

States has fought against white Christian nationalism, no less than Europe has fought against its own ultranationalist movements. Brazil threw off its military dictatorship; India was founded on secular liberal principles, with a clear-eyed view of the dangers of the very religious nationalism it now faces (yet again).

We must also remember that the structures that preserve our democracies against the current threats have long been in place. In each of our local communities, there is at least one activist who has been dealing with a problem for generations. It was under Obama that the current harsh deportation regime started in the United States. In my community of New Haven, Kica Matos was the director of immigrant rights and racial justice at the Center for Community Change, where she coordinated the nation's largest network of immigrant rights organizations. During the Trump era, she has redoubled her efforts, joining the city of New Haven as an advisor and the Vera Institute of Justice as the director of the Center for Immigration and Justice. The wisdom and courage of lifelong activists such as Matos informs this book—through democratic activists throughout our communities, we can be reminded that the struggles we face are ongoing, and the forces—on both sides—strong.

It remains for us to join that struggle, realizing that it's not to overcome a moment, but rather to make a permanent democratic commitment.

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INTRODUCTION

Growing up with parents who'd fled Europe as refugees, I was raised with stories of the heroic nation that helped defeat Hitler's armies and usher in an unprecedented era of liberal democracy in the West. Near the end of his life, gravely ill with Parkinson's disease, my father insisted on visiting the beaches of Normandy. Leaning on the shoulder of his wife, my stepmother, he fulfilled a lifelong dream, walking where so many brave American youth lost their lives in the battle against fascism. But even as my family celebrated and honored this American legacy, my parents also knew that American heroism and American ideas of freedom have never been just one thing.

Before World War II, Charles Lindbergh typified American heroism with his daring flights, including the first solo transatlantic flight, and his celebration of new technology. He parlayed his fame and heroic stature into a leading role in the America First movement, which op-

posed America's entrance into the war against Nazi Germany. In 1939, in an essay entitled "Aviation, Geography, and Race," published in that most American of journals, *Reader's Digest*, Lindbergh embraced something close to Nazism for America:

It is time to turn from our quarrels and to build our White ramparts again. This alliance with foreign races means nothing but death to us. It is our turn to guard our heritage from Mongol and Persian and Moor, before we become engulfed in a limitless foreign sea.

The year 1939 was also when my father, Manfred, then six years old, escaped Nazi Germany, leaving Tempelhof Airport in Berlin in July with his mother, Ilse, after spending months in hiding. He arrived in New York City on August 3, 1939, his ship sailing past the Statue of Liberty on its way to dock. We have a family album from the 1920s and '30s. The last page has six different pictures of the Statue of Liberty gradually coming into view.

The America First movement was the public face of pro-fascist sentiment in the United States at that time.² In the twenties and thirties, many Americans shared Lindbergh's views against immigration, especially by non-Europeans. The Immigration Act of 1924 strictly limited immigration into the country, and it was specifically intended to restrict the immigration of both nonwhites and

Jews. In 1939, the United States allowed so few refugees through its borders that it is a miracle that my father happened to be among them.

In 2016, Donald Trump revived "America First" as one of his slogans, and from his first week in office, his administration has ceaselessly pursued travel bans on immigration, including refugees, specifically singling out Arab countries. Trump also promised to deport the millions of nonwhite Central and South American undocumented workers in the United States and to end legislation protecting the children they brought with them from deportation. In September 2017, the Trump administration set a cap of forty-five thousand on the number of refugees that will be allowed into the United States in 2018, the lowest number since presidents began placing such limits.

If Trump recalled Lindbergh specifically with "America First," the rest of his campaign also longed for some vague point in history—to "Make America Great Again." But when, exactly, was America great, in the eyes of the Trump campaign? During the nineteenth century, when the United States enslaved its black population? During Jim Crow, when black Americans in the South were prevented from voting? A hint about the decade that was most salient to the Trump campaign emerges from a November 18, 2016, *Hollywood Reporter* interview with Steve Bannon, the then president-elect's chief strategist, in which he remarks about the era to come that "it will be

as exciting as the 1930s." In short, the era when the United States had its most sympathy for fascism.

In recent years, multiple countries across the world have been overtaken by a certain kind of far-right nationalism; the list includes Russia, Hungary, Poland, India, Turkey, and the United States. The task of generalizing about such phenomena is always vexing, as the context of each country is always unique. But such generalization is necessary in the current moment. I have chosen the label "fascism" for ultranationalism of some variety (ethnic, religious, cultural), with the nation represented in the person of an authoritarian leader who speaks on its behalf. As Donald Trump declared in his Republican National Convention speech in July 2016, "I am your voice."

My interest in this book is in fascist *politics*. Specifically, my interest is in fascist tactics as a mechanism to achieve power. Once those who employ such tactics come to power, the regimes they enact are in large part determined by particular historical conditions. What occurred in Germany was different from what occurred in Italy. Fascist politics does not necessarily lead to an explicitly fascist state, but it is dangerous nonetheless.

Fascist politics includes many distinct strategies: the mythic past, propaganda, anti-intellectualism, unreality, hierarchy, victimhood, law and order, sexual anxiety, ap-

peals to the heartland, and a dismantling of public welfare and unity. Though a defense of certain elements is legitimate and sometimes warranted, there are times in history when they come together in one party or political movement. These are dangerous moments. In the United States today, Republican politicians employ these strategies with more and more frequency. Their increasing tendency to engage in this politics should give honest conservatives pause.

The dangers of fascist politics come from the particular way in which it dehumanizes segments of the population. By excluding these groups, it limits the capacity for empathy among other citizens, leading to the justification of inhumane treatment, from repression of freedom; mass imprisonment, and expulsion to, in extreme cases, mass extermination.

Genocides and campaigns of ethnic cleansing are regularly preceded by the kinds of political tactics described in this book. In the cases of Nazi Germany, Rwanda, and contemporary Myanmar, the victims of ethnic cleansing were subjected to vicious rhetorical attacks by leaders and in the press for months or years before the regime turned genocidal. With these precedents, it should concern all Americans that as a candidate and as president, Donald Trump has publicly and explicitly insulted immigrant groups.

Fascist politics can dehumanize minority groups even

when an explicitly fascist state does not arise.³ By some measures, Myanmar is transitioning to a democracy. But five years of brutal rhetoric directed against the Rohingya Muslim population has nevertheless resulted in one of the worst cases of ethnic cleansing since the Second World War.

The most telling symptom of fascist politics is division. It aims to separate a population into an "us" and a "them." Many kinds of political movements involve such a division; for example, Communist politics weaponizes class divisions. Giving a description of fascist politics involves describing the very specific way that fascist politics distinguishes "us" from "them," appealing to ethnic, religious, or racial distinctions, and using this division to shape ideology and, ultimately, policy. Every mechanism of fascist politics works to create or solidify this distinction.

Fascist politicians justify their ideas by breaking down a common sense of history in creating a **mythic past** to support their vision for the present. They rewrite the population's shared understanding of reality by twisting the language of ideals through **propaganda** and promoting **anti-intellectualism**, attacking universities and educational systems that might challenge their ideas. Eventually, with these techniques, fascist politics creates a

state of **unreality**, in which conspiracy theories and fake news replace reasoned debate.

As the common understanding of reality crumbles, fascist politics makes room for dangerous and false beliefs to take root. First, fascist ideology seeks to naturalize group difference, thereby giving the appearance of natural, scientific support for a **hierarchy** of human worth. When social rankings and divisions solidify, fear fills in for understanding between groups. Any progress for a minority group stokes feelings of **victimhood** among the dominant population. **Law and order** politics has mass appeal, casting "us" as lawful citizens and "them," by contrast, as lawless criminals whose behavior poses an existential threat to the manhood of the nation. **Sexual anxiety** is also typical of fascist politics as the patriarchal hierarchy is threatened by growing gender equity.

As the fear of "them" grows, "we" come to represent everything virtuous. "We" live in the rural heartland, where the pure values and traditions of the nation still miraculously exist despite the threat of cosmopolitanism from the nation's cities, alongside the hordes of minorities who live there, emboldened by liberal tolerance. "We" are hardworking, and have earned our pride of place by struggle and merit. "They" are lazy, surviving off the goods we produce by exploiting the generosity of our welfare systems, or employing corrupt institutions, such as

labor unions, meant to separate honest, hardworking citizens from their pay. "We" are makers; "they" are takers.

