counterpunch*, September 16, 2022, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/09/16/the-post-roe-horror-is-a-bipartisan-production/>.

Chapter 4

The Hatred and Violence of Trumpism

Words have consequences. Throughout the course of US history, there are many examples of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. What is distinct about Trumpism is the link between the Trump administration and organizations that make use of hatred and employ violence. Trump's hateful rhetoric amplified and provided tacit support for the actions of these hate-filled groups. What set the political stage for both Trump and Trumpism is an ideological assault on the function of government. Trump's comments on "draining the swamp" and the "Deep state" were part of his manipulation of right-wing elitists distrustful of government. His brand of manufactured populism was used to mobilize against the idea that government is a provider of social services, especially if those services assist people of color, the working class, women, and other vulnerable groups.

From the New Deal on, aspects of a social welfare state that appeared to be redistributive and provide tangible benefits was viewed by the upper classes with hostility. With the exception of Trump's upper class corporate tax cut, which was funded by US taxpayers, his intense dislike of diversity made him oppose increasing government spending for social services. In so doing, he was appealing to insecure parts of the middle class as well as corporate America. His swamp and deep state references were useful in also getting support from racists and Nazis who regarded government as favoring non-whites over whites. Comments made about the bureaucratic deep state point to a criticism of government as the distributor of services. This is, in part, anti-rational in that the culture of Trumpism is about survival of the fittest in the absence of government intervention, creating massive social harm. In this version of social Darwinism, everyone, including the non-white diverse elements in America, are to be left to their own devices. An essential part of Trump's rhetoric put in place by word and deed a destructive politics designed to cause harm to people who are not part of the upper class or

corporate America. Trump and Trumpism are dysfunctional, as their aim is to deconstruct government, i.e., those parts of government which are aimed at promoting a common good. Government policies that divide along racial, gender, and class lines are an essential part of Trump's brand of politics. Private interest must prevail over a common good.

Trumpism is a classic example of politics as choosing sides. Divisions along race, gender, and class lines benefit the upper classes. Politics as conflict with winners and losers in the Trump era allows for the further concentration of wealth, which was already increasing:

from 1980 to 2016 during this period, the share of income accruing to the richest 1 percent of households doubled, increasing from just over 10 percent to more than 20 percent. Over the same period, the share of national income accruing to the bottom half of households declined by half from (roughly) 20 percent to 10 percent.¹

Divide and conquer, when used to cause generalized social harm, expressed itself in two ways, as thought and action intended to prevent any attempt to uplift the downtrodden and a reactionary rollback of the limited progress made from government policies. The enforcement of rollbacks was also communicated through violence. It's no coincidence that the violence of Trumpism was carried out by those parts of the middle class who felt threatened by policies intended to assist non-whites and other vulnerable groups. While parts of the middle class were venting their rage and resentment against diverse social segments, Trump was busy putting in place as his advisors and policymakers likeminded individuals.

Trump assembled a "team of billionaires" including Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, Small Business Administration head Linda McMahon, and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. The Department of Commerce received two billionaires, Wilbur Ross and Todd Ricketts. Gary Cohn, head of Trump's National Economic Council, left his prior job as president of Goldman Sachs. Goldman had also employed Mnuchin, not to mention Steve Bannon. Trump tapped billionaire financier Stephen Schwarzman to head his short-lived Strategic and Policy Forum.²

Trump put together advisors and policymakers who represented the interests of corporate America. Some had ties to the Koch empire, such as Mike Pompeo, secretary of state; Betsy DeVos, secretary of education; Rick Perry, secretary of energy; Don McGahn, White House council; and Scott Pruitt, head of the EPA. So while Trump's base was venting its anger and violence at various diverse elements, Trump's corporatists were hard at work. Pruitt was at work undoing environmental regulations while many other regulations that corporate America disliked were also being rolled back, with "enforcement

efforts curtailed, and fines for violations reduced. Enforcement actions declined sharply at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Department of Justice. White collar crime cases dropped by a third to the level of 2013.”³

Trump’s pro-corporatism appears in how he took actions to deregulate the economy and at the same time, these deregulations assaulted the environment. During a 2017 press conference, Trump assumed responsibility for what he called the “most far-reaching regulatory reform in history.” Trump claimed his administration had either canceled or delayed more than 1,500 regulations. Needless to say, regulatory policies are intended to protect the public from social effects of corporate America. When regulations are effective, there is also a beneficial impact on the economy.

It is evident that Trump’s anti-regulatory policies have caused social harm.

Many of the rules that were eliminated provided important protections to our nation’s workers. President Trump and congressional Republicans have blocked regulations that protected workers’ pay, safety, and rights to organize and join unions. By blocking these rules, the President and Congress are raising the risks for workers while rewarding companies that put employees’ health, safety, and paychecks at risk.⁴

It is clear that once Trump took office, he intended to deregulate a number of industries. One of his first executive orders required federal agencies to identify two regulations to repeal when one regulation is approved. Profit maximization is the motive for many of Trump’s deregulations. The Trump administration claimed responsibility for eighty-three deregulations “in air pollution, drilling and extracting petroleum, infrastructure and planning, animal protection, toxic substances and safety, and water pollution.”⁵ These regulations amounted to a green light for chemical and coal companies to dispose of hazardous waste in rivers and streams, contributing to water pollution and posing a threat to drinkable water. He advocated for measures that were anti-public health and anti-science. He effectively deconstructed the US Department of Agriculture by firing hundreds of scientists who resisted moving from Washington, DC to Kansas City. Scientists working at the US Department of Interior, who were researching the effects of climate change, were also fired. Trump’s faux populism, which he exhibits at his rallies as though he is a man of the people, is in sharp contrast to the Trump administration’s deregulations which are anti-labor. His Department of Agriculture expressed an interest in speeding up the lines in poultry plants, increasing the injury rates of poultry workers. In another anti-labor initiative, which impacts one of the most exploited work forces, restaurant servers are now under a new rule: employers no longer had to distribute pooled tips and could pocket the

tips of servers. Other rollbacks included the Trump administration's resistance to streamlining union elections. Trump made his own appointees to the National Labor Relations Board, making it more difficult to form unions. In a clear anti-union reversal of the "transparency rule," the administration wouldn't allow workers to be informed when employers engaged anti-union consultants in an anti-union campaign.

Additional evidence supports the view of Trump's destructive politics as anti-democratic. Given his hostility to any policies that in any way were associated with President Obama, he advanced the idea of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act. As part of this strategy, Trump took action to weaken the implementation of ACA, starting with undermining the individual mandate. When he signed the corporate giveaway in December 2017, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, it included repeal of the individual mandate for the ACA. Other actions Trump took with support from fellow Republicans included a reduction in funding and advertising for the exchange and enrollment periods. In 2018, the period to enroll was shortened. One hurtful measure would have eliminated care for persons with pre-existing conditions. Trump's corporatism is on display in his veto of a bill that would have allowed the government to negotiate the cost of drugs. In the February 4, 2019 edition of *The New York Times*, economist Justin Wolfers wrote about his survey of fifty leading economists, liberal and conservative, all of whom agreed that Trump's economic policies were destructive.

With parts of the middle class mobilized and willing to use violence and an administration that undermines the social welfare state in favor of capital it is no wonder that it is a government that tends toward dysfunction; the politics that emerge are destructive to a social good embodied by a diverse society. A declining middle class has been ideologically misdirected to blame those less fortunate than they are. The middle class is powerless to take on America's upper class but has greater access to take on groups that are also powerless against concentrated wealth and power.

Trump's policies of privatization made his politics destructive against a common social good. Various Trump privatization schemes involved a shift of control of public goods for a public benefit to control for a private good in private hands. With privatization, the profit motive is the be-all and end-all. The value of a service is determined only in relation to the bottom line. One of Trump's targets for privatization are what he called "failing government schools." His solution, which he proposed in his 2020 State of the Union address was school choice. His interest in the privatization of schools was evident in that those on his transition team had "either worked for privatizers or had touted the philosophy. Betsy DeVos was likely the most visible example, but the list also included Tom Price, tapped to head Health and Human Services, who was well known as an advocate for privatizing Medicare."⁶

The philosophy of public schools is to serve a diverse student body. Public schools are in practice representing how education for all is support by tax dollars. The same can be said of public parks and public libraries. The misguided philosophy of privatization is “you get what you pay for.” Trump and DeVos proposed a more extreme version of school privatization, replacing federal funding for charter schools with vouchers. The class-based shift to those who could afford to pay appears in the administration’s advocacy of a privatized K–12 system paid for by using 529 college saving plans. Class struggle was involved in Trump’s Department of Education initiative to eliminate the federal government’s role in student loans with “income share agreements.” The proposed plan meant that investors would fund a student’s college education once the student was employed, giving to the investors a percentage of the student’s salary, amounting to a version of indentured servitude. Clearly destructive to the common good, privatization is a political mindset of taking social needs and putting a price tag on them, in which something that people use and share without a price tag becomes a consumer good. Racism was associated with profit in the administration’s support for privatizing prisons, a move that grew by leaps and bounds during the Trump administration. To fill this ever-expanding prison industrial complex, the criminal justice system would target people of color and immigrants to fill up the prisons.

Access to safe drinking water is essential to public health. There cannot be a price tag on people’s need for water. The nation’s infrastructure of roads, bridges, ports, etc. are necessary for a society to reap the benefits of a civilized existence. Ensuring that land is public allows for equal access to use these lands. To promote universal public usage of land and services, which are accessible to all, is a common social good. To assign an economic value to goods and services puts profits and private interest over the common good and universal access. Overall, when privatization makes private what had been public, there is a resulting dysfunction. “Privatization limits public access to essential public goods like health, water, and safe food, it interferes with public goods like infrastructure that creates strong economies. It also undermines the public’s civil rights and limits access to democratic institutions and policymaking.”⁷

So while hatred and the resulting violence divides along class, racial, and gender lines, the Trump administration also supported anti-democratic privatization in the form of contracts to diminish public control over public concerns. Trump’s privatization schemes generated a form of predatory capitalism, in which profit-making is designed to create social harm.

The Trump administration will forever be associated with putting kids in cages, and the stain of that scandal should adhere to the private prison companies as

well. . . . They saw fortunes in the new policy of incarcerating asylum seekers. The value of their contracts and stock went up under the policy of child separation and went up again when Trump changed his policy to one of family incarceration.⁸

Through privatization as a destructive policy, the Trump administration attacked and undercut a range of social problems that require public funding, instead allowing a private market with a profit motive to prevail over the need to address the needs of a diverse society. By fostering dislike of government through comments like “draining the swamp” and the deep state, Trump was leading a government that could not address social ills, it could only address the marketplace, which places a monetary value on human needs. Hatred and violence as a means of dividing serves the interest of capital to take over public space for profit. As hatred and violence continue to increase social divisions, they allow for privatization with a profit motive, creating differences in terms of who has access to public spaces. Market-driven privatization works against the concept of universal access to public spaces and services.

Those parts of the middle class that are mobilized to express hatred and to use violence are unwittingly doing the bidding of capital. Trump’s base of middle- and upper-income voters directed their hatred downward on non-whites, Jews, immigrants, women, etc. instead of looking upward, allowing capital to benefit from these social divisions. The insecurity of the middle class can be addressed by attacking the less fortunate. This intense anger expressed by Trump’s followers underscores a disturbing reality, that white privilege is not a protection from economic insecurity. The perceived, and in many ways, actual loss of economic standing, by these middle and well-off classes gets acted out in a form of male violence. As this violent masculinity unfolds, it seeks creative forms of destruction.

Trump’s social base is not hostile to capitalism as a social system, the grievance his base has is subjective. The social ills are caused by elites and social diversity. In the absence of a class analysis and an inability to critique capitalism, it is no wonder that the common mindset of the base is that Trump is one of us. The base looks upward at the class standing that Trump represents and identifies with it. While the upper class exists in a world apart from everyone else, there is greater physical proximity to other classes. Violence is used against proximate targets. One day after Trump made his announcement to run for president, expressing his hatred of immigrants and people of color, Dylann Roof entered a Charleston, South Carolina church and shot and killed nine Blacks just because they were Black. Having been conditioned by simplistic propaganda, which articulates a threat and a need to take action, the base intensifies its anger and rage, seeking an outlet and blaming others by acting violently. Drawing from the Tea Party, with which Trump identified

especially its focus on conspiracy theories and alleged tyranny of the previous president, young, white alienated males perceived they had no future, blamed others for their misfortune and many turned to white nationalism. Dylann Roof was one example of the pessimism felt by members of Alt-America or the Alternative Universe, which rejects and creates its own form of reality.

Alt-America in many ways was providing members a right to invent their own reality. There was no basis for accepting established facts. The established reality was perceived to be a threat to their reality, which for Alt-right members was the perceived loss of dominance by whites in America. This loss is attributed to what is seen and foreseen. Members cherry pick and interpret specific indicators as proof of their loss of white power: perceived government favoritism to non-whites, feminism, the rising tide of immigrants. Of equal concern are various conspiracies that are manufactured within a self-contained media and social media network. Just who is in the Alt-America? “the majority of Alt-Americans are better educated than the average American and have incomes well above the median.”⁹ In his book, *Alt America*, David Neiwert summarizes their social psychology as one that is prone to hate and violence: “Ethnicentric, fearful, self-righteous, aggressive, biased, poor reasoning skills, dogmatic, dependent on social reinforcement, limited in their exposure to contrary views, easily manipulated, weak power of self-reflection.”¹⁰

From thought to action, Trump promoted and inspired this alternative America to act. His rallies were a stage to express and act out with violent intent.

The violent trend began in the fall of 2015 with incidents in the south where Trump supporters grabbed protesters’ signs and assaulted them, first on October 14 in Richmond, Virginia and then on October 23 in Miami. The violence increased over time, leading his alt-right fans to ardently defend him on social media and dismiss the protestors as worthy of violence.¹¹

At a rally in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Trump instructed those in attendance to “beat the hell out of protesters,” and that he would like to “punch a protester in the face.” In expressing their rage as violence, supporters are supposed to overcome their victimhood by eliminating the threat from selected enemies. For white supremacists, violence becomes a cleansing agent, used in extreme cases to become the path to dystopia. As the mass fear sets in of a non-white demographic takeover, a reactionary revolution is meant to instill a white ethnostate. By creating this ethnostate, white supremacists believe that this will prevent a white genocide. As Sara Kamali precisely explains, “The white nationalist belief that the United States is a land solely for white people gives cause for violence, rhetorical and physical, in the pursuit of

establishing America as a white ethnostate.”¹² For the white nationalist, Trump represents a leader who is the embodiment of white supremacy. He acts as cheerleader for the expression of hateful rhetoric and expresses resentment of organizations that call into question white supremacy, such as Black Lives Matters, which he referred to as a “symbol of hate.” MAGA became the rallying cry for white nationalists to turn back the clock to the good old days of white hegemonic racism. The chant “Make America Great” used by the white power movement was the slogan used against Black Lives Matter. Justification to hate and employ violence is expressed in the fourteen words that make up the white nationalist mission: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”

“Our people” is a declaration of inclusivity for all White people, setting aside religion while upholding racial identity. It is also a statement of exclusivity, building a distinct barrier against people of color. The phrase “must secure” projects a sense of urgency, asserting that white identity is in need of protection, endorsing the sense of victimhood pervasive across white nationalism as well as reinforcing the need for militancy.¹³

With stakes so high with the threat of white genocide and the range of threats to their version of white America, the use of violence is justified. White nationalists have a closed mind, an emotionally driven set of fantasies, the purpose of which is to affirm a false reality. This is a mechanism to shut out troubling or contrary views through cognitive dissonance. If a contrary view is heard it is compartmentalized as if it is stored elsewhere. When a troubling idea is repeated and is threatening, denialism is useful. It is in the self-interest of white nationalism to make use of these mental gymnastics. The end result is confirmation bias, only seeking supporting evidence for that viewpoint.

The rabid violence against those who are excluded from a white homeland is deeply embedded in American culture. H. Rap Brown, Black activist associated at various times with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panthers has remarked: “Violence is as American as cherry pie.” Violence in the United States has resulted in the normalizing of it by white supremacy, a form of subculture based on “might makes right,” that originates from sources that are both internal and external.

The historical roots of this culture of violence began with the conquest of North America. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, there were many recorded incidents carrying out genocidal and ethnocidal policies against American Indians and before that, the economy grew through the forced migration and enslavement of Africans. By the late nineteenth century, when there were no more areas to take over in North America, America ventured

overseas to Cuba, the Philippines, and Hawaii in what would continue to be the pattern of military intervention and the overthrow of governments. By the end of WWII, the United States was a global superpower. In 1961, Eisenhower's farewell address warned the nation of what he characterized as the military-industrial complex.

Through various steps taken outside the US government, the structural basis of the military industrial complex was put in place. It centered on the idea of militarization in which American society and policymaking are shaped by military power and war-making. This incorporation of the normalization of violence blurred the distinctions between military and civilian institutions. Part of this incorporation occurs through the use of public monies to fund the military. Defense contractors work with government to fund and expand military spending. Seymour Melman has made reference to this parasitic growth in the *Permanent War Economy*. The United States has been active on the world stage with an intention to shape the world in its own image. As an official policy of anti-Communism expressed in the Truman doctrine of 1947, moving forward over many decades, military intervention in accordance with NSC-68, a policy document of the National Security Council, justified military intervention in order to implement a "rollback" of Communism. Direct military intervention was used along with a massive buildup of nuclear weapons in what became mutually assured destruction: MAD. Shaping the world by direct military intervention was supplemented especially after the formation of the CIA with a number of covert operations. Conducting such operations with an emphasis on secrecy, the US government makes use of special operation forces consisting of private contractors, local proxies coordinating with the military and CIA. Militarization is a glorification of armed might, it also requires a tremendous number of personnel and institutions operating inside and outside the United States. Inside, people and institutions represent the totality of an American society promoting the idea of "might makes right." "As of February 2022, there were 2.91 million service members and civilians in the DoD, operating at 4,800 sites in more than 160 countries around the world. These services include the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space Force."¹⁴ The reproduction of militarism is the goal of military institutions that provide the training and overall mindset for the military. These institutions include West Point, the naval academies, Air Force Academy, and affiliated academic institutions. There are various military think tanks, such as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Defense Medical Research and Development Program, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the Office of Naval Research, and the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, to name a few. The US Army Natick Soldier Systems Center, within the Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, "is responsible for the technology, research, development, engineering, fielding,

and sustainment of our military's food, clothing, shelter air drop systems, and soldier support items."¹⁵

Militarism as a way of life is not confined to the United States. In 2021, according to David Vine at the American University, the United States had about 750 bases in at least eighty countries, with Japan having the largest number of bases with 120, Germany with 119, and South Korea with seventy-three.¹⁶ There are plans to add additional bases in the Philippines; currently, one base on the island of Itbayat, is only ninety-three miles from Taiwan, not far from the Chinese mainland. A classic example of destructive politics is the extraordinary economic commitment to militarism.

The United States will spend more than \$817 billion for its military . . . more than the next nine nations of the world combined, not including \$800 billion for veterans, \$115 billion for military retirements, \$80 billion for clandestine services, and \$60 billion for homeland security—more than \$1.3 trillion (a quarter of the entire US budget).¹⁷

So while policymakers seek to impose America's view of the world which includes making the world safe for corporate America, a choice has been made to give priority to guns over butter. The net result is visible in America in the lack of significant economic investments in infrastructure as well as social welfare spending. American militarism represents a nation that uses force as a means of compensating for its lack of nonviolent political initiatives in its interactions with other nations. What promotes this militarism is a myth of an idealized view projected as America, the benign savior of the world in contrast to the way it shapes the world through the use of force. The reality of American militarism reveals that America does not live up to its ideals.

According to a study released by the Cost of War Project at Brown University, since the start of the twenty-first century, the United States has undertaken interventions in eighty-five countries, which has resulted in 929,000 civilian lives lost and the displacement of thirty-eight million people. As part of an effort to shape the internal affairs of other nations, the United States has put in place various sanctions on more than twenty nations. Around the world, America's bases are supported by 173,000 troops stationed in 159 countries with large bases, about 439 of them, consisting of about 200 US military personnel and smaller bases as part of a network of cooperative geographic locations, making up about 40 percent of bases. The Al Udeid air base in Doha, Qatar, established in 1996, is the biggest military base in the Middle East, where the United States maintains a military presence, ranging from two bases in Jordan to ten in Saudi Arabia.¹⁸

The United States has a military presence in Europe of 60,000 troops, with 33,900 in Germany, followed by 12,300 in Italy, and 9,300 in the U.K. In Cuba, Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, the oldest overseas base under US control, has 731 troops.¹⁹ According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in Puerto Rico there are thirty-four bases with 163 troops, Panama has eleven bases with twenty-eight troops, Colombia has five with fifty-seven troops. The US commitment to militarism has meant that as of 2020, with an expenditure of \$778 billion, it is the largest military spender in the world. According to David Vine of American University, the economic commitment to militarized violence is staggering; in 2015, it cost an average of \$10,000–\$40,000 more per person to station a service member overseas vs. in the United States; \$55 billion a year to construct and maintain bases overseas, totaling more than \$80 billion.²⁰ Vine also states that “wars of choice or military interventions in fifteen countries in the greater Middle East alone since 1980” have been launched at least twenty-five times from US bases. Through those bases, he continued, the US military has deployed force against people of color around the world; through those bases, the US military has also supported thirty-eight undemocratic host countries with authoritarian or “less than democratic” regimes. Through the imposition of these bases, there is a destructive pattern of causing harm. Vine identifies the social costs:

Environmental damage caused by the disposal, dumping, and use of hazardous toxic materials, facilitated by base agreements that often exempt the US from responsibility for damage . . . crimes and accidents—including rape, murder, and other crimes and military accidents—anger local communities. . . . Exploitative prostitution and sex trafficking linked to bases. . . . Reckless foreign leaders can be emboldened by a US base presence to take dangerously aggressive stances . . . eighteen indigenous and other peoples displaced by base construction or expansion abroad since WWII.²¹

US military bases overseas are one part of an overall pattern of forceful imposition of force within and outside North America. Many examples span the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. There is the 1846–1848 annexation of Texas and California, involvement in the 1865–1867 war with Mexico; in 1893 the overthrow of the kingdom of Hawaii; in the years 1899–1902, the intervention in the Philippines; the US role in Cuba since 1903; US involvement in Nicaragua 1909–1910; the US occupation of Haiti 1915–1934. In 1918, the US military played a role in the allied intervention in the Russian Civil War, supporting the White Army. Then the US military participated in WWI and WWII, and in South Korea in the years 1945–1948 in support of the dictatorship of Syngman Rhee. In China, the United States supported the National Revolutionary Army led by Chiang Kai-shek, and 1947–1949,

under the Truman Doctrine, the United States supported the Greek monarchy. During the years 1950–1953, the United States played a role in Operation Paper, to support the Kuomintang in China. In 1952, the United States supported a coup in Egypt involving the CIA; in 1952, a covert US operation led to the overthrow of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz. Then there was the American fomented coup d'état in Iran in 1953 of Mohammad Mossadegh. In Indonesia, the United States was involved in a chain of events that eventually led to the overthrow of President Sukarno in 1965. In Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem was overthrown with the involvement of the CIA. In Cuba, the Bay of Pigs operation by the CIA was part of Operation Mongoose to overthrow Fidel Castro. In the Republic of Congo, the United States assisted in overthrowing Patrice Lumumba, who had been elected the first prime minister. In 1961, in the Dominican Republic, Rafael Trujillo was murdered with weapons supplied by the CIA. From 1961–1964, the ruler of Brazil, João Goulart was overthrown by the United States through Operation Brother Sam. US corporate interests and the CIA destabilized the economy of Chile and supported a military coup to overthrow Salvador Allende, the elected leader of Chile. The United States in the years 1975–1979 sided with Indonesia in its invasion of East Timor. In the Argentine coup d'état of 1976, the United States was involved in supporting the military dictatorship of General Jorge (a graduate of the School of the Americas), which set in motion the national reorganization process infamous for its police state practices and mass disappearances known as the “dirty war.”

Of all the many examples of US participation in regime change from the past, there was never any accountability for the United States in its use of force in overthrowing regimes, a fair number of which had been elected in free and fair elections. Under the Nuremberg standards, US involvement in these overthrows constitutes wars of aggression and even war crimes, of which the 2003 invasion of Iraq is an example. For starters, it was a war waged without justification. There were no weapons of mass destruction. The rationale used to justify the war against Iraq bears a striking similarity to the falsehoods associated with the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which accelerated US troop involvement in Vietnam. There were war crimes and crimes against humanity that unfolded during the conduct of the Vietnam War, including the killing of civilians, and the most striking example the My Lai massacre. During the so-called war against terrorism, the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq, and at Abu-Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, and Bagrum Air Force base clearly violated the provisions of the Geneva Convention and the international ban on torture (1984), of which the US is a signatory. President Obama's decision to let bygones be bygones meant that there would be no accountability for these US violations.

Not to be overlooked, as part of a culture of manufactured violence, is the role of the United States as the world's largest arms dealer. This trade in arms functions as a world industry that produces various kinds of weapons. Both public and private sectors participate. As of 2020, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the United States ranks as the top global supplier of arms exports. As a result, the United States has contributed to the increase of civil wars globally. A troubling aspect is that the majority of casualties have been civilians targeted through what is known as small arms. There is the selling and buying of tanks, self-propelled guns, artillery, armed personnel carriers, armored cars, and major surface missiles. There's also trade in aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers and frigates. This includes mine-sweepers, subchasers, mortar torpedo boats, patrol craft and motor gunboats, submarines, supersonic combat aircraft, helicopters, surface-to-air missiles, surface-to-surface missiles, and anti-ship missiles.

There is no separation of foreign from domestic policy when considering the function of the School of the Americas, renamed in 2001 as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation located in Fort Benning, Georgia. In its notorious history, it has trained more than sixty thousand Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, psychological warfare, military intelligence, and interrogation techniques. The alumni of the school represent a rogues' gallery of human rights abusers as well as heads of various Latin American dictatorships who have sanctioned the torture and killing of civilians. There is an obvious association between the selling of weapons and the cost of human lives.

Considering the vital interests the United States has in the Middle East, economic and military support are essential. As far as the selling of weapons in the Middle East, there are profits to be made by corporate interests.

Just four companies—Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and General Dynamics were involved in the overwhelming majority of US arms deals with Saudi Arabia between 2009 and 2019. In fact, at least one or more of these companies played key roles in twenty-seven offers worth more than \$125 billion out of a total of fifty-one offers worth \$138 billion.²²

Having made use of weapons supplied by the United States, the Saudis in an extensive bombing campaign in Yemen killed thousands of civilians.

A case can be made that the normalization of violence that takes place outside the United States translates into the normalization of violence inside the borders of the United States. It is an example of the chickens coming home to roost. Targeting diverse populations with violence overseas has had an impact on the use of violence against people of color, women, immigrants, Jews, etc. inside the United States. Through a combination of direct and indirect

interventions around the globe, policymakers have also dedicated expenditures and crafted policies to use violence in the United States.

In many ways, the militarism of US foreign policy has framed a militaristic domestic policy. At its core is the means to make violence a defining feature of US culture. In all cases foreign and domestic, policymakers inside and outside US government legitimate violence in response to the production of mass hysteria. From fear to threat to urgency to respond quickly, violence becomes a convenient shortcut to eliminate a threat. Whether it's fear of Communism or terrorism, the fear has to be heightened to an extreme, which then sanctions the extreme use of force. Outside and inside the United States, it has been and continues to be the threat of diversity that has led to this extreme use of violence. US foreign policy and domestic policy share a lack of restraint on the use of violence.

A culture of militarism appears in the militarization of schools in the United States. A gun culture creating a rationalization for would-be school shooters in turn has led to this militarization. American political culture usually responds to violence with violence. Within American schools, the various policies adopted amount to an acceptance of schools as targets of violence, setting up a structure in schools so that they become militarized. One example was the response to the mass killing of seventeen innocent people at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. With little to no effort to address the underlying causes, after the shooting, the response was to transform the school into an armed camp, equipped with chain-link fences, security cameras, and armed police. It is as if, from the start of the school day, the school is in lockdown mode. This knee-jerk military response, making the school into what sociologist Erving Goffman defined as a total institution, does not have any effect on preventing school shootings. Acting as total institutions, the schools end up controlling the behaviors of faculty, students, and staff. For example, in the years 2016–2017,

94 percent of public schools reported that administrators were controlling access to school buildings by locking and monitoring doors during school hours. Eighty-one percent have reported using security cameras to monitor schools and 25 percent reported using random drug dog searches on campus.²³

One aspect of schools becoming armed camps is the increasing number of school resource officers and school law enforcement officers. With nationwide cuts to many school budgets, schools are lacking in counselors, school supplies, and adequate food service, but since 2010, according to the Department of Justice, more than a billion dollars was used to hire additional police to serve in public schools. With this increase in the presence of police, there are instances of police using force and violence against students. “In

April 2017, a Pennsylvania police officer at Woodland Hills High School was caught on a surveillance video beating and tasing a student, knocking out his front tooth.”²⁴

In fact, after the 1999 school shooting at Columbine, a total of ten thousand police officers were hired at schools nationwide. According to Sam Sinyangwe, co-founder of Mapping Police Violence, the officers who were present at Stoneman Douglas High School the day of the mass shooting couldn’t prevent it. As part of the police military takeover of the schools’ public spaces, they have arrested middle and high school students for occurrences such as unruly conduct and bullying. Police are now regularly intervening in situation that should be handled by teachers, staff, and administrators. This overreaction and often violent assault on school age students has led to “over one million kids have been arrested, many of which have been hit with a criminal record and incarcerated over the past two decades since this trend began.”²⁵ Sinyangwe expresses his concern over the \$1 billion spent on school security with no evidence that schools are any safer and with the downside that many young people are now being arrested in school, due to the police presence.

