

THE TRUMP FILES

Gratis Sample: Part II: Rights

Jack Hassard

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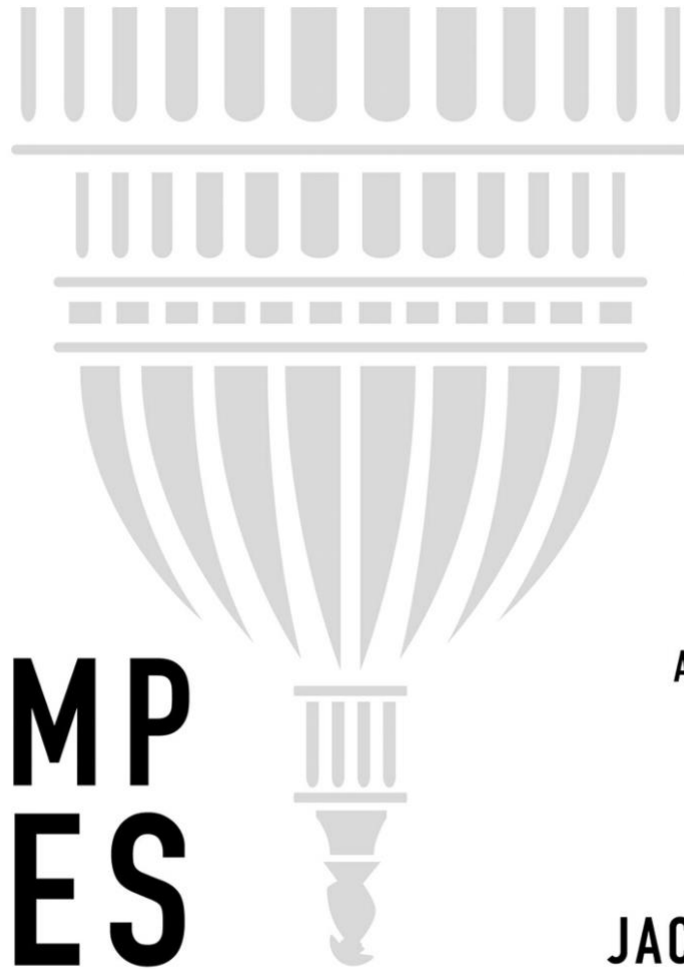
THE TRUMP FILES

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

JACK HASSARD



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JACK HASSARD

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Citizen Jack
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PART II: RIGHTS

Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and
get in good trouble, necessary trouble.

—John Lewis

INTRODUCTION

ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2017, DONALD TRUMP SIGNED EXECUTIVE Order 13769, “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States.” This was otherwise known as the “Muslim ban” and was one of the earliest “America First” populist political policies of the Trump administration. According to a *Los Angeles Times* report, the executive order was developed primarily by Stephen Miller and Steve Bannon without any consultation with the US Department of Justice’s Office of Legal Counsel.¹⁵⁸ In typical fashion, the White House denied this report and added that they had received input from the Department of Homeland Security and State Department officials. This was not true.

This executive order was the first of many anti-immigrant policy changes in the Trump administration. Continuing forward, the Trump administration followed a pattern of bigotry and human rights violations until he left office.

RACIAL EQUITY

Charles Blow, journalist for the *New York Times* and author, observed

¹⁵⁸ Brian Bennett, “Travel Ban Is the Clearest Sign Yet of Trump Advisors’ Intent to Reshape the Country,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 2017, retrieved November 20, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-trump-immigration-20170129-story.html>.

that nearly half the people who voted in the 2020 election cast their ballots for Donald Trump, an “unrepentant racist who ran for reelection under the racially coded ‘law and order’ mantra, encouraged police brutality, defended Confederate monuments, and attacked the Black Lives Matter movement.”¹⁵⁹ He also notes that most white people voted for Trump. Trump also got the largest non-white vote of any Republican since 1960. Although Joe Biden won the presidency—thanks to the support of Black voters, especially in key swing states—the Republicans held strong in down-ballot elections around the country.

But something disparate happened in the state of Georgia. According to Blow, a coalition of voters—led by Black voters—turned Georgia blue for the first time in decades. Biden won the presidential election in Georgia, but only after the state counted the ballots three times. The results were the same each time. Possibly committing an elections interference crime, Donald Trump called the Georgia governor, secretary of state, and other officials asking them to find votes to change the outcome of the election in his favor. They turned him down.

In double runoff elections for US Senate, Democrats took both seats, with Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff beating out their Republican opponents. How did this happen? And how did Joe Biden win the presidential election in Georgia?

Stacey Abrams and large numbers of activists are the answer. Stacey Abrams ran for governor of Georgia in 2018, gaining more than 2 million votes, but she lost by 50,000 votes. During the runup to the election, I received many phone calls and text messages from Stacey Abrams’s Fair Fight organization making sure I was indeed voting. I’ve been a longtime supporter of Abrams, so whenever they called, they got the answer they were looking for.

The New Georgia Project (NGP) was founded by Abrams in 2014 to register and engage Georgians civically. The NGP registered 800,000 voters (about half the population of Nebraska) in Georgia. The state

¹⁵⁹ Charles M. Blow, *The Devil You Know* (New York: HarperCollins, 2021), 4.

was flipped blue due to the efforts of NGP and Fair Fight. Charles Blow says this about the election in Georgia:

Georgia became the model for how Black people can potentially experience true power in this country and alter the political landscape.¹⁶⁰

Georgia's landscape turned from red to blue, giving hope to new possibilities. However, a backlash has emerged among white Republican lawmakers not only in Georgia, but in every state where Republicans hold majorities in the legislature. Georgia Republicans lost three key elections in 2020, and in March 2021 they changed election laws to make voting more difficult for Black and poor people. Thirty percent of the electorate in Georgia is Black. The Republicans have gone out their way to hinder and block the ability of Black Georgians to vote.

IMMIGRATION VIOLENCE

The Trump administration stomped on the idea of racial equity. Trump's border wall became the symbol of his anti-immigrant, racist policy along the southern border of the United States. Building the border wall was a disaster. Only 600 miles of the 2,000-mile border has fencing. Journalists for *USA Today* make the case that there isn't a wall between the US and Mexico. For example, Texas, which accounts for half the border, has almost no fencing. Even with billions of dollars spent, the major distance along the border is not fenced. And much of the border land is remote and new roads would have to be constructed to build the wall. *The Wall*,¹⁶¹ a USA Today Network special report and winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 2018, uses video technology, stories, podcasts, and virtual reality to analyze the border wall. It provides visually stunning images and video as well interviews with people along both sides of the border.

¹⁶⁰ Blow, *The Devil You Know*, 7.

¹⁶¹ Anne Ryman, ed., "The Wall: An In-Depth Examination of Donald Trump's Border Wall," *USA Today*, 2018, retrieved January 27, 2021, <https://www.usatoday.com/border-wall/>.

What is astounding about the *USA Today* report is that journalists explored every foot of the 2,000-mile border. The US government has spent more than \$2 billion (about \$6 per person in the US) over at least ten years building extraordinarily little fencing. And the journalists point out that where fencing exists, it's full of gaps. Indeed, 1,350 miles (about half the width of the United States) of the border is open land.

