

# The Public Eye



## **Trump's "Second Amendment People"? The U.S. Patriot Movement Today**

*Also in this issue:*

The Transformation of a Goldwater Girl

International Backlash: The Religious Right at the UN

*Whole Woman's Health's Unexpected Win for Science*

As the country barrels toward the finish line of what may be the most harrowing presidential campaign in recent memory, *The Public Eye* is looking at what happens next. In our cover story, **“Trump’s Second Amendment People”?** (pg. 4), PRA Associate Fellow Spencer Sunshine considers how recent evolutions within the Patriot movement may have implications for the post-campaign reality. As Republican nominee Donald Trump has repeatedly signaled his openness to supporters from the Far (and sometimes violent) Right, the militia members, “Three Percenters,” “Oath Keepers,” and other factions of the Patriot movement have been emboldened. Now, as Trump is widely and loudly predicting that the election will be “rigged,” and has suggested “Second Amendment people” might offer a solution to a Clinton administration they oppose, Sunshine explains who makes up this movement and what they’re capable of. (Also, don’t miss the back cover for more information on PRA’s new report on the Oregon Patriot movement.)

For our commentary this issue, **“The Transformation of a Goldwater Girl”** (pg. 3), author and activist Kay Whitlock digs into her past as a young Right Winger living in a blue-collar Colorado town, to examine what the possibilities of political change mean in the Trump era. In a beautifully told personal account, Whitlock explains what first drew her to the Goldwater campaign—one “steeped in the fear of enemies,” but one which promised a vicarious triumph—and also the small community of teachers and friends who compassionately challenged her to reconsider her views. “This is why I think it’s so important to try, as progressives, to compete for the part of Trump’s audience that may be reachable,” Whitlock writes. “People didn’t write me off. I must do the same.”

In **“International Backlash: The Religious Right at the UN”** (pg. 10), contributor Peter Montgomery, a senior fellow at People For the American Way, charts the daily assaults led by right-wing activists against LGBTQ equality at the level of international diplomacy. While United Nations leaders, including outgoing Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, have offered substantial leadership on LGBTQ rights worldwide, a number of nations—from Russia to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to African countries to the Holy See—have hit back, helped along by a familiar network of conservative Christian groups. While the integration of LGBTQ human rights into the UN mission may be “past the point of no return,” as one advocate put it, that doesn’t mean that opposition groups are ready to give up the fight. (See also Montgomery’s timeline of LGBTQ fights at the UN, available exclusively online.)

This June, when the Supreme Court ruled against an onerous Texas anti-abortion law in *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*, the verdict was welcomed as a resounding success for clinics that have been held to increasingly impossible “TRAP” law regulations. But, as PRA editorial board member and sociologist Alex DiBranco writes, in **“Whole Woman’s Health’s Unexpected Win for Science”** (pg. 17), the decision has implications far beyond just these laws. The legislation at the heart of *Whole Woman’s Health* was an example of how the anti-abortion movement has deployed false scientific claims—about, say, the existence of “Post-Abortion Stress Syndrome,” or misrepresentation of Planned Parenthood “selling” fetal tissue—to chip away at abortion rights, claiming that there exists medical uncertainty on issues where, in fact, legitimate science is in consensus. Aside from protecting reproductive rights, DiBranco finds, *Whole Woman’s Health* “breathes meaning back into science and cracks the foundation of this right-wing strategy.”

Finally, in **Reports in Review**, PRA intern Purvaja Kavattur considers the Astrea Lesbian Foundation for Justice’s new publication, “We Are Real: The Growing Movement Advancing Human Rights of Intersex People” (pg. 21).

Thanks so much for reading, and **remember to vote.**

Kathryn Joyce  
Editor

Our cover photo by Shawn Records features a Patriot movement supporter at a protest in Harney County, Oregon, this past February. As Spencer Sunshine writes in his article, veterans continue to be targets of recruitment by the movement—treated as objects of special veneration who could provide military training to other participants.

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# Trump's "Second Amendment People"?

