

*SPRING ISSUE I 2023*  
*SNOWFLAKE SYNDROME*



*PRINCETON'S LEFT*  
*POLITICAL PUBLICATION*

**THE**



**PROG**

# THE PROG

*PRINCETON'S LEFT  
POLITICAL PUBLICATION*

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

*DEAR READERS,*

Welcome back to campus! Our first publication of the semester is an homage to both the (not-so-cold-and-snowy) winter season and the pejorative 'snowflake' or 'snowflake syndrome'. While "snowflake syndrome" is often used by conservatives to refer to left-leaning individuals who are deemed overly-sensitive or entitled, this issue consists of a number of articles critiquing the illusion of free speech and debate on the right, which is often used to justify discriminatory language directed at marginalized groups. At times of protest or with the critique of conservative views, it becomes increasingly apparent that the free speech that conservatives claim to protect does not extend to all. We extend a huge thank you to all of our writers and editor for making this issue possible.

Furthermore, we are pleased to announce that we will be handing over the Editor-in-Chief position to Austin Glover '24, who has demonstrated his commitment and clear vision for the newspaper over the past year as a Staff Writer, Editor, and, most recently, the Managing Editor.

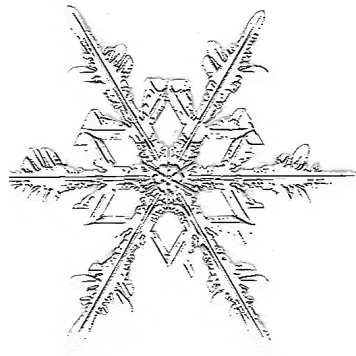
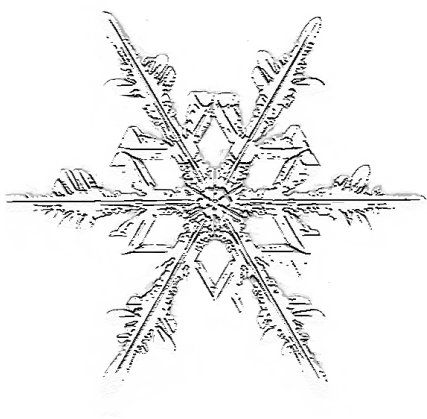
It has been a pleasure to serve as the Editors-in-Chief of *The Prog* over the past year, and we know that *The Prog* will continue to flourish and grow under Austin's leadership. We would also like to extend gratitude to each and every member and reader of *The Prog* for their support of the publication, whether big or small. We could not have revitalized the *The Prog* without you!

In solidarity,  
Maryam Ibrahim and Mary Alice Jouve

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# AVAILABLE POSITIONS

## *SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER*

- Create Instagram posts at least once every two weeks
- Create posts to advertise events and meetings
- Attract new followers and maintain social media engagement of existing followers

## *STAFF WRITER\**

- Publish at least two articles per semester on topics of choice
- Complete edits and changes from editor by assigned deadline

## *EDITOR\**

- Make edits and constructive suggestions on assigned article(s) from staff writer(s), following the Prog style guideline
- Offer assistance to staff writer during the writing process
- Proofread staff writers' articles before publication

## *DESIGN EDITOR\**

- Design covers and complete layout for each publication, following Prog style guidelines
- Work with social media manager to design and post Instagram posts

*TO APPLY FOR A POSITION*, email the editors-in-chief, Maryam Ibrahim (maryami@princeton.edu) and Mary Alice Jouve (mjouve@princeton.edu) and briefly answer the following questions:

Name, Class Year, Major

- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why are you a good fit for this role? (ex. Related experiences or relevant skills)
- Do you have any previous experience in publication? (no experience is necessary)
- What are your other commitments on campus?

\*Multiple positions are available for this role

Layout by: Maryam Ibrahim

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# PROGRESSIVE LEADERS ON CAMPUS

## Maryam Ibrahim

### *How to Unionize Your Workplace with Sara Mughal of Starbucks Workers United*

In mid-November, the Princeton Young Democratic Socialists of America chapter (YDSA) welcomed Sara Mughal, a shift supervisor and union leader at the Hopewell, New Jersey's Starbucks location, which became the first Starbucks in NJ to unionize with Starbucks Workers United.

Mughal first heard about the growing movement to unionize Starbucks locations when a Buffalo, New York store became the first to unionize, inciting a cascade of almost a hundred locations unionizing after it. Continuing to experience several problems in her Starbucks location such as labor shortages, delayed benefits, and hour cuts, after completing a rare slow, stress-free shift, Mughal approached a co-worker outside while they were taking out trash in order to avoid being on camera or overheard by management. She asked if they would be interested in organizing the other employees to discuss and address workplace issues so they did not have to continue working in such a high stress environment. Initially, she avoided using the word “union”, as she knew it was a dirty word that could have deterred some co-workers from advocating for better conditions. Much to Mughal’s delightful surprise, her co-workers were overwhelmingly supportive of mobilizing towards a healthier and more fair workplace environment, allowing them to begin strategizing.

For Starbucks die-hards, the holiday season is an exciting time, as the company



*Members of YDSA Leadership, Thomas Coulouras and Bryce Springfield leading the Discussion with Sara Mughal, photo by Maryam Ibrahim*

rolls out limited edition holiday themed cups. For Starbucks management and executives, the holiday season is an opportune time to maximize profits, inevitably at the expense of their workforce. For Starbucks baristas, the weight of meeting the increased demands of customers and managers is an often stressful expectation, especially when shifts are under scheduled to save money, yet managers boast about the holiday sales, essentially bragging about the exhaustion of their associates.

In January, Mughal worked to obtain the signature of as many co-workers as possible to file for an election with the National Labor Relations Board. Unsurprisingly, the Hopewell Starbucks employees were met with

desperate attempts to union bust from their managers and corporate staff. One tactic in particular was management closing the store location in order to hold “listening sessions”. While Starbucks has invested millions of dollars in training managers in union-busting, Mughal and her fellow co-workers were prepared to combat and dispel whatever negative sentiment management attempted to disseminate. Within these “listening sessions”, it immediately became clear that the managers were reciting a script and were repeating common misconceptions about unions as a means to cast doubt onto the workers. However, the Hopewell Starbucks baristas were unswayed and redirected the interrogation



*Princeton YDSA Members Standing in Solidarity with Starbucks Workers on Red Cup Day 2022, Photo provided by Bryce Springfield*

onto the managers themselves, leaving the workers more united and confident in the end. After the tremendous failure of these “listening sessions”, which would close the location despite the location never closing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, management attempted to create disarray by scheduling one-on-one meetings with each employee. This time, instead of attempting to confuse the workers on the value of unionizing, they resorted to using threats such as suggesting the workers’ benefits would be taken away or that managers would not be able to help them fulfill customer orders, which they rarely assist in the first place.

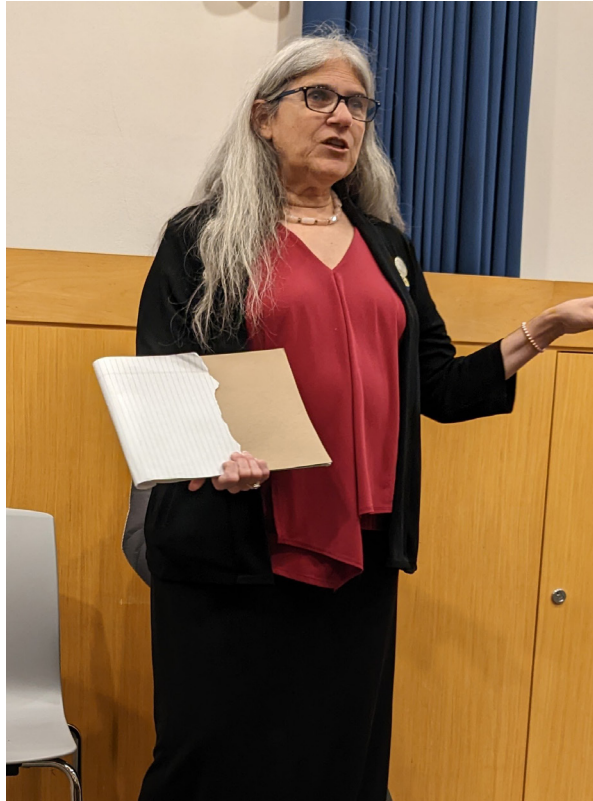
Grasping at thin air, the corporation challenged the union efforts in court, arguing that the union election should take place across stores in the district rather than within one store location. However, the case was thrown out and shortly after, the Hopewell Starbucks employees voted unanimously to form a union. Despite the backing of a multi-million dollar corporation, the Hopewell staff’s successful unionization sets a hopeful precedent that worker solidarity triumphs over empty attempts to deter mobilization.

During the Q&A portion of the talk, one student sought Mughal’s input on how students may organize their own workplace. In response, Mughal suggested discussing workplace issues with other fellow workers as a meaningful start, as Mughal had done during the beginning stages of the Hopewell Starbucks’ unionization efforts. Additionally, she encouraged students to support the unionization efforts of local workers. Only a day prior to Mughal’s talk, students of the Princeton leftist community joined a strike at the Hopewell Starbucks location, one of nearly a hundred locations around the country that shut down operations on Red Cup Day, Starbucks’ most profitable day of the year where customers receive a reusable holiday cup. As students and consumers, standing in protest with workers aids in highlighting the unjust conditions of Starbucks locations around the country, showing that the exploitation of these hard working employees will no longer be tolerated.

*The Prog gives special thanks to Sara Mughal for visiting campus to tell her courageous story of advocacy for her fellow workers. Additionally, thank you to Princeton YDSA for organizing and hosting such an insightful event. We look forward to reporting on YDSA events in the near future. ○*

## *The Long Path to Co-ed Eating Clubs: A Conversation with Sally Frank '80*

In early November, legal observer and law professor Sally Frank '80 joined *Prog* members at Terrace Club for an intimate dinner, followed by a talk at the Whig Senate Chamber with the campus community as a whole. During her time at Princeton, Frank was active in activism and student demonstrations, a passion she developed from an early age as she grew up during an era of political and social change in the 1960s and 1970s. Princeton was also in the midst of transformation, shifting to a co-educational student body in 1969. However, the remnants of centuries of exclusion lingered for several decades after.



*Prof. Frank Recalling her Impressive Case, Photo by Maryam Ibrahim*

Entering Princeton in 1976, Prof. Frank’s class consisted of a male to female ratio of 3 to 1. Many faculty members, none of whom were women with tenure, were unenthusiased with teaching female students, often creating a hostile learning environment for them. The safety of women on campus was a growing concern as they faced frequent harassment without the necessary precautions in place such as locks on dormitories.

At the heart of upperclassmen social life, three eating clubs were resistant to accepting women among their ranks-- Ivy, Cottage, and Tiger Inn. With a lingering culture as a “boys’ club”, Frank was concerned with the lasting impact of a culture where women were relegated only as attendants of a party but not as members of certain social groups.

During her sophomore fall, Frank attended a party for students planning to bicker at Cottage, where she had beer poured on her, followed by 20-30 Cottage members chanting, “Let’s throw Sally into the fountain!” That night, someone attempted to open her door, and Frank heard them mutter, “The door is locked.” Knowing that their intentions were likely negative, Frank stayed with one of her friends that night.

The summer after Frank’s sophomore year, she interned for the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey and brought these concerns to a director of the organization. The director advised her that on the basis that eating clubs are a public accommodation, she has reasonable grounds for litigating against the 3 remaining all-male clubs for gender discrimination. From this assertion, a 13 year lawsuit came to fruition.

Upon filing a complaint with the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights in early 1979, Frank’s case was campus-wide and a national topic of discussion and debate. When asked about how the case affected her personal and professional life, Frank recalled that she faced opposition such as receiving anonymous harassment phone calls and comments that attacked her appearance and character. While Frank tried not to let these incidents get to her, they ate away at her as they continued over time. However, Prof. Frank does not regret being at the center of a decade-long lawsuit challenging the discriminatory practices of powerful institutions. Elegantly put, Frank told the audience, “You can scare me, but it won’t affect my actions.”

*Thank you to Prof. Sally Frank '80 for returning to campus to give an account of her riveting story of how resilience and courage can spark meaningful change. The full account of Prof. Frank’s story may be read at [theprincetonprogressive.com](http://theprincetonprogressive.com) in Mary Alice Jouve’s articles based on her interview with Frank in summer 2022 titled “The Fight for a More Inclusive Campus: An Interview with Activist and Lawyer Sally Frank '80” ○*



*Audience Members Gathered at the Whig Senate Chamber for Prof. Frank’s Talk, Photo by Maryam Ibrahim*

# THE STATE OF CONSERVATISM AT PRINCETON

## Austin Glover

ACCORDING TO THE *DAILY PRINCETONIAN*'S annual survey of incoming first-year students, only about 11.4% of the Class of 2026 would describe themselves as either somewhat or very right-leaning. The fact that Princeton's student body tends to skew somewhat left of center (when it manages to break out of its usual political apathy, that is) means that it can be quite rare to hear conservative thought in classes or precepts.

But no one should be fooled by the apparent absence of conservative expression on campus; indeed, conservatism is alive and well at Princeton University. Instead of appearing in the classroom, however, it manifests itself online, through student groups like the Tory, and in print, via posters put up by the James Madison Program advertising its public lectures. The lectures themselves are particularly important for conservatives on campus, as they represent some of the only opportunities for right-leaning students and faculty to congregate with others of a similar political persuasion. These are spaces where Princeton's conservatives can receive cues about the status of their movement—who are its rising stars, which are its trending fixations, and what is its current trajectory. In other words, these are the places where conservatives go to be conservative.

