

THE TRUMP FILES

Gratis Sample: Part I: Trumpism

Jack Hassard

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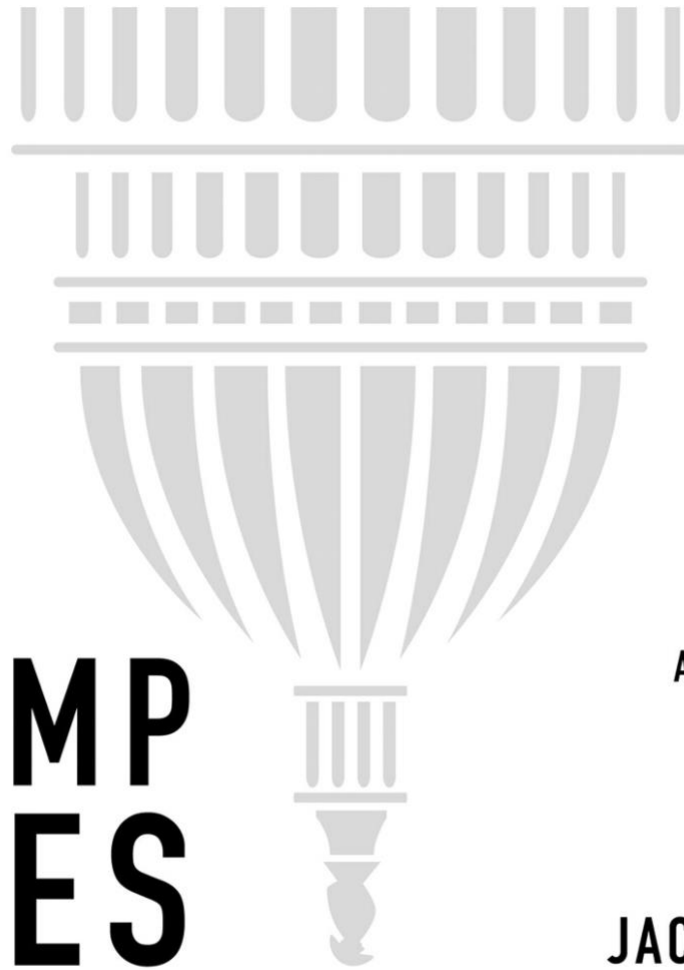
THE TRUMP FILES

AN ACCOUNT OF
THE TRUMP
ADMINISTRATION'S
EFFECT ON AMERICAN
DEMOCRACY,
HUMAN RIGHTS,
SCIENCE,
AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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JACK HASSARD

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PART I: TRUMPISM

When day comes, we ask ourselves, where can we
find light in this never-ending shade?

—Amanda Gorman, “The Hill We Climb”

INTRODUCTION

AFTER THE ELECTION I SAT WITH FRIENDS ON A BENCH OUTSIDE a hotel on a warm Ocala, Florida, day on Thanksgiving 2016. We talked about the dismay we felt knowing in a few months that Donald Trump would become president of the United States. How did this happen, we asked each other? What were we thinking? When Trump has gone, how does America carry on?

But as you will find out, I’ve asked the wrong questions here. The question that I should pose here is, what happened to America to make it ready for a Trump presidency?

Here in Part I of this book, I describe how the tidal wave of Trumpism, along with its political ideologies, emotions, and feeling, brought America into the heart of an unsuccessful coup. An American crisis, brewing for years, came to the surface in the 2016 and 2020 election campaigns. Even though Trump lost the second campaign and is out of office, his legacy of corruption, conspiracy, and lying is still with us. After his defeat in the 2020 election, Trumpism has become the core of the Republican Party. Maybe it should be renamed the Party of Trump.

The rise of Trumpism needs to be understood and not ignored. In this book I will explore Trumpism and show how it appeared but more

importantly how it affected government, science, foreign and domestic policy, human health, and the dignity of fellow humans.

What were the conditions that opened the doors for Donald Trump?

EXTREME POLARIZATION

According to the Pew Research Center, Republicans and Democrats have moved further apart in their attitudes toward many social issues such as voting, race, gender, guns, the Capitol rioters, and education.²⁴ During the Trump years, Republicans and Democrats were split even further. Trump's approval rating when he left office showed the widest gap between the two parties in many decades. Extreme polarization resulted in people feeling uncomfortable even talking about Trump. Divisions were not uncommon even among members of the same family, as was the case in my own family.

In 1994 when the Pew Research Center began asking Americans ten "values questions" on subjects including the role of government, environmental protection, and national security, the average partisan divide between Republicans and Democrats was 15 percent.²⁵ At the end of one year of Trump's presidency, the gap on the same questions had increased to 36 percent. Another finding was attitudes about higher education. Republicans who said college and universities were having a negative effect on the way things were going in the country rose from 37 percent in 2015 to 58 percent in 2017. Trust in the press also changed with Trump in office. Republicans expressed widespread distrust of the press, whereas Democrats expressed more trust of the same news outlets that Republicans were asked about.

Although America is polarized into Republican (red) states and Democratic (blue) states, it's not as simple as using the political terms Republican and Democrat, or red and blue, to understand American polarization.

²⁴ "Political Attitudes and Values," Pew Research Center, June 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/political-attitudes-and-values/>.

²⁵ Michael Dimock and John Gramlich, "How America Changed During Trump's Presidency," Pew Research Center, January 29, 2021, accessed June 3, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/2021/01/29/how-america-changed-during-donald-trumps-presidency/>.

FOUR NARRATIVES—TWO COUNTRIES

George Packer²⁶ explains how the United States has fractured into four parts: “free and real” America on one side, and “smart and just” America on the other side. Parker’s analysis gives us the insight to understand how America elected a demagogue by the name of Donald Trump. An understanding of the four parts is a key to understanding why so many people voted for Trump regardless of his 30,000 lies, his gross bigotry, and his anger directed at anyone who disagreed with him. His voters didn’t care about this.

I’ll briefly touch of the four narratives that Parker identified that I think will provide some insight as to why Trump was supported by millions of Americans, even beyond his presidency. I found this analysis very interesting, especially when I asked the question, where do I fit in? As you read my brief review of Parker’s ideas, you might ask yourself the same question.

Here is how Parker begins his analysis of the narratives that define America’s values:

The 1970s ended postwar, bipartisan, middle-class America, and with it the two stable narratives of getting ahead and the fair shake. In their place, four rival narratives have emerged, four accounts of America’s *moral identity*. They have roots in history, but they are shaped by new ways of thinking and living. They reflect schisms on both sides of the divide that has made us two countries, extending and deepening the lines of fracture. Over the past four decades, the four narratives have taken turns exercising influence. They overlap, morph into one another, attract and repel one another. None can be understood apart from the others, because all four emerge from the same whole.²⁷

²⁶ George Packer, *Last Best Hope: America in Crisis and Renewal* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2021).

²⁷ Packer, *Last Best Hope*, 69–70.

Free America.²⁸ This is Parker's first narrative, which he says has been the most politically powerful of the four. Free America is the narrative that combines libertarian ideas with consumer capitalism. We might call this the conservative movement that was jumpstarted by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. It was made up of traditionalists including Protestants, orthodox Catholics, southern agrarians, would-be aristocrats, and alienated individualists. This was the main strand of conservatism.

Free America was the underlying theme on right-wing radio talk shows that hit the airways in the 1980s hosted by the likes of Rush Limbaugh, Neal Boortz, Sean Hannity, and many more.²⁹ Right-wing radio dominated the airways (with about 80 million listeners per day) and was especially popular with people living in red states. I've listened to some of these shows over the past thirty years, especially Neal Boortz, whose show originated in Atlanta. Although I found it painful to listen to some of these shows (not so much with Boortz), not to do so meant I wouldn't understand what drives them and what they talk about. In my opinion, Limbaugh was the "voice" of free America. Most of the others followed his lead.

Free America became the dogma of the Republican Party. Americans were duped by Reagan and Gingrich and continue to be with Mitch McConnell and Kevin McCarthy. The Koch brothers poured millions into propaganda machines and campaigns for elected office on behalf of corporate power brokers and fossil fuel companies.

Parker says that real freedom means growing up and acquiring the ability to participate fully in political and economic life.

Smart America.³⁰ A new class of Americans emerged from what is known as the knowledge economy. These were people with college degrees who became salaried professionals in a myriad of professions, including information technology, computer engineering, scientific research, design, management consulting, civil service, financial analysis,

²⁸ Packer, *Last Best Hope*, 70–85.

²⁹ Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, "Understanding the Rise of Talk Radio," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, no. 4 (2011): 762–767, retrieved August 20, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41319965>.

³⁰ Berry and Sobieraj, "Rise of Talk Radio," 85–101.

law, journalism, the arts, and higher education. I've studied and worked in the halls of smart America at the high school and university levels. And I've carried my university identity into retirement with the label of emeritus professor.

Real America.³¹ Real America, according to Parker, goes back a long way. It says that “the authentic heart of democracy beats hardest in common people who work with their hands³² goes back to the eighteenth century.”³³ In the early nineteenth century, populist democracy was in vogue, identifying farmers, mechanics, and laborers as the real Americans. A key point here is that popular democracy conveyed an anti-intellectual bias to politics, and it's not faded. And one other fact: real America has always been white. There were exceptions, especially within labor movements in the early twentieth century. But any coming together was soon brought to a halt by the pressure of white supremacy.

Real America is also religious, evangelical, and fundamentalist Christian. Real America is patriotic and has a strong national character. It is hostile to humanitarianism and international engagement. According to Parker, the narrative of real America is white Christian nationalism.

Just America.³⁴ In 2014, the character of America changed, according to Parker. Even though the civil rights movement brought civil rights and voting rights laws and the country elected Barack Obama, the first Black American president, there was something else happening on the streets of American cities and towns.

Parker says that Just America emerged as a national narrative in 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, when police killed a Black eighteen-year-old

³¹ Berry and Sobieraj, “Rise of Talk Radio,” 101–118.

³² I grew up in a “real American” family home in a town on the outskirts of Boston. My father worked in the Boston shipyards as a carpenter during WWII, was a loyal union member and shop steward for many years in Dedham Bakery Company, and later worked as an engineer in the New England Boyd Teflon Coating Company. My father was an expert carpenter who worked with his hands to build his own garage and added a bedroom to our home. My mother and father raised five of us in a small home near the edge of Jennings Pond in Natick, Massachusetts. However, our family values included the importance of education and the acceptance of people from different cultures, occupations, and beliefs.

³³ George Packer, “How America Fractured into Four Parts,” *The Atlantic*, July/August 2021 Issue, retrieved April 2, 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/07/george-packer-four-americas/619012/>.

³⁴ Berry and Sobieraj, “Rise of Talk Radio,” 118–139.

and left him on the street for hours. The murder of Black Americans continued, but many of these murders were captured on video and then posted on social media.

Just America emerged from the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. It was based on the moral views of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and many other civil rights activists. In the present age, Black Lives Matter is moral ground upon which the civil rights movement has coalesced.³⁵

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

In recent years, there have been several documents and documentaries published that present a past that a lot of people want to forget or change. Beginning in 1619, a year before Pilgrims dropped anchor in Plymouth, enslaved African people arrived on the shores of Jamestown on the ship *White Lion*. Urged by Nikole Hannah-Jones, an American investigative journalist,³⁶ the *New York Times* has documented this in *The 1619 Project*³⁷ and in the new origin story in Hannah-Jones's book of the same name.³⁸ The project aims to reframe the country's history, understanding it with the beginning of American slavery and exploring the consequences and contributions of Black Americans at the center of the story of America.

Donald Trump retaliated against *The 1619 Project* by promoting a "patriotic education" curriculum titled the 1776 Project.³⁹ According to many historians, Trump's 1776 Commission report "warps the history of racism and slavery."⁴⁰ In fact, Trump had the audacity to release the report on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2021, just a few days before he was exiled to Florida. The 1776 Project rejects the claim that the true

³⁵ Aldon Morris (2021, February 3). "From civil rights to black lives matter," *Scientific American*, February 3, 2021, Retrieved May 9, 2022, from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/from-civil-rights-to-black-lives-matter/>.

³⁶ It's worth noting that her alma mater, the University of North Carolina, offered her a professorship in 2021, but without tenure. After weeks of protest by faculty and students, the UNC trustees voted to offer her tenure. Hannah-Jones turned the job down.

³⁷ *The 1619 Project*, *New York Times*, August 14, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>.

³⁸ Nikole Hannah-Jones et al., eds., *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* (New York: One World, 2021).

³⁹ Derrick Clifton, "How the Trump Administration's '1776 Report' Warps the History of Racism and Slavery," *NBCNews.com*, January 20, 2021, retrieved November 19, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/how-trump-administration-s-1776-report-warps-history-racism-slavery-n1254926>.

⁴⁰ Clifton, "Trump Administration's '1776 Report.'"

founding of America was in 1619. It remains steadfast that America was founded by the British who landed near Cape Cod.

The 1619 Project has irked Republicans. Around the country, many school districts banned the teaching of the project and related ideas. Texas, and some other states, have passed critical race theory (CRT) bills. CRT, which started in law, spread to many other areas, such as political science, ethnic studies, Indigenous studies, and philosophy, but especially scholarship in education.⁴¹ As a science educator for more than forty years, which spanned the period of the civil rights and CRT movements, the present hysterics about CRT is an abomination to the crucial role that public education plays in teaching racial justice.

Although CRT is not taught as a course in K–12 schooling, teachers of all subject areas have incorporated issues that are central to CRT theorists. In my own writing, I have explored tracking, high-stakes testing, standardizing curriculum, multicultural education, and charter schools.⁴² Science educators have embodied CRT into a framework called culturally responsive teaching.⁴³ The curriculum of American public schools emphasizes teaching science, mathematics, social studies, and language arts, which builds bridges from school to communities.

CRT is not a new idea. The person that many consider the “father of CRT” is Derrick Bell (1930–2011).⁴⁴ Bell was an American lawyer, professor at Harvard University, and civil rights activist. As a scholar he wrote foundational papers and books about CRT. He was involved in several desegregation lawsuits that led to his formulation of the theory. One of the first cases was *Hudson v. Leake County School Board* (1963). The white school board voted to close the Harmony School, a Black school in the middle of Leake County, Mississippi. The school was built by Black citizens in the 1920s and was funded by the philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, who funded five thousand Black schools in the South. In

⁴¹ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

⁴² Jack Hassard, *Science Education* ebook series, Kindle edition.

⁴³ A. H. Mackenzie, “Why Culturally Relevant Science Teaching is Vital in Our Classrooms,” *The Science Teacher* 89, no. 2 (2021): 6–8.

