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The issue in your hands right now brings together some of the most important thinkers and organizers on the Left today. These writers are sounding the alarm about authoritarianism on the march and a resurgent right wing attempting to divide and conquer its way to power in places across the globe.

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In solidarity,

Alex Han

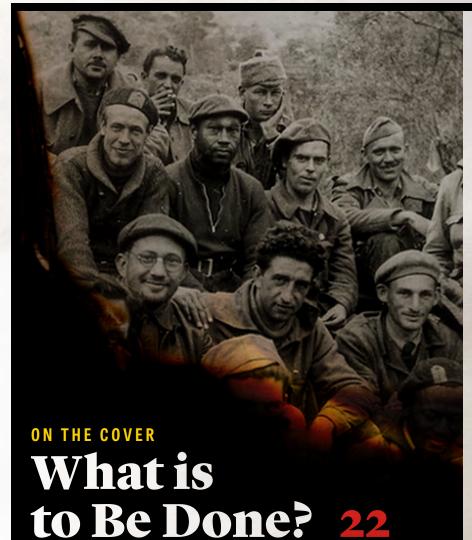
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IN THESETIMES

VOLUME 47 NUMBER 10



A conversation between Jamelle Bouie, Alex Han,

on the Left's role in fighting the Right

Nancy MacLean, Tarso Luís Ramos and Olúfémi O. Táíwò







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No political movement can be healthy unless it has its own press to inform it, educate it and orient it.

—IN THESE TIMES FOUNDER JAMES WEINSTEIN



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STEP ON THE GAS

Congratulations to the workers for standing up for their rights and advocating for fair compensation after making significant concessions in 2009 ("Striking Autoworkers Remember Broken Promises," September). It's a testament to their resilience and determination to secure a better future.

-"LEFT RIGHT & YOU" via Facebook

STRONGER TOGETHER

"The AFL-CIO Squashed a Council's Cease-Fire Resolution" (online) reminds me of the role unions of Arab and Jewish workers played before 1948. There are many examples of joint labor actions, including strikes, in the transportation, construction and agricultural sectors. The major Zionist union, the Histradut, opposed this unity; it supported the Hebrew-only labor policy, hiring only Jewish people for jobs. The Arab-run unions also appealed to nationalism. Both succeeded in pulling workers

apart, although there were bursts of joint activities, even during conflicts between Arabs and Zionists.

Nationalism weakens the labor movement, not to mention how it limits the struggle for a multiethnic revolutionary movement for workers' power.

> —KARYN POMERANTZ via email

THROUGH THE HEART

Phylis Bennis's piece ("Israeli Apartheid Is at the Heart of the Brutality in Gaza and Israel," online) is exactly how I've felt for the past 25 years. But where do we begin? The oppression of the Palestinians and the brutality of Hamas has grown increasingly. The apartheid must end. This line—"food has long been scarce—by the age of two, 20% of Gaza's children are already stunted"-broke my heart.

—MIRIAM POLLI KATSIKIS Virginia

Human rights experts, United Nations officials, faith leaders and others have warned for years that the systemic oppression, now identified as apartheid, would one day be too much to stand. Resistance would be inevitable.

For decades, Palestinian resistance has taken overwhelmingly nonviolent forms, including the Great March of Return in 2018-2019, a peaceful Gaza protest that was met with overwhelming lethal

violence by Israeli forces. But the world didn't hear—or if it heard, it didn't answer. When the UN warned in 2012 and 2015 that, by 2020, Gaza would be"unlivable" without a "herculean effort" by the international community, the world didn't respond.

This time the resistance took a violent form, including Hamas targeting civilians in horrifying ways that are illegal under international law. Those illegitimate acts must be condemned. It's also important to remember it didn't come out of nowhere.

—JERRY ROSENBLUM San Francisco

ARMING THE VOTE

Great coverage of a subject that could grow into a World War ("I Am Done Voting for the Lesser of Two Evils," online). I am quite surprised with Bernie Sanders' recent ideas on the Middle East and I really hope he reconsiders. I do not understand why some progressives, legislatively and privately, continue to support more armaments for many nations, rather than "resolving conflict" by talking (as we should learn from the Vietnam War, where thousands of

innocent people died from from U.S. weapons). Bernie and Biden should know that young people and progressives are increasingly saying "we will not vote for Dems" in the coming election.

> —WAYNE ALT Co-founder of Western New York Peace Center

I will never again cast a vote for any politician that approved, enabled, supported, funded or stayed silent during Biden's genocide campaign. Democrats and Republicans can pound grass and seethe.

—DAISY BLACKSTONE California

Vote for the lesser "evil"? Yes! In the American system, in 2024, a Democrat or a Republican will be elected president. Support your favorite in the primaries, but vote for the lesser evil in the fall. I am reluctant to support Biden because of his war policies, but remember it was Trump who moved the U.S. embassy in Israel to Ierusalem. And remember how Florida, in 2000, gave us the invasion of Iraq; millions of Muslims are still suffering from that disaster.

—JACK BURGESS via email

TELL US HOW YOU REALLY FEEL

Tell us what you like, what you hate and what you'd like to see more of by emailing letters@inthesetimes.com or tweeting @inthesetimesmag, or reach us by post at 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

IN CONVERSATION



Thank you for helping us celebrate our 47th anniversary! The September 30 event featured a keynote between Alex Han (center), ITT's executive director, and Stacy Davis Gates (left), president of the Chicago Teachers Union. Mayor of Chicago Brandon Johnson (right) also popped in to address the crowd.



Writer and community organizer Asha Ransby-Sporn (right) joined ITT and Vincent Bevins (left, author of If We Burn) at the Lincoln Lodge in October for a dynamic conversation on building the movements we need.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Why is *In These Times*, a publication best known for its coverage of labor and left movements, releasing a special issue about the Right?

When I joined ITT a year ago, I'd spent nearly two decades reporting on the right wing—from the Christian Right to global ethno-nationalism, from far-right conspiracism to the "new New Right" and its empty promises of a gentler capitalism.

But this issue wasn't my idea. Rather, ITT saw a need for the Left to grapple with our role as today's Right lays the groundwork, at home and internationally, for a "counterrevolution" that will undo decades of progress on every level. As ITT Executive Director Alex Han notes in our cover story (page 22), in previous eras, the Left understood its responsibility "to lead the anti-fascist front." Broadly conceived, that principle embodies the history of the best of the Left—inspiring thousands to join the fight against Spain's Franco and the domestic fascism of Jim Crow, to oppose unjust wars and launch movements toward liberation. The Left can be fractious (perhaps a laughable understatement), but history shows we can come together as a broad front.

While the Right is far from a monolith, we can't overlook the current, dangerous convergence of its messy factions, which makes it stronger than it's been in decades. Throughout this issue, our contributors describe its dangers and weak points. But the common message is clear: Today's rising, increasingly international, increasingly authoritarian Right is not just a sideshow of the "culture war."

It's the fight of our time. And it demands an answer to

an old left question: Which side are you on?

Kathryn Joyce Issue Editor

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We Will Not Be Silenced

ATTENDED THE JANAZAH AND BURIAL OF Wadea Al-Fayoume on October 16. In the first weeks of Israel's assault on Gaza, the six-year-old Palestinian American boy, from a suburb of Chicago, was stabbed 26 times by his family's landlord in a hate crime.

The United States is currently awash in rhetoric justifying Muslim and Arab deaths. Joseph Czuba, 71, the landlord charged with killing Wadea and gravely injuring his mother, was on the receiving end of that rhetoric.

Czuba was reportedly an avid listener of conservative talk radio. According to Czuba's wife, he'd grown irate over supposed plans for a "national day of jihad," a mistranslated call for mass protests that was weaponized by rightwing media to cause panic.

While the overwhelming support for Israel—from Republicans and Democrats—makes for an increasingly rare point of consensus, the Right is using this moment for its own scaremongering agenda. That includes vilifying Muslims and tearing apart the Left through a new red scare.

"Terrorist" was already a favorite jeer to discredit the Left, right up there with "socialist." Farright Republicans, like Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, have repeatedly charged that left movements like Black Lives Matter are terrorist groups. Occupy Wall Street demonstrations were monitored by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force. Donald Trump sought to declare anti-fascist groups as terrorists, too.

Christopher Rufo is seizing the chance to further that association. He's perhaps the chief crusader against critical race theory and now an advisor to 2024 presidential candidate Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.). Days into Israel's incursion on Gaza, Rufo called for the Right to "create a strong association between Hamas, BLM, DSA and academic 'decolonization' in the public mind" to "make them political untouchables." It's hard to imagine a clearer or more cynical expansion of the Right's strategy.

Leading Republicans followed Rufo's advice. Greene declared progressive Democrats "the

Hamas Caucus." DeSantis called pro-Palestinian protesters "part of this Hamas movement" and threatened to revoke the visas of foreign exchange students who joined the cause. He also pushed Florida universities to "deactivate" chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine—a major hub of left activism which shaped students like me across the United States.

Workers have been fired or forced to resign for expressing support for

Palestine. Law students have lost job offers. Students and activists have been harassed, with bill-board trucks featuring their faces and names circling their campuses and places of work. Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), the sole Palestinian American representative in Congress, was censured for

speaking out on behalf of Palestine after Republicans falsely charged she'd issued a "call to violence." Rep. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) called for banning TikTok, charging the app was making young people "support pro-genocide Hamas."

What we're seeing is not only the manufacture of consent for genocide against Palestinians, but an attempt to stifle the Left—particularly, the Muslim Left—globally. Germany and France have banned pro-Palestine demonstrations entirely.

When Wadea's tiny casket was transported to the burial site, so many people came to pay respects that police had to close off the road in front of the cemetery. What I saw in the crowd were people not only devastated, but angry and ready to fight—against oppression, occupation, an unrelentingly brutal siege.

For many Muslims, after 9/11, being politically vocal meant being labeled a terrorist and subjected to surveillance, or worse. Now, imams and shuyukh are defiantly calling Muslims into the streets. In the Right's fearmongering, they see fear—proof their voices are prevailing.

While we hope this issue will do its job in convincing you of the need to counter a rising Right, it shouldn't make you despair about our odds. What we are seeing in this horrible, transformative moment is a global movement, ready to stand up.

-NASHWA BAWAB

MEET TODAY'S RIGHT

It's rebranding, radicalizing, recruiting youth and spreading worldwide.

MATT MCMANUS

THE NEW NEW RIGHT AND THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

HE U.S. RIGHT'S FLIRTATION WITH AUTHORItarianism has shocked many who believed the conventional wisdom that our country is genetically "center right" and committed to free markets, ordered liberty and as many American flags as possible. This conventional wisdom has trickled deep enough down that many forget it's simply historically, untrue. For much of the midzoth century, a combination of Rooseveltian New Dealers and civil rights activists set the Overton window for U.S. politics. Things were so dire for conservatives that, as the movement reformed in the 1950s, Russell Kirk opened his manifesto, *The Conservative Mind*, by describing the Right as an ideology of losers who'd lost nearly every major battle from the French Revolution onward.

How things change. But as the Right resurges, in America and much of the world, which Right is it, exactly?

Through the neoliberal Reagan era, the GOP's three major constituencies were described as a "three-legged stool": social conservatives (especially white evangelicals), neoconservative anti-Communists (and later, "War on Terror" hawks), and free marketeers. Loads of intellectual energy and billionaire-funding were sunk into efforts to fuse these legs into a single stump, never entirely successfully.

For many in today's GOP, that kind of Reaganite fusionism no longer cuts it. The intellectual and cultural vanguard of today's Right, often called the "New Right," is increasingly critical of classical liberalism—which was long the consensus philosophy of both major parties and holds that a combination of limited government, free markets and ordered liberty on social issues (that is, the protection of individual rights within a moderately conservative culture) would produce the best kind of state. These views dominated the U.S. Right for much of the late 20th century (though never completely unchallenged). Now, new doctrines have taken over,

insisting that the old fusionist Right ceded too much ground to the Left, that egalitarian or economic principles rooted in classical liberalism have led to "decadence" (primarily LGBTQ rights), national decline (purportedly through "feminization" and "oversensitivity") and growing disorder.

In 2016, the ultra-right-wing writer and former Trump official Michael Anton reprised Kirk's lament—that the "whole enterprise of Conservatism, Inc., reeks of failure." In response, many conservatives became increasingly willing to use state power to shape culture, punish "woke" capitalism and embrace illiberalism or authoritarianism to advance a consciously radical agenda. Today, the party of tradition and "cautious management of change" calls for outright "regime change," "counterrevolution" and even so-called "Red Caesarism"—the notion that the decaying republic can only be saved by concentrating enormous powers in the hands of a strongman like Donald Trump.

As the U.S. "hard" Right has entered the mainstream, its own factions now comprise a new three-legged stool. There are the National Conservatives, who reject liberalism's emphasis on moral universalism and rational humanism, calling for new kinds of traditionalist "conservative democracies."

Then there are the postliberals, a largely academic, heavily Catholic movement that is committed to replacing the dominant neoliberal "elite" with a new conservative elite that will use the state to implement socially revanchist policies in the name of the "common good."

Finally, there's the Nietzschean Right, embodied in very online far-right personas

like Bronze Age Pervert and Lom₃Z, who are openly contemptuous of modern egalitarianism and draw on early-20th-century protofascist ideologies to demand a new male aristocracy rise to power.

These factions aren't a monolith, and they frequently fight. While postliberals agree with NatCons that liberalism must be replaced, postliberals envision a form of "aristopopulism" where conservative elites wield state power. Many NatCons and postliberals are deeply wary of the Nietzschean Right's open misogyny, racism and embrace of violence, while others are more willing to conciliate, with postliberal magazine *First Things* publishing essays by figures like Lom3Z and introducing the political philosophy of Russian fascist Alexander Dugin. But each faction shares the conviction, in the words of NatCon founder Yoram Hazony, that "liberalism destroys everything." And, despite their differences, they're doing all they can to put a stop to it—up to and including open calls to end U.S. democracy.

Many of these efforts are directed toward cultivating dissatisfied young men to become culture war foot soldiers who will advance the cause, in print and online, following fellowships or jobs with groups like far-right think tank the Claremont Institute, which has evolved from a nebbishy coven of West Coast Straussians pursuing "classical virtues" into a bastion of writers toying with authoritarianism. These days, *Claremont Review of Books* is arguably playing the syncretic role that *National Review* once did, helping glue together the various factions of the hard Right by publishing reviews of Bronze Age Pervert one day and Christian theology the next.

Even more ambitious anti-liberal efforts are directed toward remaking higher education along the lines of Michigan's ultratraditional Hillsdale College, passing volumes of anti-queer and anti-trans legislation in red states, using government power to muscle private business where it's perceived to be too "woke," and stopping the Left from propagating its ideas in any form. As the New Right's war on education has evolved, for example, it has become more willing to admit that conservative rhetoric around "academic freedom" or "indoctrination" isn't really about valuing intellectual diversity; it's about replacing left-wing intellectuals with their own, and swapping egalitarian texts for PragerU.

Perhaps most immediately threatening is the hard Right's new willingness to use the courts to get its way. For decades, conservatives talked about the need to constrain "judicial activism," claiming (sincerely or not) that an "originalist" approach to the Constitution was their North Star. That view is increasingly passé, as many on the Right are eager to use their control of the judiciary to legislate from the bench. As the Right becomes frustrated at being unable to win majority support for illiberal policies, this temptation will grow. And postliberals have already developed the theory to justify it, through the work of academics like Harvard's Adrian Vermeule, who

Above: Ersatz intellectual right-wing icons Adrian Vermeule (clockwise from left), Patrick Deneen and Yoram Hazony constitute a new vanguard of antiliberalism (in the classical sense), challenging the foundations of democracy, especially among young men.



dismisses originalism as a once-useful fig leaf that's no longer necessary, now that the courts are under their control.

The rapid spread of right-wing illiberalism has surprised many, but it shouldn't. The political Right has always been at least wary of—and often hostile toward—liberalism, defined, as the Right is, by its rejection of the progressive belief that a more equal society is a more just society, and the conviction that society is demarcated between recognizably superior people and what Edmund Burke called the "swinish multitude."

Many on the U.S. Left, meanwhile, may be reticent to come to liberalism's defense, given its longstanding association with neoliberal inequality and the carceral state. And the extent to which we should defend liberal principles is one that requires serious debate. (Personally, I think we can argue for a version of liberal socialism.) But no one should doubt that the illiberalism emerging on the Right is much more threatening than what came before.

It falls to the Left to reimagine what liberty, equality and solidarity for all should mean, and to uphold these principles against those who think the world would be better without them.

MATT MCMANUS teaches political science at the University of Michigan and is author, most recently, of The Political Right and Equality.

THE CAMPUS RIGHT

N ANONYMOUS POST APPEARED IN LATE September on Reddit's "QAnonCasualties" forum, an online space designed to support those desperate to extricate loved ones from the all-consuming grip of conspiracy theories. "I think my brother is a white supremacist and I don't know what to do," a 17-year-old posted. She went on that she became concerned after her 13-year-old brother started saying things like "gay people are disgusting."

She'd done some digging and discovered her younger brother's anonymous account on the alternative social media platform Telegram—complete with a username boasting support for white Christian nationalist Nick Fuentes and an avatar featuring the alt-right icon Pepe the Frog framed by an America First flag. Her brother, she soon discovered, had become a devoted follower of Fuentes.

Fuentes—who recently referred to Hitler as "really fucking cool" and announced "we need to eradicate the Jewish stranglehold over The United States of America"—leads the America First/"Groyper" movement, a network of disaffected, terminally online Gen Z men animated by a toxic brew of misogyny, antisemitism and white rage. (Groyper is a variation of the Pepe meme in far-right online spaces.) "This [is] really hard," the sister acknowledged to those offering support. "I love my family so much and [it] hurts to see him turn into this."

While Fuentes' unabashed Hitlerism has rendered him untouchable for most conservative leaders, he can hardly be called fringe. Within the past two years, Fuentes has featured leading MAGA politicians Reps. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.) and Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) at his Groyper conferences and intimately dined with former President Donald Trump as a surprise guest

at Mar-a-Lago. Most of the once-fringe positions Fuentes championed for years—such as the "great replacement" conspiracy theory, Christian nationalism and hardline homophobia—are now standard conservative fare. And all that's by design.

On high school and college campuses across the country, many young right-wingers are outflanking their MAGA elders in enthusiastic embrace of radically anti-democratic, exclusionary and bigoted politics. To be sure, most of Gen Z leans liberal. But those who buck the trend cling proudly to their "dissident" status, doubling down in uncompromising reassertion of the race, gender and other hierarchies their peers are set on dismantling.

These young right-wingers are often—as the younger brother above—first radicalized by online influencers like Fuentes or Andrew Tate, an ultra-misogynist livestreamer. In online fan forums and message boards, they find camaraderie and community, circulating a menagerie of racist memes, anti-feminist screeds, bodybuilder videos, Bible verses and other content steeped in the loneliness of incel culture and the vitriol of white grievance. And as they mature, many transform their politics into real-world activism. While this milieu produces no shortage of mass shooters, many more don suits and ties and find welcome, and livelihoods, in youth-focused MAGA institutions—meme-addled cell phones in pockets, determined to pull the Right ever further right.