Trump has used the wall as a messianic promise to his followers.¹⁶² At his rallies, the wall was one of the chants and narratives used between Trump and his followers. The chant "Build that wall" was promoted at every Trump rally and always ended with Trump asking, "Who's going to pay for the wall?" "Mexico!" the audience of Trump cultists would respond. Trump used the wall to manufacture crises at the border by claiming that caravans of criminal immigrants were invading our country and needed to be stopped in their tracks. Trump even sent US troops to the border. And governors of some southern states have followed suit and sent National Guard troops as well.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated in the *Women on the Run* report that most of the women escaping El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico established eligibility for asylum or protection under the Convention against Torture. Women from these countries shared their stories with the UNHCR as the basis for this report. Seeking asylum is a lawfully protected act. The women interviewed made it clear that the violence they suffered is an ongoing threat to thousands of women in Central America.¹⁶³

The Trump administration did horrific injustices to thousands of people fleeing terror in Central America. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced on April 6, 2018, a "Zero Tolerance Policy for Criminal Illegal Entry" along the southwest border. The intent of this policy was to ramp up criminal prosecution of people entering the United States illegally. Soon after the policy was implemented, immigrant parents traveling with their children were criminally prosecuted and separated from their children.

¹⁶² Lifton, *Losing Reality*, 154.

¹⁶³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Women on the Run: First-Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico," 2015, retrieved January 27, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5630f24c6.html>.

More than 3,000 children were separated from their parents.¹⁶⁴ The policy was deemed cruel by world leaders, religious groups, and lawmakers. Two months later, the order to separate families was halted; however, the zero-tolerance policy continued. To this day, hundreds of children separated by the Trump administration are still not reunited with their parents, many of whom were returned to their home country. The zero-tolerance policy was rescinded by the Biden administration.

However, the border is a continuing problem. Even with a new administration, thousands of people from Central America are migrating to the United States to flee from terror and severe and violent weather caused by climate change.

The border has become a new military-industrial complex. Todd Miller, reporting on the southern border, calls it the “border-industrial complex.”¹⁶⁵ Over the past twelve years, Miller says, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) gave out 105,000 contracts worth more than \$55 billion to private contractors. Most of the contracts went to companies creating high-tech border fortifications for sophisticated camera systems to advance biometric and data-processing technologies. As war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq began to wane, big security and defense companies turned their eyes toward the border.

Border contracts are a boon to companies such as General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon. More than \$30 million was contributed to members of the House Appropriations Committee and the House Homeland Security Committee by these and other companies. When Trump came into office, the border-industrial complex was a \$20 billion enterprise with 20,000 border patrol agents and over 650 miles of built walls. More than 200 immigration detention centers were spread across the country. According to Miller, the 450 miles of border wall that Trump

¹⁶⁴ Miriam Jordan, “Family Separation May Have Hit Thousands More Migrant Children Than Reported,” *New York Times*, January 17, 2019, retrieved November 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/us/family-separation-trump-administration-migrants.html>.

¹⁶⁵ Todd Miller, “The Greater the Disaster, the Greater the Profits,” *Portside*, March 24, 2021, retrieved April 5, 2021, <https://portside.org/2021-03-24/greater-disaster-greater-profits>.

built were replacements for smaller existing barriers. The monstrous wall sections that Trump built were a mockery to the environment and the culture along the border.¹⁶⁶

Hate and extremism, especially toward immigrants and people of color, have been fueled by Trump's "own toxic hate" according to Jeffrey D. Sachs. Sachs describes Trump's toxic hate this way:

Trump is stoking mass violence in America. Hate crimes and deaths from mass shootings are soaring. And when they occur, as with the horrific attack on the synagogue in Pittsburgh, Trump's response is always more violence, calling for more guns, not fewer, and for the death penalty, while denying any role of his own toxic hate-filled speech. Herein is another sign of Trump's pathology, an utter inability to face the consequences of his own actions.¹⁶⁷

Human rights violations during the Trump era have been the focus of mass protests and the organization of peaceful marches to resist his actions. However, Amnesty International has shown that the Trump administration has launched discriminatory attacks against the most vulnerable populations in the United States. The report outlines a "broadly dismal human rights record, both at home and abroad, deteriorating further in 2020."¹⁶⁸

A RIOT IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNHEARD

In 1967 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave a lecture at Stanford University that he titled "The Other America."¹⁶⁹ During this period, Dr. King¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Miller, "The Greater the Disaster."

¹⁶⁷ Lee, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, 4.

¹⁶⁸ "United States of America Human Rights 2020," Amnesty International USA, retrieved April 15, 2022, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/usa/>.

¹⁶⁹ Martin Luther King, "The Other America," speech delivered to Riverside Church in New York City, April 4, 1967, retrieved September 12, 2021, <https://www.crmvet.org/docs/otheram.htm>.

¹⁷⁰ When I was thirteen years old, I often visited a neighbor who was attending a local university studying theology. One day he told me about a fellow student from Atlanta who spoke about racial injustice that was prevalent in the South. This fellow student of my neighbor was Martin Luther King Jr. They were both attending Boston University (BU); in 1955 they each received a PhD in theology. Eleven years later I would earn my master's degree from BU. In 1969, I moved to Atlanta to begin my career as a science teacher educator.

spent a lot of time speaking out against the Vietnam War. But in this lecture, he chose to speak about racial justice and racial equality. The country had experienced summer riots in Watts and Harlem the previous two years. King made it clear that riots are socially destructive and self-defeating. He said he was “convinced that nonviolence is the most potent weapon available for people in their struggle for freedom and justice.”

But he also condemned the conditions that might cause people to feel that they must engage in riotous activities. Dr. King said:

I think America must see that riots do not develop out of thin air. Certain conditions continue to exist in our society which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots. But in the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard.¹⁷¹

Dr. King was adamant that if America postpones justice, “we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots repeatedly. Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention.”¹⁷²

On May 25, 2020, when George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who forced his knee into Floyd’s neck for nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds, the United States erupted with protests in all major cities. Chauvin was found guilty on three counts of murder.

Instead of riots in the summer of 2020, there were protests. George Floyd protests marked an important advancement in which people of all over the world said enough is enough. Local protests in Minneapolis-Saint Paul grew nationwide to encompass over 2,000 cities and towns in sixty countries. According to some reports, between 15 million and 26 million people (about the population of Texas) participated in these demonstrations.

According to the *Washington Post*, 93 percent of individual protests were peaceful and nondestructive. And more than 7,000 demonstrations

¹⁷¹ King, “The Other America.”

¹⁷² King, “The Other America.”

involved no injuries and no property damage. It's also true that the demonstrations caused more than \$1 billion in damage.¹⁷³

PROTEST-RELATED ACTIVITY AS CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

The mass protests that followed the murder of George Floyd led to the conviction of the police officer who murdered him. Many doubt that there would have been a conviction of guilt if these protests did not happen, or if Darnella Frazier, a teenaged girl, had not used her phone to record the murder. She was awarded an honorary Pulitzer Prize for her courage. It is rare that a police officer is even charged when a Black person is shot and killed, let alone found guilty.

Autocratic leaders such as Vladimir Putin, Alexander Lukashenko (Belarus), and Donald Trump target dissenters, often resulting in arrests, injuries, and death.

However, targeting dissenters and protestors in the United States is not new. The FBI has a long history of treating political dissent as terrorism.¹⁷⁴ Those surveilled include Black activists, Muslim Americans, Palestinian solidarity and peace activists, environmentalists, protestors at Trump rallies and the RNC, and many others. Perhaps one group that is targeted most are immigrants. In fact, the first targeting of political dissent by the FBI was over one hundred years ago, cracking down on immigrants who were politically active. In 2020, ICE conducted raids across the country, from Boston to San Francisco, on a single day and hoped to round up more than 2,000 undocumented immigrants.