⁴⁴ Jelani Cobb, “The Man behind Critical Race Theory,” *The New Yorker*, September 10, 2021, retrieved November 13, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/09/20/the-man-behind-critical-race-theory>.

the case of the Harmony School, Winson Hudson (1916–2004), founder and vice president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), met with Derrick Bell, who was an attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, New York City.⁴⁵ Hudson sought Bell’s assistance to help her and other Black citizens of Harmony sue the school board. The case led to the reopening and desegregation of the Harmony School. However, Bell and Hudson began to question whether they did the right thing in forcing integration. In the South, the integration of schools led to the establishment of private “segregation academies” and white flight, leaving the schools essentially segregated.⁴⁶

Bell realized that decisions in civil rights cases were of limited value. He concluded that racism is so deeply rooted in American society and its structures that it has been able to reassert itself after limited successes in court cases. Bell began to write and argue that racism is permanent. Accordingly, his ideas became the foundation for the CRT that emerged in the 1980s.⁴⁷

CRT is based on the thinking and writing of scholars from all cultures, historical periods stretching back to the early nineteenth century, and the present work of thousands of CRT scholars at universities around the world. Diane Ravitch provides an early example of CRT when she quoted from a Frederick Douglass speech that was given on July 4, 1852.⁴⁸

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, in their important work about CRT, insist that it “tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it.” They believe that CRT can transform society for the better.⁴⁹

There is Republican movement amongst state legislatures and school boards to outlaw CRT. Republicans or conservative activists use CRT as a catchphrase for any examination of systemic racism.

⁴⁵ Winson Hudson and Constance Curry, *Mississippi Harmony: Memoirs of a Freedom Fighter* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

⁴⁶ Cobb, “The Man behind Critical Race Theory.”

⁴⁷ Cobb, “The Man behind Critical Race Theory.”

⁴⁸ Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, Philip S. Foner, ed. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1999), 188–206, https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/coretexts/_files/resources/texts/c/1852%20Douglass%20July%204.pdf.

⁴⁹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 10.

These critics of CRT include many ideas that have penetrated public education such as social justice as well as culturally responsive and critical thinking. They are disingenuous in that a few years ago, they used the catchphrase “critical thinking and academic freedom” to disguise the intent of “intelligent design” being part of the science curriculum. Creationism and intelligent design made stealth appearances in some state science classrooms.⁵⁰

CRT rattled school board members and parents who think their children will be exposed to ideas about race and social justice. They complain that teaching about CRT will make white kids feel bad if they discuss slavery, segregation, and the Ku Klux Klan. This is simply deceitful. Most middle and high school students are quite able and interested in reading about and discussing cultural issues. Some of the literature that high school students read focuses on questions about immigration, poverty, environmental justice, and racial discrimination. As a science educator, I wrote books in 1970s that included the role of women in science and how Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino science was integral to knowing science.⁵¹

Marisa Lati wrote in her *Washington Post* article that the movement to ban CRT from K–12 schools and colleges is an attempt in assuring that the history of many people of color are not taught in schools. She added that to ban CRT erases the legacy of discrimination and lived experiences of Black, Brown, and Native people.⁵²

In a groundbreaking book offering a new narrative of the African role in creating the Americas, Christina Proenza-Coles pushes the history of Afro Americans back into the 1500s.⁵³ Indeed, she shows that there is only an illusion distinguishing American history from African American history. Like Hannah-Jones, Proenza-Coles states that Africans and their

⁵⁰ Jack Hassard, “Creationism and Intelligent Design Make Stealth Appearances in Louisiana and Tennessee Science Classrooms,” Jackhassard.org, April 23, 2012, retrieved November 18, 2021, <https://jackhassard.org/creationism-intelligent-design-stealth-appearances-louisiana-tennessee-science-classrooms/>.

⁵¹ Joseph Abruscato and Jack Hassard, *The Whole Cosmos Catalogue of Science Activities for Kids of All Ages*, 2nd ed. (Menlo Park: Good Year Books, 1977).

⁵² Marisa lati, “What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Do Republicans Want to Ban It in Schools?” *Washington Post*, July 12, 2021, retrieved November 14, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/05/29/critical-race-theory-bans-schools/>.

⁵³ Christina Proenza-Coles, *American Founders: How People of African Descent Established Freedom in the New World* (Montgomery: NewWorld Books, 2019).

descendants preceded the English in settling what would become the United States. Indeed, in Georgia, eighty years before Jamestown, a settlement of Maroons, descendants of Africans in the Americas, established the first settlement in the state where I now live. She also points out that Africans outnumbered Europeans four to one until 1820. Indeed Africans were on every exploratory and military campaign from “Canada to Chile.”⁵⁴

The current narrative about CRT is steeped in ignorance of American history and contemporary prejudices. Critical race theory is not taught in the public schools, but racial justice is.

INSIDE TRUMPISM

In my research on *The Trump Files*, I discovered the work of Arlie Russell Hochschild, a University of California, Berkeley sociologist. She writes that Trumpism is intimately tied to its namesake. She suggests “to understand the future of the Republican Party, we have to act like political psychiatrists.”⁵⁵

One metaphor she used stood out for me. Hochschild explains that “Trumpism is an emotional planet that orbits Trump’s star. Breaking the connection between Trump and the better part of the GOP will require either that Trump disappears (an unlikely proposition) or that a larger star emerges from the Republican backbench (also unlikely).”⁵⁶ It’s evident that even now, Trump leads the Republican Party.

In her book, *Strangers in Their Own Land*,⁵⁷ Hochschild writes a compelling and empathetic story about how people make sense of their lives giving rise to a gulf separating people with widely different views about politics, economics, religion, and issues such as abortion, gay marriage, gender roles, race, guns, and the Confederacy. Her book brings to light how people feel about life and the emotions that inspire their political views.

⁵⁴ Proenza-Coles, *American Founders*.

⁵⁵ Derek Thompson, “The Deep Story of Trumpism,” *The Atlantic*, December 29, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/12/deep-story-trumpism/617498/>.

⁵⁶ Thompson, “Trumpism.”

⁵⁷ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2018).

One of Hochschild's goals was to break through what she calls "empathy walls," which she views as an obstacle to deep understanding of another person, one that can make us feel indifferent or even hostile to those who hold different views. Hochschild wondered if it was possible to cross the empathy wall to know others from the inside, to see reality through their eyes, to understand the links between life, feeling, and politics. How does life feel to people on the right?⁵⁸

Hochschild's research was important to my understanding of the people who supported and flocked to Trump. The United States has polarized groups of people who have different outlooks on politics and life rooted in their firsthand experiences and family history. I wanted to make sure I understood who the people were that seemed to live into two different realities. But more importantly I wanted to understand Trumpsters.

Most of the people she met were working class and Tea Party advocates. In her years of work she discovered the Great Paradox⁵⁹: Why is hatred of government most intense among people who need government services? And indeed, most of these people live in red states. She says about the divide or polarization between blue and red states:⁶⁰

Across the country, red states are poorer and have more teen mothers, more divorce, worse health, more obesity, more trauma-related deaths, more low-birth-weight babies, and lower school enrollment. On average, people in red states die five years earlier than people in blue states.

Hochschild embedded herself in St. Charles, Louisiana. I know St. Charles, as I've driven to the city at least thirty times on my way to and from Round Top, Texas, accompanied by my wife. In addition to both being educators, we own an antiques business and travel twice a year to the Round Top Antiques Festival to sell antiques at the Marburger Farms

⁵⁸ Hochschild, *Strangers*.

⁵⁹ Arthur Goldhammer, "The Great Paradox," *The American Prospect*, August 31, 2016, <https://prospect.org/power/great-paradox/>.

⁶⁰ Hochschild, *Strangers*, 8.

Antique show. To reach St. Charles, we travel west along I-10, and as we approach the lake in St. Charles, there is a magnificent bridge that carries us across the lake. But as we drive down the bridge traveling west, the horizon is filled with oil and gas refinery storage tanks that populate the landscape in all directions.

Industrial pollution is severe in Louisiana, not to mention the pollution in the area around St. Charles, the area Hochschild studied. Large petrochemical plants have created toxic air, water, and land in many areas of Louisiana. There are five oil refineries in Lake Charles, and the oil and gas industry has built twelve other refineries in Louisiana. Only Texas has more refineries.

It is here where Hochschild realized that the Great Paradox was extreme. People are harmed by the pollution caused by energy industry corporations such as Dow Chemical and Union Carbide, neither of whom think anything of dumping wastewater into the area's waterways.

Yet she found that many of the people in her study felt a deep connection to nature and were brought up as fishermen and hunters. The people in Louisiana have a deep distrust of the federal government, even though it could help with environmental and economic issues facing them. The Great Paradox is that people who have a need for government services have a negative opinion of big government, yet when they need help, such as Medicaid, they will take the steps necessary to be eligible.

Why do people who need help from the government hate it? The emotions and feelings that guide this view are deep. It is understood as part of the Great Paradox. It was what would push the storm of Trumpism across America.

And it isn't just people in states such as Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. The discontent that exists there is also found in the "flyover" or heartland states in the Midwest, such as Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Indiana, Missouri, and South and North Dakota.

The people she met in the red state of Louisiana were waiting for a Trump. Throughout the country, especially in red states, Trump was welcomed with open arms.

According to Hochschild, the scene was set for Trump's rise. She identified three elements that came together that favored Donald Trump. Most of the people she met talked about being on shaky economic ground. They went through periods of upheaval because of losing a job or experiencing an environmental disaster such as a hurricane or flooding. Climate change has played havoc on the Gulf Coast states. Over the years that I traveled along the coast, the evidence of flooding has only increased. One woman who was working as a hotel receptionist told us that she had just finished the repairs on her home after Hurricane Harvey in August 2017 only to be flooded again by the most recent hurricane, Barry, on July 13, 2019. Hurricane Ida devastated Louisiana in 2021. Power losses, flooding, and uprooting of thousands of people rivaled the harm caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

People Hochschild met also felt culturally marginalized. They were angry that people would cut in line ahead of them. Line cutters, according to Hochschild, appear to be cutting in front of working-class whites who are in line seeking the American dream. Line cutters include government workers, as well as minority groups, Americans of color, women, immigrants, refugees, and LGBTQ people.

They also were upset that people make them feel humiliated because of their views. For many of them, they felt they were part of a demographic in decline. Hochschild says that they began to feel like a besieged minority. Trump's rallies were the perfect venue to nurse their wounds (see Blog Post 2.4 on the Trump rallies).

TRUMP'S AMERICA FIRST

To "prepare" for the presidency, Trump immersed himself in right-wing media. He watched Fox News on cable television and especially paid attention to the likes of right-wing talk radio's Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage, and Sean Hannity. In a recent analysis of how this happened, Lawrence Rosenthal says that this about Trump's preparation:

The substance of Trump's presidential campaign, the issues he thundered about in rallies and debates, was the direct result

of what he found in these right-wing media. What he found there was a populist revolt. This revolt was congenial to him in terms of his own politics and, even more so, in terms of his vulgar, over-the-top style. Donald Trump won the 2016 election by convincing America's right-wing populists to migrate ideologically—from the Tea Party's free-market fundamentalism to Trump's anti-immigrant, America First nationalism.⁶¹

Rosenthal is chair and lead researcher of the Berkeley Center for Right-Wing Studies, which was founded in 2009 at the University of California, Berkeley.

America is a liberal democracy two hundred years in the making. Donald Trump led an assault on liberal democracy in four short years. He did this by undermining the norms of democracy and surrounding himself with people who were loyal only to him to further his autocratic goals. During his presidency, Trump tried to derail the Mueller investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election. He was impeached twice for obstruction of justice and for inciting an insurrection on the US Capitol. No president of the United States has been scrutinized as much as Donald J. Trump.

When Trump walked into the Oval Office in January 2017, he was accompanied by Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller. They carried with them a white nationalist agenda. Bannon, former executive chairperson of the right-wing Breitbart News Network, compared himself to Lenin and suggested that there was a need for war in the United States.⁶² Bannon was Trump's chief strategist for seven months in 2017. He had great influence over Trump, especially in recommending cabinet members who would help deconstruct departments in the administration of the United States.

He was arrested in 2020 for defrauding people of \$25 million in a scheme claiming he was soliciting donations to help fund the wall along the southern border. He was charged also with using \$1 million of the funds for personal acquisitions. After a few days in jail, Bannon

⁶¹ Lawrence Rosenthal, *Empire of Resentment: Populism's Toxic Embrace of Nationalism* (New York: The New Press, 2020).

⁶² Anne Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism* (New York, Doubleday, 2020), 150.

was pardoned on January 19, 2021, by Trump. On November 12, 2021, he was indicted by a federal grand jury on two counts of contempt of Congress from his failure to comply with a subpoena issued by the Select Committee Investigating the January 6 breach.⁶³

Miller, assistant to the president and senior advisor for policy, however, stayed until the end of Trump's term in office. Miller had formed an anti-immigrant bias while in high school and at Duke University. His first job was as press secretary for Michele Bachman, a Republican representative from Minnesota. Bachman blamed immigrants for bringing crime, drugs, and disease to the country.

Miller then became communications director for Jeff Sessions, senator from Alabama. His work with Sessions brought him into the inner workings of immigration law. Sessions was chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety. Sessions advocated stricter immigration controls and aggressive pushback against President Barack Obama's executive actions on immigration.

As soon as Trump announced his candidacy, Bannon recommended he hire Miller as speechwriter. Miller directed Trump to promote the America First message and stricter immigration policies in the campaign and in the presidential debates with Hillary Clinton.

After the election, Miller asked to head the Domestic Policy Council, a group in the White House. Miller made this request because the position did not require Senate approval; he didn't want to lie about policy questions if he had to appear before the Senate. This tactic also gave him the ear of Trump. It meant that he would be the chief architect of Trump's immigration policy. In fact, Miller cowrote one of Trump's first executive orders, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States"—the travel ban.⁶⁴ Miller became one of Donald Trump's America First whisperers. According to Jonathan

⁶³ United States Department of Justice, "Stephen K. Bannon Indicted for Contempt of Congress," news release no. 21-1122, November 15, 2021, retrieved January 5, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/stephen-k-bannon-indicted-contempt-congress>. The case is being investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office. The case is being prosecuted by the Public Corruption and Civil Rights Section of the US Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

⁶⁴ Sahil Kapur, "Trump Adviser Stephen Miller Reveals Aggressive Second-Term Immigration Agenda," NBCNews.com, October 30, 2020, retrieved February 5, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/trump-adviser-stephen-miller-reveals-aggressive-second-term-immigration-agenda-n1245407>.

Blitzer,⁶⁵ Miller's obsession with restricting immigration and punishing immigrants defined Trump's administration.

Also, according to Jean Guerrero,⁶⁶ author of *Hate Monger*, a biographical work of Stephen Miller, Donald Trump, and the white nationalists' agenda, it's impossible to understand the Trump era without recognizing the major influence of Stephen Miller. He was with Trump throughout the campaign and Trump's years in the White House. He and Trump became experts in messaging, so much so that millions of Americans fell in line with their conspiracies and lies.