I recently visited one such space, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the opposition, as it were. The occasion was a lecture presented by Matthew Continetti—a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute as well as a historian of American conservatism—entitled “The State of Conservatism 2022.” I was intrigued by this title, which had been plastered on posters that hung from what seemed like half of the campus lamp-posts in the week leading up to the event. Not that I was necessarily ignorant of the topic—who could be, after the events of the past seven years?—but I figured that hearing it directly from the horse's (elephant's?) mouth, so to speak, could provide a potentially interesting perspective.

In his lecture, Continetti provided a captivating account of conservatism's recent history, the role of that history in determining the movement's present state, and its various implications for the future of the American right. Recent developments within the conservative movement have fundamentally altered the longstanding balance of competing impulses (traditionalist, neoconservative, libertarian, religious) on the right, and certainly not for the better.

Nonetheless, conservatism at Princeton is still in many ways the same conservatism that it has always been, particularly in regard to the ideology's usual expressions.



Carlos Barría / Reuters

For instance: Continetti took a self-righteously dramatic tone when talking about the current state of American politics, with a special condescension reserved for liberals and their ‘woke ideology’. He made the obligatory reference to George Orwell (“...the Inflation Reduction Act, at whose name George Orwell would smile...”), and he repeatedly displayed his obvious idolization of Bill Buckley and Ronald Reagan, two of the most iconic conservative leaders who successfully managed to police their movement and unite it briefly behind a common set of ideals and policies. Even that oft-repressed impulse of casual homophobia made an appearance at this lecture, with Professor Robert George (apparently still smug from the Dobbs victory earlier this year) blithely chiming in to set a new judiciary target on *Obergefell v. Hodges*;

Continetti: “...I think a great spur to the rise of the New Right was the *Obergefell* decision. I know from my students, who are on the New Right, the religious right—that decision radicalized them. And that decision is not likely to be reversed.”

George: “Give us 49 years.”

Continetti: “It would take another two generations, I think, right?”

George: “We did it once.”

But I digress. When I had first arrived in the

lecture hall where Continetti's talk was to be given, I found it nearly full—a testament to conservatism's deceptive strength within this university. The lecture truly was an event, with students, professors, and community members all filling a room just to hear what Continetti had to say about the State of Conservatism in 2022. As I observed this crowd from my corner of the lecture hall, I wondered to myself: why had all of these people come to see Continetti speak? After hearing the lecture and the questions that followed it, I had a clear answer to this question. Princeton's conservative community was eager to be told where their movement is heading because even they don't know anymore.

The first thing to know about conservatism at Princeton is that it is a conservatism of the elite; it is intellectual, it is rigorous, and it is highly self-absorbed. At first glance, it shares very little in common with popular conservatism, the conservatism of those outside the Ivory Tower who are much less ideologically consistent or concerned with legitimizing their political beliefs using high-minded intellectual justifications. These two conservatisms share a professed love for the U.S. Constitution, of course, and they use mostly the same political language, but they have different priorities because they are accustomed to occupying disparate positions in the conservative hierarchy. Ordinary conservatives are the rank-and-file voters who tend to be fixated on the social and religious concerns of conservatism far more than they

are interested in the movement's fiscal orientation—often mounting significantly fewer objections to higher taxes for the rich or to extensions of government benefits than to trans athletes competing in high school sports or to race-based affirmative action policies.

Conservative elites, on the other hand, occupy the true positions of power within the movement. They are the policymakers who set the movement's agenda, the intellectuals who outline its priorities, and the planners who shape its future trajectory. Their modus operandi has traditionally been to provoke culture war outrage amongst the conservative base using identity-based agitprop, then to harness the resulting energy in order to win elections and ultimately pass an unpopular fiscal agenda (i.e. tax cuts). Their most important power is the ability to define the conservative mainstream, to police and direct conservatism's competing impulses—including laissez-faire economics, nationalism, religious fundamentalism, racial backlash, libertarianism, etc.—into a limited and unified front.

Or at least that was their most important power, until conservative elites lost it in 2016 with the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency. Trump was and is the natural result of the conservative base's ever-growing appetite for culture war agitation, and his meteoric rise to the top of the Republican party caused a massive power shift in the balance of American conservatism, as elites took a backseat to a force they had helped create but could not control. Under Trump's leadership, the traditionalist, Christian, and fascistic impulses in conservatism were strengthened at the expense of the neoconservative, corporate, and libertarian tendencies.

But this is old news. Today, more than two years after President Trump lost the 2020 presidential election, a power vacuum has emerged at the center of the conservative hierarchy as Trump has faded slightly into the background of American politics. This power vacuum—and the eminent contest to fill it—was the main subject of Continetti's lecture. According to Continetti, conservatism's future is up for grabs because the movement is divided, to a greater extent than ever before, between its competing and somewhat contradictory elements. It is not clear which of these elements will prevail because conservatism lacks a true leader, in the mold of a Buckley or a Reagan; there is no one conservative who can organize and unify these elements behind their own agenda while simultaneously limiting the scope of the movement in order to pre-

vent the far-right from unraveling it from the inside.



*James Madison Program, Photo Gallery*

This lack of conservative leadership is partly to blame for the rise of populist conservatism, whose main symptom was four years of Trump as president, and it is also behind the growing strength and brazenness of far-right elements such as the New Right and National Conservatism. From the perspective of Continetti and other conservative elites, the National Conservatives represent a particularly noteworthy threat not simply because their ideology is antithetical to traditional conservative principles, but also because so-called NatCon 'intellectuals' stand a chance of replacing traditional conservative elites as the controlling force of the movement. These far-right forces have made a point of being explicitly anti-establishment, and as they have attracted more and more people (especially youth) to their ideology, the conservative establishment of intellectual elites has become increasingly nervous that Trump's usurpation of their ability to define the mainstream was not a temporary blip but a permanent deposition.

Even now, conservative elites have not yet managed to reassert their control over the movement. This is why conservatism is currently in a status of limbo, and why the mood of the room both before and after Continetti's lecture was marked by an undertone of anxiety and gloom. There is much hanging in the balance of this eminent contest over the future

of American conservatism; elites like Continetti are well aware that the New Right and the NatCons don't share their self-declared values of freedom, constitutionalism, limited government, and the rule of law, and they understand that the stronger the far-right grows, the more and more these values will be eroded from the fabric of American political life.

Despite this purported difference of values, however, Continetti appeared to hold a certain amount of sympathy for the far-right. He strongly criticized the New Right and the NatCons, but his attitude toward them was still one of tolerance and engagement instead of condemnation. Near the end of the lecture, he argued that conservatives must find a way to identify why people have become so discontented with the conservative establishment and work to address that problem—a strategy that is tantamount to the accommodation of the far-right into the broader movement. In the end, even conservatives at Princeton, of all places, would prefer to appease the fascists rather than work with the Left to defeat them. Yet the fact that old-guard conservatives like Continetti seem willing to work with an increasingly menacing far-right should prompt us to consider just how different from the elites these so-called 'extremists' really are. After all, Bush v. Gore was just as much of an anti-democratic travesty as January 6th, and yet it too was supported and celebrated by the conservative elite.

But refusing to work with the Left against the far-right leaves conservatism with few options. The leading figures within the Republican Party are currently Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, and new faces like Glenn Youngkin. Looking forward to the 2024 presidential election, conservative elites view the possibility of another Trump administration as a disaster in terms of their influence over and power within the movement. Trump would only further embolden the populist far-right and allow it to extend its influence at the expense of mainstream conservatism. Youngkin, on the other hand, is still relatively unknown, which makes him a wild card but also a bad bet for the time being. This leaves Ron DeSantis as the only politician capable of rescuing conservatism from the quandary it now finds itself in. Indeed, Continetti admitted that "DeSantis presents the best hope for people like me" in that DeSantis—who has increasingly come to embody the synthesis of elite mainstream conservatism with Trump's populism—is likely the sole figure capable of 1) replacing Trump as the de facto conservative leader, 2) defeating the Democratic candidate in the electoral college, and 3) co-opting the far-right into the larger conservative movement, thereby limiting its influence as much as possible. Essentially, conservatives like Continetti see Desantis as the next Ronald Reagan: a unifying leader who can harness the electoral benefits of making not-so-subtle anti-democratic, racist, and chauvinistic appeals to voters, while keeping control of the movement solidly in the hands of the elite.

The real horror of this situation is that at the end of the day, in the absence of mutual cooperation, both leftists and conservative elites will be nearly powerless to do anything to prevent the rise of the far-right. Instead, the outcome of this struggle will ultimately be determined by the Republican presidential candidates and primary voters in 2024. In the meantime, conservative elites like Continetti seem to be signaling that they would rather flirt with fascism than compromise with the Left to save American democracy, and we will all have to live with the consequences. ○



*James Madison Program, Photo Gallery*

# FACING DOWN PRINCETON: Activists Past and Present

## Alex Norbrook

ON MARCH 7, 1969, Princeton's "super-psychedelic party weekend" began with a love-themed Junior Prom. Couples were handed love beads and lush flowers as they strolled into Dillon Gym, where they danced the night away in front of a massive 60-foot stage constructed for the event. Eating clubs hosted their usual parties after the JP as well as the following night. The weekend became rowdier than expected, but not unreasonably so. A Princeton High School student was shot in the foot in the basement of Murray-Dodge, then called "the Womb." A group of students burned a pile of newspapers in Gauss Hall (eventually part of First College), triggering a fire alarm at 2:38 a.m. on Sunday. Six trucks and one ambulance rushed to the scene.

The events of this "party weekend" occurred amidst growing rumors that the Association of Black Collegians (ABC) and the Third World Liberation Front were preparing for a militant disruption on campus. These groups fought for full University divestment from companies that enabled the oppressive South African apartheid government.

The week before, the United Front of South Africa, a multi-racial coalition, held a rally and called on President Robert Goheen '40 to divest stock in 39 companies. Goheen responded with a set of steps to divest from South Africa's apartheid government. His outlined policy stopped far short of committing Princeton to full South African divestment. Goheen's proposal, which included moves to refuse financial support and stop investing in companies doing "primary business" in South Africa, was insufficient to the ABC and Liberation Front. Rumors circulated that the organizations were planning something, but no one was quite sure what. Even Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the predominantly-white radical anti-war organization, was not clued in.

It was 7 a.m. on a frigid March morning when a student hurried into the delivery entrance on the south side of New South, just as the janitor was opening the doors for the day. He held the door open, and, with "clockwork precision," roughly fifty more students from the two groups stormed the building after him, chaining the north doors and securing the east doors with a mop. This was how the ABC and Liberation Front began their 11-hour occupation of New South.

SDS, unaware of the occupation until it began, scrambled its members and hosted a demonstration in the afternoon outside New South to support the occupiers. 500 students showed up in support, huddling together on the snow-covered green outside the hulking former administrative building, and listening to rally speakers. A contingent uprooted a bike rack and barricaded the front entrance with its metal frame. Counter protesters, bundled



Gordon Chang, (Left) a leader of the Third World Liberation Front, and Douglas Seaton (right) of SDS speaking at the New South Occupation Protest. *The Daily Princetonian*.

in coats, some wearing green sweaters of Cannon Club, screamed "Get the hell out!" at the demonstrators and sang Old Nassau, at times drowning out SDS speakers. Protestors chanted "Fight racism" and "Divest now" in retaliation. The atmosphere was charged; conflict could have broken out at a moment's notice.

The occupation of New South was only one action in a long history of the anti-apartheid divestment movement at Princeton that began in the mid-sixties and ended at the same time as the apartheid regime fell in 1994. Bob Herbst '69 participated in this first wave of the divestment movement as a member of the *Daily Princetonian's* editorial board. Herbst said that the late sixties was a time "of great ferment" both on-campus and off. The Vietnam War raged on, civil rights battles persisted, and Princeton was moving towards coeducation.

During Herbst's time as a student, in addition to participating in the anti-war struggle, activists fought for self-government and protested against selective eating clubs, as nonselective clubs did not exist. They opposed parietal hours—a University policy that dictated that women (overwhelmingly from outside of Princeton, as the University remained single-sex until the fall of 1969) were only permitted in dorms before certain times each night—and fought against a requirement that students attend chapel services. "Divestment in terms of South Africa was part and parcel of this great progressive movement both on the campus and off," Herbst said. In this period the anti-apartheid movement was in its early stages, not yet the major focus of demonstration that it would become.

"[Apartheid] was... a really systematic, persistent way that the [white] settler colonialists dominated the Indigenous Black people in the country," Herbst said. "There was vast agreement that it was an apartheid society that could not change itself; it needed outside pressure in order to do so."

As a member of the editorial board of *the Daily Princetonian*, Herbst wrote an editorial criticizing the University's continued investment in apartheid. His editorial, titled "South Africa: Divest With Deliberate Speed," asserted, "If the community retains its ownership, it makes a simple statement. It says that it will continue to profit from the labor of enslaved men because the profits are so important to this university and its members, that the university will continue to exploit others for those profits."

Herbst and fellow activists encountered an administration that, according to Herbst, "thought [divestment] was nuts. They thought it was crazy." Students, too, had mixed feelings about divestment. A survey conducted by an ad hoc polling group the day of the occupation found that almost 60 percent of student respondents supported Goheen's limited and vague South Africa divestment policy, with 29 percent in disapproval. This reflected an overall campus climate where "not everyone thought that the Vietnam War was wrong, that segregation was wrong, that apartheid was wrong, or if it was wrong, that they wanted to spend a lot of time and effort thinking about it and talking about it and protesting about it," Herbst said. "The whole thing was contested."



