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# Arguments for Analysis

## KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH

Kwame Anthony Appiah (b. 1954) established his reputation as a philosopher at Cornell, Yale, Harvard, Princeton, and New York University. He is a noted cultural theorist, African historian, and novelist decorated with awards and recognitions for more than a dozen books, most recently *As If: Idealization and Ideals* (2017) and *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity* (2018).

### **Go Ahead, Speak for Yourself**

“As a white man,” Joe begins, prefacing an insight, revelation, objection or confirmation he’s eager to share — but let’s stop him right there. Aside from the fact that he’s white, and a man, what’s his point? What does it signify when people use this now ubiquitous formula (“As a such-and-such, I ...”) to affix an identity to an observation?

Typically, it’s an assertion of authority: As a member of this or that social group, I have experiences that lend my remarks special weight. The experiences, being representative of that group, might even qualify me to represent that group. Occasionally, the formula is an avowal of humility. It can be both at once. (“As a working-class woman, I’m struggling to understand Virginia Woolf’s blithe assumptions of privilege.”) The incantation seems indispensable. But it can also be — to use another much-loved formula — problematic.

The “as a” concept is an inherent feature of identities. For a group label like “white men” to qualify as a social identity, there must be times when the people to whom it applies act as members of that group, and are treated as members of that group. We make lives *as* men and women, *as* blacks and whites, *as* teachers and musicians. Yet the very word “identity” points toward the trouble: It comes from the Latin *idem*, meaning “the same.” Because members of a given identity group have experiences that depend on a host of other social factors, they’re *not* the same.

Being a black lesbian, for instance, isn’t a matter of simply combining African- American, female and homosexual ways of being in the world; identities interact in complex ways. That’s why Kimberle Crenshaw, a feminist legal theorist and civil-rights activist, introduced the notion of intersectionality, which stresses the complexity with which different forms of subordination relate to one another. Racism can make white men shrink from black men and abuse black women. Homophobia can lead men in South Africa to rape gay women but murder gay men. Sexism in the United States in the 1950s kept middle-class white women at home and sent working-class black women to work for them.

Let’s go back to Joe, with his NPR mug and his man bun. (Or are you picturing a “Make America Great Again” tank top and a high-and-tight?) Having an identity doesn’t, by itself, authorize you to speak on behalf of everyone of that identity. So it can’t really be that he’s

speaking for all white men. But he can at least speak to what it's like to live as a white man, right?

Not if we take the point about intersectionality. If Joe had grown up in Northern Ireland as a gay white Catholic man, his experiences might be rather different from those of his gay white *Protestant* male friends there — let alone those of his childhood pen pal, a straight, Cincinnati-raised reform Jew. While identity affects your experiences, there's no guarantee that what you've learned from them is going to be the same as what other people of the same identity have learned.

We've been here before. In the academy during the identity-conscious 1980s, many humanists thought that we'd reached peak "as a." Some worried that the locution had devolved into mere prepositional posturing. The literary theorist Barbara Johnson wrote, "If I tried to 'speak as a lesbian,' wouldn't I be processing my understanding of myself through media-induced images of what a lesbian is or through my own idealizations of what a lesbian *should* be?" In the effort to be "real," she saw something fake. Another prominent theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, thought that the "as a" move was "a distancing from oneself," whereby the speaker became a self-appointed representative of an abstraction, some generalized perspective, and suppressed the actual multiplicity of her identities. "One is not just one thing," she observed.

It's because we're not just one thing that, in everyday conversation, "as a" can be useful as a way to spotlight some specific feature of who we are. Comedians do a lot of this sort of identity-cuing. In W. Kamau Bell's recent Netflix special, "Private School Negro," the "as a" cue, explicit or implicit, singles out various of his identities over the course of an hour. Sometimes he's speaking as a parent, who has to go camping because his kids enjoy camping. Sometimes he's speaking as an African-American, who, for ancestral reasons, doesn't see the appeal of camping ("sleeping outdoors *on purpose*?"). Sometimes — as in a story about having been asked his weight before boarding a small aircraft — he's speaking as "a man, a heterosexual, cisgender *Dad* man." (Hence: "I have no idea how much I weigh.")

The switch in identities can be the whole point of the joke. Here's Chris Rock, talking about his life in an affluent New Jersey suburb: "As a black man, I'm against the cops, but as a man with property, well, I need the cops. If someone steals something, I can't call the Crips!" Drawing attention to certain identities you have is often a natural way of drawing attention to the contours of your beliefs, values or concerns.

But *caveat auditor*: Let the listener beware. Representing an identity is usually volunteer work, but sometimes the representative is conjured into being. Years ago, a slightly dotty countess I knew in the Hampstead area of London used to point out a leather-jacketed man on a park bench and inform her companions, with a knowing look, "He's the *head gay*." She was convinced that gays had the equivalent of a pontiff or prime minister who could speak on behalf of all his people.

Because people's experiences vary so much, the "as a" move is always in peril of presumption. When I was a student at the University of Cambridge in the 1970s, gay men were *très chic*: You couldn't have a serious party without some of us scattered around like throw pillows. Do my experiences entitle me to speak for a queer farmworker who is coming of age in Emmett, Idaho? Nobody appointed me head gay.

If someone is advocating policies for gay men to adopt, or for others to adopt toward gay men, what matters, surely, isn't whether the person is gay but whether the policies are sensible. As a gay man, you could oppose same-sex marriage (it's just submitting to our culture's heteronormativity, and anyway monogamy is a patriarchal invention) or advocate same-sex marriage (it's an affirmation of equal dignity and a way to sustain gay couples). Because members of an identity group won't be identical, your "as a" doesn't settle anything. The same holds for religious, vocational and national identities.

And, of course, for racial identities. In the 1990s the black novelist Trey Ellis wrote a screenplay, "The Inkwell," which drew on his childhood in the milieu of the black bourgeoisie. A white studio head (for whom race presumably eclipsed class) gave it to Matty Rich, a young black director who'd grown up in a New York City housing project. Mr. Rich apparently worried that the script wasn't "black enough" and proposed turning the protagonist's father, a schoolteacher, into a garbage man. Suffice to say, it didn't end well. Are we really going to settle these perennial debates over authenticity with a flurry of "as a" arrowheads?

Somehow, we can't stop trying. Ever since Donald Trump eked out his surprising electoral victory, political analysts have been looking for people to speak for the supposedly disgruntled white working-class voters who, switching from their former Democratic allegiances, gave Mr. Trump the edge.

But about a third of working-class whites voted for Hillary Clinton. Nobody explaining why white working-class voters went for Mr. Trump would be speaking for the millions of white working-class voters who didn't. One person could say that she spoke *as* a white working-class woman in explaining why she voted for Mrs. Clinton just as truthfully as her sister could make the claim in explaining her support for Mr. Trump — each teeing us up to think about how her class and race might figure into the story. No harm in that. Neither one, however, could accurately claim to speak *for* the white working class. Neither has an exclusive on being representative.

So we might do well to ease up on "as a" — on the urge to underwrite our observations with our identities. "For me," Professor Spivak once tartly remarked, "the question 'Who should speak' is less crucial than 'Who will listen?'"

But tell that to Joe, as he takes a sip of kombucha — or is it Pabst Blue Ribbon? All right, Joe, let's hear what you've got to say. The speaking-as-a convention isn't going anywhere; in truth, it often serves a purpose. But here's another phrase you might try on for size: "Speaking for myself ..."

## Topics for Critical Thinking and Writing

1. In [paragraph 2](#), Kwame Anthony Appiah says that speaking through the lens of an identity group is usually “an assertion of authority.” How is this so? In your opinion, are there experiences that are unique to one’s identity that allow them to speak with more or less authority on certain topics? If so, identify the topics and give an example.
2. How does Appiah define the term *intersectionality* in this essay? Is it adequately defined? Paraphrase the definition of *intersectionality* in this essay and then look up the term in a reputable resource and provide another definition. Does the new definition clarify or contradict Appiah’s definition? How so?
3. Where does Appiah use humor or sarcasm in this essay? Explain how his humor serves to support the argument. Is it the most effective choice for the argument? Why or why not?
4. Appiah writes at length about how speaking “as a” certain identity is inadequate for establishing authority and therefore not legitimate. Explain how Appiah’s concerns are really concerns about inductive reasoning and sampling. (See [Types of Reasoning](#).)
5. Does Appiah’s essay appeal more to *logos*, *ethos*, or *pathos*? How do you know? Was this an effective choice for his audience?
6. Examine your own identity categories and write about whether you feel you have the authority to speak “as” one of those categories. Why do you think you do? Are there identity categories in which you fit that you would not feel authoritative in speaking for the larger group? Why not?

Opinion

# Go Ahead, Speak for Yourself

Not every opinion needs to be underwritten by your race or gender or other social identity.

**By Kwame Anthony Appiah**

Mr. Appiah is a professor of philosophy.

Aug. 10, 2018

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Kwame Anthony Appiah is a professor of philosophy at New York University and the author of the forthcoming book “The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity,” from which this essay is adapted.

# How Do You Explain the ‘Obvious?’

By Nausicaa Renner

Aug. 21, 2018

There’s nothing more persuasive than the obvious. To appeal to it is to ask people to be bigger, better, more noble — to take a sweeping look at the facts, admit what is plain and do the right thing. Tell me with a fixed gaze and an air of confidence that something is obvious. I will be tempted to believe you, if only to join in the clarity and sense of purpose that comes with accepting what is staring me in the face.

In July, after President Trump’s meeting with Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, David Remnick, the editor of *The New Yorker*, called on congressional Republicans to recognize the obvious. Trump, he wrote, had spent his trip working “to humiliate the leaders of Western Europe and declare them ‘foes’; to fracture longstanding military, economic and political alliances; and to absolve Russia of its attempts to undermine the 2016 election. He did so clearly, repeatedly and with conviction.” *Use your heads*, Remnick seemed to say, inviting G.O.P. leadership out of the darkness and into the light, asking which of them would “stand up not to applaud the Great Leader but to find the capacity to say what is obvious and what is true.” *New York* magazine went further, using the blunt instrument of obviousness to impugn the Republican Party: “G.O.P. Senators: Trump’s Obvious Russia Lie Is Good Enough for Us,” read [one headline](#), soon after the president claimed that he had, during a news conference with Putin, accidentally said “would” when he meant “wouldn’t.” (“It should have been obvious,” he said, defending himself. “I thought it would be obvious.”)