Miller, after leaving office with Trump, continues his white supremacist views on various right-wing media outlets. As of publication, he's reportedly teaming up with Alabama congressperson Mo Brooks, who famously shouted on January 6, 2021, at the "Stop the Steal" rally, "Today is the day American patriots start taking down names and kicking ass. Are you willing to do what it takes to fight for America? Louder! Will you fight for America?"⁶⁷ Brooks has been accused in a legal suit of breaking DC laws by inciting a riot that aided violent actors who inflicted emotional distress on members of Congress. The Department of Justice refused to defend Brooks. Mo Brooks is a perfect match for Stephen Miller.

Donald Trump showed the kinds of behaviors that historians associate with demagogues. Instead of a liberal democracy, demagogues foster an illiberal, one-party state. I believe that Trump wished he was president of an illiberal, one-party state. If the insurrection that he instigated had been successful resulting in an overturned election, America would have become a one-party state.

THE RUSSIA I KNOW

From 1981 to 2002, hundreds of citizen diplomats worked to improve communications between Americans and Russians. The people involved

⁶⁵ Jonathan Blitzer, "How Stephen Miller Manipulates Donald Trump to Further His Immigration Obsession," *The New Yorker*, February 21, 2020, retrieved February 22, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/03/02/how-stephen-miller-manipulates-donald-trump-to-further-his-immigration-obsession>.

⁶⁶ Jean Guerrero, *Hatemonger: Stephen Miller, Donald Trump, and the White Nationalist Agenda* (New York: HarperCollins, 2020).

⁶⁷ Michael Kranish, "Mo Brooks Urged a Jan. 6 Crowd to 'Fight.' Now His Actions Long before the Insurrection Face New Scrutiny," *Washington Post*, January 11, 2022, retrieved April 2, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/01/10/mo-brooks-jan6-eric-swalwell-lawsuit-insurrection/>.

in these citizen diplomacy projects witnessed the changes that occurred in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s when Mikhail Gorbachev became president of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev initiated policies of glasnost (openness of government and dissemination of information) and perestroika (reform of economics and politics) while we were beginning our collaborative work. We held international conferences at GSU in Atlanta and the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow and St. Petersburg exploring reform in the USSR and education in each country.⁶⁸ For many years we exchanged delegations of researchers, teachers, and students, and designed a collaborative internet-based ecological program.

The Russian people whom we met were professional colleagues, husbands, wives, children, and teens who were family oriented, religious, and highly literate in science and art.

Bill and Gail Fisher,⁶⁹ parents of two American students who participated in two separate exchanges, visited their Russian counterparts on two occasions. They said that the Russians “were not ogres perhaps envisioned during the Cold War; they actually are warm and loving folks, not a lot different from us as the core, just coming from a different experience base.”

The Russian people we knew were not the stereotype often portrayed in the media. They loved their country and always shared with us their rich history and literature, especially poetry and appreciation for the arts. They also knew far more about American literature than we knew about Russian literature. Most Russian students had read many American classics. On an early school visit, a student at Moscow School 710 asked me who was my favorite Russian poet.

Many Russians are naturalists, and several invited us to Siberia on different occasions. Phil Gang, one of the founders of the GTP, spent a summer in an ecology camp for teachers on Lake Baikal.

When I discuss Russia in this book, it is based on twenty years of collaboration and the building of friendships with Russian people. Many

⁶⁸ Jack Hassard, “The AHP Soviet Exchange Project: 1983–1990 and Beyond,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 30 no. 3 (1990): 6–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167890303002>.

⁶⁹ Used with permission of Gail and Bill Fisher, parents of students from Dunwoody High School, Dunwoody, Georgia.

of us hosted Russian colleagues in our homes over a lengthy period. We were invited to dinners, parties, school events, conferences and trips to museums, the circus, ballet and opera performances, natural history excursions, and more. Hundreds of teenagers were hosted in American and Russian homes in our project, resulting in changed beliefs about each other and lifetime friendships. Some of our students studied in Russia and then pursued careers in international relations, ecology, and environmental science. We learned much about life, learning, and teaching from our Russian colleagues, and we believe it was reciprocal.

Perhaps one of the most enchanting experiences we had was teaching in each other's classrooms. In 1986, I suggested to Vadim Zhudov,⁷⁰ the director of Moscow School 710, that on the next visit to his school in October 1987, American teachers would come prepared to teach science, mathematics, literature, and social studies to Russian students at any age level. He agreed, and that agreement set into motion a novel way to work with each other. Putting your reputation as a teacher on the line, rather than simply sitting in a class and observing others teach, was a gamechanger for our collaboration. This act built a bridge of friendship and trust and allowed us to go further in our collaboration.

The night before five Americans taught lessons in several areas of science to students in Moscow School 710, one of the codirectors of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences told me that this was an important project in Soviet–American relations because this would be the first time Americans would teach Soviet children.⁷¹ When Russian teachers came to Atlanta, they also taught classes in several area schools. The Soviet teachers, like their American counterparts, used a variety of approaches when they taught American students

⁷⁰ Vadim Zhudov headed an important school in our project. He was well known and respected in the education profession in the Soviet Union, and after we collaborated for a year or so, he introduced us to schools in Puschino, Yaroslavl, and Chelyabinsk, which we visited and invited to Atlanta over the next ten years. Dr. Jennie Springer, principal of Dunwoody High School near Atlanta, began a fruitful collaboration with Zhudov. Together they arranged the first exchange of students between American and Soviet schools. Moscow School 710 and Dunwoody High School became partner schools in the GTP and exchanged teachers and students over the next ten years.

⁷¹ We tried a variety of approaches with Soviet children. In all of the lessons, the students were invited to take their experiments and materials home to show their parents, such as fossil crinoid stems, pendants the children made, and materials to illustrate the laws of physics. Dr. Alexi Matushkin, director of the Institute for General and Education Psychology, observed our lessons and reported to us that when students brought materials from the lessons home to share with their parents, it was well received. Matushkin said that we were the "talk of the town."

for the first time. When we visited schools in other Russian cities, our teaching experiment continued with great success and appreciation.

Trust didn't happen overnight. To get to a place of mutual collaboration, we showed up every year to meet with our Russian colleagues. During this time, I worked with people who held positions of power in various Soviet and Russian organizations. In 1987, Olga Olenynikova made arrangements with Vadim Zhudov and Victor Onushkin, director of the Institute of Adult Education and Research, Leningrad, for ten Soviet teachers and researchers to come to Atlanta for two weeks of meetings, visits to schools, and social and cultural events. There were three teachers in the group from Moscow School 710. About a week before they were to fly from Moscow to Atlanta, I was informed that the three teachers would not be on the flight manifest. I found out that Communist Party leaders did not want teachers traveling out of the country. I let them know our disappointment in and disapproval of their decision, and made it clear that to go forward, this policy would have to change. It did. A year later, the delegation of Soviets that came to Atlanta consisted of six teachers and six researchers.

The United States Information Agency (USIA) funded exchange projects to bring American and Russian citizens together with a goal of helping to democratize Russia by fostering exchanges between American and Russian youth. The GTP at GSU⁷² received grants from the USIA to support hundreds of educators and students in multicultural exchanges during the 1990s. The openness that Gorbachev started resulted in solid friendships and working relationships with colleagues in six Russian cities for many years.

Although difficult, it is possible to overcome neoliberal and conservative policies and engage colleagues whose cultural and political context is much more authoritarian than we consider in the West. When ordinary people are brought together to discuss common interests and concerns, actions can appear that would be surprising even to the most progressive among us.

⁷² Jack Hassard, "Citizen Diplomacy to Youth Activism: The Story of the Global Thinking Project," in M. P. Mueller and D. J. Tippins, (eds.) *Ecojustice, Citizen Science, and Youth Activism: Situated Tensions for Science Education* (Switzerland: Springer, 2015), 397–425.

As you proceed through the book, I will introduce you to educators and students not only from America, but Russia, Australia, and Spain, all of whom participated in our exchange programs and the GTP. They have much to say about the importance of cross-cultural exchanges and the value of bringing people together whose upbringing and outlooks on life might be different. It's my belief that given the present state that exists between the US and Russia as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, new ways of collaboration are necessary to stop the war, not less. The governments of Ukraine and Russia need to find ways to work together and seek guidance from other countries, as well.

VLADIMIR PUTIN'S RUSSIA

During the 1990s, Vladimir Putin rose from being a senior KGB officer to an assistant to the democratic mayor in Leningrad. In 1996, he moved to Moscow. He was appointed deputy chief of the Presidential Property Management Department of Boris Yeltsin's Russian Federation administration. Putin was responsible for foreign property of the state and organized the transfer of the former assets of the Soviet Union and Communist Party to the Russian Federation. He was promoted to deputy chief of presidential staff a few months later. While he was a member of Yeltsin's staff, on June 27, 1997, he defended his dissertation at the Saint Petersburg Mining University in St. Petersburg. On July 25, 1998, Yeltsin appointed Putin head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor agency to the KGB. He held this powerful position until August 9, 1999, when he was appointed as one of three first deputy prime ministers. Later that day he was appointed acting prime minister of the Russian Federation.⁷³

By the end of the year, Yeltsin resigned, and Putin then became the acting president of Russia. One of Putin's first acts as president was to pardon Yeltsin of all crimes and charges leveled against him.

⁷³ Kim Hjelmgard and Anna Nemtsova, "A Life on the World Stage, but Scant Biographical Details: What We Know of the Life of Vladimir Putin," *USA Today*, February 19, 2022, retrieved April 10, 2022, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2022/02/19/putin-biography/6830111001/>.

Based on all of this, the natural question to ask is how Putin went from a KGB officer to president of one of the most powerful countries in the world. So who is Mr. Putin? This question is explored in detail in the book *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* by Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy.⁷⁴ The authors say he consolidated power during this period by taking control of two wars in the North Caucasus against Chechnya that spanned from August 1999 to April 2009. Chechnya, a small Muslim republic, had sought independence since the Soviet Union collapsed. Putin directed a brutal war against Chechnya to put down any attempt at separation. Grozny, Chechnya's capital city, was bombed relentlessly and destroyed. Between 25,000 and 50,000 Chechens, mostly civilians, died or went missing. By 2009, Russian loyalists in Chechnya were in control. But these wars exposed Putin's viciousness.⁷⁵

He was elected for his first full term in 2000, and he began to crack down on the media and his political opponents. He extended his control by the forceful annexation of land in Georgia. In 2014 Russia started a protracted conflict with Ukraine in the regions of Crimea and Donbass. Russia's upper chamber of government approved military force in Ukraine, and so Russia invaded using soldiers and equipment without insignia. Within months Crimea was annexed.

The Ukraine–Russian war continues to this day. More than 10,000 troops have been killed. Civilian casualties have exceeded 13,000 killed and more than 30,000 wounded according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.⁷⁶

Most of the protests carried out by political opponents of Putin in Russia have been widely attended and peaceful, in the same way that Black Lives Matter protests were in many American cities after the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd in 2020. Yet police in each country, with federal support of armed combative troops, often without insignia on their clothing, used excessive

⁷⁴ Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2013).

⁷⁵ Greg Myre, "Russia's Wars in Chechnya Offer a Grim Warning of What Could Be in Ukraine," NPR, March 12, 2022, retrieved April 10, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/12/1085861999/russias-wars-in-chechnya-offer-a-grim-warning-of-what-could-be-in-ukraine>.

⁷⁶ US Department of State, *Ukraine—United States Department of State*, November 4, 2021, retrieved January 5, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ukraine/>.

force against peaceful protestors, many of whom sustained injuries and arrest.

From both the US intelligence agencies and the Mueller investigation, we know that Donald Trump's 2016 campaign for president of the United States was aided by Russian operatives after they hacked the campaign headquarters of Hillary Clinton. Then the hacked emails and other documents were passed on to WikiLeaks. Finally, the stolen material was used to create misinformation about Hillary Clinton's campaign on multiple social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Lastly, a report released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported that Trump was aided by the Putin government in the 2020 election, as well as in 2016.⁷⁷

Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin are autocrats and nationalists. It's difficult not to see Trump and Putin other than through the lens of authoritarianism. Throughout Trump's term in office, the United States drifted toward authoritarian and autocratic rule. Anne Applebaum⁷⁸ shows how liberal democracy is under siege, not only in the United States but in other countries around the world. Applebaum is a Pulitzer-prize-winning American journalist and historian. She makes a crucial point when she says that dictatorial leaders do not rule alone. They rely on political allies, bureaucrats, and the media. Trump hired people like Paul Manafort, Rick Gates, Steve Bannon, and Stephen Miller, all of whom who embraced autocracy.

Trump filtered his cabinet and close advisors by removing those not loyal to him. Being loyal to the "leader" is one of the personifications of autocracy. In addition to Putin, Trump rubbed shoulders with autocratic leaders of illiberal states such as Kim Jong-un of North Korea, Andrzej Duda of Poland, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey.

Trump's ascendancy to the presidency was a signal to illiberalism internationally and in the United States. Trump's vulgarity, mockery, and insults combined with his aversion to criticism led to resentment toward

⁷⁷ National Intelligence Council, "Foreign Threats to US 2020 Elections," March 10, 2021, retrieved March 26, 2021, <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ICA-declass-16MAR21.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Anne Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism*. (New York: Doubleday, 2020).

his targets. People who were confined to the fringes of politics now found a new place in the mainstream. Trump's attacks on immigrants were welcomed by white nationalists and supremacists.⁷⁹

In Trump's case, he fired administrators, cabinet members, and other officials to remove those people who were not loyal to him and would not be willing to carry out his conspiracies and policies. The first to go was James Comey, director of the FBI. Many others followed.

Author's Update: On February 24, 2022, Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. Cities and towns have been bombed and leveled; millions of Ukrainians have fled their country and millions more have been displaced. Like Donald Trump, Putin lied to the Russian people, telling them that the "special military operation" in Ukraine is to protect people who have been facing genocide by the Kiev regime. He lied to the world, saying they invaded to de-militarize and de-Nazify Ukraine. Putin has threatened the world, saying that he would act against anyone tempted to interfere with him. He put his nuclear forces on high alert, using this as a provocation aimed at NATO.⁸⁰ Further discussion and analysis of the Russian invasion of Ukraine can be found on my blog at jackhassard.org.

AUTHORITARIANISM

Trump used the playbook of authoritarians, and this has had a distinct effect on American politics and democracy, even after he left office. Authoritarian playbook strategies include rigging elections, calling the press "enemies of the people," stacking the judiciary, insisting on law and order, perpetuating conspiracy theories, and lying. This authoritarian playbook will have lasting effects on American society and politics.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Rosenthal, *Empire of Resentment*.

⁸⁰ Bloomberg, *Translation of Vladimir Putin's Televised Address on Ukraine*, Bloomberg.com, retrieved March 20, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-24/full-transcript-vladimir-putin-s-televised-address-to-russia-on-ukraine-feb-24>. Putin's threats have raised the alarm of many that he might use nuclear weapons.

