

the PROG



MAY 2017

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking this up. Since our last issue in December, The Princeton Progressive has been handed off to a new set of editors (hello) and decided to start going by its long-time internal nickname (the Prog). However we're moving toward larger changes, too, as we consider our function within Princeton and the broader challenges that the left, broadly speaking, faces in this time.

As many other students have noted, the past few years—and particularly months—have brought activism onto campus in a way it hasn't seen in many years. From the sanctuary protest march in November to the March 6 Day of Action, there has been a heartening increase in political activity. Still, Princeton lags noticeably behind many of our peer institutions when it comes to undergraduate activist engagement; even accepting that we'll never be Berkeley, there's clear room for growth. And we aren't exempt from this criticism—while the Prog has been the resident left-liberal political publication at Princeton, it has been guilty of taking an academic orientation at the expense of broad reach. This contradicts our fundamental ethos, as well as how we view our social responsibility—when the organizations of the left fail to welcome people, our political effect suffers, but, more fundamentally, so does the intrinsic value of our work. Amidst the Gothic ornaments and

leafy ways of our campus, we cannot lose sight of our imperative to serve humanity, not only distant and abstract but here and now.

Building organization and community will require a multi-dimensional and sustained effort that stretches beyond what any one of us can foresee today. Nonetheless, it's our strong belief that communication will be crucial to the process—telling stories, amplifying voices, and airing discussions. The practice of rigorous and accessible writing is essential to this, on a college campus as well as beyond.

While continuing to feature longform essays and journalism, we want to redouble our commitment to timely commentary and providing a platform for campus movements. While appreciating the tactile and visual importance of our print issues, we want to make better use of our online space. We have big plans for design, some of which should be evident in this issue, and others that will appear online in the coming months.

As the academic year closes, we're pleased with the groundwork we've laid—but even more, we're energized about where it could take us. Inherent in these shifts is that the growth of the Prog will rely quite tangibly on the potential of our campus community. Tell us what you want to read, offer us criticisms; join us, lend your perspectives, skills, and ideas.

In love and solidarity,
The Editors

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Obergefell v. Hodges: Marriage, But Not Equality

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court decided in favor of extending to same-sex couples the right to marry. The case, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, made national a conception of marriage that had already been enacted in 37 states: that two members of either sex could marry. Though it notably reinforced this gender binary, the case was the culmination, as far as we can see, of the fight for marriage equality, and was a significant victory for the broader gay rights movement. Upon the ruling, proponents of same-sex marriage celebrated outside the Court in Washington, D.C. and

around the country. The White House was illuminated with the colors of the gay pride flag. Across all major social media platforms, supporters shared images with rainbow filters and showed their support for the Court's decision with "#LoveWins." The hashtag was a joyful declaration of long-awaited victory, but it also mischaracterized the Court's actual holding in *Obergefell*.

By the 2015 decision, most Americans supported marriage equality. For them, *Obergefell* was a step in the right direction. A Quinnipiac poll released in August 2015 showed that 53% of American voters supported same-sex marriage, and an iden-

tical 53% supported the Supreme Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriage nationally. In the particularly polarized climate of what is often referred to as two distinct and isolated Americas, this narrow majority falls roughly along partisan lines. A 2016 Pew Research Center poll showed that 70% of Democrats and 61% of independents support same-sex marriage, in contrast with only 33% of Republicans. Given this data, it seems that *Obergefell* marks a win for Democrats, or at least for the liberals and progressives that comprise most of the party. It is therefore critical to emphasize that *Obergefell* was not a progressive ruling. Though

the result was consistent with the progressive position in favor of same-sex marriage—the case advance same-sex marriage—*Obergefell* did not advance a progressive *justification* of marriage equality.

The progressive approach to same-sex marriage focuses on *equality*. This contrasts with the conservative approach, which focuses on *marriage*. A progressive decision in a marriage equality case like *Obergefell* would therefore justify same-sex marriage as a right guaranteed to gays and lesbians by their equal status in society. For progressives, the right in question is not necessarily that *to marry*. It is more accurately the right *to enjoy equality*. To this end, a progressive decision would conceive of sexuality as a suspect classification, akin to race or religion, under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Accordingly, discrimination based on sexual orientation would trigger the Court's application of the "strict scrutiny" standard, under which same-sex marriage bans would, in theory, not prevail.

A progressive opinion could also invalidate same-sex marriage bans as unconstitutional forms of discrimination based on sex, rather than on sexual orientation—as did the Hawaii Supreme Court in a 1993 case. Under same-sex marriage bans, a man can marry a woman. Another woman, however, cannot marry that woman. Though it is clearly implied, sexual orientation need not be invoked. Laws that restrict one woman's right to marry another can be formulated as restrictions based on sex, and not necessarily or explicitly on sexuality. This would trigger "intermediate scrutiny," under

which the Court would rule that the government interest to restrict marriage to opposite-sex couples is insufficient for the infringement upon individuals' right to marry.

A progressive opinion that focuses on sex rather than sexual orientation would, accordingly, rely to some degree upon the liberal ideal of autonomy, or personal choice, in a sort of hybrid decision. Without acknowledging the role played by sexual orientation in the choice of partner by gays and lesbians, the Court would relegate same-sex couples to a result of voluntary choice, with no claim to the immutability of sexual orientation. In such an opinion, though, the Court would still apply a heightened standard of scrutiny above a simple rational basis review, triggered by the classification of sex under which those in same-sex relationships are already protected. In the absence of the establishment of sexual orientation as a protected classification, this is perhaps an ideal, though minimalistic, decision for positioning gays and lesbians as equal members of society.

In its *Obergefell* opinion, written by Justice Kennedy, the Court acknowledges the 1993

Hawaii case as one of the first to reckon with the legal question of same-sex marriage. Kennedy notes, however, that the decision "concerned" some states, which feared its implications, and cites subsequent laws, including the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, which reasserted marriage as "between one man and one woman as husband and wife." Seemingly concluding that an argument based on sex discrimination alone is not sufficient to secure same-sex marriage rights, Kennedy does not similarly advance the argument in the *Obergefell* ruling. So, what does the Court advance? If the decision that establishes marriage equality, a decidedly progressive ideal, is not progressive itself, what is it?

Somewhat surprisingly, the *Obergefell* decision is quite conservative. It is not grounded in any real conception of the equal status of gays and lesbians in society. Instead, it draws its validity from virtually absolute assertions as to the merits of the institution of marriage. Justice Kennedy grounds the right to marry as fundamental under the Constitution using the following four "principles and

"#LoveWins" was a joyful declaration of long-awaited victory, but it also mischaracterized the Court's actual holding in Obergefell.

traditions”:

1. One’s choice regarding marriage is among “the most intimate [choices] that an individual can make,” and such a personal choice is “inherent in the concept of individual liberty.”

2. Marriage is a “two-person union unlike any other in its importance to the committed individuals,” uniquely offering “the hope of companionship.” To this end, Kennedy states that the Court has already ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas*—a 2003 case in which the Court struck down state laws that criminalized sodomy—that same-sex couples are free to “enjoy intimate association.” He asserts, however, that “it does not follow that freedom stops there. Outlaw to outcast may be a step forward, but it does not achieve the full promise of liberty,” which is implicated by the right to marry.

3. Marriage is important in the validation of families, acting as a ‘safeguard.’ Particularly, marriage “affords the permanency and stability important to children’s best interest.” Without such benefits, children in same-sex families “suffer the stigma of knowing their families are somehow lesser.”

4. The Court’s prior jurisprudence as well as “the Nation’s traditions make clear that marriage is a keystone of our social order.” As a “building block of our national community,” it is an association to which society pledges support, “offering symbolic recognition and material benefits to nourish the union.”

Kennedy claims that these principles “apply with equal force to same-sex couples.” The

principles themselves, though, do not make any claim to the inherent equality of same-sex couples. Though the Court makes references to individual liberty and to the importance of validating same-sex families—or, to seemingly liberal and progressive values—each of these four principles draws its gravity primarily from the importance of marriage itself as an institution:

1. One’s personal choice regarding marriage is important because marriage plays such an important role in one’s life, and has such far-reaching implications.