During the 1930s J. Edgar Hoover expanded the FBI's role to research "subversives."¹⁷⁵ In the late 1940s, the FBI began to investigate the civil rights movement.¹⁷⁶ Starting in 1955, the FBI began surveilling Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. because of his involvement in the

¹⁷³ T. Craig, "The United States Is in Crisis: Report Tracks Thousands of Summer Protests, Most Nonviolent," *Washington Post*, September 4, 2020, retrieved May 25, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/the-united-states-is-in-crisis-report-tracks-thousands-of-summer-protests-most-nonviolent/2020/09/03/b43c359a-edec-11ea-99a1-71343d03bc29_story.html.

¹⁷⁴ Alice Speri, "The FBI's Long History of Treating Political Dissent as Terrorism," *The Intercept*, October 22, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/10/22/terrorism-fbi-political-dissent/>.

¹⁷⁵ "Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)," The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, May 21, 2018, retrieved April 3, 2022, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/federal-bureau-investigation-fbi>.

¹⁷⁶ "Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)," The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, May 21, 2018, retrieved September 13, 2021, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/federal-bureau-investigation-fbi>.

Montgomery bus boycott¹⁷⁷ and his outspokenness against the Vietnam War. King's home and offices at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were wiretapped. The attempt to discredit Dr. King and the SCLC continued even after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed.

After the 9/11 attacks, Congress passed the Patriot Act,¹⁷⁸ which made it easier for the government to spy on ordinary Americans. This law expanded the government's authority to monitor phone and email records and track the activity of all Americans. Edward Snowden revealed the US intelligence establishment was secretly building a system that would enable the collection of everything we phoned, texted, or emailed.¹⁷⁹

Now, something dangerous is happening because of the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020. In the state of Florida, the governor signed into law a bill that increased the penalties for acts of vandalism and adjusted the threshold for declaring a riot downward. Other bills reduce penalties for drivers who strike protestors if the driver feels at risk. This is hard to believe. The effort is naturally targeting the Black Lives Matter movement. Furthermore, the *New York Times* reports that lawmakers in more than thirty states have introduced "anti-protest bills." These bills are also dubbed "anti-riot" bills. More than 350 bills were proposed in the 2021 legislative session.¹⁸⁰ For many Republicans, changing laws to prevent the right to protest is directly targeting any Americans that disagree with their autocratic policies.

Russia has had anti-protesting bills for years. Russians have not shied away, however, from protesting. When politician Alexei Navalny was arrested after his return to Moscow in 2021, the largest protests in Russian history were seen across the country. Anastasia Edel reports that

¹⁷⁷ "Montgomery Bus Boycott," The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, May 30, 2019, retrieved September 13, 2021, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/montgomery-bus-boycott>.

¹⁷⁸ "Surveillance under the Patriot Act," American Civil Liberties Union, retrieved September 13, 2021, <https://www.aclu.org/issues/national-security/privacy-and-surveillance/surveillance-under-patriot-act>.

¹⁷⁹ Edward Snowden, *Permanent Record: How One Man Exposed the Truth about Government Spying and Digital Security* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2021).

¹⁸⁰ P. Bump, "It's Not Just Voting: Legislators Have Introduced 100 State Bills Targeting Protesting," *Washington Post*, May 13, 2021, retrieved May 14, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/05/13/its-not-just-voting-legislators-have-introduced-100-state-bills-targeting-protesting/>.

some 200,000 people across 125 cities and towns took to the streets. They chanted “Вывуцтумь его” (let him out).¹⁸¹

Russians are not afraid to protest, even in the face of military opposition. In August 1991, more than 200,000 Moscow residents protested for three days staring into the barrels of tank guns. They were protesting the KGB and military strongmen who had led a failed coup (putsch) against the last days of the Gorbachev era.

I was in Prague attending an international conference on telecomputing at the time. There were at least twenty Russian technology entrepreneurs in attendance. Throughout the conference, they were on the phones to find out about their families and businesses and wondered what the outcome would be. Barbara Tinker, at the Concord Consortium in Massachusetts,¹⁸² faxed us newspaper articles that were published in the US, providing us with the only source of information we had about the coup in Moscow. I later learned that she also faxed information to Russian colleagues in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Fortunately, the limited democracy that had emerged held against the coup instigators.

Americans will continue to protest. Throughout the twentieth century, protests led to women and Black Americans and other people of color gaining the right to vote. Protests occurred during the Vietnam War on college campuses and on the streets of major cities. During the time Trump was president, protests began when he was elected and continued throughout his presidency. Of course, Trump himself led one riotous protest, an attempted coup of the United States Congress and the attempted murder of Vice President Pence, Speaker Pelosi, and others.

VOTING RIGHTS

Voting rights are on trial in the United States because of Donald Trump’s “Big Lie” of voter fraud, which never occurred anywhere in the

¹⁸¹ Anastasia Edel, “The Berlin Patient,” *Foreign Policy*, April 25, 2021, retrieved April 29, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/25/navalny-protest-dissent-russia-putin/>.

¹⁸² Barbara Tinker was a founding member and project manager at Concord Consortium in Concord, Massachusetts.

United States. Even though the 2020 election was “the most secure in American history,” since then, democracy has been under attack. The Big Lie undermined the confidence people have in the voting process. Republican state legislators have launched an attack on voting rights in America. There is a direct attack being made especially against Black voters around the country, not just in the South. And voter repression is not new.

After Barack Obama won the presidential election in 2008 by more than 8 million votes, conservatives launched widespread voter suppression laws in as many states they controlled. In her book *White Rage*, Carol Anderson explains how conservatives designed a multitude of ways to keep the people they don’t want to vote away from the ballot box.¹⁸³ And it didn’t begin when Obama won the election. Voter suppression had been going on for a long time. The goal of suppression has been to “intimidate and harass key populations to keep them away from the polls.”¹⁸⁴

Anderson is the Charles Howard Candler professor of African American Studies at Emory University. In *White Rage*, she exposes the subtle and more sophisticated disfranchisement methods, especially those used by William Rehnquist while he was practicing law in Arizona in the early 1960s. Rehnquist’s sycophants sent “do not forward” mail to residents in Democratic precincts. Returned cards to the state were falsely interpreted to mean the addressee was no longer there and was then removed from the rolls. On election day, the voter removed from the rolls needed to prove they could read and interpret parts of the Constitution.¹⁸⁵ And, yes, this is the same Rehnquist who was appointed to the Supreme Court and became Chief Justice from 1986 to 2005.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, there were hundreds of bills introduced during the 2021 legislative session in many states that would restrict voting. The intent is to suppress, subvert, and

¹⁸³ Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

¹⁸⁴ Anderson, *White Rage*, 142.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson, *White Rage*.

disenfranchise voters. Figure 1 shows how this played out in 2021. The map identifies states that enacted bills in state legislatures that will either restrict or expand voting. Note that a few states enacted restrictive as well as expansive laws. Restricting or expanding the citizens’ right to vote is split among the states.

As you read ahead, you will find out that the state I live in passed the earliest and one of the most restrictive bills. This bill makes it more difficult for to citizens to vote and also opens the door for the state legislature to suspend county election officials and assume the power to head elections around the state.