## The U.S. Patriot Movement Today

Judging from his recent statements, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump seems to be making plans for post-election violence if he's defeated. At the beginning of August he warned, "I'm afraid the election's going to be rigged."<sup>1</sup> He went on to issue a seeming call for supporters to intimidate Democrats at the polls, telling his supporters to go with their friends and family to "watch." ("And when I say watch, you know what I'm talking about, right?"<sup>2</sup>) Ultimately he declared that if Hillary Clinton "gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do folks. Although the Second Amendment people—maybe there is. I don't know."<sup>3</sup>

While Trump claimed he was merely suggesting an electoral remedy, where gun rights advocates become a pivotal voting block, the more obvious interpretation—the one understood by many listeners—was that Trump was seeding the idea in followers' minds of an armed revolutionary struggle, or an assassination, to overthrow a democratically elected president. It's likely that at least one constituency is already thinking the same way. When it comes to Trump's so-called "Second Amendment people," the prime candidates for the role are the members of the heavily armed, Hard Right "Patriot movement."

For example, the next month, NPR talked to one Georgia man who was already making plans to join a militia. His reason? "Should martial law, civil war—whatever—break out in this country, they will uphold the Constitution and rebuild our loss...The war that's going to break out if Hillary Clinton's elected, if that happens. Your patriots are going to overthrow the government."<sup>4</sup>

The Patriot movement is a political tradition that dates back many decades. In the 1990s, when its "armed wing" ex-



*A Patriot movement member stands guard during the Malheur Wildlife Refuge occupation in Oregon in January. Photo: Shawn Records.*

panded rapidly, it became well known as the militia movement.<sup>5</sup> It gained infamy in 1995 when two of its participants bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 (including 19 children in a daycare center on site).<sup>6</sup> In more recent years, Patriot movement activists have repeatedly made headlines for anti-government actions. In 2014, members converged on rancher Cliven Bundy's Nevada ranch to hold off federal employees at gunpoint and stop them from seizing his cattle for non-payment of grazing fees. In January 2016, Bundy's sons were among the group of paramilitaries who took over the headquarters of the remote Malheur National Wildlife Refuge outside of Burns, Oregon, for 41 days. Origin-

nally demanding freedom for two local ranchers who had been imprisoned for arson, their main demand soon became that the federally owned refuge be transferred to county authorities that would allow it to be used for ranching with few or no environmental restrictions.

The Patriot movement is rooted in an idiosyncratic reading of the U.S. Constitution, which they claim prohibits almost the entire structure of the current U.S. federal government. They desire a completely unrestrained capitalist system on domestic matters, and denounce even the mildest state interventions in markets as "Marxism." Federal ownership of most public land and any regulation of private firearms are also considered to be a violation of the Constitution.

The same holds for federal agencies that engage in almost any kind of regulation, including in economics, environmentalism, workers' rights, health and safety, or civil rights for oppressed groups. The Patriot movement is saturated with anti-immigrant xenophobia and Islamophobia, and is driven by conspiracy theories concerning federal overreach, sleeper ISIS cells, and plans for a New World Order. (One popular claim is that the federal government is using Agenda 21—a non-binding United Nations white paper that promotes environmental sustainability—and environmental politics to drive rural people off the land and into the cities, where they will be disarmed and put in detention camps, so that the United Nations or China can invade.)

These conspiracy theories, which serve as the theoretical basis of the movement's politics, provide easy explanations for complex problems. The basic narrative framework is based on centuries-old ideas and appeals to people across cultures; it casts participants as the heroes in a story in which good and evil are pitted against each other, sometimes in an apocalyptic battle.