2. Same sex couples should be granted the right to marry because there is no other two-person union akin to marriage “in its importance.”

3. Marriage provides a key form of validation for children and families.

4. And, marriage is no less than necessary for the “social order.”

entirely on the importance of marriage itself as an institution rather than on the inherent equality of same-sex couples or relationships—or even on the liberty of those within such relationships to choose their partners in marriage, as would characterize the liberal approach to marriage equality. In this way, he advances a decidedly conservative argument on the merits of marriage equality.

Attorney Ted Olson articulated the “conservative case for gay marriage” in a 2010 *Newsweek* article. A prominent authority on law in the Republican Party, Olson represented the petitioners in *Hollingsworth v. Perry* (2013) who successfully argued against California’s Proposition 8 that banned same-sex marriage. To Olson’s credit, he rightfully formulates marriage equality as a civil rights issue. He even advances the generally progressive argument that, along with protections for those of dif-

ferent “races, religions, and places of origin,” Americans can fulfill the “elusive promise of equality” by extending legal protections to include sexual orientation. *Obergefell* certainly falls short of this.

Olson also grounds his justification for marriage equality, though, in the importance of marriage itself. He criticizes his fellow conservatives’ opposition to mar-

riage equality, noting it “does not make sense, because same-sex unions promote the values conservatives prize.” He formulates marriage as an inherently conservative institution, and claims, “The fact that individuals who

Kennedy relies almost entirely on the importance of marriage itself as an institution rather than on the inherent equality of same-sex couples or relationships.

Kennedy is clearly not *guided* here by the progressive view that same-sex couples should be considered equal in society and that laws should protect this equality. Instead, in arguing for marriage equality, Kennedy relies almost

happen to be gay want to share in this vital social institution is evidence that conservative ideals enjoy widespread acceptance." Olson contends that extending the purview of the institution of marriage by granting marriage equality *advances* the conservative values that marriage seemingly embodies. Olson thus favors the expansion of marriage as a *conservative*. Olson's position, of course, is not the prevailing position on same-sex marriage among conservatives. But, just as the traditionally conservative position on same-sex marriage—which favors its suppression—is not without detractors, like Olson, the gay rights movement's focus on marriage equality is certainly not without its progressive critics. Some, in fact, agree with Olson that marriage is inherently conservative—but argue, from this premise, that same-sex couples should not aspire to marry.

In *Wedlocked: The Perils of Marriage Equality*, Columbia Law School professor Katherine Franke opines, given that so many same-sex couples have already exercised their legal right to marry, that "now is the time to ask this important, if not painful, question: What have we gotten ourselves into?" Franke asserts that, legally, "gaining marriage rights really boils down to surrendering the breakup of your relationship to governance by rules set by the state." With regard to history, it's safe to say that these rules haven't been great. From imposing strict gender norms to perpetuating legal limitations on women's rights—to property ownership, for example—marriage has quite a flawed history. For Franke, the inherent heteronormativity of the institution poses a challenge to same-sex



David Boies (L) and Ted Olson (R), after oral arguments on California's Proposition 8 at the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals

couples, which will suffer from the inevitable imposition of those expectations. In *The Tolerance Trap: How God, Genes, & Good Intentions Are Sabotaging Gay Equality*, Suzanna Danuta Walters, professor of sociology at Northeastern University, criticizes the marriage equality movement for centering this issue in the broader gay rights movement. She had feared that this would "not only dull our movement to the vibrancy of queer difference," but would impose a hierarchy in which married gay couples 'push aside' those who instead seek "sexual and gender liberation."

Franke and Walters, among other commentators on the marriage equality movement, question whether marriage is a valuable end for gays and lesbians. To this point, the late Justice Scalia makes an impressive, though perhaps not earnest, contribution in his *Obergefell* dissent. On the majority's assertion that marriage, by virtue of

its uniquely "enduring bond," allows two people to "find other freedoms, such as expression, intimacy, and spirituality," Scalia asks, "Who ever thought that intimacy and spirituality [whatever that means] were freedoms? And if intimacy is, one would think Freedom of Intimacy is abridged rather than expanded by marriage. Ask the nearest hippie." Beneath his sarcasm, Scalia makes a good point—that marriage itself may not something to which individuals or couples should aspire. Of course, it is admittedly safer and easier to criticize the efficacy of marriage for same-sex couples now that they have a choice in the matter.

But any fault of marriage, like that to which Scalia alludes, seems to be lost on the majority. Regarding the importance of the institution of marriage, Ted Olson asserts in his *Newsweek* piece that marriage "is one of the basic building blocks of our neighborhoods and our nation."

David Boies & Ted Olson after Prop 8 oral arguments at 9th Circuit Court of Appeals (c) Steve Rhodes (https://www.flickr.com/photos/ari/5239961253). CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

For progressives, *Obergefell* is pretty much as bad a decision as a landmark case for marriage equality could have been—which is to say that it is good, but not good enough.

In addition to its role, in many cases, as a religious sacrament, marriage acts specifically as “a civil bond in this country.” Justice Kennedy strikingly mirrors this language in the majority opinion, asserting that marriage is a “building block of our national community” and an association to which society itself pledges its support. Kennedy’s fourth principle exposes with great clarity that the Court adheres to a conservative conception of marriage equality—one that upholds marriage, but not equality itself.

However, if marriage ceases to be such a ‘key’ public institution, one might ask, would gays not have the right to marry? Marriage rates are at relative lows, while divorce rates are at relative highs. More and more people reject the idea that marriage is a crucial requisite for child-bearing. If marriage is indeed a key public institution, it may not be so for long, presenting a troubling crack in Kennedy’s argument. The merit of the progressive argument for marriage equality, which is grounded in the inherent equality of gays and lesbians, is that marriage need not be “fundamental” for the right of marriage to be extended

to them. They ought to possess the right, along with heterosexuals, simply by being equal citizens under the law.

Kennedy alludes to equality arguments, notably recognizing sexual orientation as immutable in what seems to be an allusion to such conditions as race or gender. The merit of this immutability argument is questionable, though, as it seems to suggest that one should not choose homosexuality if a choice were indeed available. He also makes a grand statement as to the ever changing conceptions of equality, that “new insights and societal understandings can reveal unjust inequality within our most fundamental institutions that once passed unnoticed and unchallenged,” which this case presumably seeks to rectify with regard to same-sex marriage. But this decision does not rectify the status of gays and lesbians as a group; it does not grant equality to gays and lesbians, and it establish theirs as a protected group under the law.

The central holding in *Obergefell* remains that “the right to marry is a fundamental right inherent in the liberty of the person,”

and only then does the Fourteenth Amendment work to grant that right to same-sex couples. The decision draws justification from the idea that marriage is a fundamental right, a claim that relies on Kennedy’s conception of marriage as a crucial institution in society that provides unique and ostensibly absolute benefits to those who engage in it. However, many progressives—and others—know this not to be true. Not only is marriage not an absolute good, which Kennedy may acknowledge, but marriage can also be quite harmful in some circumstances, and even as an institution, as Franke and Walters would contend. More pressing than this, though, is that the right of gays and lesbians to marry should not rest on the question of the merits of marriage. It should rest solely on the fact that they are persons under the law who should be granted the same rights that are afforded to all others. Sexual orientation should not be the basis on which any law restricts peoples’ rights. This Court, though, has yet to say so.

Thus, contrary to the initial claims of victory for something so elusive as ‘love,’ a more apt victory claim applied to *Obergefell* would be “#MarriageWins.” For progressives, *Obergefell* is pretty much as bad a decision as a landmark case for marriage equality could have been—which is to say that it is good, but not good enough. *Obergefell* is, of course, better than what we had before. But the arguments do matter. The Court’s specific holdings and its claims regarding our societal institutions matter. It is important that people are not treated as second-class citizens on the basis of their sexual orientation. And it is important for us to recognize that *Obergefell* doesn’t get us there. •



FRANCE ON THE MOVE:

An Interview with Prof. David Bell

By CHRISTOPHER RUSSO

On April 23, Marie Le Pen, of the right-wing Front National, and Emmanuel Macron, head of his fledgling party *En Marche!*, won the first round of the French Presidential election and moved on to the final round, to be held on May 7. They defeated Benoît Hamon of the Socialist Party, François Fillon of center-right *Les Républicains*, and the leftist Jean-Luc Mélenchon of *La France insoumise* [sic], among other candidates. Staff writer Christopher Russo sat down with History Professor David Bell to talk about it.