⁸¹ Lena Surzhko Harned and Luis Jimenez, "President Trump's Use of the Authoritarian Playbook Will Have Lasting Consequences," YubaNet.com, December 17, 2020, retrieved January 20, 2021, <https://yubanet.com/opinions/lena-surzhko-harned-and-luis-jimenez-president-trumps-use-of-the-authoritarian-playbook-will-have-lasting-consequences/>.

Authoritarianism is no longer a threat to the United States; it's arrived, and it is the underlying policy of the Republican Party. As author and professor of pedagogy, Henry A. Giroux has said the Republican Party no longer hides its racism and has boldly engaged in voter suppression.⁸² Specifically, Republicans have made clear that they endorse the white supremacist idea that the United States should be a white nation much like they think America used to be.

At the center of the authoritarian shift by the Republicans is the Big Lie (*Magnum Mendacium*) and voter suppression in state legislatures. The Big Lie directly led to the January 6, 2021, insurrection, and by mid-February of that year, the Republican Party and state legislators had started dangerous and unprecedented restrictive voting bills in more than forty-two states.

Georgia has led the way by passing a bill on March 25, 2021, that will limit people's opportunity to vote, especially in the neighborhoods of people of color. Brian Kemp, the governor of Georgia, signed the bill in a closed-door meeting with six white legislators looking on, while Park Cannon, a Black Georgia representative knocked on the door wanting to see the governor sign the bill. She, however, was arrested by a team of police, dragged from the state house, and charged with two felonies. This is a perfect example of authoritarianism in action. If this isn't also a case of racism and suppression, then what is?

The current wave of voter suppression bills, especially the Georgia bill, is a backlash against the successful campaigns of activist groups, such as Fair Fight led by Stacey Abrams. Fair Fight helped register a million new voters in Georgia, which helped win the state for Joe Biden and elect Raphael Warnock, the first Black senator from Georgia, and Jon Ossoff, the winner of the other Georgia US Senate election.

Voter suppression bills are being circulated to state legislatures by the Koch brothers-backed American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).⁸³ Known as the "bill mill," ALEC provides copycat legislation to states that

⁸² Henry A. Giroux, "Threat of Authoritarianism Is No Longer on the Horizon: It's Arrived in the GOP" Truthout.org, March 26, 2021, retrieved March 27, 2021, <https://truthout.org/articles/threat-of-authoritarianism-is-no-longer-on-the-horizon-its-arrived-in-the-gop/>.

⁸³ ALEC, funded by corporations in the United States and globally, secretly collaborates with Republican state legislatures to push specific laws using "model bills" that designed to affect almost every area of American life, including voting rights (<https://www.exposedbycmd.org/alec/>).

are members of the council. Republicans only have to fill in the blanks to make the written draft look like the bill originated and was written by said state legislators. Therefore, you will note that the bills in Republican-held legislatures look a lot alike. It's because they share ALEC-generated voter bills.⁸⁴ I spent a lot of time investigating ALEC and have seen many of their bills presented in the Georgia legislature. The legislators who file the bills act as if they came up with the idea and the language.

ALEC bills are not just about voting. They include a wide range of policy initiatives, such as bills on worker and consumer rights, tort reform and injured Americans, and privatizing schools and higher education.⁸⁵

2020 was not the first time that ALEC circulated voter suppression bills. After Barack Obama was elected president in 2008, ALEC started circulating a host of voter suppression bills. More than thirty states were writing election laws ahead of elections in 2010, 2012, and beyond.

The new voting laws, such as those in Georgia, Florida, Texas, and other states, require voter ID. According to the Center for Media and Democracy,⁸⁶ this requirement would serve to disenfranchise many low-income, minority, elderly, and student voters, many of whom do not have driver's licenses. In many states, the offices that would supply IDs are not found near the communities that would have the greatest needs. For many of these people, taking the time to get an ID would be burdensome and might result in many people simply not voting. Wisconsin added a requirement to its voting bill that requires the ID have the current address of the voter, which would harm university students and low-income voters who might often move.

The Republican Party lost big time in fair and just elections in 2020. Republican legislators have launched an effort to limit voting and make it harder for people to cast a ballot to make sure they don't lose future elections. The bills are obviously racist and will face strong pushbacks, resistance, and lawsuits.

⁸⁴ "Democracy, Voter Rights, and Federal Power," ALEC Exposed, Center for Media and Democracy, retrieved May 9, 2021, https://www.alecexposed.org/wiki/Democracy,_Voter_Rights,_and_Federal_Power.

⁸⁵ The Center for Media and Democracy has done activist work to expose the bills that ALEC has developed and is passing on to legislatures across the country. ALEC Exposed is the go-to website to find the bills that might be infiltrated into your state legislature: https://www.alecexposed.org/wiki/ALEC_Exposed.

⁸⁶ ALEC Exposed website.

Controlling elections is one of the hallmarks of authoritarian governments. Donald Trump tried to “steal” the election not simply by calling foul but by using the office of the president to try and force state officials and even the Department of Justice either to change votes or simply claim he was the winner.

The current effort to change election laws throughout the country stems from Trump’s failure to “steal” the election. Republicans believe the only way they can win is to restrict voting. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, there have been more than 165 restrictive bills in 42 states introduced this year, compared to 35 in the previous year.⁸⁷

The suppression and the associated control of elections is a fundamental goal of the Republican Party. The purpose of storming the Capitol was to change the outcome of the 2020 election. It didn’t work. Perhaps suppressing voters by changing election laws will change the outcome of future elections.

POLITICAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

According to the Freedom House’s 2020 annual assessment and rankings of the political rights and civil liberties of a country, the United States’ democratic institutions have suffered erosion “as reflected in partisan pressure on the electoral process, bias and dysfunction in the criminal justice system, harmful policies on immigration and asylum seekers, and growing disparities in wealth, economic opportunity, and political influence.” We are not the most democratic country in the Freedom House rankings. Norway and Finland are the most democratic countries, with a score of 100/100, while the United States’ score was 83/100.⁸⁸

Over the past fourteen years, democracies are in decline, according to Freedom House. For example, in 2019, 64 countries experienced deterioration in political rights and civil liberties, compared to only 37 improving.⁸⁹ Dictators and authoritarian regimes continue to hold power over their citizens. Indeed, Donald Trump drifted toward authoritarianism

⁸⁷ Brennan Center for Justice, July 1, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/>.

⁸⁸ Sarah Repucci, *A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2020), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy>.

⁸⁹ Repucci, *Leaderless Struggle*.

by removing safeguards for the most vulnerable, disregarding the rights of opposition groups and critics, and trying to steal the presidential election by invoking an insurrection on January 6, 2021.

Trump's persistent lying and his use of conspiracy theories created a new normal for truth and reliability. According to Henry Giroux, under the Trump regime, a culture of lying normalized a world where truth was not only undermined but lost its legitimacy. Truth, in Trump's world, is assigned to "fake news." In a sense, a form of illiteracy appeared during the Trump years that led to threats and violence.⁹⁰

For example, the governor of Michigan, who was using the science of social distancing and isolation to mitigate the coronavirus, was threatened with violence when the state capitol was attacked by right-wing mobs. One of the groups of militants plotted to kidnap and kill her.⁹¹ They were arrested and face state and federal charges. One of them was sentenced to six years in prison. In short, normalizing lying and conspiracy has led the nation into a realm of dangers.

DANGEROUSNESS

Donald Trump is a dangerous man. There is plenty of evidence to support this. The best description of him was offered by his niece, Dr. Mary Trump.⁹² In interviews she described specific events and family patterns that created this damaged man. Dr. Trump reveals important ideas about her grandfather, Fred Trump, that would have had a direct impact on Donald Trump's character and led to him becoming a dangerous person.

One of the lessons that the Trump sons (Donald, Fred Jr., and Robert) and daughters (Maryanne Trump Barry and Elizabeth Trump Grau) learned at an early age was that life has only winners and losers. Donald Trump applied this principle throughout his life. When John McCain died, Trump told his staff, "We're not going to support that

⁹⁰ Giroux, "Threat of Authoritarianism."

⁹¹ Jaclyn Diaz, "One of the Men Charged in the Michigan Governor Kidnap Plot Gets Six Years in Prison," NPR, August 26, 2021, retrieved October 14, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/26/1031172713/kidnap-plot-prison-michigan-governor>.

⁹² Mary L. Trump, *Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

loser's funeral." He also said that John McCain was not a war hero. During a television interview, Trump said, "He's a war hero because he was captured. I like people that weren't captured." In other words, there is only one winner; everyone else is a loser.⁹³

Mary Trump points out that to the Trumps, "winners versus losers" was not only about business, it was also how Fred Trump Sr. ran his family. Then she explains that the second philosophy of life according to Fred Trump Sr. was the power of positive thinking. Everything is always good. There is no room for feelings. Even if you are suffering, as his wife often did because of being in hospital with broken bones, he'd come into the room where she was recuperating and say, "Everything's great, right, toots?"⁹⁴ We must wonder why she had so many broken bones.

This is a clear path to becoming a cruel and unempathetic human being. Empathy is the ability to understand another's experience in the world as if you were that person but without ever losing the "as if" condition.⁹⁵ Donald Trump rarely, if ever, showed any signs of empathy. During the year that the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the world, he said he would take no responsibility for the disease spreading across the country. And he also followed his father's instructions in saying always that everything is all right. "We have the coronavirus under control." "It will get warm, and the virus will disappear."⁹⁶ After getting the coronavirus disease and being hospitalized himself, he told Americans, "You shouldn't let the virus control your life. Everything will be just fine."⁹⁷

Mary Trump explains the myth of Donald Trump's success. The projects that he developed, the Grand Hyatt and the Trump Tower,

⁹³ Trump, *Too Much and Never Enough*, 43.

⁹⁴ Gabrielle Schonder, *The Frontline Interview: Mary Trump*, *Frontline*, July 30, 2020, retrieved February 27, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/interview/mary-trump/>.

⁹⁵ Carl Ransom Rogers, *A Theory of Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships: As Developed in the Client-Centered Framework* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1959), retrieved March 27, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_Theory_of_Therapy_Personality_and_Inte/zsIBtwAACAAJ?hl=en.

⁹⁶ Jon Greenberg, "We Have It Totally under Control! A Timeline of President Donald Trump's Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic," *Poynter*, March 24, 2020, retrieved April 2, 2022, <https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/we-have-it-totally-under-control-a-timeline-of-president-donald-trumps-response-to-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>.

⁹⁷ Donald J. Trump, "Don't Let the Coronavirus Dominate Your Life!" October 2, 2020, retrieved April 2, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuhBF74ZD8E>.

were financed by his father. His father's connections and money built the myth. According to Dr. Trump, the Atlantic City debacle and failure opened Fred Trump Sr.'s eyes that it was his funding, and not Donald's ability, that led to any success. He began to realize that Donald might not be good at anything. However, because he had been perpetuating the myth and financing Donald's work, Fred Trump Sr. needed to continue to support him.

The gravity of Donald Trump as president of the United States couldn't be any clearer than what happened on January 6, 2021. On that day he incited mobs of white supremacists to storm the Capitol and try an insurrection and takeover of the United State government. Trump led a failed coup. This mob of individuals was driven by Trump's Big Lie. Their actions stand for what has become of the Republican Party.

Unfortunately, the danger that was provoked on that day continues to this day in the form of Trumpism. Trump would likely plot to take control over the Republican Party, knowing that a majority of Republicans support him running for president in 2024.⁹⁸ He is carefully choosing those he will support in future elections, especially 2022. He is taking out his revenge on those Republicans who didn't support him in the last days of his term.

TRUMP'S MENTAL HEALTH

According to some healthcare professionals, it is unethical to withhold an assessment of someone when there is more than sufficient information. In her most recent book, *Profile of a Nation: Trump's Mind, America's Soul*, Dr. Bandy X. Lee says that a group of Harvard psychiatrists and other mental health professionals stated, "We know more about this president than we do about any patient we have ever treated."⁹⁹ Donald Trump may be out of office, but his "profile" is like it was when he was in the Oval Office. He is still a danger to all citizens

⁹⁸ Gabriela Schulte, "Poll: Just under Half of Voters Support Trump Running in 2024," *The Hill*, October 21, 2021, retrieved November 19, 2021, <https://thehill.com/hilltv/what-americas-thinking/577199-poll-just-under-half-of-voters-support-trump-running-in-2024>.

⁹⁹ Lee, *Profile of a Nation*, 42.

of the United States. And the longer he is out of office, the more that is revealed about just how dangerous he is.

According to Lee, Trump “follows his gut” rather than preparing, deliberating, or listening to career advisors when meeting with world leaders or talking about problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic. He usually will say, “We’ll see what happens,” a clear signal that he is unwilling or unable to decide how to solve a problem. When the pandemic was “breaking out,” Trump claimed that it was a hoax perpetuated by Democrats. He seemed more concerned about how reports about the pandemic were affecting the stock market.

There is considerable information and firsthand accounts to develop a full picture of Trump’s character, motivations, and mind. Lee supplies five accounts written by a biographer (Tony Schwartz), a national security advisor (John Bolton), a personal lawyer and fixer (Michael Cohen), a presidential journalist (Bob Woodward), and a family member (Dr. Mary Trump). Lee’s assessment, which I read along with the original books written by each author, provide panoramic insights into Donald Trump’s mind and behavior.

In Bob Woodward’s book *Rage*, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and former director of national intelligence Dan Coats agreed during a phone call that there might be a time to announce publicly that Donald Trump was dangerous and unfit for office.¹⁰⁰ Woodward concluded that the “man is not fit for the job.”¹⁰¹ His book *Peril*, coauthored with Robert Costa, is even more disturbing.¹⁰² The book explores the last days of Trump in office and reveals the corruption that erupted in the Oval Office in an attempt to overthrow the American government and its election.

Tony Schwartz, ghostwriter for *Trump: The Art of the Deal*, spent a lot of time with Trump. He explained of Trump that “lying is second nature to him.”¹⁰³ And if he was called out for a lie, he would double down, repeat the lie, and become hostile.

¹⁰⁰ Lee, *Profile of a Nation*, 64–65.

¹⁰¹ Bob Woodward, *Rage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019), 390.

¹⁰² Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, *Peril* (Simon & Schuster: New York, 2021).

¹⁰³ Lee, *Profile of a Nation*, 55.