Turning Point USA (TPUSA), perhaps the largest such institution, has long operated, as founder Charlie Kirk once put it, like a "battle tank" on college campuses, attacking student activists and progressive professors across the country with a barrage of culture war and harassment campaigns tailor-made for social media virality. In recent years, its politics have pushed the outermost edge of mainstream acceptability. TPUSA events now feature Greene proclaiming "we should be Christian nationalists," pastors suggesting political opponents be executed, and alt-right mainstays like Steve Bannon and Alex Jones promoting the "great reset"



conspiracy theory that posits "globalist" elites used the Covid-19 pandemic to entrench sinister world domination.

It wasn't always this extreme. In fall 2019, the Groyper movement first captured the spotlight with a national campaign targeting TPUSA, which they saw as a symbol of the milquetoast conservative establishment that obstructed the white nationalist cause. But today, Fuentes has changed his tune. TPUSA, he said in a 2023 speech, is "coming further and further ... they sound way more like me today than they sound like themselves four years ago" and "we're fighting a guerrilla war, but in many ways, we've already won."

While Kirk once argued the United States should "staple green" cards to diplomas," today he regularly calls, like much of the Right, for an immigration moratorium. He has dipped into unvarnished white nationalism, calling to protect "white demographics in America" and insisting "whiteness is great. Be proud of who you are." Multiple TPUSA chapters have hosted Groyper speakers, and Groypers have been exposed as chapter leaders on high school and college campuses—enacting a longtime white nationalist infiltration strategy to transform conservative institutions from within.

TPUSA is far from the only Gen Z political organization swarming with white nationalists. Chapters of College Republicans United (CRU), a national network closely connected to the Groyper movement, have hosted white nationalist leaders like Jared Taylor and Vincent James Foxx to speak on campuses. "[Fuentes] has a huge following among young conservatives ... [and] a message that resonates with a lot of college age students," CRU posted on X (formerly Twitter) in July, defending their decision to have Fuentes headline their national convention amid national pushback.

Students for Ye was a national network created in 2022 after Ye (the artist formerly known as Kanye West) launched an unhinged antisemitic, pro-Hitler tirade, and a purported presidential campaign, with Fuentes at his side. Students for Ye claimed the support of 1,000 students, and several college and high school campuses were tagged with "Ye is Right" graffiti, amid other harassment stunts by Groyper provocateurs. Students for Ye chairman Daniel Schmidt, a junior at the University of Chicago, railed against "Jewish supremacists" online and continues to appear as a guest on Fox News, where he invokes a central slogan of the white nationalist movement in lambasting "anti-white genocidal rhetoric." If a TPUSA chapter is "not pro-Ye," he told a Groyper livestreamer in January, "we'll send our guys down there and we'll do whatever it takes" to "put pro-Ye people in."

Campus conservative groups serve as pipelines for future conservative leadership. "Anyone who spends any time in conservative circles in D.C. knows there is a particularly potent militant mood on the younger end of the conservative spectrum," explained 25-year-old conservative intellectual Nate Hochman on a panel in February. Five

Left: From Young Republican Clubs to youth MAGA groups, Andrew Tate (clockwise from top left), Charlie Kirk, Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.), the artist known as Ye, Nick Fuentes and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) promote right-wing conspiracy theories on ever-larger platforms.

months later, Hochman was fired from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' presidential campaign after incorporating the sonnenrad, a Nazi symbol, into a campaign video.

Across the ecosystem of Young Republican Clubs, GOP precinct committees and MAGA advocacy organizations, it's also easy to find acolytes of the fascist influencer Bronze Age Pervert (BAP) and self-proclaimed "neoreactionary" thinkers like Curtis Yarvin-ideologues committed to the liquidation of democracy and its replacement by neo-feudal monarchism, authoritarianism or fascism.

"We want total war," exclaimed Gavin Wax, leader of the New York Young Republican Club at the group's 2022 gala, epitomizing this gloves-off approach. "This is the only language the Left understands. The language of pure and unadulterated power."

From campuses to communities, for every Gen Z conservative activist revealed as a devoted Groyper or BAPist, there are many others whose ideological affiliations and anonymous accounts never see the light of day. An August poll by the Center for Countering Digital Hate found that 69% of 13-to-17-year-olds with a high degree of social media use agreed with four or more conspiracy statements, with over 50% agreeing with antisemitic and great replacement conspiracy theories in particular. A 2022 study published by Political Research Quarterly, based on a survey of 3,500 U.S. adults, found "the epicenter of antisemitic attitudes is young adults on the far Right."

These are the rising leaders of the Right. And regardless of the results of the 2024 presidential election, the exclusionary, anti-democratic politics sharpened and amplified by Trumpism aren't going away anytime soon.

BEN LORBER works as senior research analyst at Political Research Associates, a progressive think tank monitoring right-wing movements, where he focuses on white nationalism and antisemitism. His book Safety through Solidarity: A Radical Guide to Fighting Antisemitism will be released in 2024 with Melville House Books.

ISRAEL, INDIA AND THE ETHNO-NATIONALIST RIGHT

he could fill another Israeli army just with Indian volunteers. "Everyone is telling me, 'I want to volunteer, I want to fight for Israel," he said. Gilon's remarks came five days after Hamas militants' attack on Israel claimed 1,400 lives; Israel's response has been an ongoing, genocidal bombing campaign, which killed more than 10,000 Palestinians in Gaza in its first month. Within hours of the Hamas attack, Narendra Modi, India's far-right prime minister, expressed solidarity with Israel, and ministers throughout his party echoed him, many proclaiming that India and Israel share a common struggle against "terrorism." Meanwhile, Indian media has inundated hundreds of millions of viewers with relentless pro-Israel coverage, and India's social media users have created such a flood of anti-Palestinian fake news that the cofounder of an Indian fact-checking nonprofit declared India "the disinforma-

N OCTOBER 12, AS ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES WERE

Gilon, told Asian News International that he had received

such an outpouring of support from people in India that

pummeling Gaza, Israel's ambassador to India, Naor

This fever pitch of pro-Israel sentiment among right-wing Indians has deep historical roots. As journalist Azad Essa explains in his new book, Hostile Homelands, the movement to establish India as a Hindu-supremacist homeland—known as Hindutva has long seen Israeli Zionism as a kindred struggle. Both ethnonationalist movements draw inspiration from 20th-century European fascism, as well as each other. In a 1923 tract, Hindutva cofounder Vinayak Savarkar wrote, "if the Zionists' dreams are ever realized—if Palestine becomes a Jewish state—it will gladden us almost as much as our Jewish friends."

For most of the 20th century, the Hindutva movement struggled to gain a following and its fervor for Israel did not influence Indian politics. Instead, India officially sided with Palestinians. In 1938, Mohandas Gandhi wrote that the Zionist displacement of Palestinian Arabs "cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct."

In the past four decades, however, Hindu nationalism has become the dominant political ideology in India, and the country's support for Zionism has risen in tandem. Essa documents this rapid change: In 1991, India revoked its vote on a United Nations resolution that called Zionism racist. In 1992, India established full diplomatic ties with Israel. By the 2000s, Israel was supplying more arms to India than to the Israeli army; under Modi, who took office in 2014, India's already copious Israeli arms imports rose by 175%. Undergirding these warming ties has been Islamophobia, increasingly rampant in both countries. By 2003, one Jewish Democratic

member of the U.S. Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans bluntly said that India, Israel and the United States are "drawn together by our joint fight against mindless, vicious, fanatic, Islamic terrorism."

India's embrace of Israel also attests to how Israel has become a model for repressive governments and far-right movements worldwide, including in Italy, Hungary, Brazil, the Philippines and the United States. As early as Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, Essa writes, Indian politicians privately expressed hopes of emulating Israel's military might. By 2004, those aspirations became overt, as India constructed an Israel-style fence around the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir. Since then, India has not only used Israeli drones, rifles, surveillance systems, fighter jets, bombs and cybersecurity in its occupation of Kashmir, but has trained its security forces in Israel and borrowed Israeli tactics, such as "surgical strike" raids.

Beyond drawing military inspiration, Hindu nationalists are watching the Israeli political model writ large as they develop a parallel apartheid system to disenfranchise Indian minorities. A recent Indian law that eases the path for Hindu migrants to gain Indian citizenship mirrors Israeli laws privileging Jewish citizenship applications. Indian efforts to create a population registry for minorities similarly echo Israel's control over Palestinians' legal status. In 2019, shortly after India unilaterally dissolved Kashmir's statehood and effectively deprived Kashmiris of the right to political representation, an Indian diplomat proposed creating Israel-style settlements in the region. "We already have a model," he

said. "If the Israeli people can do it, we can also do it."

Right: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are mutual inspirations—at least on the topics of apartheid systems, military states and minority disenfranchisement.

tion capital of the world."

Israel's role as a model for far-right regimes is not accidental; it's the explicit goal of some segments of the Zionist movement. In a recent profile of Yoram Hazony, the prominent Israeli founder of the right-wing National Conservatism movement, historian Suzanne Schneider notes how Hazony "imagines Israel as a light unto the nations—an illiberal model for the international nationalist brigade." In fact, Hazony has already taken this doctrine to India, where he gave talks on the "virtue of nationalism" in July.

Set in this context, Israel's ongoing bombardment of Gaza horrifying in its own right—becomes an even more terrifying portent of further violence. In late 2022, scholars at Georgetown University assessed that—of the widely recognized delineation of the 10 stages of genocide—India has already reached the eighth step against its more than 200 million Muslims. Now, Indian army generals are reportedly studying Israel's assault on Gaza to "quickly draw the lessons relevant to our context," as one army source told Indian media.

"India already rejects pressure to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law in occupied Kashmir," says Haley Duschinski, director of Ohio University's Center for International Studies. Now, Israel's sidelining of international law raises grave concerns "that India will follow Israel's example by dropping the thin justifications it uses to cover its atrocities in Kashmir." Put simply, Duschinski says, in the aftermath of October 7 in Israel, "Kashmiris are in grave danger of ethnic cleansing in the name of Indian self-defense."

Already, India's Hindu Right is making rhetorical use of the conflict. In late October, India's foreign minister said that Hamas' attack proved that "no danger is too distant anymore" because "terrorism [cannot] be contained," warning of "the danger of metastasis." Under the banner of preventative counterterrorism, India is cracking down on dissidents and demonizing minorities,

with police already detaining dozens of pro-Palestine protesters in New Delhi.

At the national level, with India's 2024 general election looming large, Israel's war was immediately integrated into the Islamophobic campaign of Modi's farright Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Earlier this year, 26 Indian opposition parties formed a coalition to challenge Modi and the BJP in next year's polls, but already the BJP has managed to use certain opposition parties' support of Palestinian rights to

In the aftermath of October 7 in Israel, "Kashmiris are in grave danger of ethnic cleansing in the name of Indian self-defense."

charge the coalition with "supporting terror organizations and terrorism."

And just hours after Hamas' initial attack, the BIP released a video featuring clips of vigilante attacks that took place under the opposition's rule, with the caption: "What Israel is facing today, India suffered between 2004-14. Never forgive, never forget ..." Set to an ominous drumbeat soundtrack, the video suggests the only way to protect Indians from such attacks recurring is a BJP-led clampdown, including ground assaults against tribal militants in India's poorest areas,

airstrikes in occupied Kashmir and detentions without trial for Muslims and other minorities.

> Modi has already made headway on each of these fronts. As the war on Gaza is used to inflame Islamophobic resentments worldwide, the situation in India looks poised to get much, much worse.

APARNA GOPALAN is news editor at Jewish Currents and former story editor at In These Times. She has previously worked as pologist of capitalism.

DECEMBER 2023 " IN THESE TIME

THE GLOBAL FAR RIGHT AND THE POLITICS OF DESPAIR

CROSS THE GLOBE, THE FAR RIGHT APPEARS to be on the ascent. It has seized commanding heights in Giorgia Meloni's Italy and Viktor Orbán's Hungary, while formerly ostracized ethno-nationalist parties like the Sweden Democrats and the True Finns are now in governing coalitions. As this issue goes to press, Argentina might still elect as president the voluble anarcho-capitalist Javier Milei, whose promise to commodify all facets of social life is accompanied by rabid anti-feminism and culture war invectives—"In my government there will be no cultural Marxism. I won't apologise for having a penis. I shouldn't feel guilty for being a white, blond, blue-eyed man"—as well as denialist apologias for the crimes of the military junta that ruled the country from 1976 to 1983. Across the Andes, in Chile, José Antonio Kast's Republicans are surfing moral panics around immigration, feminism and indigenous rights as they seek to reanimate the authoritarian neoliberalism that the mass social rebellions of 2019 tried to bury. There's a strong case to be made that the governments of Russia and India, and the movements supporting them, are piloting a 21st-century fascism. Meanwhile, Israel's current government is run by the political descendants of those whom Albert Einstein and Hannah Arendt had no trouble calling fascists for their terroristic program of ethnic cleansing.

All of these reactionary movements have distinct histories and agendas, but we must recognize that we're witnessing a global phenomenon: a far Right that's more than happy to combine revanchist nationalisms with international coordination. With summits like the pan-Christian Right World Congress of

Madrid Charter, with entrepreneurs of resentment like Steve Bannon jetting around the globe to build nationalist networks, or through the international outreach of proudly "illiberal" academic institutions like Hungary's Mathias Corvinus Collegium, the contemporary far Right has little truck with cultural isolationism. And, inspired by the 1970s French "New Right," this coalition commonly celebrates ethno-national identities in all their sovereign difference and plurality—so long as those identities are Western, white, traditionalist or settler-colonial.

That the Left has no monopoly on making common cause across borders is a fact we ignore at our peril.

For all its internal differences—in economic vision, emphasis on religious morality and geopolitical outlook—this planetary wave of authoritarianism converges around three core elements: First, some version of the "great replacement" theory, the racist myth that there is a "globalist" plot to replace "native" populations with migrants.

Second, homophobic and transphobic moral panics claiming that society has been overtaken by an anti-family "gender ideology."

Third, backlash against challenges to the racial-capitalist order, from U.S. right-wing attacks on "critical race theory" to the now-global "war on woke"



(a term that's been exported abroad, so that Italians now ludicrously refer to *il wokismo*, the French to *le wokisme*, and so on).

From Giorgia Meloni to the GOP, Bashar al-Assad to Vladimir Putin, everyone appears to be singing from the same hymnal, repeating some variation on these themes.

But it's not enough for us to identify and rebut the international far Right's shared narratives; we need to ask why culture wars are their preferred field of operations. The far Right's media and electoral successes are significant: accelerating catastrophic climate change, endangering and immiserating the lives of its chosen targets, exacerbating the neoliberal assault on democratic public life. But they don't reflect a proportional rise in reactionary social movements on the ground. The electoral far Right captures, nourishes and weaponizes many of what philosopher Baruch Spinoza called the "sad passions"—fear, resentment, hatred. But it rarely *organizes* them, except

by wielding its legislative power to secure its supremacy and silence minorities. And in this, the international far Right represents a broader dynamic of depoliticization. It may choreograph mass gatherings—like Donald Trump's campaign rallies, more wrestling arena than Nuremberg—but it avoids building any social fabric to counter anomie and atomization. While it provides a fertile breeding ground for violent factions and well-connected "lone wolves," even these perverse forms of community-making are not at its core.

Rather, the rise of today's far Right is a morbid symptom of our age of despair—of climate emergency, capitalist stagnation and growing awareness that postwar prosperity (however brief and uneven) is gone for good.

It is also the legacy of the imperial ravages and racist frameworks of the so-called war on terror, as well as the implosion, neutralization or deflection of all the liberatory social movements that emerged after 2007-8, from Occupy to the Arab Spring, the *indignados* to student movements against privatization and austerity.

In a time of disillusionment, the global far Right is feeding off the false promises of a reformist social democracy and the failed efforts of true challenges to the status quo. As many progressives have lost hope in the viability of progress, the possessive and punitive instincts of the far Right become more attractive to a disoriented and disgruntled electorate. In many countries, a well-articulated political project is not necessary to sway a sizable proportion of the public to believe that excluding others will secure their meager slice of an ever-shrinking pie. And endless mobilizing for culture wars is, to paraphrase W.E.B. Du Bois, a cheap way of raising psychological wages while the real ones decline. Less bread, more circuses.

While we must all implacably fight the local and national variants of this far Right, it's difficult to imagine a viable strategy for challenging it globally. The international anti-fascist movements of the past existed in a time when belief in the inevitability of a

Left: The chorus of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni celebrates a whole diversity of voices—but only from the Right.

socialist future was strong; today, nostalgia for those popular fronts is not enough.

However, if we recognize that this world-wide reactionary political cycle is an effect of the cramping of our political horizons, then our response must be different. We might need to think about German philosopher Walter Benjamin's call to "organize pessimism" and what that looks like today: not offloading the pathologies of contemporary capitalism onto the wretched of the Earth, nor looking for scapegoats to assuage our dread, but collectivizing our catastrophic condition—realizing that the imaginary security of a few can't be

As many progressives have lost hope in the viability of progress, the possessive and punitive instincts of the far Right become more attractive to a disoriented and disgruntled electorate.

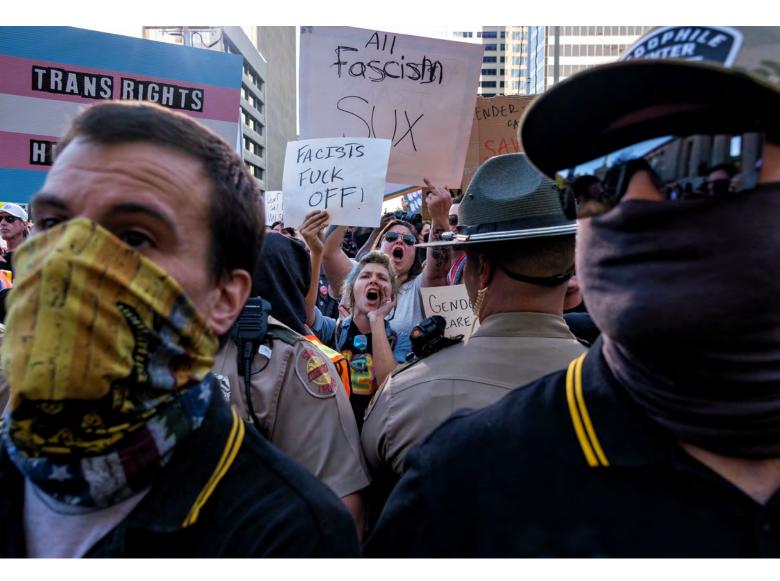
bought at the cost of the disposability of most of humanity.

In the conspiratorial imagination of today's far Right, we can glimpse, as in a funhouse mirror, what the Left we need looks like. To the far Right, the Left is an agent of monumental change: on the brink of destroying the oil industry, abolishing prisons and police, undermining private property and upending white Western civilization. In other words, the Left of the far Right's nightmares is systematically undoing the causes of so much of our misery—it is organizing despair.

To leftists facing contemporary reaction in the waking world, one might say: Be everything they fear you are.

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DISPATCHES



Above: Members of the far-right Proud Boys group protest genderaffirming care at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tenn., on Oct. 21, 2022, cordoned off from counterprotesters by state troopers.