So the polls so far show that Macron has a substantial lead over Le Pen. Is it safe to assume he is going to win?

Yeah, I mean, the polls show him way ahead. The so-called “republican front” that formed in 2002 to defeat her father has pretty much formed again. People from across the political spectrum are backing him. She has had a pretty hard ceiling that is well under 50%, so I would find it quite shocking if she won at this point. Of course, even with what happened in the United States, [Trump] was never as far behind in the polls as she is.

France has suffered some of the worst terror attacks in the West in recent memory and the Front National has played a pretty big role in politics for a long time, but it looks like Le Pen is going to lose. Why is the anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic, populist going to lose in France, when those sorts of candidates won in the UK, the US, and elsewhere in Europe?

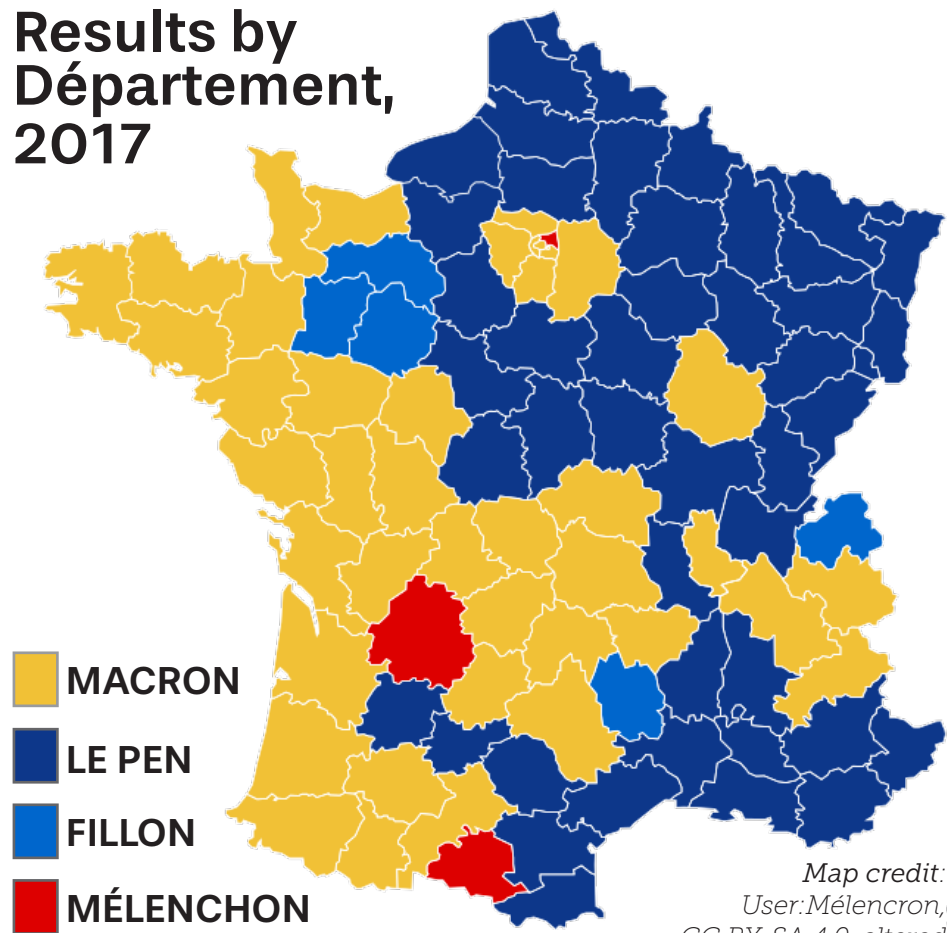
Well, that’s a good question. First, to start out, I think in some ways the factors that drove Trump and Brexit are very much the same factors that have driven the FN for a long time. Deindus-

trialization, anger at entrenched elites, the supposed threat of immigration and terrorism, fears of globalization, and all of these things, but I think that in France there are a couple of differences. Trump was somebody who appeared really within a major party. In Britain Brexit had quite a bit of support in the Tory party, the leader of the Labor party was very lukewarm indeed in calling for Britain to remain in the EU. There had been lots of people within the major parties that had been calling for Brexit for a long time. Again, in the US you had Trump sort of come out of nowhere but take control of one of our two major parties.

In France, they have a word, *cantonner*, almost a quarantine to fence off somebody. Le Pen and the FN have been fenced off for a long time. So they have been growing, and it's been distressing, but they've been growing at a fairly steady and regular pace. In 2002 Jean-Marie Le Pen got about 18% of the vote and in the regional elections 18 months ago Marie Le Pen got about 28% in the second round. She might not do much better than that. Another thing about the National Front is that it's always really been a party built around the leader. She has tried to de-demonize it, "*dédiaboliser*", but you only have to scratch the surface of their cadres and you hit neo-Nazis pretty quickly. I think this shocks and scares people. So I think for all these reasons, absent of a really shocking upset, she really doesn't have a chance of winning.

Assuming that Le Pen does lose, do you think this is the high water mark for her and her platform? Or do you think she'll remain important going forward?

First Round Results by Département, 2017



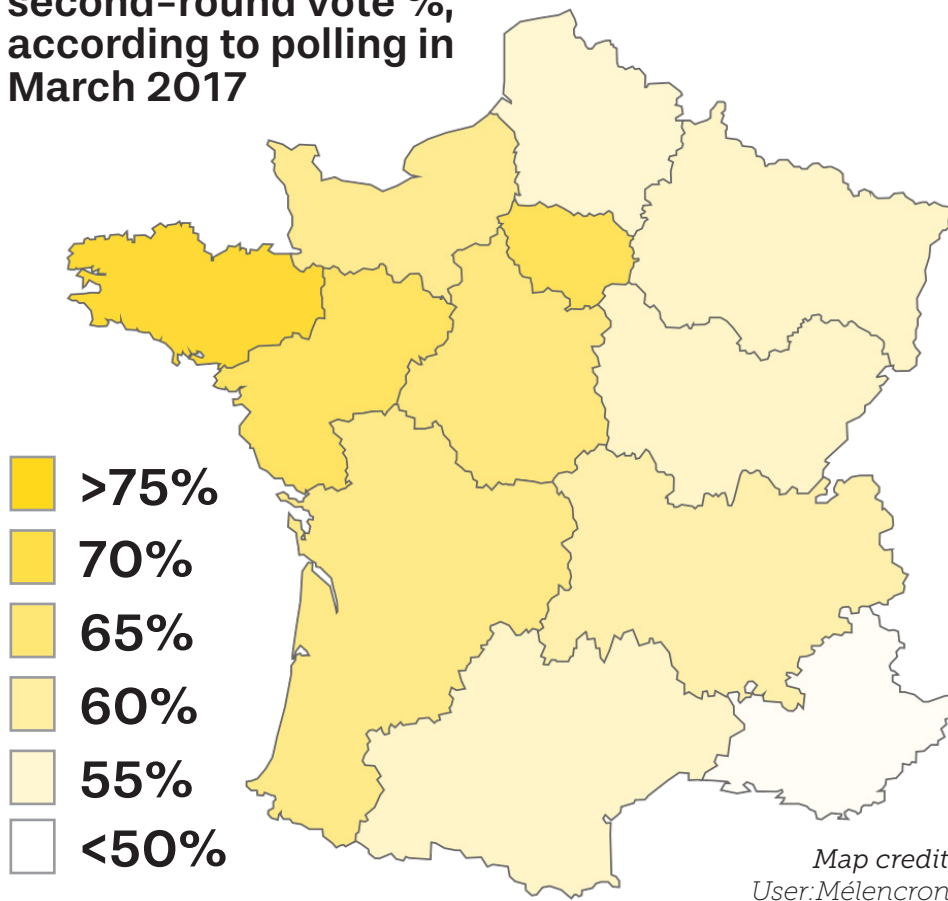
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I wish I knew. I think that of course part of this depends on things out of the control of any French government, like terrorist attacks, some of these attacks, they have very good intelligence in some respects, but some of these attacks by "lone wolves" are very difficult to hold off. There are economic factors that go well beyond France. Within France it depends on how well Macron's government does. I think he has a very difficult road. He could very well end up failing as miserably as Francois Hollande. Now in that case if there's yet another government which is seen as failing, if the paralysis is continuing, then that could really feed her and push much higher. As I said, I think the chance of her winning this year is pretty tiny, but five years from now, ten years from now, who knows.

