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Beyond Strange Bedfellows: How the "War on Trafficking" Was Made to Unite the Left and Right

Trump, the Republican Party, and Westmoreland County

With the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to replace Justice Anthony Kennedy, the balance of the Supreme Court threatens to tip toward the Hard Right for decades to come. Coming on the heels of several disastrous SCOTUS rulings, the administration's cruel family separation policy, and Trump's continuing embrace of authoritarianism, the stakes couldn't be higher. There are immediate threats to reproductive and sexual health and rights, communities of color and immigrants, workers and voters alike, as well as longer-term repercussions yet to be seen.

Nearly 30 years ago, another fierce and pivotal SCOTUS battle took place over the confirmation of Justice Clarence Thomas. As Alex DiBranco writes in **"Before the Alt Right" (pg. 5)**, when law professor Anita Hill alleged that Thomas had egregiously sexually harassed her, her testimony helped launch an early reckoning over gender discrimination in the workplace. But it also inspired a generation of conservative activists who advanced a secular form of anti-feminism, complementing the Christian Right's scriptural case against gender equality with vicious personal attacks. That laid the groundwork for the movement misogyny we're seeing today. Both then and now, the sense of aggrieved entitlement these antifeminist activists cultivate has too often boiled over in deadly assaults at the hands of men who believe feminism has stolen their birthright.

The argument that some anti-trafficking advocates deliberately blur the line between sex work and forced or coerced prostitution could hardly have been made more clear than in this July's arrest of Stormy Daniels, in what law enforcement falsely claimed was a human trafficking sting. For years, conservative activists have sought to make common cause with some feminists and liberals on the slippery terrain of "sex trafficking," succeeding in bringing together such divergent figures as Chuck Colson and Gloria Steinem. But as Melissa Gira Grant writes in **"Beyond Strange Bedfellows" (pg. 11)**, in the bipartisan "war on trafficking," that unusual collaboration isn't a byproduct but the primary point. With a moral narrative shaped by a small group of right-wing activists, the issue offered both ends of the political spectrum "a chance to adopt a new identity: neither preachers nor scolds, but defenders of human rights."

In **"Blurring the Border" (pg. 3)**, Austin Kocher reports on how draconian immigration enforcement in Ohio has furthered the sense that the border is no longer defined by geography, but rather wherever vulnerable communities in the U.S. reside. Just as they do farther south, immigrants in Ohio are regulating their behavior in fear of ICE arrest—avoiding public spaces and cancelling doctors appointments for their kids. "When public space becomes hostile to immigrants, immigrants retreat from public spaces," writes Kocher, "creating the illusion of the kind of immigrant-free, ethno-racial state that White supremacists imagine the U.S. to be."

In our last feature, **"Trump, the Republican Party, and Westmoreland County" (pg. 17)**, Margaret Power returns home to Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania: a former Rust Belt region that delivered overwhelming support to Trump in 2016. Today, Westmoreland County is home to "the Trump House" and a traveling "Trump Mobile." But within the recent past, it was a Democratic stronghold that received a post-Depression lifeline from the New Deal—most evocatively, in a community for jobless residents named after Eleanor Roosevelt. What happened in between is more complex than the story that's usually told: not just "economic anxiety" in a post-industrial landscape but also the replacement of community-shaping unions with conservative megachurches; the consolidation of the local press under right-wing ownership; and the persistent racism of a nearly-all-White county where residents draw a sharp line between the help once extended to their grandparents and those who they now consider the "undeserving poor." It's a clear-eyed look from a one-time local, and necessary background to understanding whether the nation's Westmorelanders can change.

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BY AUSTIN KOCHER

Blurring the Border

Immigration Enforcement and Solidarity in Ohio



"Families Belong Together" rally and march in Ohio, June 30, 2018. Photo: Becker1999 via Flickr.

Toledo: Stay safe! Border Patrol spotted on South and Broadway today!" Just days after Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested 114 immigrant workers at a gardening center in Sandusky, Ohio,¹ and 146 more at a meat plant in Salem, Ohio,² this alert was sent out over social media in English and Spanish, warning residents about alleged Customs and Border Patrol activity in Toledo, Ohio, over 150 miles away. Anyone who lives, works, or visits the region near the Mexico-U.S. border is familiar with white and green Border Patrol vehicles; the legacy of border checkpoints is well documented in Supreme Court decisions,³ academic research,⁴ and the phenomenon of "checkpoint refusal videos" on YouTube.⁵ But the growth of immigration enforcement farther north has led many within immigrant and refugee communities to feel that they, too, live on the border. As a result, many immigrants are avoiding

public spaces and regulating their social visibility, while others are bringing the nationwide fight for immigrant rights home to the Midwest.

Over the past several years, I've had the opportunity to observe the growth of immigration enforcement in Ohio by studying the network of courts, detention centers, and enforcement agencies that coordinate deportations, and to witness the various responses by the immigrant community and their allies. Deportation is a technology that is used to regulate the viability of certain social groups to live and thrive in society.⁶ The deportation of allegedly "illegal" immigrant groups is racially uneven, both in terms of who has been illegalized at different points in U.S. history⁷ and in terms of who is targeted by ICE officers in the field.⁸ In the current immigration frenzy, Latinx immigrants have become the ethno-racial target of Far Right rhetoric about immigration. Like the Jim Crow era in the South or the Jewish exclusion laws of the 1930s,

it is no accident that the legal exclusion of immigrant workers reflects the racial prejudice against Latinx⁹ and African immigrants.

Ohio may seem like an unlikely place to conduct fieldwork on immigration enforcement. But over the past decade, Ohio has encouraged the expansion of immigration enforcement, detention, and deportation infrastructure. In 2006, the Department of Justice recognized the growth of cases coming from Ohio and the Midwest and established an immigration court in Cleveland. In 2008, Sheriff Richard Jones of Butler County, just north of Cincinnati, signed one of the first immigration enforcement agreements with ICE in the country, empowering his deputies to screen for immigration status in the local jail and hold immigrant detainees for the federal agency.¹⁰ Jones, recently described by a local newspaper as a "mini-Trump,"¹¹ is a fourth-term sheriff who's become well known for his racially motivated policing and anti-immigrant

antics, including once sending a letter to the president of Mexico demanding payment for “dealing with your criminals.”¹² In the intervening years, immigrant detention facilities in the state expanded to include several county jails throughout rural Ohio. In 2016, CoreCivic (formerly the Corrections Corporation of America), a for-profit prison company, converted one wing of its Youngstown federal correctional facility into a for-profit detention center for immigrants from across the eastern United States.¹³ When com-

immigrants retreat from public spaces, creating the illusion of the kind of immigrant-free, ethno-racial state that White supremacists imagine the U.S. to be.¹⁶ The consequences of the Trump administration’s policies are highly racialized and have the effect of exposing immigrant minorities to an embedded system of racial controls.¹⁷

The surge in immigration enforcement is generating a counter-surge in creative strategies and tactics among immigrants and immigrant allies to challenge immi-

When public space becomes hostile to immigrants, immigrants retreat from public spaces, creating the illusion of the kind of immigrant-free, ethno-racial state that White supremacists imagine the U.S. to be.

bined with the unapologetically anti-immigrant rhetoric of President Trump as well as the explicit racism of his White supremacist supporters,¹⁴ the immigration enforcement infrastructure is leading not only to an increase of immigrants being arrested and detained¹⁵ but also leading immigrants to avoid using basic social and educational services.

Immigrants across Ohio feel the connection between ICE raids and their own everyday social existence along racial lines. One health professional who works with Spanish-speaking clients recently told me, “I had three separate families cancel their child’s appointment with me today because they are afraid to leave the house because of ICE.” One immigrant who gained temporary lawful status through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program told me that although her parents work in the same location, they had recently begun to drive to work separately so that should one of them be arrested in a traffic stop, the other could go home and take care of their two minor children. A friend and colleague, herself a daughter of recent Mexican immigrants, recently moved abroad to live with her husband who was deported from Ohio just months ago. These seemingly minor forms of self-regulation are not of secondary concern in immigration enforcement. When public space becomes hostile to immigrants,

grant social control. In response to the immigration raids in June in Ohio, labor unions,¹⁸ social workers, teachers, and churches organized to provide direct support for immigrant families that lost one or both parents to the ICE raids. Communities across the state organized public vigils and rallies outside of detention facilities and elected officials’ offices.¹⁹ Residents in Ohio and Michigan set up sustained encampments outside of ICE field offices to protest their involvement in the recent raids, calling the actions Occupy ICE.²⁰ An estimated 2,000 people participated in a rally for immigrant families in Columbus on June 30 as part of a national day of action.²¹ Columbus is also home to two churches that are providing sanctuary for immigrants who are at risk of deportation: the Columbus Mennonite Church, which extended sanctuary to Edith Espinal in the fall of 2017,²² and First English Lutheran Church, which offered sanctuary to Miriam Vargas this July.²³ Other organizations provide more ongoing community support. The Central Ohio Worker Center conducted deportation defense trainings for college students, social workers, and grassroots organizers across Ohio.²⁴ Avanza Together, an organization created by local immigrants after the 2016 election, provides direct social support for families with one or more family member going through the deportation process.²⁵

What do these immigrant rights strategies teach us? On the one hand, many of these responses are survival strategies designed to cope with the community effects of aggressive immigration enforcement. From ICE’s worksite raids to Sheriff Jones’ aggressive policing, immigrants are under attack every day and are forced to create new networks of resilience. Trump’s policies not only put more families at risk of separation and deportation, they also have the potential to drive immigrants underground. On the other hand, these resistance strategies also send another message that by working together, immigrants and citizens in America’s heartland are building the social networks needed to resist the anti-immigrant politics of the Trump administration. Protests, rallies, and vigils put immigrants’ faces and narratives back into circulation through social and traditional media, thereby challenging the pressure to remain invisible. Sustained forms of resistance through the labor movement, grassroots organizations, and sanctuary churches are creating longer-lasting networks that cross lines of citizen/non-citizen, immigrant/non-immigrant, and documented/un-documented.

In his well-known book, *Imagined Communities*, the late Benedict Anderson argues that although nationalism and citizenship have always relied on a notion of “horizontal comradeship,” in reality nationalism has historically depended on the violent exclusion of people who don’t conform to the specific racial and ethnic national ideal. Through grassroots action, Ohioans—and indeed others across the United States—are imagining a new American community that responds to anti-immigrant injustice through coordinated action that is motivated by solidarity and a refusal to allow Trump’s vision for the U.S. to become reality. ©

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BY ALEX DIBRANCO

Before the Alt Right

Anita Hill and the Growth of Misogynist Ideology

In October 1991, Professor Anita Hill testified before Congress that her former supervisor, Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, had sexually harassed her in the workplace. The committee of White male senators conducting the hearings (chaired by then Sen. Joe Biden) responded to Hill, a Black woman, by disparaging her character and questioning her motives. (Thomas, also Black, portrayed himself as the victim of a “high-tech lynching” for even being questioned on the accusations.) Hill’s description of how Thomas repeatedly pressured her for dates, described pornography in detail, and once asked her who had put “pubic hair” on his Coke can triggered sharply divided reaction in the viewing audience.