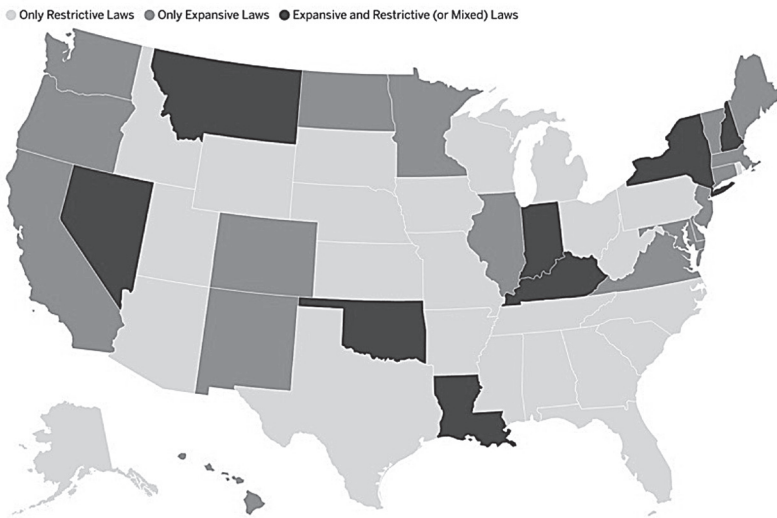


Figure 1. Voting legislation enacted in state legislatures in 2021. Data based on Brennan Center for Justice.

There were two voting bills in the Congress that failed to pass in the Senate. The first bill was the Freedom to Vote Act,¹⁸⁶ which would expand early voting and require that every state have at least two weeks of early voting, as well as permit no-excuse mail-in voting for every eligible voter. The bill also called for Election Day to be a public holiday. To protect individual voters, the bill would require that states have a

¹⁸⁶ C. Torres-Spelliscy et al., Brennan Center for Justice, *The Freedom to Vote Act*, December 6, 2021, retrieved January 14, 2022, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/freedom-vote-act>.

wide range of forms of identification to validate voters. The bill also restricted states from changing election laws and eliminated partisan gerrymandering in order to work toward neutral standards for creating vote maps. Voter registration would become automatic and include same-day voter registration.

The second bill was the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.¹⁸⁷ It was designed to strengthen the basic voting rights law and restore voting to the core protections that were in the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The recent act would put a stop to the voting rights violations that spread across the country in which state legislatures discriminated against many groups of people by lessening their ability to vote.

THE GEORGIA ELECTION LAW CASE

Georgia is a model case for new voter suppression laws that began in 2021. As a resident of this state, I have made sure that my opinions are known to Republicans and have urged Democrats fight these autocrats. Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA) blasted the Georgia legislature for passing the massive voting bill that would restrict voter access. Warnock said, "I think it's unfortunate that some politicians have looked at the results and, rather than changing their message, they're busy trying to change the rules."¹⁸⁸

Georgia Republican legislators are perpetuating Trump's Big Lie and using it as the rationale to claim there was widespread voter fraud. There was no fraud in the 2020 election. Rather than competing to earn votes, Georgia Republicans favor changing the rules to make it harder for the people who voted against them to get to the voting booth. Georgia legislators audaciously established a Special Committee on Election Integrity underscoring their action against a fair and just election system in the state. This committee missed the

¹⁸⁷ W. R. Weiser, "Why the Senate Must Pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act," Brennan Center for Justice, January 13, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2022, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/why-senate-must-pass-john-lewis-voting-rights-act>.

¹⁸⁸ Daniella Diaz, "Warnock Slams GOP-Controlled Georgia Legislature for Bill That Would Restrict Voter Access," CNN, March 21, 2021, retrieved November 21, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/21/politics/raphael-warnock-georgia-voting-rights/index.html>.

mark. The integrity of voting in Georgia has been questioned and investigated for decades. The 1965 Voting Rights Act changed the rules of voting not only in Georgia, but throughout the South. Instead of making voting more accessible to citizens, this committee made it more difficult for Georgians to vote.

I've studied this new bill, and it would restrict voting by reducing the number of ballot drop boxes and requiring voter ID for absentee ballots. It's a disturbing piece of legislation. Although the bill expands the number of days for early voting, the new law requires a personal ID on both in-person and mail-in voting. Some critics claim that this disproportionately affects voters of color.

The new law also regulates drop boxes and reduces the time for the use of mail-in voting. In past elections, drop boxes were available 24/7, but now they will be located inside the county clerk's office. And only one drop box per 100,000 voters is allowed. There are 7,234,431 registered voters in the state, which means there would be seventy-two drop boxes across a large state, or one drop box per 825 square miles. There are 345 square miles in Cobb County, where I live. Would that mean that Cobb and another county nearby would share one drop box? Also, it would be unlawful to provide water or food while voters stand in line. This cruel policy negatively impacts low-income voters who stand in line with their children so that they can take advantage of food services at voting sites.

But more egregious is that the bill enables the Georgia state election board to intervene in county- and precinct-level elections by suspending county or municipal superintendents based on performance or violation of election laws. This is rather ironic because the president of the United States interfered in the 2020 election, which is a violation of Georgia's election laws.

The law also removes the secretary of state from the election board. This is a direct attack on Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's secretary of state who stood up to Donald Trump in the phone call on January 2, 2021. I believe that this is a powerful weapon that Republicans will use in the next and future elections. They will be able to appoint their own people

to direct the work at local precincts, essentially making it possible to take over elections.

In a powerful article for *Mother Jones*, Ari Berman writes that Republicans are paving the way to steal future elections. In his piece, Berman warns us that if we ignore the consequences of Trump's Big Lie and sit on the sidelines, Republicans across the country will pull off another coup by making it more difficult for people to vote and easier for them to take over the election process. Here's how he puts it:

And make no mistake, if Republicans prevail in rigging the 2022 election, they'll be even more emboldened in 2024, especially if Trump is on the ballot. The lies of a stolen election propagated by Trump—and exploited by Republican lawmakers who know better—are now being used to lay the groundwork to sabotage elections for real. "Their endgame?" President Joe Biden asked rhetorically during a major speech in Atlanta on January 11. "To turn the will of the voters into a mere suggestion—something states can respect or ignore." This isn't just about the normal ebb and flow of partisan politics; it's a test of whether a party that is deadly serious about ending American democracy as we know it will regain control of ostensibly democratic institutions.¹⁸⁹

The current effort by Republicans to deny and limit voting is a direct attack on liberal democracy. The John Lewis Voting Rights Act, if it passed, would thwart this attempt and eliminate the barriers to voting that is contained in voting bills in most state legislatures.

¹⁸⁹ A. Berman, "The Coming Coup: How Republicans Are Laying the Groundwork to Steal Future Elections," *Mother Jones*, January 13, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2022, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2022/01/how-republicans-are-taking-over-election-system-big-lie/>.



President Obama presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom to John Lewis on February 16, 2011, who made “meritorious contributions to the security of national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural and other significant public endeavors.”¹⁹⁰ John Lewis spent his life advocating for voting rights for all Americans. He led the “Bloody Sunday” march from Selma to Montgomery for Black voting rights in 1965. He led a peaceful march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, but they were attacked by police on horseback. Lewis was clubbed and almost killed. My painting is based on a photo by Medill DC, CC 2.0.

¹⁹⁰ Yolande M. Minor, “Cascade’s John Lewis Receives Medal of Freedom,” Cascade, GA Patch, February 16, 2011, retrieved April 15, 2022, <https://patch.com/georgia/cascade/cascades-john-lewis-receives-medal-of-freedom>.

CHAPTER 4: RACIAL JUSTICE

Peaceful relations between nations require understanding and mutual respect between individuals.

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1956

4.1. BLOG POST, 1 FEBRUARY 2017: SOFT POWER AND CITIZEN DIPLOMACY: THE MUSLIM BAN

Soft power and citizen diplomacy can be traced to 1956, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower created the People-to-People Student Ambassador Program, which aimed to build a massive program of communications between Americans and citizens of other lands, distinct from government contacts. Government contact diplomacy is track one diplomacy, whereas people-to-people contact is track two diplomacy or citizen diplomacy. It's obvious that President Eisenhower would be opposed to the Trump administration's ban on citizens from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and Libya entering the US.