One of the most interesting aspects of the movement is that, despite the fact that many of its tactics and talking points come from the White supremacist movement, it presents itself in a way that seems to avoid its racist background. One of the early Patriot movement groups, Posse Comitatus, was founded in 1971 on the West Coast as a vehicle for White supremacism and antisemitism. And yet, explains Daniel Levitas, author of the most comprehensive account of the group, *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and the Radical Right*, the Posse (as it was called) didn't look or sound like other White supremacist organizations. "Unlike most other right-wing groups that shared similar beliefs," Levitas wrote, "the Posse succeeded at joining its conspiracy theories, bigotry, and zest for violence to more mainstream issues, such as banking, land-use planning, environmental regulations, property rights, gun ownership, and race."<sup>7</sup> Writing about the Patriot movement of the late 1990s, which had inherited many aspects of the

Posse's organizational model, researcher David Neiwert wrote in his book, *In God's Country: The Patriot Movement and the Pacific Northwest*, that the movement "disguises the racial and anti-democratic implications of its agenda and emphasizes, instead, its populist appeal across a broad range of issues, all wrapped in the bright colors of American nationalism."<sup>8</sup>

One of the other curious elements of the Patriot movement is that it waxes and wanes in phases; in particular it has flourished under Democratic presidencies. The militia movement coincided with Bill Clinton's tenure, but soon after George W. Bush came into office, it faded. The current generation emerged with Barack Obama's election. Apparently Democrats better fit the movement's *Manchurian Candidate*-style narratives about the president being a secret Communist agent who is about to betray the nation and is more likely to push for gun control—a core issue for the movement.

Trump isn't exactly the movement's ideal candidate; Ted Cruz did more to court Patriots, many of whom supported him in the primary. But quite a number of Trump's views—his toxic combination

**The Patriot movement waxes and wanes in phases; in particular it has flourished under Democratic presidencies.**

of bellicose patriotism, xenophobia and Islamophobia; implicit White nationalism; protectionist but pro-capitalist politics; as well as his thinly veiled threats of violence and penchant for wild conspiracy theories—all hit the same notes as the Patriot movement. And if Trump loses, and Hillary Clinton takes office, the movement could adopt a revolutionary stance. The Patriot milieu is flush with heavily armed followers who are already trained in military tactics. It would only take a small number of them to go underground and start an armed struggle, with the hope of igniting a larger uprising.

## **THE PATRIOT MOVEMENT'S THREE WAVES**

In *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*, author Matthew Lyons and former PRA senior analyst Chip Berlet write that, "The Patriot movement was bracketed on the reformist side by the [John] Birch Society and the conspiracist segment of the Christian Right, and on the insurgent side by the Liberty Lobby and groups promoting themes historically associated with White supremacy and antisemitism."<sup>9</sup> However, groups that are the backbone of the movement today are armed, or advocate actions that are beyond the bounds of the existing law—or both. This movement has had three identifiable waves.

The group that set the organizing template for both the 1990s militia movement and the most active elements of the current Patriot movement was the Posse Comitatus (Latin for "power of the county"). The proposed outline for the group was first published in 1971 by William Potter Gale, a self-proclaimed minister in the racist and antisemitic Christian Identity religion, which holds that Jews are children of Satan and people of color are "mud people."<sup>10</sup> Gale, a veteran of several Hard Right groups, developed a new politics of White su-

premacism and antisemitism that took a different direction than post-war U.S. neo-Nazism, which at the time was still a newcomer to the political scene. Instead of seeking an authoritarian, centralized state government with references to mid-nineteenth century European political imagery and promises of active government intervention, Gale promoted a vision of radical decentralization that relied on the founding symbols and texts of the U.S. liberal system. Gale's vision of White supremacy was dressed up in the Constitution and cowboy imagery—not *Mein Kampf* and swastika armbands.

Gale's Posse Comitatus was based on

his own beliefs about the law, which combined an idiosyncratic reading of the Constitution, the Bible, and Anglo-Saxon common law. The most important claim of Posse Comitatus was that county sheriffs could decide which laws were constitutional—something that would allow them to ignore federal laws at a time when civil rights and environmental protection legislation were being passed. (This fixation on fighting the federal government is what helped it gain such wide appeal.) Gale's primary concept on sheriffs' authority eventually

thority of the county sheriff to judge the constitutionality of laws and advocate the transfer of federally owned lands.