In a might makes right culture, there is no emphasis on non-violent approaches. America’s gun culture results in the promotion of gun violence, threatening and killing children and adults. A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation issued in October 2022 found that in the years 2011–2021, almost 18,500 children aged seventeen and younger were the victims of gun violence. In 2021, an average of seven children each day are killed by firearms in the United States. The socialization of American culture to embrace militarism is on display in public schools. The various programs in the schools are intended to instill the idea of a group discipline that prepares enrolled students to conform to the values associated with the use of violence. This militarized training assumes the form of JROTC (Junior Reserve Office Training Corps) and the Troops for Teachers program, which permits military officials to have a school presence. Nicholas Cruz, the Stoneman Douglas High School shooter, a documented white supremacist, received his training in the Army’s JROTC program.

This legitimization of militarism and violence in these programs acts as a breeding ground for both authoritarianism and an anti-democratic mindset. What these recruits are learning is that decisions are made through the imposition of force, not through discussion and negotiation. To act without legal restraints on the use of force is the end result of militarized schooling in these programs. The policy implications have appeared as the increase of the power of police forces in search and seizure, limiting the use of public space represented by anti-public association laws and the criminal justice system’s use of zero tolerance policies.

In the rise of Trump and Trumpism, there is an historical twist to state power mobilization of violence. The mindset among the violent arm of the Trump base is that the government is not using sufficient coercion against minorities, which made the US government a target, seeking to transform the government to create policies that are more extreme in its use of force. As segments of the white power movement became a movement at war with the US government in 1983, the ideology of the movement was to mainstream the violence of the New Right. It is no coincidence that the rise of the New Right coincided with the aftermath of US withdrawal for Vietnam. It was the perception of a United States that was no longer in control of global events.

A weakened government is seen as vulnerable to the demands of non-whites. At the same time, the middle class was in decline and there were white males who viewed this as an opportunity to reassert control, to once again make America into a masculine image. A violent movement to overthrow the US government unfolded piecemeal, with individuals violently acting out from Randy Weaver to Timothy McVeigh as an expression of leaderless resistance. The forerunner of what accelerated during the Trump administration was the formation of local armed militias. Also emerging in the 1980s and becoming one of the justifications to act out violently was the need to protect white women as the bearers of the white race. One aspect of the violence used by white supremacists from the 1980s was to use violence to instigate a race war. This intention was in the mind of Dylann Roof in his 2015 shooting of Black worshippers at a Bible study in Charleston, South Carolina.

Roof used 88, a code for Heil Hitler, popularized in the 1980s by the movement at large. And he used the Confederate flag, which at the turn of the millennium increasingly symbolized a cultural stance that conflated white supremacy with opposition to a multicultural liberal consensus.²⁶

It is this persistence of violence from the past to the present and the manner in which it is fixed and ever changing that applies to Trump and Trumpism and is fixed within the movement of US history, in terms of the conquest of North America as well as expansion and control of countries outside the US border by the selling of weapons. Recent US history reflects a changing pattern, especially during the Trump administration, which includes a pattern of violence that targets other Americans as a threat. This is related to the uniqueness of violence in the United States in terms of the sheer number of violent incidents. “Compared to other high-income nations, the chance you will die a violent death at the hands of another person is ten times higher if you live in the United States than in any other place.”²⁷

There is a thought process from which the violence and killing develop. Violence is the ultimate means for settling differences without a social

dialogue. It is not just the use of violence but the fear of its use from weapons that defines a gun culture. Leading up to the violence of the Trump administration is the social license to commit violence using weapons. What is most significant in making the United States an outlier among nations is the frequent and large number of mass shootings.

Over half of the twenty deadliest mass shootings in the 240-year history of the United States have occurred in the past twenty years. The massacre of twenty-seven at Sandy Hook was followed by twelve gunned down at the Washington Navy Yard; fourteen dead at a San Bernadino, California holiday party; forty-nine murdered at the Pulse night club in Orlando, Florida; fifty-eight killed at a concert in Las Vegas, Nevada; twenty-six fatally shot at a church in Sutherland Springs, Texas; and seventeen murdered at a high school in Parkland, Florida. . . . Up until 2011, there were an average of 177 days between mass murders. Now we average a mass murder every two months.²⁸

The overwhelming majority of the mass shooters are young white males, a trend of males socialized to define their maleness through the expression of violence, to give themselves permission to kill others when they perceive that their maleness is threatened. As these trends lead to Trumpism, their perception of various threats to white male culture as demeaning, in turn provides a motive to commit violent acts. This intense feeling of being left out and resentment of others who they hold responsible translates into violence that makes a statement; killing is the ultimate means of eliminating the threat. Just as the United States imposes its will around the world through the use of force, certain males feel that they must impose their will through violence. In both contexts, violence and killings are destructive and visceral statements are used by the perpetrator who has the right to determine who shall die.

A militaristic foreign policy without global limits also influences domestic mass killings. Both overseas military killings and killings in the United States result in the deaths primarily of unarmed civilians. Domestically, the chosen instrument of mass shootings is the semi-automatic AR-15, which was modeled after the M-16, used by the US military in Vietnam. In the hands of those who may have felt helpless, guns empower them with the extraordinary ability to determine who lives and who dies. In this subculture, guns represent the violent imposition of a male order. The mass marketing of guns reinforces this, setting the stage for the proliferation of these weapons which are advertised as the only way to make oneself and one's family safe. A key factor in the marketing is that the customer must first be afraid and convinced of the need to prepare for the appearance of unknown threats. Selling guns is based on the production of fear; the solution to that fear is to own the gun.

While mass shootings involving AR-15s garner the attention of the media, there are data indicating it's not the AR-15 that's responsible for the majority of shootings. In 2020, more people were killed by gun-related injuries than at any other time since records began to be kept. According to the Pew Research Center, out of 24,576 murders in 2020, 79 percent of them involved a firearm. Handguns were involved in 59 percent of the 13,620 gun murders.²⁹ The gun culture thrives due to the contradictory policies regarding the regulation and manufacturing of guns. In blue states, such as Massachusetts and Connecticut, there are comprehensive regulations on the carrying and possession of firearms. These states are also major production sites for gun manufacturers. Blue states are also deeply involved in the global export of weapons. While the United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population, the US population owns 46 percent of guns made for civilian use.

The production of weapons for the domestic market is not isolated from the manufacturing of weapons for America's global militarism. Permanent war-making both inside and outside the United States emphasizes technological innovations geared toward improving the efficiency of mass killings. Guns are mass produced in the United States for the domestic market and, during the Trump administration, began to be promoted as the great equalizers, that could be used to fight against the forces threatening white America, to physically remove what is perceived as the group threat in public and private spaces. It results in a hatred that is intensified through marketing; the haters are well aware of just how easy it is to get a gun and to get one that can kill many people very quickly.

Because of the power that comes with owning a gun, guns in America have acquired a mystique among gun owners. In what Marx called a fetishism of the commodity, which is often associated with his theory of alienation, the commodity is ideologically transformed into having a value and a "life of its own," independent of the labor that produced it. Many gun owners accumulate multiple weapons, in an obsessive compulsive behavior known as object fixation. It is the framing of an identity of the gun owner by giving life to this lifeless object. The power associated with guns is the power of life and death through its acquisition and potential use. Gun owners look upon the Constitution as a sacred text that bestows on them the right to bear and use arms. This is in the historical context of how white supremacists, past and present, have objectified the Constitution, in particular, the Second Amendment, in support of what Richard Hofstadter identified as a "gun culture." Armed, white militias throughout the history of the United States, have used the accumulation and use of guns to maintain racial inequality. Until *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the 2008 Supreme Court decision, there was no legal justification for the right to bear arms. Over the course of US history,

as explained by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz in *Loaded: A Disarming History of the Second Amendment*, guns are how white supremacy is implemented by force.

For young white male shooters, insecurities are overcome through gun ownership. Having experienced a sense of persecution and mistreatment, these shooters rationalize that killing is payback. In a social media driven culture, the mass shooter gets the attention, which in the minds of the shooters increases their self-esteem. In addition to the use of guns to commit mass shootings, these weapons are used as threat and intimidation.

A New York Times analysis of more than seven hundred armed demonstrations found that, at about 77 percent of them, people openly carrying guns represented right-wing views, such as opposition to LGBTQ+ rights and abortion access, hostility to racial justice rallies and support for former President Donald J. Trump's lie of winning the 2020 election.³⁰

The AR-15, in particular, the weapon of choice in many mass shootings, demonstrates how American militarism intersects with mass shootings in the United States. And the AR-15 has proven to be highly profitable. "The American gun industry has reaped an estimated \$1 billion in sales over the past decade from AR-15 style guns, and it has done so by using and cultivating their status as near-mythical emblems of power, hyper-patriotism, and manhood."³¹

Consider what these places have in common: Nashville, Uvalde, Buffalo, Boulder, Orlando, Parkland, Las Vegas, Sandy Hook, San Bernadino, Colorado Springs, Sutherland Springs, Pittsburgh—AR-15s were used in all of them. Unfortunately, this is only part of the story of gun culture. While these incidents of mass shootings are shocking, the majority of gun deaths result from handguns. For example, in just one year, in 2020, "of the 45,222 gun deaths in America, less than 1 percent were mass shootings that took place with assault type or semi-automatic weapons."³² The unique American trend of gun deaths continues in the recent report of the Gun Violence Archive (GVA), reporting that

in 2022, 44,305 people were killed and another 38,567 were injured by guns . . . nearly one thousand children under eleven years were killed (314) and injured (682) by guns . . . in 2022, 647 people died from "mass shooting" and thirty-six from "mass murder." . . . As of April 7, 2023, the GVA reports, 11,129 people died of gun violence.³³

The normalization of violence helps to foster a culture of violence and one striking example is American football. While soccer, known as football worldwide, is the world's most popular sport, American football's popularity is confined to the United States. It is a militaristic sport, the goal of which

is the conquest of territory, to attack and collide with players on the opposing team. In these intense physical encounters, football players often, as the expression goes, “play hurt,” part of the macho factor of hiding injuries from the opposing team in order not to reveal weakness. But hits to the head, resulting in concussions as a form of traumatic brain injury, are now recognized as a serious medical condition with the resulting effects of dizziness, depression, insomnia, and memory loss which persists over time. In examining brain tissue from former Pittsburgh Steeler Mike Webster, Pittsburgh neuropathologist Bennett Omalu saw abnormal clumps of protein lesions that have been seen in punch-drunk boxers. These chronic traumatic encephalopathy lesions were found in the brains of other former NFL players as well as in the brains of hockey, soccer, and rugby players. There is an increasing awareness among football fans of the dangers of playing football. What is normalized as part of a culture of violence is the acceptance of violence with an interest in bone-crushing hits and expressions such as “he had his bell rung.” Football is a violent expression of American masculinity. The fans either in attendance or watching TV erupt in cheers when one team prevails by brute force over another. The largely white audience is watching NFL players, 80 percent of whom are Black, endure violence, pain, and suffering. And most attendees are from the middle and upper classes with many stadiums located in the suburbs. The owners are able to extort governments to subsidize football at the expense of other infrastructure priorities. Football and its marketing send the message that people should embrace and support a normalized culture of violence. Leisure time, in this way, is used to mobilize support for a violent sport.

It is significant that the billionaire class is invested in this violence, with billionaire owners of NFL teams actively marketing the violence of football. What contributes to the profitmaking associated with football is the willingness of politicians and fans to divert much needed public monies in the form of public subsidies to these owners, who are mostly white and male, many of whom are donors to Donald Trump. These owners reap enormous profits from non-white players who engage in this blood sport, while giving millions of dollars to Trump who makes no secret of his racism. To purchase a sports team, the precondition is to be a multi-billionaire; owning a sports team is a symbol of their class power. It is also about the purchase of players as commodities who are bought and sold and can play so long as they continue to win games. There is plenty of money to be made from the violence of football. In a form of corporate socialism, the sports teams of the NFL receive collective monetary benefits:

The NFL will collect an average of \$10 billion annually from TV and streaming rights; the most controversial way the owners profit is through corporate

welfare; billions in public subsidies and preferential box treatment that undergird owners' abilities to rake in major profits.³⁴

This doesn't include all the other giveaways in the form of cost that are subsidized directly and indirectly, for example property tax exemptions. In 2022, the Buffalo Bills football team received \$850 million in public funds to construct a new stadium, even though the Pegula family, the team's official owners, have a net worth in the billions. As new stadium construction continues, the emphasis is on attracting fans in the upper-income scale with the addition of luxury boxes, club seating, and gourmet food offerings. Such policies serve to reproduce the normalization of the violence of football.

For the very few who become football players, it is assumed that they are willing to put their bodies on the line for any number of serious injuries in order to have the opportunity to play. The billionaires sit and watch the spectacle of football, while it is the Black bodies on the field that are being assaulted for the pleasure of the white team owners. The use and disposal of Black bodies allows these owners to gain enormous capital accumulation. "The net worth of the seven richest individual owners Rob Walton (Broncos), David Tepper (Panthers), Robert Kraft (Patriots), Stephen Ross (Dolphins), Jerry Jones (Cowboys), Shahid Khan (Jaguars), and Stan Kroenke (Rams) is around \$140 billion."³⁵

These owners largely support Trump. One example is Stephen Ross, who fundraised for Trump in 2019. Trump awarded Woody Johnson, owner of the Jets, with an ambassadorship and Johnson donated to Trump's 2020 presidential campaign. The anti-democratic actions against labor taken by these owners indicates a fascist inclination among these billionaire owners. As the richest owner of an NFL team, Rob Walton has made sure that Walmart continues to be a model of low wages and benefits for its workers. These owners have no problem supporting anti-democratic policies, such as increasing the coercive power of the police. "NFL owners also help bankroll police departments through donations to police foundations that purchase weapons and surveillance tech for cops."³⁶

The billionaire NFL owners fall into the category Jeffrey Winters describes as civil oligarchies, which he describes as:

the only type in which no oligarchs rule . . . in civil oligarchies, strong and impersonal systems of law dominate oligarchs . . . are relieved of the violence and political burdens of defending property themselves, the emergence of a state apparatus that takes on these roles.³⁷

When applied to the NFL, oligarchies are supported and protected by state and local governments. For these oligarchs, the political energy of the owners

is devoted to mobilizing their economic resources toward insuring there are no challenges to their monopoly status over NFL teams, often working behind the scenes with various policymakers toward policies that further expand capital accumulation, such as the construction of new stadiums. American capitalism's legal support for these oligarchs is grounded in their ownership, which cannot be taken away without just cause. By the production and reproduction of a corporate culture around football, the NFL owners have created sufficient societal support of the teams that amount to a defense of exorbitant capital accumulation. This, in turn, perpetuates the concentrated personal wealth of the owners. These are owners who are willing to support the wannabe fascist that Trump personifies because he defends them through his tax cuts and the lowering of tax rates. To further ensure capital accumulation is protected, the oligarchs, given their diverse economic interests, employ

the services of armies of professionals—lawyers, accountants, lobbyists, wealth management agencies, who have highly specialized knowledge and can navigate a complex system of taxation and regulations, generating a range of tax products, instruments and advice that enable oligarchs to keep scores of billions in income annually that would otherwise have to be surrendered to the Treasury.³⁸

What the example of the NFL oligarchs tells us is that the ultimate aim is capital accumulation, so forming an alliance with a would-be fascist is not a problem.

As an example of corporate culture, football is a marketable commodity, and the propaganda unfolds through mass marketing to produce an emotional attachment in the form of object fixation. As individual fans form this emotional tie, they develop together a group allegiance and loyalty to the team. There are fascistic elements in this involving the willing suspension of a rational assessment of how football functions. As the violence of football manifests itself, fans are involved in a cathartic release of emotion. Fascist rallies and Trump rallies also have this emotional blending of expressions of hatred and violence. Fans do not disassociate their emotions from football violence. As members of the media, policymakers, and celebrities all cheerlead support for football, they normalize expressions of violence as a part of a popular culture. American football contains elements of fascist culture too, as it is essentially a celebration of orchestrated acts of violence. States with football teams and the rivalries between teams at home versus the visiting team generate a kind of localized fascist nationalism. The home team transmits culturally accepted images of the violence that is unleashed against the opposing team. For example, when playing at home against the Miami Dolphins, the Buffalo Bills are out to "Squish the Fish." The nationalism associated with fascism is also a part of football culture: our team against

your team, either you are included on our team or excluded as an opponent. In his famous standup comedy routine, George Carlin referred to the imperialism of football. Fascism contains the concept of permanent war and like football, the idea of invading and conquering enemy territory. This militarism of football is based on the premise of scoring points based on the amount of enemy territory you take over. So as the billionaires maximize their profits, they do so to further their shared interests of what is a fascist corporatism, the means by which private ownership can, through effective propaganda, market the interests of capital as the common interest. The monopoly status of football is an indicator of American corporatism. It's no coincidence that the overall fan base, especially of the fans attending games, tends to be members of the well-off upper middle and upper class that gets caught up in the spectacle of football violence.

Minority rule isn't confined to those oligarchs that own football teams. The ideology of corporatism is well-represented by Leonard Leo, not just from his \$1.6 billion donation to the Federalist Society, but he also has created the Teneo Network, as part of a strategy to undermine progressive causes in all sectors of society, a kind of "Federalist Society for everything."³⁹ Any idea or policy that doesn't support corporatism is rejected as "woke-ism" or liberal. Through videos and documents, the Teneo Network promotes a set of strategies designed to push back against the coalition of academics, politicians, Hollywood, and professional athletes who are perceiving as promoting liberalism. The existence of Teneo unifies corporate America with policymakers toward forming the political agenda of a minority. In Congress, members of Teneo include US senators J.D. Vance of Ohio, Josh Hawley of Missouri, and Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York. Other members of Teneo include the leadership of the Republican Attorney General Association, the Republican State Leadership Committee, Turning Point USA, and prominent conservative figures in numerous industries.⁴⁰ When Teneo was founded in 2008, its ideological core conservative and corporate principles included limited functions of government, the free market and militarism. With Teneo representing the legal interests of the Federalist Society through Leo, the goal of appointing Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett, was to deconstruct the legal underpinnings of court cases that had advanced various disadvantaged groups, such as women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community. The monies received by Teneo were funneled from Donors Trust as essentially dark money donations from various conservative libertarian individuals and groups. Teneo has had as its mission to assemble a leadership and social base throughout the United States toward developing a consistent corporatist vision. The brainstorming and networking of Teneo takes place at its annual retreat where the faithful gather. Throughout the year, its activities take place in twenty regional chapters nationwide with a focus on

media outlets, reaching corporate America, and outlining Teneo's economic priorities. A consistent goal has been to develop strategies for its members to occupy leadership positions in various organizations in order to adopt pro-corporate viewpoints.

Corporations also supported the attempted coup of January 6, 2021:

The 147 coup caucus Republicans who voted to overturn the results of the 2020 Presidential election—many of whom also supported, planned, and orchestrated the attempted coup on January 6—received \$44 million in campaign contributions from some of the most powerful financial interests in the United States.⁴¹

Both coup planners and participants are of one mind, that is, to promote the dominance of a minority view of politics, represented by corporate America, parts of the middle class, evangelicals, white supremacists, and violent Nazis. To impose the minority view, there is, in the words of Jason Stanley, who writes about fascism, “undermining propaganda,” which excludes ideas that could challenge the ideology of minority politics. Trump's protégé, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, is an example of this with the Stop Woke Act of 2022, which legislated mind control through the banning of teaching of eight categories in Florida schools, an Orwellian twist where the victimizer assumes the role of victim. Past victims are to be wiped clean from the historical record. A whites-only history is what will be taught, and any look back to history can only be presented in a way that allows for a guilt-free white America. It is as if teaching about racism, sexism, and other isms is too much of a burden for white America to bear, even though it's the truth. White supremacists see the teaching of these truths as a way of inflicting blame on white America. The policy assumes that white people today cannot accurately and honestly assess this country's history of hatred. The Act prohibits teaching that would imply that,

a person by virtue of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, bears personal responsibility for and must feel guilt, anguish, or other forms of psychological distress because of actions in which the person played no part, committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, national origin, or sex.⁴²

For fascism to be effective, there has to be monopoly control over the production and distribution of ideas. The dissemination of well-established, factual, historical truths about a diverse America where oppressors and the oppressed struggle would expose the existence of the various isms, which contradicts the concept of a white, homogenous America. At the root of this exclusion is a denial of a very visible reality of an America in which diversity can be

seen. Somehow if the existence of diversity is no longer deemed historically relevant, then those diverse peoples no longer have a viable existence.

A manifestation of destructive politics that cause social harm to parts of a diverse society is the militarization of the police. The overdetermination of violence propels a destructive politics that causes harm to segments of society that are not left alone to be who they are without the imposition of force. As the police become more militarized, violence is used to silence dissent. Militarization erodes what should be legal limits on the use of force. This form of militarization links foreign and domestic policy, implementing the ideology of militarism. Police act like units of the military because they have the discretion to suspend restraints on using force. Also, in certain circumstances, such as the use of SWAT teams, police act like paramilitary teams engaging in elite military operations trained in the use of advanced tactics, operations, and weaponry. Often deployed in areas where people of color reside, these paramilitary units are used in no-knock raids of apartments and homes in the search for drugs, weapons, and cash. The formal justification for such actions is to define the situation as a crisis, which allows many more people and resources to be deployed.

The original purpose behind using SWAT teams in policing was to employ them only in the most extreme situations, such as those involving the taking of hostages. In an apparent example of mission creep, these teams are now used routinely to execute search warrants in what are often low risk situations. The tendency to overreact violently unfolded on May 13, 2020 with the killing of Breonna Taylor, a woman of color in Louisville, Kentucky, the tragic victim of a botched no-knock search warrant. After using a battering ram, the unit entered the residence and shot Taylor, who was asleep, eight times. Research published by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that Blacks were 3.23 times more likely to be killed in an encounter with police than whites.⁴³

The obvious violation of civil liberties in these searches is that even when they don't result in fatalities, they often amount to fishing expeditions of non-white residences, based on no evidence. "More than 80 percent of those deployments, and hence 80 percent of the growth of activity, were for proactive drug raids, specifically no-knock and quick-knock entries into private residences searching for contraband (drugs, guns, and money)."⁴⁴ Another example of police use of excessive force is when heavily armed police appear during otherwise peaceful demonstrations: "law enforcement agencies that use military equipment are more likely to display violent behavior and more likely to kill the civilians they are supposed to protect and serve."⁴⁵

The visible presence of police as violent agents of racial oppression dates back to slave patrols associated with the KKK, connections with citizens councils, brutality against civil rights organizers, and the violence against

and killing of the Black Panthers. From the Church Committee hearings came revelations of the activities of COINTELPRO and the Red Squads. The militarization of the police is the latest chapter of unrestrained police violence. Just in the year 2019, “police killed over 1,000 people in the United States. . . . Nearly 24 percent of the victims last year were Black, even though Black Americans make up just 13 percent of the population.”⁴⁶

The social harm of a militarized police is not just their intimidating appearance but also the discretion that they have to limit peaceful demonstrations and even break them up, if they so choose. It isn’t uncommon for police to point weapons at the faces of peaceful demonstrators, to shoot rubber bullets at them and douse them with pepper spray or tear gas. Foreign and domestic policy has merged in that both view civilians in various settings as threats that need to be conquered by violent means. This merger is evident in the advent of the 1033 Program in 1990, a federal program that allows excess military hardware to be sold to local police departments. With this program, policymakers made it possible for the Pentagon to distribute more than \$6 billion in surplus equipment, all designed to be used in wartime, to states and localities for policing purposes: everything from tanks, mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles, assault rifles, bayonets, night vision goggles. When this type of equipment appears in a community, it is easy to understand how residents come to view the police as an occupying force. For these communities, especially communities of color, the visible presence of these military style police is to view them as a threat, a presence to monitor the residents and limit their civil liberties.

The extensive geographic spread of militarized police throughout the country bears a resemblance to the US foreign policy spread of military bases around the world:

over 7,000 state and local agencies have participated in the 1033 program, transforming the map of American policing organizations from civil servants into a patchwork of geographically dispersed militias, each with its own agenda and rules of engagement.⁴⁷

What results from this geographic spread, whether intended or not, is a form of social harm that diminishes the quality of life through a heightened sense of fear of these military style police. The threat of, and use of, extreme force, which in most instances, is unnecessary, resembles a military takeover of enemy territory. Additional social harm is caused by these police forces when they inflict serious injury on unarmed civilians. Even in wartime, the Geneva Convention stipulates that prisoners of war should be subject to humane treatment and there are clear prohibitions against the use of torture as contained in the Human Rights Agreement of 1984. The emphasis on

warrior-style training in American police departments desensitizes police into embracing a warrior mentality. This mentality was clearly on display in Minneapolis when George Floyd was murdered. Militarism in both US foreign policy and domestic policy pursue unlimited growth. The federal budget for the US military continues to grow as does the budget for an increasingly militarized police.

In addition to the 1033 program, police militarism is further supported by the Civil Asset Forfeiture (CAF). It is legal for police to seize money and property from criminal suspects. This is possible because a suspect's property, unlike the individual, is not protected under the Fourteenth Amendment. A primary recipient of these seized assets is SWAT (originally known as Special Weapons Assault Team) which first appeared in Philadelphia in 1964, grew in response to the 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles and then was perfected by the LAPD Chief Darryl Gates. SWAT teams are trained by the US military and adopt military behavior.

Like their foreign policy counterparts, police departments have engaged in their own arms race, with the 1033 program and civil asset forfeiture. Just as US armed forces compete for the latest technology, so do police departments now compete to obtain more military hardware. Since its beginnings, the use of SWAT has been political. Used in non-white neighborhoods with a "shoot first, ask questions later" attitude, SWAT teams routinely ignore procedural due process safeguards. Militarized tactics were used to confront mostly peaceful demonstrations in 1999 in Seattle over the World Trade Organization ministerial conference, which became known as the "Battle in Seattle." In response to the ever-increasing numbers of shootings of Black people, the Black Lives Matter protests and other large demonstrations have attracted the attention of militarized police. Even before these protests, these paramilitary police forces which engaged in overreactions to the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests and the 2014 demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri after the killing of Michael Brown, were seen as so excessive that they brought increased attention to the problem of police brutality. The social harm resulting from a militarized police is dysfunctional. When militarized police arrive on the scene, their appearance creates heightened tension and a belief that violence is inevitable. As the use of militarized police has expanded, it spreads fear and violence throughout communities. Militarized police go into a community as though entering enemy territory, acting as an occupying force, and viewing the community as an increasing threat. This kind of mindset characterizes the essence of police state practices. In a police state, the use of force is pre-emptive rather than based on responding to an actual threat. As the militarized police present themselves as ready to fight with overwhelming force, the policed community becomes the target of police violence. What results is a culture of violent expectations.

In August 2020, the Brennan Center for Justice released its report “Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism, White Supremacy and Far Right Militancy in Law Enforcement.” The report refers to the 2017 FBI findings of the “persistent threat of lethal violence” from white supremacists. Among the FBI’s conclusions, since 2000, white supremacist violence has resulted in more violence and fatalities than any other form of domestic terrorism. Most disturbing is how white supremacists have established ties to law enforcement. The hate and violence unleashed by Trump’s base was in part, set in motion by decades of nationwide support from various police departments.

Since 2000, law enforcement officials with alleged connections to white supremacist groups or far-right militant activities have been exposed in Alabama, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and elsewhere. Research organizations have uncovered hundreds of federal, state, and local law enforcement officials participating in racist, nativist, and sexist media activity.⁴⁸

Equally troubling, the report points to an awareness of, and a tolerance for, these racist activities. Even earlier, in 2015, the FBI’s Counterterrorism and Policy Guide issued a warning concerning the links between extremist groups and law enforcement. The Brennan Center report cites the research of the Plain View Project, which, “documented 5,000 patently bigoted social media posts by 3,500 accounts identified as belonging to current and former law enforcement officials.”⁴⁹ The report provides examples of law enforcement officers in different states expressing support for extremist groups. In Chicago, a thirteen-year veteran was wearing a Three Percenters insignia while on duty. In Olympia, Washington, a police officer posed for a photograph with an armed member of the Three Percenters. In Philadelphia, police officers were interacting with members of the Proud Boys.

When violence is cemented into the culture, it is effectively normalized. This normalization of violence is a fundamental part of Trumpism. Trump established the political tone that would inspire fanatical elements of his base to act out violently.

Since entering politics, Trump had fashioned himself into the most fervently pro-gun nominee in presidential history; he was calling for a national right to carry concealed firearms, among other changes to loosen gun laws. His enthusiasm was rewarded. At gun shows that year, vendors were selling olive-green T-shirts marked “Trump’s Army.” . . . After Trump promised to resume the use of waterboarding, vendors added shirts in lifeguard-style red and white marked “Waterboarding Instructor.”⁵⁰

The violence-prone Trumpists had one overriding fixation: that the state is not the only entity that can employ violence. The Second Amendment, they claim, gives Americans the right to have and use guns against their enemies. In a deluded twist, violent Trumpists not only assert their right to acquire all kinds of weapons, their ultimate aim is to overthrow the state, in so doing, becoming able to monopolize the use of force. Their delusional fear is that if they do not have the right to these weapons, their enemies, i.e., non-whites, will enlist the authority of government to eliminate the white race. This is the paranoia at the root of white racists and why they are obsessed with stockpiling weapons. Even whites not affiliated with white supremacy embrace the gun culture. "Americans had accumulated 310 million firearms, roughly one per person, the highest rate of civilian gun ownership in the world."⁵¹ The mass marketing of newer and deadlier weapons by gun manufacturers has helped increase sales.