On another cold spring morning nearly a decade later, 210 activists from the People's Front for the Liberation of South Africa marched into Nassau Hall to begin a 27-hour sit-in, one of the longest occupations of an administrative building in Princeton's history. The People's Front was created in 1977 by Larry Hamm '78, nicknamed Adhimu Changa while at Princeton, as a multi-racial coalition calling for divestment. Its actions helped shake Princeton out of a "lull that came after a period of significant activism the decade before," according to Cory Alperstein '78, People's Front member and among the fifth co-ed cohort at Princeton.

ment prospects. "It was senior thesis time; people were applying to law school. There was a lot of nervousness about what would happen individually for students who got reprimanded," Alperstein said.

Nevertheless, as the sun sank below the horizon and the night's chill set in, the activists hunkered down. They read books, played cards, and talked quietly amongst themselves. One group on the third floor danced late into the night. Outside, students organized an overnight supporter's vigil. A band played rock music and people danced by candlelight. 65 students stayed throughout the night, braving the elements, though many

year reunion of the sit-in, Alperstein remarked that alumni participants continued to be activists. "They were organizers, they were in healthcare, they were professors in universities talking about the history of Civil Rights," she said. "There was a coming together of people who understood back then what was at stake... and this understanding of a protracted struggle, which is what we came to realize was the reality." Today, Alperstein engages in climate activism work in Massachusetts at the municipal and state level in grassroots and local environmental organizations. Herbst is a lawyer specializing in issues including civil rights and employment and housing discrimination. Both are active alumni members of Divest Princeton.

Princeton University never fully divested from apartheid South Africa. But all the activists who fought for divestment gained what Alperstein calls an "activist perspective" through their changemaking. To Alperstein, this perspective is the most important outcome of an activist movement, setting people on a lifelong mission of "protracted struggle" to fight for change.

I am a first-year who is just entering Princeton's fossil fuel divestment movement, joining a fight for endowment justice that spans fifty years. Outside a core group of dedicated activists, I find myself amidst a student body that accepts a climate of political apathy. Both Herbst and Alperstein found this to be true during their time at Princeton: a large number of students outside of the activist community did not want to involve themselves in University issues. Alperstein went so far as to say that some students operated "in a different universe" when it came to engagement. But today, that apathy is far more widespread. For instance, Divest Princeton's biggest annual event, the Global Youth Climate Strike, turned out just 20 people this year, a drop in the water compared to the hundreds of students the People's Front regularly assembled.

Global changes have certainly contributed to this dramatic decline in direct action. For one, we aren't mobilized by anything like the Vietnam War: our friends aren't at risk of getting drafted and dying overseas. COVID's devastation dramatically reduced activist involvement. Job insecurity, particularly among young people, has exploded and made it more difficult for people to take extra time to fight for change.

University policy also encourages apathy. Princeton directs students towards service at the expense of activism, chooses how many activists get accepted into Princeton, and creates the perfect conditions for student complacency. Princeton can legitimately present itself as a "benevolent" institution, one which accommodates student demands about campus life and increases resources devoted to students. They adopt a rhetoric that tells students and faculty that the administration will take care of them. Why would you want to critique an administration that gives you so many resources? Why would you bite the hand that feeds you?

The history of the anti-apartheid movement on campus proves that we can break free from the current apathetic climate. Even despite University resistance, we see what students are capable of when we join together en masse. Understanding this history broadens the horizon for how student activists can organize, what strategies we can use, and what we can change during our time at Princeton. With this understanding, we can join the ranks of all who fought before us and engage in the protracted struggle for justice for the rest of our lives. ○



Protestors outside Nassau Hall, *The Daily Princetonian*.

In the decade that passed since Herbst was a student, Princeton had not radically changed its position on investment in South Africa. The University made investment decisions on the basis of the Sullivan Principles, a set of protocols that demanded equal treatment of employees in South Africa regardless of race. Princeton would invest in companies that followed the principles. Princeton claimed it was using its shares in companies as leverage to push them to make responsible decisions in South Africa. "It's like greenwashing today," Alperstein said. "If you continue to provide the financial support that these companies provide and you're invested in them, they'll continue to do business."

The People's Front was not satisfied with this policy. Their sit-in culminated in a series of escalating actions organized over the previous month. For 34 days, students picketed behind Nassau Hall every day, sometimes drawing crowds of 200. The People's Front brought together 600 students for a protest on Cannon Green. That same day, 500 students crammed into McCosh 50 to listen to African National Congress member Johnny Makitini speak. Some activists went on a week-long hunger strike, too.

Organizers planned the details of the sit-in in secret, communicating via written messages instead of by telephone because they suspected their lines were tapped. Cell groups of four to five hand-picked activists met nightly the week preceding the action, learning how to respond to threats of removal or arrest.

The sit-in began the morning of April 14, when the occupiers gathered and entered Nassau Hall. While inside the building, activists were tense but determined and dispersed in their cell groups. Many worried about how the sit-in would affect their future employ-

ment more left before morning came.

The occupation concluded at 11:20 a.m. the next day. The students, waking up in sleeping bags that were thrown through windows by People's Front members, cleaned up after themselves and left through the front door. They found themselves in front of a cheering and applauding crowd of more than 300 people. Chanting and singing, the united crowd set off in the direction of Corwin Hall, where the Board of Trustees was voting on divestment proposals made by the Resource Committee. They arrived 600 strong, having accumulated more supporters on the walk.

The University did not fully accept the demands of the People's Front. In the very meeting those protestors marched to, the Board rejected a student University Council Resource Committee recommendation to vote in favor of shareholder proxies that would have limited activities of Union Carbide (a chemical company) and Kodak in South Africa. "I remember coming out of the building and feeling like we had to somehow grab victory from the experience, which was discouraging to say the least," Alperstein said. "The Board of Trustees said 'we're not going to do this.'"

The University continued to follow the Sullivan Principles, with little major change. Trustee Stephen Ailes '33, chair of the subcommittee that drafted South African investment policy, said soon after the protest, "the day that my decision-making process is affected by demonstrations and what not, I've got to quit."

Even though Princeton refused to budge, to Alperstein, the most significant result of the protest was its effect on students' lives and careers following the sit-in. "It was a lesson learned by a lot of us about what it means to take a stand," she added. After a 40-

# FREDERICK LUDWIG HOFFMAN: He who Exemplifies the Ideals of Princeton University

## Abdul-Bassit Fijabi

*The following content is purely satirical, but unfortunately not entirely fictional.*

Good morning to you wonderful students, faculty, and community! It's incredible to have you all here and energized for the day, and I applaud your resilience. Your presence is a testament to your conviction to learn, in spite of the overwhelming dissidence and vitriol hurled your way. As much as the mob may want our voices silenced, we're not going anywhere.

Since our inception in 2000, the James Madison Program has remained committed to our mission of seeking the truth and probing the depths of Western political thought. We engage with scholars with a wide range of backgrounds, ideals, and practices. This, of course, has been an unfortunate point of contention in the eyes of many of our peers. However, we always consider it worthwhile to listen to perspectives we might feel uncomfortable about; there is always something to be learned from any conversation. With that in mind, for this event we wanted to focus on prominent but previously sidelined individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of science as a whole. In the current age of misinformation and false narratives, we must recognize trusted authorities in the scientific community and the literature they produce. One such individual stood out to all of us at the Initiative on Freedom of Thought, Inquiry, and Expression: We proudly dedicate this event to statistician Frederick Ludwig Hoffman.

For a little background, Hoffman was born in Germany in 1865 to a rather wealthy family of industrialists. However, he lacked the propensity to follow in his family's footsteps. Instead, he claimed to be more of the "scientific temperament." Certain that he wouldn't find success in his homeland, he made the nearly 4000-mile journey to New York with less than five dollars to his name. Here, he would begin his path towards the sciences in earnest and carve a space for himself in the world of statistics. But let's not get too ahead of ourselves, otherwise there'd be little point to the event!

Our decision was met with a fervorous support from Princeton's conservative academic community. Eminent philosopher and Politics professor, our very own Gobert D. Forge, commented, "It's about time that man gets some recognition." Nonetheless, we also understand how such a decision might provoke controversy in other academic spheres, as many have claimed that his most prominent work is too offensive to have any relevance to the common era. Well, we can assure you, Mortality from Respiratory Diseases in

James Madison Program  
in American Ideals and Institutions

In Honor of Frederick Ludwig Hoffman:  
World-class Eugenicist  
and Statistician

Copies of *The Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* provided!

*Graphic by Maryam Ibrahim*

Dusty Trades is a harmless read (even if it is dated). There is also the case of one of his other books, Race Traits, which purportedly says less-than-savory things about African-Americans. Although, if you ask us, some of these critiques are a tad overblown. "Advocating for eugenics?" "The premature death of Black Americans?" Come on, this is the 20th century we're talking about here. Three hundred years after slavery. People can change — people have changed. And Hoffman himself was in a unique, objective position to address the "Negro problem," as it is called. And so, we want to take the time to describe our selection in greater detail and demonstrate how Hoffman not only meets but exceeds our expectations, all while using the tenets of Princeton's honorary degree requirements to guide us; if he were with us today, he would certainly be our first pick.

First: Genuine achievement and distinction in an activity consonant with the mission of the University.

To work "in the nation's service and in service of humanity" is to us a willingness to challenge the problems facing the world, going beyond individualistic desires to serve one's community. Hoffman decided to publish Race

Traits, no doubt, because he understood that race was one of the most pressing issues of American society at that time. After Congress passed Reconstruction Era amendments that banned discrimination based on skin color, certain community members were subjected to increased and undeserved persecution. We're speaking, of course, about insurance companies, who were suffering potential revenue losses because of these tumultuous changes. Who was at the front lines of this conflict, eager to bring about a resolution? Hoffman, of course! Having already established himself as a rising expert in Black mortality, he was hired by Prudential Financial (based in Newark, New Jersey, no less!) to prove that the continued discrimination was, in fact, justified. Using statistical methods, he gleaned valuable information about inherent racial criminality and allowed Prudential to continue profiting from its most vulnerable clients. Hoffman thus demonstrated a willingness to serve not only himself but Prudential and his surrounding community. And people say America is a land of individualism!

We'd also dare say that African-Americans reaped some rewards from this too. Hoffman approached the "Negro problem" with

great detail and care. The man said it himself, stating, “crime, pauperism, and sexual immorality are without question the greatest hindrances to social and economic progress, and the tendencies of the colored race in respect to these phases of life will deserve a more careful investigation than has thus far been accorded to them.” Census data, the testimonies of experts, and his objective prose all created a watertight narrative of the future of Black communities. Almost brilliantly, Hoffman’s timeless work did not consider the society in which Black Americans lived as a factor that contributed to the problem. Contrast this with another paper of his, “Suicide and Modern Civilization,” which unequivocally claims that rising White mortality rates were a product of societal factors. Some of you might be quick to call it racism, but hear us out. Society is ever-evolving, you know? The audience, the society, that Hoffman appealed to then isn’t the same as today, and it likely won’t be the same 100 years from now. For instance, groups in the 1860s might have proudly waved Confederate flags, but it’d be ridiculous to say that there are individuals who’d do this today. In essence, his arguments for addressing White mortality might have become dated, but making the plight of Black Americans an issue outside of society means that the solution is also independent of society. In other words, there’s always a solution. Genius, is it not? The problem is and will always be Black people. Perhaps society hasn’t changed in some regards.

Next: Adequate reason for recognition by Princeton University of such achievement and distinction. We’d like to tie this in with another criterion: Appropriateness of recognition at a ceremony attended by undergraduate and advanced degree candidates reflecting a diversity of interests and concerns. You might think that Hoffman himself has no connection to Princeton or the state of New Jersey, and you’d be wrong. He shares the same middle name as our very own President Eisgruber. That has to count for something!

Moreover, Hoffman’s viewpoints and ideals certainly enrich the intellectual pool of this University. Everyone on the political spectrum has something to gain from his expertise, but we’d imagine that this dedication may prove refreshing to our more right-wing constituents. After all, conservative beliefs on this campus have been subjected to a fair bit of controversy and backlash. One of our Politics students in particular has attracted national media attention discussing this ever-growing divide. She stated in a recent interview, “Conservative values aren’t respected on this campus, and it’s really awful to see. Hmm? No, not the free market. No, not lower taxes. Not defense spending! No – NOT deregulation – I’m clearly talking about my right to harass disenfranchised students and shame them in a national publication!” Sure, members of the Black Justice League have faced death threats, risks of expulsion, borderline doxing, and an overwhelming sense of insecurity on campus. These so-called “protected minorities” have to contend with University-sponsored events that debate their very existence. But one must also consider that conservatives are being asked to defend their opinions and are (gasp!) encountering disagreement; it’s rather mentally damaging, if you ask us. I mean, the psychological strain is so awful, they’ve resorted to condemning courses that no one is forcing them to take. All the while they willfully call into question the educational history and past criminal offenses of scholars to delegitimize their standing and engender acts of bigotry against them. They’re so far gone that they’ve

abandoned their ideals of anti-cancel culture! Recognizing an individual like Hoffman certainly helps to heal these bitter wounds and gives them the safe space these groups so clearly need.

This brings us to our next and final point: Particular meaning to the individual being recognized. Also tied in with: Achievement and distinction that have not been similarly recognized by a number of other institutions. What’s underappreciated about Hoffman’s origins and what gave him a unique power as a statistical researcher was his lack of bias. Young, impoverished, and lacking fluency in English, Hoffman was certainly unfamiliar with race relations in America. One could consider him a blank slate, eager to learn while preserving his objectivity. Of course, there’s hardly a better place to form an unbiased opinion than the Deep South. Hoffman spent eight years there learning about culture, identity, and race relations, provoking his desire to find an explanation for the “Negro problem”. The rest is, as they say, history. Hoffman would later enjoy a life of relative success and fame, establishing himself as a central figure in the discussion of race relations in 20th century America. A true coming-of-age story of the quintessential immigrant to the United States. When someone of that caliber and background tells us that the Black American is part of a dying race, it might be controversial, but who are we to deny it?