Many people are not familiar with the ideological structure of fascism, that each mechanism of fascist politics tends to build on others. They do not recognize the interconnectedness of the political slogans they are asked to repeat. I have written this book in the hope of providing citizens with the critical tools to recognize the difference between legitimate tactics in liberal democratic politics on the one hand, and invidious tactics in fascist politics on the other.

In its own history, the United States can find a legacy of the best of liberal democracy as well as the roots of fascist thought (indeed, Hitler was inspired by the Confederacy and Jim Crow laws). Following the horrors of World War II, which sent masses of refugees fleeing fascist regimes, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirmed the dignity of every human being. The drafting and adoption of the document were spearheaded by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and after the war it stood for the United States' ideals as much as those of the new United Nations. It was a bold statement, a powerful iteration and expansion of liberal democratic understanding of personhood to include literally the entire world community. It bound all nations and cultures to a shared

commitment to valuing the equality of every person, and it rang with the aspirations of millions in a shattered world confronting the devastation of colonialism, genocide, racism, global war, and, yes, fascism. After the war, Article 14 was particularly poignant, solemnly affirming the right of every person to seek asylum. Even as the declaration attempted to prevent a repetition of the suffering experienced during World War II, it acknowledged that certain categories of people might once again have to flee the nation states under whose flag they once lived.

Fascism today might not look exactly as it did in the 1930s, but refugees are once again on the road everywhere. In multiple countries, their plight reinforces fascist propaganda that the nation is under siege, that aliens are a threat and danger both within and outside their borders. The suffering of strangers can solidify the structure of fascism. But it can also trigger empathy once another lens is clicked into place.

THE MYTHIC PAST

It's in the name of tradition that the anti-Semites base their "point of view." It's in the name of tradition, the long, historical past and the blood ties with Pascal and Descartes, that the Jews are told, you will never belong here.

-Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)

It is only natural to begin this book where fascist politics invariably claims to discover its genesis: in the past. Fascist politics invokes a pure mythic past tragically destroyed. Depending on how the nation is defined, the mythic past may be religiously pure, racially pure, culturally pure, or all of the above. But there is a common structure to all fascist mythologizing. In all fascist mythic pasts, an extreme version of the patriarchal family reigns supreme, even just a few generations ago. Further back in time, the mythic past was a time of glory of the nation,

with wars of conquest led by patriotic generals, its armies filled with its countrymen, able-bodied, loyal warriors whose wives were at home raising the next generation. In the present, these myths become the basis of the nation's identity under fascist politics.

In the rhetoric of extreme nationalists, such a glorious past has been lost by the humiliation brought on by globalism, liberal cosmopolitanism, and respect for "universal values" such as equality. These values are supposed to have made the nation weak in the face of real and threatening challenges to the nation's existence.

These myths are generally based on fantasies of a non-existent past uniformity, which survives in the traditions of the small towns and countryside that remain relatively unpolluted by the liberal decadence of the cities. This uniformity—linguistic, religious, geographical, or ethnic—can be perfectly ordinary in some nationalist movements, but fascist myths distinguish themselves with the creation of a glorious national history in which the members of the chosen nation ruled over others, the result of conquests and civilization-building achievements. For example, in the fascist imagination, the past invariably involves traditional, patriarchal gender roles. The fascist mythic past has a particular structure, which supports its authoritarian, hierarchical ideology. That past societies were rarely as patriarchal—or indeed as glorious—as fascist ideology represents them as being is beside the point. This imagined

history provides proof to support the imposition of hierarchy in the present, and it dictates how contemporary society should look and behave.

In a 1922 speech at the Fascist Congress in Naples, Benito Mussolini declared:

We have created our myth. The myth is a faith, a passion. It is not necessary for it to be a reality. . . . Our myth is the nation, our myth is the greatness of the nation! And to this myth, this greatness, which we want to translate into a total reality, we subordinate everything.¹

Here, Mussolini makes clear that the fascist mythic past is *intentionally* mythical. The function of the mythic past, in fascist politics, is to harness the emotion of nostalgia to the central tenets of fascist ideology—authoritarianism, hierarchy, purity, and struggle.

With the creation of a mythic past, fascist politics creates a link between nostalgia and the realization of fascist ideals. German fascists also clearly and explicitly appreciated this point about the strategic use of a mythological past. The leading Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, editor of the prominent Nazi newspaper the *Völkischer Beobachter*, writes in 1924, "the understanding of and the respect for our own mythological past and our own history will form the first condition for more firmly an-

choring the coming generation in the soil of Europe's original homeland."² The fascist mythic past exists to aid in *changing the present*.

The patriarchal family is one ideal that fascist politicians intend to create in society-or return to, as they claim. The patriarchal family is always represented as a central part of the nation's traditions, diminished, even recently, by the advent of liberalism and cosmopolitanism. But why is patriarchy so strategically central to fascist politics?

In a fascist society, the leader of the nation is analogous to the father in the traditional patriarchal family. The leader is the father of his nation, and his strength and power are the source of his legal authority, just as the strength and power of the father of the family in patriarchy are supposed to be the source of his ultimate moral authority over his children and wife. The leader provides for his nation, just as in the traditional family the father is the provider. The patriarchal father's authority derives from his strength, and strength is the chief authoritarian value. By representing the nation's past as one with a patriarchal family structure, fascist politics connects nostalgia to a central organizing hierarchal authoritarian structure, one that finds its purest representation in these norms.

Gregor Strasser was the National Socialist-Nazi-Reich propaganda chief in the 1920s, before the post was

taken over by Joseph Goebbels. According to Strasser, "for a man, military service is the most profound and valuable form of participation-for the woman it is motherhood!"³ Paula Sibel, the acting head of the Association of German Women, in a 1933 document meant to reflect official National Socialist state policy on women, declares that "to be a woman means to be a mother, means affirming with the whole conscious force of one's soul the value of being a mother and making it a law of life ... the highest calling of the National Socialist woman is not just to bear children, but consciously and out of total devotion to her role and duty as mother to raise children for her people."⁴ Richard Grunberger, a British historian of National Socialism, sums up "the kernel of Nazi thinking on the women's question" as "a dogma of inequality between the sexes as immutable as that between the races."⁵ The historian Charu Gupta, in her 1991 article "Politics of Gender: Women in Nazi Germany," goes as far as to argue that "oppression of women in Nazi Germany in fact furnishes the most extreme case of anti-feminism in the 20th century."⁶

These ideals of gender roles are defining political movements once again. In 2015, Poland's right-wing party, the Law and Justice Party (in Polish, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, abbreviated PiS), won an outright majority in Poland's

parliamentary elections, making it Poland's dominant party. PiS, in its current incarnation, has at its center a call to return to the conservative Christian social traditions of rural Poland. Most of its politicians openly abhor homosexuality. It is anti-immigrant, and the European Union has condemned its most antidemocratic measures, such as creating laws allowing government ministers (who are party members) full control of state media by granting them power to fire and hire the broadcasting chiefs of Poland's radio and television stations. But internationally it is best known for its extremism in gender politics. Abortion was already banned in Poland, with exceptions only for severe and irreversible damage to the fetus, for serious risk to the mother, or in the cases of rape or incest. The new bill proposed by PiS would have eliminated rape and incest as exceptions to the ban on abortion, with incarceration as a penalty for women who pursue the procedure. The bill failed to pass only because of a large outcry and demonstrations by women on the streets of Poland's cities.

Similar ideas about gender are on the rise globally, including in the United States, very often supported with reference to history. Andrew Auernheimer, known as weev, is a prominent neo-Nazi who ran the fascist online newspaper *The Daily Stormer* with Andrew Anglin. In May 2017, he published an article in *The Daily Stormer* titled "Just What Are Traditional Gender Roles?" In it,

he claims that women were traditionally regarded as property in all European cultures, except for Jewish societies and some gypsy groups, which were matrilineal:

This was why the Jews were so keen to attack these ideas, because the patrilineal passing of property was innately offensive to their culture. Europe only has this absurd notion of women as independent entities because of organized subversion by agents of Judaism.⁷

According to Weev, echoing twentieth-century Nazism, patriarchal gender roles are central to European history, part of the "glorious past" of white Europe.

In Weev's writing, the past not only supports traditional gender roles but separates groups that are believed to adhere to them from those that don't. From Nazi Germany to more recent history, this vindictive distinction can escalate to the point of genocide. The Hutu power movement was a fascist ethnic supremacist movement that arose in Rwanda in the years before the 1994 Rwandan genocide. In 1990, the Hutu power newspaper *Kangura* published the Hutu Ten Commandments. The first three are about gender. The first declared anyone a traitor who married a Tutsi woman, thereby polluting the pure Hutu bloodline. The third called on Hutu women to ensure that their husbands, brothers, and sons would not marry Tutsi women. The second commandment is:

2. Every Hutu should know that our Hutu daughters are more suitable and conscientious in their role as woman, wife and mother of the family. Are they not beautiful, good secretaries and more honest?