As the National Rifle Association (NRA) has aligned itself with gun manufacturers, this symbiotic relationship has increased membership in the NRA along with gun sales. Using a familiar racist trope, both the NRA and gun manufacturers make the deceptive pitch that crime rates are rising especially in "inner cities," so America needs to arm up. To be a part of Trumpism is to join this special club of gun owners. The dual movement of militarized police and the arming of America has created a recipe for social harm especially targeting the identified enemies: immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, women, Black people, Jewish people, Asians, etc. These groups, which do not occupy roles as dominant decision makers are nevertheless presented as such, in order to create the ideology of victimhood for racist whites. The social harm is imposed on these targeted groups as violence against them is unleashed, and at the same time justified as a matter of survival of the fittest. Racist whites heavily armed with deadly weapons have, in their view, the right to survive because "might makes right." In speeches and rallies, Trump has glorified the spectacle of violence. While corporate America is free to function in a dominant role as policy maker, Americans attack other Americans as part of what is essentially an overall strategy of divide and conquer. Corporate America benefits when issues of wages, workplace conditions, and gender and racial inequality remain unaddressed. In short, minority rule supports a corporate agenda.

Simply put, Trump and Trumpism are a distraction, illustrating an unwillingness and an inability to address real problems. Trump and his followers formulate a hate-filled rhetoric in order to justify actions and violence intended to cause harm to many people. They aim to foment dysfunction both inside and outside the government. As president, Trump functioned to provide benefits to his financial backers, who

saw endless opportunity for tax cuts and limitless tax-free profits. They saw a President who would reign in nearly a century of regulation and allow them unimaginable capital gains that they could pass on to their children without paying taxes.⁵²

Violence-prone Trumpist organizations function as a smoke screen for policies that favor the movement of capital. The paranoid fabrication of conspiracies by QAnon, Proud Boys, and the Oath Keepers obscure the underlying functions of American capitalism. As capital has, since the 1980s, begun to restructure the labor market, increasing the use of temporary and contingent workers, along with the export of capital, there was a corresponding decline in the ranks of the middle class. Segments of the middle class responded to these changes with a misplaced perception that the threats were coming from below, from women, people of color, immigrants, etc.

The increasing militarization of American society is a response from people affected by policies that were designed to divide them, such as those based on racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, and other isms. In periods of economic decline, an ever-greater reliance on violence is intended to repress ever-greater numbers of demonstrations, strikes, and other examples of civil unrest that disrupt the reproduction of capital. Starting with the late 1970s, the middle class began to decline as the dominant social class. At the same time, the widening gulf between those at the top and the rest of America reflects an extreme between accumulated wealth and wages. With the aim of lowering capital and labor costs, computerized automation has decreased the ranks of middle-class professionals, resulting in downward mobility. What had been white-collar, managerial, and professional positions were reduced while there has been an uptick in low-level service jobs, such as in food service, home care, childcare, and security. Such workers often need to work for tips with no benefits, no paid time off, and no sick leave or pension. Uber drivers are another example of part-time, on-demand jobs, where drivers are independent contractors. Uber drivers pay up front costs, providing their cars, insurance, gas, and repairs and 20 percent of their income goes to the company. The contract employees sign is non-negotiable, including provisions that eliminate the company's liability.

Members of the middle class lack an awareness of the extent to which they are disposable in the capitalist economy, with which they are so aligned. Most Americans live paycheck to paycheck without savings in the event of an emergency. Most have few or no assets, with the exception of home ownership, which is shrinking, while those at the top continue to accumulate wealth:

the richest twenty Americans had by 2015 come to own more wealth than the bottom 50 percent of the population. By 2016, the richest 1 percent of families

controlled a record high of about 39 percent of the nation's wealth, nearly twice as much as the bottom 90 percent whose share continues to shrink.⁵³

Labor unions in the public and private sector are a shadow of their former selves. The percentage of Americans in union jobs is in the single digits and even many of those jobs do not protect workers from give backs on wages and benefits.

Decreased funding of higher education has locked out would-be college students. Even for those students who do graduate college, there is a shrinking base of middle-class jobs and greater job competition. Many of them find the employment opportunities at Google, Walmart, and Amazon lack the wages and benefits that allow for a middle-class existence. So where was the growth?

94 percent of US net job growth from 2005 to 2015 came in "alternative job arrangements," defined as temporary help agency workers, on call workers, contract company workers, independent contractors, or freelancers: jobs without a fixed paycheck and virtually no benefits were offered. Such fulltime jobs as were available were for temporary workers and independent contractors through agencies or on call.⁵⁴

Trump and Trumpists have mastered a deceptive manipulation of this group in decline: white, middle-class males, drawing their attention to, and targeting others who are less fortunate. Nancy Leong, in *Identity Capitalists*, explains through the use of this term the ideology that is disseminated which places white people, regardless of their class standing, in the same league as white capitalists. As a form of classic propaganda, Trump repeats this distorted association between the well-to-do and a marginalized middle class, spreading this message to people who lack a clear understanding of their precarious class position and the reasons behind it. Trump's remarks are a form of bonding, a false bonding at the expense of the outgroups: women, immigrants, Blacks, Jews, etc. Trump makes use of what Freud referred to as "identification with the aggressor." White capital makes policies to undermine the middle class, but they are still more privileged than the outgroups. The idea is to depict the middle class as being victimized by the outgroups. It is the hidden power of the upper class that Trump carefully omits from his speeches with middle-class white audiences. The heavier tax burden of the middle and working class is the result of the wealthy and corporations evading taxation. The well-hidden protections of the wealth system allow for the further concentration of wealth, contributing to income and wealth inequality. Behind the scenes, through dark money and by lobbying policymakers, the upper

class gains its advantages whether through tax cuts, deregulation, business subsidies, bailouts, or free-trade agreements.

While Trump's heated rhetoric against a diverse, mass-based democracy serves to activate violence-prone organizations, he also works to generate policies that only work to the advantage of the privileged. It is what Olúfẹ̀mi O. Táíwò refers to as "elite capture," expressed as a mobilization of policies that serve elite interests while acting against measures designed to promote mass democracy. Through hatred and violence, Trump and Trumpists work to disorganize social change, which would benefit the masses. Instead, institutions function to serve the interests of the few while Trump and his followers scapegoat political outsiders. The wealthiest families, the Waltons of Walmart, the Mars candy family and the Koch brothers "have used their considerable clout, spending millions to save billions. They have lobbied Congress to tip the rules in favor of dynastic wealth, including tax cuts and public policies that will further their enterprises."⁵⁵ While immigrants are demonized as a threat to white culture and jobs, behind the scenes capital undercuts the quality of life with an upper-class takeover of housing.

The luxury building boom is driving up the cost of land in central neighborhoods with a ripple impact on the cost of housing throughout the city and into surrounding municipalities. Affluent, but not super rich, households find themselves pushed into outer neighborhoods increasing competition for scarce land and affordable and moderately priced housing. The luxury boom is exacerbating extreme urban inequalities of income, wealth, and opportunities and worsening the racial divide in many cities.⁵⁶

An ideology of hatred displaces class conflict with culture wars. The cyclical nature of American capitalism manifests itself through downturns with job losses and reorganization of the labor market. Meanwhile, Trump and Trumpists do the bidding of capital, enabling capitalists to do their thing while they promote the misplaced anger of the middle class by blaming economic insecurity on the people who aren't responsible and never looking at systemic causes. Trumpism goes further to do the bidding of capital, by attacking the "deep state," criticizing the institution of government, which can and does provide aspects of a social safety net. Blaming people for their misfortunes is an aspect of marketplace ideology. Failures are always individual. Republicans have promoted a version of an Ayn Rand philosophy expressed as the "personal responsibility crusade."

The core assertion embodied in the crusade is that Americans are best off dealing with economic risks on their own, without the overweening interference or expense of wider systems of risk sharing. Insurance, by protecting us from the

full consequences of our choices, takes away our incentives to be productive and prudent.⁵⁷

Trump's "deep state" references are really about the bureaucrats of the social welfare state, who implement social services. To Trump's base, including the more violent-prone elements, the deep state is providing benefits to unworthy people. In a throwback to social Darwinism, this mindset thinks the state should get out of the way, leaving people to fend for themselves. Even though financial support for the social insurance programs of the US government has been declining since the 1970s, the political drumbeat has been that still more cuts to these programs are needed. And corporate America has paved the way with the elimination of what had been forms of private health insurance and pensions. New workers are no longer given the option of a traditional pension, instead employers provide only 401k's, which are the responsibility of the individual worker. Individual Retirement Accounts were introduced as another option.

Corporate America championed these changes for two reasons: to increase the bottom line and extend corporate control over new workers entering the labor market: young people, women, people of color, and immigrants. With these changes, corporate America now saw itself as having no responsibility for the welfare of its workers, a dramatic shift from its stance just a few decades earlier. In order to keep up with what it means to be middle class, credit card debt has skyrocketed. Obsessive spending allowed the middle class to maintain an outward façade of economic well-being. Middle class incomes also are being eaten up by the rising cost of services associated with a middle-class lifestyle: education, health care, mortgage payments, and day care. And even though middle-class families are juggling debt and the rising costs of living, they believe that the monies being spent on housing, education, etc. will pay off in the long run as investments in their future. What is also taking place is that these so-called investments do not guarantee a future payoff. Along with the uncertainty of what are risky investments in housing and education is a social psychology of middle-class insecurity.

Trump exacerbated that insecurity as part of a strategy to undermine the social welfare state. He did it through various proposals that stressed personal responsibility, largely aimed at undoing the reforms associated with the Affordable Care Act and other government programs.

He staffed his administration with personal responsibility crusaders hostile to Medicare and Social Security. He did everything within his executive powers to sabotage the Affordable Care Act. He kneecapped the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, appointing as its head a conservative deficit hawk.⁵⁸

With his rhetoric, Trump has radicalized the middle class, moving his base from being motivated by middle-class insecurity to expressions of middle-class violence. Since America's middle class, by virtue of its class identity, is supportive of capitalism, it has focused its frustrations not on the social system that created its insecurity, but rather elsewhere, on a diverse society. Trump knew how to game the system for his benefit. What Trump marketed is the appearance and not the reality of American capitalism. While Trump was gaming the system, his sleight of hand was to redirect middle class anger not at capitalism but at its victims. His tax cut, financed by borrowed money, was his important legislative accomplishment, but the benefits went to upper classes and corporate America. Most significantly, Trump's tax cut had a detrimental effect on many Americans.

Trump's tax law also shifted the burden of supporting our federal government from companies and onto workers. That year individuals paid more than eight times as much income tax as corporations did. Thanks to Trump's tax law, in 2021, for the first time, individual income taxes will generate more than half of total federal revenues. Add on payroll taxes—Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance—and individuals provide 86 percent of federal revenues.⁵⁹

Throughout his administration, Trump spewed his hateful rhetoric about invading migrants, he trafficked fear in a time of crisis all for the benefit of corporate America. Hateful remarks were the cover to scapegoat minorities while he took actions to support corporate profits. The Payroll Protection Program (PPP), for example, part of the \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, was supposed to provide aid to small businesses. To the contrary, Trump funneled much of it to big business.

Much of that money went to businesses with little apparent need for a taxpayer handout. Only 2 percent of American businesses have more than 100 employees, but the Trump administration defined small business as up to 500 employees. Many borrowers were actually big corporations that qualified because they were allowed to count each of their business locations as if it were a separate small business with fewer than 500 workers.⁶⁰

The hatred and violence that Trump inspired was a useful cover for his pro-corporate policies. Trump's supporters vented their anger and violence at people not directly responsible for their troubles. While his followers feel that Trump identifies with them, his policies tell a different story.

Trump cheated his supporters, desperate for relief after more than four decades adrift in the economic doldrums, by promising them tax cuts while ending the

excessive influence Wall Street and big business wield in Washington. Instead, he slashed taxes for the rich and the corporations they own, enhancing the power of the economic elites in our government, while throwing crumbs to his less-wealthy supporters. In his new tax law, Trump added an extra dollop of contempt for the “poorly educated” he claimed to love, showering himself and the rest of the Trump-Kushner family with more benefits as real estate investors.⁶¹

There is the question of how Trump and his violent followers were able to use hate-filled rhetoric to inspire a social movement that caused such extensive and destructive social harm. Trump became a master in his use of social media. His repeated messages amounted to a steady stream of propaganda. What magnified his messages was the fact that social media platforms profit immensely from hateful rhetoric, and their rapidity in spreading misinformation is what makes hatred spread. With the use of bots, the most distorted views are aired to the widest audience. And it isn’t just bots; social media users are seeking and being fed confirmation of a particular viewpoint. Sinan Aral refers to “the hype machine” which magnifies a particular viewpoint so that it becomes the dominant viewpoint. The integration and coordination of specific technologies form the basis of this hype machine, “the design and development of digital social networks, machine intelligence, and smartphones together.”⁶²

There is technological coordination of information that appears on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, through a process that monitors likes and dislikes, steering people to preferences based on previous activity. The simple formula, the result of private ownership of media outlets, amounts to more viewers, more profits. The bottom line is to connect like-minded viewers. Individuals who hold extreme views are linked up with others who also hold extreme views. What results is the human and technological construction of a perceived, created reality. The process of magnifying a created reality attracts users, which in turn monetizes the interactions on social media. Advertisers crave ever-expanding audiences to whom they can pitch products. As a behavior shaper, social media further amplifies content by suggesting which content and which products users should consume. This mental conditioning is hot-wired in a twenty-four-hour cycle, which is built into the technological structure of the smartphone. As an impersonal example of socialization in the digital age, false intimate relationships without face-to-face contact, are formed. Speed is of the essence, increasing the flow of information, with the effect that people become fixated on what’s being posted on these sites. Social media sites connect haters with other haters. It impacts brain function so that such rapid and pleasure-seeking connections with like-minded people has been shown to produce releases of dopamine, the pleasure hormone of the brain. The intensity of hatred expressed on social media is, in part, the

dopamine pleasure payoff, which reflects the fact that use of social media is habitual and a kind of addictive behavior. Due to the technology of social media, haters are focused on certain sites. Social media steers both haters and non-haters to specific sites, based on searches, likes, and dislikes. With sufficient user-to-user communication and with emphasis on particular content, whatever is attention-grabbing, shocking, and sensational is what will be trending. The greater the shock value, the more a statement attracts attention. The group mind is dominated by a fixed unreality.

What is then created in this unreality is a set of “in” groups and “out” groups, generating more polarization. Trump and Trumpism mobilized destructive ideas and actions, which grew on social media. Under the problematic guise of free expression, social media operates on the basis that people have a license to hate others and inspire haters to do harm to others. These sites normalize a separation between ideas and consequences so that words do not have consequences. What becomes harmful to society is a monopoly of content that justifies dehumanization of targeted groups. These views became dominant when given official sanction by President Trump.

the president had turned his Twitter account into a live-from-the-Oval-Office national address that never ended, which meant that every journalist, government workers, or concerned citizen suddenly glued themselves to the platform. And to be on Twitter, they learned, was to be besieged by trolls, buffeted by interminable online controversies, pulled into endlessly warring polarized camps, and deluged with falsehoods and rumors.⁶³

In combination, Trump and corporate America through social media produced and controlled the flow of information. On the corporate side, Mark Zuckerberg’s motto “move fast and break things” could be understood as the breaking of democratic media. Facebook embodies the social costs of private ownership and concentrated control of the media. Regardless of the official public relations initially espoused by Facebook, that it would be a participatory and empowering medium, instead it has become a global platform for hate. A closer look at Facebook reveals how the platform controls the flow of information through its rules and procedures through which it manipulates user access. One such technique is auditing, a paternalistic method through which Facebook advises users on how to navigate. With this method, Facebook acts as though it is omniscient, it knows what is best for you and will tell you how to get the information you need. Through algorithms as artificial intelligence, technology goes on automatic pilot, guiding you by predicting your thought patterns with the ultimate goal of increasing Facebook usage. Algorithms function as steps that direct human traffic toward specific content. In so doing, users are informed as to what are appropriate sources

of information. We do not get to decide for ourselves what is appropriate content, the algorithms do that for us. Our thought processes have been outsourced to a machine.

One example is Facebook's promotion of Feed, formerly known as Newsfeed, which functions to provide all kinds of content related to what you and your friends should be interested in. Algorithms represent a surrender to independent thinking, meaning people cannot on their own determine what is relevant information. Facebook determines which current events users find out about. What is considered worthy is anything that is marginal, sensational, freaky, or disturbing. With sufficient promotion driving traffic, a news item on Facebook (whether it's true or not) will be marketed like an advertisement pushing a product. While Zuckerberg's official P.R. is that Facebook brings the world and people together, beneath this is his obsessive goal to increase the number of Facebook users, in turn, increasing profits. Polarized politics manifested as words and deeds intended to harm a diverse society is what has resulted from Facebook's tremendous growth. Facebook is a wild west of misinformation, presenting views and information without citing sources or motives. Facebook creates and amplifies content designed to generate an intense emotional response; through repetition, it also becomes a powerful platform for the distribution of propaganda. It isn't surprising that Facebook selects from its viewers many hateful messages to promote. The emotional intensity of hate is measured by clicks of likes and dislikes, shares, and comments. The net result is that hate travels quickly through Facebook. The emphasis on speed to reach many people quickly doesn't allow for a more measured, reasoned, less distorted thought process. By the use of "filter bubbles," Facebook gives haters a place to express their views. The polarization of views is the result of views confined to these filter bubbles. Disturbing ideas grow on Facebook from what amounts to permission to latch onto an idea without careful deliberation.

Facebook also allows for the production and distribution of junk food for the mind by the use of "stickiness," which creates the ongoing need to be seen and heard on Facebook. Facebook's appeal to haters is that it functions to unleash irrational thoughts, to hook people into a feel-good emotional association with the expression of anger and rage. In the name of "user control," Facebook assigns the responsibility of privacy to individual users. The privacy that Facebook doesn't protect is privacy from advertisers. As people spend more time on Facebook, their exposure to advertisers increases. Despite user control, Facebook actively encourages invasions of privacy by the use of "sharing," which is related to the production of so-called friends.

Facebook also has a role to play in the use of manufactured or fake news. For example, in March 2019, Facebook subsidiary Instagram refused to take down anti-Semitic messages posted by the conspiracy promoter Alex

Jones. Facebook has exhibited a pattern of resisting removal of violent content. Violent, graphic videos have been, and are still, posted on Facebook. There have been contradictory policies about the posting of Nazi and white supremacist content. Facebook's policy has been to allow the posting of white nationalist content. Breaking things provides a technological means to mass produce all kinds of hate. Since negative content has more emotional appeal, especially views that dehumanize, what by and large doesn't reach a larger audience, is positive content.

Words have consequences and Facebook is a prime example. It has allowed extremists to not only present their views in an unregulated forum, but sites such as Facebook also incite extremists to act.

A mass killing in Christ Church, New Zealand, which resulted in fifty deaths in two mosques at the hands of a white supremacist, broke new ground in the orchestrated use of social media to incite and then amplify the damage of terrorism. . . . He livestreamed the attack on Facebook Live.⁶⁴

The violent ripple effect of the Christ Church shooting resulted in other mass shootings.

What these social media sites represent, in particular Facebook, is the harm caused by private ownership of a media outlet, which ties profitmaking to fostering the unleashing of unfiltered hatred. Facebook is not the proper forum for deliberation of issues; it instead allows for the normalization and manufacture of irrationality. Facebook manufactures content that appeals to fringe elements who become fixated on violent fantasies about causing pain and suffering to people who are demonized. Radicalized elements of the middle class use Facebook and other social media sites to reinforce their sense of victimization and shift blame for their perceived loss of social standing onto non-whites, women, immigrants, Jews, and others.

Facebook is one example among many of how corporate America has directly provided support for ideologies that promote hate and violence. The politics of destruction can be understood in relation to class struggle. Expressed as a struggle between classes, America's upper class divides and conquers by funding middle-class extremism with targets by subjecting social and political outsiders to specific ism's and violence. One such example was the formation of VDare by Peter Brimelow, which brought together white nationalists with the anti-immigrants. Part of its stated mission is the struggle to ensure that America is for Americans; this is the cover story, that VDare is nothing more than a voice critiquing immigrant policy. But a closer look at its website reveals a list of white nationalist funders. VDare provides both a cover for, and support of, the white nationalist movement. Since its founding, VDare has been a visible participant in white nationalist events. VDare is

financially supported by a dark money group, Donors Trust, which receives monies from wealthy backers, such as the Kochs, the Mercers, and the DeVoses. The website promotes a combination of racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. “The governments of the West are waging a campaign of slow extermination against their own core populations. It is white genocide.”⁶⁵

Such comments are a sample of a consistent theme on VDare of a process underway that argues whites are in the process of being replaced by non-whites and by the flood of non-white immigration. The chosen name of the site illustrates this mindset: named after Virginia Dare, alleged to have been the first white child born in America in 1587. According to the site, Virginia Dare and other colonists disappeared at Roanoke Island, part of North Carolina, which they allege was the start of an historical pattern to eliminate the white race. The emphasis on white nationalism is evident from VDare’s contributors:

Jared Taylor, the editor of the white nationalist site, *American Renaissance*, and Kevin MacDonald, a now-retired anti-Semitic psychology professor at California State University, Long Beach. “Unite the Right” organizer Jason Kessler has written semi-regularly for the site, including about the legal challenges facing the white nationalists and neo-Nazis who organized the deadly rally. Finally Kevin DeAnna, a longtime white nationalist propagandist, has written for the site since 2011 under the pseudonym, James Kirkpatrick.⁶⁶

VDare has also provided a forum for more well-known racist writers from Pat Buchanan and Ann Coulter to Michelle Malkin, who have also attended VDare events. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center’s *Hatewatch*, “Donors gave the prominent white nationalist hate group VDare \$4.3 million in 2019, over eight times more than the year before, according to tax records the Center for Media and Democracy obtained and shared with *Hatewatch*.”⁶⁷ VDare is attracting contributions from donors with deep pockets, which allows VDare to spew its hate-filled rhetoric that there is a conspiracy to commit white genocide. This idea served to inspire Robert Bowers to commit the violent and deadly attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018. According to this conspiracy, Jews are viewed as the ringleaders who conspire with non-whites to commit white genocide. Also troubling is the role of the monied class, a segment of the billionaire class that is funding hate groups who are willing and able to strike out violently against a range of diverse groups. For example, the Donors Trust Fund, which has ties to Charles Koch and the Mercer family, “pumped \$1.5 million into VDare in 2019.”⁶⁸ Donors Trust, which has been called the dark money ATM of the conservative movement, “is a donor-advised fund (DAF) sponsor, meaning that it manages individual charitable accounts for its clients for a fee.

These clients . . . can shield their identities from the public by using Donors Trust.”⁶⁹ Consider the implications of Donors Trust hiding contributions from many wealthy donors to extremist groups.

In 2019, Donors Trust provided \$10,500 to the New Century Foundation, the nonprofit behind Jared Taylor’s white nationalist *American Renaissance* magazine and website. Giant DAF sponsors including Fidelity Charitable—the largest charity in the United States—Vanguard Charitable and Schwab Charitable have all given to VDare and other hate groups.⁷⁰

VDare is one example among others, some visible and others invisible, of the flow of money to organizations and groups willing to commit violent acts. It is difficult to know how many billionaires are actively funding white supremacists; still there are noteworthy examples, such as Robert Mercer, hedge fund manager and CEO of Renaissance Technologies. Mercer, a prominent donor to the Trump campaign, had ties to Steve Bannon and helped make Breitbart News a platform for the Alt Right. There is William Regnery II who, through the National Policy Institute, published a series of books in praise of white America. Peter Thiel, PayPal founder and billionaire tech entrepreneur made various public statements about his criticisms of democracy. Democracy, in his view, is not to be associated with capitalism. Putting his money where his mouth is, Thiel gave undisclosed amounts to both Facebook and Reddit, which through its Magic Memes enhanced Trump’s social media profile. Other names associated with giving money to extremist groups are the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, Coors Brewing, Robert Shillman, CEO of Cognex, and Nina Rosenwald, an heiress of Sears and Roebuck. And the Mercers “reportedly invested \$10 million in the radical-right Breitbart News and the radical-right revolutionary, Steve Bannon.”⁷¹

The Center for the Analysis of the Radical Right identified William Regnery II “as a major figure in the White nationalist movement, having founded the National Policy Institute, a white supremacist think tank and the Charles Mantel Society, which publishes the *Occidental Quarterly*, a racist, anti-Semitic and pseudo-scholarly journal.”⁷² In addition, there is a broad range of research groups, philanthropic foundations, and toxic propaganda sites, which are funded to promote white nationalist views. The Center identifies the broad range of these intermediary organizations, such as the Carthage Foundation, Castle Rock Foundation, Council for National Policy, Fairbrook Foundation, Freedom Caucus, Gatestone Institute, Government Accountability Institute, InfoWars, John M. Olin Foundation, John Templeton Foundation, Media Research Foundation, New Century Foundation, Pioneer Fund, Project Veritas, Randolph Foundation, Shillman Foundation, and the Young America Foundation. Benjamin Page, Jason C. Wright, and Matthew

J. Lacombe, the authors of *Billionaires and Stealth Politics*, characterize how billionaires, with the exception of Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, and Michael Bloomberg, view their role in framing the issues in American politics.

Most billionaires prefer not to make public their views on the issues of the day. The exception to this is Charles Koch. While Koch is out in the open, other right-wing billionaires prefer to shape policy from behind the scenes, by funding candidates and employing lobbyists. They don't say much in public, preferring what is referred to as "stealth politics." The book uses John Menard, Jr., the founder of the Menards Home Improvement chain, as an example: like other billionaires, he makes dark money contributions to right-leaning candidates. His politics is focused on policies that promote profit maximization and exercising control over labor. "His training courses don't just provide information about how to be a better Menards employee but also talk about the dangers of socialism and why taxes are bad and why unions are bad."⁷³ In taking a closer look at some of the foundations referred to earlier, there is a pattern of economic support for hate and money used by these organizations to inspire followers to take action, which usually implies violence. One such example of using money to make prejudice respectable is The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, headquartered in Milwaukee, which funded fellowships at the American Enterprise Institute and funded Charles Murray's book, *The Bell Curve*, which amounts to a handbook for racist eugenics and asserts that white superiority over Blacks is attributed to genetic differences. "*New York Magazine* broke a story that Washington-state based Rotella Foundation was a key funder of neo-Nazi Richard Spencer and his National Policy Institute. Spencer is one of the leaders of the White Supremacist Movement."⁷⁴

The Scaife Foundation located in Pittsburgh also has a reputation for supporting extreme anti-immigrant groups, such as the Center for Immigration Services. "CIS was founded by white supremacists John Tanton, a close friend and beneficiary of the late Cordelia Scaife May. The foundation was launched by Cordelia's brother Richard Mellon Scaife and has also donated \$2.9 million to anti-Muslim hate group the Center for Security Policy."⁷⁵ In addition, although Cordelia Scaife died in 2005, "her money has been supplied to white nationalist groups to the tune of \$180 million."⁷⁶ Spreading forms of hatred and misinformation continues. Peter Thiel invested in a disinformation site called Rumble, which serves as an alternative to YouTube, allowing for all kinds of offensive visual content, aligned with Trump's Truth Social.

Now the richest man in the world, Elon Musk, has purchased Twitter. His December 11, 2022 tweet was: "My pronouns are Prosecute Fauci." Much can be inferred from Musk's tweet including his view of white supremacist paranoia about the "deep state" and its overreach in public health policy,

which is seen as an example of social control. And now that Musk has allowed Trump back on Twitter, it is a tacit endorsement of his views.

But by far, the most visible presence of a monied interest supporting extremist views is Charles Koch. In *Dark Money*, Jane Mayer provides a clear picture of the scope and scale of his influence. Koch is clear in using his money to prevent any policies that would impact fossil fuel profits, an essential part of Koch Industries. Mayer noted that supporting extremism runs in the family: Fred Koch, the father of the Koch brothers was also active in extremist politics. What is passed on is a brand of libertarianism. Unlike other capitalists who could see the value in some government regulation, the Koch brothers would have none of it. Corporate America, in their view, has to be free from all forms of government regulation. While Buffett and Gates, for example, understand the need for social programs as self-serving to the interests of capital, for the Koch brothers, the market is the be-all and end-all, providing services for a profit.

After David Koch lost his bid for the vice presidency on the libertarian line in 1980, the Koch brothers came to the realization that they should focus on monetizing the political process by funding organizations that reframed the issues in favor of their views. This had also been the thinking of Coors and Scaife. Most importantly, by monetizing politics by creating a myriad of groups, Koch and other billionaires were in the process of creating and normalizing extremist politics in the sense of framing issues so that they reflected only the interests of capital. Whenever government does act, it should be to formulate policies that benefit the accumulation of capital. Even before the Supreme Court ruled in the Citizens United case, the Kochs knew that money buys speech. Flooding American society with money and organizations that promote the interests of capital functions to monopolize speech and drown out other viewpoints. Much of Koch's money was spent in these organizations, which were set up as nonprofits. The Koch brothers made use of a provision in the IRS Code 501(c)(3) which is supposed to prohibit a nonprofit from using funds to shape electoral politics. This provision had never been subjected to rigorous enforcement. The Kochs were putting in place the funding from which an artificial grassroots movement would develop into the Tea Party movement. As it grew, the Tea Party movement began to reflect the values of corporatism. Of all the intended aims of the Kochs, one in particular, is most relevant to the violence associated with Trumpism: the radicalization of parts of the middle class. The overall message of the billionaire class, which resonated with the middle class, was that government is the cause of your distress. In any distortion, there are elements of the truth. Government policy was, in some ways, hurtful to the social well-being of the middle class, but in other ways, government programs have been helpful. What some segments of the middle class also embraced was the antidemocratic message

of the billionaires. Democracy as a force for uplifting the downtrodden was viewed as a threat to the social standing of the middle class. Libertarianism appealed to Trump's base.