Given Mélenchon's success and Hollande and the Socialist Party's abysmal approval ratings, what do you think the future of the left is going to look like in France?

Well that's a good question as well. Mélenchon did quite well this year, much better than he did five years ago. I think he himself will remain a fairly major figure on the scene. I think it will be hard to build a united left without him, but it will be hard to build a united left with him, because he's a sort of divisive figure, his populism turns a lot of people off, his anti-Europe rhetoric turns a lot of people off, particularly the more university-educated side of the left. And so I think where the left goes from here is very difficult. It depends partly on Macron and how far to the left he governs.

Macron's hypothetical second-round vote %, according to polling in March 2017



Macron says how he loves Scandinavian social democracy, and he says in some ways he wants to move in what is loosely called a neoliberal direction; in other ways he says he insists on building in working retraining, protections, things like that. Certainly in American terms he's a cultural liberal, in terms of his stances on immigration, immigrant communities, sexual freedom, things like that. If he really ends up governing as a moderate to right wing socialist it's possible that Mélenchon ends up getting marginalized; if he ends up governing more to the center right, there's a challenge for the left of how to form a serious opposition.

If you add up the support for Mélenchon and Le Pen, you have 40% of voters who are supporting Eurosceptic can-

didates, candidates who want to leave the EU. What does this mean for France's relationship with the EU going forward? What's the significance of that?

Difficult, difficult. France has been hemmed in by the Eurozone in particular, much more so than by the European Union per se, but by the conditions of entering the Eurozone, the need to keep the budget deficit to within 3% of GDP, things like that. Macron says he wants to renegotiate the conditions of France's membership in the Eurozone to the extent that he can do that. He will probably have a good working relationship with Merkel, or with whoever ends up in control in Germany, so he might be able to do that, but at the same time, I think there's been a lot of skepticism about the European proj-

ect in France for a long time. In 2005 when the European Union presented the new "constitution," which was really more of a 500 page long treaty, the French voted it down in a referendum. I think that there has always been boilerplate talk of European construction, but I really don't see how European construction gets any further at this point; I don't see them entering into any new degree of unity or creating new institutions or even allowing new members to join. I see Europe standing still or even moving backwards at this point, and I think the French vote as you point to will simply confirm that.

Do the demographic or geographic patterns of support for Le Pen parallel or differ from the patterns we saw with Donald Trump in the US election?

In some ways they're very similar. The classic Le Pen voter is the French equivalent of the classic Trump voter – older, white, working class, often feeling let down by economic changes, threatened by immigrants. There's no Fox News in France, so maybe they don't get indoctrinated to quite the same extent they do in the US. I haven't seen the actual data yet from the first round of the election, but the polling showed there is a great deal of support for Le Pen among younger voters. That's a major demographic difference with the US. I think there are a lot of young people who are clearly fed up with the situation. Anti-Europe rhetoric appeals to a certain group of young people in France. The anger at the economic stagnation which has left youth unemployment desperately high in France also has driven young people to Le Pen, so there are differences, yes.

"People don't realize that to be a centrist in French politics, and Macron is called a centrist, is very different from being a centrist in American politics."

Both candidates are well outside political norms in France. What does this shakeup show about French popular sentiment and how can we expect the rejection of political norms to affect the future of French politics? To what extent is this part of a greater anti-establishment trend in politics in the West?

I think there are two things going on here – on the one hand, it's obviously part of an anti-establishment trend, the same thing with see with Trump, Brexit, various Eastern European figures and so on. At the same time, it's a very traditional French pattern to be sort of anti-politics in this way. In French political culture there has always been a particularly high suspicion of politics as usual, of party politics. They don't have anything like a stable party system; what they have had is nearly at the brink of collapse and there has always been a temptation in French political culture, going back all the way even before Napoleon Bonaparte, for somebody to emerge as the figure who is above politics. People don't realize that to be a centrist in French politics, and Macron is called a centrist, is very different from being a centrist in American politics. In American politics it usually implies a readiness to dive into the decision making process, to look for compromise between the different sides, to do a lot of deal making. In France it really means to rise above the political fray, to be a symbol not only of

unity but of national harmony. General de Gaulle was the classic figure of this sort. He hated the rough and tumble of daily political life, and I think Macron is trying to pose in much the very same way. I think the fact that this Republican Front has formed to support him and that all the figures from across the spectrum are supporting him simply adds to his ability to pose as this sort of unifying figure. While there is a sort of anti-establishment impetus here that is very much part of broader Western trends, this is a classic French pattern.

Do you have any other comments or concluding thoughts you'd like to say?

It's a really interesting period right now, and somewhat of a dangerous period. The first thing that is going to happen as soon as Macron wins is that he's going to have to fight a parliamentary election in June. There's a big question of how he does this. Does he simply try to put the Socialist Party back together again under his leadership, calling it something else? French political parties change their name all the time; they change their broad parameters all the time. Or does he really try to play off this "centrist" rhetoric and really build something genuinely new? He said he wants to do this, that he wants to run for the legislative elections on the basis of this movement he formed for his own election, *En Marche!*, which means on the move, and he said he wants to bring in new

faces who are new to politics. Can he actually do this? Will these people have an incentive to side with him and vote for him without any kind of party discipline if they're actually elected? If he doesn't get a majority this way, can he cobble together a majority from the other, smaller centrist groupings, from the ecologists, from at least part of the socialist party? A lot of the Socialist Party loathes him, detests him. Mélenchon will not support him certainly, people who like Mélenchon won't support him. A lot of the people who supported Benoît Hamon, the Socialist candidate, will not support him. I think he has a very narrow window. He has to hope that by the sheer triumph of his election, assuming it is a triumph, by his charisma, his youthfulness, his fresh facedness, that he can really bring about a change (I won't call it a revolution) in French politics. If he doesn't do that, I think the chances are very high—given what his actual policy prescriptions are, which are really not that different from what Hollande tried and miserably failed to do for the most part over the past five years—that within a couple of years he looks tarnished and tattered and beaten, and people are more fed up than ever, and that's my worry, because then, under those circumstances, the 40% could easily turn into over 50%, and then we have a real crisis.

David Bell is the Sidney and Ruth Lapidus Professor in the Era of North Atlantic Revolutions in the Department of History. His academic research focuses on the the political culture of the Ancien Régime and the French Revolution. He also frequently writes on modern French politics and regularly contributes to publications including The Nation and Dissent Magazine.

Revitalizing Our Approach to Identity Politics

By
NATE
LAMBERT

"Reaching across the aisle" has become a political cliché, a vague, empty promise to somehow forge progress in a government comprised in views, priorities, and degrees of integrity. At its worst, it's often an excuse for centrist politicians to "compromise" on policies that their constituents do not support. As progressives, we fiercely debate the degree to which we should condone members of the Democratic party when their actions border on Republicanism. However, in our own lives most of us tend to shy away from having these discussions with conservatives and libertarians at all. Within our daily political discourse, what does reaching across the aisle look like, and how effective can it be?