Women inspired by Hill’s example—and objecting to her treatment at the hands of an all-male Senate panel—ran for office in record numbers, leading media outlets to refer to 1992 as “The Year of the Woman.” Four new female senators were elected, tripling the number of women in the Senate.¹ Today, #MeToo, a Twitter hashtag now synonymous with the campaign to call attention to the widespread problem of sexual harassment and often name perpetrators, picks up on Hill’s legacy in bringing this issue into the national spotlight.² A study analyzing the period from December 2016 to June 2018 found that hundreds of high-profile executives, employees, and celebrities accused of sexual harassment have been fired or faced other job consequences, an unprecedented change, though this represents only a drop in the bucket in dealing with the systemic problem.³ This comes after years of revitalized activism to fight sexual harassment and violence—in universities, the military, the Peace Corps, the workplace, and oth-



Anita Hill testifies before Congress during Clarence Thomas’ confirmation hearings for the Supreme Court, October 11, 1991. Photo: Rob Crandall/Alamy Stock Photo.

er spheres.

As calls for Supreme Court Justice Thomas’ impeachment are renewed,⁴ social justice advocates and researchers can benefit from understanding the other side of the impact of Hill’s testimony: a misogynist backlash to the infringement on male entitlement.

Hostile viewers saw a lying woman scheming to take down a powerful man—or perhaps simply did not care whether her story was true or not. Right-wing media and organizations took advantage of what *Mother Jones* editor Jeffrey Klein called the growth of “male resentment” against “a perceived slippage of authority, a slippage of power, in an uncertain world with uncertain enemies.”⁵ A number of conservative organizations collaborated in defending Thomas against Hill’s testimony. Among them were the Feder-

alist Society, a group of conservative and libertarian lawyers and academics, and the Free Congress Foundation (FCF), a think tank run by Paul Weyrich, the New Right “chief strategist” who helped found the Heritage Foundation, American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and Moral Majority. A new group, Women for Judge Thomas, sprouted up to provide female faces to counter feminist activists. It would later evolve into the Independent Women’s Forum: a leading anti-feminist group.⁶ *The American Spectator*, the magazine that took the lead in trashing Hill—and went on to set its sights on former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton—received millions of dollars from major conservative foundations through the 1990s. Hill and Rodham Clinton became the embodiment of female transgression against male su-

premac y. (And as a female Black law professor, Hill threatened White male power on two fronts.) Virulent hostility toward women became a more prominent part of conservative media, often couched as opposition to “political correctness,” from talk radio host Rush Limbaugh to publications with a prior reputation for more respectful engagement, like William F. Buckley’s *The Firing Line*.⁷

This resentment was certainly not new. It had been there in hostile responses to the campaign for women’s suffrage and to women entering the workforce in larger numbers during World War II. Susan Faludi’s bestselling 1991 book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (published the same month as Hill’s testimony) focused on the pushback to feminist gains since the late 1960s and ‘70s. Though Faludi recognized the backlash of the 1980s as the continuation of a longer historical trend, the late-20th century response appeared especially panicked about traditional male authority, fostering new frames claiming male victimization at the hands of powerful women.

Those arguments developed further with the 1993 publication of *The Myth of Male Power*, an influential text that has been referred to as the “bible” of the “men’s rights movement.” As Hill’s testimony about workplace sexual harassment threatened both male economic dominance and security in their sexual entitlement, other misogynist responses would follow, such as the “seduction” or “pickup artist” industry, which taught men to manipulate women into sexual intercourse in an upended society. All are part of a misogyny that has increasingly come to dominate the modern Right, sometimes boiling over in deadly violence.

MEN’S ENTITLEMENT AND MASS VIOLENCE

George Hennard, an unemployed former Merchant Marine living in Belton, Texas, began to scream and rant when Anita Hill appeared on the television screen in the restaurant where he sat on October 15, 1991, his 35th birthday. “You dumb bitch!” he shouted. “You bastards opened the door for all the wom-

en!”⁸ The next day, he opened fire at a different restaurant, in Killeen, Texas, largely passing over men to target women, killing 23 in all before killing himself once police arrived. Survivors reported him shouting, “All women of Killeen and Belton are vipers! See what you’ve done to me and my family! ... It’s payback time. It’s payback time. Is it worth it? Is it worth it?”⁹

Earlier that year, Hennard had been reported to the police for stalking two young women—sisters who lived in his neighborhood. He sent them a letter in June, praising them as on “one side” of a moral divide, with “the abundance of evil women that make up the worst on the other side.” He continued, “I would like to personally remind all those vipers that I have civil rights too.” A short time before sending his letter, Hennard had tried to file a civil rights complaint with the FBI against the “white women of the world” for a conspiracy against him. Although a psychiatrist had analyzed the letter as demonstrating troubling “Pent up anger” and a “Grandiose sense of power,” the police failed to take the letter or report of stalking and harassment seriously.¹⁰

Hennard’s attack came amid a rise of mass killings, perpetrated primarily by White men, in the 1990s—an escalation that was an anomaly at the time, as other types of homicide were decreasing.¹¹ In Montreal, Canada, two years prior, a young man, Marc Lepine, killed 14 women at an engineering school in the name of “fighting feminism.” The 1990s also saw a rise in attacks against reproductive health clinics in the United States, similarly at the hands of mostly White men, as the anti-abortion movement met with legislative failures.¹²

Writing about school shootings—yet again an epidemic dominated by White males—sociologist of masculinities Michael Kimmel and co-author Rachel Kalish rejected the popular narrative that bullying was to blame. While perpetrators often feel victimized by their peers (justly or not), Kimmel and Kalish write in *Health Sociology Review*, it is a “sense of entitlement” and superiority that “transforms the aggrieved into mass murderers.”

In a commentary on a 2014 attack targeting sorority women, Kimmel explains, “Aggrieved entitlement” is the belief “that [mass shooters] are entitled to certain things—power, wealth, sex—and that they are entitled to use violence to restore what they believe is rightfully theirs.”¹³ In his book, *Angry White Men*, Kimmel analyzes Hennard and 48-year-old George Sodini, who, before opening fire at a Pennsylvania fitness class in 2009—killing three women and injuring nine more—seethed in an online journal about being rejected by “30 million women” and expressed intense jealousy toward sexually active teenage girls. This type of mass violence, tied to hatred of women or feminism, is only one manifestation of misogynist violence. Kimmel also describes the far more common phenomenon of “everyday Sodinis”—men who physically and sexually abuse individual women in their lives, sometimes ending in murder.

THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT’S ATTACK ON HILL

While George Hennard expressed his rage against Anita Hill and other women through extreme violence, the same male resentment coursed throughout the broader Right, which sought recompense for the perceived mass violation of male entitlement that followed Second Wave feminism. Although Clarence Thomas was confirmed, many on the Right found their victory insufficient. Republicans nursed bitter resentment over the 1987 defeat of Robert Bork’s nomination for the Supreme Court, thanks to his vocal opposition to civil rights progress with regards to race and gender.¹⁴ (The opinion page of the conservative *Wall Street Journal* responded by popularizing¹⁵ the term “to bork,” as a synonym for systematic defamation.¹⁶) A Black woman’s role in nearly derailing *another* nominee, and in the process spotlighting the problem of sexual harassment and encouraging a wave of liberal female political candidates, infuriated conservatives. At the 1992 Republican National Convention, some delegates followed Nina Totenberg, one of the NPR journalists who broke Hill’s story, around the convention floor, calling her a “whore.”¹⁷

According to author David Brock, Elizabeth Brady Lurie, president of the conservative W.H. Brady Foundation, financed a “special investigation” into Hill¹⁸ that would be published by *The American Spectator*. Started as a student publication in 1967 at Indiana University (under the name *The Alternative*), the magazine ridiculed Leftist “student radicalism” from antiwar protests to feminism.

Support from wealthy conservative philanthropists Ruth Lilly/the Lilly Endowment and Richard Mellon Scaife enabled the magazine to make the unusual transition from campus to national stage. There, it established a reputation for sexist and anti-gay content. Historian Daniel Spillman points to a piece by *Spectator* founder and editor-in-chief R. Emmett Tyrrell, “Call It Women’s Glib,” which argues, “Women’s liberation is probably the most successful pestilence since Prohibition... What passed for ideas in the women’s movement were some of the scrawniest specimens of cognition ever spied.”¹⁹ The piece, included in Tyrrell’s 1979 book, *Public Nuisances*, was reprinted in *The New York Times*, indicating his was not a fringe voice. The book also helped to land him a syndicated column at *The Washington Post*, which in 1979 referred to him as “one of the most luminous young gadflies now singing in the American wilderness.”²⁰ (The *Post* dropped the column a few years later, when Tyrrell’s loyal support for the Reagan administration made for dull writing.)

Spillman emphasizes that the *Spectator* was primarily enlisted in the “secular culture wars,” writing in his dissertation on the magazine that “it considered its gay and feminist opposition an extension of its war against student radicals... The magazine saw itself as fighting a culture war, not for religious values, but against what it considered the values of 1960s student radicalism.” This approach helped the magazine appeal to a wider swath of the conservative movement, including neoconservatives alienated by explicitly religious organizations, while still appealing to the sexism and homophobia integral to the Christian Right.

This version of misogyny diverges from

traditional conservative Christian ideology in focusing less on moral outrage against abortion and contraception (in fact, it sometimes supports access to such reproductive services, though not necessarily as an aspect of women’s rights). It eschews patriarchal frameworks that put “good” women on a pedestal or portray sexist policies as “protecting” women. Instead, those operating out of a secular misogynist ideology dedicate themselves more to directly maligning feminists, objectifying women or calling them “ugly,”

While the Religious Right is often treated as having a monopoly on opposing gender justice, misogyny, as with racism or xenophobia, need not be directly religiously motivated.

and mocking the concept of equality. While the Religious Right is often treated as having a monopoly on opposing gender justice, misogyny, as with racism or xenophobia, need not be directly religiously motivated.

The American Spectator hired Brock, a former Heritage Foundation fellow then working for *The Washington Times* (a right-wing publication established by Unification Church authoritarian leader Sun Myung Moon), to write its “investigative” exposé on Hill. Brock’s article, “The Real Anita Hill,” published in 1992, portrayed Hill as a liar, incompetent, and vengeful—infamously labeling her “a bit nutty, and a bit slutty”—as well as a pawn of a liberal conspiracy against Thomas.²¹ Brock later recalled that his managing editor, Wladyslaw Pleszczyński, commented in okaying the piece that, “All women were ‘emotional’ and thus prone to fabrication.” (More recently, President Trump’s Chief of Staff John Kelly has repeatedly told aides that women are emotional.²²) Stereotypes hyper-sexualizing Black women also played a part in selling the story. *The Spectator* issue with Brock’s cover story featured a caricature of Hill, African-American features heavily exaggerated. It sold out in a record two days.²³

“[T]he Thomas-Hill hearing was more than a shocking media spectacle; it was part of a broader struggle for political power between conservatism and liber-

alism,” Brock writes in his 2002 tell-all, *Blinded by the Right*. “I hoped to turn back this feminist tide, exposing the treachery of what we saw as a liberal cabal that leaked Hill’s uncorroborated charges into the public domain and forced her public testimony.”