A classic example of political misdirection, not upward, but downward, put responsibility for the decline of the middle class on the back of mass democracy. The billionaires who fund white supremacists believe there is something to be gained from their support. The funds these organizations receive allow them to organize and attract followers who act as shock troops against the presence of a diverse democracy. Violence is used to diminish and silence those who do not belong in the white supremacist vision of a homogenous America. The goal of maintaining minority politics is what creates this class alliance between parts of the middle and upper classes. The decision-making process is monopolized to represent the views of this minority.

Even during the Trump administration, the Department of Homeland Security concluded in October 2020 that white supremacist violence was the "most persistent and lethal threat in the homeland." Omitted from this finding was the extent to which portions of the middle and upper classes use violence in service of a class war against a heterogeneous United States. What Trump and Trumpists intend by the use of conspiracy theories is to weaken the state, delegitimize it in its role as providing services to all Americans. A weakened state liberates capital from forms of regulation that impede its accumulation. Hate-filled, degrading remarks used by Trump and white supremacists in general have as their aim the justification of exercising and using violence on these targeted groups. It is in many ways a not-so-subtle message: they get what they deserve.

Words have consequences, especially Trump's remarks at rallies where he whipped the crowd into a hate-filled frenzy. "In the first week of 2017, after Trump's election win, the Anti-Defamation League saw a proliferation of racist and anti-Semitic vandalism and the Southern Poverty Law Center received four hundred allegations of instances of hate-based intimidation and harassment."⁷⁷ It wasn't long before the mass shooting happened at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Violence by Trumpists appeared to have now been elevated to a virtue, to silence alternative viewpoints and assault people who had engaged in public expressions of dissent. The organization Black Lives Matter is an embodiment of threat to the white privilege of racists, who are part of America's middle class. Violence was being used not just to silence people but to dominate them. The media are a frequent target.

In June 2018, a deranged man walked into the newsroom of the Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland, with smoke grenades and a shotgun, killing five. He had a longstanding grudge against the newspaper since its long-ago coverage of

a harassment case he was involved in—and the grudge extended to the paper’s coverage of Trump.⁷⁸

White supremacist movements share something in common: a license to distort in service of a dystopian view of reality. QAnon is one example. The social and political psychology of QAnon can be understood with references to Wilhelm Reich’s *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, and Erich Fromm’s *Escape from Freedom*. At the heart of QAnon is a conspiracy theory focused around a secret anonymous group of intelligence insiders, who identify themselves as Q. They function within the “Deep State,” receiving instructions from Trump on how to leak specific clues that are part of an unfolding puzzle that will be eventually pieced together to culminate in what is to become the earth-shattering event named “The Storm.” Contained within this narrative are the elements of surrender to the authority of QAnon, blind acceptance of these “Q drops.” These aspects are the building blocks, which construct the mass psychology of QAnon. This is in the words of Reich, the “mystical contagion,” which envelops QAnon followers and is expressed as blind acceptance and group surrender to forces outside of anyone’s control and which cannot be understood. Obviously, a close examination of QAnon reveals that it bears many traits of a cult. In *The Storm Is Upon Us*, Mike Rothschild refers to interactions between Q and followers: “Q talks directly to the people, and the people talk back to Q. It is not monologuing, it’s dialogue. Q drops encourage collaboration and Q records anons who go above and beyond in their theorizing and interpretation.”⁷⁹

For Reich, this dialogue between Q and anons amounts to an “ambivalent attitude toward authority—rebellion against it coupled with acceptance and submission.”⁸⁰ He goes on to state that this rebellion and acceptance is common to the psychological structure of the middle class. The tidbits of secret intelligence (the “drops”) are delivered by online message boards, and they contribute to QAnon’s mystique. The middle-class worship of authority appears in how people follow QAnon gurus, who are seen as all-knowing, who speak at rallies, function in leadership roles, and are beyond questioning. QAnon followers accept the conspiracy that is at the center of the movement.

To put it simply, Democrats, Hollywood elite, business tycoons, wealthy liberals, the medical establishment, celebrities, and the mass media are the bad guys. They’re controlled by Barack Obama, who is secretly a Muslim sleeper agent; Hilary Clinton, a blood-drinking ghoul, John Podesta, and they’re funded by George Soros and the Rothschild banking family.⁸¹

This characterization fits into Reich’s theory of a mass psychology of QAnon followers as rejecting and accepting authority. While cults have clear leaders,

QAnon does not have clear leadership, but is nonetheless a form of social cult, which is based on the license to suspend critical inquiry and embrace the irrational. In other words, followers want to believe anything disseminated by QAnon, whether it is that John F. Kennedy is alive or that vaccines contain microchips or that Hillary Clinton is about to be arrested. They also have the freedom to invent whatever fits into a conspiracy narrative.

This takes us to the example of Pizzagate. The conspiracy was described this way: Clinton and Podesta were involved in an elaborate child sex trafficking ring being run out of the basement of the Comet Ping Pong Pizzeria, a well-known Washington pizza joint. Choosing to believe in hidden symbols, the QAnon believers spread the belief that the artwork hanging on the walls was proof that sex with minors was taking place there. Added to the mix was the so-called “proof” that tunnels had been discovered leading to the pizzeria. Of course, there was no basement and none of this ever happened. How this false belief caught on with QAnon followers and resulted in a destructive ideology that caused genuine social harm is exhibited in the example of Edgar Maddison Welch, who in December 2016 went to the restaurant, fueled by these Q postings, armed with an AR-15, intending to rescue the endangered children.

Pizzagate is one example of the mindset binding Trump to his followers. This fixation of QAnon on a conspiracy of pedophiles necessitates Q members to take action. Like-minded Q members became willing to resort to violence in order to protect the innocent. Belief in a possible return to a state of innocence simply replaces facts. Members of Q, as well as the evangelical right, understand that Trump is a sinner who has lost his way but has found redemption and returned to a state of innocence. Trump’s secular faith in making America great again reflects the possibility that the country can return to a mythical innocent past. Fictitious fables and parables used in his rallies are presented as a means of transforming the present into a past ideal. He refers to “the call” in which by force of will he will make things happen. When confronted with a challenge to his authority, he makes reference to the example of “the bullet,” which implies that those who don’t toe the line will be subject to violence. In this regard, destruction is a cleansing agent, erasing an imperfect present toward a return to a perfect past. A violent return to the past is preceded by hatred of others in the present.

It wasn’t long before the intention to cause more social harm with racism and anti-Semitism surfaced in Q postings on the 4chan site and then spread to Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Parler. From Pizzagate to other postings, there came additional references to a secret cabal that fed off the blood of children. This is reminiscent of the age-old anti-Semitic reference to the Jewish conspiracy known as the blood libel. Religious anti-Semites talked about Jews mixing the blood of children in order to make matzo. Much was

made on QAnon posts of the chemical substance adrenochrome, alleged to have been harvested from tortured children, an updated version of the blood libel. From such fictions they manufacture a false reality. For example, in the film *The Matrix* (1999), in a pivotal scene, the main character is given a choice to take a blue or red pill. If he takes the red pill, he will understand reality, a movie reference that has become a critical part of the thought process of QAnon followers. With reference to Reich, this reflects their fear of anything other than illusion and their fantasy about being part of something bigger than themselves. The red pill is a symbol of how QAnon can escape from a reality that its followers reject. QAnon's ideology amounts to a set of ideas that seek to neutralize a visible society in favor of a dystopian non-reality, with which they have chosen to identify. This is revealed by their distrust of science, in particular, vaccines. QAnons are driven to reject facts that can be verified in favor of embracing a collective illusion based on unrestrained emotions. This is what Mia Bloom and Sophia Moskalenko in *Pastels and Pedophiles: Inside the Mind of QAnon* call emotional utility, where followers accept only the feel-good emotions and those emotions expressing hostility to any contrary views.⁸² As a result, QAnon philosophy both unites its followers and isolates them from the rest of the society in an us versus them outlook. QAnon deals with absolutes; only its truth can be accepted. That is the essence of folklore, with which QAnon offers its followers an escape from complexity to simplicity. To capture the imagination of followers, the more fantastic and simple a belief, the more truthful it becomes. When Q lore expressed the idea that lasers are setting California ablaze from space, using Jewish lasers, it becomes so fantastic that it is believable. Other obsessive beliefs are justified by the purity of QAnon's professed aim to protect babies and children.

While followers would like to believe that they are, in Erich Fromm's words, seeking an escape from freedom, they are, in fact, escaping the responsibility of freedom. Taken seriously, freedom is both a responsibility and a burden. As Fromm put it, escape from freedom is "the tendency to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse oneself with somebody or something outside of oneself."⁸³ As part of this escape, QAnon gives its anons permission to view life as determined by conspiracies and forces outside of their control, giving rise to feelings of powerlessness. What appears to be a rejection of reality-based authority is in fact acceptance of the authority of QAnon, its conspiracy theories and its rejection, for example, of science and vaccines which results in genuine social destructiveness. As Fromm put it, "destructiveness is an escape from the unbearable feeling of powerlessness."⁸⁴ QAnon's thoughts and actions amount to an undermining of what supports a constructive life. Fromm's insight explains how QAnon's creation of a fantasy existence is another way of escaping by withdrawing from the world. But where it doesn't withdraw is in its consistent expression of

anti-Semitism. Q presents “wealthy Jews as a protected class, scheming among themselves in evil cliques to hoard the riches of the world and destroy those who oppose them.”⁸⁵ The depiction of George Soros is that he is larger than life and responsible for everything from rigging elections, child sex trafficking, and behind-the-scenes support for overthrowing governments. According to QAnon, when Soros is not engaged in various conspiracies, there are other elite pedophiles engaged in the blood libel. This ties into the Pizzagate cabal of pedophiles who were secretly murdering children in order to remove adrenochrome from their bodies.

When there is a movement whose followers believe they’re engaged in a war between the forces of good and evil, its true believers are willing to use violence. QAnon is well-suited to social media which enables the rapid spreading of conspiracy theories. It’s no coincidence that the spreading of anti-Semitic hatred by QAnon has led to a significant increase in a number of anti-Semitic incidents, which “jumped 61 percent from 2020 to 2021, according to the ADL’s Audit of anti-Semitic incidents.”⁸⁶ The 2018 mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh took eleven lives and represented the deadliest anti-Semitic violence against Jews in the United States. In the years that followed, “a range of Jewish houses of worship, homes, and businesses have been targeted by violent anti-Semitic attacks, including a Chabad in Poway, California, a kosher market in Jersey City, New Jersey, and a rabbi’s home in Monsey, New York to name a few.”⁸⁷

QAnon is one group of haters among a number that are willing to commit violence. As stated earlier, the normalization of violence allows these groups to develop in a specific political climate. The purpose of the violence is to ensure the dominance of a homogenous America. Even though violent extremism supports one kind of America, the movement itself is heterogenous. There are both secular and religious organizations, such as the evangelicals; both kinds are motivated by the fear of a diverse America. While claiming to be guided by their religious views, the religious organizations among them nevertheless are perfectly willing to accept monies from secular sources. Financial support for evangelical churches has flowed from wealthy individuals and corporations that bankroll Christian nationalism. Even though, by and large, they don’t believe in the extremism of the evangelicals, these secular capitalists understand that there is a meeting of the minds regarding unregulated capitalism and support for libertarianism. There is a mutual understanding that capitalism works best when there is mass conformity. The Koch brothers have funded

the Freedom Partners Chambers of Commerce, an organization that in 2014 gave \$885,000 to Citizen Link, which itself was founded by Focus on the Family, an extremist Christian organization that opposes abortion and gay

marriage. Since 2010, the Koch brothers' nonprofit network has poured \$24 million into Catholic and right-wing Christian groups, like Concerned Women for America (which got \$11 million) and the Susan B. Anthony list (which received \$1.5 million).⁸⁸

The evangelicals received monies from the Mercer family, the Uihleins, and Sheldon Adelson. The aim is clear: fund the evangelicals to protect the bottom line: "multinational corporations like Amazon and CVS, Charles Schwab and AT&T . . . fund politicians that aim to gut reproductive rights."⁸⁹ This is a top priority of the religious right. In addition, large corporations "Amazon, AT&T, Citigroup, Coca-Cola, Comcast, CVS, General Motors, Google, T-Mobile, Walgreens, Walmart, Wells Fargo, and Verizon have spent at least \$15.2 million to support anti-abortion politicians."⁹⁰

The rise of fundamentalism coincides with what is viewed as the threat from a secular America. This fundamentalist wing of white Protestantism developed and grew in response to a more rational understanding of Christianity, discarding it in favor of a more emotion-based supernaturalism. These two trends: increasing secularism and rational explanations for Christianity generated a fundamentalist backlash. Evangelical Christians were growing as a social movement. This movement of white leaders created the National Association of Evangelicals in the early 1940s. Since the 1970s, this fundamentalist white evangelical wing of Protestantism has been seeking the moral high ground with the creation of an organization representing "The moral majority." Concerns over what was perceived as a decline of a white Christian nation and a goal to reassert the ideal of a white Christian America catapulted the founder of the moral majority, Jerry Falwell, to national prominence. The appeal was to the nostalgia of a bygone era of a white Christian America.

The civil rights movements from the 1950s under the direction of leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and other religious progressives troubled evangelicals. After passage of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act, evangelicals and Republicans reached out to organize into a bloc of southern white voters. After the evangelicals, by now a well-organized bloc of voters, were disappointed with the Carter presidency, they threw their support behind Ronald Reagan. A coalition of leaders emerged who were more or less united in spreading the message and agenda of evangelicals.

Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition of America, James Dobson of Focus on the Family and Gary Bauer and Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council spoke for white Christian America through a proliferation of statewide and local chapters of their organizations. These conservative titans continued to rally their followers by leveraging white Christian discomfort with

the country's growing secularism and pluralism and calling for a return to what they portrayed as America's Protestant Christian roots.⁹¹

They were yearning for a retreat to a fixed hierarchy in the social order, where everyone knew their place, a white male patriarchy of clear racial divisions with white dominance. Moving forward to the era of Trump and Trumpism was made possible by the Christian right's association with the Tea Party movement that started around 2009.

Animated by a sense of cultural loss, especially with the election of Barack Obama, the imperative was to take back America from policies that assisted people who were not white male and Christian. Part of the response to this changing America was the strong opposition to gay rights. To spread fear, gay men were depicted as child molesters and promoters of a promiscuous lifestyle. Evangelicals began to fear a decline in their own influence, as reflected by the rise in support for same sex marriage and the Supreme Court's ruling legalizing same-sex marriage. Also of concern among the southern Baptist evangelical Protestant wing were the civil rights movements and the Black Lives Matter movement. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, and subsequent civil rights legislation, they feared, could result in greater racial integration. The Christian nationalist beliefs of evangelicals aren't shared by a majority of Americans. According to the non-profit, non-partisan Public Research Institute, only 29 percent of Americans are Christian nationalists. This fundamentalism is based on a minority ruling the majority. The PRI report, "A Christian Nation? Understanding the Threat of Christian Nationalism to American Democracy and Culture" revealed a troubling finding, "that more than half of Republicans believe the country to be a strictly Christian nation, either adhering to the ideals of Christian nationalism (21 percent) or sympathizing with those views (33 percent)."⁹² A number of members of Congress also firmly embrace Christian nationalism. And it's not just those members of Congress, there is the Christian nationalist viewpoint of the 147 House members who voted to overturn the 2020 election. The extremism of Christian nationalists makes them more likely to resort to violence to defend their views. With their core idea being the dominance of white male evangelists, they express a range of hate-filled perspectives that are anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, sexist, and racist.

Trump's campaign rhetoric is filled with references to loss, best represented by MAGA. It is this loss that makes individual evangelicals willing to lash out with violence, in particular, those middle-class evangelicals located in the suburbs. Like their secular white supremacist counterparts, it is the overriding fear of losing the social standing as the dominant race which motivates a reactive violence. This blending of white supremacy with evangelical Christianity is a potent mix, viewing forms of racial justice as an indication

of a failed reality. With its emphasis on individual free will, individuals can absolve themselves of living in a sinful world by taking action. It isn't surprising that evangelicals would find common cause with Trump's Make America Great Again. Like Trump, evangelicals seek a return to an ideal past that existed at one time. The radicalized Christian right expresses an essential feature of fascist ideology as extreme violence intended to achieve a reactionary revolution. In *American Fascist: The Christian Right and the War on America*, Chris Hedges explains this fixation with apocalyptic violence, driven by an emotional obsession in service of a dystopian philosophy which glorifies destruction. Destruction is a virtue in that it causes harm to people who are in opposition to the creation of a better world.

One example of an individual exercising free will to support white supremacy through the use of violence is Dylann Roof. His self-definition "as a white Christian was central to his worldview. As he became more radicalized by contact with supremacist websites, reading materials and organizations, the evidence suggests that his Christian identity easily accommodated the shift."⁹³ In *White Too Long*, Robert P. Jones described Roof as a "white Christian terrorist." He proceeds to explain the overall motive for Roof's attack:

He understood himself as a white Christian warrior who consciously launched this attack on sacred ground, targeting a historic Black church in the hopes of encouraging his fellow white Christians to rise up and become completely ruthless to Blacks.⁹⁴

Another aspect of Roof's religiously inspired violence is consistent with the religious right's obsessive fear of America moving toward a majority non-white nation. This fear, manifesting as violence, represents a reactionary Christian nationalism. It manifests as a fusion of the government with the Christian religion, advocating that the

federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation. The federal government should advocate Christian values. The federal government should allow the display of religious symbols in public places. The federal government should allow prayer in public schools.⁹⁵

In *The Flag and the Cross*, Gorski and Perry link Trumpism with its promise of a reactionary return to a glorified past as MAGA is an expression of "a secularized white Christian nationalism."⁹⁶

Part of this return to the past is to protect the white Christian race from invaders seeking admittance to the United States. This aim is what characterized the Muslim ban and the construction of the border wall. Justification for

violence waged against social elements that threaten their version of Christian nationalism is rationalized as “white men exercising righteous violence to defend their freedom and impose racial and gender order.”⁹⁷ There is a collective nostalgia for the time when people of color knew their place in the Antebellum South. With self-serving biblical references, slaveholders would justify the right to own slaves. There has, over time, been a distinct interest in violent acts.

Evangelical Christians and churches engaged in lynching, attending and cheering spectacles of murder enacted upon Black bodies. Many took body parts of the lynched, such as fingers and toes, as souvenirs of the horrendous events and others sold postcards of mutilated and burned Black men and women.⁹⁸

Violence was often used as a means of preventing race mixing. Utmost in the minds of evangelical racists was the fear that was so much a part of the violence during the period of Reconstruction and well into the twentieth century, so much so that it took the 1967 Supreme Court ruling of *Loving v. Virginia* to provide a legal basis for interracial marriage.

When Obama became the first Black president, it was regarded as a sign of a racial apocalypse for evangelists. The answer to the election of Obama became electing Donald Trump, who was all too willing as a fellow traveler to pander to evangelical racism. It was in many ways a meeting of the minds. Even though other presidents, such as Carter and more so Reagan, had begun to embrace the ideas of the evangelicals, it was Trump who fully embraced their leaders and voters. It unfolded as a symbiotic relationship: the evangelicals understood that Trump would support evangelical positions in exchange for pledging their allegiance to him.

Secular white supremacists also saw Obama’s presidency as a symbol of the demise of white male power. Trump’s interest in politics coincided with Obama becoming president, when Trump began attracting media attention for his idea of the nativist birther theory, in which Obama was foreign-born and therefore not qualified to be president. This was part of an effort to delegitimize the first Black president and it coincided with the racist implications of Trump’s slogan, “Put America first.” Throughout the campaign, Trump made extensive use of anti-Semitic references on social media and what amounted to the language of neo-Nazis. His overwhelmingly white followers at rallies drew inspiration to take action against non-whites. The violence that followed was in the minds of the perpetrators in service of the survival of the superior white race. At times, Trump referred to what had been the eugenics movement in the United States, which had influenced Nazi racial ideology. In an interview with CNN, Trump said, “Well, I think I was born with the drive for success because I have a certain gene, I’m a gene believer.”⁹⁹

The America First slogan, invented decades before by Nazi sympathizer Charles Lindbergh, became the rallying cry of Trumpists, using violence against non-white threats. What sprang out of white supremacist nationalism is a two-fold social movement to maintain what followers view as the dominant white culture, which they perceive as slipping away, to shift toward a violent civil war to retake what is being lost. Even though the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville ended with a divided alt-right, each distinct part of the alt-right was capable of influencing specific followers to use violence. In many ways, the total of individual acts of violence served to further reinforce a culture of violence. It would be a mistake to assume that after Charlottesville, the alt-right was in a state of decline. To the contrary, the individual alt-right organizations often went their separate ways, but all were in pursuit of a white supremacist agenda. Incidents of extreme right violence did not subside. The various fragmented parts of the white supremacy movement proved that they are just as effective as one national organization. The hateful rants of these groups served to motivate hate-filled individuals to act out violently: “another white male inspired by nationalist rhetoric took an assault weapon to a Walmart in El Paso, Texas on August 3, 2019. He killed twenty-two people and wounded eight others in just a heartbeat. He surrendered and immediately told the police he had come to kill Mexicans.”¹⁰⁰ If the Charlottesville Unite the Right did anything, it was to unleash in greater numbers white supremacist violence.

Charlottesville also was successfully used as a recruitment event, helping add to the ranks of the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, Three Percenters, and Boogaloo. Prior to and after Charlottesville, what contributed to the persistence of these groups is the recruitment of women into these white extremist groups. One of the constant themes of white supremacy over the course of US history has been the protection of white women. While extremism practiced its own brand of sexism, it recruited women into the cause and assigned gender specific roles to women, which usually are for the purpose of supporting white male supremacy.

Not all women have been on board with the idea of gender equality in the United States. Understanding the power of male dominance, it was psychologically advantageous to express anti-feminist views. During the seventy-two-year struggle to obtain passage of a woman’s right to vote, there were organizations that worked against it including the National Association Opposed to Women Suffrage. “The 1920s were the heyday of the Ku Klux Klan, and women were among its most important participants. The women’s Klan, or WKKK, had up to three million members spread across the country.”¹⁰¹ Women who supported reactionary politics were not unusual. In many states, there are women in the forefront, supporting measures that prevent greater gender equality and support various kinds of sexism. “In 2017, more

than 60 percent of white women in Alabama voted for Roy Moore for the US Senate, despite the Republican candidate being accused of sexual assault.”¹⁰²

There is no denying the racial aspects of viewing motherhood as white women’s necessary contribution to the survival of the white race. From the days of slavery, racism played a role in the idea of white women fearing Black men who are characterized by the white supremacist movement as having out of control sexual impulses. It’s easy to understand the anti-feminism of these reactionary women as they consider women at the workplace and alternative or nontraditional living arrangements as a threat to the survival of the white race.

Hate groups initiated outreach to train and reward mothers for their service. The Aryan Women’s League (AWL) run by Kathleen Metzger, wife of Tom Metzger, former Klan leader and founder of the organization White Aryan Resistance—offered rules and tips for being a good white mom.¹⁰³

In the forefront of white extremism the role of white motherhood and white women is to teach at home and to keep one’s distance from racial enemies, non-whites. The front lines for these white women are the schools, where the mixing of races should be prevented and where they are concerned about curriculum. Consistent with the reactionary politics of extremist groups is what Seyward Darby identifies in *Sisters in Hate* as Tradwives:

Tradlife champions the family unit, common sense, and self-reliance. Home is a woman’s domain, and she manages it with the same eye toward efficiency and success that her husband applies to his career. Tradwives share tips for setting weekly chore schedules, baking the perfect pie, and saving money.¹⁰⁴

It is no wonder that these Tradwives are intense in their dislike of feminism. They accept the idea that women are the weaker sex and function well only under the control of male patriarchy. Women’s subservience had the effect of freeing up males to engage in violence.

The incremental and consistent violence of extremist groups is supposed to result in creating a white ethnostate through violence that sparks RAHOWA, the racial holy war. The looming threat and fear of a white genocide serves to legitimize violence. The mindset explains why the overall goal is to delegitimize the US government and eventually, overthrow it. White nationalist extremist groups have the mindset that violence against perceived threats is a form of cleansing. Violence is an instrument that represents the purity of their actions. Violence is the essence of the group’s identity. The militias and paramilitary groups, the Ghost Skins, Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, Proud Boys, anti-abortionists, and others are all preparing for violence. Violence to

silence others is the expression of an imposition of will. These organizations train recruits in the use of weapons for the eventual use of violence to target people who are not included in their definition of the white nation. The members of Ghost Skins include military veterans, members of the military, and active members of law enforcement, who are willing to use violence to fight for white nationalism. Ever since the *Roe v. Wade* ruling in 1973, the militant wing of the anti-abortionists has engaged in the killing of doctors who perform abortions and the intimidation of people at facilities where abortions are performed. The intention is for the violence to ultimately lead to a twisted, dystopian ethnostate, consisting of only white Christian nationalists.

The Proud Boys share with other violent extremists the fear of a white genocide. While claiming the mantle of white victimhood, they freely express various forms of hatred including Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, gay-phobia, and misogyny. With preparation for and willingness to use violence, it's no wonder that the intensity of the anger that they vent is in part about gun control. In their view, any gun control measure is intended by the government, run by a Jewish cabal, to disarm the white race and prevent a white uprising. According to the Christian Identity ideology, the Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG) will use non-whites to eliminate the white race. Violence in service of creating a white nationalist threat confronts Muslim-Americans who are regarded as intent on destroying white civilization. A group known as the Crusaders had "finalized plans to blow up an apartment complex housing more than one hundred mostly Somali-born Muslim immigrants and a small masjid."¹⁰⁵

Once again, the militarization and normalization of violence in the United States have created a culture from which these violent extremist groups developed and grew. The Oath Keepers provides a key example. Founded in April 2009 by Stewart Rhodes, in response to the election of President Obama, the group recruits current and former members of the military and police. The group's militant stance was based on its belief of birtherism, the false notion that Obama wasn't born in the United States and that therefore, the armed forces and law enforcement were duty-bound not to obey his commands. Expressed in a list of orders that exude political paranoia, the Oath Keepers refuse to obey what they believe is a consistent pattern of government actions that they believe violate libertarian principles. Included in the list of orders that should not be obeyed are: the disarming of the American people, the invasion of any state, the isolation of white people and establishment of concentration camps for them, support for the use of foreign troops on US soil, and the taking of property from white Americans.

Similarly, the Three-Percent Militia (Threepers), also appeared after the inauguration of President Obama. In essence, their ideology is based on a

libertarianism that recruits anyone who believes in the fetishism of guns that are to be used if and when the government attempts to take them away.

One of the more complex plots included developing a biological weapon of mass destruction. Militia group members Frederick Thomas, Dan Roberts, Samuel Crisp, and Ryan Adams were arrested in November 2011 for planning to attack cities with the highly toxic biological poison called ricin.¹⁰⁶

The indoctrination can begin at a very early age. Children can be subjected to a subculture of violent idealization through Project Schoolyard, which was started by neo-Nazis to indoctrinate middle- and high-school students to accept their hate-filled anti-Semitism and racism. The extent to which a normalized culture of violence is socializing youth to embrace the so-called virtues of violence is represented by the case of the Boogaloo Boris, whose members range between eighteen and thirty years of age. The name was taken from a 1984 film “Breakin’ 2: Electric Boogaloo.” This “Boogaloo” refers to the outbreak of a civil war between the races as white Christians fight and win to return to a period of white male rule. Socialized at first with toy guns and then moving onto real weapons, these youths gain expertise at shooting ranges where they learn to shoot AR-15s. Along with weapons training, they learn to become indifferent to the pain and suffering of others. This is how they came to blame Heather Heyer for her death in Charlottesville, while praising Kyle Rittenhouse, who shot three men, two fatally in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

The Proud Boys personify an extremist group that glorifies violence. From the start, the group has defined itself as a violent street gang driven by intense hatred. The group has marketed itself by forging relationships with media personalities and by establishing contacts with the G.O.P. and with Trump’s key advisors. From the time Gavin McInnes founded the group, their ideology has been that fighting is the answer; it’s the expression of violence that establishes the dominance of a white male order. Translating hate into violence will lead to the dominance of white minority politics. The Proud Boys derive pleasure from inflicting pain on non-whites. McInnes wears his hatred of others as a badge of honor. He demonizes Jews and minorities in order to promote white nationalism, anti-multiculturalism, and anti-immigration. The violence of the Proud Boys is inbred as wannabe members must pass “degrees” with which they must prove their violent intentions at each stage until accepted as a recruit. To become a genuine Proud Boy, one must pass the fourth degree by committing a serious act of violence. The Proud Boys create destruction; for them, violence is a way of life. This glorified street gang of violent thugs promote white male violence as a virtue. As McInnes has put it, “fighting solves everything.” He has called himself a “Western

chauvinist” and remarked that “multiculturalism reeks.” To deny responsibility for these views, he refers to them as matters of opinion and sarcastic satire. Members dress in pop culture uniform, consisting of a black Perry polo with yellow trim. They endorse violence for the purpose of enforcing a homogenous male-dominated white culture. Such glorification of violence by the Proud Boys can only lead in one direction: to mass killing. Inciting violence is their obsessive fixation and is at the same time nihilistic since they offer their members nothing else. “Proud Boys were known for showing up at events where they knew they might find leftists or counterdemonstrators and attacking on sight. They almost never left a rally without engaging in some kind of bloody brawl involving dozens of people.”¹⁰⁷ While the Proud Boys rationalize violence as opposition to multiculturalism, all they can envision is a reactionary return to a non-existent past, a vision of a dysfunctional society. With willful ignorance as their guide, all the Proud Boys know is how to harm their enemies, “fighting their political opponents, destroying their property, and wasting their resources.”¹⁰⁸ What has distinguished the Proud Boys is their marketing of violence as a way of life, an approach personified by the group’s new head, Henry “Enrique” Tarrío, who had been president of the Miami chapter.