How Anti-Trans Hysteria Spread Like Wildfire

NASHVILLE, TENN.—There was a lot of screaming and shouting at the Rally to End Child Mutilation, hosted in October 2022 in Nashville, Tenn., by right-wing podcaster Matt Walsh, who has said he would

"rather be dead" than have a transgender child. Compared with the noisy attendees, the Proud Boys were relatively quiet. Escorted by police amid a crowd of hundreds outside the Tennessee state house, the black-and-vellow-clad men stood arms akimbo, their tactical cargo pants bloused over their boots, their silent presence an implied threat of enforcement for what the rest of the rally's speakers said.

Walsh's rally was stacked with legislators, media spokespeople and policy advocates. Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), who had already sponsored two federal bills to curtail access to gender-affirming care for trans youth, headlined the event by urging the crowd to vote Republican, so more bans could be passed. A who's who of anti-trans figures followed, including Tulsi Gabbard, Christian Right power couple

Robby and Landon Starbuck, two anti-trans activists (one of whom is himself trans) and several Tennessee politicians vowing to pass their own state ban. This March, they did.

Standing under that bright October sky, hearing politician after politician promise to legislate transgender and nonbinary people out of the public sphere, perhaps I should have anticipated the tsunami of legislation that would come iust a few months later. At the time, 2022 had been the worst year yet for anti-trans laws. But 2023 smashed previous records. Legislators across the country, buoyed by Christian Right white papers, model legislation and moral panics, introduced more than 400 anti-trans bills, dozens of which became law.

As of the end of this year's state legislative session, 22 states have passed bans on gender-affirming medical or surgical care for transgender and nonbinary minors. Most of these bans, like Tennessee's, face court challenges. In the meantime, many of them (including Tennessee's) have taken effect. Five states have passed legislation making it a felony to provide genderaffirming care to trans youth. Nationwide, at least 70 clinics that provided gender-affirming care have closed since 2021.

These laws target youth from every angle. Nine states now have "bathroom bills," prohibiting transgender and nonbinary students from accessing appropriate restrooms at school; 23 now ban trans and nonbinary students from playing sports with teams that match their

gender identity; and five require teachers and school staff to out transgender and nonbinary students to their families or caregivers, even when that could be dangerous.

Disinformation has played a major role in the passage of these dozens of new laws. In 2022, the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration published a report justifying its decision to end Medicaid coverage of gender-affirming care for adult transgender Floridians (although it was later ruled unlawful and unconstitutional). The report made such inaccurate claims that the Yale School of Medicine said it "blatantly violates the basic tenets of scientific inquiry." An evolutionary biologist spoke at the Nashville rally, sowing doubt against the medical establishment, which has repeatedly affirmed the need for gender-affirming care.

Disinformation has also played a broader role in how the public perceives the issue, leading many to routinely overestimate the size of the U.S. trans population by wide margins—in one study, the popular opinion was that trans people compose 21% of the country, far greater than the roughly 0.6% of people over 13 who actually do. That sort of overestimation of a minority group has been shown to lead to targeting, but the attacks don't stop with just the singled out group. Just by the numbers, there are far more cisgender girl athletes who don't perfectly conform to gender stereotypes than there are transgender and nonbinary athletes. Who will be targeted by Idaho's

THIS MONTH IN LATE CAPITALISM

- **NEED A FEEL-GOOD STORY TO COME OUT OF** Israel's war on Gaza? Pretend you're the CEO of Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin or RTX (formerly Raytheon) and celebrate your stock price! Bombs ain't cheap, buyers be buyin' and CEOs have been boasting about the opportunities presented—like the Biden administration's request for an additional \$106 billion in military funding for Israel and Ukraine. Remember: The good war is the profitable one.
- **EVER SEARCH AMAZON FOR WATER BOTTLES** and get an ad for "buck urine" instead? That defect was not an error, according to documents from a Federal Trade Commission complaint about Amazon's monopoly power. Here's the grift: Junk ads increase the price of relevant results. Or, as Vice puts it, Amazon strategically "boosted profits while harming consumers and sellers." But where else are you gonna shop-Walmart?
- THE EVICTION MORATORIUM FINALLY LIFTED in Berkeley, Calif., this summer, and the Berkeley Property Owners Association wasted no time before holding a "fall mixer" with free drinks and hors d'oeuvre to cheer on the forcible eviction wave. No word yet on whether landlords will pay back the billions they received in state assistance during the pandemic.
- **NO SECURITY DEPOSIT? NO PROBLEM!**

You can replace that exorbitant (refundable) lump sum with a "security deposit insurance" policy from Rhino—for just a (nonrefundable, ongoing) monthly fee. Rhino even

says you can use your "savings" for a new couch! Rhino might sue you for unpaid rent, and your premiums might total more than your original security deposit, but, "savings"!

new law, for instance, that gives students \$5,000 "for each instance" where they've "encountered a person of the opposite sex while accessing a public school restroom"? We've already seen the answer to that, in the repeated reports of cisgender women across the world being harassed in public places for not conforming to what a stranger thinks women should look like.

Anti-trans disinformation has also fueled the rise of organized and interpersonal violence against the LGBTQ community at large and against transgender people-Black transgender women most especially. The presence of the Proud Boys in Nashville was a chilling reminder of the growing attacks on children's story hours and other LGBTQ events.

While transgender people are the clear targets of this wave of legislation, the ramifications spread far beyond, so that at least seven states now prohibit mention of all LGBTQ people in some level of school curricula. This September, in an overzealous attempt to comply with Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law—which now bans classroom discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity from pre-K through eighth grade-one county directed all schools in its district to remove every book with LGBTQ characters from library and classroom shelves.

"These characters and themes cannot exist" in books available to students, Charlotte County Public Schools officials told district librarians in prohibiting even books students bring in themselves and which contain no explicit content.

While the 2023 legislative session was bleak, 2024 promises more, and worse, bills to come.

I'm reminded that attacks on any one of us-whatever marginalized group is targeted first—never end with us alone.

HERON GREENESMITH is a policy attorney for the LGBTQ community.

The Students and Parents Defending **Public Schools**

TULSA, OKLA. — Ashley Daly still gets angry thinking about the first Oklahoma state board of education meeting she attended. It was August 2022 and the board was preparing to downgrade the accreditation for two school districts, including Tulsa, where Daly's daughter attends school, over alleged violations of Oklahoma's new law banning critical race theory. As the board penalized the district for a diversity training that predated the law, the realization struck her: "They were punishing a school district of 33,000 kids for political reasons, and I was the only parent from Tulsa in the room."

After that, Daly attended every meeting to "just show up and ask questions.'

Conservative firebrand Ryan Walters became Oklahoma's top education chief in January, waging what he called "a spiritual war for the souls of our kids." He declared the teachers' union 'a terrorist organization" and, this summer, threatened a state

takeover of Tulsa's school district, citing low academic performance, "woke ideology" and even ties to the Chinese Communist Party.

But this time, Daly wasn't alone. An expansive coalition of parents, teachers, community groups, elected officials and local business leaders began holding rallies, filling local papers with op-eds and waging a successful campaign to get Oklahoma's Republican governor, J. Kevin Stitt, to weigh in against the takeover.

The scale of the response seemed to reflect a growing recognition of how vulnerable public education is.

"The rhetoric I've heard Walters using this past year to describe anyone opposed to his agenda—parents, educators, unions, Democrats and LGBTQ people—is dangerous," says Daly. 'It dehumanizes us and puts all Oklahoma kids at risk. I think people are waking up to that."

It's been a long two years since "parental rights" erupted into the mainstream political lexicon, largely thanks to Glenn Youngkin's upset victory in Virginia's gubernatorial race. The movement's standard bearer is Moms for Liberty, the deep-pocketed group targeting school boards and pledging to eradicate "Marxism" from the nation's public education system.

Yet the response to these conservative-led attacks—the backlash to the backlash—has received little attention.

"You've got parents, students, educators, policymakers and unions all working together," says Alex Ames, director of the Partnership for Equity and Education Rights (PEER), a student organizing network of



AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS-Demonstrators march in solidarity with Palestinians on October 15. The Israeli government cut off water, electricity and other imports from the besieged Gaza Strip while its bombing campaign has killed thousands of Palestinians, garnering global backlash. In protests throughout the United States, Brazil, Egypt, Lebanon, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Venezuela, Yemen and dozens of other countries, millions have taken to the streets, demanding an end to the siege. In response, Germany and France outlawed pro-Palestine protests. (Photo by Ana Fernandez/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images)

13 state-level groups fighting censorship laws and school privatization while demanding reinvestment in public education. "Not only did these coalitions not exist in 2020 or 2021, but in many of these states, these kinds of coalitions have never existed before."

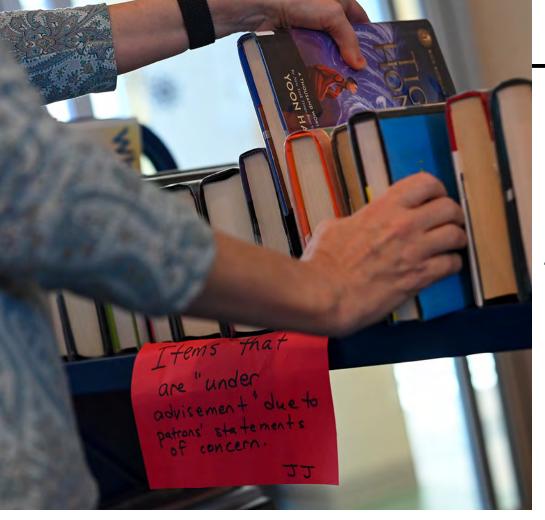
In the summer of 2020, before starting college, Ames began building the Georgia Youth Justice Coalition, which formally launched the following year. The daughter of two public school teachers, Ames attended

school in Fulton County, Ga., at a time of deep budget cuts, teacher layoffs and swelling class sizes. In 2022, when Georgia lawmakers proposed expanding school vouchers-at the cost of school districts like hers—Ames' group and a coalition of other education advocates, including the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Georgia Association of Educators, organized fiercely. They won-and also defeated Georgia's version of Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law, which restricts classroom discussions of

gender and sexual orientation.

The movement succeeded, in part, by loudly making the case that lawmakers are stoking the culture war as cover for trying to defund Georgia's public schools—a position that large majorities of Georgians oppose.

"The decision to hate your neighbors and reject your public school isn't actually the most affordable, practical or preferable path for most people—especially rural Georgians," says Ames. "And that's a wonderful, wonderful organizing opportunity."



The analysis that states are intentionally stoking public discontent to undermine public schools has proved potent. North Carolina is among a growing number of states where the GOP has made enacting "universal school vouchers" a priority, but Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper declared a state of emergency for public schools in May. He cited a raft of conservative legislation including a dramatic expansion of vouchers and bills "inject[ing] their culture wars into classrooms"-which he characterized as a concerted Republican strategy to "choke the life out of public education."

Parents are picking up the message. Isabell Moore, a North Carolinian with a child in third grade, helped start Public School Strong (PSS) this past spring to oppose the diversion of tax

dollars away from public schools. "I tell other parents that the last time my son was in a classroom with a teaching assistant was kindergarten," says Moore, calling the Right's obsessive focus on race and gender "manufactured problems."

PSS—as part of the growing national and state coalition Honest Education Action & Leadership Together—now counts active members in two-thirds of North Carolina counties. Its parent activists show up at school board meetings to demand education that is honest, accurate and fully funded. When the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board approved policies to comply with the state's new Parents' Bill of Rights in August, PSS parents denounced it as a "ruse to take away the rights of other parents."

There's also funding flowing in,

which is "changing the dynamic," says Jennifer Doeren, who heads the national PEER network. For example, the Resource Equity Funders Collaborative, a donor coalition that includes several major foundations, is investing in state-level organizing in places like Oklahoma and Tennessee through PEER. "These are conservative-majority states where you have grassroots coalitions coming together really quickly to fight back."

Meanwhile, Oklahoma's education chief has ushered in the country's first publicly funded religious charter school and approved the classroom use of videos from right-wing advocacy group PragerU, and there is growing right-wing sentiment that Oklahoma doesn't actually need public schools.

As Colleen McCarty—a volunteer with the PEER-funded Advance Oklahoma Kids, founded last summer-warns: 'They're using the education space to test the waters for even scarier government overreach. It really feels like we're organizing for our very existence."

JENNIFER C. BERKSHIRE hosts the education podcast Have You Heard. Her forthcoming book is The Education Wars: A Citizen's Guide and Defense Manual, coauthored with Jack Schneider.

Queer Organizers Challenge **Book Bans**

ST. TAMMANY PARISH, LA.-The governing board of St. Tammany Parish Library is meeting one August evening

Above: Library director Kelly LaRocca cares for one cart of "banned" books that was sitting in limbo at a St. Tammany Parish Library in Louisiana on February 13.

in the squint-inducing fluorescence of council chambers. The agenda includes the summer reading program, the latest financial reports, and whether a young adult novel about two teenagers seeking to break a world record for kissing should remain on shelves. There has been a public complaint.

"We'll move on now to the statement of concern regarding the title Two Boys Kissing," says Rebecca Taylor, board president of the library, which is in southeastern Louisiana. "As a reminder, your public comment must directly relate to this agenda item."

Someone asks: "Are we going to become California, where laws are coming into place to legalize pedophilia?"

A self-identified veteran says: "If the book was about two men kissing and featured all adult characters, it would be just as compelling, and I would stand behind it wholeheartedly. But as the book stands, featuring minors and sexual acts, I believe the book should be restricted."

Another speaker argues: "One can't judge a whole book by cutting and pasting, and that's what's being done with the challenged books."

The parish has become a flashpoint in the censorship battle sweeping the country. Between August 2022 and this November, 172 titles have been challenged at the library, 160 of them-including Two Boys Kissing-following complaints from local resident Connie Phillips, who claims the books expose children to pornography and pedophilia and confuse readers about gender identity.

"We're the capital of the United States when it comes to

censorship," says St. Tammany resident Jeremy JF Thompson.

Thompson is the cofounder of Queer Northshore, which started in 2022 as a social group in the Republican-controlled parish. The group's aim is "building an LGBTQ+ community in a part of Louisiana where there wasn't one," according to its website. But after Phillips' book challenges began later in 2022, Queer Northshore shifted gears. Thompson and others organized the St. Tammany Library Alliance, which now sends a hefty roster of individuals to meetings whenever challenges arise. A half dozen or so people from the group spoke in favor of keeping Two Boys Kissing on the shelf at the August board meeting, according to Kristen Luchsinger, a member of the alliance.

"We're nice," says Luchsinger. The group sometimes brings water, ice cream and signs to support the library. And even book banners "get an ice cream."

But that's not to say the fight over book bans has been a spunky playground debate grounded in mutual respect and liberal niceties. Someone burned down a "Ban Hate, Not Books" yard sign, Luchsinger says. And Phillips is currently facing misdemeanor battery charges after she allegedly grabbed a library supporter's phone and warned them not to "fuck with me."

Phillips did not respond to requests for comment.

"I suspect this is all a reaction to the fact that the United States is becoming less white, less Christian and less straight over time," says Mel Manuel, Queer Northshore's other cofounder.

The general debate about

FOR THE WIN

POLAND'S RIGHT-WING LAW AND JUSTICE

party has lost its parliamentary majority after eight years in power. The October election saw the highest turnout in Poland since 1989. The three opposition parties collectively won more than 53% of the electorate and voters boycotted an anti-immigration referendum, resulting in its failure.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY HAS JOINED

Illinois in eliminating cash bail for lower-level crimes, opting to issue citations and instructions to appear in court rather than arrest those accused of misdemeanors or nonviolent felonies. Cash bail systems disproportionately impact people of color and women.

R CALIFORNIA IS NOW MARKING THE WEEK of April 28 as "Workplace Readiness Week." Thanks to a new law, all public high schools will be required to teach students about unions, workers' safety, wage protections, prohibitions against retaliation and more. The effort should also help address child labor exploitation.

stored in 20 underground tanks in Hawai'i, Activists had long warned that the World War II-era tank farm posed a threat to local water supplies, but the military denied the risk. After 2.000 people fell ill due to petroleum contaminating their tap water, public pressure forced the military to act.

JAILED IRANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Narges Mohammadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work fighting the oppression of women in Iran, spurring international calls for her release. Mohammadi has served multiple sen-

> tences amounting to 12 years of imprisonment since she was first arrested in 2011. She is currently in Tehran's Evin Prison on charges of antistate propaganda.

banning books is, of course, not new. Titles ranging from James Joyce's *Ulysses* to Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses have been persistently targeted. And within the past quartercentury, the U.S. religious Right has challenged everything from Harry Potter (portrays witchcraft) to the picture book And Tango Makes Three (depicts penguin homosexuality).

But what is happening now is unique, says Tasslyn Magnusson, coauthor of the PEN America report "Banned in the USA: The Mounting Pressure to Censor," which documents more than 3,000 book bans in U.S. public school classrooms and libraries during the 2022-23 school yearmost of them written by or about women, people of color and LGBTQ authors.

In the past year, right-wing groups began targeting hundreds of books at once—a tactic designed to overwhelm librarians, who must produce reports on each. For each complaint in St. Tammany, library policy has been to pull the book from circulation and refer it to an internal committee for review—a

time-consuming process.

"It has now become a full-blown, full-time experience of censorship everywhere," Magnusson says. "They say their goal is just to get rid of pornographic books, but in no place has it ever stopped there. ... Then, there begins to be a dialogue about, 'Well, what are librarians doing in schools anyways? Why do we have a library?"

In the whirlwind of book challenges nationwide, St. Tammany stands out for the sheer volume of complaints.

In response, Manuel says, the St. Tammany Library Alliance

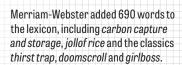
ALL THE NEWS THAT WAS FIT TO PRINT— AND WHAT GOT PRINTED INSTEAD

IN CASE YOU **MISSED IT**

Nearly 11 million people have tuned in to watch a 72-year-old widower search for love on The Golden Bachelor.







HYPED

Biden acknowledged that border walls don't work even as his administration waived 26 federal laws to expand the Trump-era barrier in South Texas.





California Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a bill banning caste discrimination, eliciting praise from Hindu nationalist organizations linked to India's far-right prime minister, Narendra Modi.



A 2,749-pound pumpkin squashed its competition at a California championship, setting the world record for biggest gourd.



The bear known as 128 Grazer beat 11 competitors in Alaska's annual Fat Bear Week, even topping 32 Chunk and 747.

Over 60% of Australians voted against a referendum to constitutionally recognize the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and create an Indigenous advisory body in Parliament.





More than 300 human rights abuses-including torture-have been committed against LGBTQ Ugandans since the implementation of the country's Anti-Homosexuality Act.





uses diverse strategies and tactics to challenge the bans. They encourage organizers to research books, create shareable infographics, organize group meetings, reach out to local political leaders, attend meetings and make petitions.

It seems to be paying off. Public comment at library board meetings increasingly tilts in support of the challenged books, and the alliance has helped fight off several proposed bans.

Back at the committee meeting, library director Kelly LaRocca shares the findings of the internal review. Two Boys Kissing, she reports, portrays "the joy and despair of being a teen, especially a gay teen." Once public comment ends, the board votes to keep the title on the shelf.

About two months later, in October—with 150 challenged books waiting for internal review and limited library capacity to assess them-the St. Tammany Library announced a policy change: It would no longer pull challenged books from circulation while the books await review. That decision effectively thwarts the key right-wing strategy of using cumbersome processes as a backdoor means of banning books. Still, with new challenges surely ahead and book-banning laws continuing to spread nationwide, the alliance knows they're in for a long fight.

"We are very consciously and meticulously trying to make our community visible, and I think that's definitely upset some people," Manuel says. "They want us to be quiet so we can ignore each other, but we're not going to be quiet."

KATIE JANE FERNELIUS is a journalist and producer living in New Orleans.

KNOW YOUR LOCAL *FASCISTS*

IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S **INLAND EMPIRE. FAR-RIGHT ACTIVISTS ASSOCIATED WITH** THE PROUD BOYS HAVE SPENT

the past year hanging banners from overpasses to broadcast queerphobic messages across the region. "Parents of Trans Kids Promote Mental Illness," they read. Or: "The Rainbow Belongs to God, Not to LGBTQ."

The banner battle is just one front in an ongoing conflict surrounding the region's Redlands schools. A network of LGBTO parents and allies, including several from the group Safe Redlands Schools (SRS), have a text line to receive alerts from community members warning when a new banner drops—to make sure it's taken down.

Shortly after forming, SRS opposed the school board campaign of Erin Stepien, whose platform opposed critical race theory, "gender ideology curriculum" and vaccine mandates. SRS continues to advocate against book bans and to support LGBTQ students at contentious school board meetings, drawing the ire of far-right groups. Several Proud Boys' banners call out SRS directly: "Protect Your Kids From SRS and Leftist Extremism." "SRS Promotes Grooming."

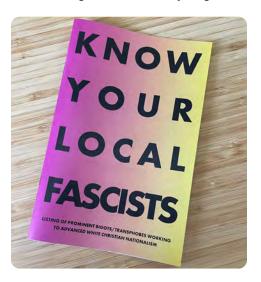
A particular target for the Right is the SRS cofounder and artist known as @eyerollsandbloodlust, a local MFA student in graphic design who runs social media accounts promoting anti-capitalist, anti-fascist politics. She prefers not to use her real name—which is sometimes plastered across the banners—here to prevent harassment. She once found a flyer glued to her front door with her name and photo adorned with swastikas, labeling her a "Marxist cunt" (a label she embraced).

"They were very easily able to paint me as ... 'scary antifa girl,'" she says, because of the radical politics in her social media posts. "Which is very funny because I'm 5'2" and a single mom."

For her MFA thesis, rather than a gallery show ("so boring," she says), she decided to host a community event to subvert the far-right attacks. She hung up confiscated banners, bought a "fuckton of spray paint," and let people go to town.

"It was incredible," she says, estimating attendance at the September 30 event at more than 200 people. Community members covered the Proud Boys' signs in hearts, peace signs and messages such as "keep trans kids safe" and "we protect us."

One of the ways "we protect us" in Redlands involves volunteers, many dads dressed in bright vests offering to walk people to and from the parking lot at school board meetings, to limit harassment. Fearing that the Proud Boys might



crash her art event, @eyerollsandbloodlust asked a larger-than-normal security crew for help. While the show was open to the community, she provided the team with zines that included the names and faces of some commonly known provocateurs who were not invited: "Know your local fascists," read the cover.

A short video of the zine, to her surprise, went viral on social media, collecting more than 10.000 likes and 2 million views on X (formerly Twitter) as of November 2. The zine draws on the research and work of other moms in the area, she says, and that work is ongoing. They're currently preparing for next year's school board elections and planning an event to provide free school supplies to local students.

"My 16-year-old is trans," she says. "It's really important that my kid's safe in school and that my kid can also safely express himself."

-DAYTON MARTINDALE

WHATISTO DE DONE?

A conversation with

JAMELLE BOUIE

ALEX HAN

NANCY MACLEAN

TARSO LUÍS RAMOS

OLÚFÉMI O. TÁÍWÒ



That deeply incomplete accounting may be shocking, but for anyone who's paid attention to the Right over the past three, seven or 20 years, it shouldn't be a surprise; the Right has been laying the groundwork for these horrors for years. Whether people are paying attention, or enough attention, is another question.

street performer on New York City's F train. Municipal governments weren't proposing to criminalize driving on their roads to obtain abortions out of state. Many fewer books had been banned. Texas hadn't laced the Rio Grande with razor wire. Idaho still had enough OB-GYNs.

> That's why ITT is publishing this special issue. Because the situation already is dire enough, but next year's election promises a race to the bottom. It's not neoliberal hysteria to say

that Trump winning the presidency in 2024 could be the nail in the coffin of American democracy; the Right, led by the Heritage Foundation, has already published its blueprints with pride. Even if Trump doesn't win, half the country already lives under an effectively separate Constitution with sharply curtailed rights.

So what do we do? How do we fight back? We asked some of the smartest people we know.

-KATHRYN JOYCE, ISSUE EDITOR

How do you see the right wing today? Is it different from five or 10 years ago?

NANCY MACLEAN: As dangerous as the Right

was 10 years ago, it's infinitely more dangerous now. They have captured one of the country's two major parties and turned it against the factual universe and toward authoritarianism. One of the most troubling developments is the willingness of corporate donors—particularly in the fossil fuel sector—to rely on Christian nationalists to power their agenda. We're seeing that all around the country, in really dangerous new ways-intimidation at community-level institutions from public health to election administration and schools—that are beyond anything we've seen since the attacks on the civil rights movement. It's a really serious situation.

JAMELLE BOUIE: I would add that today's Right has a much more explicitly authoritarian orientation than we've previously seen from the main-

stream Right. It's basically, "How can we take the administrative state and weaponize it against our political and cultural enemies?" That's the signal effort of right-wing groups like the Heritage Foundation with regards to the prospect of a second Trump administration. That's distinctive. It's not as if

the Tea Party-era conservative movement was especially pro-democracy, but it

presented itself as representing the people who'd been underrepresented in the institutions. And as recently as 15 years ago, Republicans talked about winning national majorities. You don't hear that talk anymore. Today's Right is almost openly contemptuous of the idea of popular legitimacy. Everywhere you look, extremely rightwing state Republican parties are looking for every avenue to either remove voters' power or make it essentially impossible for voters to remove them from office.

TARSO LUÍS RAMOS: I spent decades disabusing

people of the idea that the Right was all one thing—that they all had the same agenda, that they were all Nazis, they were all Christian Right. And there continue to be important distinctions

that we better figure out how to wedge. However, key institutions are now working in lockstep at a scale I have not seen in the 35 years I've been doing this. It's

a coalition whose various partners have somewhat different endgames for the society they

wish to govern. But they're united in the conclusion that they can only enact their agenda by means of minority rule. I suppose they'll fight it out amongst themselves what sort of authoritarians they'll be: more openly white supremacist, more theocratic, more corporate-dominated?

ALEX HAN: The different alignments that

exist inside the Right—the openly white nationalist bent, the question around women's bodily autonomy, the attacks on trans youth—all those things used to be subordinate to whatever the driving force behind the bloc was—corporatist or Christian Right. But all those things are so nakedly out there right now.



TARSO. It's also important to recognize there's less standing in their way. The relative strength of progressive to centrist forces, the hollowing out of Democrats' liberal tradition into neoliberalism, the willingness to make concessions to white supremacy—there's just less in their way. This is true in the international arena as well, with a rising global axis of right-wing authoritarian states and not even the pretense of a counterweight. There is nothing in the international scene to block the United States from going in an increasingly authoritarian direction.

Well, why is the Right winning?

NANDY. On issue after issue, progressives have built national majorities, whether on climate, taxing billionaires or women's reproductive rights. Yet we're losing. How?

Well, they've been working at this for over 50 years, lining up the institutional infrastructure, hamstringing labor unions—particularly public sector unions, which

lobby for all kinds of progressive goods—and capturing governments in 28 states to ram

through massive voter suppression and the most sophisticated gerrymandering we've ever seen.



But the other thing the Right did that was so strategic was not to take the courts for granted. They began a project in the 1970s of court capture and constitutional transformation. And we see the success of that in the Supreme Court now with *Dobbs*, the decisions against environmental policy, the incredible pro-corporate decisions, ending affirmative action...

We're losing on so many fronts not because our ideas are bad, and not because we don't have majority backing, but because we have allowed the rules to be rigged to such a point that it's very hard to defend even past gains, much less advance a new progressive agenda.

JAMELLE. I'm going to mildly disagree—like a-mild-sauce-at-Taco-Bell disagree. It's undeniable that the Right has a Supreme Court supermajority and that it's been able, in some states, to create laboratories of autocracy. But from another perspective, this is all a reaction to the Right's consistent inability to muster popular majorities for their agenda. A political movement that decides to target the judiciary is a political movement trying to burrow itself into the least responsive parts of the political system, and which is actually quite vulnerable to political defeat.

Not for nothing, if Biden only serves one term, he will have appointed more people to the entire federal judiciary than Trump did. If he serves two, then pull back and look at 16 years of two nonconsecutive, eightyear Democratic presidents appointing judges. That's a different picture than right-wing victory.

There are real right-wing successes, especially on the very local level, but also significant pushback on that same level. The efforts to ban abortion have basically thrown the pro-life movement into crisis.

My sense is that the political Right has real power and influence, but it's highly contested throughout every level of American political life. And that helps explain the virulence of the Right in this moment. If you read these people on the regular, you see this apocalyptic sense that they're living in a last-gasp attempt to win some final victory. That's not the posture of a movement that thinks it's winning. It's the posture of a movement that thinks if it doesn't do this, it's done for the duration.

NANCY: I agree. The Right's desperation is a measure of significant Left advance over so many issues. I would add that I've never seen the Left as seriously committed to electoral work in my lifetime. And progressives are waging a fight for the soul of the Democratic Party. So we have to keep both sides in view. We have tremendous potential on the Left side, which helps explain why the Right is talking about the end of the republic and "this is the last time we can win by nonviolence."

Why should the Left care about the Right, and does it? Historically, there's a sense that the Left has a responsibility to fight fascism and authoritarianism. Is it still showing up for that

fight?

OLÚFÉMI O. TÁÍWÒ: This probably differs issue to issue, but generally I've thought the Left's role is to exert pressure on the center. To use Cop City as an ex-

ample, while we would like people to have a leftist, anti-capitalist critique, all it would require to get liberals in the game is for them to believe themselves. I don't think it's necessary for the Left to unmask the various right-wing

assholes we know are behind a project like Cop City. Getting the Stacey Abramses of the world off the fence is sufficient.

Many of the political fights we're facing have something like this character. The fight about critical race theory, about who can be on which teams in schools we are not, in those fights, in the territory where you need to be a leftist to understand what position is against the Right.

NANCY: That reminds me of something David Roediger once said: that the tragedy of the Left in the U.S. is that it doesn't get to be a Left, because it always has to step in and become the liberal presence at moments like what you're describing, or embolden liberals to stand for values they should be standing for.

ALEX: Cop City really exhibits the neoliberal, center-to-far-right alliance that has defined so much of the last 50 years. In Chicago, our last mayor's race was largely the progressive Left versus an alliance of MAGA forces and center Democrats. That's what we see in Cop City as well: Atlanta's Democratic city structure working with every bad actor in the country to accomplish right-wing goals.

I was in the Tamiment Library labor archives at NYU last week, and was surrounded by the archives of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade—American volunteers, most of them Communist, who traveled to Europe to fight the fascists during the Spanish Civil War. It's a reminder, from a different moment, of the Left's traditional role vis a vis an authoritarian political Right, which is to lead the anti-fascist front. The fight of the UAW against the Big Three is in its own way a front against a different variety of fascism and authoritarianism.

"As dangerous as the Right was 10 years ago, it's infinitely more dangerous now. They have captured one of the country's two major parties and turned it against the factual universe and toward authoritarianism."

-NANCY MACLEAN

TARSO: The Right stands for racial, religious, gender and economic hierarchy, for the unregulated capitalist plunder of the planet and the commodification of all human interactions. So why does the Left need to care? Because the Left needs to stand for human freedom, equality, solidarity. Much of what the Right stands for destroys

the possibility of humanity.

Does the Left care about the Right? That's an interesting question.

There's a tendency to think about the struggle for power in the United States as a two-sided fight, with the Left standing with the people against concentrated government and corporate power. But at the minimum, we have a three-sided fight. On the third side are very powerful right-wing forces, also contesting for power with the state and with capitalism. And they're contesting the Left for a social base, sometimes attacking the Left explicitly and violently.

As Alex pointed out, 75 years ago there was a much deeper understanding on the Left of authoritarianism and fascism. I've had very few conversations in recent years where leftist and progressive organizers volunteered a gender analysis of authoritarianism. Even though, if we look back at the Frankfurt School's work on authoritarian personality, which sought to explain the "Good German" phenomenon, we know that appeals to gender hierarchy justify not only strong-man

leadership, but a violently hierarchical order that appeals to people who are willing to be dominated, as long as they understand their place in the social order and get to dominate others. So, is the Left exercising leadership in understanding the Right and leading the fight against it?



NANCY: There are people in our and other countries writing about this. Lots of feminists have been on this beat. So it's there, but many organizations haven't incorporated it into their understanding. And some of that has to do, frankly, with white men on the Left who never got over the eclipse of Students for a Democratic Society by radical African American activists and feminists, who have this notion of class politics versus identity politics that will be the death of us all in a world that is both/and, not either/or. But it's important to recognize that those feminist analyses are out there. It's just a question of who gets the mic.

TARSO: I agree the analysis is there, but it's not informing the Left's strategy. Even though in any country that has mounted mass mobilizations against authoritarian regimes, whether it's Iran, Brazil or Belarus, women and femme fronts have been front and center. Yet it hasn't emerged as a strategic imperative for the U.S. Left to figure this out?

The U.S. Left can be incoherent with respect to its own agency. Sometimes it imagines it has much more power than it actually has, like we're one crisis away from a fundamental socialist breakthrough. Sometimes it imagines we have zero power and are being dragged around like a rag doll by Democrats, so let's focus on complaining about how the Democratic Party isn't advancing working-class interests, as though it was anything more than a donors' club.

OLÚFÉMI: There are a lot of failures of analysis on the Left, and they don't do us any favors when we're thinking strategically about which political movements to link with in mass-movement politics.

But I also wonder if our problem is even more basic than that: just a sheer imbalance of practical capacity. The National Furry Convention is an order of magnitude larger than the DSA convention. There's not a lot of us! We represent the people that don't have the money. And we don't have a shadowy cabal of billionaires to make up for the lack of majority alignment with our views in the way the Right makes up for it with dollars.

We need a practical answer to that. The Right has a whole ecosystem of talk radio. We have great publications like this one, but I'd love to see the readership and viewership of orgs like *In These Times* an order of magnitude larger than it is. To get there, we have to

> find a posture toward the center-left that is something other than disdain as wrong as they may be on the issues. But more centrally, we need a set of communication and recruitment infrastructures that can compete with the Right.

What would a broad front to fight the Right look like?

ALEX: It's hard to learn lessons from local politics, but I think the Chicago mayor's race was the first time an electoral coalition was led by Left institutions—particularly the Chicago Teachers Union, but an array of others that took on leadership. I really don't think there's another example in modern American history. So it's a question of where does infrastructure exist to create a winning coalition.

Left: Members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade were released by fascist Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War in 1938. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade was a group of U.S. volunteers who fought for Spanish Republican forces as part of the International Brigades, against the fascist forces of Francisco

Franco and the Spanish Nationalists. Approximately 800 of the U.S. volunteers died in the war.



Many of us on the Left are going to have to get out of a mode of disliking the people who are closest to us in the sharpest way. We need a real power analysis: What are the institutional forces in our political space that can actually lead? The excitement in and around the labor movement goes unstated a lot of the time, but the question isn't whether a particular contract fight or organizing campaign will win. The subtext is: Can these institutions and groupings build enough power to help build a bigger movement that can actually provide meaningful structural gains?

NANDY. It's also important to think about where the vulnerabilities are on the other side and how their coalition might be fractured. This is a place where there was significant difference between liberals and the Left during the Trump administration. There was a real push from some liberal think tanks to orient toward Republican Never Trumpers and avoid broader critique.

We saw that play out with the January 6 hearings too. Liz Cheney's commitment to the project was hugely important, but she charged a price: to not talk about the other Republicans who enabled Trump and fed into the plot to overthrow the will of the voters.

It's become clear the Never Trumper strategy only ever pulled aside a few people, though it raised a ton of money for the groups that were part of it. In the meantime, a lot of work needed to be done, which wasn't, to show the impact of this radical-right agenda on people's lives. That would be a more effective way to fracture the coalition and realign a critical mass of voters, maybe even some industries.

JAMELLE. It's not a given that the center-left is going to look to its right for partners. I might have a more positive feeling toward the Biden administration than some people on the Left, but I actually think it's a good example of how these things are contestable and how a strategy, at least among congressional progressives, of trying to be reliable working partners, has paid dividends in ways you may not expect, like the extent to which the Biden administration continued to look for ways to pursue climate policy.

Kristen Eichamer (right), a communications advisor for the right-wing Heritage Foundation, tables for Project 2025 at the Iowa State Fair on August 14 in Des Moines. Project 2025 is the group's blueprint for a second Donald Trump presidency, which plots a purge of civil servants and the centralization of power in the president's hands.



"The political Right has real power and influence, but it's highly contested throughout every level of American political life. And that helps explain the virulence of the Right in this moment."

-JAMELLE BOUIE

OLÚFÉMI: It's worth remembering that we are a weird breed, in thinking about politics all the time. Politics has a much more minor role in most people's lives. And while a lot of people express support for either party, or what sounds to us like milguetoast liberal opinions, they would be open to other perspectives if given concrete proposals about how to get involved beyond just casting a ballot every couple of years.

I think back to 2017, when Trump talked about banning Muslims and thousands of people streamed to whatever airport they could get to, because there's a long history of teaching people that how you effect change is you stand somewhere in public and hold a sign. I have nothing against protests. But people felt moved to do something, and they did the thing that occurred to them as a way of showing support. They did the same thing three years later after the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

There's going to come a time—I think actually pretty soon, given the way the UAW is moving—where people are going to realize there are other things to do beyond just expressing disagreement with what the government is up to. The question is, who is going to get that message out first and loudest? Is it going to be the center-left saying, "You can also sign a MoveOn.org petition," or is it going to be us saying, "Join this union, walk that picket line"?

When the Right talks to its base, they talk to them as soldiers. We too often talk to our party faithful as scholars or pundits, or-

NANCY: ATMs.

OLÚFÉMI: Yeah. Honestly.

NANCY: I mean, of all those "digital organizing" emails, maybe one in a hundred are about "take this action," "be part of this." And if there is anything like that, it instantly goes to the donate button.

Maybe it works, but it's also burning a lot of turf. We all know we're being played for suckers when we sign an online petition now.

TARSO: A broad front against fascism and authoritarianism should run the gamut from antifa on the street to anti-Trump generals, with a growing role for mass organizations on the Left. One way the Left can play an outsized role, even as a less powerful force, is by providing accurate and consistent assessments of the balance of forces, along with strategic guidance for defeating the authoritarian bloc. Because the power of denialism is so strong, many forces within the Democratic Party just want to get back to making little neoliberal adjustments and calling it progress. Very few want to admit that we're dealing with authoritarianism. A Left program for defeating the Right can and should carry the day.

Of course, strategic clarity is insufficient. To supplant the authoritarian program, the Left also needs to build organizational and political and cultural capacity with masses of working people. It's not just a question of building the broad front that keeps the worst things from happening, and then going back to a politics that crushes our people slowly rather than quickly.

Lastly, the combination of rising political instability and violence and the Right's state-level capture means we are likely to find ourselves in a protracted struggle with racialized authoritarianism, regardless of who's holding the White House. That's going to require a lot of strategic shifts. Most of us were not organizing during Jim Crow, or when abortion was illegal in most of the country. Figuring out how to deal with substantial authoritarian-occupied territory will profoundly shift how we build power.

NANCY: I appreciate your language of occupied territories, Tarso. I live in North Carolina. Life is very different for those of us behind the red curtain. Things are getting very dire.



ITT executive director Alex Han sees the seeds of "a multiracial, multi-gender populism of the Left" in this year's strikes across industries nationwide. Here, janitors with Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ march in Boston on October 27 after voting to authorize a strike.

How should we think about the Right's claims of a political realignment, and that they now represent the working class?

MANDY: We should stop treating it as a new thing. My first book was about the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. It was all about reactionary populism, with many of the inflections we're seeing now. Then, the "elites" were under attack for being open to reforming the brutal Jim Crow system in the South. Liberal clergy were attacked as cultural elites. That was a feature of interwar fascism too: attacking "liberal elites" and ideas that came with the Enlightenment. This goes so, so far back.

We're seeing a new iteration of something old, which is all about attacking reforms that would make the country a more egalitarian place, and nothing about supporting workers or attacking corporations (except now the attacks on some corporations for supporting environmental or diversity programs). But it's gotten more traction with white people of different classes, and even some Latinos, because of the years

of neoliberal policy that shattered the labor movement and the role that unions had in insulating not all, but many, white men from embracing this kind of politics.

The more we recognize this as having very deep roots, the better off we'll be.

JAMELLE: It is absolutely the case that right-wing populism has deep roots in American society, and the current situation grows out of a long tradition.

But so much of the right-wing populist message seems tied specifically to Donald Trump, and other politicians who attempt to do it can't figure it out. Maybe this relates back to my previous view that the political landscape is more contested than it looks. Even with real changes in the electorate—specifically Trump's inroads with working-class men of color—it's worth considering the extent to which that is a Trump-specific phenomena. I don't know what that means post-Trump—assuming there's a post-Trump moment.

"Many of us on the Left are going to have to get out of a mode of disliking the people who are closest to us in the sharpest way."

-ALEX HAN

OLÚFÉMI: It is really difficult to know what the lesson is from Trump. I was listening to rappers reference Trump in the '90s. He was in *Home Alone* 2. He was in WWE—he smeared shaving cream on Vince McMahon's head for some reason. He did a thing that, like Jamelle said, cashed in on his pre-political history. I wouldn't say Trump's charisma is singular, but there's a formula there that other people—Ron DeSantis or Greg Abbott—might not be able to cash in on.

But I'm inclined to agree with Nancy. This is a long set of right-wing tactics that's less a coherent strategy than a set of malleable recruitment tactics. And I don't think there's much for the Left to do other than realize we're competing for the silent middle. Either unions and the institutions we're about will win those people over, or they will. I think that's the question, rather than "is this fascism? is this sparkling Bonapartism?" It's a question of who will win those numbers and how quickly.

TARSO: There is malleability for sure. There's also reaping the benefits of having animated entirely new populations into U.S. politics, going back 40 or 50 years, then very patiently building the federated alliances that allow for synergy now. It looks and sounds incoherent, but it makes sense to those being mobilized, who have grown into a bloc of 40 million people.

There's a Left sensibility of not wanting to take these kinds of politics seriously. There is still a strong tendency to think the government's primary responsibility is just delivering economic benefits. I certainly don't take issue with the need to do that, but it will not be enough.

If we don't define our project in terms of who we are as a people at a moment when that's what's being contested—like, who's the people who deserve the stuff then we're not likely to win. Not in the near term. Or if we "win" because people are just too scared of what Trump represents, that's not a power-building path. We can't just wait for the implosion of authoritarianism's

most charismatic operative. The Left needs to really grapple with the terrain of culture war. We don't want to fight within our opposition's frame. But what is our answer at the level of identity, of belonging? What do we stand for? Who's the "we" that stands for it?

ALEX: The Right's definition of populism is calcified—overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) white and male, with a class character that is aesthetically "working class" but is, in reality, dominated by the relatively wealthy.

We've seen how a multiracial, multi-gender populism of the Left could exist. Part of the issue is our ability to define what that populism looks like, and not just a cosplay, two-dimensional version of it. At moments like the 2020 racial justice uprising, we've seen glimmers of it. Or in this year's strikes by autoworkers, healthcare workers, screenwriters, actors and so many others. Or in the campaigns to save abortion rights in states like Kansas and Ohio. These give shape to the kind of populism we need to win. We are the majority, and those who seek to take away our rights are the elite minority. And we need to express ourselves as a majoritarian project in order to win.

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BY KATHRYN JOYCE + JEFF SHARLET

Losing the Plot

What do we make of former friends who fell down the rabbit hole of the Right?

> OW TO NAME THE RUDE CURRENTS ERODING THE Left, those which have claimed the hearts, minds and Substacks of so many former friends and fellow travelers? There are the journalist-provocateurs and the readers who have followed them rightward, the Trumpers-come-lately marching on to Glenn Greenwald's Rumble or vanishing into Max Blumenthal's Grayzone. There are those not quite yet there, such as Ana Kasparian of *The Young Turks*, currently mourning the leftism she now believes "gaslit" her about a "crime wave" it refuses to admit. "I'm going through something very real and very sincere," she told a "disaffected Democrats" podcast in July, "and it's uncomfortable." It is, indeed.

Consider the dislocation that flickers across the face of journalist Matt Taibbi in a TV interview this summer for the conspiracist, right-wing *Epoch Times*. Acclaimed by the Left during Occupy Wall Street as a scourge of corporate power, Taibbi is best known for his years at Rolling Stone. When the day eventually comes, the "vampire squid relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money"— Taibbi's unforgettable embodiment of Goldman Sachs in a 2010 article—will haunt his obituary.

While Taibbi insists his politics haven't changed—an oddly conservative way to insist one hasn't become conservative—his surroundings certainly have. Wearing a velvety brown jacket, jeans and his default smirk, he sat for his *Epoch Times* interview amid the libertarian FreedomFest conference. This year, in addition to Taibbi, it featured as speakers presidential candidates RFK Jr. (an Independent) and Vivek Ramaswamy (a Republican), along with former candidate Tulsi Gabbard (now a former Democrat, too), united in their contempt for "wokeness." Epoch Times' Jan Jekielek anointed Taibbi an "American Thought Leader" for Taibbi's critique of a timid, consensus-driven press that, he says, is reminiscent of the Soviet Union.

As Taibbi charges that the media is unwilling "to raise questions about things that have been 'decided,'"

Jekielek's eyes light up. It reminds him of his own experience bucking consensus, he says, when, as a university student, he realized the core tenet of evolutionary science "simply was untrue." Gulp. In the midst of nodding along, Taibbi's normally expressive, still-boyish face seems to freeze, his fingers to tense on his knee. It's a moment recognizable from countless movies. Imagine the record scratch, the freeze frame, the familiar Hollywood voiceover: "You're probably wondering how I got here."

TAIBBI'S FAR FROM THE FIRST. CONSIDER the case of David Horowitz, once a founding sponsor of this magazine, more recently author of Blitz: Trump Will Smash the Left and Win. Or, after him, Christopher Hitchens, whose knowledge of Iraqi Ba'athism led him, after 9/11, to align first with U.S. neoconservatives and ultimately with the very kind of religious nationalists he'd so long derided. We might mark 9/11 as a moment when many who believed they were for peace gave in to the notion that it can only be won through war. Post-October 7 may prove another such moment.

> But the present left-to-right acceleration began in earnest with the onset of the Trump years, in 2017.

There are the intellectualsin-exile, the scholars whose oncecontained complaints about free speech or diversity initiatives metastasized into a broad contrarianism that found new patrons. There are the not-so-funny-anymore, the comedians once known for their left politics—Chappelle and Roseanne and Russell Brand-pulled rightward by "jokes" about trans people, pandemic panics and pedophiles. There's the "new New Right's" very own Kennedy—Robert F., Jr., of the bulging biceps. RFK Jr. may seem, with his campaign pushups, little more than a joke to young leftists, but his history as a champion of intersectional environmentalism is long: as a leader of activist organizations, a lawyer for poor

communities of color and a host for the defunct progressive radio network Air America. But in recent years, he's been having second thoughts: We all know about Bobby and the vaxx, but did you know he's recently "learned" we must seal the Southern border to protect our food supply from a "tsunami" of "defecating" migrants, shitting on our greens?

These left-to-right sliders (or at least left-ish-toright)—themselves migrants across the political divide—find themselves in strange constellation with those they might once have disdained. Pop feminist icon Naomi Wolf now conferences with hard-right student organizer Charlie Kirk over the prospect of "capital punishment" for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. YouTuber Jimmy Dore, another once-left comedian who lost hold of the joke, now marvels over his meeting of the minds with Tucker Carlson: "We should do a show together!" Call it The Horseshoe Hour.

Except "horseshoe theory," which imagines a political spectrum bending to meet at its extremes, doesn't describe this drift. It goes in one direction.

It's easy to dismiss many of these high-profile defectors as crackpots or spotlight-seekers, as never truly serious in their political principles or as plain grifters. Because of course there is money to be made by saying, "Once I was blind, but now I see." It permits the Steve Bannons of the world to affirm their political faith not as an argument, but just the truth. But, in some ways, the peculiarities of the celebrity drifters are beside the point.

The point is who they bring along.

Over the past seven years, they—the intellectuals, the comedians, their fans, the growing cohort of voters now leaning toward RFK Jr. (22% in one November poll)—have taken "red pills" a la *The Matrix*, tumbled down rabbit holes in the Wonderland sense. In moments of great flux—the 1960s from which Horowitz fled, the post-9/11 years, the current clusterfuck of crises so vast and interconnected that they might more simply be called our condition-such portals, from one reality to another, are plentiful. And currently they're mostly riddling the Left as fascism gathers force, drawing together tendencies that didn't previously align. There's the rabbit hole of a Manichaean antiimperialism, in which the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and the twisting logic by which some come to believe first in Vladimir Putin and then in the self-declared "illiberal democracy" of Hungary's Viktor Orbán. There's the gender confusion of "trans-exclusionary radical feminists," who begin with a defense of women's-only spaces and

then fall, like J.K. Rowling, into alliances with the Christian Right. There's the

Maybe there's a kind of gravity to the slide, the black hole of fascism sucking toward it all the loose particles of those whose commitments were never complex or whose convictions were snapped by despair.

race vs. class debate, and the declaration that identity is just a distraction. There's #MeToo, and the backlash of those who can't let go of fallen heroes. There are genuine critiques of the concept of "white fragility" that collapse into white fragility, no quotation marks.

Matt Taibbi's own slide began in 2017, after the release of his book about the police killing of Eric Garner, I Can't Breathe, was derailed by the resurrection of his misogynistic exploits as a young expat reporter in post-Soviet Moscow. Taibbi's apologies didn't quell the criticism. Then he started talking about "cancel culture"; then liberal media bias; then, late in 2022, he made himself the mouthpiece for Elon Musk's Twitter Files project. In March, he found himself in a congressional hearing, nodding along as Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) described Democrats as a McCarthyite mob. In November, Taibbi and two other Twitter Files reporters received a \$100,000 award from a program of the Young America's Foundation, long a bridge between establishment conservatives and each generation's shoutiest right-wing youth.

In similar fashion, Naomi Wolf's path from a liberal third-wave feminist writer of "big ideas" books to a regular guest on Steve Bannon's War Room and Fox News beganor perhaps sped up—with a career humiliation. As Naomi Klein recounts in her recent book *Doppelganger: A Trip Into* the Mirror World, the premise of Wolf's 2019 book Outrages collapsed on live air over a misunderstanding of an archaic

legal term. By 2021, Wolf had emerged as a key purveyor of Covid-19 conspiracy theories, warning that "vaccine passports equal slavery forever.'

"We're seeing people turn right for a number of different reasons," argues journalist Eoin Higgins, author of a forthcoming book on formerly left-wing journalists who've aligned with reactionary tech billionaires. "There are financial incentives, there are attention incentives, there are culture war differences as people are becoming more conservative on culture; there's a sense of being betrayed by progressives and the Left. There are so many different reasons that reducing this to people going too far [left] and going to the Right is an oversimplification."

Maybe there's a kind of gravity to the slide, the black hole of fascism sucking toward it all the loose particles of those whose commitments were never complex or whose convictions were snapped by despair. And the accusation that arises with almost every left-to-right slider, that they're sell-outs, just doing it for the money? Yes, some are. Yes, and—because even when it starts that way, the transaction is transformational.

IN THE WAKE OF BERNIE SANDERS'

loss in the 2020 presidential election, a small collection of leftists reconstituted themselves as "post-left," still opposed to capitalism but scornful of "identitarian politics" and so disgusted with the liberal-left—from Democrats to the Democratic Socialists of America—that they saw little issue allying with the Right.

UnHerd, a U.K.-based "heterodox" opinion website founded by a Brexit supporter, covered the movement in a piece titled "Twilight of the American Left." To the postleft, explained contributor Park MacDougald, the real U.S. ruling class is a Democratic oligarchy that uses the threat of creeping fascism and white nationalism to consolidate power, and deploys "'identity politics,' 'antiracism,' 'intersectionality' and other pillars of the progressive culture war" as "mystifications whose function is to demoralize and divide the proletariat." Leftists merely serve as that regime's "unwitting dupes."

But distinct from other "class-first" leftists, the post-left didn't believe a real Left remained at all. Hence the doubleedged title of the now defunct podcast What's Left?, cohosted by Australian social media personality Aimee Terese, a former Sanders supporter who sought to "[heighten] the contradictions between left-liberal-identitarians and materialists" and who spent much of 2020 attacking progressive movements. After the primaries, the podcast gave voice to disillusioned Sanders supporters who railed against Sanders and other leftists for "sheep-dogging" people into

the Democratic Party. Terese's posts were shared by the likes of Mike Pompeo and Donald Trump Jr. The podcast began interviewing a range of right-wing leaders: "postliberal" scholars such as Harvard's Adrian Vermeule, rightpopulists like hillbilly elegist J.D. Vance and former Mitt Romney campaign staffer Oren Cass, who recast himself as a champion of, as his book puts it, *The Once and Future Worker*.

But Terese went further than her guests, embracing some of the most vicious far-right rhetoric online: "demographic replacement" conspiracy theories, calls to "trust the (race) science" or for the homeless to be "warehoused." These days, Terese cohosts a new podcast with friends from the ever-more-reactionary Independent Women's Forum and The Federalist. She's posted praise for the Confederacy, as well as a swastika, even as she aligns slightly more with Israel because her self-declared Islamophobia comes first. Such is the ouroboros of fascist contrarianism, the snake that bites its own tail.

It's no insult to use the F-word with regard to such beliefs. Terese herself calls fascism "the necessary corrective called forth by the existence of insane communists." It's an unwitting rephrasing of the Italian novelist Ignazio Silone's famous description of fascism as a "counter-revolution against a revolution that never took place."

And yet the internet makes it possible for left-to-righters to believe that revolution has taken place. Such is the illusion cast by, say, Libs of TikTok, which scours social media for foolish statements—they do exist—to decontextualize and amplify. If you silo yourself in that rabbit hole, it's easy to believe the most caricatured expressions of "wokeness" are overrunning our schools. It is a "very online" thing. But it isn't only online. Schools targeted by Libs of TikTok have become subject to bomb threats—so far, fake ones, but resulting in very real closures. In their book Meme Wars, Joan Donovan, Emily Dreyfuss and Brian Friedberg describe a "wires to weeds" cycle that is its own kind of ouroboros: "Someone makes an appeal online (wires) that leads to a real-life event (weeds), and at this event ... spectacle breaks out, which leads to media attention, which leads to conversation and action online (wires), which leads to a new event in the real world (weeds)," and so on. And each spectacle further cements a new underlying ideology.

In Manhattan, that sort of spectacle-call it the "cool factor" of bigoted rebellion—has been on display in real life in the widely chronicled, scene-y subculture of Dimes Square, where a group of mostly young, often arty people began to converge in 2020, in bars and pandemic-discounted lofts, eager to party despite Covid restrictions. Inspired by transgressing one boundary, they made a movement out of transgressing others. Reporters contrasted the young "downtown scene" as the inverse of earnest leftist politics, now recast as middle-aged moralism. One of the scene's patron saints, playwright Matthew Gasda, said the combination of "repressive Covid governance following years of Trump-era moral panics" had "produced a moment of ideological uncertainty and openness" in which some leftists found common cause

with conservatives and used "strategic irony" to counter what they viewed as a scolding, "woke" Left. Some declared the police killings that inspired the Black Lives Matter movement a racial "psy-op." Slurs—"retard" is ubiquitous, along with anti-queer terms and even the N-word—became a marker of "heterodox" thinking.

Anna Khachiyan and Dasha Nekrasova, the glamorous (their word) cohosts of the podcast Red Scare, which had formerly espoused a quasi-socialist politics, became the scene's queen tastemakers. They were beautiful, they came from Moscow and Minsk, they read difficult books and rolled their eyes and talked about far-right "race realists" like Steve Sailer, author of an anti-Obama book called America's Half-Blood Prince.

In theory, artists shocking the bourgeoisie is an old story. "This sort of thing has been seen before," says John Ganz, author of a forthcoming book on political volatility in the early 1990s. "A certain cultural elite thinking the transgression and vulgarity of fascism or right-wing populism is amusing and upsets all the right people. When Celine published his crazy antisemitic rant in the '30s, lots of French intellectuals thought he must be being ironic: 'This is such a wonderful provocation of middle-class sensibilities and hypocrisy." But, Ganz continues, "The problem is they also have to keep coming up with stuff to be provocative."

IN A 2017 ARTICLE, POLITICAL SCIENTIST Joseph E. Lowndes tells a cautionary tale about Telos, a once-Marxist journal founded in the 1960s that, by the 1990s, had become home to far-right thinkers who provided the intellectual backbone for the alt-right. Frustrated by their sense that all forms of dissent were co-opted and neutralized by capitalism, Telos' editors had searched farther and farther afield for movements that truly challenged social norms. Much of what they found was on the nationalist, racist Right.

It was an instructive story for the Trumpocene, Lowndes writes: "Globally, there are two major responses to this era of vast inequality, or two off ramps from neoliberalism: one left, one right." The right-wing response, he continues, is ascendant worldwide, transforming populist promises into nationalist policies. Meanwhile, too much of the Left is making the dangerous gamble that it can build power by avoiding issues "that divide the working class." That path, Lowndes warns, leads not to socialism, but "toward a politics that will be played out entirely on the landscape that the fascists are trying to create."

They have the money to do so, some of it from sources associated with venture capitalist Peter Thiel, whose strategic far-right funding has included the Senate campaigns of Arizona's Blake Masters and Ohio's J.D. Vance, an antiimmigration Super PAC and a contrarian Dimes Square film festival.

After 2016, right-wing intellectuals, flush with patronage, set about to retcon a theory of Trumpism. What was the

movement that had just upended U.S. politics? Ideas came from the new New Right-critics of the political theory of liberalism—for both letting boundless social liberty undermine the country's social foundation and for letting free markets immiserate the working and middle classes. They proposed a "realignment," combining more generous economic policies with stricter social conservatism—a call since repackaged for mass consumption as Republicans try to rebrand as the party of the "multiracial working class."