The obvious is a common tool in political arguments; there is something about calling on voters’ “common sense” that makes the opposition look like sophists and weasels, waffling and equivocating. The obvious cuts through nonsense. It asks why we have hundreds of pages of tax law instead of one; it insists on straightforward fixes for immigration policy. And part of the appeal of universal health care is simply that it’s universal: no compromises, no complex incentive systems, no loopholes, less a policy than a statement of rights. In [a recent Vox article](#), Tim Higginbotham and Chris Middleman wrote that Medicare-for-all plans present a “resolute vision, one in which our common well-being and dignity take obvious precedence over the profits of a few.” The stance is sure of itself; it has the certitude to weigh health care against profit and reach a decisive answer, while others remain lost in a mental fog.

But we also appeal to the obvious as a last-ditch effort when, after decades of conflict, we’re further than ever from clarity. After the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, President Obama gave an emotional speech at a vigil for the 20 children and six adults who were killed, asking the nation to look at itself: “Are we really prepared to say that we’re powerless in the face of such carnage, that the politics are too hard?” A few years later, in a speech calling for bipartisan agreement on gun laws, he noted that after Sandy Hook, 90 percent of Americans supported a “common-sense compromise” bill. But Republicans had voted that bill down. The speech had a ring of desperation and defeat: If we can’t agree on something this obvious, the president seemed to ask, what can we agree on?

**In Edgar Allan Poe’s** “The Purloined Letter,” the detective Auguste Dupin is able to find a stolen letter in the apartment of an unscrupulous government minister — a letter no one else could find, because everyone else assumed it would be treated as if it were valuable and hidden. Instead, the letter was hiding in plain sight, not carefully preserved but crumpled and torn like trash. It escapes detection “by dint of being extremely obvious.” We prefer our politicians to be like Dupin: able to rise above the mire of small details and see the whole.

This is harder than it sounds. The letter either pops out or it doesn’t. The obvious can be like a Magic Eye poster, one of those novelties whose hidden 3-D image only leaps out at you when you look at it just right: You can’t really help someone else see it. It has been a signature move of the Trump administration to disrupt the obvious, beginning with a debate over the size of the crowd at the moment the president was sworn in. The mind is great at coming up with viable alternatives to ideas it doesn’t want to accept, and those unwilling to accept invocations of the obvious, like Remnick’s, find themselves safely tangled in a web of possibilities. With Trump, “rather than acknowledge the obvious, the supporters spin theories of ‘Art of the Deal,’” wrote Jim Schutze in [a column in the Dallas Observer](#), “imputing all kinds of cleverness and guile, saying he

pretends to be an idiot as part of a wily strategy.” At its least extreme, this entails a belief that there is some cunning in Trump’s most transparent lies and clumsiest public statements; at its most extreme, it puts him at the center of an elaborate plot to destroy the “deep state.” What is “obvious” is taken as false because it’s *too* obvious.

This is because the obvious is, essentially, a shortcut: It appeals to a set of values we’d formed some consensus around, a set of ideas we once agreed no serious person would question. To call something “obvious” or “common sense” is to call it settled and refuse to relitigate it or revisit all the work that went into determining it was so inarguable in the first place. In a recent book, “At War With the Obvious,” the psychoanalyst Donald Moss writes that “the obvious is adaptive. It mutates under pressure, like cells.” If you need evidence of this, he writes, consider the status of gay, queer and trans people over the past few decades. In the 1990s, the American mainstream found it obvious that gay people should have no right to marry; today, it’s regarded by many as broadly obvious that they should. An idea that was once marginal enough to require laborious defense gradually became so self-evident that it was hardly worth explaining; like the crumpled letter, its presence was taken for granted.

The difficulty is that, later, when such propositions are threatened, people may find themselves shocked, out of practice, struggling to defend their values with the passion or eloquence that first brought them into existence. Last month, for instance, Michael Anton, a former national-security official in the Trump administration, published [a Washington Post op-ed](#) arguing that, contrary to the understanding of most readers, birthright citizenship was based in a misreading of the law and should be ended by executive order. The fury that met this suggestion was sputtering: For anyone not already immersed in constitutional law, being horrified by Anton’s claims meant arguing in favor of something that had long been so obvious that it was easy to forget what made it obvious in the first place. Justin Fox, a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion, [allowed](#) that a majority of the world’s nations didn’t offer birthright citizenship. But the claim that the authors of the 14th Amendment intended anything else, he wrote, “is, to anyone who takes the time to read a few pages of congressional debate, obviously false.”

**America is built** on an appeal to the obvious. The Declaration of Independence holds its truths to be “self-evident” — axiomatic, irreducible, not needing justification because they justify themselves. (It was not obvious to the authors that those truths applied to all Americans, though this seems obvious to most of us now.)

What Americans have confronted lately is a state of affairs in which many of our most basic paradigms are no longer obvious to everyone. Appeals to obviousness seem to wilt as soon as they appear. “Are we prepared to say that such violence visited on our children, year after year after year, is somehow the price of our freedom?” asked Obama in his Sandy Hook speech. This was a rhetorical question; the obvious answer is supposed to be “no.” But what if some Americans answer with “yes”?

Politicians and the press still invoke obviousness in the hope of summoning some conviction we all still share, some bedrock of group belief we can agree on. To see them fail, repeatedly, is unsettling; it makes our deepest values seem impotent. It had seemed obvious to some that a modern presidential administration would not defend white nationalists or that the United States government would seek to avoid taking babies from their parents’ arms — or that a man who bragged about harassing women wouldn’t be elected in the first place. Last summer, NPR celebrated the Fourth of July by tweeting, line by line, the text of the Declaration of Independence; its account was immediately attacked by angry Americans accusing the organization of spreading seditious anti-Trump propaganda. The nation’s founding values have come to seem, somehow, unfamiliar and contentious; we can’t recognize the Declaration of Independence when we see it. Let the obvious sit too long and it becomes like an animal in a zoo: pointed at, but never exercised, and idly wandered past by people who have forgotten how powerful it is in action.

Nausicaa Renner is the digital editor of The Columbia Journalism Review and a senior editor at n+1. This is her first article for the magazine.

# Why We Must Make Public Higher Education Tuition Free

[commondreams.org/views/2017/10/10/why-we-must-make-public-higher-education-tuition-free](http://commondreams.org/views/2017/10/10/why-we-must-make-public-higher-education-tuition-free)

Bernie Sanders

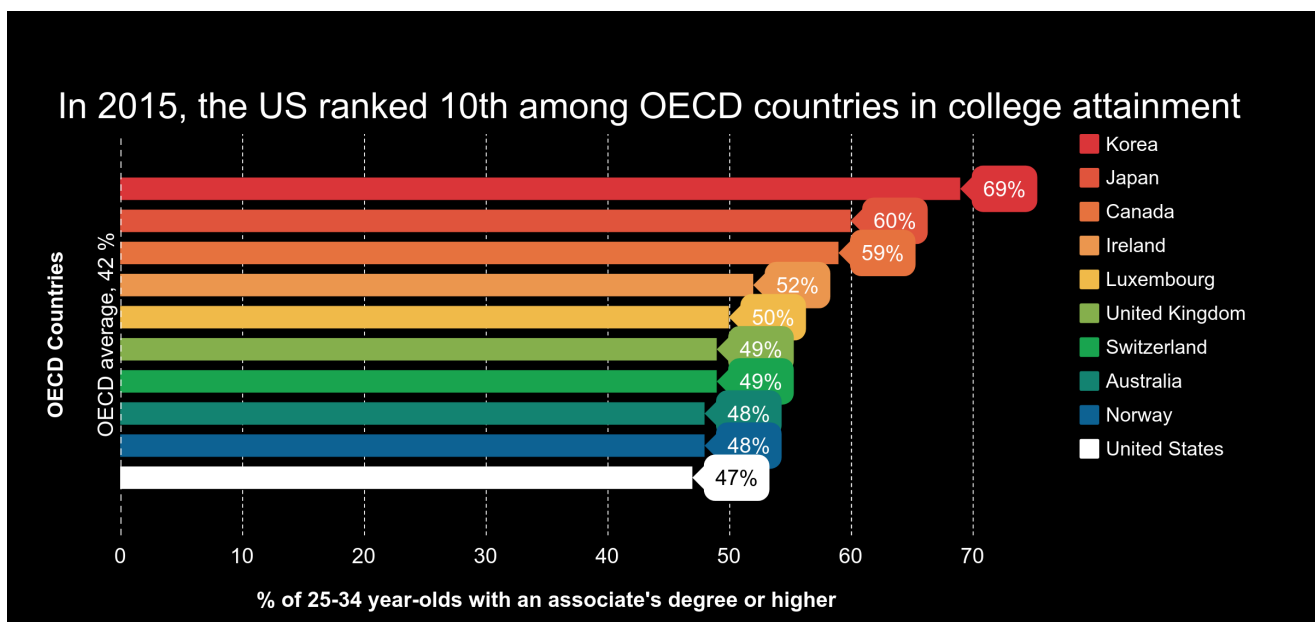
October 10,  
2017

*The following is an opinion piece published on VICE and comes ahead of a Facebook Live event to be hosted by Sen. Sanders on Tuesday evening at 7:00 PM EST. Watch it [here](#).*

*"It's time to make public colleges and universities tuition-free for the working families of our country... It's time to reduce the outrageous burden of student debt that is weighing down the lives of millions of college graduates."*

Our nation needs the best-educated workforce in the world to succeed in the ever more competitive global economy. Sadly, we are moving further and further away from that goal. As recently as 1995, the United States led the world in college graduation rates, but today we have fallen to 11th place. We are now behind such countries as Japan, South Korea, Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, and Switzerland. Eleventh place is not the place for a great nation like the United States.