In Hutu power ideology, Hutu women exist only as wives and mothers, entrusted with the sacred responsibility of ensuring Hutu ethnic purity. This pursuit of ethnic purity was a key justification for killing Tutsis in the 1994 genocide.

Of course, gendered language, and references to women's roles and special value, often slip into political speech without much thought to their implication. In the 2016 U.S. election, a video surfaced showing the Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump making harshly demeaning comments about women. Mitt Romney, the Republican Party's 2012. presidential nominee, said that Trump's remarks "demean our wives and daughters." Paul Ryan, the Republican Speaker of the House, said, "women are to be championed and revered, not objectified." Both of these remarks reveal an underlying patriarchal ideology that is typical of much of U.S. Republican Party policy. These politicians could simply have given voice to the most direct description of the facts, which is that Trump's remarks demean half our fellow citizens. Instead, Romney's remark, in language evocative of that used in the Hutu Ten Commandments, describes women

exclusively in terms of traditionally subordinate roles in families, as "wives and daughters"-not even as sisters. Paul Ryan's characterization of women as objects of "reverence" rather than equal respect objectifies women in the same sentence that decries doing so.

The patriarchal family in fascist politics is embedded in a larger narrative about national traditions. Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán was elected to office in 2010. He has overseen the demolition of the liberal institutions of that country in the service of creating what Orbán openly describes as an illiberal state. In April 2011, Orbán oversaw the introduction of "the Fundamental Law of Hungary," Hungary's new constitution. The goal of the Fundamental Law is stated at the outset, in "The National Avowal," which begins by praising the founding of the Hungarian state by Saint Stephen, who "made our country a part of Christian Europe one thousand years ago." The National Avowal continues by expressing pride that "our people has over the centuries defended Europe in a series of struggles" (presumably against the Muslim Ottoman Empire). It recognizes "the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood" and commits "to promoting and safeguarding our heritage." The National Avowal ends by promising to fulfill an "abiding need for spiritual and intellectual renewal" and to provide a way for Hungary's newer generations to "make Hungary great again."

The first series of articles in the Fundamental Law,

"The Foundation," are labeled by letters. Article L states in full:

- (1) Hungary shall protect the institution of marriage as the union of a man and a woman established by voluntary decision, and the family as the basis of the survival of the nation. Family ties shall be based on marriage and/or the relationship between parents and children.
- (2) Hungary shall encourage the commitment to have children.
- (3) The protection of families shall be regulated by a cardinal Act.

The second series of articles, "Freedom and Responsibility," are labeled by roman numerals. Article II prohibits abortion.

The clear message is that patriarchy is a virtuous past practice whose protection from liberalism must be enshrined in the fundamental law of the country. In fascist politics, myths of a patriarchal past, threatened by encroaching liberal ideals and all that they entail, function to create a sense of panic at the loss of hierarchal status, both for men and for the dominant group's ability to protect its purity and status from foreign encroachment.

If a "return" to a patriarchal society solidifies a hierarchy in fascist politics, the source of that hierarchy reaches even deeper into the past—all the way back to Saint Stephen in the case of Hungary. In a glorious past, members of the chosen national or ethnic community realized their rightful place at the top by setting the cultural and economic agenda for everyone else. This is strategically vital. We can think of fascist politics as a politics of hierarchy (for example, in the United States, white supremacy demands and implies a perpetual hierarchy), and to realize that hierarchy, we can think of it as the displacement of reality by power. If one can convince a population that they are rightfully exceptional, that they are destined by nature or by religious fate to rule other populations, one has already convinced them of a monstrous lie.

The National Socialist movement grew out of the German *volkisch* movement, whose advocates sought a return to the traditions of a mythic German medieval past. Though Adolf Hitler was more obsessed with a certain vision of ancient Greece as a model for his Reich, leading Nazis such as Alfred Rosenberg and Heinrich Himmler, one of the most powerful members of the regime, were ardent admirers and promoters of *volkisch* thought. Bernard Mees writes in *The Science of the Swastika*, his 2008 history of the connection between German antiquarian studies and National Socialism:

volkisch writers soon found that the picture of the ancient Germans could serve practical purposes; the glorious Germanic past could be employed as justification for the imperialist aims of the present. Hitler's desire to dominate continental Europe was explained in Nazi periodicals in the late 1930s as merely a fulfillment of Germanic destiny, repeating the prehistoric Aryan and then later Germanic migrations throughout the Continent during late antiquity.⁸

The tactics developed by Rosenberg, Himmler, and other Nazi leaders have since inspired fascist politics in other countries. According to adherents of the Hindutva movement in India, Hindus were the indigenous population of India, living according to patriarchal customs and with strict puritanical sexual practices until the arrival of Muslims, and subsequently, Christians, who introduced decadent Western values. The Hindutva movement has fabricated a version of a mythic Indian past with a pure nation of Hindus, to dramatically supplement what is regarded by scholars as the actual history of India. India's dominant nationalist party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), adopted Hindutva ideology as its official creed and won power in the country using emotional rhetoric calling for a return to this fictional, patriarchal, harshly conservative, ethnically and religiously pure past. BJP is descended from the political arm of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

(RSS), an extremist, far-right Hindu nationalist party that advocated the suppression of non-Hindu minorities. Nathuram Godse, the man who assassinated Gandhi, was a member of RSS, as was current Indian prime minister Narendra Modi. RSS was explicitly influenced by European fascist movements, its leading politicians regularly praised Hitler and Mussolini in the late 1930s and 1940s.

The strategic aim of these hierarchal constructions of history is to displace truth, and the invention of a glorious past includes the erasure of inconvenient realities. While fascist politics fetishizes the past, it is never the actual past that is fetishized. These invented histories also diminish or entirely extinguish the nation's past sins. It is typical for fascist politicians to represent a country's actual history in conspiratorial terms, as a narrative concocted by liberal elites and cosmopolitans to victimize the people of the true "nation." In the United States, Confederate monuments arose well after the Civil War had ended, as part of a mythologized history of a heroic Southern past in which the horrors of slavery were de-emphasized. President Trump denounced the task of connecting of this mythologized past to slavery as an attempt to victimize white Americans for celebrating their "heritage."

Erasing the real past legitimates the vision of an ethnically pure, virtuous past nation. Part of Myanmar's ethnic

cleansing of its Rohingya people is erasing any trace of their physical and historical existence. According to U Kyaw San Hla, a member of the security ministry of the Rakhine State, the traditional home of the Rohingyas, "There is no such thing as Rohingya. It is fake news."⁹ According to an October 2017 report of the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, Myanmar security forces have been working to "effectively erase all signs of memorable landmarks in the geography of the Rohingya landscape and memory in such a way that a return to their lands would yield nothing but a desolate and unrecognizable terrain." What was, before 2012, a thriving multiethnic and multireligious community in certain areas of Myanmar's Rakhine State has been entirely altered to erase any memory of a Muslim population.

Fascist politics repudiates any dark moments of a nation's past. In early 2018, the Polish parliament passed a law making it illegal to suggest that Poland bore responsibility for any of the atrocities committed on its soil during the Nazi occupation of Poland, even the well-documented pogroms during this time. According to Radio Poland, "Article 55a, clause 1, of the draft law states that 'whoever accuses, publicly and against the facts, the Polish nation, or the Polish state, of being responsible or complicit in the Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich ... or other crimes against peace and hu-

manity, or war crimes, or otherwise grossly diminishes the actual perpetrators thereof, shall be subject to a fine or a penalty of imprisonment of up to three years.'" Turkey's Article 301 of its penal code outlaws "insulting Turkishness," including mentioning the Armenian genocide during the First World War. Such attempts to legislate the erasure of a nation's past are characteristic of fascist regimes.

Le Front National is France's extremist far-right party, and the first neofascist party in Western Europe to achieve significant electoral success. Its original leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, was convicted of Holocaust denial. Le Pen's successor as leader of Le Front National is his daughter, Marine Le Pen, who finished second in the French presidential elections in 2017. The role of the French police in rounding up French Jews to be sent to Nazi death camps under the Vichy government is well documented. But during the 2017 election campaign, Marine Le Pen denied French complicity in one particularly large roundup of French Jews, in which thirteen thousand were gathered at the Velodrome d'Hiver cycling track and sent to Nazi death camps. In a television interview in April 2017, she said: "I don't think France is responsible for the Vel d'Hiv. ... I think that, generally speaking, if there are people responsible, it's those who were in power at the time. It's not France." She added that the dominant liberal culture had "taught our children that they have all the reasons

to criticize [the country], and to only see, perhaps, the darkest aspects of our history. So, I want them to be proud of being Jewish again."