Brock’s article fed an eager right-wing media infrastructure and went on to benefit from mainstream media’s own problematic willingness to accept misogynist rhetoric. His 1993 follow-up book, *The Real Anita Hill*, received positive reviews

even in publications condemned by the Right as liberal (mostly by male reviewers, Brock recalls), such as *The New York Times*.²⁴ Journalist Jane Mayer, whose book *Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas* was published in 1994, recalled, “After [the *Spectator*’s] charges were broadcast repeatedly on the growing right-wing talk-radio circuit, and then picked up by the mainstream press and television, Brock’s long article convinced many open-minded Americans to reassess their thinking.”²⁵ Of chief influence in the talk-radio world in the early 1990s was Rush Limbaugh, who seized on Brock’s article, quoting long sections on the air to his estimated audience of 14 million listeners²⁶ (adding his own degrading speculations about Hill).²⁷ Limbaugh—who, like Tyrrell, came of age in the late 1960s with a deep hostility to Leftist youth activism—shared the *Spectator*’s vitriolic and mocking style in his own attacks on “feminazis,” LGBTQ people, and liberals.²⁸ (Thomas himself listened regularly and approvingly to Limbaugh’s show, and after meeting the radio star in 1994, officiated at his third wedding.)

Between January and December of 1992, the *Spectator*’s circulation jumped from 30,000 to 114,000 subscribers.²⁹ (Other publications, like *Reason*, a libertarian magazine founded in 1968, shared in its good fortune by advertising

to its expanded reader base.) Pleszcynski opined to the *National Journal*:

the magazine has tapped into “the phenomenon that created Rush Limbaugh”—which the editor views as a long-overdue cultural response to liberal political correctness. This is the main theme of a *Spectator* TV ad that has run on Limbaugh’s television show; a young, well-dressed, professional-looking woman declares of the magazine: “It’s so incorrect. I like that.”³⁰ The frame of opposing political cor-

reports that *Spectator* publisher Ron Burr asked him jokingly, “Can’t you find any more women to attack?”³² They found their target in Hillary Clinton—half of a couple whom the *Spectator* considered the 1960s generation of student radicals all grown up. By 1994, the *Spectator* was outselling the conservative intellectual heavyweight journal, *National Review*, and observers took note of its path to success.³³ “Is it a coincidence that the *Spectator* rocketed in popularity by targeting first a woman who accused a man of sex-

woman with the audacity to become a law professor in Oklahoma in the 1980s and ‘90s in her place.

DATE RAPE AND DATE ROBBERY: THE WORLD OF WARREN FARRELL

Since the 1990s, this sense of male hostility and aggrieved entitlement has been promoted by Dr. Warren Farrell, once a 1970s feminist and “men’s liberation” activist who took a hard turn toward misogyny as he began to believe that men were the truly oppressed class. The shift began to be visible in his 1986 book, *Why Men Are the Way They Are*, but it was his 1993 *The Myth of Male Power* that laid the foundation for a new ideology of “men’s rights” and inspired a movement based on the notion of male victimhood to balance out the women’s movement’s gains. (While ostensibly race-neutral, Farrell’s audience has been primarily White men.)

Rejecting the existence of a male-dominated society, Farrell instead claims men and women have been equally harmed by sex roles: “Both sexes made themselves ‘slaves’ to the

other sex in different ways.” But, Farrell writes, women were still better off. Under the traditional system of sex roles, he explains in an analogy that trivializes the history of slavery, “[t]he male role (out in the field) is akin to the field slave—or the second-class slave,” while he views “the traditional female role (homemaker) [as] akin to the house slave—the first-class slave.”

The influence of the right-wing portrayal of Anita Hill’s testimony on Farrell’s thinking is visible in a section primarily drawn from Brock’s work, where 10 footnotes in a row cite *The Real Anita Hill*. Farrell regurgitated the worst elements of the article, pointing to allegations that “Anita,” as he referred to Hill, was “untrustworthy, selfish, and extremely



Warren Farrell leads a group of men protesting at a Women’s Strike For Equality demonstration (circa 1972). Photo: Wikimedia.

rectness was used by purveyors of misogynist and racist content in the 1990s including the *Spectator*, Limbaugh, and bestselling rightist books that came out over the next couple years—such as Dinesh D’Souza’s 1991 *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Sex and Race on Campus* and Katie Roiphe’s 1993 *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus*.

Despite the young woman in the advertisement, the *Spectator*’s misogyny appealed to very few women: its readership was 91 percent male.³¹ The magazine’s leadership continued to cater to aggrieved male readers throughout its heyday in the 1990s, when the magazine also received millions of dollars from conservative foundations. Its disparagement of Hill was so successful that Brock

ual harassment and secondly a woman who has made the First Lady post an unprecedented seat of policy-making power?” asked the centrist *National Journal*.

Looking back on his work, Brock informs readers that the quotes in his article on Hill were suspect—not explicitly made up, but rumor and spite published as fact. (Among them, Brock’s false implication that multiple sources had corroborated the claim that Hill had left pubic hairs in the assignments of her male law students—a charge lobbed after Hill accused Thomas of making his own comment regarding pubic hair.) However, even Brock’s *mea culpa* failed to consider how her identity made her a particular target of resentful men (especially former students) willing to lie to put a Black

bitter,” and an incompetent employee covering her inadequacy by falsely claiming sexual harassment. He repeats the “pubic hair” accusation, and although Brock has since admitted that this was merely one aggrieved former student’s unverified claim, Farrell let it, and the debunked assertion that “many students have confirmed” it, remain in the 2014 ebook edition (which was elsewhere updated to include changes to the text like a reference to *Fifty Shades of Grey*).³⁴

Farrell writes that as the definition of sexual harassment expanded—in his words, “to anything a woman defined as a ‘hostile work environment’”—“Men were oblivious until the Clarence Thomas hearings pulled their heads out of the sand: they saw that the definition of harassment had expanded to include discussing pornography, telling a dirty joke, calling an employee ‘honey,’ or taking a longer look at a short skirt.” Warning that “One woman’s accusation of sexual harassment can stop the government in its tracks (à la Anita Hill),” Farrell promised his book would outline “the steps we can take before we paint ourselves into a corner.”

In everyday interactions as well as grand political battles, Farrell saw women as wielding enormous power over men. What kind of power? To Farrell it was a women’s “sex power” or “beauty power,” including the “secretary’s miniskirt power, cleavage power, and flirtation power”—something he saw as equivalent to (or greater than) that of the secretary’s male boss. He approvingly quotes one of Hill’s colleagues saying, “Her flirtatiousness, her provocative manner of dress, was not sweet or sexy, it’s sort of angry, almost a weapon.” In his chapter on “The Politics of Rape,” Farrell claims that rape occurs because of men’s “addiction to female sexual beauty,” which women reap the rewards of in getting men to pay for and pursue them. Rejecting the feminist analysis of rape as a crime of power, Farrell’s addiction framework lets men off the hook for making their own decisions when it comes to sexual violence and relocates the blame onto women for cultivating this disease.

In another segment, Farrell blames women’s “date passivity”—a phrase used

to describe women’s expectation that men initiate physical intimacy—for sexual violence. “If we want to stop date rape by men, we have to also stop ‘date passivity’ by women,” Farrell argues, deftly drawing upon half of a feminist critique of gender roles—that men are expected to initiate romantic and sexual behavior—while ignoring vital issues of consent and assuring men they aren’t responsible for their actions. In this way, Farrell weaves a twisted version of feminist ideology throughout his book, strengthening its

Farrell’s addiction framework lets men off the hook for making their own decisions when it comes to sexual violence and relocates the blame onto women for cultivating this disease.

appeal for readers unfamiliar with feminism who sense a ring of truth.

In other places, he’s blunter, consistently trivializing rape and comparing it to male disappointment, claiming that paying for a woman on a date—something Farrell suggests calling “date robbery”—and then being “rejected [for sex] can feel like the male version of date rape.” “Feminism has taught women to sue men for sexual harassment or date rape when men initiate with the wrong timing,” he writes, but “no one has taught men to sue for sexual trauma for saying ‘yes,’ then ‘no,’ then ‘yes,’ then ‘no.’” Elsewhere in the book, he continues the theme: “A man being sued after a woman has more sex than intended is like Lay’s being sued after someone has more potato chips than intended. In brief, date rape can be a crime, a misunderstanding, or buyer’s remorse.” (Representative of secular misogyny, Farrell’s ideology pays little attention to abortion; the most attention he gives to this occurs in section on “The Social Incentives for False Accusations,” in which he critiques laws that only allow abortion in case of rape or incest as pressuring women to make false accusations.)

After falling out with the feminist movement by the 1980s, following his divorce from his first wife, Farrell returned to the media spotlight with *The*

Myth of Male Power.³⁵ In *The Washington Post*, Camille Paglia praised the book as “the kind of original, abrasive, heretical text that is desperately needed to restore fairness and balance to the present ideology-sodden curriculum of women’s studies courses.”³⁶ *Publishers Weekly* added, “While some feminists may assert that it is an attack on women, the book attempts to show areas in which males operate at a disadvantage without claiming that women are responsible for their plight.”³⁷

Simon & Schuster, *Myth’s* publisher, followed up the next year with Christina Hoff Sommers’ *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women*. Like *The Real Anita Hill*, Sommers’ book was written with support from right-wing foundations (including the John M. Olin Foundation and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation).³⁸ In it, Sommers coined the term “equity feminist” (also used by Paglia) to describe an ideological stance that claims to support equal gender rights but rejects the existence of structural oppression, aligning it with the men’s rights position and other libertarian philosophies.³⁹ (The Independent Women’s Forum, which emerged out of female support for Clarence Thomas, displays this type of ideological thinking.) Similarly to Farrell, Sommers challenges statistics regarding the extent of sexual and physical violence against women, emphasizes the specter of false accusations, and denies the existence of continuing structural inequalities against women.

TRUMP, THE ALT RIGHT, AND CONTEMPORARY MISOGYNY

The Myth of Male Power was not the only book telling men what they want to hear: that ignoring a woman’s verbal “no” is acceptable because her “body language” tells them differently. The “seduction”

or “pickup artist” industry, which also developed following the advances of the feminist movement, in its present form teaches men to use coercive behavior and sexual assault (under other names) as a form of “game.”

In her book on right-wing media in the United States, historian Nicole Hemmer writes that “Rush Limbaugh topped polls as the de facto leader of the Republican Party” in 2009—propelled there by his virulent rants against women, LGBTQ people, and liberals. Though *The American Spectator* and Limbaugh are no longer as prominent, the misogyny they trafficked in has only grown stronger. Since the 1990s, this type of misogyny has substantially influenced the conservative movement and proliferated through online forums that together boast hundreds of thousands of followers. Men’s rights and pickup artist ideologies combined in another community started in 2012 on Reddit, r/TheRedPill, a thriving forum that promotes conspiracy theories about feminist control of society; a smaller and recently banned forum, r/incels, catered to “involuntarily celibate” men who felt wronged by their lack of sexual access to attractive women.

The founder of The Red Pill, who went by the pseudonym “pk_atheist,” was revealed last year by *The Daily Beast* to be Republican New Hampshire state representative Robert Fisher, who used his political position to fight to undermine bills addressing violence against women. Misogyny was a defining feature of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign, in which he regularly insulted and objectified women, and wherein his past boasts about grabbing women by their genitals without consent didn’t cost him the election. And the same misogyny, once again frequently defended as opposition to political correctness, is a foundational part of the White supremacist Alt Right.

Though influenced by right-wing misogynist ideology, the men’s rights movement appeals across party lines. Farrell considers himself a liberal Democrat and supported Clinton in 2016 despite being turned off by her feminist rhetoric and drawn to Trump’s comments about her playing the “woman card.”⁴⁰ In this way, Farrell, seen today as a more mod-

erate element of the movement, differed from communities like The Red Pill that became politicized in Trump’s favor and saw support for Clinton as antithetical to their ideology. However, Farrell has also appeared on Alt Right White nationalist Lana Lokteff’s radio show, as have Christina Hoff Sommers and Paul Elam, a protégé of Farrell and founder of the men’s rights website A Voice for Men (AVFM).

In a major step toward recognizing the threat posed by misogynist groups, earlier this year, the Southern Poverty Law Center for the first time recognized two male supremacist organizations as hate groups: AVFM and Return of Kings (ROK). AVFM founder Paul Elam has encouraged violence against women, launched another website to facilitate harassment of women, and engaged in virulent victim blaming and disparagement of women. ROK, founded by Daryush Valizadeh (known as “Roosh V.”), has called for repealing women’s suffrage and the legalization of rape on private property.⁴¹

Valizadeh has further blamed feminists and progressives for recent acts of mass violence perpetrated by “incels,” arguing that these mass murders could have been prevented by “encouraging [men] to learn game, seek out a Thai wife, or engage in legalized prostitution.”⁴² Among these attacks is that committed by 22-year-old Elliot Rodger, who killed six people in 2014 in Santa Barbara, claiming to seek “retribution” against “evil and sadistic” women for not dating him. While his words echo the rants of George Hennard, who slaughtered 23 people amid the Anita Hill controversy, Rodger’s lengthy autobiographical manifesto describes being influenced by the online misogynist forums that have popularized this hateful ideology. Rodger in turn influenced subsequent mass murderers, including Christopher Harper-Mercer, who killed nine people in Oregon in 2015, and Alek Minassian, who in 2018 cited Rodger and the “Incel Rebellion” in a Facebook post before plowing his vehicle into over two dozen people in Toronto, killing 10.⁴³

Although new and disturbing revelations about prominent men keep surfacing as part of #MeToo, that hasn’t stopped suggestions that the movement

might be going “too far” and courting a backlash. When the concept of “backlash” is used in this way, it is with little understanding of how journalist Susan Faludi and academics define the term: as an acknowledgment of how hostile reactions can come in response to progress for justice and equality—even when that progress does not go as far as needed. At the same time, hard-fought gains achieved by campus anti-rape advocates under the Obama administration have been rolled back by the Trump administration and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, undermining survivors’ ability to pursue justice at their universities.⁴⁴ The top Department of Education civil rights official, Candice Jackson, operated as a mouthpiece for misogynist talking points last year, defaming women en masse as reckless liars out to destroy men, in her statement claiming that “90 percent” of campus sexual violence accusations “fall into the category of, ‘we were both drunk,’ ‘we broke up, and six months later I found myself under a Title IX investigation because she just decided that our last sleeping together was not quite right.’”

From David Brock to Betsy DeVos, the mainstream media has regularly proven willing to accept right-wing framing on social justice issues and turn against victims. The expanded organization and development of misogynist ideology in the 1990s in response to Anita Hill and feminist challenges is integral to the results we’re seeing today: in the mobilization of predominantly White men in the Alt Right; the agenda of an administration deeply sympathetic to White and male supremacism; and the mindset of perpetrators of mass violence driven by resentment and anger toward women. ☹

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BY MELISSA GIRA GRANT

Beyond Strange Bedfellows

How the “War on Trafficking” Was Made to Unite the Left and Right



President Donald Trump signs H.R. 1865 (FOSTA) into law, 2018. Photo: Office of Congresswoman Ann Wagner.

Six months into the Iraq War, then President George W. Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly.¹ “Events during the past two years have set before us the clearest of divides,” Bush declared, “between those who seek order, and those who spread chaos; between those who work for peaceful change, and those who adopt the methods of gangsters.” On the side of chaos and gangsterism, he continued, were terrorists. But he didn’t stop there:

There’s another humanitarian crisis spreading, yet hidden from view. Each year, an estimated 800,000 to 900,000 human beings are bought, sold or forced across the world’s borders. Among them are hundreds of thousands of teenage girls, and others as young as five, who fall victim to the

sex trade. This commerce in human life generates billions of dollars each year—much of which is used to finance organized crime. There’s a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable.

Terrorism was the work of “evil,” Bush had said long before—now, a new crime would join his index of evil: human trafficking.² The link between the two may have been lost in the moment; terror, “weapons of mass destruction,” and then President Saddam Hussein were still the star of the show. But for the policymakers, diplomats, and advocates who had been fighting for years to get human trafficking a prime place on the global stage, Bush’s declaration was a major win.

Bush was, in some ways, merely taking the national temperature of his base. “Each year, two million women and chil-

dren worldwide have sex with strangers only because someone kidnaps them and threatens to kill them,” argued a feature story in *Christianity Today* published that same fall of 2003, already inflating the figures Bush quoted at the UN.³ “You may have passed some of these victims on the street,” the story warned. Like terrorism, this “hidden” evil was now close to home.

The story of human trafficking as President Bush told it in 2003 has become the dominant narrative found in media accounts, activist campaigns, and fundraising appeals to this day. But Bush didn’t craft this story; he merely delivered it. Its characters and moral dilemma were shaped by a relatively small group of political influencers on the Right—with dreams of organizing Christian activists around winnable social issues—and their newfound allies: liberal feminists whose

longtime opposition to prostitution and pornography had, by the turn of the 21st century, fallen far down the women's rights agenda. What both groups sought, from different ends of the political spectrum, was a chance to adopt a new identity: neither preachers nor scolds, but defenders of human rights.

The prevailing narrative about “human trafficking” was shaped by a relatively small group of political influencers on the Right who had dreams of organizing Christian activists around winnable social issues.

Together, this new coalition popularized the anti-trafficking fight as a moral crusade on par with the abolition of slavery in the United States, even adopting its language: abolition. And the “crisis” Bush placed on the world's stage in March 2003 became an opportunity: to change their image, and to build a broader consensus, from Right to Left, that both recognized their moral authority and widened their appeal. And so they began, first by declaring war on what came to be known as “human trafficking,” and then by dedicating themselves to defining what this war would mean so that their aims and authority were always at its center.

UNITING THE BUNNY AND THE HATCHET MAN

“You’ve got soccer moms and Southern Baptists, the National Organization for Women and the National Association of Evangelicals on the same side of the issue,” Michael Horowitz, senior fellow and director at the Hudson Institute, told Bob Jones at *World* magazine in 2002.⁴ “Gloria Steinem and Chuck Colson together.”

Today, nearly 20 years have passed since Horowitz managed to align one-time Playboy Club muckraker Steinem with Nixon’s “dirty tricks” man Colson under the banner of fighting human trafficking. But the fact of these “strange bedfellows” coming together despite their differences isn’t the whole story. From the outset, Horowitz’s goal was to unite conservatives and liberals, includ-

ing religious and secular leaders. He had envisioned a coalition like this before he zeroed in on trafficking as the cause—the vehicle—that could achieve it. He’d tried before, in 1998, when he helped pass the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), to protect the human rights of persecuted Christians outside the Unit-

ed States, with support from Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ).⁵ At the time, Horowitz saw the religious freedom issue as one that could galvanize Christians to political action in the name of human rights, without appearing as stereotypical moral scolds. “Horowitz has almost single-handedly transformed persecution of Christians into a major issue,” deemed *The New Republic* in 1997.⁶

Not long after, he envisioned the fight against human trafficking as another joint cause, framing the terms of the battle so as to best draw disparate groups together. From the beginning, he saw the anti-trafficking issue as an opportunity he offered to lobbyists, politicians, and the media—a chance to be on the right side of history. “Don’t try to join the establishment,” he said then. “Let them join you.”

He would use the same appeals to human rights he’d employed for the IRFA to push the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), again working with Congressman Smith. “The sexual component of trafficking, rather than its coercive nature, was what attracted Smith and other conservatives to the issue,” observed Alicia W. Peters, an anthropologist at the University of New England. “For conservative Christians and evangelicals, the issue of trafficking, and sex trafficking in particular, was an example of depraved moral behavior that violated the principle that sex should be reserved for marriage between a man and a woman... Debates around the TVPA became a way for conservatives to engage in ‘human

rights’ work and put a moral spin on trafficking that reinforced a particular conception of sexuality.”

The movement to combat human trafficking, as conceived by Horowitz, would use that “moral spin” to attract more conservatives to this “human rights” cause. Allen D. Hertzke, a religion and politics scholar at the University of Oklahoma, says from their first meeting in 1998, Horowitz encouraged him to “be the chronicler of the movement,” including the passage of the landmark TVPA, in order to make trafficking into a major issue. “The legislative campaign built upon the earlier alliance against persecution,” as Horowitz worked to further his goal of Right/Left consensus, Hertzke writes in his book, *Freeing God’s Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights*. In May 1999, “in a hideaway room in the U.S. Capitol,” Hertzke continues, Horowitz convened a strategy meeting, which Charles Colson opened with a prayer.⁷

Also in attendance, Hertzke writes, were some familiar conservative faces: Rep. Smith and House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-TX), who promised to get a vote on Smith’s trafficking legislation, as well as conservative pundit and former Education Secretary William Bennett, Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals. But there was also David Saperstein, a prominent liberal rabbi (about whom Horowitz joked, “David’s constituency pays him to right the Christian Right, but with considerable courage he took on the persecution issue”), and Laura Lederer, a veteran women’s rights advocate and, at the time, a convert to the anti-trafficking fight.

Lederer would be central to Horowitz’s mission to transform trafficking into “the human rights issue of our times.” He would use her, Hertzke recounted, “to get women’s groups behind the effort.” Lederer thought Equality Now would be the best group to recruit: through their connection to Gloria Steinem, perhaps she could use her influence to bring other prominent feminists into the trafficking fight. “That is,” writes Hertzke, “in fact, what happened.”

As a Bush administration official once characterized Lederer's new ally in Washington to *The American Prospect*, "Horowitz is the Charlie to their Angels."⁸ Alongside Lederer, he attracted Donna M. Hughes, a contributor to the *National Review* and a chair of women's studies at the University of Rhode Island. Like Lederer—editor of the 1982 book *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*—Hughes was a veteran of the feminist anti-pornography cause. She was also a neoconservative. Since 9/11, Hughes had entreated fellow feminists to look to the Right as allies on causes such as "Islamic fundamentalism" and "anti-Zionism." As she argued in a *Washington Post* op-ed exchange with feminist activist Phyllis Chesler:

In the past, when faced with choosing allies, feminists made compromises. To gain the support of the liberal left, feminists acquiesced in the exploitation of women in the pornography trade—in the name of free speech. The issue of abortion has prevented most feminists from considering working with conservative or faith-based groups. Feminists are right to support reproductive rights and sexual autonomy for women, but they should stop demonizing the conservative and faith-based groups that could be better allies on some issues than the liberal left has been... Human rights work is not the province of any one ideology. Saving lives and defending freedom are more important than loyalty to an outdated and too-limited feminist sisterhood.⁹

This line of argument wasn't unique to neoconservatives like Hughes who were seeking new ground on which to reposition their anti-prostitution politics as human rights concerns. It was also the position of Equality Now, an international women's rights organization that campaigned to expand laws against prostitution in the United States and abroad.¹⁰ The group's founder, Jessica Neuwirth, had once worked at Amnesty International, and she was quick to admit to *The New York Times* that she'd modeled Equality Now in its image.¹¹ But she'd left Amnesty frustrated that they didn't focus enough on women's issues like female genital mutilation and prostitution. In

Horowitz's network of religious right influencers, she found a new set of allies willing to prioritize these issues as they made their own claim to human rights defense.

Organizations like Equality Now, writes Barnard women's studies and sociology professor Elizabeth Bernstein, believed that by moving the field of debate on prostitution and pornography to "human rights," they could finally emerge from the contentious sex wars victorious. In the "humanitarian terrain," Bernstein writes, "the abolitionist constituency was more likely to prevail."¹² In seeking support for their rebranded anti-prostitution politics, such organizations would answer Horowitz's call.

FROM THE WHITE HOUSE TO THE "WHOREHOUSE"

At the close of the Clinton administration, these newfound allies faced their first public test of unity.

Between 1999 and 2000, as the Horowitz coalition gathered steam, the United States took a lead role in developing what would become the United Nations' "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children," which was signed by 80

countries in December 2000.¹³ From the beginning, debates about what constituted human trafficking consumed months of meetings, as recounted by trafficking researcher Jo Doezema in her 2010 book, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters*.

Over two years of negotiations, delegates heard from anti-trafficking advocates who urged a rights-based response that differentiated between sex work and human trafficking, while other groups, like the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, argued that human trafficking and prostitution were inseparable and required a tough criminal justice response they defined as "abolitionist."

At first, the United States leaned toward the rights-based response, and supported the draft language that only

"forced prostitution"—distinct from the broader category of all prostitution and sex work—would be defined as trafficking. This incensed the Horowitz coalition, from abolitionists like Jessica Neuwirth to Religious Right figures like Charles Colson.

Colson and William Bennett took to *The Wall Street Journal* to lay the blame with then-First Lady Hillary Clinton, who, in her role as honorary chairwoman of the President's Interagency Council on Women, had participated with the U.S. State Department in the UN trafficking negotiations. Neuwirth drafted other feminists to sign a group letter challenging the U.S. to drop the "forced" from "forced prostitution," arguing, "The position taken by the administration suggests you do not consider prostitution of others to be a form of sexual exploitation... The definition would not only fail to protect a substantial number of trafficking victims, it would also shield many traffickers in the global sex trade from prosecution."¹⁴

Many leading feminists signed, including National Organization for Women President Patricia Ireland; Planned Parenthood President Gloria Feldt; Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice; Dorchen Leidholdt, co-executive

Horowitz envisioned a coalition like this before he zeroed in on trafficking as the vehicle to achieve it.

director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women; Julia Scott, president of the National Black Women's Health Project; president of Feminist Majority Foundation Eleanor Smeal; and activists Robin Morgan and Gloria Steinem.

Though aligned in purpose with the Religious Right leaders, the abolitionists were careful to say they didn't blame Clinton herself; Equality Now followed its first letter with a statement that Colson and Bennett's criticism of the U.S. government was "an attempted manipulation of feminist leaders as a political ploy to attack Hillary Clinton." Yet Clinton remained a target throughout further contentious debates over the definition of trafficking. When it covered the debate, *The New York Post* headlined its

story, “‘Hooker Panel’ Puts First Lady on the Spot.”¹⁵

The same group of abolitionists pressed Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN), who first introduced a more comprehensive trafficking bill in 1999, to separate human trafficking into “labor trafficking”—defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel labor—and “sex trafficking,” which would not require the presence of force, fraud, or coercion, thus mirroring the definition they pushed for the UN protocol to adopt.

When he would not, Clinton was blamed for that as well. In an interview with anthropologist Alicia W. Peters, a congressional staffer at that time recalled, “It was this incredible, you know, ‘Hillary has a whorehouse’ [thing.]” The staffer, “Megan,” continued, “Now you kind of forget, but in that period...the right wing rhetoric was really ramping up and it was extreme... It was about sex, and it was about rape, and it was about... women’s virtue, and if you had the labor definition then you were...complicit in the rape of thousands of young girls.”¹⁶

TVPA was signed into law in the final months of the Clinton administration, on October 28, 2000, as part of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. In a compromise, the bill split trafficking into “labor trafficking” and “sex trafficking,” but it maintained a “force, fraud, or coercion” definition for both. The victory elated the coalition of religious conservatives and feminist abolitionists, but it worried other progressives. “[C]onservative and evangelical movements were becoming much more successful in human rights issues,” the congressional staffer, Megan, told Peters. “And there was a real concern that they were capturing this major issue, and not just as a kind of ‘oh, it’s ours,’ but also that they were going to redefine it.”

NSPD-22

A year before his 2003 UN speech, President Bush had already declared war on human trafficking—in harsher terms than he’d use at the General Assembly—though few outside the anti-trafficking policy world had taken notice.

On February 25, 2002, Bush signed National Security Presidential Directive

22 (NSPD-22), defining human trafficking as a priority issue of national security and holding that “The policy of the United States is to attack vigorously the worldwide problems of trafficking in persons, using law enforcement efforts, diplomacy, and all other appropriate tools.”¹⁷ Four paragraphs of NSPD-22 remain classified, but what was public defined trafficking as a “transnational threat”—and one defined as related to sex work alone.

Our policy is based on an abolitionist approach to trafficking in persons, and our efforts must involve a comprehensive attack on such trafficking, which is a modern day form of slavery. In this regard, the United States Government opposes prostitution and any related activities, including pimping, pandering, or maintaining brothels, as contributing to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. These activities are inherently harmful and dehumanizing. The United States Government’s position is that these activities should not be regulated as a legitimate form of work for any human being.

Sex work, the directive argued, was not only the sole factor responsible for driving trafficking, but opposing it—in any form—was necessary for a “comprehensive attack” on trafficking.

Donna Hughes was one of the anti-trafficking advocates who noticed NSPD-22. Before the House Committee on Foreign Relations in October 2002, Hughes explicitly linked the case for fighting trafficking and fighting sex work. “Trafficking is a modern form of slavery,” Hughes testified, employing what was becoming a conventional metaphor among many anti-trafficking advocates. “To not understand the relationship between prostitution and trafficking is like not understanding the relationship between slavery in the Old South and the kidnapping of victims in Africa and the transatlantic shipment of them to our shores.”¹⁸

As a prominent conservative, Hughes was closer to the Bush administration than other feminists involved in anti-trafficking movements. But it was Laura Lederer, Hughes would later argue, who ultimately convinced the Bush administration to regard trafficking as a national

security issue.¹⁹ In 2001, Lederer was appointed as a deputy senior advisor to the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons; the following year, under Lederer’s influence, Bush issued NSPD-22.

“This administration is saying you cannot clean [sex work] up,” Lederer told *World* magazine in 2002, a few months after Bush signed NSPD-22. “It can never be a legitimate way to make a living because it’s inherently harmful for men, women, and children. It goes in the opposite direction of President Bush’s pro-woman, pro-family, human-rights agenda.”

NSPD-22 was a validation of Lederer’s own mission to cast the fight against trafficking as a fight against sex work. “I think I’m safe in saying that many of the organizations taking the lead in the early days in the UN and in other world arenas were comfortable talking about one kind of trafficking—labor trafficking—and then addressing sex trafficking as a subset of labor trafficking,” Lederer said at a 2005 Commission on the Status of Women briefing in Washington.²⁰

“We saw it as a degradation of the most intimate act between a man and a woman,” Lederer continued. “We saw it as encouraging exploitation and abuse of females and contributing to dysfunctional families. We felt it was linked to public and private health crises, and, last but not least, we believed it fueled human trafficking. We wanted a new policy that reflected these concerns.”

Though NSPD-22 ostensibly addresses trafficking as a national security issue, Lederer and Hughes understood it as a policy to support the continued criminalization of sex work. “A conservative Republican president of the United States had issued a policy consistent with both radical feminist theory on prostitution and sexual exploitation,” Hughes later wrote, “and conservative, religious philosophy of protecting human dignity.”²¹

THE GLOBAL SHERIFF

Though couched in humanitarian terms, the war on trafficking has done less to protect human rights than to empower law enforcement on the global stage. The Trafficking Victims Protection

Act, while defining trafficking as a crime under U.S. law, is also a tool for shaping trafficking policy in other countries. It elevates the U.S. to the role of “global sheriff,”²² writes Janie Chuang, an associate professor at American University’s law school.

TVPA “establishes a sanctions regime,” writes Chuang. If the United States believes a country is failing to comply with its “minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking,” then the U.S. may withdraw aid to that country. The TVPA created the U.S. State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, which each year issues its “Trafficking In Persons” or TIP report, as the primary mechanism for judging foreign governments’ compliance with U.S. anti-trafficking policy. The aim of the report isn’t just to document compliance but to publicly shame countries into doing more to “combat trafficking.”

“We’ve got to push them very hard,” Horowitz said in 2004. “That’s one of the great things about being a superpower.”²³ (Meanwhile, the U.S. only began evaluating itself in the 2010 TIP report.)

“The stigma of the scorecard makes states change their behavior,” writes Judith G. Kelley in *Scorecard Diplomacy: Grading States to Influence Their Reputation and Behavior*. No TIP report has been released without provoking controversy. Scholars have noted the methods used by the State Department to collect anti-trafficking data are inconsistent and that the politics behind TIP compromise its credibility. “[T]he TIP Report weaves a simple—and ultimately comforting—tale of trafficking being about bad people doing bad things to good people,” wrote Anne T. Gallagher, a criminal justice and human rights scholar, in 2015. “It fails to seriously interrogate the deep economy of human exploitation—to ask what would happen to global wealth and productivity if such exploitation were suddenly removed.”²⁴

The original Horowitz-convened alliance took issue with the TIP report as well. Donna Hughes protested²⁵ in 2002 that it didn’t sufficiently punish countries that don’t criminalize prostitution, and complained²⁶ that the U.S. was still funding groups who compromised the

trafficking fight, whether by “work[ing] to ‘empower’ victims of trafficking rather than rescue them” or “support[ing] unionizing prostitutes as the solution to trafficking.”

Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) elevated these claims in debates over the Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act (which created PEPFAR, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief). Smith proposed that in order to qualify for PEPFAR funds, non-governmental organizations must adopt an explicit policy opposing prostitution. Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA), who helped write PEPFAR, opposed Smith’s amendment. “I’ll never forget that day,” said Lee.²⁷ “We thought we had the votes to pass [PEPFAR] based on negotiations, but then Chris Smith offers this—what did he call it? A conscience clause. This was the start of this

Smith’s advocacy rests in decidedly anti-feminist notions of gender roles and family structure.

anti-prostitution clause.” PEPFAR did pass, but with Smith’s amendment, enshrining what came to be known as “the anti-prostitution loyalty oath” or simply “the pledge” into U.S. law.

Notice of the new policy came in January 2003 in a cable from Colin Powell.²⁸ The policy stated that “organizations advocating prostitution as an employment choice or which advocate or support the legalization of prostitution are not appropriate partners” for the U.S. government anti-trafficking grants.

The pledge didn’t just cost aid organizations desperately needed funding, but led to a global chilling effect. By 2004, how program officers, field workers, and human-rights advocates felt about prostitution had “become a litmus test for the Bush administration,” reported Tara McKelvey in *The American Prospect*. An NGO worker summarized the U.S. line on prostitution to her in terms familiar during the Bush era: “You’re either with us or you’re against us.”²⁹

Congressman Smith continued to claim, well into the Obama administration, that the pledge was “designed to

ensure that pimps and brothel owners don’t become, via an NGO that supports such exploitation, U.S. government partners.”³⁰ In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that to require U.S.-based NGOs to sign the pledge was a violation of their constitutional right to free speech.³¹ But NGOs outside the U.S. had no such protection.

“AMERICA’S CHILDREN” AND BEYOND

“It was as if God whispered in my ear, ‘Touch her for Me,’” said Linda Smith, recalling her formative encounter with a young woman in the Mumbai brothel district in 1998.³² Smith, who was then serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, often describes this as the moment her career was born again.³³

The woman who entered Congress as part of Newt Gingrich’s 1994 “Republican Revolution,” and was once named the

House’s “farthest Right of the Right,”³⁴ responded by turning her attention away from Washington, D.C. and toward combating trafficking. She founded Shared Hope International to carry out her mission—rooted in her conversion moment in India, but aimed at children in the United States. Smith’s turn to what she calls “domestic minor sex trafficking” represents another evolution in the Horowitz coalition’s Right/Left appeal.

Smith is a fitting bridge figure for the future of the Horowitz coalition. “She’s the leader of a movement that opposes nearly everything feminists support,” *The Seattle Times* wrote of her early career in Washington state politics. “But she’s also a strong woman who could be mistaken for a feminist.”³⁵ Smith came into politics through Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum, and Smith and Schlafly still moved in the same circles as recently as 2011, when, at the Values Voter Summit Schlafly keynoted, and Smith gave a talk promoting Shared Hope’s model trafficking legislation framework, called “Saving America’s Children from Pimps and Perverts: The Protected Innocence Initiative.”³⁶ Smith’s

advocacy has a maternal feel; it rests in decidedly anti-feminist notions of gender roles and family structure. Before an audience at the Family Research Council, Smith once described a young woman she had personally “saved,” saying the woman had been “vulnerable” to traffickers because her mother worked two jobs, and her “daddy...wasn’t there.”³⁷

Shared Hope’s method of activism was to test its anti-trafficking projects internationally,³⁸ and then bring them back to the United States to target “domestic minor” trafficking. To create political pressure on “domestic minor sex trafficking,” Shared Hope promotes its annual trafficking report card, prepared in collaboration with the American Center for Law and Justice, one of the key legal advocacy groups on the Christian Right, with an anti-LGBTQ, anti-Islam agenda. The report card evaluates U.S. states as the State Department TIP report judges other countries. As the Horowitz coalition worked to link trafficking with prostitution internationally, Smith’s group links trafficking to domestic prostitution. By expanding her anti-trafficking focus to “saving America’s children from pimps and perverts,” she has also elevated her profile. In 2017, Smith campaigned, unsuccessfully, to be appointed Ambassador at Large to Combat Trafficking in Persons.³⁹ (At present, President Trump has announced his intent to nominate former federal prosecutor John Cotton Richmond to head the TIP office. Richmond was also once the India field director for International Justice Mission, a Christian anti-trafficking organization.⁴⁰)

The Horowitz coalition has evolved, now that his goal of claiming human rights for the Religious Right has found a new generation. As described by sociologist Elizabeth Bernstein, members of this new generation “do not identify with the Christian right at all, but rather describe themselves as Christian ‘moderates,’ and in some cases, even as Christian progressives.”⁴¹ Combating trafficking is one way for them, Bernstein says, to “not only embrace the languages of women’s rights and social justice but [also take] deliberate steps to distinguish their work from the sexual politics of other conservative Christians.”

The disparate groups Horowitz gathered continue to vie for influence and resources over what it meant to combat trafficking. Congressman Chris Smith remains in Washington, still working, as advocates noted in February 2018, to insert the anti-prostitution pledge into new legislation. According to some advocates, Smith is at odds with Sen. Bob Corker, the architect of the global fund to “end modern-day slavery,” which is possibly modeled on the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Smith considers anti-trafficking his issue. It’s this fund that Ivanka Trump announced at the United Nations in 2017, serving as the de facto head of anti-trafficking work under her father’s administration (usually a job reserved for the State Department). Her “braintrust” is stacked with current and former staffers of International Justice Mission, the Christian anti-trafficking NGO and a Horowitz ally from the late 1990s which has worked with the Department of Justice.

Meanwhile, Chris Smith and Lederer continue to find new angles on the anti-trafficking fight. In 2017, they spoke at a UN General Assembly side event, “Slave Trade in Minors in the Digital Age,” sponsored by C-FAM, one of two right-wing organizations President Donald Trump selected to represent the U.S. at the 2017 UN Commission on the Status of Women.⁴²

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women remains active in U.S. trafficking politics, defending Rep. Smith’s anti-prostitution pledge against its 2013 challenge at the U.S. Supreme Court. Most recently, CATW has lobbied Congress, with the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (formerly Morality in Media) and Shared Hope International, to focus anti-trafficking laws on men who buy sex.

Hillary Clinton, the coalition’s one-time target, was again criticized over her stance on trafficking during her 2016 presidential campaign. In October 2016, just weeks before the election, right-wing blogs⁴³ spread the news that Clinton had been asked, during a closed-door meeting with Black Lives Matter activists in 2015, whether she supported the decriminalization of sex work—one of the

movement’s platform goals. Clinton, according to an email later published by Wikileaks, said, “I support the idea of it. I’m not sure exactly how you would implement it.” She added, “there is a difference between an adult sex worker and a child trafficked into being a sex worker, so you cannot just make a blanket statement, you have to figure out what the different work situations are.”

Donna Hughes, the longtime anti-trafficking leader, was among the first people on social media to share the story, which appeared to prove that Hughes had not, in fact, been wrong nearly 20 years earlier, when she claimed that Clinton saw sex work and trafficking as distinct concerns.

But the same 20 years have only further eroded such nuanced perspectives in terms of policies that link sex work and trafficking. In April 2018, President Trump signed the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA), expanding the century-old White Slave Traffic Act to include websites used by sex workers, so that state attorneys general can bring suits against such websites. Almost immediately after the legislation passed Congress, websites sex workers rely on to work in relative safety began going offline for fear of being targeted in new prosecutions. Since then, sex workers report that they are no longer able to use websites to share information about abusive customers,⁴⁴ and that abusive customers they had once refused have returned⁴⁵ to take advantage of their newly precarious position. The groups leading the charge for FOSTA include the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and Shared Hope International. The Horowitz coalition has proven itself to be the first successful moral entrepreneurs of the war to combat human trafficking. ☹

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BY MARGARET POWER

Trump, the Republican Party, and Westmoreland County



The "Trump House," Pennsylvania, March 2018. Photo: Courtesy of the author.

“P

ennsylvania was key to Trump’s presidential victory, Westmoreland County was key to Pennsylvania, and District 7 was key to Westmoreland County.”¹ Whether District 7 and Westmoreland County were as central to the 2016 election as Paul Verostko, President of District 7’s Republican Party, claims, one thing is certain: the area is Trump territory. In March 2018, Verostko invited me to meet him at “the Trump House.” Local Republican Leslie Rossi had opened the house in mid-2016,² not only as a visible display of her support for the Republican candidate but also as a key distribution center for Trump gear. The house had “all the Trump materials you could imagine: hats, flags, t-shirts, bumper stickers,” Verostko told me, and visitors could pick any four items, “All for free, no charge.”³

In the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump obtained 63.5 percent of the vote to Hillary Clinton’s 32.5 percent in

Westmoreland County.⁴ The county is now solidly red, but it hasn’t always been. I grew up in Westmoreland County in the 1960s and ‘70s, and despite my mother being a loyal, committed Republican, the county was solidly blue. When elections came around, my mother would ask, “Why do I even bother to vote? The Democrats always win!”

When and why Westmoreland County switched from a Democratic Party bastion to a Republican stronghold is a complicated question. To start to find the answer, it helps to look back to when the region’s party orientation first shifted the other way.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Westmoreland County is one of 10 counties that make up southwestern Pennsylvania. On a good day, Greensburg, the county seat, is about a 30-minute drive southeast of Pittsburgh. Most people outside the area have never heard

of Greensburg, but they might be familiar with its neighbor, Latrobe, the home of Mr. Rogers, Arnold Palmer, and Rolling Rock beer.

From the late 1880s to the 1920s, Westmoreland County was coal country. The world’s richest seam of bituminous coal—used to make coke—ran through southwestern Pennsylvania. Coke was critical to fueling the steel mills that sprung up in Pittsburgh and along the Monongahela River Valley. Steel—as Trump’s 2016 campaign promises hammered home—was the exemplary and essential product of an industrializing United States.

Henry Frick, Andrew Carnegie, and Andrew Mellon—all names associated with elite academic and cultural institutions today—amassed huge fortunes from their ownership of or investment in the coal, coke, and steel industries. Frick, born and raised in Westmoreland County, was known as the “Coke King” because he was the single largest owner

of coke ovens in the area. When he died in 1919, he was worth what would be \$3.9 billion in today's money. Frick's wealth, like Carnegie's and Mellon's, resulted from the exploited labor of coal miners who burrowed deep underground and the workers who then distilled that coal into coke.

Tens of thousands of Catholic immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe streamed into southwestern Pennsylvania to labor in the coal and coke industries in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Forced to live in company towns (known locally as patch communities) attached to the mines and coke ovens, the men worked long, dangerous hours for very little pay. The women struggled to keep their families fed and clothed in the face of highly adverse conditions. Together, they supported the United Mine Workers' call for unionization that helped make the region strongly pro-union for most of the 20th century and, in some pockets, still today.

The 1920s witnessed a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, with an estimated four to six million Americans identifying themselves as members of this White supremacist organization. A quarter-of-a-million Klan members lived in Pennsylvania, and the southwest corner of the state saw more than its share of Klan activity,⁵ which frequently targeted Catholic immigrants. The Klan, like many Americans, defined the country as White and Protestant, and feared the growing Catholic population threatened the nation's identity and their own position within it. Most of the immigrants spoke little to no English and lived in semi-isolated, impoverished communities surrounding the mines and factories where they worked.

Voters in Pennsylvania cast their ballots for Republicans for the first third of the 20th century, and Westmoreland was a reliable part of that trend. The Depression and Franklin Delano Roosevelt changed that. The mining and coke industries were the largest source of employment in the county in the 1920s. Yet, the glut of laborers meant that mining and coke families suffered under- or unemployment and declining wages even prior to the economic crash in 1929. By

1930, they were desperate. The New Deal Programs of the Roosevelt administration altered the economic and political landscape. The 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act gave workers the right to collective bargaining and the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration offered jobs and government funding. The Subsistence Homesteads Division established settlements offering housing, work, and dignity to the jobless and their families, such as the Westmoreland community of Norvelt, named for EleaNOR RooseVELT.

As a result of the New Deal, people's lives gradually improved and their voting patterns shifted. The Democratic Party welcomed Eastern and Southern Catholic Europeans into the party, beginning their assimilation into White America and obtaining their political loyalty for decades. In 1932 Westmoreland County voted Democrat in the presidential elections, according to Westmoreland County Court House records, and continued doing so until the 2000 election of George W. Bush, albeit at a declining rate and with the exception of the 1972 election of Richard Nixon, who captured a majority of votes there.

Voting Democratic also meant belonging to or supporting unions. However, the closure of industrial sites and the loss of union jobs inevitably led to a decline in union membership there and across the United States. During the 1980s, the massive steel mills in Pittsburgh and the Monongahela River Valley shuttered. When the Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel plant in Monessen, Westmoreland County, closed in 1986, 800 people lost their jobs. The small town of Jeanette was the "Glass Capital of the World," until its glass production factories closed in the 1980s. Another blow to organized labor came when the Volkswagen factory, which employed over 2,500 laborers, closed in 1988. The economic picture in Westmoreland County became bleak.

County commissioners responded with economic restructuring, creating the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation (WCIDC), which recommended that banking on large industrial enterprises was futile, and the county should instead create industrial

parks to attract smaller companies. Today 18 industrial parks dot the county, providing 9,000 nonunionized jobs.⁶

Between 1990 and 2000 the economy improved. New sources of employment in information, health care, services, and education opened. Employment rates increased, more women entered the workforce, salaries rose, and many household incomes increased by 44 percent. Nonetheless, 14 municipalities experienced growing poverty.⁷

Westmoreland County was predominantly White in the 20th century and remains so today. According to the 2010 census, 95.3 percent of the population is White, and in some small towns that figure rises to 99 percent or higher. At just 2.3 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively, Black or mixed-race residents just make it into single digit figures, while Asians and Latinos each account for less than 1 percent of the population.

Westmoreland's fate was similar to most U.S. industrial centers. As factories and ancillary industries closed, union jobs and membership plunged, and workers who had found comradeship in their workplaces and union halls found themselves not just unemployed, but no longer part of a group with a common identity and shared purpose. They also lost the affective community that had sustained them for decades.

In its place, smaller, non-unionized workplaces filled the void, as have the Protestant megachurches that now attract thousands across the county. The new jobs may pay better, the work may even be less difficult, but the *esprit de corps* that had bound the industrialized workers to each other, their community, and the Democratic Party is gone, if not entirely for their generation, then almost completely for their children.

THE RISE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

When I was growing up, I associated Westmoreland's Republican Party with the "old" families in Greensburg: the country club set that golfed together, rode horses for sport, and attended the Golden Cup Steeplechase races at the Rolling Rock Club, on the Mellon estate in Ligonier. They belonged to the same bridge or ladies' clubs, drove the most ex-

pensive cars, and lived in the big houses.

Mellon money has directly influenced political attitudes in Westmoreland County for the last half-century. In 1969 Richard Mellon Scaife, a major right-wing financier of conservative think tanks and organizations, purchased the *Greensburg Tribune-Review* and other smaller papers in the area. He also launched the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* to counter the pro-Democratic *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Between 1992 and 2012, Mellon Scaife poured \$312 million into the two papers, using them as a bully pulpit from which to relentlessly attack Democrats and any progressive program with which he disagreed. This bombardment of reactionary propaganda contributed to the rightward shift that has occurred in the county.

Mellon Scaife, who died in 2014, had direct, personal ties with Republicans in Westmoreland County who told me how he helped finance the party's infrastructure, paid for its office, and purchased its first computer in the early 1990s.

Although upper-class elements and wealthy donors still populate the Republican Party, both the party's public face and voting base have changed in the last 20 years. Today, a significant proportion of party officials are the children or grandchildren of coal workers. Paul Verostko grew up in a Democratic family. His father was a tool and dye worker, a solid union man, and an active Democrat. He broke politically with his family to vote for Richard Nixon, "a brilliant candidate," in 1972. He became active in the Republican Party in 2012 or 2013. Today, he leads one of the most active districts in Westmoreland County.

Elaine Gowaty, the former party head of Westmoreland and current head of the Westmoreland Federation of Republican Women, also embodies the political changes the children of working-class families have undergone. Her coal-miner father was a member of the United Mine Workers, and a loyal Democrat, as was the rest of her family. In 1980, she decided she liked Ronald Reagan, because, Gowaty asserts, he, along with the Republican Party, supported hard work, unlike the Democrats, who, she believes, support people who don't work.

Gowaty, like so many Republicans, bought into Reagan's fallacy about poor people, especially African Americans, and welfare. Reagan famously created, then denounced, the mythical "Welfare Queen": a Black woman from Chicago who drove a Cadillac and paid for her groceries with food stamps. Reagan and his party further proclaimed that Democrats sponsor programs for lazy chiselers, which hard-working White taxpayers end up funding. In fact, more Whites receive welfare than any other racial group. Many of those who receive welfare work, usually in low-paying jobs with no benefits, and live in households with other employed people. However, this calculated lie—that welfare recipients equals welfare cheats—persists because it plays well in many parts of the United States.

It resonates particularly well in Westmoreland County. The children and grandchildren of the immigrants who inhabit the county assert they, unlike the "welfare cheats," inherited a strong work ethic from their parents and grandparents. Although many of their families benefitted from New Deal programs, they largely attribute their success to their own efforts. They were the "entitled poor," as their current success proves, and they are determined to deny the benefits their parents and grandparents received to those who they consider the "undeserving poor." Karen Kiefer, then treasurer (and current chair) of Westmoreland's District 7 Republican Party, evoked this idea to explain White workers' increased preference for Republicans. Newly registered Republicans, she wrote on the District 7 Facebook page, "said they joined the Republican party because it now represented the working man, whereas the Democrats represented those on welfare, the looters."⁸

Although few Democrats would accept that characterization of their party, there is one thing on which both they and Republicans agree. People in Westmoreland County are socially conservative, pro-gun rights, and anti-abortion—policies that nearly all Republicans, but also many local Democrats, uphold. And many of them are openly racist. The 2008 presidential elections demonstrated the power of these positions, which further

solidified by 2016.

John Boyle, a Democratic attorney born and raised in Westmoreland County, ran for Pennsylvania State Representative in 2008. During the primaries, while knocking on the doors of loyal Democrats, he remembers that many constituents asked whether he supported Hillary Clinton, or "that n****r."⁹ Obama won the primaries nationally but lost to Clinton in Westmoreland County. And in November 2008, John McCain received 57.8 percent of the county vote to Obama's 41.1 percent. Many Democratic candidates, including John Boyle, also lost—due, many surmise, to their membership in the party that supported a Black man for president.

Outraged at the idea of a Black president, right-wing forces quickly mobilized. Among them was the Tea Party, which became particularly strong in Westmoreland County and exerted a huge influence on the Republican Party, pushing it further Right. Melinda Donnelly, a chiropractor, formed Westmoreland's Tea Party in 2009, along with her husband. They and other Tea Party activists organized large rallies three times a year across the county. By 2012 they'd held 12 rallies and were going strong.

The Tea Party in Westmoreland County (TPWC) both reflected and accentuated conservative attitudes in the area. Donnelly told me that candidates seeking their endorsement had to submit to an interview with TPWC leadership and give the "correct" answers to a number of questions, including: "Do you believe there is such a thing as a moderate Muslim?" (No!) "Do you believe in traditional marriage?" (Yes!) "Would you support the building of a mosque in [Greensburg] city limits?" (No!) "When do you think life begins?" (At conception!) "Do you believe Mexico is a threat?" (Yes!)

When I asked Donnelly if she meant "illegal aliens" coming into the United States or Mexico itself, she replied, "Both!"¹⁰

2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The depth of Westmoreland County's support for Donald Trump in the months leading up to the 2016 presidential election was so unmistakable that Rush

Limbaugh remarked upon it, referring listeners to a *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* article noting the numerous Trump signs across the county and the enthusiasm of its residents.

The wave of pro-Trump sentiment sweeping Westmoreland County was stoked by the determination of Republican Party activists. Paul Verostko remembers that the demand for Trump signs was so high he had a hard time getting enough of them. At the county's annual August fair—a sprawling mixture of rides, agricultural contests, food, and political campaigning—Verostko distributed signs and literature from the Republican Party booth.

One local Republican designed a “Trump mobile,” publishing flyers announcing the date, time, and location when the car would visit towns in Westmoreland and the adjoining Fayette County. The flyer encouraged supporters to “Get your picture taken with the Trump mobile, get Trump signs, hats, shirts, stickers, flags & buttons!” as part of the effort to “Make America Great Again!”¹¹ Another ardent Trump advocate organized a skydiving “Jump for Trump” event. As she excitedly told me, “I jumped out of an airplane for Trump.” She and a group of like-minded friends, she explained, had “faith in him, [so] we took a leap of faith.”¹² (Their faith appears to have had some limits, however, since they all wore parachutes.)

Trump would win Westmoreland County by a landslide, obtaining nearly 63.5 percent of the vote.

A recent article in *The New York Times* challenges the idea that economic fears explain the large number of votes for Trump—across the country and in places like Westmoreland County.¹³ Instead, it argues, Trump voters feared losing their social status. My interviews with Republicans in Westmoreland County both confirm and complicate this perspective. Rather than differentiating between the two, they reveal the close correlation between people's perceived sense of economic and social standing.

Many Republicans transmuted their dread of what Obama government programs would mean for the United States into a visceral horror of those groups

they believed would benefit from and be empowered by these policies. Fear of the threatening “Other” permeates these Republicans' political and emotional imaginations, as demonstrated by the questions the local Tea Party put to candidates seeking its support. For many Republicans in Westmoreland County, the frightful Other comes in the form of people of color: Black people, non-White immigrants, and Muslims, despite, or perhaps precisely because of, the fact that Westmoreland County is overwhelmingly White. Many Republicans in the county not only want to keep it that way, they want their region to serve as a model for the entire country.

A story Karen Kiefer told me exemplifies the perceived interrelation between status and economics. Kiefer recounted how, one day, several Latino men were working in her yard when she took them sandwiches and water. To her aggravation, they didn't seem to know enough English to thank her. When she subsequently heard that her neighbor's daughter had applied to the same landscaping company the men worked for but did not get the job, Kiefer said she felt so mad she vowed to go right down to the border and help build that wall. (Later, reflecting on her lack of construction skills, Kiefer said she decided she would make sandwiches for the wall builders instead.)¹⁴

For Keifer, these Latino men had no right to be in the United States. Their failure to speak English or follow what she considered proper codes of behavior violated her definition of who belongs in this country and who does not. She was outraged because their very presence defiled her sense of what the United States is and should remain: a White nation inhabited by people who know the correct way to behave. In addition, she viewed these workers as threats to her neighbor's daughter's economic well-being, and, by extension, that of other deserving White people. Needless to say, it is unlikely that the neighbor's daughter, like so many others who complain about immigrants taking their jobs, would accept the conditions or pay the men working in Kiefer's yard did.

One issue that has confounded many is why so many women voted for Trump,

despite his obvious misogyny and the accusations and evidence that he abused women. Penny Young Nance, president of Concerned Women for America, succinctly sums up their sentiments about Trump. “We weren't looking for a husband. We were looking for a bodyguard.”¹⁵

Their vote for Trump was driven by fear: of the non-White Other's growing demographic and political strength; economic challenges; and the undermining of what they believe has been, is, and always should be a White, Christian nation. They elected Trump to protect what they consider their birthright from any and all domestic and international threats. To ensure this, they are willing to overlook his abuse of women, boorish language and attitudes, and unpresidential behavior.

The Republican women I spoke with in Westmoreland County echoed this perspective. Until recently, Robin Savage was chair of the county Republican Committee. She stepped down from that position in early 2018 to join Americans for Prosperity. As a Trump enthusiast, she opposes immigrants coming across the southern border. “They are just coming and no one does anything. Where are they going?” she asks. She also seeks for the country to once again rule the world, which is how she remembers things used to be. “I remember growing up and thinking America was the powerhouse and no one wanted to mess with us. We have lost our position as the world player and that bothers me.” Trump, she believes, will restore the United States' leadership role in the world since, “You know what, this president is not going to bow down and apologize for anything in the past.”¹⁶ (How right she was! Speaking to the U.S. Naval Academy in May 2018, Trump announced, “They've forgotten that our ancestors trounced an empire, tamed a continent, and triumphed over the worst evils in history... We are not going to apologize for America. We are going to stand up for America.”)

I asked her if Trump represents her interests as a woman, and her answer encapsulates why many women accept Trump. She is ready to overlook his scandalous behavior toward women because

she agrees with his political stance of “making America great again” and his economic policies, which she believes favor people like her. (She and her husband own a business.) “I have to divide myself as a mother and as a woman. As a Mom, yes, he does [represent my needs and interests] because he is going after what I want. He will protect us, make the military stronger, build that wall, not let people scare us. As a woman, what he has said, he’s not a trained politician, some of the things that come out of his mouth.” Although Savage wouldn’t accept his behavior if she were married to him—were Trump her husband, she said, she would “smack him”—she defends his treatment of women in general, particularly what she describes as his promotion of women in the business and political worlds. “Look at his cabinet,” she said, “he has a lot of women.” She further considers him a successful and non-sexist businessman. He has “a lot of overachieving women [who have worked for him], he’s given them opportunities. It’s not like he has all men in the business.”¹⁷

Tricia Cunningham, the woman who organized the Jump for Trump—and who boasts that neither she nor any of her children has ever received any economic assistance from the government because “they work their butts off”—echoes Savage’s beliefs. “Trump has put more women in superior positions in politics and business than anyone. He chooses talent.” It’s worth noting that Savage’s and Cunningham’s assessment isn’t actually correct: The number of women in Trump’s cabinet is in fact fewer than in Obama’s and similar to previous Republican administrations.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Cunningham feels a deep, personal loyalty for Trump, who she claims to have met at a luncheon in his hotel in Atlantic City 23 years ago. “I would take a bullet for that man,” she said, “for anyone in his family, and for the grandchildren.”

THE 2018 SPECIAL ELECTION

In March 2018, a special election was held in the 18th district of Pennsylvania. The seat had been held by Republican Tim Murphy, who was forced to resign when news broke that he had encouraged a woman he was having an extra-

marital affair with to have an abortion. Trump, who had swept the district with a 20-point lead over Clinton in 2016, pulled out a number of stops to ensure the victory of Republican Rick Saccone, who had proclaimed he was “Trump before Trump was Trump,” over Democrat Conor Lamb. He visited the area to rally the troops, as did several members of his administration and his son Donald Trump, Jr. He even announced a tariff on steel and aluminum imports to win over or retain the votes of workers in the region. But Lamb ended up winning with a few hundred votes more than Saccone, confounding Republicans who saw the region as a lock.

Although he won overall, Lamb lost Westmoreland County, where Saccone garnered 57 percent of the vote—a smaller percentage of the votes than Trump had, but still a strong majority. Shortly after the election, I spoke with Paul Verostko and Mike Ward, whose mother, Kim Ward, is the district’s Republican State Senator. They remarked that Saccone was anti-union, a stance they disagreed with, and had Kim Ward run, they were certain she would have won.¹⁹ Mike Ward had previously told the press, “My mother was the most qualified candidate. She was the most prepared and, as a female candidate in this climate, that’s an add-on, too.” He went on to say, “Rick is a friend and I don’t want to beat up on him...but if you didn’t have four party bosses picking your candidate and the people were able to vote, he never would have run.”²⁰ What’s important to note here is that both men come from traditionally pro-union families, as does much of the county’s Republican leadership, and far from abandoning that position, they believe it’s still essential to Republicans’ success, there and elsewhere. The irony, of course, is they both support a pro-corporate, anti-worker president whose program includes the elimination of working people’s rights and the upward redistribution of wealth.

GOING HOME

In 2008 I attended a meeting of the Norvelt Historical Society to plan the New Deal community’s 75th anniversary. I was co-writing a book on Norvelt

with two local historians. Since the participants loved the Roosevelts, particularly Eleanor, and partially attributed their parents’ and grandparents’ success to the New Deal, I suggested we invite Michelle Obama to attend the upcoming celebration. The response was dead silence, broken only when someone suggested other people to invite. It was only later, in talking with one of my coauthors who also attended the meeting, that I realized most people in Norvelt, like the rest of Westmoreland County, had voted not for Obama but McCain.

The realization piqued my curiosity: When had my home county changed its longstanding political affiliation? It was a transformation I hadn’t been aware of, having left the area for college at 17. To explain the generational shifts in party affiliation, I can point to the economic changes in the county, the closing of industry and mines, the demise of the unions, and their replacement with new affective communities such as the megachurches. But when it comes right down to it, I believe the most significant factors are White supremacy and conservative social values, which many in the area equate with being American and what they will fight to preserve or reinstate. As a girl growing up in Westmoreland County with a Republican mother, those are the values I was taught, and they’re the ones I now see being brandished by a dismayingly large number of people in the area.

But a key question remains unanswered: Can they change? I don’t know. I do know that I did, and that I did because I was challenged to learn about other people’s lives and realities. I think that is our primary task: determining how to cultivate an awareness of and identification with people of radically different racial, sexual, and national groups. So that instead of seeing the “Other” as a threat, people like those I grew up with can see them as a resource to work alongside to build a better and safer world. ☺

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The Art of Activism

Spotlighting the efforts of artists and organizations who are engaged in the struggle for social justice and are helping to build the movement through their work.

Rae Senarighi is a painter, designer, and muralist based in Portland, Oregon. The front cover of this issue of *The Public Eye* features a piece from "The Love Series," which he conceptualized after receiving a cancer diagnosis. Senarighi decided that all of his future artwork would come from a place of love. "I essentially spent a year meditating on love and painting abstract color fields," he said. "It was a wonderful and healing experience for me." His previous years of work in scientific illustration furthered his understanding of "how interconnected we all are, and how much we all have in common with the natural world and with each other."

His TRANSCEND series is currently touring art galleries and community spaces in several U.S. cities as well as London. It features portraiture of transgender and non-binary individuals from all over the world "who are living their lives out in the open, and choosing integrity over safety." Senarighi paints each individual with skin tones made up of a rainbow pallet to bring the viewer's focus on the "vibrant living breathing souls" depicted and elicit a sense of pride and unity. The larger-than-life portraits in this series rep-



Rae Senarighi, "Ceraun," 2017, acrylic on canvas, 48" x 48".
See more at: www.raesenarighi.com/.

resent trans people reclaiming space in direct response to oppression. Being transgender is "not just about one experience, not linear and not simple," Senarighi said. "Each transgender person is unique with incredibly diverse experiences yet we are united in a common struggle."

As a transgender non-binary artist, Senarighi is personally driven to combat the misunderstanding and marginalization of the trans community through art, which he says is "the way I know how to communicate best."

"Portrait galleries worldwide are filled with White, presumably cisgender men and women, and it is my personal passion to help change that." He explains that this goal is "larger than me or any single election cycle" and is

inspired by the work of artists such as Kehinde Wiley, Amy Sherard, Kadir Nelson, and Harmonia Rosales.

Senarighi hopes that trans youth will be able to see themselves in the fine art world and experience the power of seeing beautiful and revered images of their own community. "By elevating our stories, our community will be empowered."

-Gabriel Joffe

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