Why is this so important? Because fifty years ago, if you had a high school degree, odds were that you could get a decent-job and make it into the middle class. But that is no longer the case. While not all middle-class jobs in today's economy require post-secondary education, an increasing number do. By 2020, two-thirds of all jobs in the United States will require some education beyond high school.



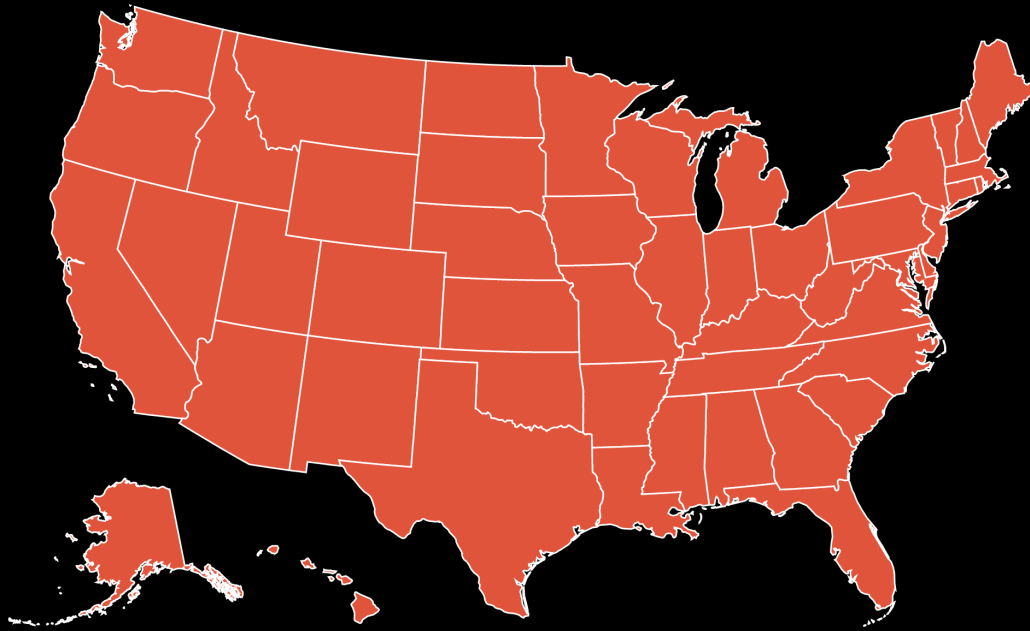
And these jobs tend to pay better, too. Nationally, a worker with an associate's degree will earn about \$360,000 more over their career than a worker with a high school diploma. And a worker with a bachelor's degree will earn almost \$1 million more.

If it makes sense to get a college degree, why aren't more high school students enrolling in and graduating from college? The main reason is because the ever-rising cost of higher education puts college out of reach for many families, or requires students to take on a mountain of debt.

It's time to change that dynamic. It's time to make public colleges and universities tuition-free for the working families of our country. It is time for every child to understand that if they study hard and takes their school work seriously they will be able to get a higher education, regardless of their family's income. It's time to reduce the outrageous burden of student debt that is weighing down the lives of millions of college graduates.

Today, our system of higher education is in a state of crisis. As tuition and fees steadily rise and as states cut funding for colleges and universities year after year, American families are finding it increasingly difficult to afford college. Every year, hundreds of thousands of bright young people can't get a higher education because it is simply too expensive. Equally disgraceful, millions of college graduates have had to take on life-long debt for the "crime" of getting the education they need.

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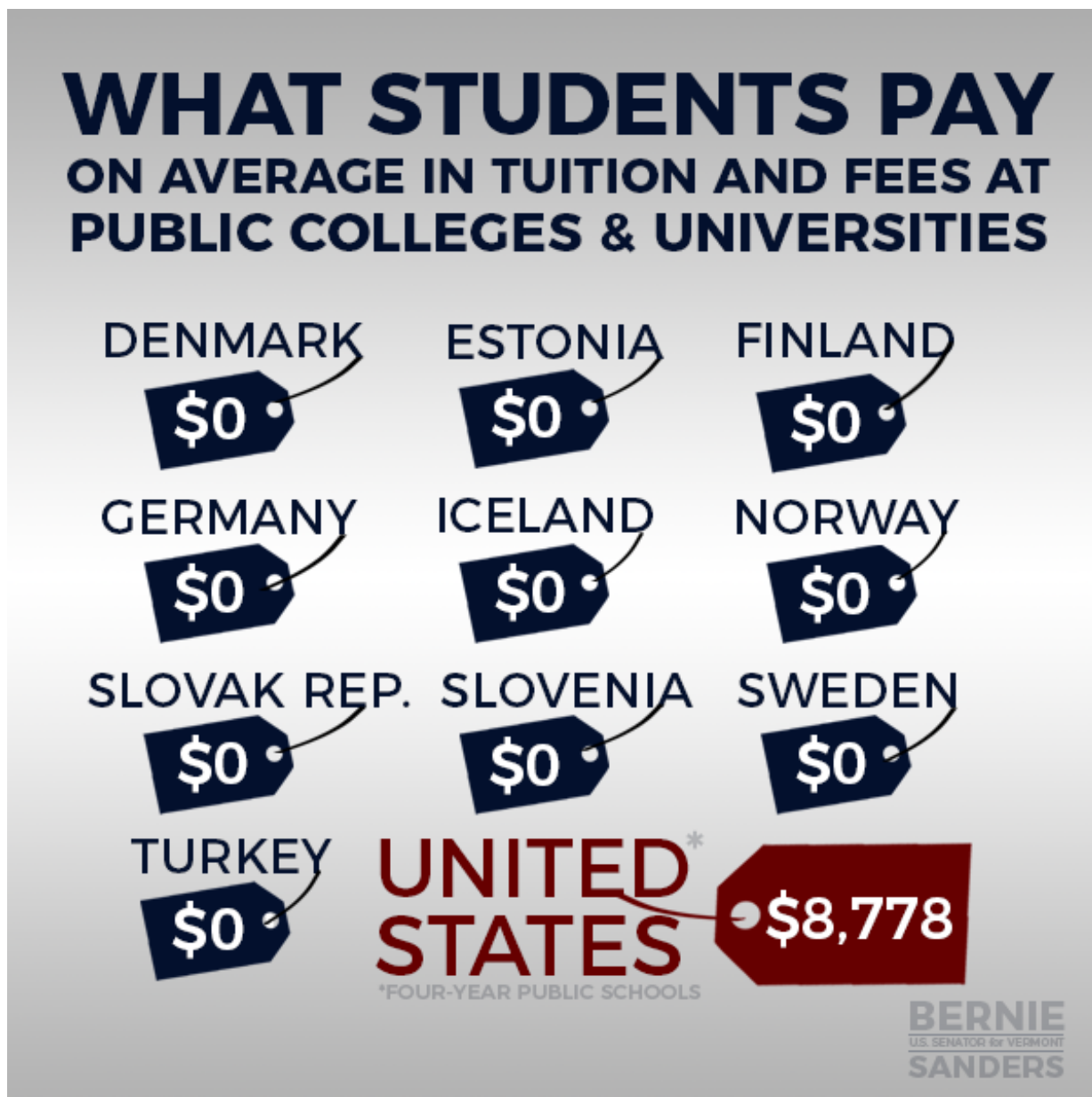
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Some 44 million Americans already owe more than \$1.3 trillion in student loans, and the vast majority of current college students will graduate deeply in debt. For most graduates, this debt will take many years to repay, which not only impacts their career choices, but also their ability to get married, have kids, or buy a home.

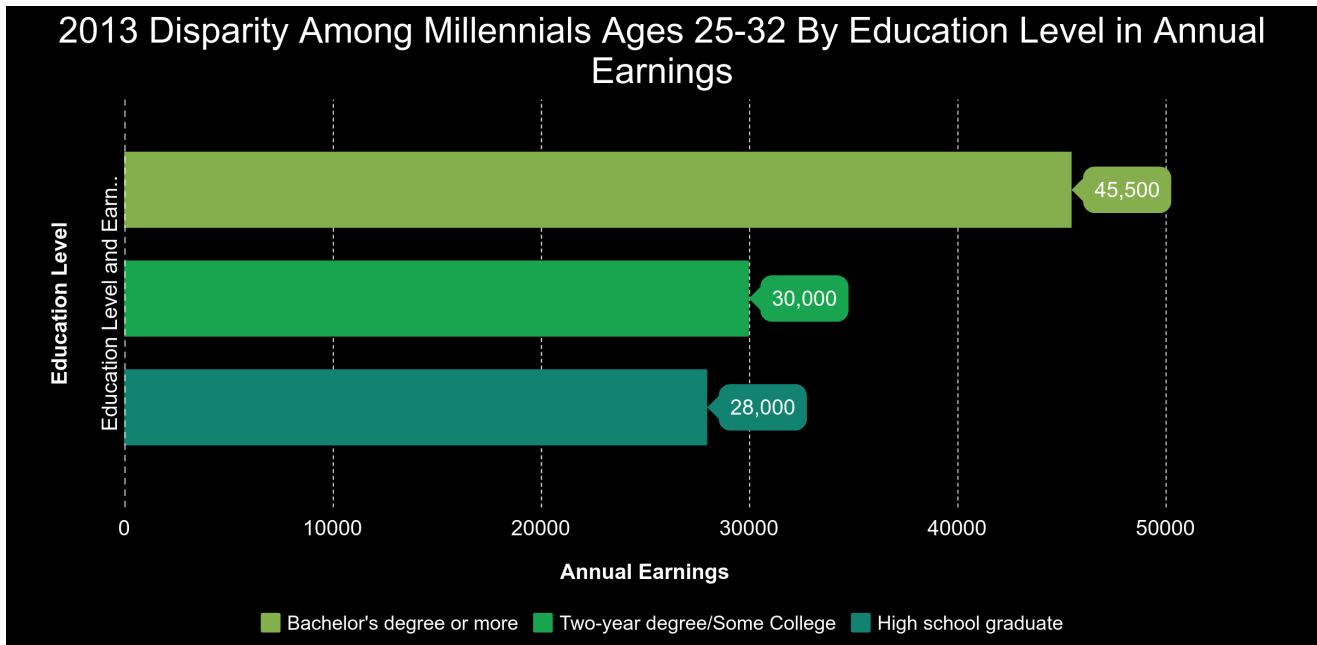
In the richest country in the history of the world, everyone who has the desire and the ability should be able to get a college education regardless of their background and ability to pay. That's why I introduced the *College for All Act*, to make public colleges and universities in America tuition-free for families earning \$125,000 per year or less—which covers 86 percent of our population.