In a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Keith David Watenpaugh wrote, "Why Trump's Executive Order Is Wrongheaded and Reckless."¹⁹¹ Professor Watenpaugh is a historian of the Middle East and professor of human rights studies at the University of California, Davis. In the article he said:

¹⁹¹ Keith David Watenpaugh, "Why Trump's Executive Order Is Wrongheaded and Reckless," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 23, 2020, retrieved January 25, 2021, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Trump-s-Executive-Order/239042>.

The closing of America to the world, begun by this order, is, among other things, an abandonment of the enormous capacity of American soft power embodied in exchange programs, study abroad, and efforts to rescue scholars and students—all of which promote human rights, collective security, and global commerce.

I agree with Professor Watenpaugh's assessment of Trump's wrong-headed executive order and agree with former acting Attorney General Sally Yates, who informed Trump that in her legal opinion, she was not convinced that the executive order is lawful.

Watenpaugh has recently been working with colleagues through the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund to welcome dissidents from Iran so that they could improve their own understanding of the human rights problems that citizens in Iran face. These people-to-people contacts (what Watenpaugh calls "soft power") have been wiped out by the Trump immigration ban.

CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

For twenty years we fostered more than forty people-to-people exchanges among North American and Soviet (later Russian) middle and high school students and teachers, school administrators, professors, scholars, researchers, and activists. Even with the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 in September 1983, our two countries did not ban travel to each other's country (although President Reagan did ban Aeroflot flights to the United States). In fact, our AHP group was booked on an Aeroflot flight from Washington, DC, to Moscow. Our travel agent had to scramble to find seats on a Finn Air flight to Helsinki. We took a Russian train from Helsinki direct to Moscow and were bused to our first meeting at the Institute of Psychology, affiliated with the Academy of Sciences. Although there was coldness and resentment in the room about the airline tragedy, we talked with each other and indeed planned future activities with the scholars in the institute. Our citizen diplomacy project was off to a start.

WHAT IF I WERE BANNED FROM TRAVELING TO THE USSR?

If we or the Soviets were banned from each other's country, none of what happened in the next twenty years would have been possible. The hundreds of American and Russian students, teachers, administrators, researchers, and activists never would have had the opportunity to collaborate with each other or take part in the GTP, which emerged from the first people-to-people exchanges. Lack of collaboration leads to distrust, anger, and fear, and Watenpaugh is correct in saying that the "enormous capacity of American soft power in exchanges" will dwindle away under the ban imposed by Trump administration. I'm left disturbed by the actions of a small group of Trump's men who haven't a clue where they are in anyone's universe except their own.

Author's Update: Trump's sycophants might consider the words of Sergey Tolstikov, a Russian teacher at Moscow 710 and one of the founders of the GTP who was involved in the GTP from 1987. Tolstikov made several trips to Georgia and worked with us when we traveled to Moscow as host at his school and translator in meetings and on field trips. He was instrumental in helping Russian and American students use an email dictionary that enabled American students to write phonetically in English so that Russian students could read it. He retired from Moscow School 710 and started a Russian translation business and now lives on the outskirts of Moscow. He said this in an email interview about the value of direct face-to-face contact between Americans and Russians:

Direct face-to-face contact, interactions at different levels, numerous discussions and collaboration, little by little created the atmosphere of understanding and mutual respect and often lead to strong friendship. Seeing American and Russian kids working together on different serious ecological projects was a heartwarming and moving experiences for me and, I am sure, for other Russian educators. GTP participation created

huge positive emotional and intellectual impact on all the participants, and as a teacher I witnessed it thousands of times.¹⁹²

4.2. BLOG POST, 28 JUNE 2018: MOST CHILDREN AND WOMEN FLEEING CENTRAL AMERICA ARE ELIGIBLE FOR ASYLUM PROTECTION

According to the UNHCR analysis of the screenings conducted by US asylum officers, over 80 percent of women from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico who were screened on arrival at the US border “were found to have a significant possibility of establishing eligibility for asylum or protection under the Convention against Torture.”¹⁹³ Why aren’t they being granted asylum?

These women and their children have traveled more than 2,300 miles. If you could drive the journey, it would take at least thirty-three hours, but most of these people flee on foot and may or may not have any transportation to their destination: the border of the United States. If they do, it’s via train, which is still dangerous. What we fail to realize is that these people need to get into Mexico and do so through one of a few border towns.

Most of what we have heard from the Trump administration about the people trying to seek asylum is untrue. They are not members of the MS-13 gang. In fact, according to the fact sheet published by the Washington Office on Latin America, the MS-13 gang membership makes up less than 1 percent of all criminally active gang members in the United States and Puerto Rico, and there is no sign that the number of MS-13 members in the United States has increased in the past few years.¹⁹⁴

If you listen to President Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions, you’d think the country is being overrun by the MS-13 gang. If you want to learn about gangs and groups that play havoc in the US, then look no further than the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). There

¹⁹² Sergey Tolstikov (retired English teacher, Moscow School 710, and journal editor), email interview with the author, September 13, 2020.

¹⁹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Women on the Run.”

¹⁹⁴ Sarah Kinoshian, *Seven Facts about MS-13 Gang and How to Combat the Gang* (Washington DC: WOLA, 2017).

are over 950 “hate groups”¹⁹⁵ tracked by the SPLC, and most of them are populated with white American citizens, not immigrants. Indeed, the SPLC is one of the organizations in the country that fights for immigrant justice.

FAMILY SEPARATION

The people fleeing the violence in Central America are not trying to sneak across the US border. They are actively seeking out US Border Protection Services and applying for asylum.

The current US “border crisis” was manufactured by the Trump administration once Sessions announced his zero-tolerance policy (family separation policy). To me it’s not surprising that Sessions made this announcement. In 1986, Coretta Scott King wrote a letter to the US Senate when the Senate was considering Sessions for a federal judgeship in Alabama. Sessions, acting as a US attorney, committed fraud in a voting rights case in which he charged three Black Alabama citizens for using absentee ballots and encouraging other Black voters to do the same (which had been used by whites for a long time).¹⁹⁶

Sessions directed the FBI to punish elderly Black citizens who had used absentee ballots (legally). Ms. King said that after the ordeal, many of these citizens said they would not vote again. Many years later, Senator Elizabeth Warren tried to read Ms. King’s letter in the Senate in 2017 when Sessions was being considered for the attorney general position. She never got to complete the speech. She was stopped by Mitch McConnell citing Senate Rule 19, which forbids members from imputing to a colleague “any conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming a Senator.”¹⁹⁷ Sessions was confirmed, and he is back at it, but this time he is going after Central American children and women who are seeking asylum in our country.

¹⁹⁵ “Hatewatch,” Southern Poverty Law Center, retrieved June 27, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch>.

¹⁹⁶ Coretta Scott King’s 1986 Statement and Testimony on Jeff Sessions’s US District Court nomination in Alabama, DocumentCloud, retrieved April 3, 2022, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3259988-Scott-King-1986-Letter-and-Testimony-Signed.html>.

¹⁹⁷ Bill Chappell, “Read Coretta Scott King’s Letter that Got Sen. Elizabeth Warren Silenced,” NPR, February 8, 2017, retrieved April 3, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/02/08/514085145/read-coretta-scott-kings-letter-that-got-sen-elizabeth-warren-silenced>.

The travesty at the border has intensified. Children are being separated from their parents and sent off to detention centers across the country. ProPublica has identified ninety-seven facilities spread across the US housing these children. As of today, very few of the more than 2,000 children sent to one of these facilities has been reunited with their parents. The crisis created by Trump and Sessions is immoral and it alone ought to be grounds to impeach them both.

4.3. BLOG POST, 21 JULY 2019: THE DARK CLOUD OF HATE THAT RODE THE ESCALATOR THREE YEARS AGO

When Trump came down the escalator into the basement of the Trump Tower to give his speech announcing he was running for president, he was accompanied by the darkest of clouds, even darker than the clouds when the Krakatoa volcano erupted in 1883. All hell broke loose in 1883, as it did in 2015. A cold chill emerged from the Trump Tower basement, and it's gotten worse over the last three years.

This cold chill—or what we should call the Trump Effect, a fallout of hate that has resulted in the harassment or attacks against immigrants, people seeking asylum, Latinos, Muslim Americans, African Americans, and others—appears to have no bounds. This chill has its roots on this day in 2015, and started with these words:

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

But I speak to border guards, and they tell us what we're getting. And it only makes common sense. It only makes common sense. They're sending us not the right people.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Adam Gabbatt, "Golden Escalator Ride: The Surreal Day Trump Kicked Off His Bid for President," *The Guardian*, June 14, 2019, retrieved November 21, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jun/13/donald-trump-presidential-campaign-speech-eyewitness-memories>.

TRUMP'S LONG HISTORY OF RACISM AND OUTLANDISH BEHAVIOR

Trump has been a racist throughout his adult life. In the current media cycle, people are looking for that instance that will expose Trump as a racist. He's always been this way, long before he moved to DC.

His twisted logic is full of lies and outright racist talk in closed meetings and in public, especially before the press. Jeffrey Goldberg, editor in chief of *The Atlantic*, has assembled "50 Moments That Define an Improbable Presidency," a catalog of incidents (much like the list of incidents of obstruction set out in the Mueller report against Trump) that are outlandish.¹⁹⁹ Although these are not all necessarily racist, they provide a wide range of this man's outrageous behavior.

Remember, for example, that during a January 11, 2018, Oval Office meeting with US senators, Trump unleashed his "shithole nations" comment. He referred to African countries as "shithole" nations—asking why the US can't have more immigrants from Norway instead—and complained that, after seeing America, immigrants from Nigeria would never "go back to their huts."²⁰⁰

All the Republican senators in the meeting said he never used the word "shithole," but Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) said he did. Former Georgia Senator David Perdue denied Trump used the term. I wasn't surprised that Perdue would lie about Trump as he's been one of his chief advocates in the Senate.

Trump's racial views have been well documented.²⁰¹ He has a history of speech and actions that define his own racial views and fuel racial tensions in the US, as he is doing right now with his despicable attacks on Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN), as well as three other House Representatives: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, and Ayanna S. Pressley of Massachusetts. Everything that

¹⁹⁹ Jeffrey Goldberg, ed., "50 Moments That Define the Trump Presidency," *The Atlantic*, 2019, retrieved February 25, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/unthinkable/>.

²⁰⁰ Alan Fram, "Trump: Why Allow Immigrants from 'Shithole Countries'?" AP News, January 12, 2018, retrieved April 3, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/immigration-north-america-donald-trump-ap-top-news-international-news-fdda2ff0b877416c8ae1c1a77a3cc425>.

²⁰¹ German Lopez, "Donald Trump's Long History of Racism, from the 1970s to 2020," *Vox.com*, July 25, 2016, retrieved November 21, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/2016/7/25/12270880/donald-trump-racist-racism-history>.

Trump has said about Representative Omar is false, and these accusations fueled a brutal rally in North Carolina in which white Trump supporters chanted, "Send her back."²⁰²

Trump's tweets have fueled this attack, and finally the House of Representatives voted to condemn his remarks as racist. But only four Republicans in the House agreed with the motion.

That dark cloud of hate is visible every time we see or read about Trump. The media has a responsibility here to stop rebroadcasting his comments and instead refute his comments. The media can very easily use split-screen technology to call out Trump's hate speech. When he says that Representative Omar hates this country, they need to provide evidence that she does not. All they have to do is play a clip of her recent arrival home in Minnesota. She was received with open arms.

4.4. BLOG POST, 31 MAY 2020: AMERICA IS BURNING BY DIANE RAVITCH²⁰³

These are the worst of times.

Police brutality in Minneapolis murdered a Black man who allegedly used a fake \$20 bill. Petty crimes are adjudicated in a court of law. Police do not have the authority or right to use lethal force when confronting an unarmed person. After a long string of similar incidents where Black people were unjustly murdered, the killing of George Floyd ignited protests across the nation. Some of the protests turned violent, and fires were burning in widely scattered cities in the midst of confrontations between police and protestors.

Racism is America's deepest, most intractable sin.

The explosion of protest is unlikely to lead to any productive change until the racists in the White House are ousted and replaced by people who are determined to fight racism. We currently have a government

²⁰² Michael Laviertes, "Trump Relished Rally Chant, Ocasio-Cortez Tells Constituents in Queens," Reuters, July 21, 2019, retrieved April 3, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-democrats/trump-relished-rally-chant-ocasio-cortez-tells-constituents-in-queens-idUSKCN1UG00D>.

²⁰³ Diane Ravitch, "America Is Burning," May 31, 2020, retrieved December 15, 2021, <https://dianeravitch.net/2020/05/31/america-is-burning/>. Used with permission of Diane Ravitch.

of old white men who have used their words and deeds to stoke the fires that are now burning.

Trump has no credibility to calm the situation or to offer solace or to promise meaningful change. He has spent many years expressing the anger of racists, repeatedly claiming that President Obama was not born in the United States, demanding the death penalty for the Central Park Five (who were ultimately found innocent), pretending never to have heard of David Duke when Duke offered his endorsement of Trump, referring to the white nationalists who marched in Charlottesville as “very fine people,” appealing again and again to the gun-toting, violent people who thronged to his rallies and praising them. No need to point out that Trump has stoked the fires that are now burning. We have all seen it with our own eyes. He is like a boy who plays with matches and eventually burns down his own house.

Last night on CNN, the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II referred to the protests as an expression of “national mourning.” The protestors are reacting, he said, not only to the death of George Floyd, but to poverty, joblessness, unequal treatment, hunger, injustice—to systematic racism and inequity that have been ignored for too long. For too long, our nation has been on a trajectory that creates and enriches billionaires while millions of people of all races, but especially Black Americans, are expected to live a life of want and need and hopelessness without complaint.

Last night, the Martin Luther King Jr. Center released the text of a speech that Dr. King gave in 1967 in which he said that “a riot is the language of the unheard.” He said, prophetically, “And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again. Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention.”²⁰⁴

Franklin Delano Roosevelt laid out an “economic bill of rights” in 1944, which has since been forgotten as a small number of extraordinarily

²⁰⁴ Joshua Bote, “A Riot Is the Language of the Unheard: MLK’s Powerful Quote Resonates amid George Floyd Protests,” *USA Today*, May 29, 2020, retrieved April 3, 2022, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/05/29/minneapolis-protest-martin-luther-king-quote-riot-george-floyd/5282486002/>.

wealthy people rig the system to intensify economic inequality, abetted by willing allies like Mitch McConnell. Even a huge multi-trillion-dollar bill to relieve those suffering from the effects of the coronavirus turned out to be a package of goodies for big corporations.

Trump did not create racism, but he has used it and exploited it for his political benefit. He has ignored it, belittled its consequences, and courted the support of racists. He has made plain his contempt for his predecessor, our nation's first Black president. When Obama was elected president, many commentators declared that America was finally a post-racial society. With a man of African descent in the presidency, with a racially integrated Cabinet, with a Black man leading the Justice Department, the stain of racism would at last be abolished.

The commentators were wrong. Racism is thriving. It will destroy our nation until we assure equal justice to every citizen; until we guarantee that everyone has the same rights and privileges; until we provide every man, woman, and child with decent health care, housing, education, and a decent standard of living.

We can't eliminate racism entirely, but we can remove its adherents from the seats of power, and we can stigmatize it. We can choose leaders who fight for freedom, justice, and a decent standard of living for all people. Unless we do so, our tattered democracy will not survive. We can't let that happen. We must be willing and able to pursue genuine change, a social democracy in which every one of us is protected equally by the law and has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

4.5. BLOG POST, 23 JULY 2020:

STORMTROOPERS IN AMERICAN CITIES

The president of the United States is sending stormtroopers into American cities. Without any invitation from or consent of the governor of Oregon or the mayor of Portland, hundreds of camouflaged armed troops have used force against legal protestors. The protestors are not breaking the law by protesting police brutality and the unequal

treatment of people of color. These stormtroopers are not there to help local law enforcement, but instead to use aggressive force against protestors.

As a result, Trump announced today that he is sending his stormtroopers to Chicago after a shooting that wounded fourteen people, again without any local consent.

Trump is using this tactic to manipulate the right of American citizens to protest on the streets, outside or inside buildings. It is a First Amendment “right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”²⁰⁵ However, Trump’s administration is claiming that “lawlessness” exists in these cities. He’s ready to attack the “lawless” with armed stormtroopers. Many are outraged. We all should be outraged.

STORMTROOPERS IN PORTLAND

The *Oregonian* published a report today, the fifty-fifth day of protests. It’s titled “Portland Protests Continue Tuesday as Federal Officers Use Gas, Force on Hundreds Gathered Downtown.”²⁰⁶ According to the authors, more than 1,000 people filled the city’s core for the second straight night to rally against police violence and systemic racism. They reported that there was repeated force and violence by federal officers. Officers were often seen shooting munitions, stun grenades, and gas containers at the protestors.

USING PARAMILITARY—TRUMP’S BROWNSHIRTS

Donald Trump is using paramilitary stormtroopers to scare the shit out of Americans living in America’s cities, especially those that have Democratic governors or mayors. The red state cities are safe. But blue and purple states are in for it. In 1921 Adolf Hitler and Ernst Röhm used stormtroopers, a paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party, to help Hitler

²⁰⁵ Congressional Research Service, Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation, S. Doc. No. 112-9 (2012).

²⁰⁶ Noelle Crombie and Ryan Nguyen, “Portland Protests Continue Tuesday as Federal Officers Use Gas, Force on Hundreds Gathered Downtown,” *OregonLive.com*, July 22, 2020, retrieved February 25, 2021, <https://www.oregonlive.com/weather/2020/07/portland-protests-continue-for-55th-day-tuesday-live-updates.html>.

rise and keep power in the 1920s and 1930s. Their uniforms were brown-colored shirts, mainly because they were cheap. They were called Sturmabteilung (SA), assault division.²⁰⁷ They were used to disrupt the meetings of opposing parties, fighting against protestors (Red Front Fighters League of the Communist Party of Germany, Romani people, trade unionists, and especially Jewish people). Eventually these paramilitary troops were called "Brownshirts," from the color of their uniforms. Mussolini's troops were called "Blackshirts" for the same reasoning.

Donald Trump and Chad Wolf, acting secretary of Homeland Security, are using paramilitary officers in Portland and have threatened to use them in other American cities. Although they aren't Brownshirts or Blackshirts, they are disguised to deceive an "enemy" with their military camouflage. For some time, these stormtroopers used no visible identification, but now I noticed that they have "SCF" on their shirts. SCF is the Surge Capacity Force of Homeland Security, which was established after Hurricane Katrina. They are supposed to help people. Trump is instead using them to terrorize citizens in American cities who are peacefully protesting.

²⁰⁷ Graham Land, "The Brownshirts: The Role of the Sturmabteilung (SA) in Nazi Germany," History Hit, January 13, 2021, <https://www.historyhit.com/hitlers-bullyboys-the-role-of-the-sa-in-nazi-germany/>.

CHAPTER 5: FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

5.1. BLOG POST, 17 AUGUST 2020: MOST US CITIZENS CAN VOTE BY MAIL

Most of us living in the United States can vote by mail. There will be no need to stand in line for hours. There will be no fear of COVID-19 because you can receive your ballot by mail and then drive to a drop-off location. A friend can do the same for you. If you want to use the US Postal Service (USPS), then make sure that your ballot is time stamped before 7:00 p.m. on November 3, 2020.

However, one of the underlying fears, beyond the coronavirus, is voter suppression. In Georgia, where I have lived for more than fifty years, voter suppression in the last election (2018) possibly led to Stacey Abrams losing to Brian Kemp. Kemp was Georgia's secretary of state at the time. Kemp refused to step down from his position and managed the election in which he was on the ticket for governor. He was accused of conflict of interest by overseeing an election in which he was a candidate. He refused to go.

There were also accusations that Kemp, as secretary of state, made it difficult for some people to vote, especially Black people, the poor, and students. According to an article in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, precinct closures around Georgia made it difficult for a lot of people to vote. The journal article estimated that between 55,000 and 85,000 voters were affected. Stacey Abrams lost the election by 55,000 votes.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Mark Niese and Greg Bluestein, "The Right to Vote Becomes a Heated Battle in Georgia Governor's Race," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 21, 2018, <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/the-right-vote-becomes-heated-battle-georgia-governor-race/Mga2D1WMOvolspCJYU6YoK/>.

Even today, some counties in Georgia have either moved or closed polling stations. These conditions make voting exceedingly difficult for many people, especially if people simply can't take hours off work to cast a vote. In some cases, people who had only to travel a mile or so to vote now must travel more than ten miles. Because of this situation, Black voters were 20 percent more likely to miss elections because of long distances. This statistic is also happening in other states.

VOTING BY MAIL IS ESSENTIAL BUSINESS

In the upcoming election, it is imperative that we as the people pay attention and learn as much as we can about the voting options open to us.

Voting by mail will overrule those officials who have a personal stake in making voting difficult. But it doesn't have to be that way, and it is possibly quite easy for us to fight back against the "suppressionists."

The *Washington Post* published an article stating that more than 84 percent of Americans can vote by mail.²⁰⁹ I was surprised by this statistic, but by no means was I disappointed. America has 234 million voters. Only 52 million need an excuse beyond COVID-19 fears to vote by mail. That means that more than 180 million people can vote by mail. No wonder Trump is trying to undermine people's confidence in voting by mail. He has also done an end run around the USPS by naming a corrupt friend as head of the postal service and refuses to provide additional funds that the post office says it needs for the November election.

5.2. BLOG POST, 21 AUGUST 2020: TRUTH ABOUT MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting was the subject of my most recent post. I received a flurry of comments on that post, which I also posted on Facebook.

Most comments on my Facebook page were positive. But some people are really upset about absentee and mail-in voting. One

²⁰⁹ K. Rabinowitz and B. Mayes, "Vote by Mail: Which States Allow Absentee Voting," *Washington Post*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/politics/vote-by-mail-states/>.

person questioned me because I was a professor, and I was born in Massachusetts. I suppose he believed I was a liberal professor and would hold ideas in favor of mail-in voting. Another person said I should take these ideas and put them where the “sun don’t shine.” And then another person said that voting by mail has fraud written all over it. People had strong opinions on mail-in voting. Their opinions are important. I’ve used them to develop the ideas in this post.

Let’s start by reviewing the history of voting in our country, with some emphasis on mail-in voting. Finally, we’ll consider other factors that affect voting.

The Constitution grants states the power to set voting policy. Most states originally limited voting to property-owning or tax-paying white males. They were who could vote in the first presidential election in 1789. However, four northern states allowed free Black males to vote. Women could vote in New Jersey until 1807.

The first absentee ballots were issued by Union and Confederate troops on the battlefields during the Civil War.²¹⁰ So as far back as the early 1860s, it was possible to vote by “mail.” Legal challenges and public skepticism didn’t prevent voting from afar from happening. Now, in 2020, with voting by mail sure to rise because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Trump and his sycophants are claiming mail-in ballots would be fraudulent. We know this is a false claim. Trump still holds this view, which was one of the bases for his Big Lie.

From the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jim Crow laws were used to enforce racial segregation and disenfranchise and remove political and economic gains made by Black people during the period of Reconstruction (1865–1877). In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, giving women the right to vote. It explicitly states: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” African American women were crucial to the suffragist movement.

²¹⁰ Nina Storchlic, “How Mail-in Voting Began on Civil War Battlefields,” *National Geographic*, February 20, 2021, retrieved February 25, 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/how-mail-in-voting-began-on-civil-war-battlefields>.

During this time they not only sought the right to vote, but also fought for the civil rights of African Americans.

Most Southern states did not ratify the amendment until between 1951 and 1984. Three million women south of the Mason–Dixon line remained disfranchised after the passage of the amendment. In Southern states fear, intimidation, poll taxes, literacy tests, and violence were used to suppress the vote of African American women.

In 1965, the Voting Rights Act was passed to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment. The act secured the right to vote for racial minorities throughout the country, especially in the South. Voting is now enforced federally. Thank you, Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, and the other civil rights activists of the 1950s and 1960s. However, in 2013, the Supreme Court struck down a key part of the Voting Rights Act, freeing nine states (mostly in the South) to change their election laws without advance approval from the federal government.

Voting and voting rights have a history going back to the formation of the United States. Although voting in person has been the mode of voting in the US, the points listed above provide information that absentee and mail-in voting have been part of voting protocols in America. Voter fraud is rare, and even rarer with mail-in voting.

THE 2020 ELECTION

Voter interest is extremely high in the 2020 election. As a result, President Trump has announced if he loses the election, it will be because it was rigged. To him there is no way he can lose without a rigged and fraudulent election. And the culprit is mail-in voting. Trump rails and whines about this every day. It's part of his plan to discredit the general election. There is also another aspect of Trump's fraud claims. All the cases that were filed by Trump claiming fraud were in counties with large populations of African Americans. In counties that had similarly large populations but were majority white, lawsuits were not filed.

On the other side of this coin is the fear that Trump has done everything in his power to convince Americans that fraud is only a stamp away. He has torn into any state (except Florida, where he uses

an absentee ballot) that allows vote by mail. Trump knows that most states have provisions that make it possible for people to vote by mail. He conveniently ignores the fact that at least three states have *only* vote by mail. Two hundred and forty million people are registered to vote in the US. Over 180 million American voters could vote by mail in November. As a result, the data from past elections would suggest that about one-third of these folks would either vote early or vote by mail. About 30 million would choose to vote by mail.

THE PANDEMIC'S EFFECT

The pandemic has changed the formula and has slowed the process of voting. The six-foot social distancing policy has made going through polling stations slower. Also, older citizens (such as me) are more susceptible to the coronavirus, which makes finding workers for the polling stations harder. The pandemic has created the situation where more people will choose to vote by mail.

Donald Trump *melted down* over the idea of more folks voting by mail. He has made it clear that if he loses, he will call the election a fraud. He has railed against mail-in voting and messaged that it will result in millions and millions of rigged votes. I believe that his constant tweets and comments in public about mail-in voting will affect people's confidence in the 2020 election results.

5.3. BLOG POST, 4 JANUARY 2021:

TRUMP THREATENS GEORGIA SECRETARY OF STATE

After eighteen phone call attempts, Donald Trump finally reached Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's secretary of state. Trump's phone call was recorded²¹¹ by Raffensperger, who later released the complete phone call.²¹² The phone call is full of an absurd collection of Trumpist lies about the election in Georgia.

²¹¹ "Trump Berates Georgia Secretary of State, Urges Him to 'Find' Votes," audio of a phone call, *Washington Post*, January 3, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3hrN0cP58Y&feature=youtu.be>.

²¹² P. Firozi and A. Gardner, "Full Transcript and Audio of the Call between Trump and Raffensperger," *Washington Post*, January 5, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-raffensperger-call-transcript-georgia-vote/2021/01/03/2768e0cc-4ddd-11eb-83e3-322644d82356_story.html.

- Trump told Raffensperger that there are thousands of votes that were not counted.
- Trump claimed that more than 5,000 people who weren't on the rolls voted. He told the secretary of state that there were more than 18,000 vacant address votes—and some of them only had post office box numbers.
- Trump said that Georgia had nearly 5,000 out-of-state voters.
- Trump said there are photographs of ballot drop boxes that were picked up. Trump claims they weren't delivered for three days.
- Trump said that he thinks that 5,000 dead people voted.

The phone call continued for an hour. Nearly every sentence is a lie or fabrication. Raffensperger corrected the president and said he found only two dead people had voted. Trump said, "When you add it up, there are at least 300,000 fake ballots." None of the previous assertions by Trump were true. They were all fabricated by Trump and White House sycophants.

I'll stop there with what Trump's call revealed. Not only was the phone call disgusting, but there is also ample evidence in the call that Trump was trying to influence the outcome of the Georgia election, and that is a crime.

Trump has done this before. In December, he called Brian Kemp, Georgia's governor, and asked him to reconvene the Georgia legislature to have them change the outcome of the election in Trump's favor. Kemp turned him down

Trump told Kemp and Raffensperger to resign. Also, Senators David Perdue (R-GA) and Kelly Loeffler (R-GA) agreed that Raffensperger should resign. Loeffler was appointed by the governor to fill out the Senate term, so she couldn't diss Kemp. Please note that Loeffler and Perdue lost their elections in Georgia's dual senate races to Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, respectively.

Author's Update: The Fulton County, Georgia, district attorney has started a criminal investigation into former President Donald Trump's attempts to overturn the Georgia election results, including the Raffensperger phone call. Fani T. Willis, the district attorney, wrote in a letter that the investigation will examine violations of the law, including the solicitation of election fraud, the making of false statements to state and local governmental bodies, conspiracy, racketeering, violation of oath of office, and any involvement in violence or threats related to the election's administration.

The Trump–Raffensperger phone call was another attempt by Trump to overturn Georgia's presidential election, which was won by Joe Biden by 11,780 votes. Georgia's election was counted three times, and the results were the same. Joe Biden beat Donald Trump. Trump told Raffensperger to find at least 11,781 votes. Raffensperger politely told Trump that he has the wrong data, and he lost the election. Trump threatened Raffensperger and called him a child for not knowing what the correct election results were. Trump is in Dalton, Georgia, as I write this update for a last-ditch rally for Perdue and Loeffler, the two Republicans that are being challenged by Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, respectively. The election is tomorrow, but already more than 3 million Georgians have voted.