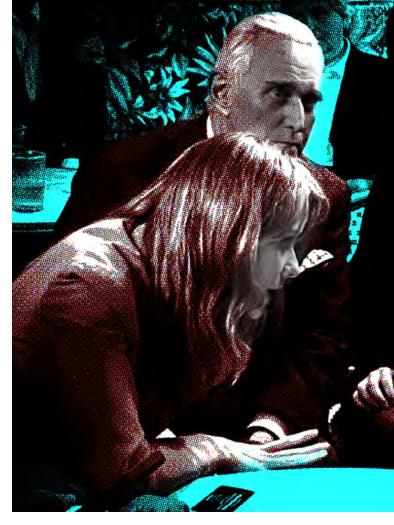
In October 2022, Ohio's Franciscan University of Steubenville, perhaps the most conservative Catholic college in the country, hosted a conference lauding FDR and Amazon union leader Christian Smalls. It was an academic affair, but Vance interrupted his Senate campaign to deliver its closing address.

The conference was organized by Sohrab Ahmari, an Iranian-American immigrant who converted to Catholicism on his way to becoming one of the most public faces of this realignment, as cofounder of the "heterodox" journal Compact. Launched in 2022, Compact's mission was to prosecute "a two-front war against the Left and the Right" by promoting "a strong social-democratic state that defends community-local and national, familial and religious—against a libertine left and a libertarian right." The premise, Ahmari told one of us last year, was building a coalition that could agree to disagree on abortion and LGBTQ rights, but whose consensus on a social welfare state would "lower the temperature" of the culture wars.

What *Compact*'s project has looked like in concrete terms is eclectic: a blend of articles about labor and corporate monopoly alongside self-described "neoreactionaries," anti-"woke" leftists who view corporate diversity statements as a smokescreen for capital, anti-immigration social democrats, anti-"gender ideology" feminists—and all that wrapped around Trump endorsements.

Online, leftists lampooned the interrelated post-left and new New Right projects. That the post-left was nothing more than "an internet clique waiting on a check" perhaps from someone like Thiel. Or that Compact existed "to expand GOP agitprop production by .04% into a new microniche." Or that the "New Right working class realignment" came with the disclaimer: "PRODUCT INTENDED FOR AESTHETIC/ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY & NOT LIABLE FOR POLICY OUTCOMES."

But aesthetics aren't nothing and the blurring of political boundaries lends space for full-fledged fascists to develop crossover appeal. In 2022, Compact warmly profiled the hashtag movement #MAGACommunism, which derides leftists for "demonizing MAGA supporters as inherently racist, xenophobic, and so on," arguing that they should instead be seen as "the only mass working-class and antiestablishment movement that currently exists in America." What do such figures mean by "working class"? "Racists," says one prominent #MAGACommunist, Jackson Hinkle, "hate me because I'm white." He has 2 million Twitter followers. This October, numerous leftists warned that Hinkle



was among the far-right actors opportunistically promoting the Palestinian cause to further their reach—he gained roughly 1.6 million of his followers in the first weeks of the war—and achieve their own, deeply different goals.

IN MID-2022, JUST MONTHS AFTER COMPACT launched, its main leftist founding editor, Edwin Aponte, was gone from the project. Later that year, he spoke with one of us, for a report at Salon, about why he'd joined in the first place.

"Why would this even be attractive to me?" he asked. He's a Marxist; he sees culture as secondary to material conditions. Sanders' first campaign had struck him as a mass movement coming around to his point of view. "And it all fell apart. ... Famous stuff on the Left: To lose your mind after the failure of your movement."

In the shifting aftermath, Aponte gravitated toward "rightleaning, right-curious leftists and Marxists" who echoed his thinking that "the cultural things actually don't matter." He felt he'd been isolated on the Left for his views and believed the same was true on the Right for Compact's other founding editors, Ahmari and Matthew Schmitz.

Compact's founders, Aponte said, pitched the project to him as one that sought "a strong, centralized and generous social democracy" and told him they weren't interested in



"relitigating settled issues" like abortion. (Ahmari and Schmitz insisted to Salon, in 2022, that their agreement "wasn't to preclude articles about abortion, but to refract abortion—and all other cultural issues—through a material lens.") After a draft of the Dobbs decision overturning Roe v. Wade was leaked that spring, Compact published what Aponte saw as a "triumphalist" proposal by a rightwing nationalist critic of neoliberalism: "One country can help us cut through the noise," declared the author, thinking not of the abortion debate, now settled in his mind, but of next steps. "When Hungary set out to reverse its catastrophic population declines, it picked one goal that has enabled the rest: promoting *marriage*."

Record scratch; freeze frame; voiceover: What, wondered Aponte, am I doing here?

Aponte realized the desire he shared with his right-wing co-editors for a social democratic state derived, for them, from a very different dream of the order that would result. Yes, like much of the postliberal new New Right, they saw the

Above: Podcasters Anna Khachiyan and Dasha Nekrasova attend, as "special guests," a party hosted by the New York Young Republican Club in March, as the Daily Beast's Kelly Weill reported. Organizers called the event "the horseshoe party," Roger Stone mixed drinks using Richard Nixon's "secret martini recipe" and Nekrasova argued that Pope Francis is a puppet of the Freemasons and the Jews.

benefits of economic policy made with the working class in mind. "But more importantly," Aponte suddenly understood, for his new comrades it was all "a way to forcefully apply their moral and cultural ideas": "It's a moral authoritarianism as centrally informing what the state would be. And everything flows from there."

Back then, Aponte feared what would happen if politicians who shared those beliefs, such as Blake Masters or J.D. Vance, won their Senate races—as Vance did. He could see these ideas were spreading, in weird directions, among postleftists, people who used to tweet about how "identity politics" were a diversion from materialist concerns. "The next thing you know, they turn into actual racists, transphobes and homophobes. I've seen it. It's real."

The truth of it all, he says, isn't in this theory or that. "People go where people accept them, or are nice to them, and away from people who are mean to them." It wasn't always coherent, but it didn't have to be. "Historically speaking, authoritarian reactionary movements have been the result of, or have gained support and energy from, such incoherence and such contradictions," Aponte said. "So, some dark shit is happening, and it sucks because I feel like I've had a hand in that."

Since then, Aponte's realization is finding echoes. On X (formerly Twitter) in September, a Dimes Square habitué wrote, "It is certainly not the case that everyone who participated in this scene to get clout for their lit mag is a 'fascist' or should be 'canceled.' However-it is also the case that simultaneously it is becoming the soil and recruiting ground for an actual 1930s style far-right movement that is organized and funded by venture capital." The anonymous poster claimed that several prime movers now "explicitly endorse and advocate mass genocide." A classic Page Six blind item, made over as murderous: "Everyone who is in the scene knows this at this point—presumably soon it will be public knowledge."

That same month, Compact's Schmitz tweeted his dismay that the post-left converts to the "dissident right" had "simply inverted the leftist frame," swapping supposed "misandry" for misogyny and embracing "an increasingly open politics of white identity."

"FASCISTS HAVE BEEN PUSHING RED-BROWN politics for generations—sometimes openly, sometimes by repackaging their ideas to sound leftist," argues Matthew Lyons, author of Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire. The forerunners of fascism emerged from France in the late 19th century, when a movement arose combining anti-Marxists, Catholic traditionalists and disaffected leftists who'd grown pessimistic about democracy. The tendency has been overstated at times, but it's rippled through Left movements since, from strange marriages of convenience within the Weimar Republic to Trotskyite-turned-fascist Lyndon LaRouche leaching off Left support from countless causes.

Today, *Grayzone*, the megasite created by once-leftist journalist Max Blumenthal, supports Putin's authoritarian Russia and its international alliances, notably including Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, on putatively antiimperialist grounds. But any far-left and far-right alliance against imperialism and globalization rests on shaky ground. While the Left sees globalization as entrenching inequality, argues economist Simon Choat, Trumpish anti-globalization is primarily concerned with the erosion of "supposedly traditional and homogeneous cultural and ethnic communities." The Left critique calls for freedom of movement for people as well as capital; the Right seeks to reverse it through new forms of nationalism and xenophobia. Not to mention that "globalist," in the Right's usage, is an antisemitic dog-whistle.

This isn't horseshoe theory. If there's a commonality between far Left and far Right, says Lyons, it's a common opposition to the status quo-but one that's based on fundamentally different reasons. "And there are many more commonalities between the far Right and center in terms of investment in hierarchies and inequalities, which are not reflected in horseshoe theory."

"It's not the Left going to an extreme," says Lowndes. "It's choosing one element of left politics and abandoning all of its other historic principles."

The publication of Naomi Klein's Doppelganger has popularized an alternative interpretation: diagonalism, a theory developed by historian Quinn Slobodian and political theorist William Callison to describe 2020 Germany, where a coalition of primarily small business owners and apolitical "lifestyle leftists" joined to protest pandemic restrictions.

Diagonalism, argue Slobodian and Callison, functions like a post-Covid version of "digitally mediated" movements such as Brexit. It rejects conventional labels of left and right, even as it borrows elements from both, sharing "a conviction that all power is conspiracy." It's often marked by "a dedication to disruptive decentralization, a desire for distributed knowledge and thus distributed power, and a susceptibility to right-wing radicalization."

The people who comprise diagonalist movements come in various forms: movement hustlers gamifying politics; leftto-right ideologues who claim they didn't leave the Left, the Left left them; and far-right esoterics. It has drawn wellness enthusiasts as well as neo-Nazis, and has praised QAnon. Unlike a horseshoe, the diagonalist path draws from not just the Left but also the center and the greater hinterlands, where everyday people hadn't previously thought much about politics at all.

But even for those with deeper political commitments, Callison told the podcast Conspirituality, "these left-to-right travelers tend to do something sort of sleight of hand, where they begin to put civil freedom above social justice. What should remain for them is a belief in the need for redistributive equality, or some kind of end state where economic inequality has been ameliorated somehow. But that seems to fade deep into the background, instead replaced by a kind of obsession with matters of speech and platforming."

Diagonalist politics aren't ending with Covid. They're already transferring onto issues such as environmental protections. The "medical freedom" of the body becomes the corporate freedom of capitalism. RFK Jr., a former Riverkeeper, now calls himself a "radical free marketeer." In his campaign, he told a podcast, "Climate has become a crisis like Covid that the Davos groups and other totalitarian elements in our society have used as a pretext for clamping down totalitarian controls." It'd be just cynical if it wasn't so sad: the retreat to 20th-century Cold War rhetoric in the face of a 21st-century totalizing threat, the ultimate denial of the passage of time, a morbid symptom of fascism's growing attraction.

IN OCTOBER, MATTHEW GASDA, THE playwright whose *Dimes Square* helped solidify the movement, wrote in *Compact* about his own regrets. The scene had once struck him as having "a nondenominational interest in questioning the way things worked." He'd found it thrilling that "old political boundaries were temporarily porous and fluid." But something had changed. "Edgelords" who'd once used "strategic irony" to challenge the status quo "began to believe their own rhetoric."

This change is not entirely surprising—think of the white power "OK" symbol's origins as a "joke" with which to "own" earnest "libs." But how was Gasda to have known? He was just an artist. But then "new ideological silos were constructed" and now "significant downtown figures softpeddle eugenics; others glamorize revolutionary terrorism; others worship political strongmen." Gasda began to fear that, as he told a *Compact* podcast, "Memetic violence is going to produce real violence." The podcast host noted that within online dissident right circles, cheering Kyle Rittenhouse—who killed two people during a Black Lives Matter protest in 2020—had become a litmus test. "Certain masks seem to be coming off," Gasda said.

In 2022, Red Scare's Anna Khachiyan promoted "based literary publication" The Asylum, one of a new crop of "dissident right" journals. Alongside an extended interview with her ran a celebration of Rittenhouse—an exemplar of "an heroic ethos that is manifested through action"—and an exploration of whether the blood libel, the centuries-old conspiracy theory that Jews ritually murder Christian children, might actually be true.

This fall, Nekrasova posted a picture of herself reading a book on "selective breeding" by Costin Alamariu—a Yale Ph.D. and the man behind far-right internet personality Bronze Age Pervert, who's developed a following among right-wing political staffers for his advocacy of an Aryan warrior state.

Where does it end? Ask Oliver Bateman, a journalist who grew up in a conservative community, moved left and then post-left, for a time cohosting the What's Left? podcast with Aimee Terese. By 2021, says Bateman, much of the post-left

camp began acknowledging they were no longer on the Left at all. The breaking points centered around the racial justice protests following the murder of George Floyd and pandemic shutdowns. In time, says Bateman, even the fig leaf of leftist economic politics fell away. Post-leftists, now rebranded as the dissident right, began arguing against unions. "Labor pimps," declared Terese. By the time the podcast ended in 2022, Terese was defending Alex Jones as he faced a defamation lawsuit over his claims that the Sandy Hook mass school shooting was a "false flag."

Today, says Bateman, there's no line between postleft and plain-old Right. "It's just all this goofy soup, and the people that got off the crazy train are just" like himself—"leftover Democrats."

As for the rest?

"This is all building toward a new push for people knowing their place," says Bateman. "They're fighting all the same battles the Right fought in the '80s, '70s, '60s: relitigating civil rights, gays, race in America, race and IQ. It's this train that only goes in one direction, unless you have any sense of what the map looks like. Some of these podcasts are meme-ing George Wallace back into the discourse. They're relitigating Germany in the 30s. Everything is in play. You can only be ironic for so long—you can only post so many George Wallace memes—before you start thinking that two sets of water fountains aren't a bad idea."

It's easy to feel contempt for such people. It's more honest to acknowledge our losses. We may say, "They were never really Left"-Tulsi Gabbard's connection to Hindu nationalism is a prime example—or, "Good riddance, we're better off without them." But are we?

What they've become, yes. But was any movement ever made stronger by subtraction?

Meanwhile, the Right knows the power of addition. For Steve Bannon, his new War Room regular Naomi Wolf is just one more wedge he can use to peel pandemic-aggrieved suburban "wellness moms" away from the Democratic Party, just as he's pulled the "white working class" toward Trump.

For every Wolf, for every Taibbi, there are so many everyday people following them rightward. Not selling out but breaking up, sometimes cracking up, giving into knowingness and the elation of "seeing through" the conof Covid, or pronouns, or "the Russia hoax" or "Trump Derangement Syndrome."

We, the authors of this article, each count such losses in our own lives, and maybe you do, too: friends you struggle to hold onto despite their growing allegiance to terrifying ideas, and friends you give up on, and friends who have given up on you and the hope you shared together.

Hope, after all, is earnest, and earnest can be embarrassing, especially now as the odds seem to lengthen. But as media critic Jay Rosen puts it, what matters more than odds

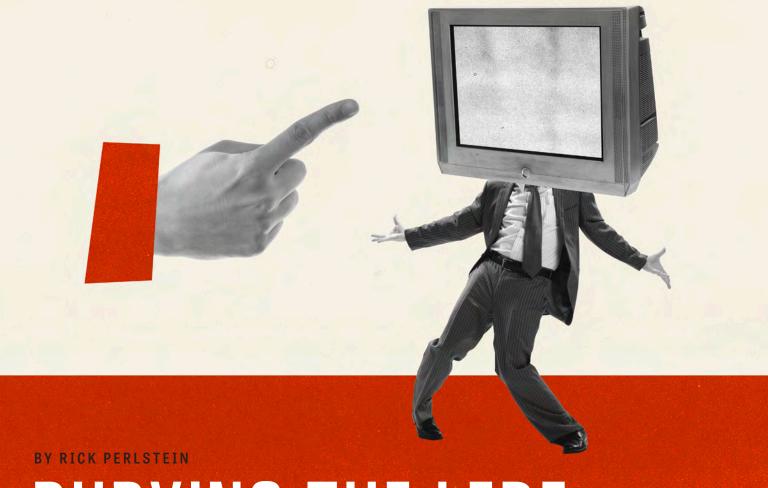
It's easy to feel contempt for such people. It's more honest to acknowledge our losses. We may say we're better off without them. But was any movement ever made stronger by subtraction?

are stakes. We, the authors of this article—such an earnest phrase—have spent much of the past 20 years documenting the mutations of the Right in the United States and around the world. We've taken courage from the fault lines such close examination reveals: that there is no singular Right, but many, so often squalling, like the GOP House conference that just spent a month searching for a speaker.

But in this age of Trump, his presence and his shadow, we've witnessed more right-wing factions converging than splitting, putting aside differences and adopting new and ugly dreams. They, of course, do not see the dreams as ugly, but beautiful. Utopian, even, with MAGA as merely prelude to what the intellectuals among them sometimes refer to as "sovereignty," "greatness" or "the common good": sweet-sounding phrases that find their purest expression in the image of the gallows erected outside the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. The greater the spectacle, the stronger its gravity. That's what makes fascism so scary when it genuinely flares. It consumes. It grows.

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BURYING THE LEDE

How media malpractice enables the far Right

IOLENCE IS A PART OF AMERICA'S culture," the Black Power militant H. Rap Brown once said. "It is as American as cherry pie."

Another equally American tradition is looking away from the problem when it comes from the Right.

As researchers have repeatedly found, the Right is where political violence in America overwhelmingly originates. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies-an eminently respectable, bipartisan think tank-right-wing political violence accounted for more than 90% of all attacks or plots in the first half of 2020, far outpacing terrorism from any other source since 1990. And since 2020, it's gotten increasingly worse.

But you would never know this from listening to the mainstream media for most of the past three decades. And as calls to violence metastasize into a routine component of Republican politics—as when former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee made the H. Rap Brown-like declaration that, should criminal prosecutions of Donald Trump continue, 2024 will be the last U.S. election "decided by ballots rather than bullets"—that denial may soon be among the biggest problems we have.

MERICANS "HATE EACH OTHER ENOUGH to fantasize about killing one another, in cold blood, over political culture disagreements," I wrote in the conclusion of my 2008 book, Nixonland. The book is about how the shape of those disagreements was forged in the crucible of the 1960s. The reviews were good, including a kind notice in the Washington Post. But the *Post*'s reviewer, Elizabeth Drew—a longtime Washington correspondent dating back to the Nixon

era-took exception to that particular passage, about a divided America's mutual hate. She thought the author "becomes carried away and pushes his theme too far."

She must not have been reading what I was reading while I was finishing the book.

During a single month in 2007, a bomb was defused at an Austin, Texas, abortion clinic; a Liberty University student was arrested with napalm bombs he planned to use against people protesting Jerry Falwell's funeral; the FBI raided a three-county, far-right Alabama terror ring that was plotting to massacre Mexican immigrants with a stockpile including 130 grenades and a rocket launcher; and an anti-immigrant militia member was apprehended at a rally in Washington, D.C., carrying an M1 rifle and a map with lines pointing to the speaker's platform.

The problem might have been that my reviewer was getting her news from sources like the Post, which didn't run a word on any of these foiled terrorist plots. I learned about them from "alternative" media. It's

a sad state of affairs for a nation when "alternative" translates to accurate and "mainstream" to blinkered.

This sort of mainstream media denial goes back a long way. After the Oklahoma City bombing, speculation that Muslim jihadists were responsible saturated mainstream media. New York Times columnist A.M. Rosenthal wrote, "Whatever we are doing to destroy Mideast terrorism, the chief terrorist threat against Americans, has not been working." After news broke that a homegrown Christian was responsible for the bombing, mainstream voices still strained to blame anything except the Right's gathering forces of hate against the federal government.

When the Post profiled Timothy McVeigh in 1995, it cited his parents' divorce as one possible motivation for his terrorism—ignoring the fact that he was part of a movement that, by the mid-1990s, included more than 850 antigovernment militia groups, and that its rhetoric was echoed by "mainstream" conservatives. In 1995, shortly before McVeigh's attack, a National Rifle Association mailer excoriated federal agents as "jack-booted government thugs" who wear "Nazi bucket helmets and black storm trooper uniforms" as they "attack law-abiding citizens." The prior summer, G. Gordon Liddy-who'd transformed himself from Watergate felon to one of the Right's top talk radio stars—broadcast a show in which he advised listeners to "hunt down and kill" agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms with "head shots."

At the museum in Oklahoma City that memorializes the bombing, a political cartoon on the wall encapsulates this denial: One reporter asks, "How many hurt?" Another answers, "260 million Americans"—the entire U.S. population in 1995. The crime, in other words, was to be understood as the product of forces entirely alien to American politics and its longstanding traditions.

That stubborn and dangerously naïve myth has a great deal to do with how unprepared the nation was for Jan. 6, 2021, from the police tasked with protecting the Capitol to the journalists who should have seen it coming.

AD THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA DONE ITS JOB A decade earlier, when the Tea Party movement was sweeping the nation, things might have turned out differently.

That the media did a terrible job of explaining what the Tea Party was and how it functioned, right from its founding in the spring of 2009, is clear from the move-

> ment's Wikipedia entry, which describes the Tea Party as focused on lower taxes, national debt and decreased government

> > spending. That's how the movement was almost universally reported, after all, on network news, in cable outlets like CNN and in newspapers like the New York Times and the Washington Post.

> > > It's also not true.

If Tea Party members had actually cared about lowering taxes, after all, they should have venerated Barack Obama, whose Making Work Pay tax cut, passed the first month of his presidency, promised lower income taxes by an average of \$1,200 annually for the 97% of Americans who paid payroll taxes. If they cared about debt and the

deficit, they shouldn't have idolized Ronald

Reagan, who sent both through the roof.

While the media depicted the Tea Party as nonideological —as one headline read, "Look to Your Left, Look to Your Right ... Everyone Is a Tea Partier!"—it was, in reality, a classic reactionary formation that viscerally hated all forms of liberalism. The media credulously repeated poll findings that 40% of Tea Partiers called themselves "Independents," omitting the fact that many refused to identify as Republican simply because they instead identified as John Birchers, Ron Paul supporters, or other factions beyond even the GOP's fringe. The movement also was deeply intertwined with Stewart Rhodes' far-right Oath Keepers.

Rhodes is now a federal prisoner, sentenced in May to 18 years for seditious conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government in the January 6 plot. In 2008, Rhodes was a libertarian Yale Law School graduate, former Ron Paul



Members of the far-right Oath Keepers group stand quard during a pro-Trump rally at Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park in Berkeley, Calif., on April 27, 2017.

campaign staffer and columnist at the survivalist magazine S.W.A.T. A retired Army colonel wrote a letter to S.W.A.T. proposing that active duty and retired military and police were the nation's best defense against a New World Order takeover, to which Rhodes agreed. Rhodes' column in response—warning that if "Hitlery" Clinton was elected, the government would "go house-to-house to disarm the American people and 'black-bag'" anyone who resisted was the seedbed of the Oath Keepers. When Obama won the Democratic nomination, Rhodes simply slotted Obama into the same scenario.

Rhodes held the Oath Keepers' first "muster" on April 19, 2009, because it was the anniversary of the start of the American revolution—which was also the date McVeigh chose for his atrocity. There, law enforcement and military personnel pledged to refuse 10 specific orders should they be issued from their commanding officers, including "disarm[ing] the American people" and "subjugat[ing] any state that asserts its sovereignty and declares the national government to be in violation of the compact by which that state entered the Union" (a nice nod to slavery's 19thcentury defenders).

One of Rhodes' first followers, Daniel Knight Hayden, had already been arrested for a series of tweets he posted eight days earlier, promoting a Tea Party rally scheduled for Tax Day at the Oklahoma State Capitol. The rally, Hayden suggested, would mark the opening salvo of a new civil war, in which he was "willing to be the FIRST DEATH."

As the Tea Party grew, Rhodes became a fixture on its circuit, recruiting cops and soldiers as Oath Keepers from Tea Party rally stages. He received such a warm reception from this supposedly "fiscally centered" movement that he apparently couldn't accommodate all of the requests for his appearance. That July 4, he sent dozens of surrogates across the country to speak in his name. One was a YouTube militia star, Charles Dyer (aka July4Patriot), who urged fellow veterans to use their military training to become "domestic terrorists." When Dyer was arrested in January 2010 for raping his 7-year-old daughter, authorities found an arsenal in his home that included a grenade launcher pilfered from a military base.

This militia/Tea Party convergence was an important story, you might think. But it's not one you could find in mainstream media. In the Tea Party's first year, the New York Times gave it saturation coverage; one of its reporters even published a book about the movement. But the *Times* noted the Oath Keepers only once in its news pages, and in passing.

CNN covered the Oath Keepers more frequently—but seemed almost to celebrate it. Correspondent Jim Acosta, who appeared to find Rhodes charming, teased his report from the Oath Keepers' 2010 Las Vegas convention as an introduction to "a group of soldiers ... that believes their allegiance to the Constitution is what's front and center." He reassuringly concluded: "They're not really a militia."

You had to turn to alternative media to go deeper.

When Mother Jones' Justine Sharrock covered the same 2010 Oath Keepers convention, she reported how the group was planning to take over the Tea Party from what they termed "asshole RINOs." Sharrock also found that, far from being a mere Constitution-lover, one featured speaker was a leader of a movement claiming county sheriffs have the power to contravene federal law. In upstate New York's Fort Drum, Sharrock reported on a young soldier who spent his off-hours drilling his six-man Oath Keepers cell so they would be prepared to fight fellow soldiers who had not yet awakened to the threat when the time came, which he was sure would be soon.

When Sharrock reminded the soldier that Rhodes' oath was a call to refuse tyrannical orders rather than wage civil war-to lay down weapons, not take them up—the soldier told her to "read between the lines": "They have to be careful because otherwise they will be labeled as terrorists."

In 2011, In These Times ran a dispatch noting that Flathead Valley, Mont.-the Oath Keepers' home base—was becoming a refuge for violent far-right insurrectionists who overlapped with the state's "particularly virulent Tea Parties." In an online discussion about the murder of gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard, In These Times reported, the president of one local Tea Party group requested an "instruction manual."

By 2022, a year after the January 6 attacks, Acosta had become a primetime CNN anchor. He teased the following story: "Federal prosecutors are presenting new evidence to a jury that Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes called for a, quote, 'bloody war' to keep then-President Trump in office after his 2020 election defeat."

In a different timeline, in which Acosta and his mainstream media colleagues did a better job a decade prior, maybe that story would've had a different ending.

HE MAN PERHAPS MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR building and sustaining the lunacy that produced January 6—the one individual who embodies the overlap between Tea Party and Oath Keepers—was hiding in plain sight, every night on Fox News. Glenn Beck's primetime preachments of the dark liberal conspiracy to undermine the United States were uncannily similar to Rhodes' Oath Keepers arguments. Most importantly, Beck was himself a Tea Party hero. In one poll, 25% of the movement's adherents named Beck the figure they trusted most-their Walter Cronkite, if Walter Cronkite had his own political organization.

Beck's political organization was the (now defunct) 9/12 Project. One of its organizers was a woman named Nighta Davis, who believes abortion is part of a plot to eugenically eliminate Christians. Davis was at the 2010 Oath Keepers convention—as Mother Jones reported but CNN did not-planning a program of outreach to the mainstream Right, which culminated in meetings attended by several members of Congress and former Christian Coalition head Ralph Reed.

On Sept. 12, 2009, Beck held a massive "tea party" on the National Mall. Rhodes was on its planning committee, and his Oath Keepers were there in force.

> The next summer, Beck published The Overton Window, a book depicting a cartel from the highest

echelons of business, politics and the military plotting a totalitarian coup. The first step was brainwashing the masses with concepts like "social justice" and "the common good," then expanding the "malleable voter base and agenda support by granting voting rights to prison inmates, undocumented migrants and select U.S. territories, e.g. Puerto Rico." Then, after their Reichstag fire-obliterating Las Vegas by nuclear bomb—Americans would be too spiritually denuded to resist. Except, of course, the brave cadres of a group that suspiciously resembled Beck's 9/12 Project, who save the world just in time.

Beck called the book a novel. But in an afterword he detailed how aspects of the plot had already taken place and instructed readers to think of the book as training, the way "fighter pilots often use flight simulators to train for real combat." On Independence Day 2010, the book debuted at the top of the New York Times bestseller list.

Two weeks later, a Beck fan named Byron Williams engaged in a shootout with police, who picked him up for speeding on his way to San Francisco to "start a revolution" by murdering employees of the Tides Foundation and the

The need for action

The following article, published in Share International magazine, was written by a Master of Wisdom.

The Masters, led by the World Teacher Maitreya, are highly advanced advisors of humanity, working constantly to help and uplift people everywhere. They plan to appear openly before the public very soon.

The article refers to the events and tensions of earlier periods, but it also provides an insight into how the international community's failure, thus far, to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem has played into today's horrific war. Sharing and justice are key in this and other conflicts.



Many times before have I spoken of the need for action to realize men's* plans and dreams of a better life for all. As Maitreya has said: "Nothing happens by itself; man must act to implement his will." With this in mind, let us look to the problems which most demand attention, and seek to throw some light on their solution.

...The major problem awaiting resolution is that of achieving just and lasting peace. Without peace, today, there would be no future for the race,...but certain basic requirements must be met before real peace can be assured.

Firstly, true peace depends on trust which arises only when the Law of Justice is fulfilled. The great and widening gap between the lifestyles of the rich and poor, nationally and between the nations, is, today, the greatest block to the achievement

of peace. Divergent ideologies play their divisive part but this factor is diminishing in potency. More important, by far, is the ingrained complacency and greed of the developed world.

Peace results from balance, whose absence guarantees conflict and war. The achievement of balance requires the recognition that all are interdependent, peoples and nations, and that the needs of all can be met by just sharing. Until that realization dawns and is followed by action we shall know an unstable world. While half the world goes hungry and millions yearly starve, true peace remains a dream...

No resolution of the present situation is possible without an Arab-Israeli accord, and an end to the bitter enmity which has festered there since the founding of the State of Israel. The Palestinian people must, and will, have their homeland. Nothing less will satisfy the legitimate aspirations of that long-suffering group, and nothing less will bring an end to the recurrent crises which have maintained tension, and thus threatened world peace, for so long.

Events are moving fast. If the leaders grasp this present opportunity and, with wisdom, take the longer view and withhold their military hand, the world could see emerging the end of hostility and war, a just redistribution of resources, and a new and saner relationship between the nations. For this Maitreya has worked long and hard, counseling the main protagonists in the various crises as they have arisen, seeking to endow them with his insight and breadth of view.

For more information: ShareInternational.info/itt

Omitting political violence from political coverage is an abdication of basic journalistic responsibility. Horserace reporting has its place. But it won't matter much if the men in the MAGA hats blow up the horse track.

ACLU—nodes on Beck's infamous conspiracy chalkboard. Kenneth B. Kimbley—arrested around the same time for building homemade grenades in preparation for when "the government started rounding up the patriots"—was another Beck fan, as his lawyer noted in his defense: He'd just been following what his idol "typically states on the air."

Had mainstream media ignored Beck? Hardly. Ten months earlier, Time magazine had Beck on its cover, calling him "a gifted storyteller with a knack for stitching seemingly unrelated data points into possible conspiracies if he believed in conspiracies, which he doesn't, necessarily; he's just asking questions."

A jocular profile, accompanied by a jocular portrait: Beck blowing a raspberry at the reader. He was "the hottest thing in the political-rant racket," a talented "entrepreneur of angst" who "lit up the 5 p.m. slot in a way never thought possible." As politics, *Time* noted, it was "sort of a train wreck at once powerful, spellbinding and uncontrolled." But as "melodrama," it was "thumping good stuff."

It's worth noting that part of that thumping good stuff both from Beck's oeuvre and Rhodes' movement—was a prediction of the cunning pretext the bad guys would use to rob American patriots of their liberties, their fortunes and their guns: a pandemic. You may recall that a foundational argument of 2020 election deniers was that Democratic states used Covid-19 as a pretext to change election rules to

Joe Biden's benefit.

And that completes the story mainstream media missed: More than a decade ago, a cadre of armed military and police personnel took an oath rooted in a conspiracy theory that a globalist cabal was working to steal

Left: Glenn Beck poses as an angry baby despite the "Mad Man" moniker on his 2009 Time magazine cover. Or does he? We're just asking questions.

Americans' democratic birthright. That narrative was then mainstreamed on the most-watched "news" show on cable TV. And then a Republican presidential candidate exploited the narrative to mobilize a citizen army to steal back the White House after losing the election.

OW, NEARLY THREE YEARS LATER, WHAT should we expect the media establishment to have learned from missing an origin story of January 6? That much of Trump's constituency understands violence as a central tool for achieving their political aims.

But has the media learned it?

This September, in Española, N.M., as Indigenous activists protested the reinstallation of a statue honoring a conquistador, a man in a MAGA hat named Ryan Martinez allegedly started shooting. One of the activists, a Hopi man named Jacob Johns, was shot and required emergency surgery. When investigators questioned Martinez, he began laughing. He asked whether the police could just let him go.

You can read all about the shooting in the Guardian, but the New York Times did not find the story fit to print. The Washington Post waited over a month. I wonder if anyone in either newsroom understands this sort of thing as an urgent part of the story of the 2024 elections.

Forces are gathering on the Right that see their political aspirations as something worth killing for. When the likes of Mike Huckabee proudly announce the idea of bullets over ballots as an inevitability, media that omit the mounting potential for political violence from their political coverage are abdicating basic journalistic responsibility. It's certainly as important as totting up who can be expected to caucus for whom in Iowa, or who's winning over Virginia's soccer moms.

Horse-race reporting has its place. But it won't matter much if the men in the MAGA hats blow up the horse track.

RICK PERLSTEIN is a historian and journalist who has authored four books on American politics. He is working on a book to be subtitled How America Got This Way. He is a member of the In These Times board.



Can Unions Hold the Line?

BY BILL FLETCHER JR.

S THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT A FORCE TO combat right-wing authoritarianism? That's the question I posed in mid-October to University of Florida history professor Paul Ortiz. While the union Ortiz heads, United Faculty of Florida, has been at the vanguard of fighting Gov. Ron DeSantis' reactionary rule, the national picture is a mixed bag.

Our present labor movement is poorly equipped to be an energized, anti-fascist force. It suffered terrible hemorrhaging in the late 1940s and early '50s. After the purge of some of its best and brightest leaders, activists and unions, the movement lost the political will not only to engage in strategic organizing and growth, but to challenge the systems and ideologies that pit the working class against itself. Discussions about race, gender, class and U.S. foreign policy were widely treated as forbidden subjects until the 1990s.

Today, the luxury of silence and denial does not exist. The threats to constitutional democracy are not just evident, but growing. The question is, what will the movement do?

BILL FLETCHER JR.: Over the past several years, the country has watched Florida descend into a political version of Dante's Inferno. Tell us about that context.

PAUL ORTIZ: Make no mistake about it: We are moving decisively toward fascism in Florida. The Trump and DeSantis movements are virulently anti-union, anti-Black Lives Matter, anti-intellectual freedom. A lot of the normal organizations we would have expected to step up during this crisis have folded. And I'm very sorry to say that the state Democratic Party is still recovering after allowing DeSantis to have a landslide victory in the 2022 gubernatorial election.

But in ways I could not have anticipated, it's been the union movement, especially the United Faculty of Florida and our parent union, the Florida Education Association, that has become the last statewide organized group standing against DeSantis' fascist movement.





What do you make of the narrative we began hearing after the 2020 election, defining the Republican Party as a workers' party?

PAUL: I come from the working class. I grew up in a shipyard town, Bremerton, Wash., and was a first-generation college student. I came up through the labor movement as an organizer. And what working-class people say is they don't care about the "woke" debate. There's a lot of things they're concerned about, and it's not gender studies or Black studies. But I've talked to affluent people who, when you mention those terms, go red in their faces.

If you look at DeSantis' and Trump's base of support—who funds them, who allows their party machinery to move forward—it's folks in Palm Beach, Fla., in those gated communities in South Florida. They're the leaders of this movement. They come to Florida because they see the state as low-hanging fruit. Because, on a statewide level, we're so poorly organized.

| Nationally, one of the things that became very apparent after 2016 is that there are MAGA forces within the trade union movement and certainly within the working class. It's not Trump's main base, but it's an important one. How do we manage those contradictions?

PAUL: That's a critical question. There are people in the union movement I knew as a younger labor organizer who had such reactionary viewpoints on some issues. But when it came time to defend people's rights on the job and even in the broader community, you could count on some of those people, too.

How do we move people in a progressive direction? Well, we get them organized.

Several years ago, United Faculty of Florida came together as a chapter to fight [alt-right leader] Richard Spencer. After he and his followers had caused all that chaos in Charlottesville, Va., he announced he was coming to Gainesville, Fla. And we started organizing. The union sponsored teach-ins about the Holocaust, about homophobia. That coalition had members of Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish student organizations. We had a whole range of people come together as a united front. We were told by our university leadership, city leadership and state leadership to stand down, to just let the man come in with his fascist thugs. We didn't do that. And by God, we retired his ass.

That's the way that we negotiate our differences—get people active on a campaign that we can work on in unity.

I frequently tell people we have to distinguish zombies from humans. We have a majority of people who are basically rational, but there's this very strong core that is moving more toward fascism, and has an armed wing. And there are rabid right-wing populists who will seize onto some of our progressive economic language and use it, so we've got to think about doing something differently.

Left: Outside of Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis' donor retreat in Miami on May 24, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America calls the working class to unite against fascism. Will unions get the message?

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-Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), chair, Congressional Progressive Caucus PAUL: In my union chapter, one thing we've tried to follow is this principle of being there for other people and other causes. If there's an affordable housing struggle, an environmental justice struggle, a refugee crisis in Florida—and there always is—we need to step up and be there as best as

The Right has captured places like Texas and Florida because they've discovered you don't have to be a majority to seize control of the state legislature in Tallahassee—which has always been a reactionary place, from time immemorial. To me, that leads us to think through coalition-building tactics. As a labor organizer, everything comes down to recruitment. It's that constant outreach that we've been lacking, and the global pandemic put a big hurt on us. We've got to get that kickstarted again.

We do have some positive examples. A few years ago, we passed restoration of felony voting rights. My wife Sheila, through the Alachua County Labor Coalition, led that campaign in our part of the state. We got nearly a million signatures. And some of the people who signed told us very pointedly that they were Trumpers. It took listening, getting out of our comfort zones. I mean, we went to University of Florida football games to get signatures.