"In the richest country in the history of the world, everyone who has the desire and the ability should be able to get a college education regardless of their background and ability to pay."



This is not a radical idea. Many other nations around the world invest in an educated workforce that isn't burdened with enormous student debt. In Germany, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden public colleges and universities are free. In Germany, public colleges are free not only for Germans, but also for international students.

It wasn't that long ago that our own government understood the value of investing in higher education. In 1944, Congress passed the GI Bill, which provided a free college education to millions of World War II veterans. This was one of the most successful pieces of legislation in modern history, laying the groundwork for the extraordinary post-war economic boom and an unprecedented expansion of the middle class.



But it was not just the federal government that acted. In 1965, average tuition at a four-year state public university was just \$256, and many excellent colleges—such as the City University of New York -- did not charge any tuition at all. The University of California system, considered by many to be the crown jewel of public higher education in this country, did not charge tuition until the 1980s.

The good news is that governors, state legislators, and local officials around the country now understand the crisis and are acting. This year, the City College of San Francisco began offering tuition-free college, and its enrollment for residents is up by 51 percent compared to last year. In New York, tens of thousands will go to the city's public colleges and universities this year without paying tuition. Similar programs have popped up in Tennessee, Oregon, Detroit and Chicago.

We are making progress on this issue, but we still have a long way to go. Making America great is not spending tens of billions more on weapons systems or providing trillions in tax breaks for the very rich. Rather, it is having a well-educated population that can compete in the global economy, and making it possible that every American, regardless of income, has the opportunity to get the education they need to thrive.



VOICE

# The Pro-Free Speech Way to Fight Fake News

Most cures for fraudulent news threaten to be worse than the disease. There's at least one exception.

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BY SUZANNE NOSSEL | OCTOBER 12, 2017, 9:15 AM

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**A**fter the gunfire ended, false claims that the Las Vegas carnage was the work of Islamic State terrorists or left-leaning Donald Trump opponents flooded Facebook pages, YouTube searches, and news feeds. Again, we saw how so-called “fake news” can fuel chaos and stoke hatred. Like most fraudulent news, those deceptive articles are protected speech under the First Amendment and international free expression safeguards. Unless they cross specific legal red lines — such as those barring defamation or libel — fake news stories are not illegal, and our government does not have the power to prohibit or censor them.

But the fact that fake news is free speech does not nullify the danger it poses for open discourse, freedom of opinion, or democratic governance. The rise of fraudulent news and the related erosion of public trust in mainstream journalism pose a looming crisis for free expression. Usually, free expression advocacy centers on the defense of contested speech from efforts at suppression, but it also demands steps to fortify the open and reasoned debate that underpins the value of free speech in our society and our lives. The championing of free speech must not privilege any immutable notion of the truth to the exclusion of others. But this doesn't mean that free speech proponents should be indifferent to the quest for truth, or to attempts to deliberately undermine the public's ability to distinguish fact from falsehood.

Both the First Amendment and international law define free speech to include the right to receive and impart information. The power of free speech is inextricably tied to the opportunity to be heard and believed, and to persuade. Fake news undermines precisely these sources of power. If public discourse becomes so flooded with disinformation that listeners can no longer distinguish signal from noise, they will tune out. Autocrats know this well and thus tightly control the flow of information. They purvey falsehoods to mislead, confuse, and — ultimately — to instill a sense of

the futility of speech that saps the will to cry foul, protest, or resist. On social media, the problem is not one of control, but of chaos. The ferocious pace with which false information can spread can make defending the truth or correcting the record seem like mission impossible, or an invitation to opponents to double down in spreading deceit.

The problem of fraudulent news right now is compounded by social and political divisions that undercut the traditional ways in which truth ordinarily prevails. Investigations, exposes, and studies fall short in a situation where a significant portion of the population distrusts a wide array of sources they perceive as politically or ideologically hostile — including sources that traditionally commanded broad if not universal respect.

The debate over solutions to fraudulent news has centered on what the government, news outlets, social media platforms, and civil society actors like fact-checking groups can do. Each has an important role to play, but they also must respect sharp limits to their interventions. Of course, no president should routinely denigrate legitimate news that he dislikes — as Donald Trump continually does. But Trump's misuse of his authority merely reminds us that it's for good reasons that the Constitution forbids the government from adjudicating which news is true and which is false. Google and Facebook, as private platforms, should monitor their sites to make sure that dangerous conspiracy theories don't go viral, — but if they over-police what appears on their pages, they'll create new impairments for edgy speech. Certainly, news outlets should strive to uphold professional and ethical standards, but they alone can't convince cynical readers to trust them. Similarly, those who believe fake news tend to distrust the fact-checking outlets that try to tell them the stories are bogus.

Ultimately, the power of fake news is in the minds of the beholders — namely, news consumers. We need a news consumers' equivalent of the venerable Consumers Union that, starting in the 1930s, mobilized millions behind taking an informed approach to purchases, or the more recent drive to empower individuals to take charge of their health by reading labels, counting steps, and getting tested for risk factors.

When there were only a few dishwashers to choose from, buyers didn't need *Consumer Reports* to sort through their features and flaws. But when the appliance shopper began to face information overload, trusted arbiters were established to help them sort out the good from the bad. In decades past, news consumption centered on newspapers, magazines, and network shows that had undergone layers of editing and fact-checking. Most consumers saw little necessity to educate themselves about the

political leanings of media owners, modes of attribution for quotes, journalistic sourcing protocols, the meaning of datelines, or other indicators of veracity.

Now, with the proliferation of overtly partisan media, lower barriers to entry into public discourse, and information flooding across the web and cable news, consumers need new tools to sort through choices and make informed decisions about where to invest their attention and trust. The fight against fake news will hinge not on inculcating trust in specific sources of authority but on instilling skepticism, curiosity, and a sense of agency among consumers, who are the best bulwark against the merchants of deceit.

A news consumers' movement should include several prongs, building on PEN America's newly released "News Consumers Bill of Rights and Responsibilities" from its new [report](#), "Faking News: Fraudulent News and the Fight for Truth." The movement should furnish credible information to help consumers weigh the reliability of varied news sources. It should include an advocacy arm to prod newsrooms, internet platforms, and social media giants into being transparent about their decisions as to what news is elevated and how it is marked. This movement should advance news literacy curricula in schools and equip the next generation to navigate the information ocean they were born into. It should conduct outreach to diverse constituencies and strive continually to avoid ideological bias. It should develop an investigative research arm to expose, name, and shame the purveyors of fraudulent news and their financial backers. And it might provide periodic ranking of, and reporting on, newsrooms and other outlets to hold them accountable to their audiences. The movement should also mobilize the public to become good news consumers by encouraging them to apply a critical eye to news sources, favor those that are trustworthy, validate reports before sharing them on social media, and report errors when they see them.

Recognizing fraudulent news as a threat to free expression cannot be grounds to justify a cure — in the form of new government or corporate restrictions on speech — that may end up being worse than the disease. Unscrupulous profiteers and political opportunists may never cease in their efforts to infect the global information flow of information to serve their purposes. The best prescription against the epidemic of fake news is to inoculate consumers by building up their ability to defend themselves.

Photo credit: Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

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## **The Politics of Pests: immigration and the invasive other**

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In 2015 more than one million people entered the European Union, many fleeing wars in the Middle East. There was a strand of hostile media coverage that represented migrants as vermin or insects. This paper examines the context of this representation and argues that that association of vermin – waste, numbers and threats to the home – provides useful insights into the anxieties underpinning negative responses to asylum seekers. Analysing these representations offers insights into the kinds of political questions that must be tackled in struggling for more positive responses.

## **The Politics of Pests: immigration and the invasive other**

'We are a disturbance... because we show you in a terrible way how fragile the world we live in is'

The UNHCR estimates that more than one million people entered Europe by sea in 2015 and at least 3,700 drowned. The vast majority of entrants were from the world's top ten refugee producing countries including Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Like the apocryphal story that the Haitian slave revolutionaries greeted the repressive French army by singing the Marseillaise, so some of the people walking along the motorways of Hungary and Austria were carrying the European flag. We share your respect for justice, freedom and human rights and here we are! We belong!

The situation was labelled a 'crisis' and the response was schizophrenic. Widespread 'Refugees are Welcome' demonstrations were met with nationalist counter demonstrations and fire bombings. As autumn arrived, amidst mutual recriminations of xenophobia and hypocrisy Europe re-bordered: checkpoints were instituted between Austria and Germany, Italy and France, Sweden and Denmark, Croatia and Austria, Macedonia and Greece. Thus the crisis brought into question not only the principles of asylum and of free movement within the European Union but Europe's very idea of itself as a space of liberal values, freedom, moral equality and human rights. This could be seen as prefiguring political shifts of 2016 with the UK's vote to leave the European Union ('Brexit'), and the mainstreaming of what had been regarded as the 'far right' across the EU. As well as a migration crisis confronting Europe, what started to unfold was a *European* crisis confronting migrants: A multi-dimensional European crisis of solidarity between member states, many of which are struggling with austerity and with rapidly diminishing state capacity. This crisis was effectively called out by migration (Kriss 2015).

The media coverage of these events and their consequences reflected these tensions. Hostility towards mobile people, concerns about security and demands on resources, collided with the unavoidably human face of catastrophe, and for a time negative responses were mitigated by the photograph of drowned toddler Aylan Kurdi. The temporalities inherent in this contradiction were encapsulated in an editorial in *The Times* of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016: "Compassion is the right response but unconditional welcome is the wrong way to express it".