He viewed the Proud Boys as marketable to the mainstream right and saw potential in gaining favor with the GOP for the coming culture wars. Tarrío came to the table with skills most Proud Boys had never seen before: a bit of political savvy and business experience.¹⁰⁹

One of Tarrío’s strategies was to move the group beyond street fighting to market them to appeal to politicians and pundits under the banner of American patriotism. The result was mindless violence dressed up and packaged as a noble cause. “The Proud Boys often incorporate pro-police messaging into their patriotic tableau at rallies.”¹¹⁰ This manufactured, pro-police messaging operated as a convenient counter to the Black Lives Matter movement, which was depicted as anti-police. Through inventive political advertising, the Proud Boys marketed themselves as something other than what they really are, “they make themselves available to the media for interviews and relentlessly push their own version of the narrative—that they’re not a violent gang but a patriotic men’s drinking club.”¹¹¹ This included having the Proud Boys run for political office. Part of this strategy was to form an association with dirty trickster Roger Stone, one of Trump’s close advisors. Tarrío and Stone had mutual admiration for each other, and Stone provided advice to Tarrío and the Proud Boys.

In an article on the website Lawfare, Jacob Glick detailed two elements that characterize the mindset of members of the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers,

and QAnon as a combination of mythmaking and racism. He described the intensity of violence of these groups as a response to pandemic health restrictions and to the Black Lives Matter protests. Mythmaking as a motive for violence stems from what is expressed as the tyranny of the Democrats, who take away freedoms by imposing coronavirus safety precautions:

the most consequential example of this phenomenon was Kellye SoRelle, lawyer for the Oath Keepers and close confidante of Stewart Rhodes as he plotted his seditious conspiracy. SoRelle said her desire to fight back against the coronavirus public health measures initially led her to engage with the Oath Keepers. She testified that a “ragtag” association of groups had private militias—including Rhodes and the Oath Keepers—that acted as security for anti-lockdown activists who challenged restrictions in Texas.¹¹²

In their minds, violence was justified according to the myth that they were protecting the Constitution.

At the same time, the political paranoia expressed as racism was directed against Black Lives Matter activism. “Witnesses from both Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers testified that they decided to become involved in paramilitary operations because they were responding to Trump’s apocalyptic messaging about Black Lives Matter.”¹¹³ The article cites Oath Keeper Alondra Propes as describing the group’s decision to band together against Antifa and Black Lives Matter. Glick also referred to Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrío describing the group’s engagement as a struggle against Antifa in which “violence and intimidation is for a political cause.”¹¹⁴

FBI director Chris Wray has expressed concerns that the most persistent forms of violence in the United States are coming from right-wing extremist groups.

The far right and the police are responsible for an overwhelming and disproportionate amount of violence at political rallies today. Racist extreme violence remains one of the greatest domestic terrorist threats in America. Far-right violence far outweighs violence ascribed to the left.¹¹⁵

This has been and continues to be the legacy of Trump and Trumpism, an ideology of hate-filled rhetoric used to instigate violence in the end expressing how to cause harm against various social segments. There are questions that will remain unanswered for some time, such as to what extent the Proud Boys and other extremist organizations will be able to consistently frame a national hate-filled agenda. Given the fact that the aim is to mainstream hate and violence, that too will have its limits. When these groups are exposed for what they represent, they are not well-received in local communities. There is also the question of how much consistent support extremist groups will receive

from corporate America. Will these extremist groups diminish in scope and scale as America achieves the status of a population that is majority multi-cultural? There is no way to forecast how these questions will be answered. Perhaps it is somewhat reassuring that historically, oppressive movements decline over time. More troubling though is the fact that in spite of the decline of such movements, they can reappear once certain factors are present. What contributes to the reappearance of extremist forms of hate is how violence is reproduced by an ideology that allows for, and even promotes, its expression.

When violence in the United States is normalized in American culture, it is marketed as something other than what it really is. Football isn't a violent sport, it's entertainment. Mass shootings and the gun culture are evidence of the freedom associated with the second amendment. American global militarism is presented as a noble cause, as it is saving the world. In spite of these Orwellian twists, the underlying reality is that violence is destructive and is normalized in relation to a well-defined enemy: in football it's the opposing team; in the military, it's communism, terrorism, and whomever is the enemy of the moment. For the mass marketing of guns, the enemy is the criminal lurking in American neighborhoods.

NOTES

1. Jacob Harker and Paul Pierson, *Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 2021) p. 45.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

4. Celine McNicholas, Heidi Shierholz, and Marni von Wilpert, "Workers Health Safety and Pay are Among the Casualties of Trump's War on Regulations" *Economic Policy Institute*, January. 29, 2018, <https://www.epi.org/publication/deregulation-year-in-review/>.

5. Evangelos Vallianatos, "The Environmental Crimes of the Trump Administration" *Counterpunch*, August 2, 2019, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/08/02/the-environmental-crimes-of-the-trump-administration/>.

6. David Cohen and Allen Mikaelian, *The Privatization of Everything: How the Plunder of Public Goods Transformed America and How We Can Fight Back* (New York: The New Press, 2021) p. 35.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

9. David Neiwert, *Alt America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump* (New York: Verso Books, 2017) p. 39.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 42–43.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

12. Sara Kamali, *Homegrown Hate: Why White Nationalists and Militant Islamists Are Waging War Against the United States* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021) p. 9.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
14. Joan Roelofs, *The Trillion Dollar Silencer: Why There is so Little Anti-War Protest in the United States* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2022) p. 24.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
16. Mohammed Hussein and Mohammed Haddad, “Infographic: U.S. Military Presence Around the World” *Al Jazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/10/infographic-us-military-presence-around-the-world-interactive>.
17. Stephen Eisenman, “The Insecure Superpower,” *Counterpunch*, February 17, 2023, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/02/17/the-insecure-superpower/>.
18. Hussein and Haddad, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/10/infographic-us-military-presence-around-the-world-interactive>.
19. *Ibid.*
20. David Vine, “Where in the World is the US Military?” *Politico Magazine*, July/August 2015, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/us-military-bases-around-the-world-119321/>.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *The Nation*, January 23, 2023.
23. Alex Johnson, “After Parkland: The Militarization of High Schools in the U.S.” *World Socialist Web Site*, September 29, 2018, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/09/29/park-s29.html>.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Sharmini Pereira, “Militarizing Schools, Criminalizing Students” *The Real News Network*, February 26, 2018 <https://therealnews.com/militarizing-schools-criminalizing-students>.
26. Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019) p. 238.
27. Chris Murphy, *The Violence Inside Us: A Brief History of an Ongoing American Tragedy* (New York: Random House, 2020) p. 64.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
29. John Gramlich, “What the data says about gun deaths in the United States” *Pew Research*, February 3, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>.
30. Mike McIntire, “At Protests, Gun are Doing the Talking” *The New York Times*, November 26, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/26/us/guns-protests-open-carry.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>.
31. *The New York Times* editorial board, “America’s Toxic Gun Culture,” *The New York Times*, December 10, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/10/opinion/america-gun-violence.html>.
32. David Schultz, “Gun Violence, Profiling and Faulty Social Science,” *Counterpunch*, March 31, 2023, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/03/31/gun-violence-profiling-and-faulty-social-science/>.

33. David Rosen, “Americans are Dying and Dying and Dying” *Counterpunch*, April 13, 2023, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/04/13/americans-are-dying-and-dying-and-dying/>.

34. Derek Seidman, “We Already Know Who’s Winning Super Bowl LVII—the Billionaire Class” *Truthout*, February 10, 2023, <https://truthout.org/articles/we-already-know-whos-winning-super-bowl-lvii-the-billionaire-class>.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. Jeffrey Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 208.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

39. Andy Kroll, Andrea Bernstein, Nick Surgey, “Inside the Private Conservative Group That Promises to ‘Crush Liberal Dominance’” *Truthout*, March 11, 2023, <https://truthout.org/articles/inside-the-private-conservative-group-that-promises-to-crush-liberal-dominance/>.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Cameron Orr, “NY Coalition Protests Corporate Backers of Fascism” *Communist Party of USA*, November 9, 2022, <https://cpusa.org/article/ny-coalition-protests-corporate-backers-of-fascism/>.

42. John Vile, Middle Tennessee State University, “Stop W.O.K.E. Act Florida” (2022) <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/2167/stop-w-o-k-e-act>.

43. “Black people more than three times as likely as white people to be killed during a police encounter” Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, June 24, 2020, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/blacks-whites-police-deaths-disparity/>.

44. Peter B. Kraska, “Police Militarization 101” *Critical Issues in Policing*, p. 451, <https://justicestudies.eku.edu/sites/justicestudies.eku.edu/files/files/23%20Kraska.pdf>.

45. Wayne Mcelrath and Sarah Turberville, “Poisoning Our Police: How the Militarization Mindset Threatens Constitutional Rights and Public Safety” *Project on Government Oversight*, <https://www.pogo.org/analysis/2020/06/poisoning-our-police-how-the-militarization-mindset-threatens-constitutional-rights-and-public-safety>.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. Michael German, “Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism, White Supremacy and Far Right Militancy in Law Enforcement” *Brennan Center*, August 27, 2020, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/hidden-plain-sight-racism-white-supremacy-and-far-right-militancy-law>.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Evan Osnos, *Wildland: The Making of America’s Fury* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2021) p. 264.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

52. Malcolm Nance, *They Want to Kill Americans: The Militias, Terrorists and Deranged Ideology of the Trump Insurgency* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2022) p. 33.

53. Alan Nasser, *Overripe Economy: American Capitalism and the Crisis of Democracy* (London: Pluto Press, 2018) p. 211.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
55. Chuck Collins, *The Wealth Hoarders: How Billionaires Pay Millions to Hide Trillions* (Cambridge: Polity Books, 2021) p. 45.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
57. Jacob Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift: The New Economic Insecurity and the Decline of the American Dream* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) p. 27.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
59. David Cay Johnson, *The Big Cheat: How Donald Trump Fleeced America and Enriched Himself and his Family* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022) p. 108–9.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
62. Sinan Aral, *The Hype Machine: How Social Media Disrupts our Elections, Our Economy and our Health—and How We Must Adapt* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2020) p. 58.
63. Max Fisher, *The Chaos Machine: The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired Our Minds and Our World* (New York: Little Brown & Co., 2022) p. 140.
64. Roger McNamee, *Zucked: Waking up to the Facebook Catastrophe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019) p. 244.
65. Blog post on VDare.com by Jason Kessler, posted two months before the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, <https://www.spicenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/v-dare>.
66. *Ibid.*
67. Alex Kotch and Michael Edison Hayden, “Donors Pumped Millions into White Nationalist Group” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, June 17, 2021, <https://www.spicenter.org/hatewatch/2021/06/17/donors-pumped-millions-white-nationalist-group>.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*
71. Alan Waring, “The Dark Money That Fuels Radical Right Ideology,” *Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right*, August 19, 2020, <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2020/08/19/the-dark-money-that-fuels-radical-right-ideology/>.
72. *Ibid.*
73. An interview with Matthew Lacombe, “The Ultra-rich are Ultra-Conservative,” *Jacobin*, July 27, 2019 (<https://jacobin.com/2019/07/billionaires-and-stealth-politics>).
74. “The Millionaires and Billionaires Funding White Supremacy” *AccountableNW.org*, June 9, 2020, <https://accountablenw.org/news/the-millionaires-and-billionaires-funding-white-supremacy/>.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Patrick Young, “The Billionaire Who Funded Anti-Immigrant Hate,” *Long Island Wins*, August 14, 2019, <https://longislandwins.com/news/national/the-billionaire-who-funded-anti-immigrant-hate/>.

77. Dana Milbank, *The Destructionists: The Twenty-five Year Crack-up of the Republican Party* (New York: Doubleday, 2022) p. 284.

78. Ibid., p. 288.

79. Mike Rothschild, *The Storm is Upon Us: How QAnon Became a Movement, Cult and Conspiracy Theory of Everything* (London: Monoray, 2021) p. 4.

80. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1980) p. 37.

81. Rothschild, p. 11.

82. Mia Bloom and Sophia Moskalenko, *Pastels and Pedophiles: Inside the Mind of QAnon* (Segundo, California: Redwood Press, 2021) p. 109.

83. Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Holt, 1994) p. 140.

84. Ibid., p. 179.

85. Rothschild, p. 50.

86. “Recent Threats to Jewish Institutions,” *Anti-Defamation League*, December 9, 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/analysis-recent-threats-jewish-institutions>.

87. Ibid.

88. Nicholas Powers, “Wealthy Donors Bankroll Christian Nationalists to Sustain Unregulated Capitalism” *Truthout*, August 15, 2022, <https://truthout.org/articles/wealthy-donors-bankroll-christian-nationalists-to-sustain-unregulated-capitalism/>.

89. Ibid.

90. Sharon Zhang, “Companies like Amazon and CVS have Donated Millions to Anti-Abortion Politicians,” *Truthout*, May 5, 2022 <https://truthout.org/articles/companies-like-amazon-and-cvs-have-donated-millions-to-anti-abortion-politicians/>.

91. Robert P. Jones, *The End of White Christian America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017) p. 91.

92. Ashley Lopez, “More than Half of Republicans Support Christian Nationalism” *NPR*, February 14, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/14/1156642544/more-than-half-of-republicans-support-christian-nationalism-according-to-a-new-s>.

93. Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021) p. 139.

94. Ibid., p. 142.

95. Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry, *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022) p. 16.

96. Ibid., p. 85.

97. Ibid., p. 89.

98. Anthea Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2021) p. 29–30.

99. Sarah Churchill, *Behold America: A History of America First and the American Dream* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) p. 196.

100. Richard C. Fording and Sanford F. Schram, *Hard White: The Mainstreaming of Racism in American Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) p. 13.

101. Seyward Darby, *Sisters in Hate: American Women and White Extremism* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2021) p. 117.

102. Ibid., p. 119.

103. Ibid., p. 142.
104. Ibid., p. 153.
105. Sara Kamali, *Homegrown Hate: Why White Nationalists and Militant Islamists Are Waging a War Against the United States* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021) p. 126.
106. Malcolm Nance, *They Want to Kill Americans: The Militias, Terrorists and Deranged Ideologies of the Trump Insurgency* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2022) p. 106–7.
107. Andy Campbell, *We are Proud Boys: How a Right-Wing Street Gang Ushered in a New Era of American Extremism* (New York: Hachette Books, 2022) p. 37.
108. Ibid., p. 96.
109. Ibid., p. 129.
110. Ibid., p. 153.
111. Ibid., p. 163.
112. Jacob Glick, “The Long Descent to Insurrection” *Lawfare*, February 15, 2023, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/long-descent-insurrection>.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. Campbell, p. 221.

Chapter 5

A Fascist Dress-Rehearsal

Elements of America's middle and upper classes are inclined to support fascist ideology. The motives for these fascist tendencies in parts of these classes stem from two causes. Members of the middle class who are misinformed by propaganda have been convinced that their decline is caused by diversity. For the radicalized parts of corporate America, hate and violence shifts attention away from policies that are not supportive of corporate interests. Historically, fascist ideology has been linked to extreme hatred and violence. The hatred unleashed by Trump and Trumpism expressed itself overtly with the idea of a hierarchy and a division between superior and inferior races. White supremacy, anti-Semitism, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiments share this doctrine. Trump's public persona as the infallible, all-knowing leader aligns itself with the role of the fascist leader. Applied to the delusional mindset of QAnon, fascist mysticism is where myth represents an unquestioned truth. Qdrops and references to a red pill represent a dreamlike depiction of a state of preconsciousness linked to the creation of a conscious, fascist reality.

The fixated link between Trump and his followers who embrace his absolute truths as the only truth is yet another example of fascist mythmaking. Trump establishes with his followers a perverse view of democracy, in which he, alone, personifies mass democracy. Reality becomes whatever the leader says it is. The absolute power of the leader is not to be questioned. Irrational prejudices are a license to invent a distorted representation of the targets of hatred. Trump assumes the status of a master of hate-filled myths that are presented as a means of returning to an ideal past, a period that is seen as one of historical purity. The myths that Trump fabricates about his enemies tend to resemble the plot lines of fairy tales. When he refers to the deep state, he is expressing his rejection of any kind of restraint—legal or otherwise—on him. He is demonstrating his starkly fascist position that the government should simply be the expression of his will.

Trump's social base consists of members of the middle and upper classes, who have a higher likelihood of becoming cult-like followers of Trump.

“Relatively more privileged groups . . . are more likely to support Trump, including affluent whites (earning over \$75,000/year), older men (fifty and older), affluent white men, and affluent, older white men.”¹ *The New York Times* and other outlets have reported that exit polls from the elections of both 2016 and 2020 show that Trump’s support came, by and large, from the non-working class. “The biggest gains for Trump between the two elections was among middle-upper-class voters, with those earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000.”² On November 12, 2019, the *Washington Post* published an article titled, “White Trump Voters are Richer Than They Appear.” The article points out that higher-income localities are more likely to vote for Trump. Trump’s voters tend to be

unsympathetic to the poor, needy, or to those struggling and left behind in an era of record inequality, and being more supportive of unrestricted corporate power and policies that further enrich the wealthy . . . Trump supporters are significantly more likely to feel that dealing with the problems of the poor and needy are not a priority; that taxes should be lowered on those making over \$250,000/year; that government regulation of business does more harm than good; that raising the minimum wage is a bad idea; that the poor have it easy and get free benefits from government without doing anything in return.³

Trump’s class-based support has fostered a cult in which the base and Trump are of one mind and supporters are blindly loyal to Trump. His grip on his followers explains how they so readily accept and express forms of hatred and then are inspired to act out with violence. He makes use of specific delusions distorting political realities that motivate followers to act against perceived enemies. In terms of thought and action, Trump and his base embody a fascist cult, the ultimate aim of which is creative destruction. The elements that are functional to minority rule are dysfunctional to majority rule; they are intended to concentrate power by attacking democracy and the rule of law and by promoting whites-only policies, nationalism, idealization of violence, and the unquestioned following of a cult of personality. Such measures result in the unleashing of destructive violence. Trump’s support for extremism and violence comes right out of the fascist playbook in which destruction liberates the mystical truth from being questioned. Violence unleashed is considered the only, and ultimate, proper course of action. The violent, mythical fantasies of Trump and Trumpism expressed through violence unfold as incremental acts intended to diminish the presence of the hated group. Each act of violence is meant to increase over previous acts the scope and scale of destruction. “In April 2019, on the six-month anniversary of the Tree of Life massacre, a teenager attacked an Orthodox congregation in a city in San Diego County, killing a woman. A few months later, in August 2019, a white

supremacist opened fire at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, killing twenty-two people and injuring twenty-six in what was the deadliest attack on Latin people in recent history.”⁴ This national normalization of hate-filled violence is a hallmark of fascist ideology. “The 7,314 hate crimes logged by the FBI in 2019 took place coast to coast in almost every state; in essence, America is a society saturated in hate.”⁵

Left unchallenged, this nationwide spread of violent hate has been associated in fascist regimes with mass killing. In a new survey by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), released in January 2023, there has been an increase in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. “The survey of a representative sample of more than four thousand US adults asked the extent to which Americans agreed with different statements about anti-Jewish tropes and found that 20 percent of Americans—as many as fifty-two million people—agreed with six or more of the eleven anti-Jewish statements.”⁶ This is the danger anti-Semitic beliefs have in relation to acceleration of violence against Jews. Trump’s role in spreading subtle and overt anti-Semitism is supported by the spike in the number of cases of white supremacist propaganda tracked by the ADL from fewer than five hundred in 2017 to more than five thousand in 2020.⁷

In a few short years, through thought and actions, Trump and Trumpists have moved toward fascism by eroding the components of mass-based democracy. In these cases, the leader “rejects in words or actions, the democratic rules of the game, denies the legitimacy of opponents, tolerates or encourages violence, or indicates a willingness to curtail civil liberties of opponents, including the media.”⁸ Key examples of this include Trump’s rejection of the results of the 2020 election, support for a coup, belief in fixed elections, and support for groups like QAnon and the Proud Boys. After the Charlottesville rally, Trump’s reference to “the fine people on both sides,” and his message during the presidential debate to the Proud Boys to “stand back and stand by” amount to his giving permission to his followers to attack anyone who disagrees with him. As Levitsky and Ziblatt explain in *How Democracies Die*, Trump’s overall political tone once in office was hostile to the institutional functions of procedural democracy as he cemented corporatism, a key element of fascism. “Soon after his inauguration, he sought to ensure that the heads of US intelligence agencies, including the FBI, CIA, and the National Security Agency would be personally loyal to him, apparently in the hope of using these agencies as a shield against investigations into his campaign’s Russia ties.”⁹

The corporatism initiated by Trump included reshaping the courts, which in principle, are supposed to provide a legal obstacle to fascist rule. Examples include the liberal use of pardons without institutional procedures, including his granting of a pardon to the authoritarian former sheriff Joe Arpaio, who

established policies to abuse prisoners and conduct racial profiling. Trump expressed his displeasure when a federal judge halted his administration's first travel ban on Muslims. His corporatist measures included an executive order granting federal agencies the authority to withhold federal funds from "sanctuary cities," that didn't take action against undocumented immigrants. It wasn't just the breaking down of accepted legal norms, Trump's corporatism assaulted democratic norms. His persistent references to millions of illegal voters, while false, nonetheless provided Trumpists with talking points. Their embrace of Trump's rhetorical claims justified violent actions. By prohibiting mainstream media outlets, whose reporters would question his claims, from covering his rallies, Trump was able to repeatedly spew propaganda. The consistent use of hate-filled propaganda as well as the glorification of violence had a sandpaper effect of wearing down the elements of mass-based democracy. His rhetoric appealed to parts of the white, middle class in terms of the way it framed their victimization, which included the scapegoating of minorities; it had the fascist appeal of a reactionary return to a time when social distinctions were firmly in place and not questioned.

His MAGA is a reaction to the increased visibility of people who have been on the margins of policymaking and society. The rise of movements representing oppressed groups represents how the principles of democracy are being realized. Using MAGA propaganda, Trump mobilized his base to hate perceived enemies and use various forms of violence to silence these progressive movements. The violence, once unleashed, acts to soothe the insecurities of the base by empowering Trumpists to dominate others. To use violence to attack those who are different tears apart the social fabric. Violence has great appeal to Trump's middle-class followers; targeted violence for the middle class is useful in validating its sense of superiority over people depicted as inferior. In seeking to control others by violence, they are themselves controlled by irrational impulses. Trump's violent followers liberate themselves from having any responsibility for their actions. Violence appeals to their need to simplify complexity. Any troubling problem is to be addressed by a show of force, in order to eliminate the problem once and for all. Trump created a feel-good movement of inverted values of people who can freely act as they please directing their hate and violence as if it is a moral virtue.

As the hate and violence unfold, it is fascistic in its intention to achieve body control. One example is what evangelicals achieved in overturning *Roe v. Wade*. In writing *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Wilhelm Reich explained how body control functions "with the establishment of an authoritarian patriarchy and the beginning of the division of the classes, the suppression of sexuality begins to make its appearance."¹⁰ In other words, sexual repression leads to political repression. The idea of controlling the functions of women's bodies, especially in biological functions, can be understood in

relation to Foucault's concept of biopower, which means having the means to exercise power over peoples' bodies. It is the state as a disciplinary institution, making use of politics to structure the biological functions of peoples' bodies. He elaborates the use of this disciplinary power in his book *Discipline and Punish*. An essential use of disciplinary power is not just to control biological functions, but it is also to monitor the functions of women's bodies in particular through constant surveillance. Through anti-abortion legislation, the state keeps a watchful eye on doctors and patients to make sure women do not express bodily autonomy in terms of medical procedures, such as abortions. It is for the purpose of exercising total control over women's bodies. Anti-abortion policymakers share the fascist ideal of passing laws that criminalize abortion.

The reactionary impulse in forcing motherhood is for fascists enforcing the role of women as the mothers of children. This view coincides with how Mussolini viewed the role of women in fascist Italy as the bearer of many children. Women guilty of having had an abortion faced up to five years in prison. To dissuade women from having abortions, the state promoted marriage laws that were aimed at young women marrying at an early age and having children. With the exception of giving birth, Mussolini said, "women never created anything." The regime was willing to offer financial incentives to women who gave birth to six or more children. As another example of biopower, fascist Italy through the Rocco code not only outlawed abortion, but it also limited women's access to birth control. Women's fertility was regarded as something belonging to the state.

Turning the focus to the fascist view of women's bodies in Nazi Germany, the policies were more complex and contradictory. Even before Hitler became chancellor in 1933, when he proceeded to destroy the legal foundation of the Weimar Republic, Nazi ideology in the 1920s supported marriage and child-bearing among designated Aryan females through an organization known as the Reich League for Child Rich Females. In thought and actions taken by the Nazi regime, the Nazi party, and especially Hitler, "equated the emancipation of women as a depravity similar to parliamentary democracy. Women were regarded as unworthy and in January 1921, one of the earliest Nazi party ordinances excluded them from holding any leading party positions."¹¹ There were these examples of biopower shortly after Hitler became chancellor on January 30, 1933. In May, the Nazis "closed all sex and marriage counseling centers and destroyed research papers, books, and educational material."¹² An important Nazi state use of biopower appears in the May 26, 1933 decree, introduced into the penal code, in particular paragraphs 219 and 220, which read as follows, "Anyone who for the purpose of abortion, advertises or recommends certain articles or procedures, or exhibits them to the general public will be punished by a fine or a prison sentence for a period not exceeding two

years. Paragraph 220 stated that anyone who publicly offers his services or the services of a third person for the purpose of an abortion will be punished by a fine or prison sentence of up to two years.”¹³

These measures indicate a consistency in the body control measures put in place by the Nazi regime. In the same year, you have the statement made by the medical director of the Prussian minister of the interior stating, “commercial abortion must be sternly suppressed.”¹⁴ The goal of the Nazis in prohibiting abortion is to maintain a healthy stock of pure Aryan blood. This explains why early in the Nazi regime, in May 1933, it identified abortion as a “crime against the race” that would be punished by a maximum sentence of fifteen years. While the regime was increasing legal prohibitions against abortion as one form of body control, as of 1939, in order to increase the birth of Aryan children, over a million German women were enrolled in various maternity schools established to instruct these future mothers in developing the skills associated with motherhood, everything from appropriate diet and the correct health protocols. A set of directives link Nazi racial ideology to childbearing:

1. Remember you’re a German! 2. Remain pure in body and spirit! 3. Keep your body pure! 4. If hereditarily fit, do not remain single! 5. Marry only for love! 6. Being a German, choose only a spouse of similar or related blood! 7. When choosing a spouse, inquire in his or her forebears! 8. Health is essential to outward beauty as well! 9. Seek a companion in marriage not a playmate! 10. Hope for as many children as possible!¹⁵

These measures, in essence, the characteristics of Nazi eugenics, were targeted to teenage girls and boys finishing school. The consistency of Nazi anti-abortion regulations unfolded during peacetime and wartime, in association with an emphasis on Nazi ideology. As the medical professions became increasingly aligned with Nazi racial doctrine, the policymaking body of the Berlin Council of Physicians stated, “that the practice of abortion shall be exterminated with a strong hand.”¹⁶ In spite of the possible legal sanctions for anyone providing abortions, there were many illegal abortions documented by the Ministry of Justice, which “reported a 70 percent rise in the number of persons accused of performing illegal procedures in 1937.”¹⁷ In charge of identifying these illegal abortions, the Gestapo arrested many individuals who were performing them. In wartime, in the context of fighting a racial war, the bureau of the Nazi regime that was tasked “to fight against homosexuality and abortion . . . listed eight thousand abortionists, including 1,020 physicians, 495 midwives, 355 health workers, 4,090 women, and 2,040 other untrained persons.”¹⁸

It is obvious given Nazi racial ideology that the regime’s goal was to increase the stock of its Aryan population. The intensity of this effort in the

midst of the unfolding Final Solution waged as a war between the Aryan race and inferior races is evident in “the severest abortion restrictions incorporated into law on 9 March 1943, subparagraph 5 to paragraph 218 stated that a woman who kills her fetus or permits such killing by another will be punished by a prison sentence and in especially serious cases by penitentiary.”¹⁹ In paragraph 219, which was at first a prohibition against devices used for abortions, was in 1943 extended to a prohibition on the use of contraceptives. The medical profession adopted anti-abortion policies in medical schools. Absent from medical schools and residency training were lectures or other instruction on abortion. Even as Nazi Germany was losing the war, especially in the year 1944, the obsessive fixation on anti-abortion progressed in a more extreme direction with the application of the death penalty for anyone found guilty of performing abortions.

a fifty-three-year-old married housewife with a sixth grade education and a prior record of convictions for performing abortions beginning in 1923 was executed in Mannheim in 1944. A fifty-seven-year-old married woman with a seventh grade education was convicted of having performed nine abortions was executed in Vienna in 1944. In Innsbruck, a sixty-six-year-old practical nurse with a record of at least twenty-one abortions was executed in 1944.²⁰

In part, the Nazi regime’s actions taken from pre- to wartime are, in Hitler’s words in *Mein Kampf*, the use of biopower, when he states, “we must do away with the conception that the treatment of the body is the affair of every individual.” The role of Aryan women is to do what is expected, that is, to produce babies as a means of ensuring the future of the Third Reich. The strong language of the 1943 German law is intended to apply to Aryan women. But while the aim of anti-abortion measures was to preserve the Aryan race, abortion was advocated for inferior races. In 1938, the government proclaimed that Jews could have abortions any time because this would have a positive effect on the nation. Throughout WWII, abortion functioned as a means of carrying out the Nazi’s eugenics policies.