In Germany, where laws prevent similar, public denials of the Holocaust, the far-right party *Alternativ für Deutschland* (AfD) shocked the mainstream German public in the 2017 elections by becoming the third-largest party in the German parliament. During the election campaign, in September 2017, one of its party leaders, Alexander Gauland, gave a speech in which he said that "no other people have been so clearly presented with a false past as the Germans." Gauland called for "the past to be returned to the people of Germany," by which he meant a past in which Germans were free to be "proud of the accomplishments of our soldiers in both World Wars." Just as politicians in the U.S. Republican Party seek to harness white resentment (and votes) by denouncing accurate historical scholarship about the brutality of slavery as a way to "victimize" American whites, especially from the South, AfD seeks to garner votes by representing the accurate history of Germany's Nazi past as a form of victimization of the German people. In a speech earlier that year in Dresden, one of AfD's party leaders, Bjorn Hocke, spoke passionately about the need for "a culture of memory that brings us into contact first and foremost with the great achievements of our ancestors."¹⁰

Hocke's remarks about "a culture of memory" were a disturbing echo of those of the creator of Nazi Germany's myth. In 1936, Heinrich Himmler himself spoke similarly of favoring achievements:

A people lives happily in the present and the future so long as it recognizes its past and the greatness of its ancestors.... We want to make it clear to our men, and to the German people, that we do not have a past of only roughly a thousand years, that we were not a barbaric people that had no culture of its own, but had to acquire it from others. We want to make our people proud again of our history.¹¹

When it does not simply invent a past to weaponize the emotion of nostalgia, fascist politics cherry-picks the past, avoiding anything that would diminish unreflective adulation of the nation's glory.

In order to honestly debate what our country should do, what policies it should adopt, we need a common basis of reality, including about our own past. History in a liberal democracy must be faithful to the norm of truth, yielding an accurate vision of the past, rather than a history provided for political reasons. Fascist politics, by contrast,

characteristically contains within it a demand to mythologize the past, creating a version of national heritage that is a weapon for political gain.

If one is not concerned by politicians who deliver an intentional appeal to erase painful historical memory, it is worth acquainting oneself with the psychological literature on collective memory. In their 2013 paper "Motivated to 'Forget': The Effects of In-Group Wrongdoing on Memory and Collective Guilt," Katie Rotella and Jennifer Richeson presented American participants with stories "about the oppressive, violent treatment of American Indians," framed in one of two ways: "Specifically, the perpetrators of the violence were described either as early Americans (in-group condition) or as Europeans who settled in what became America (out-group condition)."¹² The study showed that people are more likely to suffer from a sort of amnesia of wrongdoing when the perpetrators are characterized explicitly as their countrymen. When American subjects were presented with the agents of the violence as Americans (rather than Europeans), they had significantly worse memory for negative historical events, and "what participants did recall was phrased more dismissively when the perpetrators were in-group members." Rotella and Richeson's work builds on a body of previous work with similar results.¹³ There already is a strong built-in bias toward forgetting and minimizing problematic acts one's in-group committed in the

past. Even if politicians did nothing to stoke it, Americans would minimize the history of enslavement and genocide, Poles would minimize a history of anti-Semitism, and Turkish citizens would be inclined toward denying past atrocities against Armenians. Having politicians urge this as official educational policy adds fuel to an already raging fire.

Fascist leaders appeal to history to replace the actual historical record with a glorious mythic replacement that, in its specifics, can serve their political ends and their ultimate goal of replacing facts with power. Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban has drawn on Hungary's experience fighting occupation by the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to represent Hungary in the historic role of defender of Christian Europe as a basis for restricting refugees today.¹⁴ Of course, during this time, Hungary was the border between a Muslim-led empire and a Christian-led one; but religion did not play such a major role in these conflicts. (The Ottoman Empire did not, for example, demand conversion of its Christian subjects.) The mythic history Orban tells has just enough plausibility to reduce the complex nature of the past and support his goals.

In the United States, the history of the South is continually mythologized to whitewash slavery and was used to justify the refusal to grant black U.S. citizens voting rights until a century after slavery's end. The central nar

rative in the justification of the South's refusal to grant blacks the vote is a false history of the period known as Reconstruction, immediately following the Civil War in 1865, when black men in the South were allowed the vote. Black Americans at that time comprised the majority in some Southern states, such as South Carolina, and for a dozen or so years their representatives had a powerful voice in many state legislatures and even occupied positions in the U.S. Congress. Reconstruction ended when Southern whites enacted laws that had the practical effect of banning black citizens from voting. White southerners propagated the myth that this was necessary because black citizens were unable to self-govern; in the histories advanced at the time, Reconstruction was represented as a time of unparalleled political corruption, with stability restored only when whites were again given full power.

W.E.B. Du Bois's 1935 masterwork, *Black Reconstruction*, is a decisive refutation of the then official history of the Reconstruction era. As Du Bois shows, whites in the South, with the collusion of Northern elites, brought an end to the Reconstruction era because of the widespread fear among the wealthy classes that newly enfranchised black citizens would join with poor whites in developing a powerful labor movement to challenge the interests of capital. Du Bois shows how the Reconstruction era was a time of just governance, when black legislators not only did not govern from their own self-interest but bent over

backward to accommodate the fears of their white fellow citizens. At the time, *Black Reconstruction* was largely ignored by white historians; but by the 1960s, the history Du Bois there recounts became widely recognized as fact.

Academic historians knowingly promulgated a false history of Reconstruction for political reasons. They used their discipline not to pursue truth, but rather to address the psychic wounds of white Americans arising from the Civil War. By providing a comforting vision of history that covered over the stark moral differences between states, historians justified the removal of the minimal protections of citizenship for black citizens in former proslavery states. The final chapter of *Black Reconstruction* is titled "The Propaganda of History." In it, Du Bois harshly denounces the practice of appealing to the ideals of historical scholarship, truth and objectivity, to advance political goals. To do so, Du Bois declares, is to undermine the discipline of history. Historians who advance a false narrative for political gain under the treasured ideals of truth and objectivity, according to Du Bois, are guilty of transforming history into *propaganda*.

comforting illusion of superiority. Fascist politics thrives off the resulting sense of aggrieved loss and victimization that results from the ever more tenuous and difficult struggle to defend a sense of cultural, ethnic, religious, gendered, or national superiority.

6

VICTIM HOOD

In fascist politics, the opposing notions of equality and discrimination get mixed up with each other. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 made the newly emancipated black Americans of the South into U.S. citizens and protected their civil rights. It was passed by the Senate and the House on March 14, 1866. Later that month, President Andrew Johnson vetoed the Civil Rights Act, on the grounds that "this law establishes for the security of the colored race safeguards which go infinitely beyond any that the General Government have ever provided for the white race." As W.E.B. Du Bois notes, Johnson perceived minimal safeguards at the start of a path toward future black equality as "discrimination against the white race."¹

Today, white Americans wildly overestimate the extent of U.S. progress toward racial equality over the past fifty years. Economic inequality between black and white Americans is roughly at the point it was during Recon-

struction; for every \$100 the average white family has accumulated, the average black family has just \$5; and yet, as Jennifer Richeson, Michael Kraus, and Julian Rucker have shown in their 2017 paper, "Americans Misperceive Racial Economic Equality," white American citizens are widely ignorant of this fact, believing that racial economic inequality has dramatically narrowed.² Forty-five percent of President Donald Trump's supporters believe that whites are the most discriminated-against racial group in America; 54 percent of Trump's supporters believe that Christians are the most persecuted religious group in America. There is a crucial distinction, of course, between feelings of resentment and oppression and genuine inequality and discrimination.

There is a long history of social psychological research about the fact that increased representation of members of traditional minority groups is experienced by dominant groups as threatening in various ways.³ More recently, a growing body of social psychological evidence substantiates the phenomenon of dominant *group* feelings of victimization at the prospect of sharing power equally with members of minority *groups*. A great deal of recent attention has been paid in the United States to the fact that around 2050, the United States will become a "majority-minority" country, meaning that whites will no longer be a majority of Americans. Taking advantage of the salience of this information, some social psycholo-

gists have tested what happens when white Americans are primed with it.