The relation between media coverage, policy and public opinion is highly complicated, particularly in cases that are depicted as some kind of 'crisis'. Press coverage is not a neutral mirror of public opinion, but neither does it simply shape public attitudes – news organisations are businesses, concerned to build relationships with their readers not to challenge their views. The relation between media, public attitudes, and policy-making is complex and mutually constitutive and there has been some interest in this triangular relation in the case of migration and asylum (Matthews and Brown 2012). This issue has received increasing attention post 2015, and there continues to be considerable debate about the role of the media in the representation of migrants/refugees, and its relation to public opinion. Several studies were commissioned. The Ethical Journalism Network found that press coverage was fuelling sensationalism, anxiety and intolerance (Morrison 2016), while research commissioned by the UNHCR found representations of migrants as cultural or welfare threats were prevalent in several EU states.

Attention to media depictions of the migrant/refugee inevitably foregrounds questions of race and racism. The fixing of race and ethnicity was and continues to be related to control of mobility, and to ideas of the nation. In public discourse there is some recognition of a potential relation between hostility to migration, xenophobia and racism – even if this is expressed in the *denial* of an actual relation. This is reflected in the competing claims that immigration/asylum policies are necessary to forestall racism, or that they are irrelevant to issues of race, or that they are inherently racist. Yet in academic research the migrant as racialized other, and what this means for ideas of the constitution of the racialized other has tended to either be assumed or ignored (Solomos 2014). The representation of the migrant as invasive other indicates the need for more attention to be paid to the relation between hostility to migrants and racism. It is important to uncover how ideas about migration play a complex and often contradictory role in racialisation processes: simultaneously evidence of tolerance and threatening tolerance, a new political subject and a threat to the polis, shaping ideas of shared identity by incorporation and rejection.

### Coverage in Context

For over twenty years the outsourcing of migration controls, agreements with source and transit countries, readmission agreements, the creation of migration management policies and facilities in countries of origin and so on have kept the consequences of war and global inequalities largely out of sight. European publics have largely been protected from the practical reality of forced displacement and economic desperation that is now showing up on holiday beaches. In 2015 tourists began to complain about sharing beaches and pavements with homeless refugees: 'It's really dirty and messy here now. And it's awkward. I'm not going to sit in a restaurant with people watching you' (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3099736/Holidaymakers-misery-boat-people-Syria-Afghanistan-seeking-asylum-set-migrant-camp-turn-popular-Greek-island-Kos-disgusting-hellhole.html#ixzz2IEzd91gT> ).

The long tail of the movement to Europe is easy to trace. Even before the Arab Spring the Middle East and North African region was being singled out as a potential source of migrants, and 'unresolved conflicts' and political unrest suggested as potentially motivating emigration to Europe. By the mid-2000s there were warnings that Middle East's states of reception were under considerable pressure from the challenges of coping with displacement, and it was suggested that people might start moving on. Notably this was even before the war in Syria, and the collapse of Libya which had functioned as an effective migration buffer zone. Colonel Ghaddafi was well aware of the importance of this to Europe. When his regime was being challenged by Western powers, he told the France 24 television station: "There are millions of blacks who could come to the Mediterranean to cross to France and Italy, and Libya plays a role in security in the Mediterranean" (cited in BBC News 7th March 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12663513>). His son also warned "Libya may become the Somalia of North Africa, of the Mediterranean. You will see the pirates in Sicily, in Crete, in Lampedusa. You will see millions of illegal immigrants. The terror will be next door".

Even before 2015 anxiety about asylum, migration and terrorism had been on the increase across the European Union. How this was expressed, and in particular the tone of the media coverage, varied significantly, both between outlets, and also across states (Berry et al. 2015). In 2014 there



had been large numbers of deaths in the Mediterranean. Displacement from the Syrian war, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, poverty and environmental degradation in Niger, Senegal, and Gambia was pressing ever more urgently at the borders of Europe. By the early Spring of 2015 the main route from Africa to Europe shifted from Libya/Italy to Turkey/Greece. Those on the move included a significant proportion of Syrians often with young children, reluctant to remain in Turkey with its limited health and education and the long term prospect of living with precarious status. Faced with tens of thousands of people heading towards Germany, on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015 German Chancellor Angela Merkel ordered the suspension of the Dublin Regulation for Syrian nationals. The Dublin Regulation requires asylum cases to be heard in the first EU state that the applicant arrives in. If they move on and claim asylum in another EU member state, that second state can return them to their point of arrival for their case to be heard there. It places considerable pressures on countries at the borders of Europe to the benefit of Northern European states (if one assumes that having fewer asylum seekers is a benefit). It is worth noting in the light of subsequent events that in January 2011 the European Court of Human Rights had halted Dublin removals from other EU member states to Greece on the grounds that detention conditions in Greece were so inhumane that they constituted an abuse of human rights.

In September 2015 EU member states had committed to resettling 160,000 refugees in order to relieve some of the pressure on member states at the edges of Europe. Even this extremely modest target proved too much: by July 2016 they had resettled only 3,056. However, the EU had trebled spending on border defence and, in December 2015, the establishment of a European Border and Coast Guard to defend Europe's borders was announced. Alarmed by numbers and the refusal to 'burden share' the European Commission struck a deal that provided the framework for the mass return of migrants from Greece to Turkey. This was agreed despite multiple concerns including claims from Amnesty International that Turkey was conducting illegal mass returns of Syrians to Syria on a daily basis.

There was uncertainty about the words used to describe what was happening: was this a 'refugee crisis' or a 'migrant crisis', or indeed, was it a 'crisis' at all? The debate about 'refugee' versus 'migrant' was not about accurately conveying the legal status of those who are moving, (which depends on their nationalities, personal histories and claims), but rather on the moral value of the entrants: helpless victims of war, - refugees; potential terrorists, the undeserving wealthy, those in search of a good life, - migrants. Despite nearly two decades of negative publicity, 'refugee' (unlike 'asylum seeker') does still retain connotations of deservingness and human rights. When applied to groups moving in 2015 it often facilitated comparisons with the Europe of Second World War, both the movement of Jewish people during the war, and the situation of displaced people after it. This was used to emphasise the scale of the 'crisis' but also the ethics of the political response. For example, Prime Minister Cameron described the offer of admitting 4,000 Syrian people a year for five years with particular focus on vulnerable children as 'the modern equivalent of the Kindertransport'. Critics compared Denmark's policy introduced in January 2016 to demand the handing over of money and assets to pay for the cost of their accommodation and maintenance with Nazi treatment of Jews. Swedish MEP Cecilia Wikström campaigning for safe passage to Europe from conflict zones compared the contemporary response to refugees to the policy of appeasement in the Second World War warning that Europe would be judged negatively by future generations: "Swedes will compare this to the Holocaust". Indeed the German response of opening its borders was

welcomed by liberal commentators as a kind of reparation for its Nazi past and only months after the hostility invoked by the Eurozone crisis with Greece calling for Nazi war reparations Angela Merkel was in the frame for winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

The flipside of the invoking of sympathy for the 'refugee' was that 'migrant' became overtly pejorative. The negativity of this ostensibly neutral term had been apparent for some time. 'Migrant' and its equivalents in contrast are increasingly associated with the low skilled, the low waged and the global poor. Notably it is a term rarely used to describe the professional or those moving from North Europe and North America, who are more likely to be known as 'expats'. In August 2015 the broadcaster Al Jazeera announced that it was no longer going to use the term 'migrant'. It is worth quoting their reasons in full:

The umbrella term migrant is no longer fit for purpose when it comes to describing the horror unfolding in the Mediterranean. It has evolved from its dictionary definitions into a tool that dehumanises and distances, a blunt pejorative.

It is not hundreds of people who drown when a boat goes down in the Mediterranean, nor even hundreds of refugees. It is hundreds of migrants. It is not a person – like you, filled with thoughts and history and hopes – who is on the tracks delaying a train. It is a migrant. A nuisance.

It already feels like we are putting a value on the word. Migrant deaths are not worth as much to the media as the deaths of others - which means that their lives are not. Drowning disasters drop further and further down news bulletins. We rarely talk about the dead as individuals anymore. They are numbers.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/editors-blog/2015/08/al-jazeera-mediterranean-migrants-150820082226309.html>

## **UK press coverage**

The UK press coverage has been found to be the most polarised, aggressive and negative towards those seeking asylum across the European Union (Berry et al. 2015). In contrast with Germany where the mobility of 2015 was routinely labelled refugee (flüchtling(e)/ flykting) or asylum seeker (asylsuchende(r)/asylsokande) in the UK the dominant term was migrant. The UK press has a 'pathologically present anti-Nazi past' (Gilroy 2012) but is nonetheless infamous in its hostility to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. A 2003 study on asylum coverage found that media reporting was characterised by inaccurate and provocative use of language, and an overwhelming focus on numbers which were often unsourced and exaggerated (Buchanan et al. 2003). A study of the use of migration in the 2005 general election campaign described how it became a central issue for political communication with an emphasis on highly emotive disaster and container metaphors (Charteris-Black 2006). A comparative study in 2016 found that anti-immigrant hate speech flourished 'inside the newsroom' and that there was a long term obsession with migration as 'invasion' (Sufee, 2016).

The pejorative nature of 'migrant' was strongly signified and expressed through imagery and metaphor. One metaphoric trope that has emerged as particularly powerful in the coverage of the 2015 events is the migrant as invasive insect, a metaphor that has been deployed by politicians as well as press commentators and reporters. Katie Hopkins, a columnist for the UK's largest tabloid newspaper *The Sun* in her piece in April 2015 described 'aggressive young men at Calais, spreading like norovirus on a cruise ship'. She claimed that 'Some of our towns are festering sores, plagued by swarms of migrants and asylum seekers, shelling out benefits like Monopoly money. Make no mistake, these migrants are like cockroaches' (Hopkins 2015). The shift from simile to metaphor was apparent when, three months later, UK Prime Minister David Cameron described 'a swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life, wanting to come to Britain because Britain has got jobs' (ITV News 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015). Scarcely surprisingly this graphic imagery was taken up by cartoonists. One infamous example was published on 17<sup>th</sup> November by *The Daily Mail*, a newspaper whose circulation of approximately 1.6 million is second only to *The Sun*. It is a newspaper that is notoriously hostile to immigration and to welfare claimants. The cartoon by Mac depicted people marching firmly across a line marked 'Welcome to Europe'. These were Muslim-looking characters, bearded, wearing hijabs, carrying prayer mats and guns. At their feet, also scurrying across the border and seemingly passing unnoticed, were rats. It is particularly concerning because these kinds of cartoons are stand-alone items that have an entertainment rather than an informative purpose:

the sort of material which may be re-told in conversation or passed around a group of friends, family, co-workers simply because of its 'amusement value'. In this way the anti-asylum message is shared through gossip and normal social interaction which allows it to seep much more easily into the collective consciousness. It also legitimises what would normally be considered to be socially unacceptable behaviour – to ridicule and demean a vulnerable group.