The Posse Comitatus experienced a revival during the 1980s farm crisis. An increase in interest rates by the Federal Reserve—from single digits to an average of 15.3 percent, and often higher—as well as changes in the international agricultural industry, led to widespread foreclosures of small farms, especially in the Midwest.<sup>12</sup> A protest movement, led by the American Agriculture Movement, arose in response. Their tactics

including White separatists, gun rights activists, right-wing tax protestors, anti-abortion activists, and Sovereign Citizens.

Starting in 1994, the militia movement expanded rapidly. Opposition to the Brady Bill, a 1993 gun control law, helped catalyze the movement. But many adherents were inspired by two incidents widely seen as evidence of federal government overreach or even tyranny. Then, as today, veterans were targets of recruitment by the movement—treated as objects of special veneration who could provide military training to other participants. The first was Ruby Ridge, a 1992 standoff between the FBI and the Weaver family, White separatists and Christian Identity followers in Idaho. During the 11-day standoff, two members of the family and one FBI agent were killed. The second was the 1993 siege of the compound of the Branch Davidian sect in Waco, Texas, where a total of 84 people died in a botched raid by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), which was followed by a standoff that lasted almost two months. Timothy McVeigh's 1995 Oklahoma City bombing was retaliation for these incidents, as he made clear in a letter just before his execution.<sup>14</sup> One side effect was that, even as the federal government amped up its infiltration of militia groups, it also apparently adopted a very hands-off policy in dealing with majority-White, Hard Right groups in order to avoid a repeat of these two tragedies, and the reaction that resulted. This practice has affected standoffs in recent years.

At its height, the militia movement had 20,000–60,000 active members, and perhaps five million people who agreed with its basic worldview. It was able to attract supporters in Washington, D.C., including U.S. Representatives Steve Stockman (R-TX) and Helen Chenoweth-Hage (R-ID). There were also state and local legislators like Colorado State Representative and Senator Charlie Duke.<sup>15</sup> Gary Johnson, the 2016 Libertarian Party presidential candidate, even had a disturbing meeting with the militias in 1995 when he was New Mexico's governor. Occurring about a week after the Oklahoma City bombing, Johnson emerged to call them “very

**Then, as today, veterans were targets of recruitment by the movement—treated as objects of special veneration who could provide military training to other participants.**

included the notion that sheriffs could reject Constitutional Amendments as well—especially the 14th, which would strip citizenship from many people of color.

Posse Comitatus also advocated setting up fake courts as part of the prefigurative legal system it envisioned. These “common law courts,” composed of movement adherents, claimed they had the legal right to try and sentence standing officials, typically for treason. In effect, they were kangaroo courts, which hold their trials in absentia (who would show up to one?), and have only been known to pass out guilty verdicts. The threatened punishments have ranged from issuing fines to execution.<sup>11</sup> This idiosyncratic reading of constitutional law later became the Sovereign Citizen movement.

A significant, more intellectual, part of the movement was the Hard Right anti-Communist John Birch Society, founded in 1958. The group promoted conspiracy theories that were based on old antisemitic tropes but which no longer named Jews as the agents of conspiracy. For example, they claimed the United States was controlled by a secret cabal of Communists who planned to implement an authoritarian New World Order. Still in existence today, the John Birch Society continues to promote Patriot movement staples such as the au-

thority of the county sheriff to judge the constitutionality of laws and advocate the transfer of federally owned lands. The Posse Comitatus experienced a revival during the 1980s farm crisis. An increase in interest rates by the Federal Reserve—from single digits to an average of 15.3 percent, and often higher—as well as changes in the international agricultural industry, led to widespread foreclosures of small farms, especially in the Midwest.<sup>12</sup> A protest movement, led by the American Agriculture Movement, arose in response. Their tactics included “tractorcades,” where thousands of farmers would drive tractors into urban areas as demonstrations, and “penny auctions,” where they tried to sabotage auctions of foreclosed farms. While the farm crisis affected thousands of farmers, a portion of the protesters were drawn to the Posse Comitatus politics, which claimed that an international conspiracy of Jewish bankers (who supposedly controlled the Federal Reserve) had dispossessed farmers of their land. By then the name “Christian Patriots”—a label which “said who they were without exposing them to quite as much criticism or surveillance” as Posse Comitatus, Levitas writes—had come into common use for the movement.<sup>13</sup>