In a 2014 study, the psychologists Maureen Craig and Jennifer Richeson found that simply making salient the impending national shift to a "majority-minority" country significantly increased politically unaffiliated white Americans' support for right-wing policies.⁴ For example, reading about an impending racial shift of the country from majority white to majority nonwhite made white American subjects less inclined to support affirmative action, more inclined to support restrictions on immigration, and, perhaps surprisingly, more likely to support "race neutral" conservative policies such as increasing defense spending. Summarizing this research in a forthcoming review article, Maureen Craig, Julian Rucker, and Jennifer Richeson write, "this growing body of work finds clear evidence that White Americans (i.e., the current racial majority) experience the impending 'majority-minority' shift as a threat to their dominant (social, economic, political, and cultural) status."⁵ This feeling of threat can be marshaled politically as support for tight-wing movements. This dialectic is far from native to the United States; it is rather a general feature of group psychology. The exploitation of the feeling of victimization by dominant groups at the prospect of sharing citizenship and power with minorities is a universal element of contemporary international fascist politics.

In the face of discrimination, oppressed groups throughout history have risen up in movements that proclaimed pride for their endangered identities. In Western Europe, the Jewish nationalism of the Zionist movement arose as a response to toxic anti-Semitism. In the United States, black nationalism arose as a response to toxic racism. In their origins, these nationalist movements were *responses* to oppression. Anticolonialist struggles typically take place under the banner of nationalism; for example, Mahatma Gandhi employed Indian nationalism as a tool against British rule. This kind of nationalism, the nationalism that arises from oppression, is not fascist in origin. These forms of nationalism, in their original formations, are equality-driven nationalist movements.

In colonialism, the imperial nation typically presents itself as the bearer of universal ideals. For example, British colonialists in Kenya presented Christianity as the universal ideal and the many local tribal religions as primitive and savage. In part a response to this religious oppression, the Mau Mau rebellion against Britain valorized the traditional Gikuyu religion—Mau Mau rebels took an oath to Ngai, the Gikuyu god. The Mau Mau colonialist struggle used nationalist religious ideals to fight colonialism. But the goal of the Mau Mau struggle was not to fight for the *superiority* of the Gikuyu religious traditions over the British

religious traditions. The goal was rather to fight for the *equality* of the Gikuyu traditions against the British demonization of them as forms of primitive savagery. To do so, it was necessary to elevate these traditions, to hold them as sacrosanct and special, not as a means of repudiating the value of British traditions, but rather as a means to emphasize a demand for equal respect. This kind of nationalism is therefore in no sense *opposed* to equality; instead, despite appearances to the contrary, equality is its *goal*.

The case is similar with the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States today. Its opponents try to represent the slogan as the illiberal nationalist claim that *only* black lives matter. But the slogan is hardly intended as a repudiation of the value of white lives in the United States. Rather, it intends to point out that in the United States, white lives have been taken to matter more than other lives. The point of the slogan Black Lives Matter is to call attention to a failure of equal respect. In its context, it means, "Black lives matter *too*."

At the core of fascism is loyalty to tribe, ethnic identity, religion, tradition, or, in a word, *nation*. But, in stark contrast to a version of nationalism with equality as its goal, fascist nationalism is a repudiation of the liberal democratic ideal; it is nationalism in the service of domination, with the goal of preserving, maintaining, or gaining a position at the top of a hierarchy of power and status.

The difference between the nationalism motivated by oppression and nationalism for the sake of domination is clear when one reflects upon their respective relationships with equality. But that difference can be invisible from the inside. Whether or not the anguish that accompanies loss of privileged status is similar to the sense of oppression that accompanies genuine marginalization, it is anguish nevertheless. If I grew up in a country in which my religious holidays were the national holidays, it would feel like marginalization to have my children grow up in a more egalitarian country in which their religious holidays and traditions are just one of many. If I grew up in a society in which every character in the movies I see and the television programs I watch looked like me, it would feel like marginalization to see the occasional protagonist who does not. I would start to feel that my culture is no longer "for me." If I grew up seeing men as heroes and women as passive objects who worship them, it would feel like oppression to be robbed of my felt birthright by having to regard women as equals in the workplace or on the battlefield. Rectifying unjust inequalities will always bring pain to those who benefited from such injustices. This pain will inevitably be experienced by some as oppression.

Fascist propaganda typically features aching hymns to the sense of anguish that accompanies loss of dominant status. This sense of loss, which is genuine, is manipulated in fascist politics into aggrieved victimhood and exploited to justify past, continuing, or new forms of oppression.

For a white working-class male who is no longer employed, for structural economic reasons, to be told to "check your privilege" may increase the likelihood that he might see a level playing field in the agenda of white supremacy. Fascist politics makes great sport of such earnest liberal injunctions. Inquiry into structural inequality requires collective public reflection on the strong evidence that reveals how race and gender-based status has given white males, and to a lesser degree white females, degrees of freedom never fully available to black citizens. "Check yoll' priv_ilege" is a call to whites to recognize the insulated social reality they navigate daily. However, the phrase is flung back into the public sphere as hypocrisy on the part of liberal elites, because white nationalist propaganda finds no racism against black citizens in 2017 America, but much against whites.

Fascist politics covers up structural inequality by attempting to invert, misrepresent, and subvert the long, hard effort to address it. Affirmative action at its best was

designed to recognize and address structural inequality. But by falsely presenting affirmative action as uncoupled from individual merit, some of its detractors recast advocates of affirmative action as pursuing their own race- or gender-based "nationalism" to the detriment of hardworking white Americans, regardless of evidence. The experience of losing a once unquestioned, settled dignity—the dignity that comes with being white, not black—is easily captured by a language of white victimization.

The Men's Rights Activist (MRA) movement in the United States in the 1990s crystallized the loss of privilege experienced as victimization. In his 2013 book, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*, the Stony Brook sociologist Michael Kimmel writes:

When white men are cast as the oppressors, normal, everyday middle class white guys don't often feel all that power trickling down to them.... To the MRAs, the real victims in American society are men, and so they built organizations around men's anxieties and anger at feminism, groups like the Coalition for Free Men, the National Congress for Men, Men Achieving Liberty and Equality (MALE), and Men's Rights Inc. (MR, Inc.). These groups proclaim their commitment to equality and to ending sexism—which was why they were compelled to fight against feminism.⁶

Kimmel notes "a curious characteristic of these new legions of angry white men: although white men still have most of the power and control in the world, these particular white men feel like victims." He connects this sense of victimhood to the perpetuation of a mythic patriarchal past:

These ideas also reflect a somewhat nostalgic longing for that past world, when men believed they could simply take their places among the nation's elite, simply by working hard and applying themselves. Alas, such a world never existed; economic elites have always managed to reproduce themselves despite the ideals of a meritocracy. But that hasn't stopped men from believing it. It is the American Dream. And when men fail, they are humiliated, with nowhere to place their anger.⁷

Promulgating a mythical patriarchal past works to create unreasonable expectations. When these expectations are not met, it feels like victimhood.⁸

Those who employ fascist political tactics deliberately take advantage of this emotion, manufacturing a sense of aggrieved victimization among the majority population, directing it at a group that is not responsible for it and promising to alleviate the feeling of victimization by punishing that group. In her book *Down Girl*, Kate Manne

illustrates this by drawing a distinction between patriarchy and misogyny. Patriarchy, according to Manne, is the hierarchal ideology that engenders the unreasonable expectations of high status. Misogyny is what faces women who are blamed when patriarchal expectations are left unfulfilled. The logic of fascist politics has a vivid model in Manne's logic of misogyny.

Breitbart News is a powerful far-right U.S. media outlet filled with anti immigrant propaganda representing refugees as public health threats, threats to civilization, and threats to law and order. In such outlets, we find clear expression of the way in which an aggrieved sense of victimization of dominant majorities can be weaponized for potential political gain. *Breitbart* has run dozens of articles with headlines related to Somali refugees in the United States, including those with titles such as "296 Refugees Diagnosed with Active TB in Minnesota, Ten Times Any Other State; Majority Are Somalis," and "Somalis: Least Educated of Refugees Arriving to U.S. in FY 2017." *Breitbart* was only a part of a wave of such propaganda in the United States around this time. In a video viewed three million times since it was posted in April 2015, Ann Corcoran of the far-right anti-immigrant group Refugee Resettlement Watch speaks of a plan of "Muslim colonization" of the United States, aided and abetted by international organizations such as the United Nations, federal agencies such as the U.S. State Department, and "Chris-

tian and Jewish groups assigned to seed them throughout the country." These outlets spread a sense of paranoia at a "fifth column" of "liberal" groups in our midst using the vocabulary of human rights to undermine the nation's traditions. But in doing so, they not only undermine liberal ideals, but also suggest that their targets should be subject to intense scrutiny or punishment merely on the basis that the dominant group feels fearful.