Buchanan et al 2003: 27

None of these representations went unremarked. Katie Hopkins was questioned by the police for inciting racial hatred and was the subject of an online petition calling for *The Sun* to sack her that received over 200,000 signatures in a matter of days. She was not sacked. The *Huffington Post* described *The Daily Mail* cartoon as 'straight out of Nazi Germany', but the cartoon was defended on the basis that it was the terrorists, not the migrants, who were cast as rats. David Cameron's comments were called 'irresponsible' and 'dehumanising' by refugee groups, but he defended them on the basis that he was simply trying to convey that 'a lot' of people were coming.

### **Animal Magic**

Metaphors matter. 'They are figures of thought as much as they are figures of speech' (Steuter and Wills: 7), or, to paraphrase Santa Ana (1999), they do not simply colour the poetic but shape the prosaic. They are a crucial element in the structuring of our conceptual systems, providing cognitive frames that make issues understandable. They bridge the gap between logic and emotion exposing and shaping our feelings and responses and acting as both expression and legitimation (Mio 1997). Thus they are at their most effective when they are surreptitious and uncontested, not when they

are applauded or called out, but when they pass unremarked into our language. That is, when they shift from simile to metaphor suggesting the horror lurking beneath reason. In the press migrants routinely scurry, scuttle, sneak, and they often swarm too. Migrants are invaders, but invasion usually suggests a state or at least an authority that controls the invasion. In the case of migrants this invasion is a force of nature, of war without sovereignty and of agency without individuality.

The comparison of foreigners and outsiders with animals has a long history. Non-citizens and those regarded as outsiders or sub-human have been called animal names, been treated like animals and forced to behave like animals. This has contemporary twists - in 2013 Tripoli zoo was turned into an immigration detention centre – but it is not new. In Ancient Greece Herodotus compares slaves to cattle, while more recently in the American South slaves were commonly equated with domestic animals – oxen, hogs, calves and colts (Jacoby 1994). Otto Santa Ana has analysed the coverage in the Los Angeles Times of the referendum on Proposition 187 and found the key metaphor discerned to be ‘immigrants are animals’ (Sta Ana 1999) while O’Brian (2009) describes the metaphors deployed during the US immigration debate of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and found that the immigrant as invader and the immigrant as animal were even then common tropes. O’Brian’s analyses finds that in contrast to the depiction of slaves who were imagined as beasts of burden, to be whipped, branded and controlled, migrants whose entry must be controlled are compared to ‘parasites or “low animals” capable of infection and contamination’ (O’Brian 2009:43). Similarly those seeking to enter Europe are not depicted as beasts or brutes but as vermin, forms of non-vital life, low down on the animal phyla.

Rats, cockroaches and swarms are urban, they are not wild animals, but neither can they be domesticated. Unlike beasts of burden these are not productive animals. They are alive, but not truly sentient. Considered more closely there are three interrelated connotations of invasive vermin that are of relevance to anxieties about asylum: waste, numbers and threats to the home.

Cockroaches, ants and rats do not come from nowhere. They are strongly associated with human waste and they flourish near humans because they live in the dirt that we produce. They thrive in the places we try to forget: sewers, empty lots, derelict buildings, mountainous landfills. They are ambassadors of entropy, appearing in huge numbers during floods, wars, economic decline, or other periods of disorder, both associated with disaster, but also bringing the risk of ‘natural disaster’ with them. They are nature’s revenge. In her piece for *The Sun*, Hopkins wrote of asylum seekers that ‘They might look a bit ‘Bob Geldof’s Ethiopia circa 1984 but they are built to survive a nuclear bomb. They are survivors’. After the bombing of Hiroshimi and Nagasaki, a science fiction short story by Edward Grendon depicted millions of cockroaches ‘swarming’ out of the cities and killing hundreds of people. It has passed into the public imagination that cockroaches will inherit the earth after a nuclear explosion and insects will survive the apocalypse.

The comparison with vermin recalls the waste of the current social, political and economic global system. In the same way that vermin serve as a reminder of eco-systems of dirt and waste that are thrown up by and live on the by-products of production, so the people at the borders of Europe and those whose bodies wash up on Mediterranean beaches are part of the eco-systems of global economic, social and political relations, and the living histories of colonialism and patriarchy. Europe is not an uneasy bystander having to deal with the consequences of actions that it had no control over, but rather it is dealing with the human consequences of a situation that it played a crucial role

in creating. There is an obvious connection of mobility with recent foreign policy decisions in European capitals, but there are also deeper connections with the economic and environmental 'zones of sacrifice' demanded by our current systems, those areas despoiled for the purpose of resource extraction: "And you can't have a system built on sacrificial places and sacrificial people unless intellectual theories that justify their sacrifice exist and persist: from Manifest Destiny to Terra Nullius to Orientalism, from backward hillbillies to backward Indians" (Klein 2016: 13). Thus migrants belong to eco-systems that we would rather forget,

The problem with insects is a problem of *numbers*. One insect is trivial, of no consequence, but they travel in swarms and one is likely to presage millions. In a video that went viral in July 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was depicted in an awkward televised encounter with a 14 year old Palestinian girl, Reem. Reem described in fluent German how she and her family, who arrived in Rostock four years ago from a Lebanese refugee camp, face deportation. Merkel responded by saying she understood, but that "politics is sometimes hard. You're right in front of me now and you're an extremely nice person. But you also know in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are thousands and thousands and if we were to say you can all come ... we just can't manage it." The chancellor was forced to stop mid-sentence on seeing that Reem was crying. She walked up to the girl and started stroking her shoulder and attempting to comfort her. She was widely mocked on twitter hashtag #Merkelstrokes, but Merkel did well all things considered. For here we have the bottom line: there are too many of you. If it was just *you* then of course you would be welcome to come, but if we allow the principle, there will be millions of refugee and of migrants.

In the past two or three years, people attempting to enter Europe have indeed been using sheer numbers to overwhelm border posts. Whether running at the fences of Melilla, pulling down the barricades at Macedonia, jumping on to the trains and ferries at Calais, or hiding in the ranks of hundreds of no borders activists walking across frontiers, the weight of numbers is being transformed into a means of resistance. Crowds are breaking down fences and mass co-ordinated crossings are proving difficult to halt. As a border guard interviewed at Melilla put it: 'we can stop them when they come two at a time, but if there are 2,000 at each point we cannot'. This is the very antithesis of 'managed migration' the careful identification, points systems and processing of migrants that lies at the heart of migration and refugee policy. Indeed for decades the principle measure of success of an immigration or refugee policy has been numerical, and more particularly, keeping numbers down. No amount of money it seems is too much if it contributes to dampening the flow of migrants. Arguments from those who advocate for migrants rights have often relied on claims that concerns about numbers are exaggerated, but not challenged the way that limiting numbers of entrants is often the sole measure of policy success.

Vermin are ubiquitous and cockroaches, rats and 'swarms' are indigenous to everywhere. The horror is not simply that the 'sneaky little creatures' do not respect borders or boundaries. They are not invasive of a *territorial* space<sup>1</sup>. What vermin are invasive of is the civilized space of the home. Thus comparing migrants to insects and vermin invokes what Walters (2010) has called 'domopolitics', the aspiration to govern the state like a *home*. Indeed, Merkel's policy has been dubbed her 'open door' policy and is in contrast to Prime Minister Cameron's stance that we need to stop migrants 'breaking

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<sup>1</sup> The Israeli army has opened small tunnels in the separation wall to migrate, in part because of the separation of animal 'families' (<http://www.dw.com/en/israeli-army-opens-west-bank-barrier-for-animals/a-16351700>). This of course is not necessary for vermin like rats that live on both sides of the wall.

into Britain', both metaphors associated with the home. The home is our place, the space where 'we' are native. In recent years in Europe there has been a striking resurgence of language of nativity and indigeneity. While in colonial past 'natives' were the uncivilised, the tribal, now native and indigenous British/French/European etc. is used to denote autochthony and assert a natural belonging to a territory. Walters discusses the tension between 'domos' and 'oikos', the state imagined as home and the state imagined as household. Oikos and its desire for economy, utility and efficiency is receding in the face of domus and the search for order, domesticity and security. 'Domopolitics implies a reconfiguring of the relations between citizenship, state, and territory that requires securitization or 'homeland security' to protect it' (Walters 2010: 241).

When they are in the home insects must be dealt and while 'exterminate all the brutes' is not acceptable, 'exterminate all the bugs' is, indeed this is the solution to an infestation of pests. The lives of insects do not matter – they are not 'grievable' (Butler 2009). The relation between the development of pesticides for agricultural and domestic use and chemical technologies for the mass killing of humans has been well documented. During the Second World War for example, the German chemical company IG Farben bought the patent for Zyklon B which was used in the extermination camps of the Holocaust. Its original use was an insecticide, and it had previously been licensed for de-lousing Mexican migrants to the United States in the 1930s.

There is no proposal to exterminate people at the borders of Europe (though Katie Hopkins' piece, entitled, "Rescue Boats? I'd use Gunships to Stop Migrants" came perilously close to calling for killing people). However, "letting die" is a different matter. The Italian led search and rescue missions under the Mare Nostrum programme were designated to constitute a pull factor by European policymakers. In October 2014 Mare Nostrum was replaced by Triton which did not have rescue as an operational priority. *Death by Rescue*, a report produced by Forensic Oceanography at the University of Goldsmiths, found that 'institutionalised neglect' 'created the conditions that led to massive loss of life' (Forensic Oceanography 2016). Furthermore the policy of returning people to Turkey requires forced removals to situations which are acknowledged as inhumane. The vulnerable situation of those in refugee camps in Turkey was illustrated by the recent case of a cleaner in one of the camps being convicted of sexual assault against at least 30 children aged 8 to 12 years old.