The 1990s militia movement, which formed the second wave of the Patriot movement, called for the formation of locally based militias to fend off looming tyranny—usually conceived of as a coming invasion by the United Nations, or domination by a secret cabal of elites. Although still present, those who openly espoused racist and antisemitic ideas were now a minority in the movement. The tactics and political goals remained the same, although the ideas of the John Birch Society had now become more prominent than the Christian Identity beliefs that animated the earlier movement. This second wave brought a mixture of different groups together,

patriotic” and say he shared their views about federal government overreach.<sup>16</sup> But after George W. Bush’s 2000 election win—and then, even more so after 9/11—the movement, which has always been strongest in opposition to a Democratic administration, declined.

In late 2008, with the election of Barack Obama, the movement sprang back to life with a third wave. New organizations emerged, but they still promoted the doctrines that the county sheriff should interpret the Constitution; that most of the federal government was unconstitutional; and that it was essential to form paramilitaries and a parallel legal apparatus, such as movement-controlled court systems, in order to replace the current structure of government. After 2008 it became rare to find open, ideological White supremacist (or separatist) views among those in leadership positions. Islamophobia also largely supplanted antisemitism, with Muslims replacing Jews in recycled demonizing narratives.

#### THE NEW WAVE

While organized **militias**, which were popular in the 1990s, are still around, they are no longer the central organizing force of the movement. Since 2008, Patriot movement activists who engage in armed organizing, or other actions that overstep the law, usually fall into five main groups. The **Oath Keepers** are a membership-based organization of current and former police, military, and first responders who swear to “defend the Constitution.” (Others can join as associate members.) Oath Keepers swear not to enforce 10 hypothetical orders—mostly derived from staple right-wing conspiracy theories about how the U.S. government will disarm civilians and herd them into concentration camps to facilitate a foreign invasion. The organization attempts to operate within the law while also being armed, and to portray themselves as a cross between a veterans’ group and a community service organization. They were present at the Bundy Ranch standoff; sent members to Ferguson, Missouri, during protests against police killings; tried to recruit at Occupy Wall Street events; and offered to guard Kentucky County Clerk Kim Davis when she refused to register same-

sex marriages.<sup>17</sup>

Founded in 2009 by Stewart Rhodes, who had been an aide to former U.S. Representative Ron Paul (R-TX), the Oath Keepers are estimated to have just over 2,000 members (they claim a membership of 40,000). Rhodes, a graduate of Yale Law School, illustrates how cross-class this movement is, despite the stereotype of it being mostly poor, rural, and uneducated White people.

An affiliated group, the **Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA)**, is led by former Arizona county sheriff Richard Mack, who is also on the board of directors of the Oath Keepers. Mack became a hero of the Hard Right in the 1990s when he won a Supreme Court ruling that backed his argument that local law enforcement does not need to enforce the provision of the Brady Act, which required them to perform gun sale background checks.<sup>18</sup> Like Posse Comitatus, Mack believes sheriffs can refuse to enforce federal laws, and decide whether amendments are constitutional. He has worked with Randy Weaver, the White separatist whose family was killed at Ruby Ridge, and previously worked for the radical group Gun Owners of America. The CSPOA refuses to make its membership list public, but it may include dozens of county sheriffs (they claim 400), in addition to other members.

One of those in the CSPOA’s orbit is Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke, whom the group named their “Sheriff of the Year” in 2013. A speaker at the 2016 Republican National Convention and a frequent commentator on Fox News, he has called Black Lives Matter “purveyors of hate” and “black slime,” and tweeted,

“Before long, Black Lies Matter will join forces with ISIS to bring down our legal constituted republic” (sic). He has also made comments that imply he would welcome an armed revolutionary movement against gun seizures.<sup>19</sup>

The **Three Percenters** were co-founded in 2008 by Mike Vanderboegh, a

Since 2008, most Patriot movement activists fall into five main groups: Oath Keepers, Three Percenters, