

The Revenge of the Lower Classes and the Rise of American Fascism

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College-educated elites, on behalf of corporations, carried out the savage neoliberal assault on the working poor. Now they are being made to pay. Their duplicity—embodied in politicians such as Bill and Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama—succeeded for decades. These elites, many from East Coast Ivy League schools, spoke the language of values—civility, inclusivity, a condemnation of overt racism and bigotry, a concern for the middle class—while thrusting a knife into the back of the underclass for their corporate masters. This game has ended.

There are tens of millions of Americans, especially lower-class whites, rightfully enraged at what has been done to them, their families and their communities. They have risen up to reject the neoliberal policies and political correctness imposed on them by college-educated elites from both political parties: Lower-class whites are embracing an American fascism.

These Americans want a kind of freedom—a freedom to hate. They want the freedom to use words like “nigger,” “kike,” “spic,” “chink,” “raghead” and “fag.” They want the freedom to idealize violence and the gun culture. They want the freedom to have enemies, to physically assault Muslims, undocumented workers, African-Americans, homosexuals and anyone who dares criticize their cryptofascism. They want the freedom to celebrate historical movements and figures that the college-educated elites condemn, including the Ku Klux Klan and the Confederacy. They want the freedom to ridicule and dismiss intellectuals, ideas, science and culture. They want the freedom to silence those who have been telling them how to behave. And they want the freedom to revel in hypermasculinity, racism, sexism and white patriarchy. These are the core sentiments of fascism. These sentiments are engendered by the collapse of the liberal state.



Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump, seen in reflection. (Andrew Harnik / AP)

The Democrats are playing a very dangerous game by anointing Hillary Clinton as their presidential candidate. She epitomizes the double-dealing of the college-educated elites, those who speak the feel-your-pain language of ordinary men and women, who hold up the bible of political correctness, while selling out the poor and the working class to corporate power.

The Republicans, energized by America’s reality-star version of *Il Duce*, Donald Trump, have been pulling in voters, especially new voters, while the Democrats are well below the voter

turnouts for 2008. In the voting Tuesday, 5.6 million votes were cast for the Democrats while 8.3 million went to the Republicans. Those numbers were virtually reversed in 2008—8.2 million for the Democrats and about 5 million for the Republicans.

Richard Rorty in his last book, “Achieving Our Country,” written in 1998, presciently saw where our postindustrial nation was headed.

Many writers on socioeconomic policy have warned that the old industrialized democracies are heading into a Weimar-like period, one in which populist movements are likely to overturn constitutional governments. Edward Luttwak, for example, has suggested that fascism may be the American future. The point of his book *The Endangered American Dream* is that members of labor unions, and unorganized unskilled workers, will sooner or later realize that their government is not even trying to prevent wages from sinking or to prevent jobs from being exported. Around the same time, they will realize that suburban white-collar workers—themselves desperately afraid of being downsized—are not going to let themselves be taxed to provide social benefits for anyone else.

At that point, something will crack. The nonsuburban electorate will decide that the system has failed and start looking around for a strongman to vote for—someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and postmodernist professors will no longer be calling the shots. A scenario like that of Sinclair Lewis’ novel *It Can’t Happen Here* may then be played out. For once a strongman takes office, nobody can predict what will happen. In 1932, most of the predictions made about what would happen if Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor were wildly overoptimistic.

One thing that is very likely to happen is that the gains made in the past forty years by black and brown Americans, and by homosexuals, will be wiped out. Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion. The words “nigger” and “kike” will once again be heard in the workplace. All the sadism which the academic Left has tried to make unacceptable to its students will come flooding back. All the resentment which badly educated Americans feel about having their manners dictated to them by college graduates will find an outlet.

Fascist movements build their base not from the politically active but the politically inactive, the “losers” who feel, often correctly, they have no voice or role to play in the political establishment. The sociologist Émile Durkheim warned that the disenfranchisement of a class of people from the structures of society produced a state of “anomie”—a “condition in which society provides little moral guidance to individuals.” Those trapped in this “anomie,” he wrote, are easy prey to propaganda and emotionally driven mass movements. Hannah Arendt, echoing Durkheim, noted that “the chief characteristic of the mass man is not brutality and backwardness, but his isolation and lack of normal social relationships.”

In fascism the politically disempowered and disengaged, ignored and reviled by the establishment, discover a voice and a sense of empowerment.

As Arendt noted, the fascist and communist movements in Europe in the 1930s “... recruited their members from this mass of apparently indifferent people whom all other parties had given up as too apathetic or too stupid for their attention. The result was that the majority of their membership consisted of people who had never before appeared on the political scene. This permitted the introduction of entirely new methods into political propaganda,

and indifference to the arguments of political opponents; these movements not only placed themselves outside and against the party system as a whole, they found a membership that had never been reached, never been 'spoiled' by the party system. Therefore they did not need to refute opposing arguments and consistently preferred methods which ended in death rather than persuasion, which spelled terror rather than conviction. They presented disagreements as invariably originating in deep natural, social, or psychological sources beyond the control of the individual and therefore beyond the control of reason. This would have been a shortcoming only if they had sincerely entered into competition with either parties; it was not if they were sure of dealing with people who had reason to be equally hostile to all parties."

Fascism is aided and advanced by the apathy of those who are tired of being conned and lied to by a bankrupt liberal establishment, whose only reason to vote for a politician or support a political party is to elect the least worst. This, for many voters, is the best Clinton can offer.

Fascism expresses itself in familiar and comforting national and religious symbols, which is why it comes in various varieties and forms. Italian fascism, which looked back to the glory of the Roman Empire, for example, never shared the Nazis' love of Teutonic and Nordic myths. American fascism too will reach back to traditional patriotic symbols, narratives and beliefs.

Robert Paxton wrote in "The Anatomy of Fascism":

The language and symbols of an authentic American fascism would, of course, have little to do with the original European models. They would have to be as familiar and reassuring to loyal Americans as the language and symbols of the original fascisms were familiar and reassuring to many Italians and Germans, as [George] Orwell suggested. Hitler and Mussolini, after all, had not tried to seem exotic to their fellow citizens. No swastikas in an American fascism, but Stars and Stripes (or Stars and Bars) and Christian crosses. No fascist salute, but mass recitations of the pledge of allegiance. These symbols contain no whiff of fascism in themselves, of course, but an American fascism would transform them into obligatory litmus tests for detecting the internal enemy.

Fascism is about an inspired and seemingly strong leader who promises moral renewal, new glory and revenge. It is about the replacement of rational debate with sensual experience. This is why the lies, half-truths and fabrications by Trump have no impact on his followers. Fascists transform politics, as philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin pointed out, into aesthetics. And the ultimate aesthetic for the fascist, Benjamin said, is war.

Paxton singles out the amorphous ideology characteristic of all fascist movements.

Fascism rested not upon the truth of its doctrine but upon the leader's mystical union with the historic destiny of his people, a notion related to romanticist ideas of national historic flowering and of individual artistic or spiritual genius, though fascism otherwise denied romanticism's exaltation of unfettered personal creativity. The fascist leader wanted to bring his people into a higher realm of politics that they would experience sensually: the warmth of belonging to a race now fully aware of its identity, historic destiny, and power; the excitement of participating in a wave of shared feelings, and of sacrificing one's petty concerns for the group's good; and the thrill of domination.

There is only one way left to blunt the yearning for fascism coalescing around Trump. It is to build, as fast as possible, movements or parties that declare war on corporate power, engage in sustained acts of civil disobedience and seek to reintegrate the disenfranchised—the “losers”—back into the economy and political life of the country. This movement will never come out of the Democratic Party. If Clinton prevails in the general election Trump may disappear, but the fascist sentiments will expand. Another Trump, perhaps more vile, will be vomited up from the bowels of the decayed political system. We are fighting for our political life. Tremendous damage has been done by corporate power and the college-educated elites to our capitalist democracy. The longer the elites, who oversaw this disemboweling of the country on behalf of corporations—who believe, as does CBS Chief Executive Officer Leslie Moonves, that however bad Trump would be for America he would at least be good for corporate profit—remain in charge, the worse it is going to get.

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