The etymological origin of 'exterminate' is to put beyond the boundary or the frontier. The question is where shall they be removed to? What to do with Bauman's human waste, the 'collateral casualties of progress'? In the past, penal transportation to colonial territories was the means by which 'civilized England shall be disburdened of its worst people' (1603 Order of the Privy Council cited Beier 1985: 150). Transportation turned the poor into the 'building blocks of Empire' (Ocobock). There was a hierarchy of spaces where people could be removed to. For example, between 1832 and 1843 some 1200 'Liberated Africans' kidnapped from many different areas of Africa were sent to McCarthy Island, a small island in the River Gambia. It had been proposed originally as a British penal settlement, but it was deemed too unhealthy, and would make transportation tantamount to a death sentence, so would therefore be unlawful (Webb 1993). For those rescued from the slave trade however, McCarthy Island was apparently acceptable. In 1936 the French Prime Minister Leon Blum permitted a Polish delegation to Madagascar to explore the possibility of Poland 're-settling' Polish Jews there, an idea at one stage announced to the German cabinet by Goring as a plan by Hitler to solve the 'Jewish problem'. Timothy Snyder (2015) has examined how Nazi politics were presented as restoring the balance of nature in the face of

dwindling resources. 'Races' needed more *Lebensraum* – living room – to feed themselves and to reproduce. But *Lebensraum* also invokes the space of the home, conflating home with nation.

Since 1945, one of the two senses of *Lebensraum* has spread across most of the world: a living room, the dream of household comfort in consumer society. The other sense of *Lebensraum* is habitat, the realm that must be controlled for physical survival... In uniting these two passions in one word, Hitler conflated lifestyle with life... Once standard of living is confused with living, a rich society can make war upon those who are poorer in the name of survival. Tens of millions of people died in Hitler's war, not so that Germans could live, but so that Germans could pursue the American dream in a globalized world.

Snyder 2015: 324

While Snyder asks whether tolerance of climate change invokes *lebensraum*, one might argue that this is much more directly invoked in the language of migration – full up, overcrowded, no room, Europeans only. It is sad to see all these people in such suffering and misery, but we have to put ourselves first. Northern League leader Matteo Salvini suggested taking 'rescued' migrants to disused oil platforms off the Libyan coast abandoned by the Italian energy firm ENI in order not to 'disturb' Italians: 'Help them, rescue them and take care of them, but don't let them land here' (Agence France Presse 2015). As the tourist quoted above complained that she could not eat while there were hungry refugees looking at her, so the refugees must be moved on – otherwise how can we continue to feel comfortable on holiday?

### **Politicising Pests**

Controlling unruly mobilities unleashed by inequality, conflict and hope, channelling, enforcing and preventing them has been a challenge for the wealthy and the powerful for over a millennium. Mobility is not controlled and restricted simply out of cruelty or indifference. It is constrained because it has the potential to be profoundly disruptive.

Disgust at waste, fear of numbers, protection of the home, what do these three anxieties about migrants and migration suggest about the possibilities for a more progressive political discussion – what is it that needs to be tackled? Clearly the guilty eco-systems of migration are important. The boats in the Mediterranean, the fence chargers at Melilla, the lorry and train jumpers at Calais are symptoms of far deeper problems, rooted in global inequality and injustice, the escalation of wars at Europe's edges, and the creaking of the nation state form and ideas of citizenship and human rights. As then UK Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, said in a statement on Calais to the BBC:

"The gap in standards of living between Europe and Africa means there will always be millions of Africans with the economic motivation to try to get to Europe...So long as there are large numbers of pretty desperate migrants marauding around the area, there always will be a threat to the tunnel security."

Here we have an explicit reference to global inequality very gently signified by 'gap in standards of living'. This is a feature of much of the current coverage, and of course is not a natural state of affairs. In fact, 'marauding' might be a more accurate description of the European massacres, betrayals, land grabbing and of course slavery that caused so much devastation in Africa. In wealthy

Europe life for a proportion of the population might look relatively good compared with five hundred years ago, but we are living at a time of the highest level of global inequality in human history, when the poorest 50% of the world have 6.6% of total global income. The World Bank has estimated that three quarters of inequality can be attributed to between country differences (Milanovic 2011). We can quibble about their methodology, but we cannot deny that the world has changed from the 19<sup>th</sup> century when what was critical to your life experience was if you were a master or a servant. It is not your position in life, but the state where you are born and where you live that shapes your life chances and options for survival. Why some states are poor and others are rich is not because their inhabitants are any more intelligent, plucky or have more resources than anywhere else. It has everything to do with the living (hi)stories of colonialism and exploitation.

Secondly the fear of numbers must be confronted. Numbers are often the principle, if not the sole measurement of an immigration policy's success. The reason that there are too many migrants is that they are a strain on resources, either they are employed, in which case they are 'taking jobs', or they are unemployed, in which case they are 'taking benefits'. 'They' may place demands on infrastructure, social security and health systems. The assumption is that, were it not for migration/asylum, societies and labour markets would remain the same, or subject to only very slow demographic shifts. That is, migration impacts on otherwise stable systems. However, economies and societies are always changing and the obsession with immigration has overshadowed the structural reasons for inequality and lack of social protection.

The problem of numbers is a problem of resources, and the flipside of there is not enough to go round is that there are too many of the wrong kinds of people. The resurgence of domopolitics suggests we need to interrogate more closely the relation between state and nation, and the relation between nationalism, xenophobia and racism and find ways of introducing this more sophisticated discussion into public debate. To claim that the experiences at the borders of Europe are consequences of 'racism' is to risk underestimating their persuasive power if by 'racism' we mean an individual's belief in biological difference and hierarchy on the basis of skin colour. After all, Black people with US passports will generally find it easier to enter Europe than those with paler skin who are from Afghanistan, Syria or Iraq. Citizens of these states are subject to the most stringent visa restrictions in the world while those with US passports can travel relatively freely. Black US citizens are however disproportionately likely to be checked in comparison to white people with US passports (Anderson 2013). Race, nationality and poverty are interrelated in complex ways and immigration controls and their consequences can seem rational to many of those who take a strongly anti-racist position in non-immigration politics. For while race is always reducible to skin pigmentation it is far more complex and racism is highly adaptable. Race in the context of migration to Europe is, bound up with nation, and more particularly with nationality, ethnicity, culture and poverty. Immigration controls work to, quite literally, turn people into 'aliens', and also often make them subordinate, dependent on citizens, as employers, spouses, sponsors. While policymakers disavow race as an ordering tool of immigration controls, nationality is fundamental to them.

## **Conclusion**

On July 30<sup>th</sup> 2016 the upmarket burger chain Byron had to temporarily close two outlets. The firm had colluded with immigration officials and tricked members of staff into attending health and safety meetings that had turned out to be immigration traps. Some thirty five people were deported.



A Boycott Byron campaign was organised, but London Black Revs and Malcolm X Movement went further. They released some 8,000 locusts, 2,000 crickets and 4,000 cockroaches into two central London branches forcing them to close for cleaning. One protester said: “Katie Hopkins called them cockroaches in an article just a few months ago. We want to show these people what cockroaches really look like, and we’ll unleash them on places like this if they don’t change their ways.” (The Guardian 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016).

There is empathy and solidarity if we dare. After all in the inaugural public opinion research on the refugee crisis it found that 73% of people in 11 countries in the global north acknowledged some level of responsibility to accept refugees. This is a start. It suggests that politicians can afford to be bolder in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean and expand safe and legal channels into the EU. Countries – and not only within the EU, must ensure more equitable responsibility sharing for asylum seekers. These are demands to make of policy makers and governments and they can be made now, but they are not enough.

It is not enough to demand from policy makers, and it is up to all of us to build connections between the low waged, homeless and unemployed EU citizens, those struggling to get by, and the struggles of migrants without turning them into competitors for the privileges of membership? How to jump the scales and the borders of the local, national and global and make the connections between them? There new possibilities here that resist the lure of domopolitics and make important connections between migrants and citizens, but the analysis can’t be abstracted from political and social practice. It can offer clues that must be followed and developed through campaigning and organising and people’s daily experiences of building relationships with one another. In recent months across Europe people have been supporting and welcoming migrants, but we are in for the long haul of building an economy, culture and society where better lives for Syrians, Eritreans, Afghans and Pakistanis, mean better lives for all of us.

Perhaps we can look to metaphor for political inspiration, for ways of reframing the relationship between embedded citizens and mobile populations. Teiko Tomita was a woman who came and farmed in the US in 1921. Throughout her life she wrote beautiful tanka, a particular form of Japanese short poetry, expressing her struggles and hopes. When her poetry was published as part of a collection of Issei poetry, she entitled her section *Tsugiki* meaning ‘graft’ or ‘grafted tree’, a depiction of her and her children’s relation to their lives in the US (Nomura 2005).

Carefully grafting  
Young cherry trees  
I believe in the certainty  
They will bud  
In the coming spring

(Teiko Tomita)

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Q. &amp; A.

# HOW ANTI-SEMITISM RISES ON THE LEFT AND RIGHT



By Isaac Chotiner

January 3, 2020

*To what extent can anti-Jewish violence be tied to other hate crimes, and to what extent should it be understood as having a distinct history and motivations?* Source Photograph by Eduardo Munoz Alvarez / AP / Shutterstock

Hate crimes against Jews have been on the rise around the country for several years, but this past month saw a spike in violence in the New York area. On December 10th, three people were fatally shot at a kosher supermarket in Jersey City, along with a police officer who was killed nearby. Eighteen days later, five people were stabbed at a Hanukkah celebration in an Orthodox community in Rockland County. In December, police also filed hate-crime charges against several people who attacked Orthodox Jews on the streets of Manhattan and Brooklyn. According to the *Times*, of the hate crimes that were reported to the New York City Police Department in 2019, more than half were directed at Jews.