BILL In 2021, I met with about a dozen national union leaders. I was making a pitch for a particular kind of labor education—I called it a "war college"—to train up-and-coming leaders and staff in strategy, tactics, campaigns, finance. The response I got was, "That's kind of redundant because we have labor education programs with unions or universities like Harvard and Rutgers." I said, "OK. But what did those labor education programs prepare your leaders to do had January 6 succeeded?" It was dead silence.

Then I said, "How many of those programs are preparing your leaders for what to do when it happens again? When there is right-wing terror, when there is legislative obstruction?" And they got silent again.

PAUL: These union organizing schools and centers are doing great work. I'm very excited the University of California system is creating new labor centers. But how can that match the fact that every major college in this country has a business school and most of those teach virulently anti-labor doctrine from day one?

On the most important point, about January 6 succeeding, I don't think they would have done anything except be completely confused. I don't think they have any idea of the historical roles unions have played in fighting fascism. Most of the U.S. labor movement of the 1930s was antifascist. Notable examples were the Tampa-based Tobacco Workers Industrial Union and Paul Robeson's work with the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Fascists saw the labor movement as such a threat that when fascists took power in Italy in the 1920s, for

"We were told to stand down, to let Richard Spencer come in with his fascist thugs. We didn't do that. And by God, we retired his ass."

example, the first thing they did was crush the unions.

You've given me a nightmare scenario, Bill. I can just imagine our unions falling like dominoes.

What do you do when you hear leftist or non-leftist union members say some variation of "Our job is to fight for wages, hours, working conditions"? Or, "You coming in here talking all this stuff about race and sex and fascism—it's divisive"?

PAUL: When we look at the long-running success of unions like the District 65 in New York [a crossindustry union of low-wage workers organized in 1933] and the packinghouse workers' union [a left-leaning meatpacking union that grew out of the CIO's 1937 Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee], they had their weak points, but they held together by not just advocating for their members, but trying to be advocates for the entire working class. To me, that's what we need to do.

The United Faculty of Florida has never defined academic freedom as just about faculty's right to teach a class, or tenure as just about economic security for pampered professors. We've always connected those things to the good of our students and the broader community. To me, those are examples we can build on in every union, in different occupations, in different parts of the country.

In Florida, we have been able to hold the line. Believe me, the ruling class would like to get us to shut our mouths. But keeping this tradition of dissent going is what we need to do.

BILL FLETCHER JR. is a longtime trade unionist, international solidarity activist, writer and speaker. His latest book is his second murder mystery novel, The Man Who Changed Colors, an examination of race, justice, revenge and accountability situated within the Cape Verdean American community of New England.

The Lie MAGA Sold

Party of the People wants you to believe the country is divided into multiracial, working-class Republicans and latte liberals

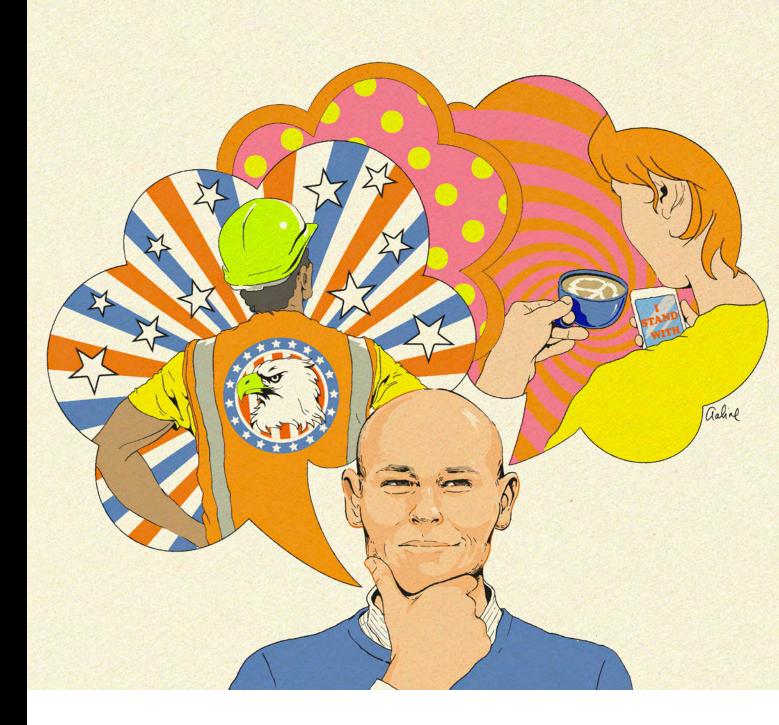
BY SARAH POSNER

HE LATEST CONSCRIPT in the Republican Party's war on higher education is pollster Patrick Ruffini's Party of the People: Inside the Multiracial Populist Coalition Remaking the GOP. Ostensibly a book about polling, voter outreach and political realignments, it is actually a thinly disguised, ahistorical and poorly argued attack on college-and a naked attempt to stoke resentment and distrust.

Ruffini claims he's appalled by Donald Trump, but much like other Republican beneficiaries of the #NeverTrump movement, he nonetheless sets out to harness the wreckage Trump made of his party and the country. Ruffini proposes a realignment of U.S. politics by dividing Americans into college-educated "cosmopolitans"—a cringy antisemitic dog-whistle Ruffini uses as the anchor of his us-versus-them framework-and a purportedly "multiracial populist" coalition that has grown even more disgusted

with college-educated Democrats than they were with the country club Republicans of days gone by.

Ruffini is far from the first Republican to promote this realignment theory. Ambitious Sens. Josh Hawley of Missouri, Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Marco Rubio of Florida, among others, have proclaimed the working-class transformation of the Trump GOP, and prominent rightwing intellectuals like Harvard constitutional law scholar Adrian Vermeule have placed—dare I say it—an elite sheen on the argument. While attempting to dazzle with charts and graphs, Party of the People is premised on discredited tropes and filled with ridiculous caricatures. While that's dismaying enough, far more vexing is the possibility that political reporters and pundits may seize on Ruffini's book as evidence of a phenomenon they are perpetually straining to prove: that the two political parties are essentially an even electoral match, but the GOP has its finger on the pulse of the heartland, while Democrats are over-educated, selfabsorbed, virtue-signaling hypocrites.



The cliche of latte-sipping liberals is an old one, but Ruffini builds on it to depict his college-educated cosmopolitans as a sneering "aristocracy." The "'hollowing out' of the middle class," Ruffini contends, is not due to income inequality, tax cuts for the wealthy or rapacious CEOs, but rather to "middle-middle-class kids earning college diplomas and becoming richer," then imposing their out-of-touch, woke ideology onto everyone else against their will. In this

framing—which is increasingly commonplace in Republican circles, even among Ivy Leagueeducated senators—"elite" is defined by ideology and taste, not wealth.

The divide between "elites" and traditionalists, according to Ruffini, is stark and unbridgeable. Only those in the "elite bubble" watch Succession, for example, while those without college degrees watch Yellowstone. Not only will the two sides never Netflix and chill together, but, Ruffini warns more ominously, Democrats better beware of the pitfalls of

ILLUSTRATION BY GALINE TUMASYAN

their Roy family-obsessed base. Roger Friedman, Ruffini alerts us, warns that *Yellowstone*'s popularity "could spell trouble in elections." If you, like I, wondered who this esteemed political analyst Roger Friedman is, I'll spare you the Google: He's a former Fox News columnist who now runs an entertainment gossip blog called Showbiz 411.

While no one contests that Trump won 64% of white voters without college degrees, Ruffini faces a much greater challenge in supporting his claims of "multiracial" support. He persistently uses passive voice and verbal sleights of hand that whitewash Trump's racism, minimize Trump's assaults on democracy and accuse Democrats of having equally reprehensible problems, like being "pulled left by cosmopolitan elites" on issues of crime and immigration. "Trump himself often did little to disabuse the GOP's critics, from his extremely poor response to the Charlottesville protests in 2017 to the events in Lafayette Square in 2020," Ruffini writes in a breathtakingly euphemistic description of Trump's embrace of Nazis and authoritarian crackdown on racial justice protesters. "But," Ruffini goes on, "liberals have their own inconvenient truths to contend

with," including their supposed inability to explain why Trump did "better among Black voters than respectable establishment Republicans." Ruffini provides no data to back up his statement, which happens to be misleading at best—Trump actually did worse than every Republican nominee since 1965, except for John McCain and Mitt Romney (who both ran against Barack Obama)—but Ruffini elides this inconvenient truth.

Trump did make real gains with some pockets of Latino voters, some of whom genuinely embrace GOP ideology. But Ruffini omits the widely reported evidence that Spanish language media and social media were bombarded with election disinformation. He also relies on patronizing stereotypes to explain Trump's improvement with a demographic he built his campaign demonizing—claiming that Latino voters are prone to embrace strongmen, have a "deep moral aversion toward government handouts" and don't like people "who game the [entitlement] system." (As supposed evidence of the latter, Ruffini writes that, during his own visit to the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, "a picture was making the rounds [on Facebook] of a



Tesla parked in front of the food stamp office.")

Elsewhere, Ruffini strains to relieve Republicans of their responsibility for engaging in deliberately racist campaigns. In discussing Obama's candidacy and presidency, Ruffini passively observes that "Internet conspiracy theories abounded that he was not born in the United States or was secretly a Muslim"—no mention of the fact that they "abounded" largely because Trump was one of the most vociferous purveyors of these racist lies. Ruffini also manages to construct a history of Republican presidential politics in the 1960s and '70s, describing white voter ire as "directed at welfare recipients and campus rioters," without mentioning the Southern Strategy to mobilize white voters by fomenting racist fears on issues like crime and social safety net programs.

Near the end of the book, Ruffini finally admits that, to truly appeal to Black voters, Republicans "still have history to overcome." It's here that Ruffini finally uses the phrase Southern Strategy-but in scare quotes—writing: "The belief that Republicans benefited from a 'Southern Strategy' of appealing to anti-Black southern whites is firmly ingrained and remains a barrier to winning more voters today." Ruffini later adds that "admitting some fault for the 'Southern Strategy' could be a symbolically crucial first step toward building a bridge to the Black community," as if there were forces other than the Republican Party itself that conceived of and carried out that same Southern Strategy. After more than 200 pages spent glorifying conservatives' socalled multiracial populist coalition, Ruffini finally concedes, "while Republicans might take heart in the fact that Black conservatives realigned in 2020, fewer Black voters called themselves conservatives than had in 2016."

Ruffini's anti-"cosmopolitan" thesis leads him to open contempt for his readers. "If you are reading a book like this one, the chances are that you have a college degree and are also part of this disconnect," he writes. Noting that college graduates read more books and travel abroad more than their non-degreed counterparts, he insinuates that both pastimes reflect a sense of elite superiority and entitlement. But rather than advocate for working people to have better pay and more leisure time—in which they could do things like read and see the world—he rehashes outdated tropes against "government handouts" and lauds CEOs for union-busting. He extols how, under the leadership of former CEO Howard Schultz (a multibillionaire), Starbucks "does right by shareholders by resisting efforts of its employees to

He relies on patronizing stereotypes to explain Trump's improvement with a demographic he built his campaign demonizing claiming that Latino voters are prone to embrace strongmen, have a "deep moral aversion toward government handouts" and don't like people "who game the [entitlement] system."

unionize and closing down stores that do."

In September, Trump attempted to one-up Joe Biden after the president walked the picket line with striking United Auto Workers union members in Michigan. But Trump's much-ballyhooed visit was the opposite of working-class solidarity, as he was invited by management to drop in on a nonunion auto parts supplier. Just like Trump's purported outreach to autoworkers, Ruffini's claim to represent the interests of working people is a sad ruse.

Ruffini might snicker at "elites" who read books, but his own is nothing but a blueprint for the next Republican bait and switch.

SARAH POSNER is the author of Unholy: How White Christian Nationalists Powered the Trump Presidency. and the Devastating Legacy They Left Behind, an investigative journalist and columnist for MSNBC.



What a time to be alive, when history rears its ugly head and decides to repeat itself.

Book banning, sadly, is nothing new. In 1637, New English Canaan by Thomas Morton, became the first banned book in America because it was deemed a harsh critique of puritan customs and power structures.











JEN SORENSEN MATTIE LUBCHANSKY











TOM TOMORROW

WE'VE SEEN THIS MOVIE BEFORE. FIRST, THERE'S A BRUTAL TERRORIST ATTACK. AND THEN INEVITABLY, A BRUTAL MILITARY RESPONSE.



YEARS LATER, CHEERLEADERS FOR THE WAR **MIGHT** GRUDGINGLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT LITTLE WAS ACCOMPLISHED, BUT NOBODY ACTUALLY LEARNS ANYTHING FROM THAT.



CIVILIANS ARE SLAUGHTERED. FAMILIES THOUSANDS OF MILES ARE DESTROYED.
THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY, INNOCENT PEOPLE ARE PHYSICALLY
ATTACKED FOR THEIR PERCEIVED HERITAGE.





WAR CRIMES ARE DEBATED IN GRANULAR DETAIL: WHICH SIDE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WORST SPECIFIC ATROCITY, OUT OF ALL THE ATROCITIES OCCURRING OR ABOUT TO OCCUR?





INHUSETIMES

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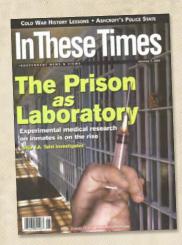
The Occupation Came First

he Israeli military is currently carrying out an attack on the besieged Gaza Strip, bombing homes, mosques, hospitals and a church while cutting off access to water, electricity and food. The Palestinian death toll has risen past 10,000, and 70% of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have been displaced. Gazans suffer untreated injuries and a continual lack of medical supplies.

While this collective punishment has been justified by right-wingers—Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant called Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip "human animals," and

U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) called for the military to "level the place"—others argue the brutal attack by Hamas on October 7 has been 75 years in the making.

In 2001—53 years after the mass displacement and ethnic cleansing of 700,000 Palestinians, and 14 years after the creation of Hamas—Hussein Ibish wrote of the "real question" in Palestine and brought to light that the "elephant in the living room of Israeli and American discourse on this conflict" was the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. Ibish's words are a reminder of what stands at the core of resistance—and why resistance can't be stopped until the occupation ends.



IN 2001, HUSSEIN IBISH WROTE: The recent scenes of horror and devastation in Jerusalem and Haifa caused by three Palestinian suicide bombers screamed out to a world distracted by other events that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is continuing to intensify.

These attacks came in response to a less reported but extraordinary wave of killings of Palestinians by Israel, including the blowing up of five children in their Gaza refugee camp and the assassination of a leading Hamas figure.

Suicide bombing is a reprehensible tactic. These murderous acts involve not only political short-sightedness, but an unwillingness to set limits on what is permissible in the pursuit of freedom. Yet just as the occupation does not justify suicide bombing, neither does resistance justify the occupation, which imposes routine violence on the daily lives of the 3 million Palestinians who live under abusive Israeli army rule.

The occupation is the elephant in the living room of Israeli and American discourse on this conflict, the overwhelming fact that cannot be acknowledged. Instead, what we get is obsession over the personality of Yasser Arafat and his future as a political leader. It seems almost absurd to have to point out that forcing millions of people to live for decades under hostile military rule with no end in sight inevitably produces violent resistance. Only a mindset that steadfastly refuses to recognize this can become captivated by a lone figure whose real and imagined failings become a smoke screen that obscures the machinery that actually drives the conflict.

As Israelis and Palestinians use ever more lethal means against each other's civilians, the question being asked in Israel and the United States is not how to end the occupation, but whether to end the career, or even the life, of Arafat. Let us suppose that Arafat were somehow permanently removed from the equation. What would really change?

The bulldozers, checkpoints, Israeli settlements, Jewish-only roads, the entire hideous apparatus of the occupation would still be in place. Would Palestinians suddenly lose their will to resist? Would they become incapable of organizing protests, demonstrations, armed resistance—or suicide bombings? Can anyone really believe that the solution is a more oppressive occupation rather than an end to the occupation?

Like the discourse on "incitement" in the Palestinian media, the whole conversation about Arafat misses the point. It is the occupation that creates a distorted reality for both Palestinians

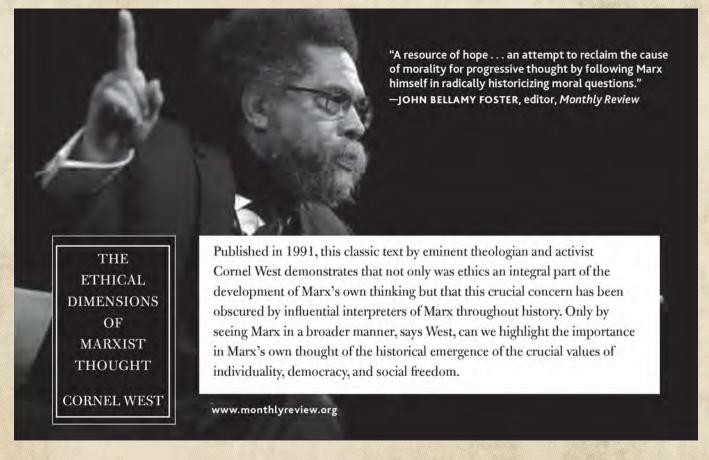
and Israelis, allowing each side to interpret "good" as being anything that is bad for the other. In their rage and frustration, Israelis are tempted to obliterate Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. This would certainly intensify the struggle. As such, it is a step that would be welcomed not only by many Israelis but also by some Palestinians who believe that the Palestinian Authority simply mediates the occupation.

If the goal is to bring greater security to Israelis, eliminating Arafat or the Palestinian Authority would certainly backfire spectacularly. It would only deepen the Palestinian determination to resist Israeli rule. If it involves Israeli soldiers once again policing the towns of the West Bank, it would create new targets for armed resistance. No one should be under any illusion that it would succeed when the killing of almost 1,000 Palestinians in the past year has failed to break the will of the Palestinians to accept anything less than genuine independence.

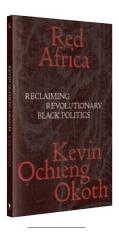
Moreover, it would play directly into the hands of the religious fanatics responsible for the suicide bombings, whose parties have never been able to command much more than 20 percent support among Palestinians until now. The failure of the peace process to ease the plight of the Palestinians and Israel's brutal response to the uprising already has strengthened the extremists' hand. The destruction of the secular leadership of the Palestinians and a harsher occupation would all but ensure a spectacular rise in support for them.

Even dramatic developments such as these, however, would not alter the substance of the conflict. The question is not whether Israel gets rid of Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. The only real question is how many more innocents must die before Israel decides to return to the negotiating table and work out a serious plan to end the occupation—and the conflict the occupation propels.

HUSSEIN IBISH is communications director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. A version of this article originally appeared in the Los Angeles Times.



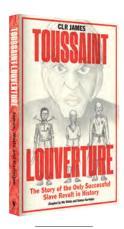
WINTER READS FROM VERSO BOOKS



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Reclaiming Revolutionary Black Politics By Kevin Ochieng Okoth

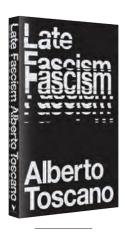
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Toussaint Louverture

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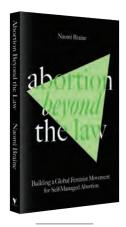
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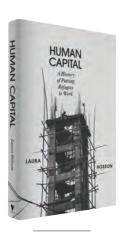
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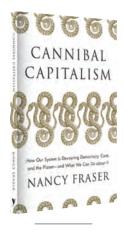


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