Lee considered John Bolton's account of Trump the least reliable because of his motivation in releasing the book when he did and not coming forward during the impeachment hearings. Bolton saw firsthand that Trump lacks the mental ability and basic requirements to be fit for the presidency.¹⁰⁴

Michael Cohen not only worked for Trump as his personal attorney but, Lee suggests, he got closer to Trump than his family. In his account, Cohen revealed that Trump was "a cheat, a liar, a fraud, a bully, a racist, a predator, a con man."¹⁰⁵ According to Lee, Cohen's description of Trump is consistent with what mental health professionals have witnessed. Cohen reveals that Trump did indeed "collude" with the Russians, although not at the level that Mueller and his investigators were thinking. Cohen says that Trump did try to build a Trump Tower in Moscow. It was true that Trump would welcome any kind of help from Putin, and he admired Putin because he believed the Russian leader was very wealthy.¹⁰⁶

Donald Trump is authoritarian, dangerous, and solipsistic. I've included blog posts that describe Trump's narcissism and his attempt to impart authoritarian rule in the United States. You will find discussions of why I named him "The Authoritarian" and how I believed he could be resisted. He was the most dangerous president ever to take up residence in the White House. You'll find posts about how he was and still is a clear and present danger. I believe that Donald Trump is a con man, and if he were to become president again, our nation would face an existential threat more menacing than the climate crisis.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, *Profile of a Nation*, 57.

¹⁰⁵ Lee, *Profile of a Nation*, 59.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Cohen, *Disloyal: A Memoir: The True Story of the Former Personal Attorney to President Donald J. Trump* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2020).

CHAPTER 1: AUTHORITARIANISM

1.1.¹⁰⁷ BLOG POST, 31 JULY 2016: I ALONE CAN FIX IT

Long before I saw Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II speak, I had read many of his published papers, especially in the *Nation* magazine. Rev. Dr. Barber is president of the North Carolina NAACP and has dedicated his life to social justice. I admire him and the work he has been doing. Rev. Dr. Barber is also cochair of the Poor People's Campaign and president of the Repairers of the Breach. Rev. Dr. Barber is working with Congress to unveil a congressional resolution for a Third Reconstruction, which seeks to expand voting rights, implement immigration reform, raise minimum wage, set up a jobs program, and more. According to Rev. Dr. Barber, there is not a scarcity of resources; what there is, is a scarcity of social justice conscience.¹⁰⁸

On July 29, 2016, Rev. Dr. Barber gave a speech at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Philadelphia. It was the fourth night of convention speeches given by Democratic luminaries. But this speech stood out from the others.

In his speech at the DNC, Rev. Dr. Barber said that there are some issues that are not left versus right or liberal versus conservative. They are right versus wrong. He said we need to embrace our deepest moral values and push for revival of the heart of our democracy when we fight to reinstate the power of the Voting Rights Act.

¹⁰⁷ Please note that throughout the book, the blog posts are numbered in sequence and dated signifying when the post was published on my blog.

¹⁰⁸ Amy Goodman, "Rev. Barber calls for 'Third Reconstruction' to Lift 140 Million Out of Poverty," Truthout.org, May 21, 2021, retrieved May 22, 2021, <https://truthout.org/video-rev-barber-calls-for-third-reconstruction-to-lift-140-million-out-of-poverty/>.

Rev. Dr. Barber said he normally wouldn't endorse a particular candidate for the presidency, but when he heard "stuff" at the Republican National Convention (RNC) that bordered on heresy—when he heard a candidate at the 2016 RNC say, "I alone can fix it"¹⁰⁹—then he hoped if the opportunity came to speak at the DNC, he might consider it.

The speech he delivered is as relevant now as it was in 2016. I've listened to his speech many times, and each time I hear Rev. Dr. Barber say that the heart of democracy is on the line in the next election and beyond.

One of the ideas that resonates with me is Rev. Dr. Barber's statement that "we must shock this nation and fight for justice for all. We can't give up on the heart of democracy, not now, not ever!" I cheered when he said he believed it was a moral obligation to get about the business of defeating the Republican Party's nominee, Donald Trump.

He started off by saying, "I might not normally be here as a preaching individual, but when I hear human voices and positions are here, and I know [Hillary Clinton] is working to embrace our deepest moral values, and we should embrace her. But let me be clear that [neither] she nor any person can do it alone. The watchword of this democracy and the watchword of faith is we." A link to Rev. Dr. Barber's speech is provided in the footnotes.¹¹⁰ I hope you will take the ten minutes to listen to his words and then consider what they might mean to you, your community, and the nation.

In his speech he went on to say there is a need for the kind of language that's not left or right or conservative or liberal, but moral fusion language that says:

- It is extreme and immoral to suppress the right to vote.
- It is extreme and immoral to deny Medicaid to millions of poor people, especially when denied by people who have been elected to office and receive their own insurance through that office.

¹⁰⁹ Yoni Appelbaum, "Trump's Claim: 'I Alone Can Fix It,'" *The Atlantic*, July 22, 2016, retrieved November 19, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/trump-rnc-speech-alone-fix-it/492557/>.

¹¹⁰ Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, "We Must Fight for the Heart of Our Democracy!" speech given at the 2016 Democratic National Convention, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNcP82-trrA>.

- It is extreme and immoral to raise taxes on the working poor and cut earned-income tax credits, especially to slash taxes for the wealthy.
- It is extreme and immoral to shut off people’s water in Detroit.
- It is extreme and immoral to end unemployment compensation for those who have lost jobs through no fault of their own.
- It is extreme and immoral to resegregate and underfund our public schools.
- It is mean, it is immoral, it is extreme to kick hardworking people when they are down.

1.2. BLOG POST, 25 NOVEMBER 2016:

WHY I NAMED HIM “THE AUTHORITARIAN”

On this blog, I refer to the next POTUS as “The Authoritarian.” My choice for using this term to name him is based on the research done by George Lakoff.¹¹¹ Lakoff is the retired distinguished professor of cognitive science and linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. He is now director of the Center for Neural Mind & Society. I read and studied much of Lakoff’s work over the past decade and have found it important in my understanding of authoritarianism and a deeper understanding of how liberal and conservative political views differ. I found Lakoff’s theory of moral worldviews relevant to understanding Donald Trump. In earlier blog writing, Lakoff’s theory helped me answer questions about K–12 public education. I wanted to explain why authoritarianism loomed over education, making it difficult to implement many progressive reforms I valued.

Lakoff’s theory explains why we can call Donald Trump an authoritarian. I know this is a bit academic, but his theory is quite practical and helpful in understanding Trump and the Americans who are moved by his views.

¹¹¹ George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Using a conceptual metaphor of nation as family, Lakoff maps two types of families. They are the “nurturant” family and the “strict father” family. An idealized nurturant family is expressed in terms of progressive values: empathy, caring, support for each other, public resources for all. We might call these people liberals or maybe progressives. An idealized strict father family is expressed in terms of power and authority, which rests with the head of the family (the father) or the head of the nation—authoritarian values. These are conservatives.

Lakoff makes it clear that the head of the strict father family cannot be a loser, corrupt, or a betrayer of trust. Father knows best. But here is what Lakoff says characterizes the president-elect:

LOSER: To the American majority, he is a loser, a minority president. It needs to be said and repeated.

CORRUPT: He is corrupting his office in a direct way by refusing to put his business interests in a blind trust. By doing so, and by insisting on his children both running the business and getting classified information, he is using the presidency to make himself incredibly wealthy. This is corruption of the highest and most blatant level.

BETRAYER OF TRUST: Trump is a betrayer of trust. He is acting like a dictator—and even supporting Putin’s anti-American policies.¹¹²

In Lakoff’s analysis, the president-elect is interested only in absolute authority, money, power, and celebrity. These are not the characteristics of a president in a democratic society, but let’s face it, this is what we have. Although we have had authoritarian presidents in the past, none have risen to the level of betrayal of democratic principles as has Donald

¹¹² George Lakoff, “A Minority President: Why the Polls Failed and What the Majority Can Do,” Common Dreams, November 22, 2016, retrieved November 24, 2016, <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2016/11/22/minority-president-trump-why-polls-failed-and-what-majority-can-do>.

Trump. As Lakoff points out, we must create a powerful network of communication and call out The Authoritarian, and make sure that he knows not only that he's being watched but also that there are moral imperatives on the opposite end of his, and that they are rooted in the principles of democracy, which have had to be fought for by many people living in this country. He and his administration will present a clear and present danger.

Here are some of behaviors that are most associated with The Authoritarian:

- Autocratic
- Dictatorial
- Imperious
- Totalitarian
- Tyrannical
- Dogmatic
- Harsh
- Severe
- Unyielding
- Despotic
- Oppressive

His attitude toward the press sends chills down my spine and further undermines the free exchange of ideas. We should know what the president is up to. His ideas should be known and should be subject to criticism. We should be able to question The Authoritarian.

The problem is the next POTUS doesn't want anyone questioning what he thinks or does. If you do, he'll call you out, or worse.

1.3. BLOG POST, 30 APRIL 2017:

RESISTING THE NARCISSIST IN THE WHITE HOUSE

Sometimes it's hard to believe what's happened to our country in the wake of the last presidential election. But, that said, we must face what is happening, act, and support and be a part of the opposition and

protestation of the deconstruction of America and its relationship with the rest of the world.

Here are two ideas that are pertinent to understanding Trump's mental fitness, as well as those around him.

- **Narcissistic:** A person having an excessive or erotic interest in oneself and one's physical appearance; vain, self-obsessed, egotistic, arrogant, self-centered.
- **Sycophant:** Someone who is a self-seeking, servile flatterer; flattering parasite.

After thanking President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout the transition, he launched into a dreadful attack on democratic norms and expectations.

Early in his inaugural speech, he said, "This American carnage stops right here and stops right now."¹¹³ This was also the speech where Trump's vision for the country is going to be "America first." The slogan was used among Americans who resisted entering WWII. It was also associated with anti-Semites during this time and tended not to be used for decades, until now. Trump also used his words to insult politicians by saying that politicians who are "all talk and no action" will no longer be accepted. This was used to refer to Representative John Lewis, and it caused dozens of Democrats to skip the inauguration.

Donald Trump painted a dark picture of the world in his inaugural speech. He continued to repeat this mantra of the presidential campaign, not only within the White House but especially when he goes on the road like he did on the hundredth day of his presidency in front of a crowd in Pennsylvania. As one Republican advisor to Ronald Reagan put it, "Last night's speech by Trump was the most divisive ever by a president."¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Shane Goldmacher, "This American Carnage Stops Right Here," Politico, January 24, 2017, retrieved April 3, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/this-american-carnage-stops-right-here/>.

¹¹⁴ Mary Papenfuss, "Reagan Adviser Slams Trump Rally Speech as 'Most Divisive Ever' from a President," HuffPost.com, April 30, 2017, retrieved November 20, 2021, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/adviser-trump-divisive-speech_n_5905617fe4b02655f83e0aef.

Resistance to Trump's actions and lies were immediate and wide-ranging. Here are some of them.

INAUGURATION

The first action was no action. Few people showed up on January 20, 2017, to watch the inauguration, although the narcissist claims the media was wrong. Even when one of his own government agencies took pictures of the crowds at his and Obama's first inauguration, Trump defied the images that showed clearly how massive Obama's inauguration was—and how his was not.

However, Trump can take credit for the fact that hundreds of demonstrations were held across the United States. These were held the same day of the inauguration protesting the very nature of Trump's existence.

THE WOMEN'S MARCH

The second and most important action to confront and block Trump's world was the Women's March on January 21, 2017. The numbers worldwide are staggering: 500,000 people (about half the population of South Dakota) marched in Washington, DC. More than 2 million marched in other US cities. Worldwide, 81 countries held marches in 168 locations. Organizers reported after the marches that at least 5 million people (about twice the population of Mississippi) took part, with 673 marches held worldwide. In the United States, the only protest that rivaled the Women's March were marches held in protest of the Vietnam War.¹¹⁵

ROGUE TWITTER SITES

One of the first rogue Twitter groups to open an account was @AltBadlandsPark out of fear that the Trump administration would inflict damage to this national park's website. Would Trump's minions block or remove data that is available to all of us?

Employees at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services

¹¹⁵ Anemona Hartocollis and Yamiche Alcindor, "Women's March Highlights as Huge Crowds Protest Trump: 'We're Not Going Away,'" *New York Times*, January 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/21/us/womens-march.html>.

had reported that notices appeared instructing them to take down certain pages and to watch what is said to the media, and that papers written by department employees should be checked before being published in any form. The muzzling of information is a huge problem for us and is not unprecedented. The George W. Bush administration was a champion of the Muzzle Award.¹¹⁶

What followed was the emergence of many rogue accounts, some of which claimed to be authored by employees of various government agencies. The sites do a service by highlighting the discontent that exists across the federal government.¹¹⁷

THE MARCH FOR SCIENCE

On Earth Day, April 22, 2017, more than 600 cities across the world held rallies and marches called the March for Science.¹¹⁸ It initially was called the Scientists' March on Washington. The significance of the March for Science was a rebuttal to the Trump administration's lies, fake news obsession, and the unimaginable impact on human health and the environment.

For example, Trump has recommended the EPA budget be cut by 30 percent, which would mean that thousands of people will lose their jobs and dozens of programs that are carried out by the states would be abolished. Recently I talked with the parents of a young woman who is an environmental lawyer. She works with a nonprofit in the DC area that helps companies move towards clean energy usage. I asked the parents what their daughter thought of Trump's EPA budget cuts. Their daughter said she just couldn't talk about it and spent a lot of time crying before getting on with her important task. I told these parents that their daughter is one of many lawyers who are using their knowledge and experience to fight the good fight against Trump and his minions.

The March for Science showed that science should be nonpartisan. However, it also showed that scientists, with non-scientists, can protest

¹¹⁶ Chris Mooney, *The Republican War on Science* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

¹¹⁷ Some of the accounts can still be accessed, such as twitter.com/ActualEPAfacts and altnps.org

¹¹⁸ March for Science: <https://marchforscience.org/>.

together to question the Trump administration's view of science and to call out a Congress that ignores science in the face of its effect on the people.

It also showed that there is a large segment of the world's population that believes government policy should be evidence-based and accepts, for example, the scientific communities' consensus on climate change and evolution.

THE PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH

On April 29, 2017, the one-hundredth day of Trump's administration, people marched in Washington, DC, and many locations in cities around the US. This was a direct protest to the Trump administration's disregard for climate science and its disregard for environmental policies designed to protect human health and the environment.¹¹⁹

The People's Climate March couldn't be any timelier, especially considering the EPA website. If you follow the link titled "Climate Change" on EPA's list of Environmental Topics, it's written, "This page is being updated." The list then says that the page is being updated to fall in line with EPA priorities under Administrator of the EPA Scott Pruitt and Trump. So right now, the climate change page is down, and they redirect you to a snapshot of the page taken on January 19, 2017, when Obama was still president.

1.4. BLOG POST, 5 MAY 2017: CURING OURSELVES OF THE ITCH FOR ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ: Think it possible you may be mistaken.

—Oliver Cromwell

It's difficult to think in terms of tolerance in the age in which America elected a president who doesn't give one hint of being tolerant. What

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Fandos, "Climate March Draws Thousands of Protesters Alarmed by Trump's Environmental Agenda," *New York Times*, April 29, 2017, retrieved January 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/29/us/politics/peoples-climate-march-trump.html>.

he does do is encourage violence, not only in his campaign rallies, but now, after being elected, he's back on the road holding the same rallies and encouraging hate, bigotry, and racism. With access to the most powerful military in the world, he ordered the launch of fifty-nine Tomahawk missiles, unleashing violence with the push of a button. Even Wilbur Ross, Trump's commerce secretary, said at the Milken Institute Global Conference that the Syria missile strike was "after-dinner entertainment." The guests found his comment humorous and burst into laughter.¹²⁰

What we have here among the people who Trump has assembled in the White House and in his administration are a lot of people who believe in certainty. They believe they have the right answers, never thinking for a moment that they might be wrong, or that in the interests of a civil society, they might compromise. As Oliver Cromwell said, in the quote at the top of this post, "Think it possible you may be mistaken."

Yet people were killed in the Syria bombing, and Americans at a conference, dressed to the nines, laughed at the bombing and found it humorous. What were they thinking?

And today, the House of Representative barely passed a bill (voting 217–213) that replaces the Affordable Care Act, which would mean that more than 20 million people (about the population of New York) could lose their health coverage. This bill also reduces Medicaid payments to the states, which would mean either not as many people would be supported or the support would be less. In addition to the poor, Medicaid also is a lifeline for people with disabilities. To remove or lessen support would be devastating to people in need of it.¹²¹ All major medical groups opposed the bill.

In the Senate, however, John McCain cast the deciding vote, 51–49, against the legislation aimed at dismantling the Affordable Care Act. To

¹²⁰ Michael R. Gordon, Helene Cooper, and Michael D. Shear, "Dozens of US Missiles Hit Air Base in Syria," *New York Times*, April 6, 2017, retrieved January 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/06/world/middleeast/us-said-to-weigh-military-responses-to-syrian-chemical-attack.html>.

¹²¹ David Morgan Yasmee Abutaleb, "US House Passes Republican Health Bill, a Step toward Obamacare Repeal," *Scientific American*, May 4, 2017, retrieved January 20, 2021, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/u-s-house-passes-republican-health-bill-a-step-toward-obamacare-repeal/>.

say the least, Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell was shocked and had to announce that the bill failed.¹²²

I could go on and describe other actions by this administration that show how little they think of people and the effects of their actions on the well-being of citizens. Instead, they are more interested in protecting the interests of businesses and think tanks, and less interested in science. Consequently, we find that the EPA's purpose to protect the environment and human health is being trampled on by ignorance. Scott Pruitt, the EPA administrator and the president's chief denier of climate science, wants to destroy the EPA by reducing its budget by 30 percent, which will lead to unhealthy and unsafe environments (think the Flint River fiasco, which is being repeated across the country).

These are examples of an attack on citizens not only in the US but in other countries as well. Tomahawk missiles, climate science denial, and ignorance are all signs of intolerance and certainty.

Since January 20, the bigotry, racism, and hate crimes have increased enormously.

¹²² Susan Davis and Domenico Montanaro, "McCain Votes No, Dealing Potential Death Blow to Republican Health Care Efforts," NPR, July 28, 2017, retrieved January 20, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2017/07/27/539907467/senate-careens-toward-high-drama-midnight-health-care-vote>.

CHAPTER 2: DANGEROUSNESS

2.1. BLOG POST, 10 NOVEMBER 2016: HOW COULD WE?

Like many of you, I've spent the day after mourning for our country and the people who have been abused and threatened by the man who was elected over one of the bravest women that we could have had for our president.

- How could we?
- How could we choose the bully?
- How could we enable the press to rarely call him out and hold him accountable for stiffing the American people about his taxes, fraud, sexual assault charges, racist beliefs and actions, his outrageous attitude toward women, and his endless lies?
- How could we allow the far right into the White House through cabinet appointees? It will be a rogue's gallery of has-been politicians and corporate raiders.
- How could we turn our backs on children and families?
- How could we pick a person who thinks climate change is a hoax and will look to remove the environmental protections that have been put in place since *Silent Spring*?
- How could we enable the privatizers of public education to have a voice at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue?
- How could we not overcome the racism and bigotry that drove his campaign and turned his rallies into assemblies without hoods?

- How could we open the door to the White House to a man who has assaulted countless scores of women, insulted and threatened people who have religious beliefs different from many of us, insulted Mexicans who seek a better life, and riled up the worst in Americans by threatening to build a wall along the Mexican/American border?
- How could we?

Author's Update: According to the *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, "dangerousness" is the state in which individuals become likely to do harm to themselves or to others representing a threat to their own or other people's safety.¹²³

Trump's dangerousness becomes visible when we acknowledge that Trump and Trumpism are an assault on reality.¹²⁴ Trump has created a community of zealous believers, which you can witness anytime you view a video of one of his rallies. He appointed people to his cabinet positions who were opposed to the actual work of those agencies.

Robert Jay Lifton describes Trump's extreme grandiosity as the perfect remedy for those souls who attend his rallies and voted for him. His dangerousness also appears when his falsehoods morph into government policy, as it did when he sent troops to the border or troops to Portland and other cities around the country. Trump lacks any form of ideology, but according to Lifton, he does have a narrative. His narrative appeared when he announced his run for the presidency and then was repeated at every one of his hundreds of rallies during the 2016 and 2020 elections. His narrative is dangerous and solipsistic. Lifton describes Trump's narrative as:

America has been great in the past but has been in the wrong hands and allowed to become weak and misused

¹²³ *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, American Psychological Association, s.v. "dangerousness," retrieved January 5, 2022, <https://dictionary.apa.org/dangerousness>.

¹²⁴ Lifton, *Losing Reality*, 155.

by foreign forces, especially allies, who cheat and take advantage of us. He, Trump, and only he, has both the strength and negotiating skills to “make America great again.”¹²⁵

2.2. BLOG POST, 14 DECEMBER 2016: A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

There is little doubt that the incoming Republican administration presents a clear and present danger to all citizens in the US and the rest of the world. Never has such an inexperienced, corrupt, and autocratic administration been given the reins to American democracy. This lapse is coupled with a Congress that is in denial of research-based policies for science, health, the environment, and education.

First, we have one of worst presidents-elect in history. He did not secure the votes of the majority. He lost the election by more than 3 million votes, and there is some suspicion that the votes tallied in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania may be contested. If the results in these three states swing to Clinton, she would win the election. Jill Stein, the Green Party presidential candidate, has raised more than \$2 million to fund this and has requested recounts in these three states. Wisconsin has indicated it will begin a recount now. The Clinton campaign has joined in the effort.

The Authoritarian is calling foul and is reeling. The words and actions that Trump used and put on display during the primary and presidential campaign describe his beliefs and understandings, which resonated with many but were repulsive to many more. He said Mexicans are criminals, rapists, and drug dealers. He called a judge Mexican because his surname is Hispanic and claimed he would be biased against him in his university fraud case. The judge was born and raised in Indiana.

Degrading women (mocking Carly Fiorina’s appearance by saying “look at that face”; saying that Megan Kelly “had blood coming out of her

¹²⁵ Lifton, *Losing Reality*.

whatever”) and using phrases such “lying Ted Cruz,” “crooked Hillary,” or “little Marco,” are part of his lexicon, which he will carry to the White House, perhaps in a disguised form.

He thinks of people as either winners or losers and is quick to give his opinion. In one interview he was asked about Senator John McCain’s ordeal as a prisoner of war for seven years. He said, “He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren’t captured.”

Most incendiary are his racist plans to round up “bad hombres” and create a registry for Muslims, and one of his allies even brought up the disgraced idea of internment camps!

The Authoritarian is also inept when it comes to literature, history, and science. In a tweet in 2012, he said, “The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese to make US manufacturing non-competitive.”

In addition to his racism, sexism, misogyny, sexual assaults, and corruption, there are other concerns ranging from national security and education to climate change.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The *Washington Post* has reported that Trump has only had two intelligence briefings, turning these away daily. It’s reported that he is taking part in fewer briefings than earlier presidents-elect. During the election campaign, he claimed to know more about ISIS and how to defeat it than US Army generals. He also said he wanted to be unpredictable and not say what he is thinking. Many experts on national security are deeply concerned about his lack of preparation and knowledge about security.¹²⁶

EDUCATION

He had little to no respect for public education, and of course he picked as secretary of education a person holding similar beliefs, Betsy DeVos, a billionaire philanthropist from Michigan with zero experience with

¹²⁶ G. Miller and A. Entous, “Trump Turning Away Intelligence Briefers Since Election Win,” *Washington Post*, November 23, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-turning-away-intelligence-briefers-since-election-win/2016/11/23/5cc643c4-b1ae-11e6-be1c-8cec35b1ad25_story.html.

public schools and a predominant advocate for vouchers and charter schools. His choice of DeVos is an injustice for public education. For thirty years or more, Republicans have been dismantling public education one voucher or charter school at a time. And DeVos has been central in this attempt. It's no surprise this person of privilege would be given this post. Add another billionaire to the cabinet. The *New York Times* journalist Kate Zernike said this about DeVos:

But Ms. DeVos's efforts to expand educational opportunity in her home state of Michigan and across the country have focused little on existing public schools, and entirely on establishing newer, more entrepreneurial models to compete with traditional schools for students and money. Her donations and advocacy go entirely toward groups seeking to move students and money away from what The Authoritarian calls "failing government schools."¹²⁷

The Network for Public Education is calling on US senators to turn her down for cabinet secretary. The Network for Public Education¹²⁸ said this about her nomination:

DeVos believes that the market solves all problems, and she and her husband's foundation spent 1.5 million dollars to persuade the Michigan legislature to kill a bill to regulate charter schools in the state. Thanks to her efforts, 80% of the charters in Michigan operate for profit, without accountability or transparency. Send a clear message to the Senate that Betsy DeVos should not be confirmed as US Secretary of Education. Her hostility towards public schools disqualifies her.

¹²⁷ Kate Zernike, "Betsy DeVos, Trump's Education Pick, Has Steered Money from Public Schools," *New York Times*, November 24, 2016, retrieved November 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/us/politics/betsy-devos-trumps-education-pick-has-steered-money-from-public-schools.html>.

¹²⁸ Network For Public Education, retrieved January 6, 2022, <https://networkforpubliceducation.org/>.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Trump thinks climate change is a political issue, and he falls in line with many lawmakers who are in denial of climate change science. Climate change is an existential threat. The hottest temperatures recorded since record-keeping began have occurred in the past ten years, yet Donald Trump says more research is needed. And more than half the Republicans in Congress deny climate change and the related scientific research that overwhelmingly asserts the realness of climate change. And not because of natural rhythms but because humans have been so good at burning fossil fuels.

Denying climate change is the tip of the iceberg (no pun intended). To deny science in this case leads to a populace that is steeped in ignorance and is sliding off a flat Earth. Ironically, science teachers in our public schools teach the science of climate change in earth science courses. It's part of the curriculum. So the children and teenagers of climate deniers come home each day with ideas that are counter to their parents'.

Author's Update: Chapters 8 and 9 are devoted to extreme weather events and the existential threat of climate change, respectively.

2.3. BLOG POST, 16 AUGUST 2017: WHAT IS ALT-RIGHT?

If there is an alternative right (alt-right), then there must be an alternative left (alt-left)—at least according to Donald Trump, who came down from his gold-plated apartment in New York and said so. He even challenged a reporter who covers the White House to define the term because he has no idea what the term means. Does he know what the term alt-right is? No, but if he were to listen to any of the reporters at this press briefing, he would have learned this about the term alt-right:

- Alt-right was a term coined by a white nationalist, Richard Spencer, to describe the white nationalist movement.
- Alt-right is a movement based on an ideology of white nationalism and anti-Semitism.

- The goal of the alt-right is to destroy the left.
- Alt-right is anti-immigrant, anti-feminist, and against gay and transgender rights.
- Alt-right wants its own homeland within the United States.

ALT-RIGHT AT CHARLOTTESVILLE

At the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, (August 11–12, 2017), the alt-right, which organized the protest about taking down a Confederate statue, outnumbered any of those Americans who were protesting the alt-right’s presence in the city. One reporter from NPR, who was on the ground among the protestors, described the “many sides” quite differently than the president. She said that for every American flag at the protest, there were a hundred Nazi flags.¹²⁹

All the alt-right agitators were armed with helmets, clubs, guns, and sprays, and many were in military-style costumes. Those protesting the Nazis and other alt-right groups were the ones not shouting Nazi slogans, such as “blood and soil,” and were not an armed camp or group. Many were clergy, and normally the clergy protest peacefully. Although some of those with the clergy had clubs and guns, they were so outnumbered, the NPR reporter made it clear that there were two distinct groups: one armed to the teeth and the other in normal street clothes.¹³⁰

THERE IS NO ALT-LEFT

According to political scientists, there is not an equivalent “alt-left” group. It doesn’t exist. However, you might ask: What would be the opposite of a white nationalist group? What are we talking about here? You mean there is a similarity of morality between the ideologies of neo-Nazi white nationalism and those who oppose them?

I don’t think so. The alt-right is a fascist collection of people who have faith in autocrats, tyrants, and authoritarians, and they accept a totalitarian way of life.

¹²⁹ Dave Davies, “In the Wake of Charlottesville, Journalist Begins ‘Documenting Hate’ in America,” *Fresh Air*, NPR, August 2, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/02/634890750/in-the-wake-of-charlottesville-journalist-begins-documenting-hate-in-america>.

¹³⁰ Davies, “Wake of Charlottesville.”

But the outrageous idea here is that the president of the United States has publicly defended them and called those who oppose these fascists “alt-left,” as if there is an equivalency. And throughout his only term in office, Trump supported and asked for help from the alt-right.

Author’s Update: When the nation’s Capitol was stormed by a white mob on January 6, 2021, there were people who claimed it was alt-left members who infiltrated the Trump protestors. According to FBI reports, the insurrectionists were members of known right-wing groups.¹³¹ Eleven members of the Oath Keepers, a right-wing group, were charged with sedition conspiracy in January 2022.¹³²

2.4. BLOG POST, 10 JULY 2021: THE TRUMP RALLIES

Trump took advantage of the discontent that existed in people who lived in red states and would attend his rallies. During the 2016 campaign for president, Trump held 323 rallies, 186 during the primary and 137 during the general election. Most rallies were held in red states, drawing more than 1.4 million people (about half the population of Nevada). All the attendees were white, except for a few protestors and Black security guards or vendors.

In my search for information about the Trump rallies, I found the research of Caroline Teisen Mohan,¹³³ entitled “Donald Trump Did a ‘Very Good’ Job: A Rhetorical Analysis of Candidate Trump’s Campaign Speeches.”