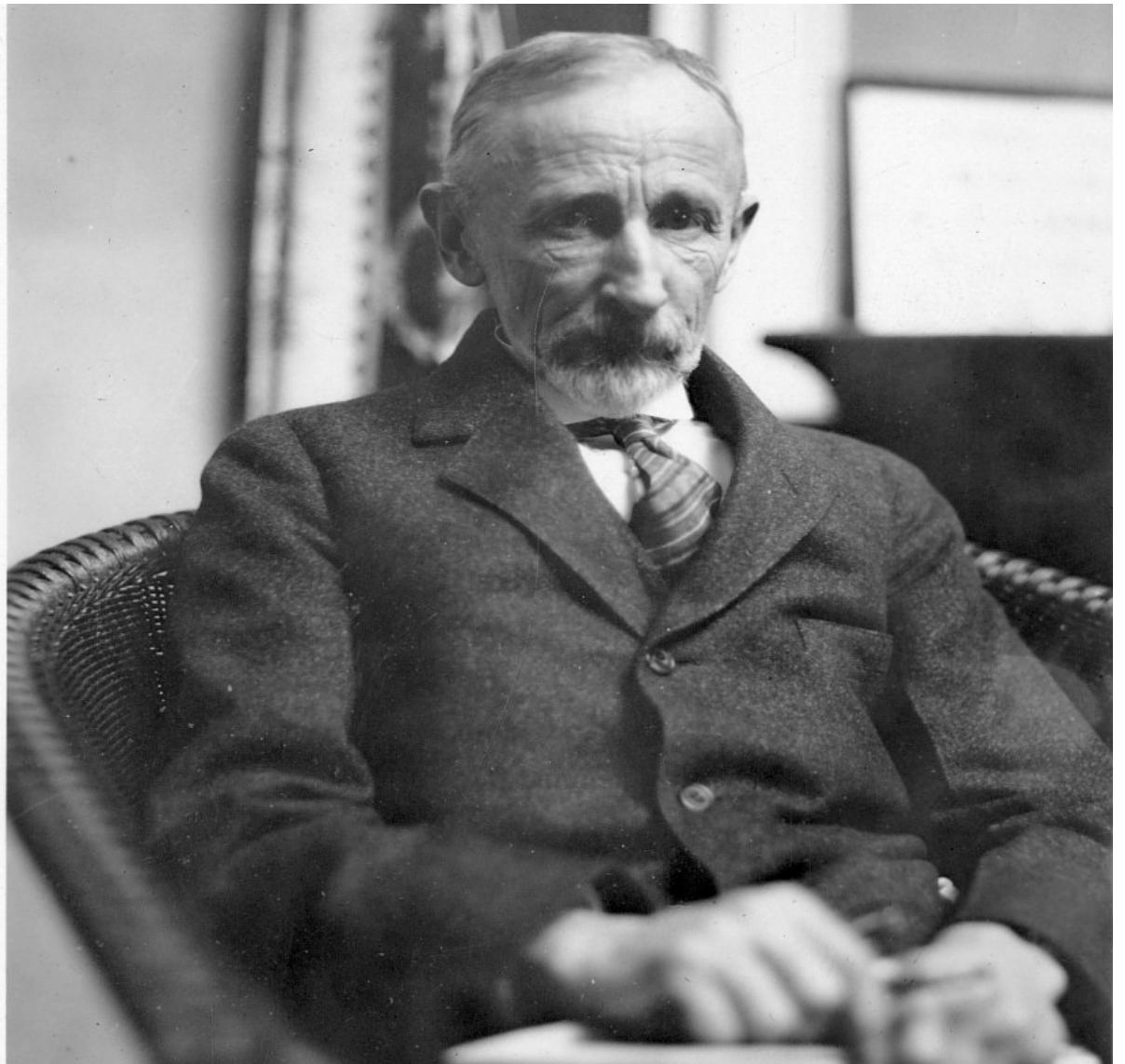
The more astute of you might be wondering, “Hey, wait a minute. Didn’t Hoffman change his perspective? What about all the stuff he did for Native Americans?” Indeed. For those who are unaware, following his work on safety in the workplace, he began to reconsider his stance and relationship with the minority population. He advocated for the rights of Native Americans, and he urged Prudential to make them eligible for their insurance. And yes, his stance on the “Negro problem” reversed. As he put it: “unfavorable influences on Negro health were environmental rather than racial.” So there you have it. Didn’t we say that people can (and have) changed? Hoff-

man is no exception.

Consequently, there’s no need to whine about how damaging his book supposedly was. A shame, really. We thought they had some weight to them. But it’s not as if his work *Race Traits* became pivotal for reinforcing the concept of inherent Black criminality. Surely you can’t sit here and tell us that scientists would, in spite of this, continually publish studies attempting to derive a causal link between race and intelligence even well after his passing. Even while pursuing free expression, we must not entertain misinformation. So it would be ludicrous to imply that Princeton would willingly invite an academic who endorses this false narrative to speak in a special event. Not once, but twice.

We speak directly to Hoffman’s critics now. If you’re so upset that many scientists and academics hold these views to this day, shouldn’t you consider examining your own biases? Rather than run to your echo chamber, why not engage with a well-researched and objective perspective? What are you yelling for? Do you think you can cancel crime statistics and data? Tell it to say something else? At this point, you’re just preaching to the void. If the data is seriously telling us that you aren’t worth it, if you’re on the road to extinction, then go alone for goodness’ sake! Don’t take us with you! You honestly have no one to blame but yourselves. March for our lives? Don’t make us laugh. Joshua Katz was right: The words “terrorist organization” don’t even begin to describe the likes of you.

But don’t worry, we’re not here to attack you and reject your viewpoint. This is a congratulatory address first and foremost. Frederick Ludwig Hoffman is a man that is well-deserving of his accolades, and we hope our reasons outlined above make that clear. If you disagree, that’s fine; you’re entitled to your opinions, and we welcome you to debate us with open arms. But if you think you have the right to call us racists and catalysts of a system of oppression, then the road is open for you to walk down, too. We won’t miss you. o



*Frederick Ludwig Hoffman, Smithsonian Institution Archives*

# AN ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FOR STATE OPPRESSION IN XINJIANG, CHINA

## Re: What's Really Happening in Xinjiang

### Bryce Springfield

*DURING MY FIRST SEMESTER AT PRINCETON*, I, like many students, decided to look into student organizations that I could get involved with going forward. Apart from wishing to satisfy my “speedcubing” hobby with the Cube Club, I also looked into left-wing organizations to which I could contribute, as I had been a committed socialist for several years at that point. While several left-wing organizations had gone dormant, one that caught my interest was *The Prog*. A quick glance at the ODUS description made *The Prog* seem like a great fit for me: it is Princeton’s only left-wing campus newspaper written by and for students. However, after taking a look at *The Prog*’s website, one piece raised a lot of questions for me: “OPINION: What’s Really Happening in Xinjiang”, by an anonymous author. As I read the article, I found myself disappointed with the article’s arguments, similar to points I had heard from some Marxist-Leninists and even the Chinese government’s own public comments.

My first thought was this: the Left is meant to question the status quo and its institutions. Considering the pervasiveness of capitalist institutions in China’s economy and authoritarian bureaucracy, one should think that a minimization of the Chinese government’s oppression of minority groups should be something that leftists radically reject. However, I did not find this article to follow that ideal.

In its introduction, the author of “What’s Really Happening in Xinjiang” rightly points out that the United States has utilized unfounded claims and racist propaganda to justify its imperialist ambitions. Most visibly, this is what happened after the September 11 terrorist attacks as President George W. Bush declared a “War on Terror” in response. Many Muslim Americans were targeted and discriminated against by individuals and the government, which has had lasting repercussions until today. Even in recent years, nearly half of Americans see Muslims as a group more inclined to violence than others, and Muslims are the least approved-of religious group in the United States, according to survey data from the Pew Research Center.

The War on Terror gained widespread legitimacy and support through the construction of an Islamic “threat” that justified US-backed wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and other regions, leading to at least 37 million displacements, mass food insecurity, and the deaths of 897,000 to 929,000 people.

Yet, alongside vague references to “CIA front groups, defense contractors, and Western government sources” fabricating empirical support for key claims regarding the

genocide, the author resorts to suspiciously familiar fearmongering about the “increasing radicalization of some of [Xinjiang’s] Islamic citizens”—referring to a few notable cases of terrorism—as, seemingly, a mitigating factor for the oppression that the Chinese government commits against an entire population. Though I applaud the author for at least acknowledging officials’ “eager[ness] to surveil, arrest, and racially profile Uyghurs,” some parts of the article appear to me to question whether key claims of atrocities in Xinjiang are true or imply an alternative framing of “vocational schools.”

In this article, I hope to demonstrate compelling evidence from the Chinese government itself and other openly available sources to emphasize the state oppression occurring in the majority-minority Xinjiang province. Then, I will discuss how leftists can reconcile legitimate claims of atrocities with anti-imperialism and international solidarity against statist and capitalist systems that profit off of oppressed groups.

#### GENOCIDE

Of course, “genocide” is often a loaded term used to overcharacterize a wide range of atrocities, as the author of the opinion piece points out. For the sake of using this word in line with international standards, I will compare the United Nations’ definition of genocide with what I believe is occurring in Xinjiang based solely on the information presented in this article.

In Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, or simply the Genocide Convention, ratified or acceded to by 149 countries, including China, the following definition was approved:

*In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical [sic], racial or religious group, as such:*

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Most people likely immediately only

think of part (a), but this excerpt demonstrates that genocide also includes other sorts of atrocities while maintaining clear, defined bounds. In the case of Xinjiang since at least 2017, I would argue that, with the points made in this article, at least (b) through (d) likely apply due to mandatory “re-education” for Muslim practices and especially forced birth prevention. Therefore, I will use the term “Uyghur genocide” to refer to the state oppression occurring particularly against Muslims in Xinjiang, but that may also target others in Xinjiang.

For the purposes of this article, in addition to mentioning a few things about forced cultural assimilation (which some refer to as “cultural genocide”), I will primarily focus on the genocidal aspects of oppression in Xinjiang according to the UN definition, although there is also much to be said about surveillance and repression of free expression in Xinjiang for the sake of “stability,” including against activists pushing for—and this is of particular interest to the Left—environmental protections.

#### INTERNMENT CAMPS

The most well-reported aspect of the Uyghur genocide is perhaps its internment camps, described by the Chinese government as “vocational education and training centers” or “re-education camps.” According to Chinese government officials, there is an “urgent need” for these camps in order to fight the “Three Evil Forces” of terrorism, separatism, and extremism that have threatened Chinese territorial and civil stability “[b]etween 1990 and the end the 2016.”

Shortly after this policy realignment, the creation of internment camps was first observed in 2017. In 2018, Xinjiang officials responded by either denying the camps’ existence or justifying them as agents of social stability and economic growth. What is interesting is that in 2015, a few years before this major policy shift, Chinese government officials claimed that they had already been extremely effective in preventing terrorist attacks, indicating that the new policies in Xinjiang were not in response to heightened terrorist activity.

Since then, Chinese government sources have shifted toward acknowledging the re-education camps and have even invited Western journalists to observe them under restrictive conditions, presenting them as bona fide educational facilities. However, an analysis of the birth rates and arrest rates in Xinjiang suggests that something more nefarious is occurring.

## CRUDE BIRTH RATES AND INCARCERATION RATES

One does not need to rely on Western researchers or on testimonials to find drastic irregularities that cannot reasonably be explained by normal demographic or developmental trends. In fact, we only need to look at the Chinese government's own annual statistical reports, the *China Statistical Yearbooks*, which it publishes online and in print. Unfortunately, the *Yearbooks* do not report on ethnic breakdowns. Regardless, an analysis of the provided data points to abnormal trends in Xinjiang, which is mostly populated by minority groups and nearly half Uyghur, that are not observed in other regions in the same time frame.

The first piece of evidence that should raise serious concern is Xinjiang's change in birth rates over the last few years. Although the Chinese government began omitting regional birth rates from the 2020 statistics, the data up to 2019 is clearly unusual.

My analysis begins with recent regional birth rate data from 2013 through 2019 provided by the *China Statistical Yearbooks*. In the appendix at the end of this article are a few graphs I constructed to visualize the data. In the first, we see a significant drop of 49% in the annual birth rate in Xinjiang between 2017 and 2019, which is a much faster drop than that of China as a whole. This brings the regional birth rates significantly below that of China, which is all the more concerning given that Xinjiang's historic birth rates had previously been notably higher than that of the national average.

To compare this to other regions in China, the histogram within the appendix shows Xinjiang as the lowest instance of birth rates from 2017, when the "vocational camps" opened, to 2019. One thing to note is that with the rescinding of the One Child Policy in 2015 and 2016, according to many Chinese demographers, we should see an immediate increase in birth rates followed by decreases over this period—due to "two-child policies"—to a greater extent than natural changes. Given that Xinjiang was exempted from having one-child restrictions as mentioned in the article, meaning it should not have experienced shocks from this, it should be concerning that it is an extreme outlier even compared to other Chinese provinces that were supposed to experience significant changes which were nowhere near as drastic as predicted).

The only comparable drop in reported birth rates since 1950 that I am aware of is that of Greenland from mass sterilization under Danish colonial rule, which is a fitting comparison. Even this, however, was over the

course of nearly a decade rather than two years.

We see unusual changes in official contraceptive data in 2018 in Xinjiang, as well. In the *China Health Statistical Yearbooks*, we see rapid increases in the national proportion of sterilizations—which include vasectomies and "tube tying"—in Xinjiang especially in 2018. The author of the original article correctly notes that Adrian Zenz, a far-right fundamentalist and senior fellow at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation widely cited for claims about the Uyghur genocide, performed serious errors in his calculations of sterilizations in Xinjiang, but the data displayed below demonstrates the point to be generally correct, despite his obvious biases and propensity to exaggerate.

In addition to information on birth rates and birth control, we can look at incarceration rates reported by government officials in various work reports. One leftist blogger published a 2021 article titled "Uyghur Mass Internment: Evidence From Criminal Prosecution Data," aggregating and analyzing the arrest data reported by the Chinese government across disparate reports. After verifying each data point, I produced the second graph located in the 'Appendix' based on the original sources this author cited to represent the percentage of arrests in China as a whole that were in Xinjiang.

Despite Xinjiang being just 1.5% of the national population, it quickly went from making up less than 5% of national arrests to more than 20% after 2017, and arrests have remained quite high in the following years. Considering that terrorist incidents in Xinjiang did not more than quadruple between 2016 and 2017, this should suggest that a campaign against a more vast swath of the population has been coordinated.

## RAZING OF CULTURAL SITES

Beyond statistical data on reproduction and incarceration, it is also important to look at the cultural effects of the Chinese crackdown in Xinjiang, which may also help us think about why China chose to ramp up repression in the region despite declining terrorist incidents. Evidence from publicly available satellite imagery has been studied to look at how religious and cultural sites in Xinjiang have been affected. Systematic studies have demonstrated an unusual 32% of mosques in Xinjiang having been destroyed and another 28% significantly damaged between 2017 and 2020. One of the more visible examples of this was the erasure of the ancient Imam Asim Shrine, where thousands of Muslim pilgrims regularly prayed and tied flags just a decade ago before its apparent destruction.

## ISLAMOPHOBIC LEGISLATION

Next, I will examine the possible policies and prevailing ideas that may be driving Uyghur persecution in Xinjiang. For this, I closely read the 2017 "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-Extremification," hosted on the Xinjiang regional government's website. While I used a browser extension to translate the document, which could lead to misinterpretation, others have performed their own translations, which read similarly to my computer translation.

Beginning in Chapter I, article 3 of the legislation, the definition of "extremification" is left very broad. Specifically, it notes that "[e]xtremification ... refers to speech and actions under the influence of extremism, that spread radical religious ideology, and reject and interfere with normal production and livelihood." Extremism refers to ideas and behaviors that "incite hatred and discrimination, and advocate violence by distorting religious teaching and other methods."

What is inciting hatred and discrimination, or violence? What is "radical religious ideology"? What is considered an interference "with normal production and livelihood"? These questions are not answered in the document and these terms are left open to interpretation so that any idea one may find challenging could be a "violent" thought and any behavior deemed atypical could be "radical" and interfere with "normal production." This enables the document to provide sweeping powers to the government to persecute Muslims in Xinjiang who adopt more visibly Islamic clothing, speech, traditions, and political and religious thought.

The legislation specifically prohibits "irregular beards or name selection," the wearing of "burqas with face coverings," or other "symbols of extremification" in Chapter II. The former two restrictions are common presentations and behaviors of Muslims worldwide, and the latter can describe anything the government deems as "extreme," leaving ample room for arbitrary discrimination.

In Chapter III, the legislation reveals the main objective of these strict regulations: "De-extremification shall persist in the correct political orientation and direction of public opinion" (Article 12) and "shall do a good job of ... combining ideological education, psychological counseling, behavioral corrections, and skills training [emphases added]" (Article 14). From this 2017 legislation, the pervading theme seems to be the Chinese and Xinjiang governments' interest in forcing cultural and political conformity and the "correct political orientation" of Xi Jinping onto the Uyghur and Muslim populations of Xinjiang.



Imam Asim Shrine, Image by Maxar Technologies

As mentioned in the opening paragraphs, it is important to recognize that the justifications given by Chinese officials for increased control of the Uyghur population is a continuation of the global “War on Terror” proliferated by the United States. After the September 11 attacks, Chinese state rhetoric on the Uyghur population shifted toward dubiously connecting Uyghur organizations and jihadist groups rather than emphasizing “pan-Turkic separatism.” In fact, some of the United States’ current foreign policies in Central Asia may actually bolster the deportation of Uyghur Muslims to China, as the US subsidizes security systems and massive hauls of military equipment for authoritarian regimes in the region who are themselves supportive of the crackdowns in Xinjiang or who find some of their own Uyghur citizens too disruptive.

It should be mentioned that the Chinese government stands to benefit from oil deposits and other economic opportunities through its grip on Xinjiang and by employing War on Terror-esque justifications against the majority Muslim peoples that populate much of the province.

In addition, while labor conditions in China as a whole are quite squalid, oppression and surveillance in Xinjiang have been particularly beneficial to global capitalism’s exploitation of workers for endless profit. Regardless of concerns about human rights violations in Xinjiang, companies like Nike benefit from the province’s cotton production supported by forced laborers and actively try to water down labor laws related to it; and more than \$1 billion was invested in pub-

lic-private partnerships in the first quarter of 2017 alone to securitize Xinjiang, drastically higher than in other years.

\* \* \*

There is far more to be said about the complexities of state oppression in Xinjiang, including the silencing of progressive activists, government leaks of mass surveillance data, the heavily restricted conditions of foreign inspections, and more. Alas, there is only so much that can fit in one piece.

Of course, several aspects of what is happening in Xinjiang have been committed by Western governments, particularly toward indigenous and Black populations. However, this does not mean that the Uyghur genocide is any less troubling because other countries do the same. It does mean that the working class has multiple competing enemies sustaining the same system of globalized state capitalism. To this day, the Uyghur genocide benefits global capitalism, including Western firms, through its securitization and production of materials under poor conditions. We must find ways to liberate the oppressed in Xinjiang, regardless of the atrocities of either “side.”

We should always question government and corporate media narratives as well as their motives. However, we can look at concrete data and other public information to substantiate many of the claims espoused by agenda setters. Perhaps exaggerated conclusions and the history of US imperialism have resulted in a higher degree of skepticism, but, in this case, we have convincing primary source evidence available, free from the manipulation of US propaganda outlets, Adrian Zenz, or any other biased Western source.

As leftists, we should respond to the

clear motives that some interest groups and US officials have regarding the expansion of US imperialism not by trying to dismiss or mitigate claims of atrocities as only “in service of a larger imperial project” or by giving credibility to government-constructed visits or other authoritarian governments’ representatives and ambassadors, but by educating our peers about what war hawks wish to do with information of atrocities. US statements and policies acknowledging the Uyghur genocide are not the problem; the problem is the imperialist tendencies of the United States and the influence that pro-interventionist interest groups have over our government.

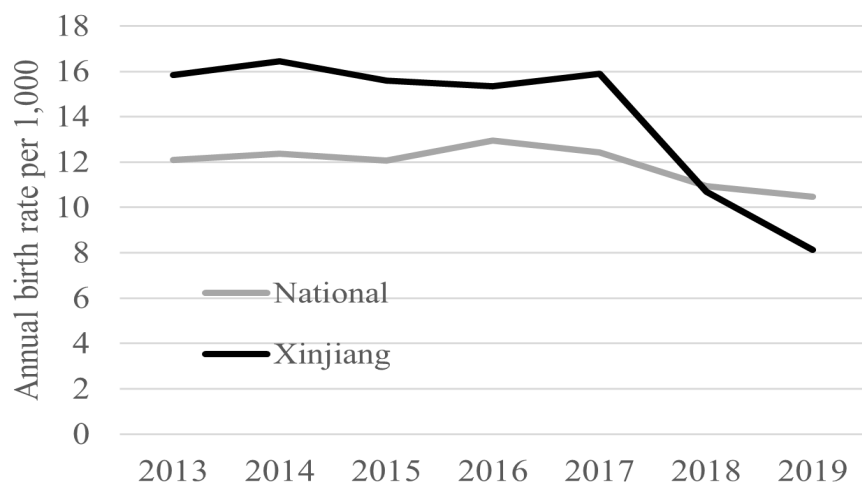
It is not easy to provide a simple solution to end the oppression of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, but surely most leftists can agree that putting American boots in China or attempting to externally change the country’s regime aren’t viable options if we want to reduce violence and promote freedom across the world. Part of the solution will need to involve teaching international solidarity for the liberation of all working class people, including for Chinese Uyghurs potentially seeking refuge. This is what many in the Muslim world have already demonstrated through mass demonstrations in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Indonesia, just to name a few, and through polls in Palestine.

Neither the US’s electoral capitalism nor China’s Leninist capitalism will save us. Only the working class can save itself through building solidarity and, in this case, critically assessing claims of atrocities without lending fallacious credibility to either pro-imperialist or denialist tendencies. ◦

## APPENDIX

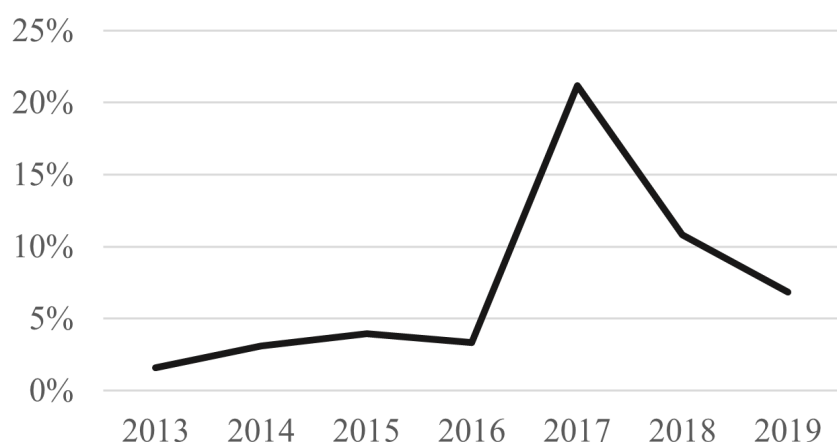
Graphics Generated by Bryce Springfield

Birth rates by year in Xinjiang, compared to the rest of China



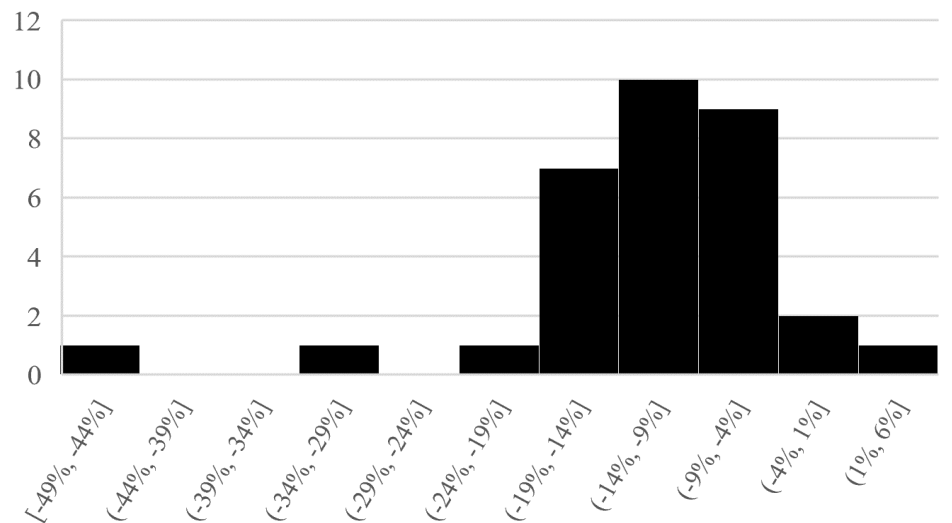
China Statistical Yearbooks, Tables 2-7 & 2-8

Arrests in Xinjiang as % of total arrests in China, by year



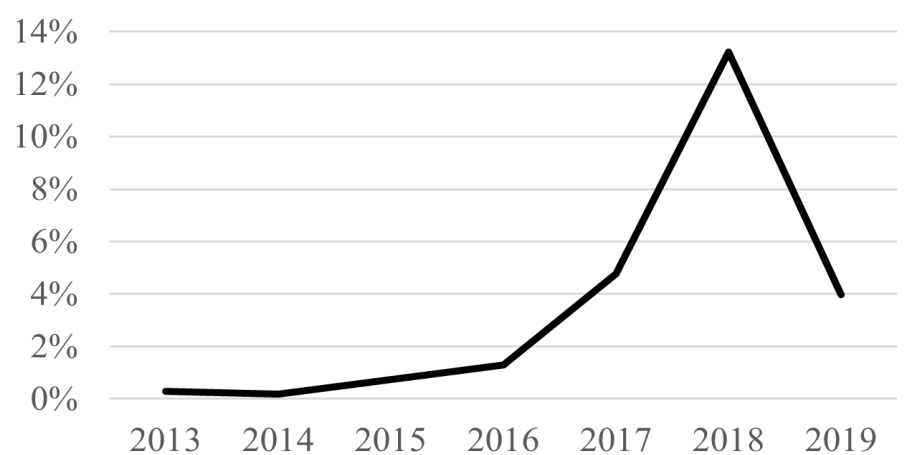
Aggregated by Socialism Done Left (2021) Using Various Chinese Government Work Reports

Change in birth rate from 2017 to 2019, all provinces



Calculated from 2018-2020 Statistical Yearbooks, Tables 2-8

Sterilizations in Xinjiang as % of national total, by year



China Health Statistical Yearbooks, Tables 8-8-2 & 8-7-1

# OIL FROM SNAKES: Health Fraud in the Age of Information

## Andrew Duke

*THIS ARTICLE REPRESENTS* part one of a two-part series on health fraud. Part one focuses on health fraud in the United States as a whole, how it operates, and how it should be responded to, while part two, which will be published in the next issue of *The Prog*, will describe the ways in which health fraud specifically operates in Princeton and New Jersey, as well as some of the specific ways health fraud operates and can be recognized.

The 2020s have so far been defined mainly by public health catastrophes on a global scale. The coronavirus pandemic has led people all across the United States and the world at large to seriously begin reconsidering their personal health, the medicines they take, and their healthcare systems, as well as the ways in which they engage with those systems. The conclusion that many have arrived at is one of disillusionment and fear, a realization that the structures upon which we have come to rely have failed to protect us from severe threats to both our lives and our financial well-being. Government measures to prevent the spread of disease are delayed by bureaucracy, medical practitioners are given perverse incentives to exploit their patients for their own personal benefit, and even when the built-in inefficiencies and insufficiencies of healthcare systems are minimized, human error and/or ignorance often causes people to suffer and die anyway. Meanwhile, the United States remains—and seems as though it will continue to remain—the only developed nation without any form of universal healthcare. Amidst this near-unprecedented crisis of health, many people have chosen to turn away from conventional medicine and have instead begun seeking out other solutions to their medical issues, in the hopes that less insidious avenues to good health exist.

When people decide to begin searching outside of the realm of accepted medicine, however, opportunities arise for bad actors to enter the picture. Alternative medicine, sometimes referred to as complementary, holistic, or integrated medicine, encompasses a wide range of treatments, from those which may have some validity despite not having yet been fully vetted by the medical community, all the way to treatments that have no medical worth whatsoever and that are actually harmful to the patient, or intended to treat non-existing conditions. For the purposes of this article, I will be discussing treatments that fall along the latter end of that spectrum—those constituting health fraud—though it should be noted that any treatment which cannot be readily supported by medical science ought to be regarded with at least some level of skepticism.

Health fraud, sometimes called quackery, is the promotion of medical practices which are ineffective in treating conditions and/or the diagnosis of conditions that do not exist or

which the patient does not suffer from. Health fraud takes on many forms, with one of the most recognizable in the present day being the promotion of high-priced and ineffective “miracle cures” for conditions ranging from cancer to asthma and various other chronic illnesses. The recently invented myths that ivermectin or hydroxychloroquine could treat or even cure COVID-19 were trademark examples of this type of health fraud. It even has a name of its own, “snake oil,” a term that tends to conjure amusing images of mustache-twirling villains selling bottles of herb-laced mineral oil to gullible townspeople in the Wild West.



Unsplash.com

Snake oil, however, can be deadly serious. Over 1 million people have died from COVID-19 in the past two and a half years in the United States alone, many of whom chose not to receive vaccinations due not to a lack of access (which was catastrophic early in the pandemic), and not to hesitancy about the trustworthiness of a rushed vaccine (a concern which was at least somewhat reasonable even if it didn't prove accurate), but rather to the belief that through some type of home remedy or alternative cure, they could prevent or treat the coronavirus without the help of a vaccine.

In fact, the general sense of vaccine hesitancy now prevalent in the United States stems from a single instance of health fraud that occurred nearly 25 years ago. The modern anti-vaccine movement was sparked in 1998 by a now-discredited study authored by then-doctor Andrew Wakefield alleging a relationship between the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine, inflammation of the colon, and autism. This study's findings were knowingly fabricated, and Wakefield went on to stoke the flames of a medical scandal whose repercussions we are still experiencing today, all in order to boost the sales of an alternative vaccine

and contribute to a fraudulent lawsuit against vaccine manufacturers. Wakefield is no longer a licensed medical practitioner, but despite this, his following is massive—as is the number of people who subscribe to some version or another of the anti-vaccine conspiracy theory.

In the face of such far-reaching and unethical cases of medical fraud, our first instinct may be to blame the people who seek out and fall for these false “treatments.” We are inclined to shame them, to simply laugh at their perceived gullibility, and though some of us might try to educate them about the medical science behind an issue, many more of us will, in some way, sneer and move on. This approach, however, is flawed in that it allows the real perpetrators of health fraud to go free, and denies compassion to those who use these treatments and who are, after all, the true victims of these practices.

As mentioned above, many of those who turn to alternative practices and find themselves the victims of health fraud are people who have been failed by our healthcare system, and by society as a whole. People who attempt to find “miracle cures” for chronic illnesses often do so because they have not been properly diagnosed or treated by real doctors, or because ableist structures in our society do not allow them to live with their illnesses contentedly. Many (though not all) of those who choose not to take vaccines make that choice because they have had some negative experience with the medical system which has left them unable to trust doctors in the way that receiving an inoculation requires, some even having racial trauma related to discrimination or outright racism within the medical system. Even those who freely choose to pursue alternative avenues to medicine, rather than having been forced into that choice by the systemic shortcomings and inequities within the healthcare system and within society at large, should not be blamed for being victimized by a deeply predatory and deceptive industry.

The health fraud industry is not a universal constant, not some natural disaster to bemoan but accept; it is an industry controlled by human beings, which feeds off the same perverse incentives that fuel our entire health care system. The first victims of health fraud only turned to alternative medicine because the established medical system, which promised to help them, only took their money and pushed them aside. While our health care system remains for-profit and inaccessible, while hospitals remain underfunded and poorly managed, and while doctors are taught inaccurate and even racist medical science, we will never be free from those who advertise cheaper and more appealing treatments whose only drawback is that they never really work. o

# WHO IS SERVED BY ENDLESS DEBATE?

## Ben Gelman

MODERN UNIVERSITIES TEND to worship at the altar of a certain romanticized understanding of free speech and debate; it's a common refrain that the entire purpose of college is to hear opposing viewpoints and learn to productively disagree. The Chicago Statement on Free Speech, a guiding statement on the importance of free speech in universities, has been adopted by dozens of universities, including Princeton in 2015, and President Eisgruber has said that "rigorous, respectful debate is not a barrier to change—it will make our ideas stronger and their impact more lasting." Just this past fall, freshmen attended a mandatory orientation session titled "Free Expression at Princeton," highlighting the university's purported commitment to free exchange of ideas and the need to be made uncomfortable by opposing political ideas.

Political debate is indeed a good thing, and progressive students should celebrate and encourage events that engage in controversial topics in good faith. However, many student-organized debates are just the opposite. Such events fail to divulge their inherently conservative agenda and the ways that they assume a certain viewpoint before the debate even begins.

Prime examples of this phenomenon can be found in talks run by the Federalist Society (FedSoc)—a conservative legal organization embedded in campuses across the country, including ours. Princeton's FedSoc chapter runs legal conversations with decep-

tively neutral and open-ended titles, such as "Are Racial Preferences in College Admissions Lawful?" and "The History and Role of Supreme Court Clerks." The Society's non-partisan and generic advertising might lead one to conclude that they are a humble debate society, not a legal behemoth that has almost single-handedly taken over the federal judiciary in the past decade. President Trump even stated he would only select Supreme Court justices deemed conservative enough by the group. Its purported apolitical status only serves to give it undue legitimacy and mystify its true agenda.

A recent campus debate, one run by an organization called Braver Angels, shows another way in which such events can mislead the campus community. The debate was centered on whether parents should have the primary say in their students' education. On its website, Braver Angels claims to be "a national movement to bridge the partisan divide." Framing itself as a home for those "heart-sick about the rancor tearing us apart," it claims that if one is concerned about polarization, "you need Braver Angels and Braver Angels needs you."

This pitch neglects important context. For one, Braver Angels' mission statement contains no ideas for where the partisan divide came from, instead serving to naturalize and excuse it through the complete omission of its historical origins. They write about polarization as if we are all collectively responsible

for addressing it through mutual respect and debate. In reality, there is extensive political science research, notably from Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson of Yale and UC Berkeley, describing how increasing political polarization is driven by Republicans' hard turn to the right, rather than both parties moving toward ideological extremes. This is most evident in the Republican party's open effort to overturn American democracy and secure one party rule on the federal and state level through overturning elections and gerrymandering. Organizations like Braver Angels and FedSoc push a narrative of both sides-ism that allows the Right to absolve itself of this authoritarian turn. By insisting that it is a collective civic responsibility to come together and heal the partisan divide, they reframe culpability for the ideological crisis they created. Once this is accomplished, they go right back to further polarizing the nation and attempting to weaken democracy, a pattern made evident by the fact that several members of the Federalist Society were involved in the January 6th, 2021 attempt to overturn the election.

Braver Angels advertised their debate as one engaging with a philosophical dilemma of how much control parents ought to have over their students' schooling. This perspective obscures how the modern political debate over parental control over schools has been engineered by conservative elites such as Chris Rufo, who pushed the conspiracy theory that Critical Race Theory was being imposed on



Masks... Don't Say Gay... Gender... Critical Race Theory...  
**SHOULD PARENTS HAVE THE PRIMARY SAY IN THEIR CHILD'S PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION?**

A Braver Angels debate, open to students, faculty, and staff

Sponsored by the Princeton Open Campus Coalition and The Initiative on Freedom of Thought, Inquiry, and Expression; and supported by Princetonians for Free Speech



Event Flyer for Braver Angels' Nov. 1st Debate





*Professor Robert P. George, Director of the James Madison Program*

students nationwide in an appearance on Tucker Carlson. After this interview, the issue exploded onto the national scene, becoming a prominent talking point in the coverage of the 2021 Virginia gubernatorial race and the 2022 midterms.

Braver Angels' description of their event also does not give the essential context that the modern conservative attack on public schools is part of a long lineage of attempts to shift education towards privatized "school choice." Education journalist Jennifer Berkshire has written extensively about how this school model allows wealthy parents to take their children, social capital, and resources out of public schools, leaving urban, disproportionately poor and minority students to languish in underfunded schools, all in the name of 'parents' rights.' The idea that parents ought to be the final arbiter of everything that goes on in schools is used as a general attack line on the very idea of public school where students of different backgrounds come together to receive a common, secular education that benefits the entire citizenry.

This argument is then used to justify shifting tax dollars toward private schools run by the rich, or toward religious schools where conservatives can inculcate fundamentalist thought into students. Instead of discussing how this entire controversy is manufactured by conservative elites who are simply trying to gut a public service that mainly benefits the poor, Braver Angels opted to turn this political issue into a more abstract one, with fair perspectives to be heard from all sides.

Of course, this very well might have

been the intention. While Braver Angels claims to be nonpartisan, the event was sponsored by the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions (JMP) and the Princeton Open Campus Coalition, a "free-speech" organization founded in 2015 to resist the Black Justice League's anti-racism efforts. JMP is funded by conservative mega donors such as the Olin foundation, and a prime example of a conservative "beachhead", an in-house conservative think tank funded by corporate interests embedded on college campuses. JMP is led by Professor Robert George, who is also associated with the Federalist Society. There isn't enough room to get into Professor George's conservative bona fides here, but recent examples of his prominent place in the conservative movement include writing an amicus brief in *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health* arguing for fetal personhood, which would outlaw abortion nationwide.

Given this background, it's not hard to see how Braver Angels' "non-partisan" framing serves conservative interests. This depiction presents a controversy created by conservative media elites as an intriguing, depoliticized, and philosophical question to pose in good faith. Through this method, radical conservative beliefs, such as the idea that children are being taught to hate white people in school or parents should be able to opt out of public school curriculum they don't like, are laundered as mainstream. In turn, the political paradigm of what is "debatable" shifts right. Even if the conservative ideas promoted at these events do not convince attendees, they are left with a newfound respect for reac-

tionary positions. After all, if they are being taken seriously by "apolitical" organizations like Braver Angels, they must be worth consideration.

All this prompts the question of what a leftist response should be. An easy answer is to boycott, as progressives should not lend legitimacy to organizations like the Federalist Society or Braver Angels through participation. However, this may not be the most effective option for combatting the conservative messaging of these events. At the Braver Angels debate, many attendees gave relatively centrist speeches on the issue and even appeared persuadable. More progressive voices might have created a real opportunity to move them left on education policy. Perhaps something was gained by not lending Braver Angels the support of both the right and the left on campus, but I can't see how that outweighs the potential damage done as centrists were exposed to, and possibly convinced by, numerous conservative arguments outlining a radical, regressive version of school choice that would functionally eliminate public education.

There are two valid responses to this dilemma. The first is a public education campaign to inform fellow students of the true nature of these events. Listserv emails advertising them should be met with responses detailing the real motivations of Braver Angels and the Federalist Society, posters could be spread across campus, and progressive students could educate their peers on how propaganda disguises itself as nonpartisan debate. The second, complementary approach is to show up and advocate, both for the leftist position on the issue at hand as well as against the unfair framing taking place. This does run the risk of extending credibility to these organizations, but it also allows leftist students to make their case to people who show up open to being converted to a more progressive position.

In an ideal world, FedSoc and Braver Angels wouldn't be running these farcical debates on campus. But the fact remains that for now, they are happening, and progressive students must respond. We must strike a delicate balance between debating and unintentionally legitimizing conservative views. Leftists can't afford to indulge the faux bipartisanship of these debates, but neither can we afford to cede the stage entirely to reactionaries. ◦



*Anthony Bolognese, Capitol Hill Photos.*

# AUTISM SPEAKS: Spreading Awareness or Ignorance?

## Jazmin Morales

WITH ITS MENACING MUSIC AND OMINOUS NARRATION, Autism Speaks released “I am Autism”, a 2009 commercial that personifies autism as a sinister and burdensome force with lines such as, “I am autism. I have no interest in right or wrong. I take pleasure in your loneliness. I will fight to take away your hope.” After ‘autism’ concludes its first-person account of how it seeks to tarnish the lives of those around it, family members of autistic children make a pronouncement to autism, saying, “Autism, if you are not scared, you should be. When you came for my child, you forgot: you came for me.”