There have also been increased attacks on other racial and religious groups; hate crimes against African-Americans remain the most common racially motivated hate crimes, and there has been a significant rise in violence against Latinos and the transgender community in recent years. To what extent can anti-Jewish violence be tied to other hate crimes, and to what extent should it be understood as having a distinct history and motivations? To discuss these questions, I recently spoke

by phone with David Nirenberg, the dean of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, who has written extensively on the history of anti-Semitism. During our conversation, which has been edited for length and clarity, we discussed why prejudice against Jews seems to arise in so many different eras and contexts, and the unhelpfulness of always thinking about anti-Semitism as a manifestation of politics.

**Some historical eras, including ones you have written about, have been characterized by their relationship to anti-Semitism. Does it feel like we are in an era worth defining as such, and, if so, how would you characterize it?**

Yeah, it does feel to me like we are in an era worth defining in terms of anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism, by which I mean we are in an era where many different societies are reviving ways of explaining the complexity of the world in terms of the dangers posed by Judaism or Jews. It is not always real Jews. There are many societies that spend a lot of time thinking about Jews and Judaism where there are no Jews actually living today. And I think we are definitely in a period in which more and more registers of multiple societies are thinking in those ways. We often think of anti-Semitic periods as periods in which thinking about Judaism is a convincing way of explaining what's wrong with the world to people on many parts of the political spectrum, like in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. And I think we are similarly in such a period today.

**Do you think it is worth thinking of anti-Semitism today as akin to the prejudices that afflict many different religious and ethnic minorities, such as Muslims or Hispanics in the United States? Or is it distinct in important ways?**

That's a really tough question, and, in some ways, I hate to distinguish between different forms of prejudice or hate. When you think about some of the most enduring prejudices—for example, the asymmetries of power between men and women—these are structural aspects of our global society. But I do think anti-Semitism is distinctive in certain ways. One of those ways is that it really does transcend particular political contexts. There aren't a great number of Jews in Hungary or Poland, but thinking about Jews is a crucial part of nationalism—or anti-globalization or whatever you want to call it—in Hungary and Poland today. And I think that's different from the way most of the other groups you mentioned are used in the world's imagination.

This is a really difficult topic to think about, and I would like to think we are each entitled to study our own hate without having to study all the others. But we can see symptoms of a distinction in our own age. I don't think, for example, that people in many parts of the world where there aren't Muslim immigrants are thinking really centrally about their own society in terms of Islam, and I would say the same thing might be true of some racial prejudices that are central to the United States but don't play a very large role in other societies. But what's curious about anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism is how it can be put to work by many societies that really have nothing to do with living Jews or Judaism.

When many of the people in these societies think about immigration, even though the problem they see isn't Jews immigrating to these societies, they do think about Judaism in order to explain the immigration they see as threatening their society. So, in the United States, France, Hungary, and many other places, replacement-theory ideologies explain replacement in terms of the machinations of the Jews, or the Jewish global order. Anti-Judaism is actually a system of thought that people can use to explain many of the challenges they face, even when there are no Jews around. And that has a flexibility that, in the worst moments, allows many parts of society to agree that Jews are the problem in a way you don't always see coalescing around other distinctions.

**You mentioned Poland and Hungary, and what you say seems convincing. But it's probably not coincidental that both of those countries are seeing a type of right-wing xenophobia that is not just focussed on Jews. Even though there is something unique about anti-Semitism, does it rise and fall with political trends?**

I think that is absolutely right about anti-Semitism, even though I am going to keep using "anti-Judaism." I think it is more important to understand the system of thought that understands the challenges one confronts as posed by Judaism—that's anti-Judaism—than it is to understand the focus of anti-Semitism on real Jews who need to be attacked or defeated. I don't think we can understand the power of anti-Semitism if we don't first understand that vast system of thought—which was transmitted and taught by Christianity and Islam and many different kinds of thoughts, and many different kinds of philosophy, from idealism to Marxism, which really understood capital or materialism or legalism or greed in terms of Judaism. So once you understand that system of thought, you can understand why it is possible for people to imagine that their world is threatened by Judaism, even when they have no real Jews around them to be anti-Semitic toward.

But back to your original question. I think that, in every moment in which anti-Semitism really becomes an organizing principle in society, and anti-Judaism starts to do a lot of work in society, it is because of political polarizations, economic stresses, et cetera, which make that language of anti-Judaism so useful as a system of thought. Every context is different, every period is different, but the reason that anti-Semitism can be put to work in so many contexts and periods is because anti-Judaism is such an integral part of the ways we have learned to imagine the challenges we face in the material world.

**What would be an example of people in the twenty-first century using anti-Judaism to describe how they see the world?**

Let me give you an example, which spurred me to write the book "Anti-Judaism." It happened in 2001, in mid-September. I was heading to New York City to give a talk at N.Y.U. It was the day George W. Bush was speaking at Ground Zero. There were only two other people on the subway car, and they were trying to explain to each other why this new kind of terror had struck New York. They had two answers for each other. One said that it was the Jews' greed, and that the Jews had turned New York into a symbol of capitalism, and that's why everybody hates us, and the other said, yes, and because they killed Christ.

O.K., you might say this is ridiculous. I remember feeling a bit of shock at hearing two explanations for 9/11 that were perfectly familiar to people in the Middle Ages. When the plague struck Barcelona, both explanations were used, about usury and the killing of Christ. Now, of course, I am not saying it is the same. The context isn't the same. But here you have an example of two twenty-first century people who are explaining this new threat to their world in terms that are very familiar and anti-Jewish. Do they also make sense in twenty-first-century terms? Sure, New York still represents lots of things in twenty-first-century globalization, and Christianity and its offshoots remain powerful ways of explaining the moral order of the world for many people. There is nothing archaic about this. But it is stunning to see what I call "moral memes" that have such persistent power across time, and so I set out to explain how it can be that history matters, that the past of how people have learned to think about Judaism matters to how we enact our politics in the present.

**That story reminded me of the joke about the Jews being the only people blamed for both communism and capitalism. It's a funny line, but it makes me think anew that the details are less**

**important, and it's the explanatory power that makes it fit for all occasions.**

Yeah. I think details are important to understand how these things came to make sense in so many different places and systems of thought. And it is important to understand how things are being put to work right now. I think you need both: you need the details of the past, and you need the details of the present.

I think we have a tendency to think that anti-Semitism is just a political problem, and it is always a problem of the politics of the other. If we do that, we don't understand why it is possible for anti-Semitism to work across so many different parts of our society in ways that makes it truly dangerous. And the reason it is possible is that it is the product of some pretty deep habits we have about the world.

**Wouldn't the counter be that it is able to operate across all these different parts of society because it appeals to people all across the political spectrum?**

That's not really an explanation. That's just a description. You need to explain why it appeals. And that's where you need to take seriously the way in which our own values or ideals have come to be expressed in terms that grew out of ways of thinking about the overcoming of Judaism. And I think that's pretty easy to see if you think about Christianity or Islam, two religions that had to do a lot of work to distance themselves from the Hebrew Bible and Judaism and the claims of primacy of the Jews and their text. I think it is pretty easy to understand if you take seriously the impact of Christianity and Islam on much of what came later.

**Do you just mean that religions have lots of followers? What specifically do you mean about "what came later"?**

I mean it's really interesting to see how many of the founders of the great philosophical movements of modernity are thinking with Judaism and using Judaism to represent a wrong way of thinking about the world, usually an excess literalism—or think of Marx and his famous essay "On the Jewish Question" and how he represents capital as Jewish. The reason he is doing so is that he is influenced by Hegel, who is influenced by a Protestant putting-to-work of the overcoming of Judaism. That's what I mean when I say that some of our most modern, philosophical ways of trying to imagine how to improve the world have incorporated within themselves plenty of thinking about Judaism.



**I interviewed the historian Deborah Lipstadt last year and asked her whether it was worth distinguishing between right-wing and left-wing anti-Semitism. She told me, “No, we’re not talking about completely different phenomena. They’re the same because they rely on the same stereotypical elements.” Do you agree?**

I think I see anti-Judaism anywhere that I see people explaining their circumstances by thinking about the Jews in a way that seems driven by prejudice rather than reality. In that sense, I wouldn’t draw a distinction between a Muslim in Paris who suffers all kinds of discrimination at the hands of the French state, but who enacts his rage first and foremost against a Jewish target, and a white nationalist or a black nationalist or a left-Labour politician in England. I think all of them—to the degree that they are explaining what needs to be overcome in their world in terms of overcoming the Jews—are participating in a similar kind of thought.

I do think what is very dangerous for us today is if, on the right, we think that only the left is anti-Semitic because of the critique of Israel, and if, on the left, you think that only the right is anti-Semitic because of white nationalism—and I am speaking as someone whose face has been put up on white-nationalist Web sites as an enemy of the white race. I do feel there is a danger there. But I think the real danger is imagining that it is only the other where anti-Judaism is doing its work and thereby not being able to see it in your own affinity group. It is when you do that that the danger of anti-Semitism becoming more dispersed in different parts of society and the potential for doing significant damage becomes greater.

**How did the creation of Israel change the conversation about anti-Judaism? My guess would be that you think it changed the conversation less than both people on the right and left do, because you think these prejudices are so deeply held.**

I think we know that, before the establishment of the state of Israel, much of the world was capable of imagining that its greatest enemy that most needed to be overcome was Judaism, and that mobilized a large part of the Western world to eliminate its Jews. I do think the state of Israel dramatically changed the situation for Jews in the Arab world, and it dramatically changed the Muslim world’s attitudes toward Jews and Judaism, particularly in the societies in which they coexisted under Islam.

I think, at times, people have rejected arguments about the power of anti-Semitism by pointing out that defenders of Zionism often invoke anti-Semitism to quell criticism of Israel, which has undoubtedly been the case in different times and places. And you still hear that. But that doesn't mean that there isn't, in fact, an increasingly powerful and dispersed anti-Semitism today.

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