According to Mohan, at these rallies Trump ramps up the crowds of people using “Gingrich-izing” public broadcasting, which is to turn name-calling into a strategic political tool. Indeed, as pointed out by Mohan, Newt Gingrich’s strategy is the basis for many politicians’

¹³¹ Daniel Funke, “FBI Investigation of Capitol Riot Focuses on Far-Right Groups,” Politifact, January 20, 2021, <https://www.politifact.com/article/2021/jan/20/fbi-investigation-capitol-riot-focuses-far-right-g/>.

¹³² United States Department of Justice, “Leader of Oath Keepers and 10 Other Individuals Indicted in Federal Court for Seditious Conspiracy and Other Offenses Related to U.S. Capitol Breach,” Justice News, January 13, 2022, retrieved April 15, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/leader-oath-keepers-and-10-other-individuals-indicted-federal-court-seditious-conspiracy-and>.

¹³³ Caroline Mohan, “Donald Trump Did a “Very Good” Job: A Rhetorical Analysis of Candidate Trump’s Campaign Speeches,” *Senior Honors Projects*, 2010–2019 (bachelor’s thesis, James Madison University, 2019), 632, <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/honors201019/632>.

communication playbooks. She found that Trump used Gingrich-style word association and inflammatory, reality-skewing speech. That is, Donald Trump used his speeches to take advantage of people who were vulnerable or who had little understanding of the political sphere. In Mohan's study, she described the word combinations and symbols to cause confusion, fear, and resulting anger to win the White House.¹³⁴

Trump was an emotions candidate, according to Arlie Russell Hochschild,¹³⁵ the University of California, Berkeley sociologist whose book takes us inside the world of Trump followers. Trump uses phrases and name-calling to elicit emotional responses from his fans and then praises them. He treats them like children or adults who need parenting. This approach is right out of the authoritarian playbook described by George Lakoff,¹³⁶ retired distinguished professor of cognitive science and linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. In the conservative/authoritarian worldview, the metaphor that determines how Trump behaves is a family that needs a homeland, citizens as siblings, the government as parent, and so forth.

Trump has been successful at playing the role of the strict father, who is the only one capable of solving problems (only he isn't). He claims, "I alone can fix it." This insistence leads Trump to tell his audience that they must place their trust in him, not anyone else, including God.

Trump demonized his opponents. At his rallies, he used pronouns such as "we" and "us" and "I" to create a bond or collective among the attendees. Mohan cites John A. Powell, professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley who uses the term "othering" to explain how language is used to establish an "out-group" of those who don't share his ideas. At the rallies he used expressions that led to forms of prejudice using words such as "they" and "them."

Here are some phrases from some of his rallies that provide the audience with ways to connect with Trump, and vice versa:

¹³⁴ Mohan, "Trump Did a 'Very Good' Job," 11.

¹³⁵ Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*.

¹³⁶ Lakoff, *Moral Politics*.

- “We’re not going to let other countries rip us off!”
- “We’re going to build a high wall and Mexico’s going to pay for it!”
- “We’re going to build up our military!”
- “We’re going to knock the hell out of ISIS!”
- “Get that guy out. Get him out.”
- “Why is this taking so long? I can’t believe it’s taking this long.”
- “I’ve been greedy. I’m a businessperson...take, take, take. Now I’m going to be greedy for the United States.” (wild cheers)
- “I’d like to punch him in the face.”
- “In the good old days, they’d have ripped him out of that seat so fast.”

In Mohan’s research, she pointed to a piece published in *The Atlantic* by Charles Duhigg.¹³⁷ His article “The Real Roots of American Rage” explores how anger became the dominant emotion in American politics. Trump was an expert performer. He integrated rage and retribution to bash political opponents and those who voted for his second impeachment.

I have been to a few political rallies, but none were even close to being as dangerous as the ones that I saw broadcast on FOX or CNN. They were dangerous to the cities that hosted the rallies and to people who encountered Trump’s attendees. Trump’s campaign rallies increased assaults by 2.3 times in host cities.¹³⁸ Interestingly, the authors found no corresponding link between assaults and rallies for Hillary Clinton’s rallies. A Stanford study¹³⁹ linked Trump rallies to 30,000 COVID-19 cases and over 700 deaths. The study was based on an analysis of twenty-one rallies from June to September 2020. Even though most of the rallies

¹³⁷ Charles Duhigg, “The Real Roots of American Rage,” *The Atlantic*, July 15, 2019, retrieved May 17, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/01/charles-duhigg-american-anger/576424/>.

¹³⁸ Niraj Chokshi, “Assaults Increased When Cities Hosted Trump Rallies, Study Finds,” *New York Times*, March 16, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/16/>.

¹³⁹ Douglas Bernheim, et.al., “The Effects of Large Group Meetings on the Spread of COVID-19: The Case of Trump Rallies,” SIEPR, October 30, 2020, Stanford: Stanford University, Department of Economics.

investigated in this study were outside (eighteen out of twenty-one), people still got sick attending these.¹⁴⁰ You may remember that Herman Cain, a 2016 presidential candidate, was infected with COVID-19 after attending the June 20, 2020, Tulsa rally and later died. Herman Cain was also a conservative radio talk show host in Atlanta. Cain's death is the result of Trump's deliberate ignorance of the science that advocated social distancing and wearing masks.

On June 26, 2021, Trump launched a series of rallies beginning in Ohio. He targeted congressional members who voted against him in the second impeachment trial with a series of "revenge" rallies. The first was held in the district of Ohio Representative Anthony Gonzalez, who voted to impeach Trump. The rallies are despicable rants against elected congressional officials who, regardless of political party, were willing to vote according to their personal conscience based on the evidence presented in House and the Senate, rather than along political party lines.

These revenge rallies are dangerous signposts for American democracy of how authoritarianism and repression have taken over the Republican Party. Trump is naming who should run against the congressional members he considers his enemies. In their book *After Trump*,¹⁴¹ Bob Bauer and Jack Goldsmith, each of whom served in prominent levels of the executive branch for Barack Obama and George W. Bush, respectively, explore the need for a reconstruction of the presidency after Trump's term. They recall that Trump said he can do anything he wants as president. Now that he is not president, Trump believes that he still can do what he wants, and in so doing disregards the norms upon which the US democracy is built.

¹⁴⁰ "Study: Trump Campaign Rallies Likely Led to Over 700 COVID-related Deaths," Axios, October 31, 2020, <https://www.axios.com/study-trump-campaign-rallies-coronavirus-700-deaths-14914ee5-3aa2-458b-a478-366fc8189ab9.html>.

¹⁴¹ Bob Bauer and Jack Goldsmith, *After Trump: Reconstructing the Presidency* (Washington, DC: Lawfare Press, 2020).

CHAPTER 3: MORAL WORLDVIEWS

3.1. BLOG POST, 5 JUNE 2017: TRUMP'S MORAL WORLDVIEW

Politics,¹⁴² according to some scientists, is about moral values. Indeed, conservatives and liberals not only have different goals or values, but they also have different modes of thought. Liberal or progressive modes of thought are connected to the ideals of American democracy as seen in the nation's founding documents. Yet conservatives have characterized defenders of traditional American ideals such as civil liberties, the welcoming of immigrants, and public education as extremists.

Trump's moral worldview is based on Lakoff's "strict father" metaphor for a worldview that appears in an authoritarian family with a strict father as the head. From early childhood on, Trump learned and practiced in a reward-and-punishment family environment how to conceptualize the world as a fight against evil and to always fight ruthlessly against the enemy. For Trump, there are no limits to truth, because in the end it's his goal to always come out on top, to do the deal, to win, to use retribution, and to never apologize or empathize with others or their views.

Trump does have a moral worldview. We will explore the moral worldview of Donald Trump using the research of George Lakoff.¹⁴³ We start with two of Trump's favorite conspiracy theories:

¹⁴² **Author's Update:** I've added two paragraphs to the original post to add context.

¹⁴³ Lakoff, *Moral Politics*.

- Global warming is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese to serve their economic interests.
- President Barack Obama was not born in the United States.

We've heard Donald Trump repeat these false statements for a decade. Trump's worldview allows these beliefs to hold true (for him). Even with contravening evidence that the Chinese didn't invent the idea of global warming or that President Obama was born in Hawaii, which is part of the United States, Trump still believes in his two ideas. He holds on to these ideas because his brain resists new ideas. He infuriates many around him with his lies and penchant for conspiracy theories to "back up" his ideas.

Although many people deal with the world in a comparable way, no Oval Office occupant comes close to living in the world of denial, distortion of facts, and fantasies that Trump believes. Some would say he is the archetypical science denier. I am not just speaking about climate change, but all the policy decisions that rely on logic, science research, and wisdom. These are missing from Trump's brain.

So this question should not surprise you: Why would he reject the facts that have been agreed upon by scientists and citizens in all but two countries (three now that the US pulled out of the Paris Agreement on climate change)? He is boxed in to the racist and isolationist concept of "America First," as are many of his cabinet appointees. Sometimes when I hear them speak, I am amazed how they can join the selfish and unrealistic policy that underscores the "America First" notion.

Yesterday, Nikki Haley, former governor of South Carolina, was talking as an expert on climate science explaining why global climate change was not an American issue and that getting out of the Paris Agreement was to protect the American people. Haley is not a scientist, although as governor of South Carolina, she should have been aware of how climate change was affecting the coast of her own state. Flooding along the Atlantic coast has increased as the temperature of the Earth has increased.

For a decade Trump picked up and promoted the "birther" falsehood, even when photos and documents proved Obama to be a citizen

of the US. Obama showed a video clip of his birth at the 2011 White House Correspondents' Dinner, tongue in cheek.

Trump flew around the US in his airplane, landing in places like New Hampshire, announcing once again that he knows that President Obama is an illegal immigrant and was not born in this country and he shouldn't be the president. His "birther" notion was racist and appealed to a sizable part of the electorate, and Trump, for more than ten years, fanned this racist conspiracy theory. Even when he was forced to say that Obama was born in America, he blamed the idea on Hillary Clinton—which is not true. But it's another clear example of how Trump works by twisting and turning, and as he walks away with a smirk on his face, he's giving you the finger.

Trump is like a wounded tiger. He knows he lost the popular vote to Hillary Clinton. More people voted for her than for him, and he is not happy.

In Trump's world, people are either winners or losers, good or bad, virtuous or evil. So now he's in the loser category. In fact, not as many people showed up at his inauguration as for Obama's first one, a fact he fought even to the present day by creating a crack committee to investigate election fraud. Trump insisted that 3 million illegal immigrants voted fraudulently in the election, and that's the reason why he lost the popular vote. The committee later disbanded because of lack of fraud.

The election fraud conspiracy is no different from any other of Trump's conspiracies: Obama wiretapped the Trump Tower phones; immigrants from Mexico are rapists, drug dealers, and criminals; the sale of German-made cars is bad for America. It goes on and on.

Author's Update: The United States officially rejoined the Paris Agreement on January 20, 2021.

MORAL WORLDVIEWS

Traditional American moral values are progressive.¹⁴⁴ If you look at pro-

¹⁴⁴ Lakoff, *Moral Politics*.

gressive policies, whether in government, schooling, or business, they are based on empathy, together with responsibility and strength to act on empathy. In this light, it isn't about caring. It's about taking responsibility, then acting powerfully and courageously. Lakoff points out that ethics of care shape government and requires two roles: protection and empowerment.

Lakoff says that protection is “more than just the army, police, and fire department. It means social security, disease control and public health, safe food, disaster relief, health care, consumer and worker protection, environmental protection.”¹⁴⁵

Conservative thought has a different moral thought than progressive thought. In the conservative mind, morality begins with obedience to an authority. The authority functions to protect people from evil in the world. In this view, obedience is enforced by punishment. Lakoff says that loyalty is needed to keep the hierarchy of the conservative view, or “obedience is freedom.” Do you recall that Donald Trump asked James Comey for his loyalty? Comey said he could only be loyal to his oath to defend the Constitution. And now, even with Trump out of the White House, Republicans are lining up to show fealty to him for fear of retaliation.

METAPHORS FOR MORALITY

George Lakoff has explored how liberals and conservatives think. He says that conservatives and liberals support opposite policies because they have contradictory moral worldviews. He puts it this way:

Conservatives and progressives typically support opposite policies because they have opposite moral worldviews—opposite notions of right and wrong. Moral worldviews are important to people, part of their self-identity. People tend to think of themselves as good and moral, not considering that there could be an opposite view of what is moral.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Lakoff, *Moral Politics*, 47.

¹⁴⁶ Lakoff, *Moral Politics*, 2.

Lakoff uses a conceptual system to explain differences in moral thinking using a metaphorical conception of the nation as a family. He projects two metaphors:

1. The strict father—the conservative worldview
2. The nurturant parent—the liberal or progressive worldview

STRICT FATHER

The strict father metaphor results in moral strength, which requires one to stand up to evil and have self-discipline to engage evil. The strict father metaphor sees the world in terms of a war of good against the forces of evil that must be fought ruthlessly. For the strict father, moral strength is of the highest order. Moral weakness, according to the conservative worldview, will lead to welfare, teenage sex, and illegal drugs. According to the strict father morality, we all start morally weak, and we need a strong parent to discipline us so we won't become immoral.

The strict father subsumes moral authority, retribution, moral order, moral boundaries, moral essence, moral purity, and self-defense. Reward, punishment, and competition are integral to the strict father model.

NURTURANT PARENT

The essence of the nurturant parent is caring, being cared for, caring about, and deriving meaning from mutual interaction and care. Open, two-way communication is key to the nurturant parent metaphor. Protection is a form of caring. Children are respected, nurtured, and communicated with from birth on. Empathy, happiness, and learning to take care of themselves are integral. Morality is empathic. We learn to experience what it is like to be in someone else's shoes. I feel for you.

MORAL VIEW OF DONALD TRUMP

For Trump, those who show empathy toward others are weak and should not be in leadership positions. Instead of showing some form of caring

toward the British people over the past two weeks after they endured three terror attacks, he picked a fight with the mayor of London and said that the Justice Department should have given the original order to ban Muslims to the Supreme Court.

His tweets expose his moral worldview. The archetype of the strict father morality, Trump shocks with tweets, such as “James Comey better hope that there are no ‘tapes’ of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press”¹⁴⁷ or “pathetic excuse by London Mayor Sadiq Khan who had to think fast on this ‘no reason to be alarmed’ statement.”¹⁴⁸

Trump’s moral view is narcissistic, and because he thinks he is the most important person in the world, he undermines himself by subverting his colleagues and staff. We’ve never before seen the lying that characterizes press conferences conducted by his staff or himself. His moral view has diffused into the minds of his cabinet members, and we see them trying to explain actions taken, such as dropping us out of the Paris Agreement or initiating the Muslim travel ban.