This PSA has been derided by autistic advocates since its release, with the Autism Self Advocacy Network describing the ad as “horrific.” While Autism Speaks removed “I am Autism” from their platform and apologized “for the video and the harm it may have caused”, the distasteful 2009 commercial is only one of the many insidious actions taken by the self-proclaimed autism awareness non-profit organization. “I am Autism” serves as an emblematic example of the non-profit’s propensity to center the voices of parents and caregivers while ignoring the concerns of the autistic community itself.

According to their website, Autism Speaks was founded in 2005 by Bob Wright, a former NBC executive, and his wife, Suzanne, because they were “inspired” by their grandson’s autism diagnosis. From that point onwards, their mission was to “create awareness and to get scientific and medical research on autism and to also provide treatments,” as

Wright stated in a 2014 *MetroFocus* interview. Today, Autism Speaks remains the largest American autistic research group, and it has made strides towards correcting its earlier outward hostility of autism through transforming their mission statement to promote autism acceptance and support instead of seeking a “possible cure” for the condition.

However, the same criticisms of the group’s internal functioning largely remain valid: the board of directors and leadership team contains only one autistic person and is largely composed of members from companies like Goldman Sachs and Mastercard. Autism Speaks continues to refuse to center the input of the autistic community, as indicated by their website still listing Asperger’s Syndrome as a key part of ASD (autism spectrum disorder), despite the fact that the condition is no longer diagnosed in the USA and Hans Asperger, the physician after whom the condition was named, was infamous for his collaboration with the Nazi Party. Furthermore, the organization’s website is still largely aimed at providing information about autism to parents and caregivers rather than resources for autistic people themselves.

Perhaps most visibly, Autism Speaks has popularized the use of the puzzle piece as a symbol of autism and continues its use despite a growing backlash towards the symbol. After shifting their blue puzzle piece logo to include a gradient of complementary colors in 2020, Autism Speaks professed that their logo is a representation of autism’s many complexities and the diverse variety of experienc-



es with autism. However, many members of the autistic community argue that the puzzle piece symbol implies that there is something inherently childish and incomplete about autistic people. Originally, the puzzle piece was created by a board member of the National Autistic Society in 1963. It included a puzzle piece with a weeping child in it, suggesting that autistic people, specifically children, are ‘suffering’ from a ‘puzzling’ condition. In recent years, a rainbow infinity sign has grown in popularity as a representation for the wide spectrum of presentation and traits of autistic people and neurodiversity more generally. Unfortunately, even the positive intentions behind the logo connote deeply unsettling goals that pervade the non-profit. The bright colors are meant to symbolize hope for a



The co-founders of Autism Speaks, Bob and Suzanne Wright, at the Palm Beach Autism Speaks Walk, [leadersmag.com](http://leadersmag.com)



Protest Against Autism Speaks, Autism Self Advocacy Network-Central Ohio (2009)

cure or treatments to minimize autistic behaviors and traits, The continued use of this logo symbolizes a continued deliberate ignorance of autistic voices and feelings. Their logo truly represents the group's outlook on autistic people: as a puzzling and infantilized population unable to speak for themselves.

The group's corporatist roots and its years of villainizing autism and, by proxy, autistic people, speak for themselves. The group isn't focused on making the world more accessible or producing a place in which autistic people are allowed to speak; it's simply focused on aiding caregivers in reinforcing conformity onto their autistic loved ones. Numerous articles and groups have criticized Autism Speaks' conduct in public discourse and as a non-profit. *Medium* contributor and autism advocate Toni Morales recently wrote an insightful article on the harm that Autism Speaks has caused. She notes that most of the apparent strides made by Autism Speaks have actually maintained and continued the harm they've caused since the group's beginning.

Morales points out Autism Speaks' continued support of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) as a documented "treatment" for autistic people. Based on the principles of operant conditioning, ABA has been fiercely criticized for its underlying objective to "train" autistic people in extinguishing their autistic behaviors. However, ABA has resulted in poor mental health outcomes for those subjected to the "therapy", with one 2018 study by Henry Kupfersteing suggesting that 86 percent of patients that have undergone ABA have experienced increased PTSD symptoms. Most importantly, Morales highlights the dread that she, as an autistic person, feels for another Autism Awareness month centered around the powerful body's poorly designed symbols and ideas. Instead of a month of celebration, she and many others are forced to endure a

month of patronizing and inaccurate information.

As a well-funded research body, Autism Speaks' current legislative actions and scientific exploration demands further explanation and exploration. The organization often reiterates that one of their main objectives is to "increase knowledge through research." However, this year, they've spent over \$44 million on advertising alone and just over \$20 million on research. Almost half of their massive \$95 million budget isn't directed towards actual research into autism, and less than 14 percent of their entire budget contributes to "science" according to their annual budget report. Despite being the biggest autism research body in the US, they don't seem focused primarily on research; their main focus remains on creating mean-spirited advertisements like "I am Autism."

Nonetheless, it is still worth asking how Autism Speaks' research and advocacy has changed the autism landscape. The most recent legislative action that the group has supported was the Autism CARES Act in 2019, which expanded the previous Combating Autism Act of 2006. According to Autism Speaks, the act has allocated \$3.1 billion of government funds towards autism to the National Institutes for Health, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Health Resources and Services Administration. The non-profit proudly announced that this money has led to:

- "A reliable diagnosis age of 18-24 months;
- Established that timely interventions makes a lifetime of difference;
- Identified co-morbidities;
- Increased understanding of biological causes of autism;
- Identified genes and possible medication targets;
- Developed early career autism research-

ers;"

Despite the length of this list, there is very little elaboration on each point. In addition, in some sense, the act merely represents another attempt at curing ASD without directly saying so. Moreover, the concept of a "reliable diagnosis age" contradicts a CDC study published in 2020 which highlighted a discrepancy between the number of adult autistic people and autistic children. They found that children, especially those assigned female at birth, are likely underdiagnosed and unrecognized as having autistic traits, so an increased subjection to diagnosis makes little difference if the current ASD diagnostic process is flawed. Additionally, the vague "timely interventions" that could potentially alter an autistic person's life and the identification of "possible medication targets" also marks a continued pursuit of potentially altering autistic people towards neurotypical standards.

Other interactions with the government that the group mentions are detailed in a 2018 Autism Speaks blog titled "How the autism community guided the FDA." A reference to autistic communities would usually signify the inclusion of autistic people. However, the community that "guided" the FDA in developing drugs that supposedly reduce autistic behaviors was composed of two neurotypical parents. In a question and answer style interview, readers learn that, with the aid of Autism Speaks, the FDA can now "give clear guidance on designing clinical trials to achieve what matters most to patients" despite neither organization consulting autistic patients. What best highlights the negligibility of the medical investigations by Autism Speaks, which likely is worth millions of government dollars, is their descriptions of current medications that mitigate autistic behaviors. The parents state that they worry "about the long-term effects" and effects that have had a detrimental impact on the autistic people who use them, but they also emphasize that finding "life-saving" medication (as described by parents of autistic children) is still needed to "increase function" in autistic people.

With the group's influence on various government agencies and policies as well as their continued ignorance towards the autistic community, Autism Speaks prioritizes the comfort of parents and caregivers over the opinions of autistic people themselves. Despite their past apologies and incremental changes, it is apparent that Autism Speaks still believes that "family is stronger than autism," as mentioned in "I Am Autism", but only because they are doing their best to make it so. They are bringing their vision of mitigation and ignorance to the real lives of autistic people who must live with the consequences of their misdirected actions. ○



Sign from a Protest Against Autism Speaks, Autism Self Advocacy Network-Central Ohio

# HOW TO PAVE STREETS OF GOLD: Contextualizing Myths on Immigration in America

## Ethan Wang

*THE TOPIC OF IMMIGRATION* seems to have settled into the public consciousness as inseparable from any political arena—it is a question asked at every debate, a demand made at each ballot, and a hot topic at any fragmented dinner table.

And on the biggest stage, this salience has been successfully exploited for political power. In alignment with centuries of conservative anti-immigrant rhetoric, Trump and his GOP colleagues have brought forward a slew of blatantly xenophobic and ethnocentric narratives targeted at nonwhite immigrants, demonstrating that such rhetoric can be fundamental in electoral success. This push of immigration as a threat has been so effective that a recent Reuters/Ipsos poll found immigration to be the second most important issue to Republican voters, only ranking behind economic concerns.

Despite its dominance of the political sphere, however, the debate about immigration often lacks concrete substance. That is to say, its participants have a tendency to give platitudes backed by nothing but “common sense” or data of narrow scope, both sides speaking past each other and ultimately concluding very little in the way of anything but “stolen jobs” and dog whistles of “safety” concerns. As if written in response to those inane debates, Professor Leah Boustan’s new book *Streets of Gold* is an impressively extensive research project years in the making which seeks to address this very dearth of reliable and complete data about immigration.

In a conversation with journalist Matt Yglesias, Professor Boustan elaborated on some of her and co-author Stanford Professor Ran Abramitzky’s findings, and how they can

introduce solid evidence into such discussions going forward. Of them, she pointed out a few as the most intriguing. Here, we only get into some of the more politicized findings, but for an unprecedented collection of research on immigration, *Streets of Gold* is surely an engaging read.

Over time, sentiments about immigration have shifted drastically. Boustan and Abramitzky’s investigation on the language used in political speeches revealed a firm negative slant from both parties in speeches regarding immigration. However, starting in 1940, due in large part to Truman and JFK’s messaging, both parties began speaking positively about immigrants. Nonetheless, by 1965, the all too familiar pattern of polarization we know today was beginning to show. The data actually indicates that, today, Republican speeches on immigration are about as negative as they were in the 1900s.

The notion that immigrants today are not as homogeneous as the Ellis Island cohort, is, first and foremost, based on modern notions of whiteness and non-whiteness. During the late 19th century and early 20th century wave of immigration, immigrants we now deem unequivocally white, including Italians, Germans, Irish, and European Jewish immigrants, were readily discriminated against with almost as much vitriol as non-white immigrants today. Not to mention, Boustan and Abramitzky find that the recent cohorts of immigrants are, in various measures, working just as hard to assimilate as their past counterparts, such as adopting Americanized first names for their children and in their high levels of English proficiency.

One of the main concerns brought up

by anti-immigration proponents is the plight of the American worker in the face of cheap, readily available migrant labor. Through repeated investigation, however, Boustan and her co-author reach a conclusion that corroborates a host of evidence due to the greater benefits provided to the economy. In most cases, American workers actually see a net benefit from immigration.

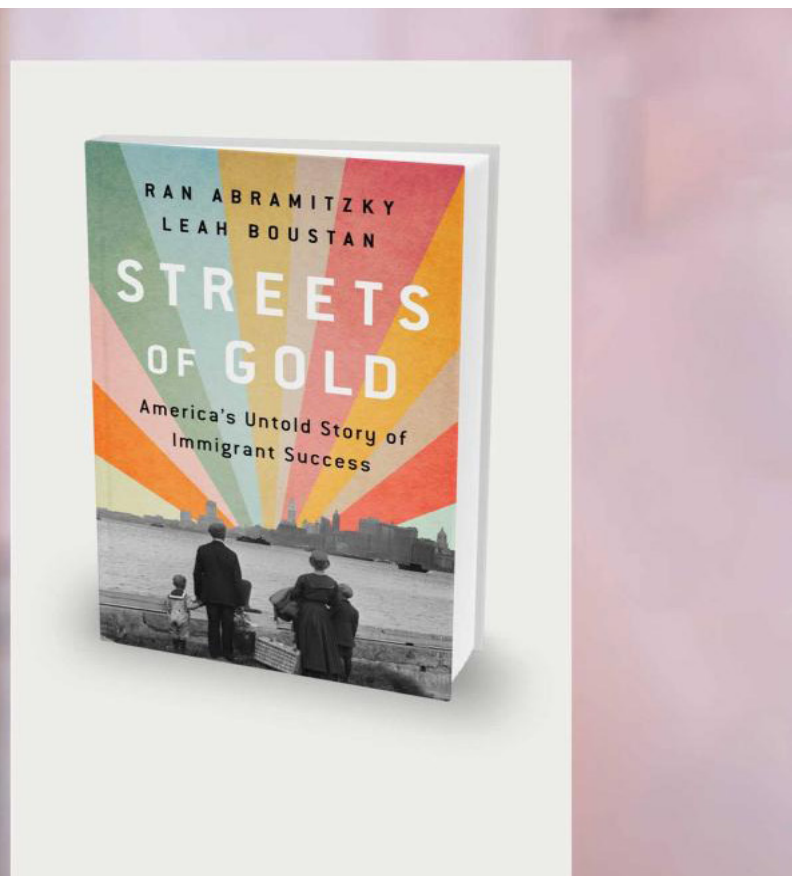
As much as the concerns above may paint the broader discourse around the issue as negative, the reality is that while the Republican platform has regressed to a pre-1940 state in its treatment of immigration, the persisting difference from then to now is that the positive expressions on immigration from the Democratic Party we hear today simply did not exist. In fact, polls find 75% of the current American public to be supportive of immigration.

There is an argument to be made that—at least to a degree—the political relevance the immigration debate enjoys was and continues to be crafted by the GOP to tap into the reservoir of latent racism endemic to a considerable proportion of the American public. Even so, it is important to remember that immigration itself, and not just the racist rhetoric around it, is and always has been at the heart of this country.

What Lady Liberty (and Emma Lazarus) knew more than a century ago about America is exactly what conservatives today forget when they get tied up into a fear-laced narrative of crime and xenophobia. America, since its founding, has never been a country protected from immigrants—after all, it is almost entirely constituted of them. ◦



Leah Boustan, Photo by David Kelly Crow



# GIORGIA MELONI: Is Fascism Back in Italy?

## Theodore Gross

*FOLLOWING AN ELECTORAL VICTORY* in late September of 2022, an alliance of Italian conservative parties formed a new government to be headed by Giorgia Meloni, the first woman to ever serve as Italy's Prime Minister. The problem? Her politics and party are rooted in Italy's prolific history of fascism. While this case alone is cause enough for concern, what implications does it have for European politics? Are we witnessing the onset of another fascist scourge over the continent and globally, or will the Meloni government fail to have any larger significance?