Understanding the dynamics of power in a society is crucial to assessing claims of victimhood. Equality-driven nationalism can rapidly turn oppressive itself, if one is not paying enough attention to shifts in power. Some problematic nationalist sentiments arise from perfectly genuine histories of oppression. Serbians have unquestionably been oppressed in the past. And one does not have to go back to the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, from which Serbians draw a great deal of national anger and identity, to encounter such oppression; World War II will suffice, when Serbians were murdered en masse in concentration camps. Contemporary Serbians come from families who are able to summon up a legacy of persecution. Serbian nationalists used this background to justify the persecution of less powerful and more marginalized local Muslim populations.

In 1986, the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences

published a memorandum that is generally regarded as having set out the tenets of the toxic Serbian nationalism that led to so much subsequent bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia. The document serves as a useful guide to the connection between victimization and oppressive nationalist sentiment. At the time, the majority of the residents in the province of Kosovo, who were ethnically Albanian, were requesting greater autonomy. The document's authors describe the Albanian treatment of ethnic Serbs in Kosovo as a "physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide of the Serbian population." They declare, "No other Yugoslav nation has had its cultural and spiritual integrity so brutally trampled upon as the Serbian nation. No one else's literary and artistic heritage has been so despoiled and ravaged as the Serbian heritage." They speak of "consistent economic discrimination" against Serbia, and unyielding "economic subordination." They declare that the "vindictive policy toward this republic has not lost any of its edge with the passing of time. On the contrary, encouraged by its own success, it has grown ever stronger, to the point of genocide." The document uses a dramatically exaggerated narrative of Serbian victimization to call for a recommitment to the defense of ethnic Serbs, as well as to Serbia's traditional history and culture.

Slobodan Milosevic was the president of Serbia from 1989 until 1997. On June 28, 1989, Milosevic delivered a speech to a vast crowd gathered on the battlefield of the

Battle of Kosovo, at the celebration of its six hundredth anniversary. Milosevic blamed the Serbian defeat at the hands of the Ottomans at the Battle of Kosovo, as well as "the fate Serbia suffered for a full six centuries;" on a lack of Serbian unity—that is, a failure of Serbian nationalist spirit. In Milosevic's speech, he said that the failure of Serbians to have nationalist pride had led over the centuries to "humiliation" and "agony" exceeding the cost of the fascist reign of terror during which several hundred thousand Serbians were killed. According to Milosevic, the only way to end the centuries of horror was to embrace national unity—in other words, a Serbian nationalist agenda. The narrative of Serbian victimization led him to political victory. It also justified a series of brutal wars, including in Kosovo, after which Milosevic was charged with genocide and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal for actions taken against the Albanian population of Kosovo. There is no question that Serbians have, in the past, been oppressed by multiple forces. It hardly mattered that many of the groups Milosevic would target were not actually responsible for any oppression of Serbians. Serbia's recent history under demagogic nationalists shows how a history of past oppression can be marshaled in fascist politics for military mobilization against phantom enemies.

Victimhood is an overwhelming emotion that also conceals the contradiction between equality-driven and

domination-driven nationalist movements. When groups in power use the mask of nationalism of the oppressed, or of genuine oppression in the past, to advance their own hegemony, they are using it to undermine equality. When the Israeli right uses the unquestioned history of Jewish oppression to assert Jewish dominance over Palestinian lands and lives, they are relying on the sense of victimization to obscure the contradiction between a struggle for equal respect and a struggle for dominance. Oppression is a powerful motivation for action, but the questions of who is wielding it when, under what context and against whom, remain eternally crucial.

Nationalism is at the core of fascism. The fascist leader employs a sense of collective victimhood to create a sense of group identity that is by its nature opposed to the cosmopolitan ethos and individualism of liberal democracy. The group identity can be variously based on skin color, on religion, on tradition, on ethnic origin. But it is always contrasted with a perceived other against whom the nation is to be defined. Fascist nationalism creates a dangerous "them" to guard against, at times to battle with, to control, in order to restore group dignity.

On October 12, 2017, Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban gave a speech at the International Consultation on Christian Persecution in Budapest. He begins

by speaking of the "undoubtedly unfair" persecution of Christians in Europe, which he labels as "discriminatory," and "painful." After extolling Hungary's traditional role as defenders of Christian Europe, he declares that "today it is a fact that Christianity is the world's most persecuted religion," which according to him places "the future of the European way of life, and of our identity" into peril. According to him, "the greatest danger we [Europeans] face today is the indifferent, apathetic silence of a Europe which denies its Christian roots." The manifestation of this potentially catastrophic indifference to Europe's Christian roots is generous European immigration policies: "A group of Europe's intellectual and political leaders wishes to create a mixed society in Europe which, within just a few generations, will utterly transform the cultural and ethnic composition of our continent and consequently its Christian identity."

In Orban's speech, we have all the elements of the victimology of fascist politics. Orban whips up irrational fear of immigrants, using Hungary's mythic past as the supposed defender of European Christianity to present himself as the warrior-leader who is brave enough to defend Christian Europe, which has been imperiled by the liberal elites ("Europe's intellectual and political leaders") who would let "the most persecuted religion in the world" be undermined from within by letting in a wave of immigrants. The refugees from brutal foreign wars are,

in his eyes, a powerful invading force who seek to establish a "fifth column" inside Christian Europe's walls. Orban asks his audience to repudiate "human rights" (ignoring their own home in Christianity) and other outdated concepts. As victims of persecution, he urges his audience to stand behind him as he returns Hungary to its glorious past as the mythic defender of Christian Europe against the barbarian, lawless hordes.

"J!"

LAW AND ORDER

In 1989, five black teenagers-the "Central Park Five"-were arrested for the gang rape of a white woman jogger in New York City's Central Park. Newspapers at the time were filled with breathless accounts of "wilding" black lawless teens rampaging and raping white women. At the time, Donald Trump took out full-page ads in several New York City newspapers, describing them as "crazed misfits" and calling for their execution. Subsequently, it emerged not only that the Central Park Five were innocent, but that they were known to be innocent to many of those involved in their prosecution. Years later, all five were completely exonerated and given a cash settlement by the City of New York.

In November 2016, Jeff Sessions, now the U.S. attorney general, praised then president-elect Donald Trump's 1989 comments about the Central Park Five as demon-

strating his commitment to "law and order." This is a striking understanding of law and order, not only because the teenagers were, in fact, completely innocent, but because Trump's words left no room for due process in the case. Narms of law and order in a liberal democratic state are fundamentally fair. Sessions's use of the phrase "law and order" instead seems to refer to a system of laws that declares young black men to be, in their very *existence*, violations of law and order.

A healthy democratic state is governed by laws that treat all citizens equally and justly, supported by bonds of mutual respect between people, including those tasked with policing them. Fascist law-and-order rhetoric is explicitly meant to divide citizens into two classes: those of the chosen nation, who are lawful by nature, and those who are not, who are inherently lawless. In fascist politics, women who do not fit traditional gender roles, non-whites, homosexuals, immigrants, "decadent cosmopolitans," those who do not have the dominant religion, are in their very existence violations of law and order. By describing black Americans as a threat to law and order, demagogues in the United States have been able to create a strong sense of white national identity that requires protection from the nonwhite "threat." A similar tactic is

used internationally now to create friend-enemy distinctions based on fear in order to unify populations against immigrants.

The history of National Socialism is a textbook example of fascist political national identity formation. Beginning in the 1880s, a version of ethnic nationalism developed in Austria and Germany that provided the wellspring from which the National Socialist movement flowed. The *volkisch* movement was rooted in a romanticized notion of ethnic purity of the German *Volle*. Anti-Semitism functioned within *volkisch* thought as part of the definition of the German *Volk*; the *Volk* were defined by contrast with their enemy, the Jews. The National Socialists also used what surely must be the most common method of sowing fear about a minority group—painting them as threats to law and order.

In the spring of 1936, my grandmother, Ilse Stanley, had just returned from a theater tour that had kept her away from Berlin for almost the whole winter, only to discover a city in which "more and more friends were missing." Soon after her return, a cousin arrived at her home. The Gestapo, her cousin told her, had taken her husband away to a concentration camp. In her 1957 memoir, *The Unforgotten*, my grandmother describes ask-

ing her cousin about the reasons for her husband's arrest. Her answer:

Because he was a criminal with a record. He had paid two fines in court: one for speeding and one for some other traffic fine. They said they finally wanted to do what the court had missed doing all these years: to get rid of all Jews with criminal records. A traffic fine—a criminal record!

The first half of my grandmother's book is a careful accounting of the years following Hitler's rise to power. In it, she documents how difficult it was to get the German Jewish community to understand the peril they faced. She understood this peril from the inside as a result of her work rescuing prisoners from the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen while disguised as a Nazi social worker. Because of what she witnessed in the camp, she was aware, as many other fellow Jews were not, of the full horror of what was occurring, which was, as with refugee and immigrant detention centers in the United States right now, kept hidden from the general population. She repeatedly writes of her difficulty in persuading friends and family members to leave. After all, most German Jews did not think of themselves as criminals.

In February 2016, the far-right SVP (the Schweizerische Volkspartei) introduced a referendum in Switzer-

land to expel "immigrants," including even second- or third-generation Swiss-born residents found guilty of as little as a few parking violations. The referendum seemed sure to pass. It was partly because of the efforts of Operation Libero, a group founded by Swiss students who organized to change the narrative of deporting "criminal innigrants;" that the referendum was defeated.

In the United States, Donald Trump rode to the presidency with a call to expel "criminal aliens." Since he has taken office, he has continued targeting immigrants. Both he and his administration regularly stoke fear of immigrants by connecting them to criminality. Again and again, we are presented with the specter of "criminal aliens"—and not just in remarks but also in official documents, such as the announcement of a new office in the Department of Homeland Security devoted to helping "victims of crimes committed by criminal aliens."

The word "criminal" has a literal meaning, of course, but it also has a resonant meaning—people who by their nature are insensitive to society's norms, drawn to violate the law by self-interest or malice. We do not generally use the term to describe those who may have inadvertently broken a law or who may have been compelled to violate a law in a desperate circumstance. Someone who runs to catch a bus is not thereby a runner; someone who commits a crime is not thereby a criminal. The word "criminal" attributes a certain type of *character* to someone.

Psychologists have studied a practice they call linguistic intergroup bias. It turns out we tend to describe the actions of those we regard as one of "us" quite differently than we describe the actions of those we regard as one of "theIn."

If someone we regard as one of "us" does something bad—for example, steals a chocolate bar—we tend to describe the action concretely. In other words, if my friend Daniel steals a chocolate bar, I will tend to characterize what he did as "stealing a chocolate bar." On the other hand, if someone we regard as one of "them" does the same thing, we tend to describe the action more abstractly, by imputing bad character traits to the person committing it. If Jerome, who is regarded as one of "them," steals a chocolate bar, he is much more likely to be described as a thief or a criminal. If a white American sees a well-dressed white American handcuffed in the back of a police car, the question that comes to mind might be what happened that led to that particular arrest. If a white American sees a black American handcuffed in the back of a police car, the question that presents itself might instead be how the police got "that criminal."

The reverse is true of *good* actions. If someone we regard as one of "us" does a good deed, we will be inclined to explain what happened by attributing it to good character traits of the person in question. Daniel's giving a child a chocolate bar is described as an instance of "Dan-

iel's generosity." Jerome's giving a child a chocolate bar is described in concrete terms: "That guy just gave that boy a chocolate bar."

Research on linguistic intergroup bias has shown that an audience can infer from how someone's actions are being described—abstractly or concretely—whether that person is being categorized as "us" or "them." For example; experimental subjects make inferences from the way someone describes someone else as to whether that person is likely to share the same political party as the person they are describing, or the same religion.¹ To describe someone as a "criminal" is both to mark that person with a terrifying permanent character trait and simultaneously to place the person outside the circle of "us." *They* are criminals. malce mistakes.

Politicians who describe whole categories of persons as "criminals" are imputing to them permanent character traits that are frightening to most people, while simultaneously positioning themselves as our protectors. Such language undermines the democratic process of reasonable decision making, replacing it with fear. Another salient example in the U.S. context is the use of the term "riot" to describe political protests. In the United States in the 1960s, the civil rights movement included black political protests in urban areas against police brutality (most famously in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles and the Harlem district of Manhattan). These protests

were regularly described in the media as "dots." As James Baldwin wrote at the time about the media description of these protests, "when white men rise up against oppression, they are heroes: when black men rise, they have reverted to their native savagery. The uprising in the Warsaw ghetto was not described as a riot, nor were the participants maligned as hoodlums: the boys and girls in Watts and Harlem ate thoroughly aware of this."² Such misrepresentations allowed Richard Nixon to run for office in 1968 on a "law and order" platform. Nixon's administration is generally viewed as laying the groundwork for the subsequent mass incarceration of black American citizens.

In 2015, widespread protests by largely black crowds against police brutality occurred in Baltimore after the killing of Freddie Gray by police. In an article for *Linguistic Pulse* in April 2015, Nie Subtirelu compared different media outlets' use of "protest" versus "riot" to describe the Baltimore protests. Subtirelu found that Fox News, the United States' far-right media outlet, used "riot" in its coverage of the Baltimore unrest with more than twice the frequency of its use of "protest," CNN, by contrast, used "riot" with only slightly more frequency than "protest," and MSNBC used "protest" with only slightly more frequency than "riot" in its coverage of the unrest in Baltimore.³ The misrepresentation of political protests as riots was a factor in the election campaign of Donald

Trump, whose campaign had strong echoes of Nixon's. Nixon, however, campaigned at a time of rising rates of violent crime. Trump's successful "law and order" campaign took place under the conditions of some of the lowest rates of violent crime in recorded U.S. history.

Discussion that uses terms like "criminal" to encompass both those who commit multiple homicides for pleasure and those who commit traffic violations, or "riot" to describe a political protest, changes attitudes and shapes policy. A good example of what can result when language that criminalizes an entire group of people distorts debate and leads to unreasonable outcomes is the mass incarceration of American citizens of African descent.

In 1980, half a million Americans were in prison or jail. By 2013, there were more than 2.3 million. The explosion in incarceration has fallen disproportionately on American citizens who are the descendants of those who were enslaved in this country. White Americans constitute 77 percent of the U.S. population, and black Americans 13 percent. Yet more black Americans are incarcerated than white Americans. There has scarcely been a time in history when one group has composed so much of the world's prison population; black Americans may be only 13 percent of the U.S. population, but they are 9 percent of the *world's* prison population.

If the system of justice in the United States were fair, and if the 38 million black Americans were as prone to crime as the average ethnic group in the world (where an ethnic group is, for example, the 61 million Italians, or the 45 million Hindu Gujarati), you would expect that black Americans would also be about 9 percent of the 2013 estimated world population of 7.135 billion people. There would then be well over 600 million black Americans in the world. If you think that black Americans are like anybody else, then the nation of black America should be the third-largest nation on earth, twice as large as the United States. You can of course still think, in the face of these facts, that the United States' prison laws are fairly applied and color-blind. But if you do, you almost certainly must believe that black Americans are among the most dangerous groups in the multi-thousand-year history of human civilization.

In the United States, the steep increase in incarceration rates has accompanied a steep drop in crime. In a 2017 review essay, "The Impacts of Incarceration on Crime," its author, David Roodman, notes that the "59% per capita rise in incarceration between 1990 and 2010 accompanied a 42% drop in FBI-tracked 'index crimes.'"⁴ And yet, as Roodman accurately notes, "researchers agree that putting more people behind bars added modestly, at most, to the fall in crime." For one thing, Canada has experienced a pattern very similar to the United States',

with steeply dropping crime rates since the 1990s. However, Canada's incarceration rate did not rise alongside the United States' experiment in mass incarceration that continued through the 1990s. If there is an explanation for the general North American drop in crime since 1990 that explains the similar U.S. and Canadian decrease in crime, it is not increased incarceration.

The main reason that many researchers are dubious about a link between an increase in incarceration and a drop in crime rates is because studies indicate that incarceration itself contributes substantively to an increase in crime rates. Formerly incarcerated individuals have much greater difficulty finding employment; this effect is multiplied, as we shall see in the final chapter, for black Americans. Formerly incarcerated citizens also have a drastically lower civic participation rate; they effectively remove themselves from civil society.⁵ Incarceration also has a negative impact on families of the incarcerated, increasing the likelihood of subsequent incarceration. Black Americans face greater risk of incarceration compared to whites for the same crime, as evidenced, for example, by the vastly different rates of incarceration for drug crimes. Studies also suggest that incarceration itself leads to crime--Roodman summarizes this effect as "more time in prison, more crime after prison."