Trump does have morals, but they are based on a worldview that sees a dangerous world, one that requires him to fight this evil. He won’t change and see that there are alternative ways of seeing the world. Even when provided with scientific research on climate change, he resorts to hitting the messenger and ignoring what was presented. It appears also that he prefers not to seek professional advice within the American government, but instead prefers to watch Fox News in order to form policy.

The way to “fight” Trump is through collaboration and protests that are based on a different worldview. This worldview is described by Lakoff as the nurturant parent morality.

The essence of collaboration and protests is caring and deriving meaning through mutual interaction. I was in England when the Ariana Grande memorial concert in Manchester was held. The memorial concert is the example that we are looking for. I was moved listening

¹⁴⁷ Jordyn Phelps, “Trump Says Comey ‘Better Hope’ There Are No ‘Tapes’ of Their Conversations, White House Won’t Say If There Are Recordings,” ABC News, May 12, 2017, retrieved November 20, 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-warns-comey-hope-tapes-conversations/story?id=47368560>.

¹⁴⁸ Maya Rhodan, “Donald Trump Attacks London Mayor Sadiq Khan on Twitter,” *Time*, June 5, 2017, retrieved November 20, 2021, <https://time.com/4805285/donald-trump-twitter-london-attack/>.

to ordinary citizens that came out, a day after the attacks in London, to bear witness to the caring and love of the people in Manchester. Empathy for others, compassion, and resolve are the characteristics that will always elude Donald Trump.

We mustn't bend to his level. As Michelle Obama said, "When they go low, we go high."

3.2. BLOG POST, 12 JULY 2017: WHY DOES POTUS MAKE THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT A LAUGHINGSTOCK?

I received a letter from a friend and colleague, Dr. Roger Cross, who lives in Australia. Back in the day, we were colleagues in the field of science education research and worked together on many projects, including the GTP.

We've kept up with each other over the years via email. Last night I received the following letter from him in which he asked why the president of the United States is making a laughingstock of the office.

Hello Jack,

Trust all is well with you both and you are enjoying life.

I'm wondering (as are many Australians) whether we shouldn't transfer our allegiance to China (the Chinese president would never behave like Trump does in public!) as your president seems intent on damaging America's good name. Why does he make the Office of President a laughingstock? I wish I knew what is going on.

Anyway—we potter along in the deep countryside of South Australia, so I suppose it doesn't really matter.

Best wishes mate.

Roger

I responded to Roger with this letter.

Hi Roger,

I don't have a simple answer to the Trump debacle.

Right now, chaos reigns in the White House. Trump is acting like a wounded (self- and family-inflicted) tiger. He's made no public appearances since returning from the G20. He's outraged at his staff. He's irked that the Russian "thing" stays front and center of his presidency.

Why is he acting like this now? If he looks back at the G20 he realizes (in private) that he's been isolated and he fell for Putin hook, line, and sinker. Even his own party is slowly disavowing themselves.

But the actions of his son may have been what broke the camel's back. It was just revealed that Donald Jr. received an invite to meet with a Russian government lawyer. She said she had information that could incriminate Hillary. Trump Jr. said that was good. He loved it. They met in Trump Tower, one floor under Trump's office. Also attending was Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, and Paul Manafort, Trump's campaign manager at the time. Trump Jr. released emails admitting there was a meeting. He did so because the New York Times was set to release them.

If this meeting did happen, it could be the smoking gun in the Russian investigation. A special prosecutor was appointed about two months ago to investigate connections or collusion between the Trump campaign staff and Russia. All along Trump and associates have denied any connection with Russia. But many have been caught cheating—even the US attorney general lied in his senate hearing about Russian meetings. He had several meetings.

So this meeting that Trump Jr. had with the Russian attorney is big. It's another concrete example of how Trump's associates (now family) have indeed been involved and met with Russians, and their meetings were directly tied to the campaign for the presidency. Trump Jr. has denied any involvement with Russia, and now, in July, it turns out that he not only met with a Russian official but relished the idea because there was dirt on Hillary Clinton.

America is divided. Those who voted for Trump still support him, although some are leaving his ranks. Those that didn't, like us, are outraged. Families are divided. It's hard for me, Roger, to understand how people can see any good in this man. He's a serial liar. A serial denier. He's gotten away with this his entire life. Unfortunately for him, a democracy is not a business. He will eventually be had, removed from office via the Twenty-Fifth Amendment, impeached, resign, or be defeated in the next election.

His administration is on course to do damage to the environment, energy infrastructure, education, transportation, and mostly morality.

I liked what the Pope had to say about America and Russia. To the Pope it's dangerous for these two nations to collaborate on anything because they have a distorted view of the world. They (we) have no interest in the serious problems facing the world today—the poor, immigration, and migrant workers.

There is much more to this.

*Best regards,
Jack*

3.3. BLOG POST, 29 AUGUST 2019: IS DONALD TRUMP A TYRANT?

In France, at the 2019 G7 summit, is Donald Trump beginning to realize he's not number one on the world stage? I noticed he was off balance and stone-faced in public and spoke with little to no authority. He knows that he's been outmaneuvered by the president of France, Emmanuel Macron, when he learned the foreign minister of Iran was secretly invited to the G7 summit by President Macron. When Trump spoke in public, he resorted to his lies.

Brian Stelter of CNN raised the issue that all in the media have avoided with Trump: What is going on with him? Is he unfit to carry out the responsibilities of the office of the president? Why doesn't he tell

the truth? Why is his reality so different from most Americans? Why does he deny, in so many instances, his involvement in events that have happened and there is evidence to undermine his statements? Could it be that behind President Trump's behavior is some form of mental illness?

In the book *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, Jeffrey D. Sachs writes in the foreword to the new edition:

Donald Trump is a profound danger to Americans and to the rest of the world. He will remain a profound danger until he is no longer president, since the dangers clearly result from Trump's serious mental impairments that are untreated and are impervious to treatment. The authors of this volume deserve our nation's gratitude and, most important, our deep attention and political response.¹⁴⁹

IS HE A TYRANT?

As soon as Trump was in office, he filed paperwork for the 2020 presidential race. And he planned a series of campaign-like rallies to feed his supporters the narcissistic vitamins that they need as much as he does. Indeed, Trump and his followers feed on each other.

Trump has been called a narcissist by many authors and journalists. But Trump is not simply a narcissist. He may be a tyrant. In discussing tyrants past or present, Elizabeth Mika explains that "each one of them promises to bring back law and order, create better economic conditions for the people, and restore the nation's glory."¹⁵⁰

BECOMING A TYRANT

For a tyrant to appear in a society, three conditions are needed: the tyrant, his supporters (the people), and the society at large that supplies a ripe ground for the collusion between them. According to Mika, political scientists call this the toxic triangle. She also says that the force to bind

¹⁴⁹ Lee, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Mika, "Who Goes Trump? Tyranny as Triumph of Narcissism," in Bandy X. Lee, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Experts Assess a President* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017), 289-308.

all three is narcissism. The tyranny of Hitler and Stalin can easily be forgotten, and there lies a danger to humanity.¹⁵¹ According to Henry Giroux, forgetting results partly from miseducation. It also comes from denial.¹⁵²

It's for others to decide if Trump is a tyrant. But there is an agreement among most that Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini were tyrants. Perhaps if we remember what they were like, we can begin to look at the behavior of the current president of the United States in an unusual way.

Mika supplies details about tyrants that need to be examined. Many in the American press, especially the main broadcast networks (ABC, NBC, FOX, and CBS) have not pursued the truth about Trump, but instead only describe his behavior as if his actions are normal. They aren't normal.

For instance, Mika suggests that in the 1930s, many German moderates "underestimated" Hitler and as a result didn't take him seriously. I believe we are doing the same with Trump. Consider this quote from Mika's chapter:

Hitler was seen by many as a bombastic but harmless buffoon, while many others, including members of clergy, intellectual elites, and the wealthy were nevertheless mesmerized by his grand visions of Germany's future glory, and eagerly supported his agenda.¹⁵³

TRUMP'S TYRANT FRIENDS

Mika also suggests that tyrants tend to identify with other tyrants. Why is it that Trump continues to indulge his relationships with Putin and Kim Jong-un? When Trump talks about these two, he flatters them, while he derides former members of his own administration, members who were held in some esteem, such as Pentagon head Jim Mattis. He believes Putin over his own intelligence agencies and claims that the recent North Korean missile launches are okay, when in fact these launches are provocations.

¹⁵¹ Mika, "Who Goes Trump?"

¹⁵² Giroux, "Threat of Authoritarianism Is No Longer on the Horizon."

¹⁵³ Mika, "Who Goes Trump?" 301.

Hatemongering has become an integral part of Trump's persona. He has launched attacks on a wide range of people, but especially if their skin color or native language is different from his. Hatemongering was also a fundamental part of Hitler's war on Jewish people and others that were different from him. This comparison is not to be dismissed as overreaching at all.

TRUMP'S AUDIENCES

Finally, in this post, I'd point out that those who attend the Trump rallies are integral to Trump's behavior. His audience feeds him with physical manifestations of their support, such as their chants, shouting, and dress. At the same time, Trump cheers these people on by lying to them about the nature of our society. His rallies are full of rage and hate, and he constantly wreaks havoc on any of the press that dare attend these events. For the members of the press, they are taking well-documented chances by attending these rallies.

3.4. BLOG POST, 16 JUNE 2020: WHEN TRUMP SENDS YOU RUNNING FOR COVER

It seems like every day is a day when Trump sends you running for cover. It's an affirmation of the danger that this man has brought to everyone. He hasn't made America great again. He and his sycophants have marched to a drummer eroding the principles of the American democracy. And in the age of COVID-19, his inactions have led to more people dying in the United States than any other country on earth. More than 2.1 million Americans have been infected and more than 109,900 people have died from the virus.

The Tulsa rally is one example when Trump sends you running for cover. There are many others. But I want to start with the Tulsa rally.

THE TULSA RALLY

In Trump's world, the coronavirus is not an obstacle to risk the health of people who will have their temperatures checked and sign a release that they will not sue Trump if they die from the virus. You're kidding,

you say. No, I'm not. Trump will storm into Tulsa to give a speech to 20,000 people who will crowd into the BOK (Bank of Oklahoma) Center.

However, Tulsa health officials and the *Tulsa World* newspaper "don't know why he chose Tulsa, but we can't see any way that his visit will be good for the city."¹⁵⁴ Not only is the rally a dangerous event, but both Trump and Pence have lied about the pandemic challenge that faces Tulsa. The city's healthcare system will have to deal with any effects of the rally, where people will be spitting and rolling over each other. The pandemic has killed more than 109,900 people in the United States at this time.

Still Trump and Pence want to put about 20,000 more at risk. If you are planning to go to the rally, many of us suggest that you reconsider for the sake of your family and friends.

Equally offensive is that Trump originally planned the rally for June 19, which is Juneteenth, which marks the end of slavery in Texas on June 19, 1866. Its original celebration marked the first anniversary of the day that African Americans in Galveston, Texas, first learned of the Emancipation Proclamation, more than two years after it was initially issued. It's a holiday and is commemorated annually throughout the United States, including where I live in Marietta, Georgia. I don't believe it was a coincidence to have the rally on Juneteenth. But Trump was forced to postpone it by one day because of the global protests against police violence and racism. Furthermore, Tulsa is where at least 300 people, mostly Black, died in 1921.¹⁵⁵ Republican Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt had invited Trump to visit the site of the Tulsa race massacre, which decimated Black Wall Street, as it was known. However, Monroe Nichols, the US congressional representative for this part of the state, doesn't want Trump to step one foot on the site. He didn't.

¹⁵⁴ "Tulsa World Editorial: This Is the Wrong Time and Tulsa Is the Wrong Place for the Trump Rally," *Tulsa World*, June 15, 2020, retrieved January 6, 2022, https://tulsaworld.com/opinion/editorials/tulsa-world-editorial-this-is-the-wrong-time-and-tulsa-is-the-wrong-place-for/article_26388374-1747-5120-bc01-24b81c1b0c78.html.

¹⁵⁵ Hannibal B. Johnson, *Black Wall Street: From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District* (Fort Worth: Eakin Press, 2007.)

Author's Update: The Tulsa conference was a bust. The million or so people who had signed up to go didn't materialize. A prank was pulled, inflating attendance expectations for the Tulsa rally. TikTok users and K-pop (Korean pop music) fans registered hundreds of thousands of tickets for the rally. A young woman put a note on a social media platform telling people to sign up for the Tulsa rally but telling them not to go. They didn't. Only 6,200 people showed up.

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

Trump and his administration's behavior, if permitted to continue, will bring harm to Americans. Although there are only 258 days (about eight and a half months) left in his administration, he continues to endanger the country now by his lack of leadership and knowledge about the pandemic. He has been totally inept in leading the US during this pandemic. He was late in recognizing the pandemic. Instead he used this time to spread lies about the virus. Now, he wants to forget that the virus exists and sacrifice American lives. He is only interested in himself and getting re-elected.

RUN FOR COVER

Here are some examples of actions, speeches, or lies when Trump makes you run for cover. I've only listed twelve examples. Just a couple of days ago, Professor David Markowitz had an article published in *Forbes* about Trump's lying.¹⁵⁶ In 2020, he averaged 23.3 lies per day, slightly more than he lied in 2019.

- Riding down the golden escalator at Trump Tower on June 16, 2015, announcing his candidacy for president.
- Signing an executive order banning foreign nationalists from seven Muslim countries from visiting the US.
- Blocking Congress from obtaining documents about the census citizenship question and trying to bar the full Mueller report from being given to Congress.

¹⁵⁶ David Markowitz, "Trump Is Lying More than Ever: Just Look at the Data," *Forbes*, May 5, 2020, retrieved February 24, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidmarkowitz/2020/05/05/trump-is-lying-more-than-ever-just-look-at-the-data/>.

- Throwing paper towels into a crowd of people at a relief center in San Juan, Puerto Rico, after the island had been devastated by Hurricane Maria.
- Suggesting people inject bleach into the body to kill the coronavirus.
- Attacking journalists and the press.
- Assaulting and attacking the intelligence community, especially when he said he couldn't see any reason that Putin's Russia would have anything to do with the 2016 election.
- Spreading misinformation about the coronavirus by saying such things like it's no different from the flu or it will just go away when it gets warm.
- Attacking four Muslim women members of Congress.

Trump is putting America at risk by continuing his reckless behavior and the effects of his ignorance and narcissism. I have no idea if he will be re-elected. To prevent this disaster from happening, we need to be smart, dedicated, and willing to join together, especially with the young activists who are leading the national protests against police brutality and racism through Black Lives Matter, which may be the largest movement in American history.¹⁵⁷ We also need to help the fight against voter suppression by supporting Stacey Abrams's Fair Fight group in its efforts to unearth and eradicate voter suppression.

¹⁵⁷ Larry Buchanan, Quoc Trung Bui, and Jugal K. Patel, "Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in US History," *New York Times*, July 3, 2020, retrieved March 19, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>.