Giorgia Meloni heads the far-right nationalist Fratelli d'Italia party, which originates from a group formed by ex-fascists following World War II called the Italian Social Movement, or MSI. It should go without saying that any party with a direct link to the original Italian Fascist movement is worrisome. Fascist Italy was a time of authoritarian rule by the far-right characterized by crackdowns on all political dissent and an imperialist and racist agenda. Despite its legacy in Italy, Meloni has shown herself dedicated to the far right since her youth, having joined the neofascist Italian Social Movement at the age of 15 and led the student branch of the far-right National Alliance, according to her 2021 autobiography titled "I am Giorgia". She entered politics in 2006 after being elected to the Chamber of Deputies on a nativist and nationalist platform. Two years later, she was a minister in the scandal-plagued and backward-looking right-wing government of Silvio Berlusconi.

Outside of her history of Italian Nationalist associations, Meloni has also made countless comments expressing her support for fascism and a fascist agenda. Reuters reports that as a teenager, she praised Benito Mussolini, the infamous fascist dictator of Italy, as a "good politician." Though she has since offered half-hearted renouncements of her explicit fascist sympathies, her government does not seem to be radically distant from these sympathies. This reality is made apparent by Meloni's appointment of Galeazzo Bignami as deputy minister for infrastructure, who has been pictured wearing a black shirt, the marker of Mussolini's fascist paramilitary units, and a swastika armband. Other ministers she has appointed to her administration have proposed naming parks after Mussolini's brother, attended Italian SS memorial services, and made pilgrimages to the grave of the Fascist dictator. No matter how often Meloni may have verbally backtracked from her fascist associations, her government is a testimony to her continued efforts to bring fascism and fascist sympathizers into the political mainstream.

Meloni's policies are not much better. Her language is rooted in homophobia, nativism, racism, and a host of other hateful positions. Reuters reports some of Meloni's questionable stances as expressed in her

own words: "Yes to natural families, no to the LGBT lobby, yes to sexual identity, no to gender ideology, yes to the culture of life, no to the abyss of death." Opposition to protections for the LGBTQ+ community and fluidity of gender and social structures is not novel in terms of 21st century right-wing positions, though her association of these ideas and certain groups with "life" and "death" certainly points toward rhetoric that is more clearly fascist.



ANTONIO MASIELLO / GETTY IMAGES

The original fascist movements supposed themselves to be revitalizing a decadent society that had been bogged down by liberal capitalism, socialism, intellectualism, and a host of other dominating philosophies of the day. In his *Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism*, Italian fascist poet F.T. Marinetti expounds a sentiment similar to that of Meloni in declaring that, "For too long Italy has been a marketplace for junk dealers. We want to free our country from the endless number of museums that cover her like graveyards." We should be extremely critical therefore of Meloni when she proposes reinvigorating Italy with a "culture of life" in opposition to an "abyss of death." This life force that she claims to seek, when heard in combination with her bigoted attacks on marginalized groups, seems awfully similar to the nationalistic sentiments of Fascist Italy that uplift the unthinking party ideologue over anyone not fitting within the narrow definition of a true Italian or a "Brother of Italy." Any modern day leader preaching "a culture of life" and exclusionary language, especially one originating from a country like Italy with a historical period of Fascism during which "Homosexuals, 'career' criminals, and the so-called socially degenerate would all be excluded, along with ethnic minorities such as Slavs, and later, Jews," is grounds for alarm.

Though Giorgia Meloni may be the most recent right-wing leader whose party has explicit ties to the fascist regimes of the early 20th century, she is not alone among European politicians denounced for having fascist ideas or tendencies. Marine Le Pen, who has finished second in the past two presidential contests in France on platforms of Islam-

phobia and nativism and whose father is an on-record Holocaust denier and antisemite, is another right-wing nationalist whose positions have been called fascist. Though Le Pen has attempted to distance her father and dissociate her party, Le Rassemblement National (formerly Le Front National), from its fascist and antisemitic history, many of her voters continue to believe in the conspiracy theories about Jews which are inseparable from the irrational appeal of fascism. Another troubling example of the resurgence of right wing nationalism is the case of Jimmie Åkesson, the leader of Sweden Democrats, which is a party founded by Neo-Nazis and has recently become a part of the governing coalition and the second largest party in Sweden. He is likewise no stranger to Islamophobia and accusations of fascism, even if he, like Le Pen and Meloni, has sought to distance himself and his party from explicitly fascist associations.

What exactly has driven this Fascist resurgence in Europe? The nativist rhetoric and agenda of many far-right politicians like Meloni and Le Pen, suggests that increased migration into Europe could be one contributing factor. For instance, Marine Le Pen and the RN have long associated immigration with economic problems and an erasure of French identity amid historical surges in immigration to France from North Africa. Similarly, *Le Monde* reports that Italy has recently become the main point of entry for migrants entering Europe at a time when Meloni touts policies which would criminalize migrants. She even called for a naval blockade against migrants during her 2022 electoral campaign. When coupled with economic problems like rising energy costs, inflation, and national debt, immigrants serve as a persistent scapegoat for potential fascists to blame and use to rise to power.

It is impossible to say for sure how far these leaders will get in realizing modern Fascist regimes. But the selection of a politician like Giorgia Meloni, whose party has roots in neo-fascism, as the Prime Minister of a formerly fascist country should be cause for concern. When viewing her new government in the context of other far-right governments across Europe like Sweden and nearly France as well, it seems as though we are witnessing the onset of what could be called contemporary fascism. But this fascism need not look like the fascism of the past to be fascism. It will not necessarily use swastikas, military uniforms, and parades to get its hateful and nationalistic agenda across. It will adapt itself to modern culture and take advantage of uniquely 21st-century discontents to reach power. Media outlets, voters, and left-leaning opposition parties alike must therefore be diligent in recognizing and refuting the rhetoric and tactics of this modern sprout of fascism and rooting it out before it can return to power. ○

# PUTTING THE CROSS OVER THE FLAG: How Religious Ultranationalism is Imperiling Our Democracy

## Ben Lemkin



*President Trump Signing the Infamous "Muslim Ban" Executive Order, The Huffpost (2017)*

*VET NOV TESTAMENTUM.* Alongside a Bible, these are the words inscribed onto the seal of Princeton University; from Latin, the phrase translates to “Old and New Testaments”. Yet Princeton endorses neither the Old or the New Testaments, and they have no role in the lives of many of its students. Furthermore, our unofficial motto, “In the Nation's Service and the Service of Humanity”, is much more applicable to our university than the official “*Dei Sub Numine Viget*”, which translates to “under the protection of God she flourishes”. Despite the symbolic nature of these phrases, the presence of religion in university-wide mottos and symbols is rather troubling, especially considering that more than 58% of first-year students say they are “not at all religious” or “not very religious”, according to *the Daily Princetonian's* annual Frosh Survey. Their presence recalls fundamental questions upon which our university and our society have not come to an agreement: what is the place of religion in a secular University, and in a secular country at large? What are the dangers when religion oversteps its boundaries? For me, such symbols serve as a reminder of the ubiquity and pervasiveness of religion at Princeton and in the United States, which I believe pose a serious and growing danger to the democratic ideals of our nation.

Our country does not endorse any official religion; the First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”. Yet instead of the phrase “*E Pluribus*

*Unum*”, which emphasizes the importance of both unity and diversity in America, our nation's official motto is the remarkably unsecular and unrepresentative “In God we trust”. The Pledge of Allegiance, which 47 states require students in public schools to proclaim, describes America as a nation “under God”. And the 501 (c) (3) tax exempt statuses of many religious institutions act as direct government subsidies that further religion. How can a government that “shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” insert God into so many aspects of American society and life, and more importantly, why has it done so?

Many of these religious phrases did not actually originate in any deeply-rooted American “tradition”; in fact, most of these references to God were thrust into American culture during the Cold War. In the course of its rivalry with the Soviet Union, the United States became possessed by an anti-Communist fervor. The Communist Party of the United States of America was banned, and basic American freedoms were routinely suppressed in order to crush the supposed Communist ‘threat’. As anti-Soviet sentiment grew in America, anything that the USSR did was suddenly deemed to be “un-American”, and anything the USSR stood against became an American virtue. Such was the case with religion; the USSR's atheism meant that many Americans started to see religious belief as inherent to patriotism. And so “In God we trust” became our motto, and “under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance. This ill-conceived deci-

sion to let anti-Soviet sentiment define what it meant to be American set our country on the exceedingly religious path that it remains on today.

Furthermore, in disregard of the long-standing American doctrine of “separation of Church and State”, U.S. presidents are sworn into the nation's highest office saying “so help me God” with their hand on a Bible. Why has such preferential treatment of a religious text been normalized into our presidential inaugurations? Article VI of the Constitution guarantees that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States”, yet our presidents still voluntarily take one anyway. Yes, many presidents are deeply religious, and they strongly believe in the Bible; even so, why should their personal faith be such an integral part of a national tradition? Why should they be sworn into office on a book that has personal significance to them, yet means nothing to the 120 million non-Christians in America? The United States was not built on top of the Bible, it was built on our Constitution, which would be a far more emblematic and inclusive document for presidents, senators, and representatives to use when taking their oaths of office. In fact, not every president has used a religious text in their inauguration; for example, John Quincy Adams was sworn into office using a law book, and Theodore Roosevelt even decided to omit the “so help me God” from the end of his oath. There is obviously nothing wrong with American officials being religious, but



*Karolina Grabowska, Joe Longobardi, and Bettmann*

stand in the way of impartiality, or cause them to lose sight of the secular country they govern. Starting presidential terms with a show of faith sends a poor message; presidents are supposed to represent every American, and the presence of the Bible in inaugurations is completely at odds with this objective.

Still, some may argue that the presence of religious language and symbols in national traditions is insignificant and does not constitute religious overreach. But even when symbolic, such encroachments can do real harm to our country and empower those who have a theocratic vision for America. Such “symbolic” violations of the separation of Church and State can be interpreted by some as confirmation that America is meant to be a Christian nation. As an example, the practice of taking oaths of office using a Bible has fueled the ludicrous belief that non-Christians should be barred from participating in American politics. Roy Moore, a Republican who nearly won the 2017 Alabama Senate race, wrote an article claiming that Muslims should not be allowed in Congress. Moore’s spokesperson, Ted Crockett, later went on to falsely state that “[y]ou have to swear on a Bible to be an elected official in the United States of America.” Such rhetoric shows precisely why religious symbolism in our government is a problem: symbols send messages. Connecting religious texts to public office and government feeds the dangerous idea that our government should favor one

religion over another, and serves to embolden those who oppose secularity outright.

But America’s religion problem goes far, far beyond symbols. According to a recent Pew Research poll, 45% of Americans think America “should be a Christian nation”. Allow that to sink in for a moment; 45% of the nation thinks Christianity should hold a special status above that of other religions, and that there is something inherently Christian about America. Of course, such a declaration would go directly against the First Amendment to the Constitution. Evidently, 45% of Americans are either unaware of the First Amendment, or they simply want to get rid of it; I do not know which is more alarming. In reality, declaring America a “Christian nation” would be one of the most un-American things conceivable. It would constitute a clear and complete violation of core American principles, and would be the end of religious freedom in our nation. The fact that nearly half of Americans want to remove these basic guarantees of impartiality that have long defined our political system should be a wake up call: we are headed toward a theocratic cliff.

These anti-democratic ideals are a key component of a larger ideology which has experienced a meteoric rise over the last few years, and which can be summed up by four words on a red hat: “Make America Great Again”. In typical ultranationalist fashion, Trump and his supporters have an extremely narrow vision of what America should be, and of which Amer-

icans belong here. With announcements like “[I am] calling for a total and complete shut-down of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what the hell is going on”, Trump has made it abundantly clear that he views certain religions as more “American” than others, and certain Americans as less deserving of fair treatment under the law.

In fact, the Republican Party has often weaponized religion for the sake of gaining political power, mixing a Christian outlook into its platform in order to satisfy its evangelical base, and to entice more moderate Christian voters into supporting conservative positions on crucial issues such as abortion rights. Over the last few decades Republicans have successfully tied anti-abortion movements to religiosity, which attracts Christians to anti-abortion stances as well as energizing voters who have been led to see pro-choice legislation as an attack on Christianity itself. Even Republican politicians who don’t personally believe that the Bible prohibits abortion are usually more than willing to spread such beliefs among their base, thereby portraying a fundamentally secular issue as a religious one instead. The consequences of this sort of politics are obvious; Republicans have been attempting to force their personal spiritual perspectives, and the highly-debatable idea that “life begins at conception”, onto women around the nation.

Religious bias in our institutions presents a grave danger to our country. The truth is that one of America’s greatest assets is our diversity of thought, the fact that we have many religions, and that many of us are able to openly have no religion. Neither Christianity nor atheism are (or ever have been) American values, but secularity is. As such, American officials must ensure that their own religious views never lead them to violate the separation of Church and State, or to favor one religion over another. Religion is incredibly important to many Americans, and there is nothing wrong with that; however, religion must not be given special or preferential treatment in American mottos, schools, ceremonies, or in the Supreme Court. It is essential we remember that America is inherently secular, and that religion cannot, for the sake of our democracy, be allowed to proliferate throughout our government and into our official traditions. This country was established on the idea that we, out of many, are one; if we are to honor and preserve that idea’s place in our political system, we must stand united against the theocratic ultranationalism peddled by the far-right and show that religious overreach has no place in America. ◯



*President Biden’s Presidential Oath, Public Domain, 2021*

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