The Nazi idea of abortion as a threat to the future of the Aryan race reappears in the white supremacist idea of a “white genocide” which informs the anti-abortion position of white supremacists. Allowing abortion, extremists believe, will lead to the extinction of the white race. They believe abortion has contributed to declining white birth rates along with demographic changes as a conspiracy to terminate the white race. Trump and Trumpism inherited America’s history of nativist fears of a white race in decline. What became political hysteria among policymakers unfolds in the 1860s with a decline in white births and increased by the early twentieth century with the large number of European immigrants and the rise of Black birth rates.

For two centuries, it was a threat to white Anglo-Saxon Protestants who felt threatened by Catholics who followed church doctrines that prohibited birth control and abortion and was a reason for policies meant to increase birth rates among Protestant women. This concern made for an alliance with the Ku Klux Klan who targeted Catholic immigrants. In part, the appearance of laws that would criminalize abortion in the latter part of the nineteenth century was out of a concern that Protestant women were having abortions. But upper-class Protestants did not become part of the anti-abortion movement until the 1980s. Protestants, by and large, associated anti-abortion sentiment with Catholics. Even after *Roe v. Wade* was passed, Protestants didn't adopt anti-abortion views. The change in how Protestants viewed abortion was due to a combination of events. "the lessening of anti-Catholic prejudice, strategic recruitment of evangelicals by New Right Catholic leaders, and evangelical discomfort with how many abortions took place as women accessed their new reproductive rights."²¹ As a result, it's no coincidence that white supremacist organizations such as the KKK were anti-abortion and willing to take action promoting the use of violence. "In 1985, the KKK began creating wanted posters listing personal information for abortion providers."²² Other white supremacist groups such as Tom Metzger's White Aryan Resistance (WAR) supported the killing of abortion providers. The association of Jews and abortion became common among extremist groups. With Catholics and Protestants in agreement on the issue of abortion, the violent segment of the white supremacist movement shifted its focus to Jews as the enemy of the white race, referring to the killing of millions of white babies through what was labeled "Jewish-engineered legalized abortion."²³ The Jewish link to abortion resulted in violent attacks, such as the one perpetrated by James Charles Kopp, who killed a Jewish abortion provider, Barnett Slepian, near Buffalo, New York. Kopp had ties to the radical anti-abortion organization, the Army of God. The appearance of the organization Abolish Human Abortion (AHA) is another example of how the movement used anti-Semitism against abortion. In the minds of anti-Semites, Jews are not really white so it makes sense to them that Jews would be pro-choice. Opposition to abortion translates into opposition to feminism as well as advocating for the birth of white children. As a form of destructive politics, it is a social harm inflicted on women's bodies and the biopower implications are obvious in the *Dobbs* ruling and in anti-abortion initiatives in general.

The post-*Roe* era has reversed the progress made during the *Roe v. Wade* era. After the *Roe v. Wade* decision, there were a number of positive effects, including the increase in women's participation in the labor force. It allowed many women to finish their education, which in turn, improved their earning potential. It also allowed women to balance family planning with their careers. Many more women were able to attend and complete college, with

less concern about unwanted pregnancies. But after the Dobbs decision in 2022, states enacted a host of measures that imposed legal restrictions to control women's reproductive functions. In the absence of abortion care, there are economic consequences. When women are forced to carry a pregnancy to term, there are significant economic downsides. There is the sexism associated with pregnancy, which in turn restricts upward mobility and has been responsible for propelling women into lower-paying occupations. One study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research "found in 2021 that restrictive abortion laws cost state and local economies \$105 billion annually by reducing labor force participation and earning levels while also increasing time off and turnover among women ages 15–44 years old."²⁴ Abortion bans in the twenty-seven states with restrictions contain other examples of biopower exercised over women's bodies.

None guarantee paid family and medical leave. Eighteen have gender wage gaps above the national average. Twenty-two have poverty rates for women above the national average. Seventeen have poverty rates for children above the national average. Nineteen have not extended Medicaid coverage to twelve months post-partum. Only four legally require insurers to cover an extended supply of contraceptives.²⁵

The expression of biopower is so extreme in these states that they do not allow abortion in cases of rape, incest, or threats to the health of women. The consequence of anti-abortion policies is that women are forced to give birth in states that refuse to provide supporting services. The United States is one country among six other industrialized nations without national, paid family leave. In the absence of federal legislation that would provide workplace accommodations for pregnant workers, women in the workplace have to deal with issues associated with pregnancy at work. Even with the Roe decision, women of color and poor women were still experiencing health complications without access to proper health care. But in the post-Roe era, states that put in place restrictions "have around a 7 percent increase in maternal mortality compared with states that have fewer abortion restrictions."²⁶ With less access to prenatal care, maternal mortality is greater among women of color. In the nineteen states that haven't extended Medicaid coverage from sixty days to twelve months post-partum, women of color are most affected and therefore have a higher likelihood of complications from pregnancy. In total, these policies are direct and indirect examples of violence against women's bodies.

Alarms about the so-called declining white birth rate were sounded early in the twentieth century by President Theodore Roosevelt, who went so far as to warn, "Native born whites' birth rates will be surpassed by immigrant birth rates." He spoke of the imperative for white people to bear as many

children as possible and called for the production of “crops of children,” and he advanced legislation that would provide relief to families that had two or more children. This idea of an ongoing decline of white birth rates continued throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Echoing the Trump administration’s anti-immigration position, Congressman Steven King said, “We can’t restore our civilization with somebody else’s babies.” In more precise detail, King issued another statement: “To grow your population, strengthen your culture, and strengthen your way of life, which is in essence, white culture.” The destructive politics behind this ideology of having more white babies reveals, in its practical application by white supremacist policymakers, in essence a hatred of all children who are not white. These politics were taken to their ultimate and illogical conclusion with the mass killing of African Americans at the Tops supermarket in Buffalo in May 2022; the shooter, eighteen-year-old Payton S. Gendron, was obsessed with the declining birth rate of white people and specifically targeted the most segregated and densely populated Black neighborhood in Buffalo. The most violent-prone white supremacist groups have been associated with the anti-abortion movement. Strong ties were forged between the Aryan Nation, the Patriot Front, and the Neo-Nazi Traditionalist Worker Party, all of which support the anti-abortion movement. In 2019, Kristen Hatten, vice president of anti-abortion group New Wave Feminists, identified herself as an ethnonationalist and disseminated white supremacist content. Whiteness for white supremacists is more than just the appearance of a physical trait; it is the symbol of white superiority which must be enforced by legal means and through violence.

Mary Miller, an Illinois Republican, attended a 2022 Trump rally and expressed her thanks to Trump for his role in appointing justices to the Supreme Court. She went on to say that she supported the Dobbs ruling, “on behalf of all the MAGA patriots in America, who appreciated the historic victory for white life.” Fiction writer Margaret Atwood, author of “*The Handmaid’s Tale*,” said the decision paves the way for creation of a kind of theocracy.²⁷ The result is what Foucault would refer to as an expression of biopower. In their opinions reversing *Roe v. Wade*, Justices Alito and Coney Barrett echo what Atwood described as the role of the state as control over women’s reproductive capacities. Alito referred to an “insufficient domestic supply of infants” while Barrett reflected on the number of unwanted babies, who she said could be given up through safe haven. This is, in essence, the idea that women’s bodies are assembly lines for baby production. This production of babies, with a preference for white babies, is what ultimately matters and not the social harm to women.

When policymakers criminalize the womb as they did with Dobbs and abortion bans in the states, they exert a control that bears a striking resemblance

to similar measures that appeared in Nazi Germany. Hitler described the positive role of motherhood in a 1935 Nazi Party speech: “When our opponents say: you degrade women by assigning them no other task than childbearing, then I answer that it is not degrading to a woman to be a mother. On the contrary, it is her greatest honor.” Richard Walther Darré, Hitler’s Reich leader, classified the breeding potential of girls as either well-suited, less well-suited, hardly suited, and unfit. Women’s wombs are objects that are necessary in order to breed the master race; women are socialized in organizations that use the tools of Nazi indoctrination to accept the assignment that they will only be mothers. For young girls, this meant becoming a member of The Bund Deutscher Mädel or the League of German Girls. Older women would join the NS-Frauensschaft or the National Socialist Women’s League. Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, developed the Lebensborn program in 1935 in order to encourage the production of babies of the master race.

While there are obvious differences between Nazi controls of women’s reproduction and those of the Trump era, there are also similarities, such as anti-abortion measures that provide a distinct legal status to the fetus. In Nazi Germany as well as in Trumpism, it is the state that is supposed to control and regulate the reproductive functions of women’s bodies through anti-abortion laws. For both the Nazis and Trumpists, anti-abortion measures are used to preserve the superiority of the white race. The legal system will define the reproductive functions and institute sanctions when women do not adhere to state regulations prior to and during pregnancy. In essence, it amounts to state seizure of women’s bodies. As Michele Goodwin states in *Policing the Womb: Invisible Women and the Criminalization of Motherhood*,

a range of laws now police and criminalize behavior during pregnancy. These include fetal protection laws (FPLS); laws that criminalize illicit drug use during pregnancy—fetal drug laws; child abuse laws pertaining to fetuses—maternal conduct laws (MCLS), which seek to criminalize otherwise legal conduct that may cause risk to pregnancies, including cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, falling down steps, and refusing bed rest.²⁸

These various laws are framed in such a manner to violate doctor-patient confidentiality and to make doctors, nurses, and other health care providers agents of the state. These laws have transformed women’s bodies into vehicles that produce a valuable commodity in the form of a live birth, and they exercise control over how the commodity is produced. The body that generates the product has to be controlled. As the fetus is being defined as having the same rights as living people, there is a corresponding decline in the legal status of pregnant women. A woman’s productive capacity to create

children must be controlled by the state. Distinctions are made between the fetuses of white women and those of poor women of color.

The forcing of women to be vessels to give birth is about making women pay the price, which is, if you have sex, and become pregnant, you must bear the child. The view of evangelicals was that they were framing the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate sex. Legitimate sex only takes place between heterosexual, married couples, who, when a woman is pregnant, whether wanted or unwanted, will allow for the birth of a child. Illegitimate sex is any sex outside of marriage which is not for baby-making and is outside the control of the male patriarchy. When abortion was legal, women, regardless of whether they were married or unmarried, had the right to choose to terminate a pregnancy. This was the wholly the woman's decision. Anti-abortion activists resent males being removed from the decision-making about baby-making. One example of this view is New Hampshire Republican state Rep. Robert Fisher, who founded the online forum Red Pill. One of its core ideas is that women have to be granted permission by men in any decisions about their health. Posts on the Reddit forum supported men's right to control if and when women can have an abortion, a main gripe being that women should not have final authority over their own reproductive rights. Choosing to have an abortion gives women the final say as to whether or not sex would lead to baby-making. By denying married and unmarried women access to abortion, women are left with the life-changing challenge of having to raise a child often without male support.

After the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the control over women's bodies became public policy in many states with the net result that women's bodies were valued only in relation to baby-making. The presence of pregnant women in public serves to reinforce the message. The purpose of giving birth is to generate a baby as a commodity, an object which is visible evidence of male domination over women's bodies. The extent to which controlling women's bodies has been extended is clear with twenty GOP state attorney generals filing suit against Walgreens and CVS pharmacy chains for filling mail orders for the abortion medication mifepristone. With medication abortions comprising more than half of all abortions in the United States, the drug is in greater use, due to the decline in the availability of surgical abortions. The various abortion restrictions are just another example of destructive politics, intended to cause harm. An element of fascist culture is this emphasis on rigid views of sex and gender. Since women aren't considered to be part of the political in-group, they are subjected to policies that are harmful.

Both anti-abortion and anti-trans policies represent a reaction to and rejection of the fact that people's identities can and do change over time. When someone is pregnant and chooses to have an abortion, that individual has exercised the freedom to change one's identity. To those in the anti-abortion

movement, this is threatening, therefore access to abortion as well as the use of mifepristone and misoprostol, the two abortion medications, must be eliminated. What bothers extremists about the transgender movement is that it implies that one's gender identity is not fixed. What they are reacting to is that these movements violate their view of what should be an unchanging America with a fixed social hierarchy.

Fascism centers on the dominance of a select view in spite of its official rhetoric of being mass-based. Trump's mindless, nationalist appeals border on xenophobia with his consistent self-definition as a nationalist. Fascism provides universal benefits to its corporate masters. Hatred and violence serve as a useful distraction, as Trump devised policies to benefit corporate America. But while the middle class supported Trump, the administration was developing policies that were strongly anti-worker. He continued with his anti-labor positions, in part, by defining the United States as a right-to-work country. "Trump issued executive orders that rolled back the rights of federal workers, and engaged in union-busting, including a plan to effectively eliminate unions within the Department of Defense. Shortly before the 2020 election, he issued an executive order allowing any unionized federal employee who is in a policymaking position to be fired at will by political appointees."²⁹ Trump's Department of Justice argued and won in the Supreme Court case of *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru* that found that employees in a religious organization are not subject to labor laws. His radicalized base consists of those he describes as "real people," namely, evangelicals, segments of the white middle class, rural America, and corporate America. The more diverse populations of the nation reside in cities, with whom Trump regularly registered his disgust. For example, he described Los Angeles and San Francisco as disgusting and referred to blue cities as decadent and dangerous. He embraces racist stereotypes of minorities who live in cities as dangerous and violent. His wannabe fascist leadership is also contradictory.

He uses hate against diverse social segments while claiming the mantle of the only leader who is a uniter of the country. While embracing speaking for the so-called silent majority, he has a narrow base of support from parts of the middle class, some billionaires, and Christian nationalists. The license to normalize prejudice becomes a solution to the manufacture of a perceived sense of victimhood. Trump is able to mobilize various fringe elements because he knows they are especially receptive to fables based on hidden plots and conspiracy theories. With each reference to conspiracies associated with a "deep state," he generates a need among followers to take action through violence. This violence is to be permanent so long as the enemies are present.

There are indications that Trump and Trumpism represent a fascist dress rehearsal. Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch of November 8–9, 1923 was a failure in violently overthrowing the Weimar Republic. The attack on the Capitol on

January 6, 2021 was also a failed coup. In the Weimar Republic of the early 1930s, conservative policymakers believed Hitler could be controlled. Hitler and the Nazis came to power through a combination of electoral success and appeasement by conservative policymakers, who literally invited him into the government. Hitler then proceeded to dismantle the legal foundation of the Weimar Republic. In Congress, there exists a fascist subculture in the House of Representatives, which resisted verification of the 2020 presidential election. Some members of the GOP bring guns to Congress, wear AR-15 pins and associate with Nazis and QAnon. In the 1920s, the Nazi's paramilitary unit, the Sturmabteilung or the "Brown shirts" functions as the party's violent arm. The Trump administration also had clear ties to militias and paramilitary organizations. The Nazi Brown shirts and Trump's militias are both characterized by their perpetual preparation for warfare. The militaristic Proud Boys were violent participants at the January 6 attempted coup.

In addition to Trump's major legislative accomplishment, the massive upper-class tax cut, he packed federal courts and in particular, the US Supreme Court with right-wing ideologues. It is difficult to predict to what extent the Court with its 6-3 radical conservative majority will support any number of fascist initiatives. It is more likely that the Court at this time will be willing to hear extremist views. If it demonstrates a pattern of rulings that continue to weaken legal safeguards that protect democracy, movement toward fascism is more likely. If there is any troubling indication, one can refer to a comment by Justice Clarence Thomas of his being open to reconsidering cases involving privacy, such as *Griswold v. Connecticut*, protecting the right of married couples to use contraception; *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which allows same-sex marriage; *Lawrence v. Texas*, which invalidated sodomy laws across the United States and *Romer v. Evans*, which bans discrimination based on sexual orientation. If the Supreme Court takes up challenges to these precedents, it will be enabling a fascist return to an idealized past. This would satisfy the part of the base, including evangelicals, who favor traditionalism over modernism. Another implication of possible Supreme Court reversals would provide legal cover for hatred and violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community. In addition, according to Umberto Eco's *How to Spot a Fascist*: "Fascism grows and seeks a consensus by exploiting and exacerbating the natural fear of difference."³⁰ In this targeting of those who are different, there is an expression of an intense dislike of people who are disadvantaged. The perspective is: those people should get what they deserve. At its most extreme, fascism amounts to an intention to cause pain and suffering of others. When they take their violent acts to the extreme, the militarized members of Trump's base revel in a cult of killing and death.

What is disturbing to discover from any historical survey of fascism is that it doesn't require the support of a majority. Fascism personifies acting in the

name of the majority but acts to serve the interests of a minority. According to Matthew C. MacWilliams in *On Fascism*, polling points to the fact that a minority of Americans have anti-democratic views such as racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism.

Thirty-four percent of Americans agree that having a strong leader who does not bother with Congress and elections is a good way of governing the United States. Thirty-four percent of Americans agree it is more important to follow the will of the people than the principles laid out in the US Constitution. Thirty percent of Americans agree with the statement, "I often find myself fearful of other people and other races." Forty-four percent of Americans agree that increasing racial, religious, and ethnic diversity represents a threat to the security of the United States. Thirty-one percent of white Americans say Black Americans are somewhat to very violent.³¹

The symbiotic fascist association of Trump and his followers is apparent when those in attendance at one rally were asked to raise their right hands in a show of support, reminiscent of the Nazi salute. A reporter covering the event was so shocked that in his words, "Trump's rally resembled a Nazi spectacle."

Whether it is the killing of Black motorists or attacks on Jews, the fascist aspect amounts to a division of us vs. them. During the unprecedented attack on the Tree of Life synagogue Robert Bowers was shouting, "All Jews must die!" The perspective that some individuals are less than human is reflected in Trump's policy separating children from their parents at the border. This indifference to human suffering and a clear intention to cause harm is ongoing to this day because, according to the Department of Homeland Security, there are still 998 children separated from their parents. In his public remarks, Trump consistently elevates violence as a political virtue, whether it's clearing Lafayette Square during the George Floyd protests, his support for Kyle Rittenhouse, or his "very fine people" statement after the violence in Charlottesville. That Trump takes sadistic delight in violence was especially clear from his response to the attack on the Capitol on January 6. As Trump was fixated on watching the attack, he was pleased to see that his base was using violence to support him remaining in power.

Trump consistently used Twitter to distribute propaganda to provide a counter-narrative to the media, which he often called the enemy of the people. At the same time, he was careful to always reward his loyalists, inside and outside the media, such as Roger Stone, Steve Bannon, Paul Manafort, Michael Flynn, and others. In so doing, he assumed the role of the fascist patriarch, the all-knowing, paternalistic leader, who, with his bluster, strives to project an image of hypermasculinity. Whether or not the United States fully embraces fascism might depend on the extent to which Trump

and his enablers are prosecuted. If they aren't fully prosecuted, as was the case with the lenient sentence doled out to Hitler for his 1923 coup attack, the fascists among us could very well prevail in the future. One troubling indicator was Trump's initial refusal to leave office after the 2020 election, amounting to a "soft coup." Furthermore, the efforts by members of the GOP in the House of Representatives to resist the verification of the election is another example of a "soft coup." The Republican National Committee supported Trump's baseless claim of a fixed election. Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida supported Trump's attempt to get the state's legislators to nullify the 2020 election. In addition, "eighteen states and 126 Republican members of the House sued to overturn the election results in Michigan, Georgia, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, it showed that GOP leadership in most states, and 64 percent . . . of GOP representatives, would happily disenfranchise most of the country."³² The fascist tendency characteristic of these efforts is geared toward cementing minority rule and eliminating any semblance of mass-based democracy. This destructive form of politics in service of minority rule is intended to develop policies that harm various diverse social segments.

The delusional QAnon conspiracy theories, which peddle an irrational nihilism, have made inroads in the GOP as two brazen QAnon followers, Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert, currently sit in Congress. With Josh Hawley and Paul Gosar, the GOP now has in both houses of Congress elected officials who are openly supportive of Nazi ideology. These members of the GOP as well as Senator Tom Cotton market themselves in the name of white evangelical culture and routinely use racist tropes against civil rights activists. Cotton's fascist inclinations were evident when he advocated using the Insurrection Act to support Trump, which would have resulted in a national sweep, seizing people engaged in peaceful dissent off the street and reminiscent of Nazi Night and Fog decrees in which people would simply disappear into unmarked vehicles.

These examples represent a fascist political culture that has taken root within the Trumpist coalition. Firmly attached to Trumpism, the evangelical right within the GOP is focused on waging a religious war on diverse segments, feminists, Black Lives Matter activists, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. They have been active making use of the cover of religion in order to enact discriminatory policies. With Trump's packing of the Supreme Court with Federalist Society members who hold religious fundamentalist views, the Court created legal sanctions to justify discrimination based on religion. This was the result of *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, which reached the Supreme Court. The justices sided with a business having a legal right to refuse service to LGBTQ+ individuals, not all that dissimilar to certain Jim Crow laws. This is another example of minority politics presented under the guise of populism. Trumpism markets populism in practice as the imposition

of one viewpoint on everybody else. It masquerades as democracy in order to disguise narrowminded bigotry. Trump presents himself through his rhetoric as a populist leader, when in practice he determines which narrow viewpoints are to be popularized.

What does not bode well for the future of democracy is the extent to which a political culture of fascism is evolving with additional inventive means to subvert democracy. One troubling sign is the emerging presidential candidate who exhibits fascist tendencies, Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida. Trump was his mentor. The student has progressed from the teacher toward becoming a more intelligent and devious fascist ideologue. DeSantis' calm demeanor contrasts with Trump's megalomania. DeSantis' fascist inclinations unfold in criminalizing ideas that he does not approve of, such as prohibiting the teaching of Advanced Placement African American studies in Florida's high schools. His actions include excluding courses at the college and university level that cover questions of race, racism, and institutional racism. The obvious implication is that for DeSantis, Black history is not American history. His intention is to literally whitewash American history, leaving out people of color. DeSantis took pages out of George Orwell's 1984 in his idea of thought crimes. DeSantis, as the self-appointed thought police decides, with the assistance of censors, ideas which are contrary to his conception of a white America. A representative sample of scholars, authors, and public intellectuals whose books were made illegal are: Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Nell Irvin Painter, Manning Marable, Cathy Cohen, Henry Louis Gates Jr., James Cone, Nikki Giovanni, Barbara Fields. Fascist ideology works to eliminate all forms of literature which expresses the experiences of people who are oppressed. It is the appearance of other more rational, would-be fascist leaders, such as DeSantis, which is a troubling trend. This persistence of a destructive white power movement is another cause for concern. In December 2022, Sarah Beth Clendaniel of Baltimore County was arrested, facing criminal charges for an alleged role in a plot to destroy the power grid in Baltimore. She conspired with Brandon Russell who was arrested in Florida. They planned to shoot out power substations. In a photograph of Clendaniel, she wore tactical gear with a swastika and was holding a rifle.

The possible development of full-blown fascism in the United States could, in part, stem from American militarism. The budget for the military is a sacred cow, not subject to spending cuts. In December 2022, President Biden signed a bill that authorized \$858 billion in Pentagon spending. The United States with the exception of China leads the world in military spending: "a full accounting of all spending justified in the name of national security, including for homeland security, veterans care, and more will certainly exceed \$1.4 trillion."³³ The main beneficiaries will be those private firms that

are part of the military industrial complex. There has been no scaling back of the US commitment to send troops “to engage in military action against Iran or North Korea and continue to wage a Global War on Terror that involves stationing 200,000 troops overseas, while taking part in counter-terror operations in at least eighty-five countries.”³⁴ Biden supports committing the US military to Iraq, Syria, Somalia, and sending military aid and hardware to Ukraine. America’s global military commitments have had and continue to have domestic implications raising the possibility of an American form of fascism. American militarism continues to foster a militarized society. The might makes right of US foreign policy is what in part, generates a normalized domestic culture of violence. When fascism thrives, it has been in a highly militarized and permanent war-making framework. As the Pentagon budget continues to grow, there is the question of whether America is getting what it pays for by shaping and reshaping the globe in order to service the interests of the United States. There appear to be diminishing returns as all that spending and the US military presence around the globe hasn’t translated into global dominance. Consider a few noteworthy examples of declining empires that developed fascist regimes. The declining Ottoman Empire and Turkey’s defeats in WWI served as preconditions for the Armenian genocide. After Germany’s defeat in WWI, the rise of the Nazi Party and its eventual overthrow of the Weimar Republic was in part a response to the decline of German militarism. It is becoming increasingly problematic for the United States to continue to fund and commit resources toward military interventions. For the years 1991–2022, the United States was involved in 251 military interventions, according to a report by the Congressional Research Service.

If there is to be a drift toward a fully developed American fascism, a relevant question to ask is whether support for fascism will emerge from the billionaire class. This is obviously difficult to predict with any degree of certainty. There are, nonetheless, some ominous signs in the state of democracy, which make democracy prone to billionaire influence on policymaking. Without a large social welfare state, America cannot be considered a global leader in democracy since that is an ingredient for a vibrant democracy. Among its most prominent social services is Social Security, which, since its inception in 1935, has been under attack by the right. The American system of representation, in particular, the Senate, due to a representation scheme, allows small states to have outsized power compared to big states. The electoral college with its 538 members, elected by state assemblies, has rules which also favor rural states over large urban states. The fact that political parties engage in gerrymandering, setting up districts to favor either of the two parties, is anti-democratic. The entry for big money is through the private funding of elections.

The impact of private funding on US elections reached its zenith on November 8, 2022. Those elections determined which party would control the federal and state legislatures, as well as many governorships and other political positions. According to the *Washington Post*, fifty billionaire donors alone gave more than \$1.1 billion to finance the elections of their desired candidates. Between the super-wealthy, corporations, and smaller donations, a whopping \$17 billion was spent on the midterm elections. Billionaires also gave huge sums to finance candidates for election to the judiciary, such as judges. One of the billionaires in the Chicago business class (Barre Seid) gave an astounding \$1.6 billion dollars to promote the election of conservative judges who will safeguard their economic interests and guarantee control of the legal system. The overall impact of private funding of elections is to diminish the popular election process for representatives, senators, governors, and judges, as well as referendums, widely used at the state level.³⁵

The floodgates for the role of big money opened as a result of the US Supreme Court ruling of Citizens United in 2010. Billionaires in corporate America are extremely sensitive to any possible policy proposal that impacts in any way the bottom line. This sensitivity extends to regulation, taxation, and proposals to increase the minimum wage. Above all, capital is determined to maintain its control over the nation's wealth: "in 2022, its share had increased to 31.8 percent or \$44.9 trillion."³⁶ Warren Buffett was correct when he stated, "There's been class warfare going on for the last twenty years and my class has won." In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith wrote "Where there is great property, there is great inequality. For the very rich man, there must be at least five hundred poor, and the affluence of the few presupposes the indigence of the many." The number of billionaires has increased to 745, up from 614 in little more than a year, according to a report sponsored by Citizens for Tax Fairness and the Institute for Policy Studies.³⁷ With this increase, it's a question of how far the billionaire class will go in their pursuit of capital. So much of the nation's wealth concentrated in the hands of capital translates into social control over policymaking. Wealth continues to accumulate while income varies in response to the cycles of American capitalism. Among wage earners there exists inequality along gender and racial lines. The wage gap based on gender is just that according to the findings of Pew Research: in 2020, women earned 84 percent of what men earned and in 2021, the Federal Reserve reported that the average Black, Latino, or Hispanic household earned half of what was earned in white households. Inequality according to race or gender manifests in indicators, such as unequal opportunity in education, employment, housing, and health, to name a few.

In association with the GOP, the wealth class has successfully promoted such anti-democratic initiatives as voter suppression, intimidation, and threats of violence in local communities. Election board officials, school

officials, and librarians have been subject to mob-like intimidation. The political and economic forces that appear to support a fascist agenda in the United States are learning how to use democracy in order to subvert it. Historically, fascism has developed within democratic institutions and worked to undermine them. One tactic of using democracy against itself is the fostering of extreme nationalism, which manifests itself as intense hatred of diversity. One troubling example is the right-wing organization Turning Points USA, which funded the travel of as many as 3,200 Trumpists to the Capitol for the January 6 event. Turnings Points USA “has been funded by large infusions from right-wing megadonors like the Uihlein family (Logistic Magnates) and Bruce Rauner (former governor and private equity executive) and got its seed money from Foster Friess (investment manager and major donor to Christian conservative causes).”³⁸ Spreading propaganda necessary for the mobilization of support for fascism has emerged from another billionaire Elon Musk. After purchasing Twitter, Musk opened the floodgates for all forms of hateful, racist, anti-Semitic, anti-LGBTQ+, and misogynistic content. He has expressed his support for and aligned himself with the ideology of MAGA. When he took over Twitter, he restored over sixty thousand accounts that had been removed due to their hate-filled content. Now under the control of Musk, Twitter is in the forefront of spewing misinformation and lies. A global pattern in the rise of fascist movements has been the ability to achieve institutional control over media outlets. Ownership of social media by a billionaire works hand in hand to support fascism.