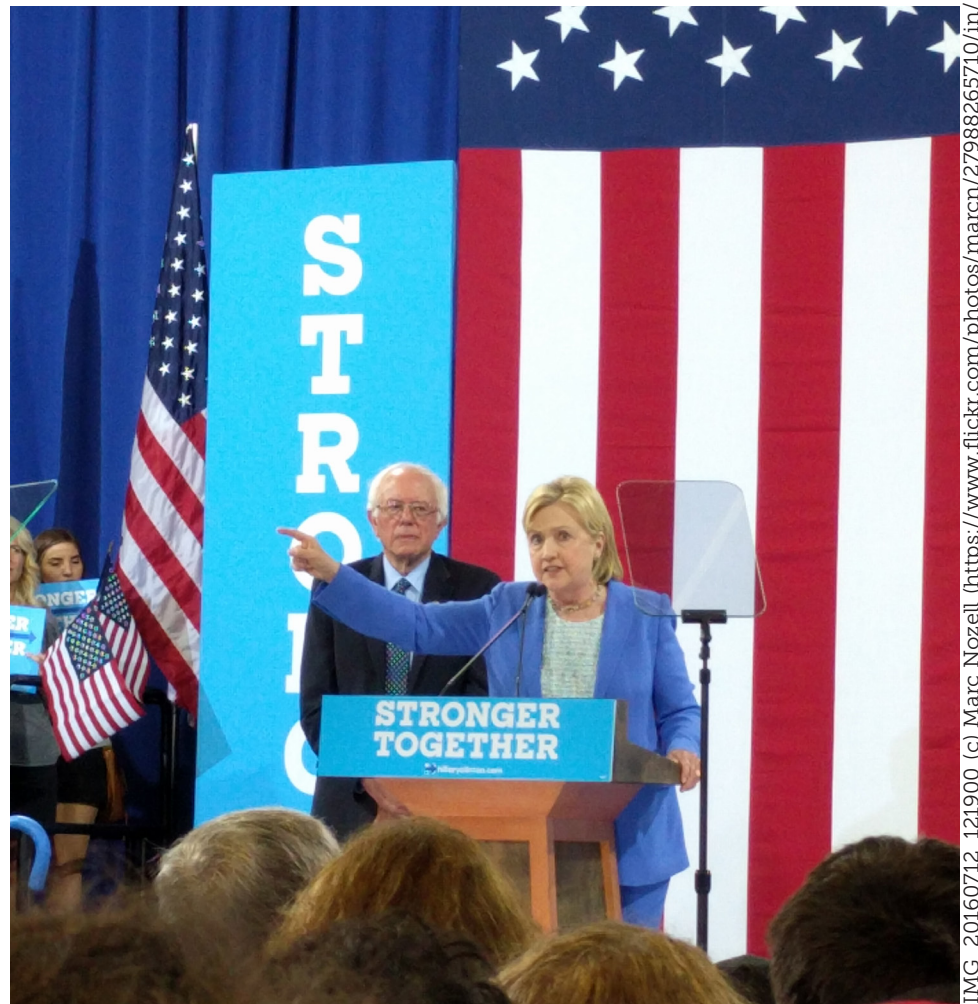
Ask these questions to twenty progressives and you're likely to receive twenty different answers. For some, the "aisle" represents the divide within the left; for others, it's the divide between the left and right. During the final months of Obama's presidency, when the left took Clinton's victory as inevitable, the "aisle" seemed to refer to the divide between "true" progressives and corporatist, neoliberal monstrosities. In those months, when I expressed that I was a progressive but also a

strong Clinton supporter, I could feel the judgement pouring out of my fellow progressives' eyes: "Coward!" "Fool!" "Typical white gay!" they seemed to say. In their eyes, I was the kind of suburban, sheltered simpleton who dabbles at H&M and thinks that Halsey is "edgy."

After the election, I was

stunned by my progressive friends' narrow-minded insistence that Trump's victory could be boiled down to one factor. "It was NAFTA!" the Bernie bros cried. "It was bigotry," the neo-liberal cowards insisted. For me, the most baffling part was not these answers themselves, most of which I'm sympathetic to, but rather the smug condescension with which they were expressed—as if they believed that Trump's win was inevitable all along.

Reflecting upon the infighting on the left, I'm struck by the urgent need that some feel to pinpoint and hone one narrative for any given topic (e.g.: the election outcome, cultural appropriation, campaign finance reform) and then disregard any differing views. In her excellent TED Talk, feminist author Chimamanda



Ngozi Adichie warned listeners against the danger of a “single story”; the “stories” she referenced teach us not to stereotype or oversimplify individuals’ experiences. Ironically, Adichie herself recently came under fire for arguing that all transgender women have benefitted from male privilege. This incident exemplifies why single story narratives are shortsighted and unrealistic. Hypocritically, Adichie confined the experiences of transgender women to a single narrative, that of someone like Caitlyn Jenner who has lived a life of privilege that most transgender women have not. Adichie’s fans, myself included, were dismayed to learn that our hero was not, in fact, a progressive robot programmed to dispense canonically “woke” gospel with the touch of a button.

Around the same time, Tomi

nopoulos are racist internet trolls who built careers off of empowering white people to flaunt their suppressed racism. Still, in an effort to avoid the temptations of a single story, we should pay these incidents a closer look. Although Adichie has always been far more eloquent and sophisticated than either Lahren or Yiannopoulos, they all were beloved by their respective audiences because their words and opinions matched the worldview of their target demographics.

The difference between Lahren’s and Yiannopoulos’ triggering comments is that Lahren’s comments about abortion were surprisingly sensible whereas Yiannopoulos’ endorsement of pedophilia was just horrifying. By contrast, Adichie’s comments cannot be labeled in such black

Adichie’s claims with eloquence and grace.

Adichie could have stayed silent on her stance about trans-feminism, but instead she spoke candidly and revealed her own shortcomings. Should the left punish her as the right did to Tomi Lahren for not neatly fitting the single story we have written for her? No. Punishing individuals for having their own opinions encourages stale dialogue and will only further push the left and right towards isolated tribalism. When we stigmatize such dialogue in an effort to avoid discomfort or offense, we may enjoy a façade of progress—that is, until 53% of white women vote for Trump. Similarly, when we sort people into umbrella groups based on whom they voted for—Bernie voters are the real progressives and Hillary supporters are either uneducated or corrupt!—we distort the diversity of thought and perspective among the left.

In the aftermath of Trump’s victory, some on the left suggested that the Democratic Party should steer away from identity politics. I wholeheartedly disagree. Identity politics are not some escapable topic that we can just cast aside; after all, this nation was founded by leaders whose identity politics ensured the hierarchical dominance of cishet white men with money. We don’t need to “forget” about identity politics; rather, we need to reinvigorate and revitalize our approach to them—and this means keeping an eye out for our own temptations to buy into single stories. If we keep this tendency in mind when we “reach across the aisle,” we might just be surprised by what insights we can gain from those on the other side.

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Lahren was suspended from “The Blaze” for her pro-choice comments on The View. Her dismissal was met with celebration from the left, akin to that of Milo Yiannopoulos’ recent downfall for his comments apparently condoning pedophilia. I too rejoiced; Lahren and Yian-

opoulos are racist internet trolls who built careers off of empowering white people to flaunt their suppressed racism. Still, in an effort to avoid the temptations of a single story, we should pay these incidents a closer look. Although Adichie has always been far more eloquent and sophisticated than either Lahren or Yiannopoulos, they all were beloved by their respective audiences because their words and opinions matched the worldview of their target demographics.

FASCISM & FREE SPEECH

By SEYITCAN UCIN

The popular image of Adolf Hitler is of a violent, angry man down in his bunker or affront a rally, regularly spewing inchoate anti-semitic rants. This may be true to an extent, but this portrayal of Hitler is too convenient, and simply incomplete—how would such a villainous character gain mass support? Early on, the German electorate rejected Hitler, whose public image was too militant, too tarred by the street brawling of the Sturmabteilung (SA), especially in the cosmopolitan Weimar Republic that had begun to make a recovery from the postwar depression. From 1932 onwards, Nazi propagandists made a concerted effort to put forward a perception of Hitler that was divorced from the brutal, intrinsic violence of his political ideology. In her essay *Hitler at Home*, architectural historian Despina Stratigakos writes about this presentation of Hitler's private life. A "genial Bavarian gentleman," Hitler was presented as a good man with a fondness for children and dogs to make up for the lack of ties to his family and

meager romantic relationships; his regulated schedule and propensity for alpine walks were the epitome of a respectable, bourgeois life. Even Western publications, such as *Time*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The New York Times* bought this portrayal, reporting with rapt tones on this continental bachelor. "Nothing in the dreamy fable of 'Herr Hitler at Home' reflected the realities of a continent on the brink of war," Stratigakos writes.

This portrayal was also reflected in Hitler's foreign policy, as Trotsky sketches out Hitler's ostensibly peaceful foreign policy in his 1933 work *Hitler the Pacifist*. Trotsky writes, "Hitler must employ the greatest caution in the European arena. Do not frighten anyone, do not irritate anyone... Hitler is ready to cover the walls of the war factories with pacifist speeches and non-aggression pacts... If a clear, simple, non-diplomatic formula of the pacifist offensive is necessary, it is the following: for the next two or three years Hitler must painstakingly avoid a preventive war on the part of his

opponents. Within these limits his pacifism is absolutely sincere. But within these limits only." Trotsky, of course, was right, correctly predicting that Hitler's pacifism would only provide a smokescreen for Germany's militarism until Hitler decided Germany was strong enough to face Europe and build the *Lebensraum*. Historian W. H. C. Frend concurs in *Hitler and his Foreign Ministry*, relating an anecdote about a minister that was so convinced that Germany would respect Austria's independence that he asked the state secretary permission to not receive two hawkish officials on the very day that Germany invaded Austria. Hitler had convinced everyone, even up to statesmen in his foreign ministry, that his pacifism was sincere.

History repeats itself, "the first as tragedy, then as farce," as Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. We are experiencing the rise of fascism a second time in the West, and rather than attempting to understand the systemic



Adorno (front right) and Horkheimer (front left) in 1964. A young Jürgen Habermas is on the far right.

problems that have led to Trump's election, liberal critics have taken to analyzing certain symptoms of today's late capitalist order—Russian interference, fake news—that they believe to explain the shock of Trump's victory. This past December, *The New Yorker* published an article written by music (and sometime cultural) critic Alex Ross titled "The Frankfurt School Knew Trump Was Coming." The title—referencing the collective of intellectuals that coalesced at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt to unite the multiplying Marxist tendencies and, following the fall of the Third Reich, to understand what went wrong—makes a comparison between the rise of the Reich and Trump. Adapting the Frankfurt school's emphasis on the "culture industry" present in a commodified capitalism that maintains the status quo through pacifying popu-

lations with its uncritical output and hegemony, Ross writes, "A defining moment was the turn-of-the-century wave of music piracy, which did lasting damage to the idea of intellectual property. Fake news is an extension of the same phenomenon, and, as in the Napster era, no one is taking responsibility. Traffic trumps ethics." Ross' critique of mass culture indicts piracy and fake news as outliers; unexpected anomalies that ruined an otherwise well-functioning society. Some may call the election of Trump the end result of the factors Ross is referring to: the loss of credibility of sources, divergence from liberal democratic values, and the subsequent rise of populism. But what's even more pressing is the actual fascists—what's referred to commonly as the alt-right—that have been emboldened by the current political landscape; this

is the true farce.

Thus, Ross' misapplication—which is the result of looking at "fake news" without understanding the underlying structures that have enabled it—of the Frankfurt School goes further: much of the School's work was to detect fascism before it could do damage—not after it has made its way to relevance. As Frankfurt School theorist Walter Benjamin writes in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realise that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against fascism." In other words, capitalism will always be in the "state of

emergency" Benjamin is talking about because class society naturally contains class conflict, and fascism will present itself, not as a continuation of the same structures, but as a revolutionary emancipation. "Fake news" and the "post-truth era" that we apparently live in aren't unique to today's right-wing populism — "fake news" articles have been floating around Facebook since the early days of Obama's presidency; WMD's were never found in Iraq, despite the numerous 'credible' news sources that reported on them. In a society where political elites have come to rely on disinformation, fascism has an easy job since it relies on the same tactics to garner support: meaningfully combatting fascism is to show that fascism is the authoritarian foil to liberal capitalism and that we must move beyond today's technocratic liberalism.

Today's fascists aren't essentially different from fascists of the past. They shield themselves behind "free speech" and decry the "violent" antifascists that attack them at their events. They advocate for "peaceful" ethnic cleansing (as if there is such a thing) and blame multiculturalism and diversity for society's ills—ignoring centuries of laws and structures that have subjugated and marginalized people of color. In recent events, neo-Nazi Richard Spencer (who is credited with coining the term 'alt-right') was attacked by a masked protester during Donald Trump's inauguration. Liberals in droves have come out against the use of violence to suppress Spencer's hate-driven speech. Spencer—a man who gives the Nazi salute in front of his supporters, encourages the targeting of Jews in his home state

Montana, and believes in ethnic cleansing—would not hesitate to would use violent methods to pursue his goals when given the opportunity. His current 'peaceful' disposition is a facade. On the University of Florida campus, a man named Michael Dewitz was spotted wearing a swastika on his arm. In an interview with a local news station, he described his action as a "social experiment" then proceeded to use the interview as a platform to deny the existence of Nazi concentration camps and say the Nazis "saved the world."

Both Spencer and Dewitz justify their speech and actions through the First Amendment's protection of free expression. However, it is their ability to use — or rather misuse — free speech that gives their ideology strength. Frankfurt School thinkers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (both of whom Ross so gleefully cited) compare fascism and advertising in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "The blind and rapidly spreading repetition of designated words links advertising to the totalitarian slogan. The layer of experience which made words human like those who spoke them has been stripped away, and in its prompt appropriation language takes on the coldness which hitherto was peculiar to billboards and the advertising sections of newspa-

pers." Fascism strips the meaning of words, leaving meaningless platitudes that aren't even understood by the people who parrot them. Alt-righters decry the so-called "white genocide" — the irony that white people are systematically oppressed seeming to escape them. Anyone looking closely enough can tell that "white genocide" — which apparently is a concerted effort by the government and liberals to end the white race through immigration and reproductive rights—is anything but a genocide.

After all, how does one reason with people who use the term genocide to refer to the empowerment of marginalized communities, people who think ethnic cleansing is a reasonable approach to dealing with today's complex social issues? Just after Richard Spencer was punched, TV pundits to Internet commenters flooded media with the similar, almost parroted, phrases — "violence only leads to more violence" and "punching fascists makes you just as bad as them" — instead championing an open dialogue with blatant antisemites. On the contrary, the only meaningful way to fight fascism is through denying it a platform. Fascists don't seek to engage in substantive discussion—they act entirely in bad faith. Kamau Bell, host of

"The blind and rapidly spreading repetition of designated words links advertising to the totalitarian slogan."

To attempt to criticize the struggle of the oppressed through a pacifist lens is to do the fascists' work for them.

United Shades of America on CNN, interviewed Richard Spencer on his show. "I'm not afraid of these people or Richard Spencer's ideas," explaining why he felt it necessary to give Spencer a platform, "because I know my ideas will win. My ideas are better." This analysis completely misses the dynamics of power. Portrayed on media as a champion of open discourse and invited to universities to speak in front of students, this ignores the reality on the ground. Today's fascists are already calling for the targeting of marginalized groups, and engaging with such an ideology only legitimizes and emboldens its supporters. When Milo Yiannopoulos and his followers harass a trans person for her identity until she feels forced to withdraw from her university, or calls on his followers to "purge your local illegals," fascism is already violent. Do we continue to allow universities to provide a platform for harassment and hate? Do we allow fascists to plan their ethnic cleansings for sake of preserving free speech? Must we wait until fascists are carrying out pogroms and committing genocides to act?

In his preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre writes, "[I]f violence began this very evening and if exploitation and oppression had never existed on the earth, perhaps the slogans of non-violence might end the quarrel. But if the whole regime, even your non-violent ideas, are conditioned by a thousand-year-old oppression, your passivity serves only to place you in the ranks of the oppressors." Today's "state of emergency" isn't anything unique; fascism relies on the same techniques that capitalism uses to maintain hegemony because fascism is a continuation of society with the same structure. As the Democratic

Party fails to find an answer to the systemic problems that have left real wages stagnating and workers worse off, fascism will find something external to scapegoat—be it immigrants or refugees or its choice of a multitude of "Others"—, and present itself as a rational solution. The danger is immediate, and growing.

Accordingly, the tactics of the Left must be based in material reality, not idealistic morality. Fascists will continue to use violence as a tool of oppression; to argue that non-violent means to resist fascism (e.g. engaging simply in discourse against it) are superior to physical resistance—or even perhaps are the only means to resist—is to ignore the deaths of the millions that have suffered and currently suffer at their hands. To attempt to criticize the struggle of the oppressed through a pacifist lens is to do the fascists' work for them. The fascist *modus operandi* is to demand a platform—not because they are champions of free speech, but because it's momentarily useful to them—and use it to spew their hate and vitriol in order to manipulate people into accepting their message. We must not allow them to succeed.

Ross concludes his article: "The ultimate fear isn't of the second coming of Hitler: history never repeats itself so obviously..." Unfortunately, one could say the Frankfurt School drew the opposite conclusion. We find ourselves

in precisely the same situation that the School warned about: public policy "experts" debating the most effective policies in the halls of government as real people suffer and are susceptible to the very kind of tactics fascism uses. Adorno and Horkheimer continue, "Clever people have always made things easy for barbarians, because they are so stupid. It is the well-informed, farsighted judgments, the prognoses based on statistics and experience, the observations which begin 'I happen to be an expert in this field,' it is the well-founded, conclusive statements which are untrue." What they mean isn't that intellectuals are necessarily wrong with their analysis – it's that their analysis misses the point. No amount of means-testing—the favorite catchphrase of liberal academics like Paul Krugman—can convince the masses that their conditions will be ameliorated. As Professor Matthew Karp writes in his post-election analysis, Fairfax County, USA, the Democratic Party is run by "a leadership that views politics as a room where clever experts hash out benevolent policies for the neediest, rather than a field of mass struggle in which everybody's basic welfare is at stake." What is necessary is a politics of compassion and vision – not a technocratic leadership that alienates people who have been affected by decades of exploitative neoliberal order.

As such, Adorno and Horkheimer don't blame the dismantling of reason on external



President Barack Obama Hillary Clinton (c) Sarah Burris (President_Barack_Obama_Hillary_Clinton_(27983954534).jpg). CC BY 2.0

Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton wave to the crowd at the 2016 Democratic National Convention.

and unexpected forces acting on a society (e.g. fake news and music piracy) like Ross does. Rather, they point out that our reliance on "reason" is itself unreasonable. For instance, sure, the data points to Obamacare insuring millions of people who would otherwise be uninsured, but that ignores the reality that people are suffering through increasing premiums and paying penalties — nevermind the fact that many people are still uninsured. Is a program like Obamacare more reasonable than universal healthcare? Most Democrats would argue so because it doesn't subsidize the healthcare of the rich. Fascism (and fake news) is only tasked with the job of bringing people closer to an understanding of how the world works because programs like Obamacare seem so unreasonable at a glance. As

absurd as it is to blame the lack of quality healthcare for the masses on alt-right conspiracies, the mere fact that the alt-right provides an argument to explain how we could be in this abysmal circumstance is enough for people to escape from reason.

In reality, it isn't just fascism we should be concerned with—the worldview of the entire Right, from moderate Republicans to Tea Party-ers is just as problematic and based in the absurdity that fascisms deals with, and they certainly won't help us get any closer to universal healthcare. However, in our current political situation—where fascists have been uniquely emboldened by public faces on the Right (Trump, Bannon, and the like) whose ideas are based off of the same xenophobic and nationalist roots as the alt-right—there is no choice but to make our

presence not only known, but felt. We stand at a crossroads: the Left can either sit aside and fight in a protracted "battle of ideas" as fascists continue their program of attacking marginalized groups, or the Left can attract people through exposing the unreasonableness of today's society and build solidarity through resistance. But, as progressives, our resistance isn't just debating conservatives and reforming the status quo into a more equitable society—we must also resist the reactionary historical regression that fascism is, even when it is relatively weak, because it stands to threaten all of the progress that we have made. Which is why—in his essay "Progress"—Adorno concludes, "Progress is this resistance at all stages, not the surrender to their steady ascent."

GOOD TROUBLE

By MASON COX

In the tenth grade, my teacher introduced me to the notion of what she called “good trouble”: political action that is disruptive, erratic, or even dangerous, but that fundamentally does “good” for society. When faced with an institution whose existence is predicated upon their continued subjugation, she explained, the subdued can break their chains only through direct action against both the institution that subdues them and its mechanisms. This kind of resistance has been a constant feature of human civilization. People die, cities rise and fall, revolutions happen, and wars are declared. But one thing rises above the temporality of history: good trouble.

Good trouble has recently been featured in the news. At Princeton in fall 2015, members of the Black Justice League (BJL) occupied President Eisgruber’s office, protested, and published open letters to Princeton and its community to call for the renaming of the Woodrow Wilson

School. Although the program’s name remains, the BJL’s scrutiny of Woodrow Wilson’s legacy continues to inspire discussions about race on and off campus.

On Capitol Hill last June, House Democrats decided to engage in some good trouble of their own when the Speaker pro tempore Dan Webster, acting under Speaker Paul Ryan, refused to give the House a vote on gun control legislation. The Democrats announced a sit-in on the House floor to challenge Ryan’s decision, literally sitting on the floor of the House. Around 60 Democratic Representatives gave speeches, impeded the House from reconvening, and demanded a vote on the legislation. Speaker Ryan asked C-SPAN to stop broadcasting from the chamber, but Democratic Representatives responded by streaming the sit-in from their cellphones. News agencies covered the scene unfolding in the House using the resulting Facebook streams, which were shared thousands of times. Through this good trouble, Democratic Rep-

resentatives successfully drew attention to the issue of gun control and Ryan’s tyranny as Speaker.

Most recently, good trouble played a vital role in the 2017 Women’s March on Washington. In response to the election and inauguration of President Donald Trump, people decided to march for, amongst other reasons, women’s rights and racial equality. As many as 500,000 people marched on the streets of D.C., while millions of others marched throughout the United States. It was the largest protest to ever take place in U.S. history, and it was paralleled by solidaristic women’s marches on every other continent, making the Women’s March one of the largest and widest reaching protests in human history.

All this good trouble isn’t exclusive to the 21st century. In 1838, though the U.S. Supreme Court had already ruled that the Cherokees formed a sovereign nation and had a claim to their homelands in the southern part of the Appalachian Mountains

(Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, etc.). President Jackson sent in the U.S. Army and forced them to march to Indian-Territory (Oklahoma). They fought, and even used legal action, and even though they were finally ruled an independent nation and not forced to move, President Jackson still forced them out. It was ultimately a failure. Thousands of Cherokees died, while Native Americans thereafter faced greater discrimination.

Before India's independence, the British Empire had a monopoly on salt in the region, which they sold to natives at high prices. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi walked for two months to the Arabian Sea in protest of these prices. Once there, he picked up salt, directly violating British laws in India. His message was simple: Civil disobedience was needed on a massive scale. Millions of Indians began to resist and challenge Britain's rule. Ultimately, Gandhi and his strategy of civil disobedience facilitated India's achievement of independence.

In all these cases—and endless others throughout history—those who lacked a voice used good trouble to challenge their mistreatment. They demanded that those in power respect their rights, fomenting good trouble to fight oppression,

raise awareness for their problems, and ultimately change the status quo. What's so beautiful about this is that groups suffering different forms of injustice in different eras all share something in common: They used good trouble to induce change. In this way, there exists a kind of camaraderie and solidarity between all of those who have fought, are fighting, and will fight for change. Marx famously said that "the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle"—but I would contest that the history of humankind, from the beginning until now and throughout all the future, is the history of good trouble.

Since institutions of power benefit from their own existence, only good trouble can force them to change. All revolutions and other kinds of historical change therefore emerge from good trouble, though those changes don't necessarily emerge immediately. The Cherokees were unsuccessful in halting their removal from their homelands, but their good trouble emboldened a resistance to discrimination towards Native Americans, one which predated them but continues to this today. Similarly, Gandhi was thrown in jail, and thousands were arrested because of their civil disobedience, but India ultimately achieved its independence. More recently, Democratic Represen-

tatives achieved mass coverage of their sit-in and message about gun control on the House floor. Good trouble induces change, uniting those who have fought for change throughout history. Without it, the world would be stuck at the same status quo.

Now, more than ever, the time has come to embrace good trouble. President Trump and his administration do not have a mandate. He imposed a travel ban—one that was fortunately overruled—on six predominately Muslim countries. He wants to practically end the Environmental Protection Agency. He wants to build a wall that would not ensure border security, but rather would be a symbol of xenophobia and ignorance. The list of hateful and bigoted policies goes on and on.

People have already started to show good trouble in response to President Trump. From the Women's March, to rogue Twitter accounts run by government workers, to protests on college campuses, good trouble is sweeping the nation. The resistance is growing, and it will continue to grow. Some argue that the protests against President Trump won't work and the violence takes them beyond simple resistance, but all of history shows that this is the only way to induce change. Passively accepting his policies does nothing good, policies which are going to kill people. Syrians seeking a haven in the U.S. have been turned back to a war-riddled country. Hate crimes in the U.S. have spiked. We're going down the wrong—and darkest—path possible.

Trump is now the President of the United States. This is no longer a game or a joke. It is now quite literally a question of rights or oppression, democracy or dictatorship, life or death. We need to resist. We need good trouble.

I would contest that the history of humankind, from the beginning until now and throughout all the future, is the history of good trouble.

Violent Politics: The Rise of America's Authoritarian Left

By HUNTER CAMPBELL

Is it okay to violently silence hateful speech? This was the question the American left pondered after far-right leader Richard Spencer was punched in the face by an anarchist during Trump's inauguration. Spencer is a member of the "alt-right" and white supremacist. Many leftists who supported the assault against Spencer said that it is universally acceptable to punch fascists, and that shielding people from such grotesque opinions is necessary. Shortly after Spencer was punched, Milo Yiannopoulos held an event at UC Berkeley. His event was stopped by violent anarchist protesters. Unfortunately, many liberals applauded this demonstration.

Here is what some faction of the left has failed to realize: this is not simply a matter of morals, but also one of tactics. If anyone "deserves" to be punched in the face, it is Spencer. Instead of asking whether this violence is justified, progressives should ask whether it was for the sake of the greater good. For tactical as well as ethical reasons, the answer is an unequivocal no.

First, the authoritarian left's premise — that lashing out violently at this hateful figure is an effective way to turn off his megaphone — is preposterous. Practically no one knew who Richard Spencer was until around mid-November of 2016. At that time, he gave a Nazi salute while speaking at an event in D.C. and subsequently received substantial media coverage, along with a vocal response from the left, further drawing attention to him. A petition and protest surrounding his planned speech at Texas A&M in early December caused a second spike in his fame. By January, he was once again receding from the spotlight. Then he was punched. Since that time, according to Google Trends, the searches for his name have remained high. By another metric of Spencer's rise to fame, he went from having 18,000 twitter followers in mid-October to having nearly 40,000 today. Media coverage, protests, and being hit have boosted his image. Similarly, on February 1st, violent anarchists shut down

a Milo Yiannopoulos event at UC Berkeley to try and silence him, yet when Americans turned on their TVs they did not see Milo spreading hate, they saw rioters destroying Berkeley's campus. The very next day Milo went on Fox News and was able to discuss the event for millions across the nation to see. Violently shutting down speakers does not silence them, but rather makes their voice louder. If this were not enough, it also makes them appear as victims, which they most certainly are not. While to many liberals it may seem funny or satisfying to watch Spencer be assaulted, to the moderate, apolitical, average American, the video makes the left look pugnacious and bloodthirsty. And in the moment, it distracts from Spencer's prejudiced rhetoric.

Consider the combined effect: the spotlight is placed on precisely the wrong parts of Spencer's antics. Those who would vehemently disagree with his xenophobic, neo-Nazi ideas instead pay attention to the protester; those who have just as perverse a mindset as he now

have a leader to follow.

For a moment, let us put aside the speed with which this petulant attempt to silence Spencer backfired, and return to the original question of whether such hypocrisy from the left can be tolerated. Those who say they champion peace and freedom by engaging in political violence have legitimized that tool of the fascist as a political tactic. Of course, the use of violence does not automatically make one a fascist — fascism is a larger ideology — but it does make you an authoritarian. While the political spectrum is frequently viewed on a scale of simply left and right, liberal and conservative, there is a whole other dimension that is frequently ignored: the spectrum of authoritarianism and libertarianism. "Authoritarian" is defined by the Oxford Dictio-

nary as: "Favoring or enforcing strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom." Some of the synonyms include: illiberal, oppressive, undemocratic, and dictatorial. Fear, anger, intimidation, hate, aggression. These are attributes of the authoritarian. The authoritarian tries to maintain control of political debate by silencing their ideological opponents through censorship and violence. The claim that violence against the alt-right is justified displays profound ignorance of the ramifications violent political discourse can have. Particularly in light of the current president's authoritarian tendencies, legitimizing such habits by adopting them ourselves is a frightening idea.

This policing of ideas bears a frightening resemblance to what

author George Orwell famously referred to as crimethink — "thought crime." When authoritarian leftists consider violence against an ideology justified, they have also made adherence to such an ideology a politically and socially criminal offense. Saying that Nazis should be punched sets out a supposedly proper punishment for holding a certain ideology. We have no assurance that the far left will stop at punching. If they got their wish, they would likely behave in the exact way authoritarian left-wing governments of the past have: all right wingers with an ideology they believe is unacceptable would be punished by the state.

Many sympathizers of left wing extremists argue that the violence is only happening to people like Richard Spencer, that



Milo Yiannopoulos (c) @Kmeron (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/leweb3/8960613293/>) CC BY 2.0

We cannot praise Michelle Obama for saying “when they go low, we go high” and at the same time sink to the lowest form of political expression.

only “Nazis” are being punched. Sadly, that is factually incorrect, because the very same day Spencer was punched, a female Trump supporter’s hair was set ablaze at a protest. Another Trump supporter who was putting out a fire in a trash can, and was calling for peace, was assaulted by leftists. At Berkeley, the situation was even worse. Two students were attacked while giving interviews, including one woman who was pepper sprayed simply for wearing a red Trump hat. Others were punched and beaten with sticks. The masked anarchists shot fireworks and threw rocks at the police, some even throwing Molotov cocktails. Over 1500 rioters chanted “this is war.” It’s not a question of when the

violence will spread to average Trump supporters: it already has, and the right wing has noticed.

Conservatives been quick to capitalize on the increased violence from the left. Wayne LaPierre, head of the National Rifle Association, has used recent violence against Trump supporters as evidence of why conservatives need guns, saying at CPAC “Folks, our long nightmare — it may not be over. The fact is, it may be just beginning. Right now, we face a gathering of forces that are willing to use violence against us.” Shortly after being punched, Richard Spencer took to Twitter to say: “If law enforcement can’t protect us from [antifascist] assaults we will begin protecting ourselves.” When one side of the aisle uses

violence against the other, it will inevitably be reciprocated. This results in a race to the bottom.

Tactically, using violence to silence political opponents is completely counterproductive. It does not silence the other side, it gives them a microphone. Violence creates undeserved sympathy for the right wing, and gives the left less ground to stand on when trying to convince Americans to stand with us. Ultimately, it legitimizes the far-right and makes people question how confident the left is in its own message. Furthermore, this uptick in violence has an eerie resemblance of terrorism, defined as “the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.” Morally, violent politics is indefensible. Using terror to try and silence political opponents is indistinguishable from fascism, communism and other ideologies from darker sides of the political spectrum. The lie that the violence will be restricted to just the far-right has been proven false through the numerous examples of far leftists attacking random Trump supporters. All this will lead to is reciprocal violence from both sides. The far ends of the political spectrum want our nation to descend into a war in the streets. It is up to the rest of us to preserve some standard of decency in our political process. We cannot praise Michelle Obama for saying “when they go low, we go high” and at the same time sink to the lowest form of political expression. Hate cannot Trump hate.

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