But the more important question is why harshly punitive measures are considered an appropriate response to

adverse social conditions among black Americans. When a community has a particularly high crime rate, there is clearly a social problem requiring empathy and understanding, and an urgent need for policies that address underlying structural causes. The more important question is then: What is the source of widespread lack of empathy for this group?

Pause for a moment in this context to consider the empathy in play when the contemporary "opiate crisis" is covered in the U.S. media. The opiate crisis is not depicted as driven by vicious and terrifying "opiate rings." Nor are those addicted to opiates defined as criminals. If anything, the media, politicians, social commentary, the medical community, and even President Trump address opiate addiction, yes, as a crisis, but as a public health epidemic and not as an issue directly tied to law and order. The opiate crisis is not associated with African American citizens; rather, it is associated with Trump's base, rural whites and displaced white industrial workers. In short, a complicated and compassionate public analysis of opiate addiction is in play in U.S. public discourse, and federal and state initiatives are focused on prevention and treatment. If only such an analysis had been applied to African American citizens when drug addiction appeared to be associated with them. The addiction of citizens of all races, classes, and groups should be addressed with

compassion, empathy, and the liberal values of shared human dignity and equality.

In 1896, Frederick L. Hoffman published the book *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*, which the historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad describes as "arguably the most influential race and crime study of the first half of the twentieth century." Its thesis is that black Americans are uniquely violent, lazy, and prone to disease. In 1996, William J. Bennett, John J. Dilulio, Jr., and John P. Walters published the book *Body Count: Moral Poverty . . . and How to Win America's War Against Crime and Drugs*. Its thesis is that America faces a unique threat from a new generation of young men, a large percentage of whom are black, who are especially prone to cruel, violent acts and incapable of honest work; these young men they call "super-predators." The book warns of a coming wave of youth violence by these "super-predators" (the wave of course did not materialize; violent crime plummeted in subsequent years, rather than sharply rising). These two works bookend a century of pseudo-science forging a link in the American consciousness between criminality and Americans who descended from enslaved Africans. Despite the century-long gap between them, the two books are remarkably similar: Both employ the sober language of statistics to raise moral panic about a coming wave of racialized violence (*Body Count*,

unlike Hoffman's book, grounds its false predictions in claims about the "moral poverty" of "inner-city culture," rather than genetics).

Essentially as long as there have been black Americans, they have been challenging the pseudoscientific attempt to "write crime into race." In his 1898 essay "The Study of the Negro Problems," W.E.B. Du Bois lamented the

endless final judgments as to the American Negro emanating from men of influence and learning, in the very face of the fact known to every accurate student, that there exists today no sufficient material of proven reliability, upon which any scientist can base definite and final conclusions as to the present conditions and tendencies of the eight million American Negroes; and that any person or publication purporting to give such conclusions simply makes statements which go beyond the reasonably proven evidence.⁶

Du Bois here emphasizes the wide gap between what social scientists know and the full facts, a gap that is subject to what the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has called "manipulative expertise." Du Bois's words remain true today.

One particularly important example of manipulative expertise, both disturbing and revealing, is "super-

predator theory," introduced, at least in its contemporary version, by a coauthor of *Body Count*, John Dilullo, Jr., a political science professor at Princeton at the time, in a successful attempt to advocate for adult prison sentences for juvenile offenders. The theory postulated a group of "super-predators" with intrinsically violent natures, who "kill, rape, maim, and steal without remorse" and for whom reform is not an option. In *Body Count* as well as other publications, Dilullo predicted a large increase in violent crime in the United States from 1995 to 2000 arising from the (mysterious) development of a rash of "super-predators" entering society. His prediction was treated as credible, despite the fact that violent crime in the United States began dropping in the early 1990s and continued to fall from 1995 to 2000. Dilullo spoke with much more certainty than the evidence warranted. One might suspect this to be a case in which a background ideology linking race and crime explains the large gap between the evidence at hand and how social scientists had interpreted it.

The theory had a large effect on public discourse. In the 1996 election, U.S. presidential candidates Bill Clinton and Bob Dole competed over who would be harsher on these "super-predators." Though its effects are hard to quantify, it seems clear the theory contributed greatly to the adoption of draconian and dubiously constitutional policies charging juveniles as adults. The asymmetrical

tacial application of these laws has been well documented; for example, a 2012 Sentencing Project report shows that 940 of the 1,579 survey respondents setting life without parole for crimes committed as juveniles were black. Super-predator theory has contributed to a public culture in which black juveniles are viewed as significantly more culpable than white juveniles.

Demagogic language does not just affect public discourse. It has well-documented, deep-seated effects on judgment and perception throughout a population. A criminal is someone whose character is deficient, who is by nature beyond society's help. Jennifer Eberhardt's work in social psychology has helped document the effects of 150 years of racial propaganda linking black Americans to irredeemable criminality. In a 2012 paper, Eberhardt, along with coauthors Aneeta Rattan, Cynthia Levine, and Carol Dweck, presented white subjects with factual information about a Supreme Court case deciding the constitutionality of life without parole for juvenile offenders.⁷ In the materials the participants were given was a description of an example juvenile recipient, "a 14-year-old male with 17 prior juvenile convictions on his record who brutally raped an elderly woman." The juvenile was described either as "a black male" or "a white male." After being presented with this information, the participants were asked, "To what extent do you support life sentences with no possibility of parole for juvenile"

niles when they have been convicted of serious violent crimes (in which no one was killed)?" and were directed to rate their responses on a scale of 1 ("extremely") to 6 ("not at all"). Those who were given the description of the "14-year-old male" as black were significantly more likely to support life sentences with no possibility of parole for juveniles.

In a 2014 paper, "Racial Disparities in Incarceration Increase Acceptance of Punitive Policies," Eberhardt and coauthor Rebecca Hetey had a white female experimenter present white registered California voters with California's draconian three-strikes law, as well as a petition to amend it.⁸ According to California's law, passed in 1994, if someone had two previous serious felonies, no matter how long ago they occurred, a "third strike" for a violation as small as stealing "a dollar in loose change from a parked car" would result in a mandatory sentence of twenty-five years to life imprisonment. The proposed petition would amend the law to require that the third strike be a violent crime.

Before presenting the subjects with the petition, the experimenter would show them a forty-second video with eighty mug shots of inmates, both black and white. In one video, 45 percent of the faces were black (the "more black condition"). In the other video, 25 percent of the faces were black (the "less black condition"). In the "less black condition," 51 percent of the subjects signed

the petition. Only 27 percent signed the petition in the "more black condition;" Eberhardt's work is only the latest in a large body of research showing that the mass incarceration of Americans of African descent has its roots in racist propaganda tracing back to the days of slavery that casts members of this group as irredeemably criminal. The result has been a massive overrepresentation, historic in scale, of this group in the U.S. prison population.

Fascist propaganda does not, of course, merely present members of targeted groups as criminals. To ensure the right kind of moral panic about these groups, its members are represented as particular kinds of threats to the fascist nation—most important, and most typical, a threat to its purity. Consequently, fascist politics also emphasizes one kind of crime. The basic threat that fascist propaganda uses to raise fear is that members of the targeted group will rape members of the chosen nation, thereby polluting its "blood." The threat of mass rape is simultaneously intended as a threat to the patriarchal norms of the fascist state, to the "manhood" of the nation. The crime of rape is basic to fascist politics because it raises *sexual anxiety*, and an attendant need for protection of the nation's manhood by the fascist authority.

8

SEXUAL ANXIETY

If the demagogue is the father of the nation, then any threat to patriarchal manhood and the traditional family undermines the fascist vision of strength. These threats include the crimes of rape and assault, as well as so-called sexual deviance. The politics of sexual anxiety is particularly effective when traditional male roles, such as that of family provider, are already under threat by economic forces.

Fascist propaganda promotes fear of interbreeding and race mixing, of corrupting the pure nation with, in the words of Charles Lindbergh, speaking for the America First movement, "inferior blood." Fascist propaganda characteristically magnifies this fear by sexualizing the threat of the other. Since fascist politics has, at its basis, the traditional patriarchal family, it is characteristically accompanied by panic about deviations from it. Transgender individuals and homosexuals are used to heighten