The political culture of Trumpism as a social movement with fascist inclinations has amplified pre-existing anti-democratic measures unfolding at the start of the twenty-first century. In a reversal of what Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis called state politics as “laboratories of democracy,” Trumpism is proving at the state level to be an experiment in fascist politics. The broad range of these measures are in service of minority politics, which favor the upper classes. Just as it does at the federal level, Trumpism functions to harm various social segments at the state level, too. Upper-class policymaking is not supported by a majority of Americans, which is why Trumpism on the state level seeks to cement minority rule. Trumpism increased what has been a political trend toward anti-democratic practices at the state level. In *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Jacob Grumbach assessed the level of democracy that has prevailed in state politics from 2000–2018, using 51 measures that indicate either the degree of political participation or the internal structure of state governments. What he concluded coincides with the acceleration of anti-democratic policymaking during the Trump administration, that Republican states are increasingly anti-democratic while Democratic-led states have not experienced a decline of democracy. Notable examples include Arizona and Mississippi; in Arizona Republicans proposed using the state

legislature to nullify the results of presidential elections and in Mississippi, Republicans in the House of Representatives created a distinct court system that is reminiscent of the Jim Crow era, with one justice system solely for white neighborhoods. Anti-democratic action unfolded in Tennessee in spring 2023, where two Black legislators who staged a protest on the floor of the statehouse in support of stricter gun laws, were removed. With the possibility of the indictment of Trump coming in Georgia, Republican legislators passed a law allowing them to remove elected prosecutors from office. An anti-abortion initiative in Idaho made it illegal to cross state lines to get an abortion. Texas Governor Republican Greg Abbott was determined to pardon a white man who was convicted of murdering a Black Lives Matter protester.

Gerrymandering, which has tended to favor Republicans more than Democrats nationally, has become a useful tool for voter nullification. As an historical trend, gerrymandering has long been on the political scene. It is unique to the United States. In *One Person, One Vote: A Surprising History of Gerrymandering in America*, Nick Seabrook identified the essential features of gerrymandering. It includes these characteristics: intent as a plan to include and exclude the votes of specific groups of voters; the reshaping of the electoral map, which Seabrook states is “a violation of the norms, procedures, and conventions of a functioning democratic system.”³⁹ Gerrymandering is antidemocratic because it results in a district that favors one political party over the other. It also allows billionaires privileged access to state government. While Trump unleashed hatred of groups that aren’t members of the white male upper class, it is billionaires who are at work behind the scenes, shaping state politics. While attention is paid to politics at the federal level, it is often the policies made by governors, state legislators, and municipal governments that have a more direct impact on the lives of residents. Many of the social welfare functions, such as education, police, fire protection, and the implementation of Medicare and Medicaid, are controlled by state government. States have a crucial role in federal laws, which means they have discretion as to how to interpret and carry out federal laws. At the state level billionaires have exercised an enormous influence on policymaking, in part, by funding candidates for state office behind the scenes.

The political trend is that in gerrymandered states, Republicans and billionaires are successful in influencing and shaping politics at the state level. This trend, that began many decades ago, has generated a shift in policymaking emphasis from the federal level to state governments. Given the fact that state governments have smaller constituencies the points of access are easier to reach as billionaires try to influence state politics. For smaller contributions at the state level, billionaires can achieve greater access and influence. Gerrymandering generally provides for one party dominance, which increases the influence that billionaire funds can have in shaping decision-making. It

is therefore not surprising that billionaires are investing heavily in state and local elections. One example is the billionaire-controlled Americans for Prosperity (AFP) funded by the Koch brothers. The involvement of AFP is not confined to the electoral process. In between elections, it engages in lobbying and grassroots organizing. It is hardly surprising that it took a great interest in state governments that were establishing new legislative districts. One example of AFP's anti-progressive tactics was its ability in 2017 to prevent the expansion of Medicaid as a part of the Affordable Care Act in certain states. Another billionaire affiliated group, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an organization with a pro-corporate agenda, generated legislation aimed at benefiting corporate America, through tax cuts and loosening of regulations and right-to-work laws. The harm to social segments that Trump and Trumpism generated at the federal level also appears at the state level as ALEC sponsors bills that are harmful to many Americans, such as various stand your ground laws and voter suppression measures that in particular target people of color. Working with Republican majorities in various states, billionaires have had success in advancing harmful policies, such as cutting back state government spending, decreasing taxes, and further weakening labor unions, to the benefit of corporate America. The overall political strategy that they have devised is described in *Billionaires and Stealth Politics* as the use of boundary controls, "a coordinated effort to use and preserve one party dominance of state politics to win special favors at the state level, while at the national level working to prevent federal regulation or other interference with the spoils."⁴⁰

In practice, given their vast wealth, billionaires developed a strategy of using federal and state campaign contributions to obtain benefits at the state level while preventing interference from the federal government. The manufacture of hate and violence exercised by Trumpists functions as a convenient smokescreen to cover up the political activities of billionaires. The ideology of boundary control amounts to a diminished role for the federal government and an increase influence on policymaking in state governments by billionaires all in the name of promoting states' rights.

In conclusion, specific prerequisites for American fascism are already in place: extreme militarism, an obsessive gun culture, support from capital, a fearful and violent segment of the middle class, a Republican party that embraces extremism, the January 6 attempted coup, anti-intellectualism, anti-science, a mobilization of the passions directed aggressively toward certain segments of the population coupled with a submissiveness directed at the fascist leader. American-style fascism personifies minority rule.

NOTES

1. Anthony DiMaggio, *Rebellion in America: Citizen Uprisings, the News Media and the Politics of Plutocracy* (Philadelphia: Routledge Publishing, 2020) p. 207.
2. DiMaggio, *Rising Fascism in America: It Can Happen Here* (Philadelphia: Routledge Publishing, 2021) p. 201.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
4. Jonathan Greenblatt, *It Could Happen Here: Why America is Tipping From Hate to the Unthinkable and How We Can Stop it* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2022) p. 25.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
6. Anti-Defamation League, "Number of Americans Harboring Extensive Anti-Semitic Prejudice Doubled Since 2019; Reaches Highest Levels in Decades" January 12, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/number-americans-harboring-extensive-antisemitic-prejudice-doubled-2019>.
7. Greenblatt, p. 48.
8. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2019) p. 21–22.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
10. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1980) p. 28.
11. Beverly Chalmers, *Birth, Sex and Abuse: Women's Voices under Nazi Rule* (Surbiton: Grosvenor House Publishing, 2015) p. 43.
12. Henry P. David, Jochen Fleischhacker, Charlotte Hohn, "Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany" *Population and Development Review*, March 1988, Vol. 14. No. 1 p. 81.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
15. Chalmers, p. 44.
16. Henry P. David et al., p. 90.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
21. Alex Dibranco, "The Long History of Anti-abortion Movements Links to White Supremacists" *The Nation*, February 3, 2020, p. 3.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Osun Ahmed, Bela Salas-Betsch, Lauren Hoffman, "State abortion bans will harm women and families' economic security across the U.S." *Center for American Progress*, August 25, 2022, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/state-abortion-bans-will-harm-women-and-families-economic-security-across-the-us/>.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. Anthony DiMaggio, "War on Women: The Link Between White Supremacy, Men's Rights and Anti-Abortion Politics" *Salon*, April 1, 2023, <https://www.salon>

.com/2023/04/01/on-women-the-link-between-supremacy-mens-rights-and-anti-abortion/.

28. Michele Goodwin, *Policing the Womb: Invisible Women and the Criminalization of Motherhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) p. x.

29. Brynn Tannehill, *American Fascism: How the GOP is Subverting Democracy* (Oakland: Transgress Press, 2021) p. 192.

30. Umberto Eco, *How to Spot a Fascist* (London: Harvill Secker, 2020) p. 20.

31. Matthew C. MacWilliams, *On Fascism: 12 Lessons from American History* (Irvine: Griffin Publishing, 2020) p. ix–x.

32. Tannehill, p. 240.

33. William Hartung, “America’s Costly Dysfunctional Approach to Security is Making Us Ever Less Safe” *Counterpunch*, January 19, 2023, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/01/19/americas-costly-dysfunctional-approach-to-security-is-making-us-ever-less-safe/>.

34. Ibid.

35. Vicente Navarro “The Enormous Limitations of U.S. Liberal Democracy and Its Consequences: The Growth of Fascism” *Counterpunch*, February 6, 2023, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/02/06/the-enormous-limitations-of-u-s-liberal-democracy-and-its-consequences-the-growth-of-fascism/>.

36. David Rosen, “America: The Land of Inequality” *Counterpunch*, September 8, 2022, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/09/08/america-the-land-of-inequality/>.

37. Heather Gautney, *The New Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022) p. 151.

38. David Mazucchi, “Right Wing Organizations Bussed Trump Fascists to the Capitol Insurgence” *La Voce di New York*, January 12, 2021, <https://lavocedinewyork.com/en/news/2021/01/12/right-wing-organizations-bussed-trump-fascists-to-the-capitol-insurgence/>.

39. Nick Seabrook, *One Person, One Vote: A Surprising History of Gerrymandering in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2022) p. 5.

40. Benjamin I. Page, Matthew J. Lacombe, Jason Seawright, *Billionaires and Stealth Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018) p. 109.

Bibliography

- Abutaleb, Yasmeen and Damian Paletta. *Nightmare Scenario: Inside the Trump Administration's Response to the Pandemic that Changed History*. New York: Harper Collins Press, 2021.
- Alberta, Tim. *American Carnage: On the Front Lines of the Republican Civil War and the Rise of President Trump*. New York: Harper Collins Press, 2019.
- Anderson, Carol. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of our Racial Divide*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016.
- Aral, Sinan. *The Hype Machine: How Social Media Disrupts Our Elections, Our Economy, and Our Health and How We Must Adapt*. New York: Currency Trade Paper Edition, 2021.
- Baird, Robert and Stuart Rosenbaum, eds. *Hatred, Bigotry and Prejudice: Definitions, Causes and Solutions*. New York: Prometheus Books, 1999.
- Baker, Peter and Susan Glasser. *Divider: Trump in the White House, 2017–2021*. New York: Doubleday Press, 2022.
- Balko, Radley. *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces*. New York: Perseus Books, 2013.
- Bardon, Adrian. *The Truth About Denial: Bias and Self-Deception in Science, Politics and Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Beck, Aaron. *Prisoners of Hate: The Cognitive Basis of Anger, Hostility and Violence*. New York: Harper Collins Press, 1999.
- Belew, Kathleen. *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.
- Belew, Kathleen and Ramon Gutierrez. *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021.
- Bellesiles, Michael. *Arming America: The Origins of the National Gun Culture*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Toward the Critique of Violence: A Critical Edition*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2021.
- Benitham, Jeremy. *Handbook of Political Fallacies*. New York: Thomas Crowell and Co., 1971.
- Better, Shirley. *Institutional Racism: A Primer on Theory and Strategies for Social Change*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008.

- Bloom, Mia and Sophia Moskalenko. *Pastels and Pedophiles: Inside the Mind of QAnon*. El Segundo: Redwood Press, 2021.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism Without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018.
- Borowitz, Andy. *Profiles in Ignorance: How America's Politicians Got Dumb and Dumber*. New York: Avid Reader Press, 2022.
- Butler, Anthea. *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.
- Campbell, Andy. *We are Proud Boys: How Right-Wing Street Gangs Ushered in a New Era of American Extremism*. New York: Hachette Books, 2022.
- Churchwell, Sarah. *Behold America: A History of America First and the American Dream*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.
- Cohen, Donald and Mika Elian. *The Privatization of Everything: How the Plunder of Public Goods Transformed America and How We Can Fight Back*. New York: The New Press, 2021.
- Collins, Chuck. *The Wealth Hoarders: How Billionaires Pay Millions to Hide Trillions*. New York: Polity Press, 2021.
- Corn, David. *American Psychosis: A Historical Investigation of How the Republican Party Went Crazy*. New York: Hachette Book Group, 2022.
- Coyne, Christopher and Abigail Hall. *Tyranny Comes Home: The Domestic Fate of U.S. Militarism*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2018.
- Darby, Seyward. *Sisters in Hate: American Women and White Extremism*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2020.
- Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 2014.
- Devine, Tim. *Days of Trump: The Definitive Chronology of the 45th President of the United States*. Los Angeles: The Devine Company, LLC, 2021.
- DiAngelo, Robin. *White Fragility: Why is it So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism?* Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.
- DiMaggio, Anthony. *Rising Fascism in America: It Can Happen Here*. New York: Routledge Press, 2022.
- Eco, Umberto. *How To Spot A Fascist*. New York: Random House, 2011.
- Evans, Brad and Henry Giroux. *Disposable Futures: The Seduction of Violence in the Age of Spectacle*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2015.
- Finkelstein, Federico. *A Brief History of Fascist Lies*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.
- Finkelstein, Federico. *From Fascism to Populism in History*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.
- Fisher, Max. *The Chaos Machine: The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired Our Minds and Our World*. New York: Little Brown and Co., 2022.
- Foer, Franklin. *World Without Mind: The Existential Threat of Big Tech*. New York: Penguin Press, 2017.
- Fording, Richard and Sanford Schram. *Hard White: The Mainstreaming of Racism in American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

- Fried, Amy and Douglas Harris. *At War With Government: How Conservatives Weaponized Distrust from Goldwater to Trump*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021.
- Fromm, Erich. *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1973.
- Fromm, Erich. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1969.
- Furedi, Frank. *How Fear Works: Culture of Fear in the 21st Century*. New York: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019.
- Gautney, Heather. *The New Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023.
- Gaylin, Willard. *Hatred: The Psychological Descent into Violence*. New York: Perseus Books, 2003.
- Goodwin, Michele. *Policing the Womb: Invisible Women and the Criminalization of Motherhood*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Gorski, Philip and Samuel Perry. *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Greenblatt, Jonathan. *It Could Happen Here*. New York: Mariner Books, 2022.
- Guerrero, Jean. *Hate Monger: Stephen Miller, Donald Trump and the White Nationalist Agenda*. New York: Harper Collins, 2020.
- Haag, Pamela. *The Gunning of America: Business and the Making of American Gun Culture*. New York: Basic Books, 2016.
- Hacker, Jacob. *The Great Risk Shift: The New Economic Insecurity and the Decline of the American Dream*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Hacker, Jacob and Paul Pierson. *Winner Take All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010.
- Hacker, Jacob and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made American Prosper*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016.
- Hacker, Jacob and Paul Pierson. *Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2020.
- Hassan, Steven. *The Cult of Trump*. New York: Free Press, 2019.
- Hedges, Chris. *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*. New York: Free Press, 2006.
- Hemmer, Nicole. *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
- Hinton, Alexandra. *It Can Happen Here: White Power and the Rising Threat of Genocide in the U.S.* New York: New York University Press, 2021.
- Hobfoll, Steven. *Tribalism: The Evolutionary Origins of Fear Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2018.
- Hofstadter, Richard. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Horesh, Theo. *The Fascism This Time: And the Global Future of Democracy*. Boulder: Cosmopolis Press, 2020.

- HoSang, Daniel and Lowndes, Joseph. *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right Wing Politics of Precarity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.
- Huntington, John. *Far-Right Vanguard: The Radical Roots of Modern Conservatism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021.
- Johnston, David Cay. *The Big Cheat: How Donald Trump Fleeced America and Enriched Himself and His Family*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2021.
- Jones, Robert P. *White Too long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020.
- Jones, Robert P. *The End of White Christian America*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016.
- Kalmoe, Nathan and Lillian Mason. *Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, its Causes and the Consequences for Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022.
- Kamali, Sara. *Homegrown Hate: Why White Nationalists and Militant Islamists are Waging War Against the United States*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2022.
- Kendi, Ibram X. *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. New York: Bold Type Books, 2016.
- Kimmel, Michael. *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. New York: Bold Type Books, 2017.
- Kivel, Paul. *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2017.
- Klaas, Brian. *The Despot's Apprentice: Donald Trump's Attack on Democracy*. New York: Hot Books, 2017.
- Kovel, Joel. *White Racism: A Psychohistory*. London: Free Association Books, 1988.
- Lee, Erika. *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States*. New York: Hachette Book Group, 2019.
- Leibovich, Mark. *Thank You for Your Servitude: Donald Trump's Washington and the Price of Submission*. New York: Penguin Books, 2022.
- Leiman, Melvin. *The Political Economy of Racism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010.
- Leong, Nancy. *Identity Capitalists: The Powerful Insiders Who Exploit Diversity to Maintain Inequality*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2021.
- Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Broadway Books, 2018.
- Lonergan, Eric and Mark Blyth. *Angrynomics*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing, 2020.
- MacWilliams, Matthew. *On Fascism: 12 Lessons from American History*. New York: St. Martin's Publishing Group, 2020.
- Marcus, Kenneth. *The Definition of Anti-Semitism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- May, Elaine. *Fortress America: How We Embraced Fear and Abandoned Democracy*. New York: Basic Books, 2020.
- Mayer, Jane. *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*. New York: Doubleday, 2016.

- McGirr, Lisa. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- McNamee, Roger. *Zucked: Waking Up to the Facebook Catastrophe*. New York: Penguin Books, 2020.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Liberation of the Jew*. New York: Orion Press, 1966.
- Memmi, Albert. *Racism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Memmi, Albert. *Portrait of the Jew*. New York: Viking Press, 1962.
- Memmi, Albert. *Dominated Man*. New York: Orion Press, 1968.
- Mercieca, Jennifer. *Demagogue for President: The Rhetorical Genius of Donald Trump*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2020.
- Milbank, Dana. *The Destructionists: The Twenty-five Year Crack Up of the Republican Party*. New York: Doubleday Books, 2022.
- Mogelson, Luke. *The Storm is Here: An American Crucible*. New York: Penguin Books, 2022.
- Mondon, Aurelian and Aaron Winter. *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream*. New York: Verso Press, 2020.
- Mudde, Cas. *The Far Right Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019.
- Murphy, Chris. *The Violence Inside Us: A Brief History of an Ongoing American Tragedy*. New York: Random House, 2020.
- Nagle, Angela. *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt Right*. Washington: Zerobooks, 2017.
- Nance, Malcolm. *They Want to Kill Americans: The Military, Terrorists and Deranged Ideology of the Trump Administration*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2022.
- Nasser, Alan. *Overripe Economy: American Capitalism and the Crisis of Democracy*. London: Pluto Books, 2018.
- Neiwart, David. *Alt America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*. New York: Verso Press, 2018.
- Nichols, John. *Coronavirus Criminals and Pandemic Profiteers: Accountability for Those Who Caused the Crisis*. New York: Verso Press, 2022.
- Nichols, Tom. *Our Own Worst Enemy: The Assault from Within on Modern Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at our Political Crisis*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018.
- Ortiz-Dunbar, Roxanne. *Loaded: A Disarming History of the Second Amendment*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2018.
- Ortiz-Dunbar, Roxanne. *Not a Nation of Immigrants: Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and a History of Erasure and Exclusion*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2021.
- Osnos, Evan. *Wildland: The Making of America's Fury*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2021.
- Patterson, Thomas. *How America Lost Its Mind: The Assault on Reason That's Crippling Our Democracy*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019.
- Perry, Marvin and Frederick Schweitzer. *Anti-Semitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Posner, Eric. *The Demagogue's Playbook: The Battle for American Democracy from the Founders to Trump*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2020.

- Posner, Sarah. *Unholy: How White Christian Nationalists Powered the Trump Presidency and the Devastating Legacy They Left Behind*. New York: Random House: 2021.
- Prager, Dennis and Joseph Telushkin. *Why the Jews: The Reason for Anti-Semitism, The Most Accurate Predictor of Human Evil*. New York: Touchstone Press, 2016.
- Reich, Wilhelm. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1970.
- Robins, Robert and Jerrod Post. *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Roediger, David. *How Race Survived U.S. History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon*. New York: Verso Press, 2010.
- Roelofs, Joan. *The Trillion Dollar Silencer: Why There is So Little Anti-War Protest in the United States*. New York: Clarity Press, 2022.
- Rosenthal, Lawrence. *Empire of Resentment: Populism's Toxic Embrace of Nationalism*. New York: New Press, 2020.
- Rothschild, Mike. *The Storm is Upon Us: How QAnon Became a Movement, Cult and Conspiracy Theory of Everything*. Brooklyn: Melville House Printing, 2021.
- Rucker, Philip and Carol Leoning. *A Very Stable Genius: Donald J. Trump's Testing of America*. New York: Penguin Press, 2020.
- Sandel, Michael. *The Tyranny of Merit: Can We Find the Common Good?* New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2021.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew*. New York: Schocken Books, 1948.
- Serwer, Adam. *The Cruelty is the Point: The Past, Present and Future of Trump's America*. New York: One World Press, 2021.
- Smith, David. *Making Monsters: The Uncanny Power of Dehumanization*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021.
- Stanley, Jason. *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*. New York: Random House, 2018.
- Stein, Alexandra. *Proud Boys and the White Ethnostate: How the Alt Right is Warping the American Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2019.
- Stevens, Stuart. *It Was All A Lie: How the Republican Party Became Donald Trump*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020.
- Stovall, Tyler. *White Freedom: The Racial History of an Idea*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Street, Paul. *This Happened Here: Amerikaners, Neoliberals and the Trumping of America*. New York: Routledge Press, 2022.
- Sunnstein, Cass. *Can It Happen Here: Authoritarianism in America*. New York: William Morrow, 2018.
- Táiwò, Olúfẹ̀mì O. *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took over Identity Politics (and Everything Else)*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2022.
- Tannehill, Brynn. *American Fascism: How the GOP is Subverting Democracy*. New York: Transgress Press, 2021.
- Tenold, Vegas. *Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America*. New York: Nation Books, 2018.

- Vaidhyanathan, Siva. *Anti-Social Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- West, Cornell. *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017.
- Williams, Kristian. *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America*. Oakland: AK Press, 2015.
- Wilson, Rick. *Everything Trump Touches Dies: A Republican Strategist Gets Real About the Worst President Ever*. New York: Free Press, 2018.
- Winters, Jeffrey. *Oligarchy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Wistrich, Robert. *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1991.
- Wistrich, Robert. *Demonizing the Other: Anti-Semitism, Racism and Xenophobia*. New York: Routledge Press, 1999.
- Wu, Tim. *The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads*. New York: Vintage Books, 2016.
- Yancy, George. *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly About Racism in the United States*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018.
- Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Right for a Human Future and the New Frontier of Power*. New York: Hachette Books, 2019.

Index

- Abbott, Greg, 149
abortion, 3, 35, 61–62, 111–12, 118, 132–41
ACA (Affordable Care Act), 5, 19–20, 34, 60, 68, 97–98, 150
Adams, Ryan, 119
Adelson, Sheldon, 112
ADL (Anti-Defamation League), 38, 107, 111, 131
Affordable Care Act (ACA), 5, 19–20, 34, 60, 68, 97–98, 150
aggressor, identification with, 36, 59, 95
algorithms, social media, 100–101
“Allegorical Idols,” 15
Allende, Salvador, 76
Alt-America, 71
Alt America (Neiwert), 71
Amazon, 95, 112
America First, 6, 34, 115, 116
American Fascist (Hedges), 114
The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (Fromm), 28–29
anger, 28–29, 34, 47, 54
Anti-Defamation League (ADL), 38, 107, 111, 131
Antifa, 14, 48, 56, 121
anti-intellectualism, 39, 40, 150
anti-Semitism, 14, 35, 49, 101–2, 109, 136; hate and, 24, 29, 39, 54, 57–60; Hitler and, 50, 135; mass shootings and, 37, 103, 107, 111, 130–31, 143; Trump, Donald, with, 3, 15
The Apprentice (TV show), 45, 51
Aral, Sinan, 99
Arbenz, Jacobo, 76
Army Natick Soldier Systems Center, US, 73–74
Arpaio, Joe, 19, 35–36, 132
artificial intelligence (AI), 100
Aryan Nation, 138
Aryan Women’s League (AWL), 117
asylum seekers, 40, 41, 70
Atlas, Scott, 44
Atwood, Margaret, 138
authoritarianism, 19, 29–30, 40, 79, 129
“Authority Prejudice,” 15
AWL (Aryan Women’s League), 117
Bannon, Steve, 27, 34, 39, 66, 104, 143
Barr, William, 48
the base (Trump supporters), 16, 33–35, 39, 43, 59–60, 92; annual income, 4, 52–53, 130; MAGA and, 5, 17, 27, 30, 45, 52, 55, 57, 72, 113–14, 132, 138, 148; as middle class, 1, 27, 52, 130, 141; at Nazi-style rallies, 14, 143; Trumpism and, 4–5, 9, 29, 50–51, 54, 65–67, 80, 93, 99, 115,

- 129–30, 135, 139, 141–45, 148, 150;
as upper class, 130, 141
- “Battle in Seattle,” 91
- Bauer, Gary, 112
- Beck, Aaron T., 25
- “Begging the Question,” 15
- The Bell Curve* (Murray), 105
- Benjamin, Walter, 20–21
- Bentham, Jeremy, 12–15, 45
- Biden, Joe, 26, 45, 145–46
- billionaire class, 20, 66, 96, 111–12,
141; fascism and, 146–50; NFL
owners marketing violence, 84–87;
white supremacists funded by, 103–7
- Billionaires and Stealth Politics* (Page,
Wright and Lacombe), 105, 150
- biopower, 133–38
- birtherism, 3, 38, 55, 118
- birth rates, 135–38
- Black Lives Matter movement, 5, 44,
56, 91, 149; opposition to, 14, 72,
120–21, 144; as threat, 107, 113
- Black Panthers, 72, 90
- Bloom, Mia, 110
- Bloomberg, Michael, 105
- bodies, 25–26, 60–62, 84–85, 131,
133–35, 137–41
- Boebert, Lauren, 144
- Bolton, John, 49
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, 57
- Boogaloo, 116, 119
- borders, 3, 5–6, 35, 38, 40–41, 70, 114
- Bowers, Robert, 103, 143
- Boyd, Rekia, 57
- brain, 84, 99–100
- Brandeis, Louis, 148
- Breitbart News, 40, 104
- Brimelow, Peter, 102
- Britt, Laurence W., 3
- Brown, Michael, 91
- Buchanan, Pat, 103
- Buffett, Warren, 105, 106, 147
- Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of
German Girls), 139
- Bush, George W., 19
- capital, 16, 28, 85–86, 94
- Capital Gazette shooting, 107–8
- capitalism, 17–18, 28–29, 56–57,
69–70, 94, 104
- Carlin, George, 87
- Catholics, 53, 112, 136
- Central Park Five case, 3
- Charlottesville Unite the Right rally, 15,
19, 35, 37, 103, 116, 131, 143
- China, 37, 42, 49, 53, 75–76, 145–46
- Christians, 1–2, 36, 111–15, 118–19,
136, 141, 148
- CIA, 73, 76, 131
- Citizens United, 106, 147
- Civil Rights Act (1964), 112
- class, 4, 51, 56, 65, 69. *See also* elite
class; middle class; upper class
- Clendaniel, Sarah Beth, 145
- climate change, 6, 11, 20, 67
- Clinton, Hillary, 26, 37, 45, 49, 52–53,
59, 108–9
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi, 145
- coded messages, 45–46
- Cohen, Cathy, 145
- Cohn, Gary, 66
- COINTELPRO, 90
- “color-blind racism,” 57
- Comey, James, 26
- “Concept of Vague Generalities,” 15
- Cone, James, 145
- Coney Barrett, Amy, 87, 138
- conspiracy theories, 46, 71, 94, 107–11,
131, 136, 141, 144
- Constitution, US, 82, 91, 93, 121, 143
- Conway, George, 48
- Coors Brewing, 104, 106
- corporations, 20, 57, 67, 69, 77, 84–85,
97–98, 102, 112, 129; January 6,
2021, supported by, 88; protections
for, 4, 66, 141, 150; taxes and,
36, 54, 93–94, 99, 130; white
supremacists funded by, 103–7. *See
also* billionaire class
- corporatism, 20, 66–68, 87, 106, 131–32
- Costa, Robert, 37

- Cost of War Project, 74
 Cotton, Tom, 144
 Coulter, Ann, 103
 Council for National Policy, 104
 coups: Hitler with failed, 141–42, 144;
 January 6, 2021, as failed, 1, 53, 88,
 131, 142, 144, 150; US-supported,
 73, 76
 COVID-19, 14–15, 42–44, 98, 121
 Crenshaw, Kimberlé, 145
 crime, 4, 34, 67, 69, 75, 79, 131
 criminalization, 3, 41, 61–62, 133, 136,
 139–40
 Crisp, Samuel, 119
The Cruelty is the Point (Server), 53
 Cruz, Nicholas, 79
 Cruz, Ted, 45
 Cuba, 73, 75, 76
 cults, 27, 108–9, 130, 142
 Cummings, Elijah, 47
 Curiel, Gonzalo, 19
 CVS, 112, 140
- DACA (deferred action for childhood
 arrivals), 5, 36, 53
 DAF (donor-advised fund), 103–4
 Darby, Seyward, 117
 Dare, Virginia, 103
 dark money, 87, 95, 103, 105, 106
Dark Money (Mayer), 106
 Darré, Richard Walther, 139
 Davis, Angela, 145
 DeAnna, Kevin, 103
 Debord, Guy, 30
 deception, ideology as form of,
 12–13, 14
 deep state, 2, 17, 29, 30, 65, 70, 96–97,
 129, 141; conspiracy theories and,
 46, 108; with public health policy,
 105–6
 deferred action for childhood arrivals
 (DACA), 5, 36, 53
 dehumanization, 16–17, 24, 30, 37,
 40–41, 47, 60, 100
 demagoguery, 26–27, 45–46
 democracy, 3, 103–4, 106–7; anti-
 democratic actions, 6, 21, 68–69,
 79, 85, 130, 143, 146–49; fascism
 eroding, 129, 131–32, 146–50
 Democratic Party, 37, 59, 108, 121, 149
 Department of Justice, US, 67, 78, 131,
 141, 147
 DeSantis, Ron, 88, 144
 destructive politics, 3, 9, 14–18, 23, 29,
 40, 68, 98, 138; with exclusionary
 policies, 34–35; social harm with,
 21, 66, 89, 97, 136; violence and,
 24–28, 30–31
 Destutt de Tracy, Antoine, 12
 DeVos, Betsy, 20, 66, 68–69, 103
 DiAngelo, Robin, 56
Dictatorship (Schmitt), 19
 DiMaggio, Anthony, 4, 5
Discipline and Punish (Foucault), 133
Disposable Futures (Evans and
 Giroux), 30
 Dobbs ruling, 60, 137, 138, 139
 Dobson, James, 112
 “domestic gag rule,” abortion, 61
 Dominion, 4
 donor-advised fund (DAF), 103–4
 Donors Trust, 87, 103–4
 “draining the swamp,” 65, 70
 drugs, health care, 68, 140–41
 DuBose, Samuel, 57
 Due Process Clause, 20
 Duke, David, 55
 Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne, 83
 Durbin, Dick, 36
 dysfunction, 5, 35, 44, 66
 dystopia, 28, 30, 38, 71, 108, 110,
 114, 118
- Eco, Umberto, 142
 economy, 68, 73–75
 ego, fragile, 39, 47
 Eisenhower, Dwight D., 73
 “Election Con 2016” (DiMaggio), 4
 elections: billionaires funding, 147, 150;
 labor unions, 68; 2016, 2, 4, 31, 34,

- 41, 50, 130; 2020, 42, 44, 83, 85, 88, 130, 131, 142, 144
- elite class, 3, 17–18, 29, 36, 46;
billionaires, 20, 66, 84–87, 96, 103–7, 111–12, 141, 146–50; ideology of, 12–13
- emotions, 5, 24, 27, 39, 46, 86–87, 110. *See also* fear; rage
- The End of Myth* (Grandin), 5
- enemies, friends and, 19, 20, 129
- environment, 6, 20, 67, 75
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 61
- Equal Protection Clause, 20
- Escape from Freedom* (Fromm), 30, 108
- ethnostate, white, 71–72, 117–18
- eugenics, 105, 115, 134–35
- evangelicals, 3–4, 27, 34–35, 88, 112–13, 140, 144
- Evans, Brad, 30
- extremism, 5, 102–7, 111–18, 130, 136, 148, 150
- Facebook, 99–102, 104, 109
- fake news, 40, 46, 48, 101
- fallacies, politics, 12–15, 45
- “False Consolation,” 15
- false realities, 48, 52, 71, 72, 110
- Falwell, Jerry, 112
- families, 3, 40, 41, 70, 79, 111–12, 143
- fascism, 2–5, 18–20, 27, 29, 50, 79, 86, 103, 136; *American Fascist*, 114; billionaire class and, 146–50; with bodies of women, 133–35, 137–41; democracy eroded by, 129, 131–32, 146–50; gestures, 131, 143; *How to Spot a Fascist*, 142; *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, 108, 132; with minority rule, 1, 21, 87, 93, 130, 144, 148, 150; *On Fascism*, 143; Trumpism and, 129–30, 135, 139, 141–42, 144–45, 148, 150; in US House of Representatives, 142, 144, 149
- “Fascism Anyone?” (Britt), 3
- Fauci, Anthony, 43, 105
- FBI, 92, 121, 131
- fear, 15, 17, 27, 46, 60, 77, 81, 93; ignorance and, 14, 109; xenophobia, 30, 40–42, 65, 71, 114, 141
- Federalist Society, 61, 87, 144
- Feed (Newsfeed), 101
- fetishism of the commodity, 82
- Fidelity Charitable, 104
- Fields, Barbara, 145
- firings, government workers, 67, 141
- Fisher, Robert, 140
- The Flag and the Cross* (Gorski and Perry, S.), 114
- Floyd, George, 4, 37, 48, 91, 143
- Flynn, Michael, 143
- Focus on the Family, 111–12
- force, use of, 20, 25, 38, 76, 81, 89, 91; militarism and, 74, 78, 79; Trumpism with, 80, 93
- fortuna, politics and, 4, 7
- Foucault, Michel, 131, 133, 138
- Fox News, 3, 4, 40, 49
- freedom, escape from, 30, 108, 110
- Freedom Partners Chambers of Commerce, 111
- Freire, Paolo, 16, 57
- Freud, Sigmund, 17, 95
- friends, enemies and, 19, 20, 129
- Friess, Foster, 148
- Fromm, Erich, 2, 28–29, 30, 108, 110
- funding: of elections by billionaires, 147, 150; of extremism, 103–7, 111–12, 148
- Garner, Eric, 57
- Gates, Bill, 105, 106
- Gates, Darryl, 91
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., 145
- gender, 61, 116, 137, 140, 147
- Gendron, Payton S., 138
- Geneva Convention, 76, 90
- genocide, 25, 48, 71, 72, 103, 135, 146
- Germany, 5, 18, 50, 74–75, 133–35, 139, 142

- gerrymandering, 146–47, 149–50
- Ghost Skins, 117, 118
- Giovanni, Nikki, 145
- Giroux, Henry, 30
- Glick, Jacob, 120–21
- Goffman, Erving, 78
- Goodwin, Michele, 139–40
- Google, 95, 112
- Gorski, Philip S., 114
- Gorsuch, Neil, 87
- Gosar, Paul, 144
- Goulart, João, 76
- government, 12, 27, 42, 80, 104, 106, 118; “draining the swamp,” 65, 70; with workers fired, 67, 141
- Grandin, Greg, 5
- Gray, Freddie, 57
- Greene, Marjorie Taylor, 144
- Grumbach, Jacob, 148–49
- Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, 42, 75, 76
- guns, 1, 4, 81–83, 92–93, 119, 142, 149–50. *See also* shootings
- Gun Violence Archive (GVA), 83
- Handbook of Political Fallacies* (Bentham), 12
- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 89
- hate, 16, 36, 39, 45, 54, 57, 59–60, 107; destructive politics and, 23–24, 27–29, 31; groups, 103–5, 117; MAGA and, 5, 132; marketing of, 47, 82; *The Psychopolitics of Hatred*, 56; rhetoric, 31, 37, 40, 65, 72, 98–99; *Sisters in Hate*, 117; social media and, 24, 99–101, 115, 148; violence and, 1–3, 23–24, 31, 52, 58, 69–71, 92, 96, 98–99, 102, 115, 129–32, 141–42, 150
- Hatewatch, 103
- Hatten, Kristen, 138
- Hawley, Josh, 87, 144
- health care, 4, 68, 97–98, 105–6, 137, 140–41, 149–50. *See also* Affordable Care Act
- Hedges, Chris, 114
- Heyer, Heather, 48, 119
- “Hidden in Plain Sight” (Brennan Center for Justice), 92
- Himmler, Heinrich, 139
- Hitler, Adolf, 10, 30, 45, 80, 141–42; Trump, Donald, and, 3, 50–51, 143, 144; women and, 133, 135, 139
- Hofstadter, Richard, 53, 82
- hooks, bell, 145
- House of Representatives, US, 142, 144, 149
- housing, 34, 96, 97
- How Democracies Die* (Levitsky and Ziblatt), 131
- How to Spot a Fascist* (Eco), 142
- hype machine, 99
- Identity Capitalists* (Leong), 95
- ideology, 12–14, 16, 65, 110
- ignorance, fear and, 14, 109
- immigrants, 5, 31, 36, 38, 42; anti-immigrant initiatives, 3, 102–3, 105, 132, 143; as targets, 1, 24, 26, 34, 39–41, 46, 52–53, 70, 77, 93, 96
- immigration, 14, 19, 35–37, 40, 42, 105
- “Imputation of Bad Design,” 14
- “Imputation of Suspicious Connections,” 14
- indentured servitude, corporations and, 69
- Informed Comment* (weblog), 21n1
- InfoWars, 48, 104
- Instagram, 101–2, 109
- Institute for Policy Studies, 147
- Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 137
- intelligence, 14, 49–50, 77, 99, 108, 131
- Israeli American Council, 59
- January 6 insurrection (2021), 1, 53–54, 88, 131, 142–44, 148, 150
- Jews: stereotyping of, 26; as targets, 1, 16–17, 24, 28–29, 31, 34, 40, 46,

- 52–53, 57–58, 70, 77, 93. *See also* anti-Semitism
- Johnson, Woody, 85
- Jones, Alex, 101–2
- Jones, Jerry, 85
- Jones, Robert P., 114
- Junior Reserve Office Training Corps (JROTC), 79
- Kaepernick, Colin, 49
- Kaiser Family Foundation study (2022), 79
- Kamali, Sara, 71–72
- Kavanaugh, Brett, 87
- Kehoe, Thomas David, 50
- Kelly, John, 49, 50
- Kelly, Megyn, 47
- Kessler, Jason, 103
- Khan, Shahid, 85
- Kimmel, Michael, 30
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., 112
- King, Steven, 138
- Kirkpatrick, James, 103
- KKK (Ku Klux Klan), 35, 56, 89, 116–17, 136
- Koch, Charles, 105, 106, 111–12, 150
- Koch, David, 106, 111–12, 150
- Koch, Fred, 106
- Koch empire, 66, 96, 103
- Kopp, James Charles, 136
- Kovel, Joel, 55
- Kraft, Robert, 85
- Kroenke, Stan, 85
- Ku Klux Klan (KKK), 35, 56, 89, 116–17, 136
- Kushner, Jared, 49
- labor, 5, 16, 65, 85, 97–98, 136; unions, 20, 56–57, 68, 95, 141, 150; wages, 4, 34, 52–53, 67–68, 94–95, 130, 137, 147
- Laboratories Against Democracy, 148
- Lacombe, Matthew J., 105, 150
- Lafayette Square protest, 48, 143
- Lawfare, 120–21
- League of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Mädel), 139
- Lebensborn program (1935), 139
- Lee, Robert E., 35
- Leo, Leonard, 87
- Leong, Nancy, 95
- Levitsky, Steven, 131
- LGBTQ+ people, 3, 24, 31, 61, 87, 144–45; opposition to, 111–12, 134, 142; as targets, 1, 16–17, 26–28, 34, 40, 46, 52–53, 83, 93, 113
- libertarianism, 87, 106, 107, 111, 118–19
- Lipmann, Walter, 25
- Loaded* (Dunbar-Ortiz), 83
- losers, 17, 46, 48, 66
- Lumumba, Patrice, 76
- Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, 104, 105
- MacDonald, Kevin, 103
- Machiavelli, 4, 6
- MacWilliams, Matthew C., 143
- MAD (mutually assured destruction), 73
- Make America Great Again (MAGA): with hate, 5, 132; mobilizing messages to, 17, 27, 45, 52, 55, 57, 113, 132; Musk and, 148; with violence, 30, 45, 132; white nationalists and, 72, 114, 138. *See also* the base
- Malkin, Michelle, 103
- Manafort, Paul, 143
- Mandela, Nelson, 10
- Mapping Police Violence, 79
- Marable, Manning, 145
- marketing: guns, 81, 93, 122; hate, 47, 82; of Trump, Donald, 39, 45, 51; violence, 84–87, 120
- Marr, Wilhelm, 57
- marriage, 111–13, 115, 133–34, 140, 142
- Marx, Karl, 82
- The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (Reich), 108, 132

- The Matrix* (film), 110, 129
Maximum Golf magazine, 60
 Mayer, Jane, 106
 McGahn, Don, 66
 McInnes, Gavin, 119–20
 McKenna, Natasha, 57
 McMahan, Linda, 66
 McMaster, H.R., 49
 McVeigh, Timothy, 80
 media, 3–4, 40, 46, 48–49, 88, 103–4,
 132; fascism and institutional control
 over, 131, 148; private ownership of,
 2, 99, 102. *See also* social media
Meet the Press (TV show), 47
 Melman, Seymour, 73
 Memmi, Albert, 58, 60
 men. *See* white men
 Menard, John, Jr., 105
 Mercer family, 103, 104, 112
 meritocracy, 17, 40
 #Metoo movement, 5
 Metzger, Kathleen, 117
 Metzger, Tom, 117, 136
 middle class, 4, 54, 57, 58, 68, 96, 102;
 the base as, 1, 27, 52, 130, 141;
 decline of, 2, 27–30, 52–53, 94–95,
 97, 129; with fascism, 129; violence
 and, 2, 31, 66, 70, 98, 132
 Middle East, 35, 49, 74, 75, 76, 77, 146
 militarism, 2, 74, 78–79, 145–46
 militarization, 2, 73, 78–79, 89–91,
 93–94, 118
 military, US, 20, 42, 73–79, 90, 146
 militias, 35, 43, 53, 80, 118–19, 142
 Miller, George, 59
 Miller, Mary, 138
 Miller, Stephen, 26, 34, 38, 40–42
 minorities. *See* people of color
 minority rule, fascism with, 1, 21, 87,
 93, 130, 144, 148, 150
 misogyny, 3, 4, 118, 133, 148
 Mnuchin, Steven, 20, 49, 66
 mobility, 17, 26, 28–29
 Moore, Roy, 36, 117
 Moskalenko, Sophia, 110
 Mossadegh, Mohammad, 76
 Motadel, David, 1
 Murray, Charles, 105
 Musk, Elon, 105–6, 148
 Muslims: anti-Muslims initiatives, 3, 20,
 35, 37, 105, 114, 132; as target, 19,
 31, 37, 39, 40, 105, 108, 113, 118
 Mussolini, Benito, 38, 133
 mutually assured destruction (MAD), 73
My New Order (Hitler), 50
 “The Myth of Middle-Class Liberalism”
 (Motadel), 1
 Nader, Ralph, 10
 narcissism, 28–30, 39, 48–50
 “National Day of Patriotic
 Devotion,” 34
 nationalism, 3, 19, 148; fascist, 86–87,
 103; white, 30, 42, 45–47, 71–72,
 102–5, 111–19, 130, 138, 141
 Nazis, 14, 65, 88, 102, 146; neo-Nazis,
 19, 24, 35, 56, 103, 105, 115, 117,
 119, 138; Trumpism and, 50, 115,
 139, 142–44; women and, 133–35
 Neiwert, David, 71
 neo-fascism, 19, 20
 neo-Nazis, 24, 56, 117, 138; students
 indoctrinated by, 119; support for,
 19, 35, 103, 105, 115
 New Right, 80, 136
 Newsfeed (Feed), 101
The New York Times (newspaper), 1, 6,
 68, 83, 130
New York Magazine, 105
 NFL, 2, 36, 84–87
 9/11 attacks, 10, 20
 Nixon, Richard, 19
 nonprofits, 106
 nonviolence, 12, 27–28, 48–49, 56–58,
 72, 74, 79
 NSC-68, 73
 Nunn, Sam, 49

 Oath Keepers, 24, 29, 53, 94, 116, 118,
 120–21

- Obama, Barack, 19, 35, 54, 57, 76, 113;
 as target, 37, 38, 55, 56, 108, 118;
 white supremacists with, 115, 118
- obedience, 10, 12, 51
- Occupy Wall Street protests (2011), 91
- O'Donnell, Rosie, 60
- oligarchs, 85–87
- Omalu, Bennett, 84
- One Person, One Vote* (Seabrook), 149
- On Fascism* (MacWilliams), 143
- oppression, 15–17, 58–60, 88, 132, 145
- Orwell, George, 51, 145
- Page, Benjamin, 105, 150
- Painter, Nell Irvin, 145
- paranoia, 23, 25, 53, 56, 93, 105,
 118, 121
- pardons, 19, 35, 132, 149
- Parler, 109
- Pastels and Pedophiles* (Bloom and
 Moskalenko), 110
- pathology, of Trump, Donald, 14,
 26–27, 42–43
- Patriot Front, 138
- patriotism, 30, 83, 120
- Paxton, Robert, 2
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire), 16
- people of color, 17, 31, 39, 46, 50, 57,
 62, 72, 132; with COVID-19, 44; as
 targets, 1, 16, 24, 26–28, 34–37, 40,
 52–53, 65, 70, 77, 93, 98, 141, 143
- Perkins, Tony, 112
- Permanent War Economy* (Melman), 73
- Perry, Rick, 20, 66
- Perry, Samuel, 114
- Pew Research Center, 82, 147
- Pizzagate, 109, 111
- Plain View Project, 92
- Planned Parenthood, 35
- Podesta, John, 108, 109
- police, 3, 5, 36, 48, 57, 76, 92;
 militarization of, 2, 89–91, 93; at
 schools, 78–79
- Policing the Womb* (Goodwin), 139–40
- political paranoia, 56, 118, 121
- political psychology, 14, 108
- Political Theology* (Schmitt), 18
- politics, 4, 7, 9–11, 18, 56, 108; anti-
 democratic, 6, 21, 68, 146–47;
 billionaires influencing, 105, 147,
 150; fallacies, 12–15, 45. *See also*
 destructive politics
- “Politics Above Law” (Kolin), 21n1
- Pompeo, Mike, 66
- “Popular Corruption,” 15
- populism, 4, 54, 65, 67, 145
- Post, Jerrod, 56
- Price, Tom, 68
- Priebus, Reince, 49
- prisons, 69, 70, 132, 133, 134, 135
- privatization, 20, 68–70
- “Procrastination Argument,” 15
- profits, 68–70, 84–85, 87
- Project Schoolyard, neo-Nazis and, 119
- Project Veritas, 104
- propaganda, 2, 39, 45, 101, 104, 131–
 32, 143
- Protestants, 36, 53, 112–13, 136
- Proud Boys: with January 6 attempted
 coup, 53, 142; political paranoia
 and, 56; violence and, 24, 29, 92, 94,
 117–21; women and, 116
- Pruitt, Scott, 20, 66
- psychology, 14, 30, 108–9, 132
- The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (Robins
 and Post), 56
- Public Religion Research Institute
 American Values Survey (2020), 36
- Public Research Institute, 113
- QAnon, 1, 56, 58–59, 121, 129;
 conspiracy theories, 94, 108–11, 144;
 support for, 131, 142
- Quinnipiac poll (2017), 36
- race war, 80, 134
- racial holy war (RAHOWA), 117
- racism, 14, 34, 44, 49, 57, 60, 69, 92;
 eugenics, 105, 115, 134–35; hate
 and, 24, 29, 37, 39, 54; sexism and,

- 5, 30; support for, 35, 36, 65, 103; Trump, Donald, and, 3, 84; violence and, 55–56, 115, 121, 129. *See also* anti-Semitism; white supremacists
- rage, 23, 24, 39, 55, 101; anger and, 28–29, 34, 47, 54; violence and, 31, 37, 45, 57, 66, 71
- RAHOWA (racial holy war), 117
- rallies, 29–30, 41, 46–47, 107, 138; Charlottesville Unite the Right, 15, 19, 35, 37, 103, 116, 131, 143; Nazi-style, 14, 143; violence at, 15, 38, 71, 93
- Rand, Ayn, 96–97
- Rauner, Bruce, 148
- reading, Trump, Donald, and, 18, 49–50, 51
- Rebellion in America* (DiMaggio), 5
- Reddit, 104, 140
- Reed, Ralph, 112
- refugees, 6, 35, 42
- Regnery, William II, 104
- Reich, Wilhelm, 2, 30, 108, 132–33
- Reich League for Child Rich Females, 133
- religion, 3, 36–37, 72, 114, 144
- religious exceptions, 60–61
- Republican Attorney General Association, 87
- Republican Party, 20, 68, 87, 112, 119, 149, 150; Nazis and, 50; with overturning 2020 elections, 88, 142, 144
- rhetoric, 45, 51; hateful, 31, 37, 40, 65, 72, 98–99; at rallies, 46–47
- Rhodes, Stewart, 118, 121
- Rice, Tamir, 57
- Ricketts, Todd, 20, 66
- Rittenhouse, Kyle, 119, 143
- Roberts, Dan, 119
- Robertson, Pat, 112
- Robins, Robert, 56
- Roe v. Wade, 3, 61, 118, 132, 136–38, 140
- roll-back policies, 6, 27, 34, 35, 41, 61, 66–68, 73
- Roof, Dylann, 70–71, 80, 114
- Roosevelt, Theodore, 137–38
- Rosenwald, Nina, 104
- Ross, Stephen, 85
- Ross, Wilbur, 66
- Rothschild, Mike, 108
- rule of law, undermined, 18–19, 50–51, 130
- Rumble, 105
- Russell, Brandon, 145
- Sandy Hook Elementary School, 48, 81, 83
- Scaife, Richard Mellon, 105, 106
- Scaife May, Cordelia, 105
- Schmitt, Carl, 18–20, 21n1
- School of the Americas, 76, 77
- schools, 6, 20, 48, 68–69, 76–79, 81, 83
- Schwartz, Tony, 49–50
- Schwarzman, Stephen, 66
- science, 67, 150
- Seabrook, Nick, 149
- Server, Adam, 53
- Session, Jeff, 38
- sexism, 3, 5, 14, 30, 116, 137; hate and, 24, 29, 39, 54
- sexuality, suppression of, 132–33
- Shillman, Robert, 104
- shootings: mass, 2, 31, 37, 48, 70–71, 78–83, 102–3, 107–8, 111, 114, 116, 122, 130–31, 138, 143; police, 36, 57, 89; at protests, 119; at schools, 48, 78, 79, 81, 83
- silent majority, 39, 141
- Sinyangwe, Sam, 79
- Sisters in Hate* (Darby), 117
- slaves, 16, 72, 89, 115, 117
- Slepian, Barnett, 136
- “smart idiot effect,” 51–52
- Smith, Adam, 147
- “The Snake,” 46
- SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), 72

- social Darwinism, 65, 97
social destruction, with fascism, 2
social division, 16, 70
social harm, 6, 17, 20–21, 66, 89, 97,
109; of militarized police, 90–91, 93;
profits and, 69–70; Trumpism and,
65, 67, 99; to women, 136, 138
socialism, NFL and corporate, 84–85
social media, 2, 3, 102, 104, 109, 111;
hate and, 24, 99–101, 115, 148;
Twitter, 39–40, 45, 47, 99–100,
105–6, 143, 148
Social Security, 97, 98, 146
social services, 12, 65, 97, 146
social welfare system, 18, 29, 46, 65,
74, 97, 149
The Society of the Spectacle
(Debord), 30
SoRelle, Kellye, 121
Soros, George, 108, 111
Southern Poverty Law Center, 103, 107
sovereign authority, 18–20
Spencer, Richard, 105
sports, 2, 36, 83–87, 122
Stanley, Jason, 88
State of the Union address (2020), 68
Stefanik, Elise, 87
stereotyping, 25–26, 37, 47, 58–60, 143
Stockholm International Peace Research
Institute, 75, 77
Stone, Roger, 120, 143
Stoneman Douglas High School, 78, 79
Stop Woke Act (2022), 88
The Storm Is Upon Us (Rothschild), 108
Student Nonviolent Coordinating
Committee (SNCC), 72
students, 35, 53, 69, 72, 78–79, 119, 145
Supreme Court, US, 3–4, 20, 60, 82,
115, 138, 141–42, 148; Citizens
United and, 106, 147; Federalist
Society members on, 61, 144
Susan B. Anthony list, 112
SWAT teams, 89, 91
“Sweeping Classifications,” 15
Táiwò, Olúfémí O., 96
Tanton, John, 105
Tarrío, Henry “Enrique,” 120, 121
taxes, 4, 65, 68, 86, 95, 98, 147;
corporations and, 36, 54, 93–94,
99, 130; credits for billionaire class,
20, 85
Taylor, Breonna, 89
Taylor, Jared, 103, 104
Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta, 145
Tea Party, 54–55, 70–71, 106, 113
Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
program, 41, 53
1033 Program (1990), 90, 91
Teneo Network, 87–88
Tepper, David, 85
terrorism, 26, 35, 76, 92, 102, 114, 121,
145, 146
Thiel, Peter, 104, 105
“Thirteen Similarities Between Donald
Trump and Adolf Hitler” (Kehoe), 50
Thomas, Clarence, 142
Thomas, Frederick, 119
Three Percenters (Threepers), 53, 92,
116, 118–19
Tillerson, Rex, 20
tips, wages and, 67–68, 94
Todd, Chuck, 47
“Toward a Critique of Violence”
(Benjamin), 21
TPS (Temporary Protected Status)
program, 41, 53
Tradwives, 117
travel bans, on Muslims, 5, 35, 132
Tree of Life synagogue massacre, 37,
103, 107, 111, 130–31, 143
Troops for Teachers program, 79
Trujillo, Rafael, 76
Truman Doctrine (1947), 73, 76
Trump (Trump, D., and Schwartz),
49–50
Trump, Donald. *See specific subjects*
Trump, Ivana, 50
Trumpism, 5, 9, 29, 51, 66, 80, 93;
fascism and, 129–30, 135, 139,

- 141–42, 144–45, 148, 150; Nazis and, 50, 115, 139, 142–44; populism and, 4, 54, 65, 67, 145; social harm and, 65, 67, 99. *See also* the base
- Turning Point USA, 87, 148
- Twitter, 39–40, 45, 47, 99–100, 105–6, 143, 148
- Uihlein family, 112, 148
- United Nations, 6, 20
- United States (US), 41, 50, 79; Constitution, 82, 91, 93, 121, 143; coups supported by, 73, 76; Department of Justice, 67, 78, 131, 141, 147; House of Representatives, 142, 144, 149. *See also* military, US; Supreme Court, US
- upper class, 1–2, 4, 16–17, 65–66, 95–96, 129–30, 141. *See also* elite class
- US. *See* United States
- Vance, J.D., 87
- VDare, 102–3
- Victims of Immigrant Crime Engagement, 41
- Videla, Jorge Rafael, 76
- Vietnam, 76, 80, 81
- Vine, David, 74, 75
- violence, 5, 11, 16, 36, 53, 88; anger and, 47, 54; destructive politics and, 24–28, 30–31; hate and, 1–3, 23–24, 31, 52, 58, 69–71, 92, 96, 98–99, 102, 115, 129–32, 141–42, 150; MAGA and, 30, 45, 132; marketing of, 84–87, 120; middle-class and, 2, 31, 66, 70, 98, 132; mobilization of, 80, 93, 132, 141, 143; nonviolence, 12, 27–28, 48–49, 56–58, 72, 74, 79; normalization of, 2, 31, 72–73, 77–78, 82–83, 118–19, 122; against protesters, 48, 49, 119; racism and, 55–56, 115, 121, 129; rage and, 31, 37, 45, 57, 66, 71; at rallies, 15, 38, 71, 93; sports and, 2, 83–87, 122; “Toward a Critique of Violence,” 21; use of force and, 20, 25, 38, 74, 76, 78–81, 89, 91, 93; white supremacists and, 17, 29, 38, 55, 71, 94, 107, 116–18, 129, 136
- wages, 34, 95, 137, 147; annual income of the base, 4, 52–53, 130; tips, 67–68, 94
- Walgreens, 112, 140
- Wall Street, 20, 29
- Walmart, 85, 95, 96, 112, 116, 131
- Walton, Rob, 85
- WAR (White Aryan Resistance), 117, 136
- warrior mentality, of police, 91
- Washington Post* (newspaper), 59, 130, 147
- water, 6, 67, 69
- wealth accumulation, 28, 66, 85–86, 95–96, 99, 130, 147
- The Wealth of Nations* (Smith), 147
- Weaver, Randy, 80
- Webster, Mike, 84
- Welch, Edgar Maddison, 109
- White Aryan Resistance (WAR), 117, 136
- white fragility, 56–57
- white men, 1, 2, 16, 17, 30, 115; as mass shooters, 81, 83; middle-class, 28–29, 52–54, 95, 130
- white power, 55, 71–72, 80, 145
- whites: birth rates, 135–38; genocide, 25, 48, 71, 72, 103, 135; nationalism, 30, 42, 45–47, 71–72, 102–5, 111–19, 130, 138, 141; racism, 37, 49, 55; as victims, 16–17, 28, 33–34, 36, 132, 135–36; women, 80, 116–17, 140
- white supremacists, 39, 42, 72, 80, 83, 88, 92–93, 102, 113–15, 138; funding for, 103–7; KKK, 35, 56, 89, 116–17, 136; as mass shooters, 79, 131; violence and, 17, 29, 38, 55,

- 71, 94, 107, 116–18, 129, 136; with white genocide, 25, 135
- White Too Long* (Jones, R.P.), 114
- “White Trump Voters are Richer Than They Appear,” 130
- Whitmer, Gretchen, 43
- winners, losers and, 17, 46, 66
- Winters, Jeffrey, 85
- Wistrich, Robert S., 57–58
- WKKK (Women of the Ku Klux Klan), 116
- Wolfers, Justin, 68
- women, 5, 31, 80, 112, 136; bodies of, 60–62, 133–35, 137–41; as targets, 1, 16–17, 24, 26–28, 34, 40, 46, 52–53, 60, 65, 70, 77, 93; white supremacists, 116–17
- Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK), 116
- Woodward, Bob, 37
- working class, 4, 65
- Wray, Chris, 121
- Wright, Jason C., 105, 150
- xenophobia, 30, 40–42, 65, 71, 114, 141
- zero tolerance policies, 38, 41, 79
- Ziblatt, Daniel, 131
- Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG), 118
- Zuckerberg, Mark, 100, 101

About the Author

Andrew Kolin is a professor of political science at Hilbert College. He earned his doctorate from the City University of New York Graduate Center. He has taught throughout CUNY and the State University of New York, as well as at private colleges. He is the author of *The Ethical Foundations of Hume's Theory of Politics* (1991); *State Structure and Genocide* (2008), *State Power and Democracy: Before and During the Presidency of George W. Bush* (2012), *Political Economy of Labor Repression in the United States* (2016), *One Family: Before, During and After the Holocaust* (2021) and *The Irrationality of Capitalism and Climate Change* (2022). Courses he teaches include: American Government; State and Local Government; Introduction to Political Science; Civil Liberties; Political Movements; Human Rights; Gender Politics; Terrorism; Genocide; The Holocaust: Politics of Technology; Political Trials.

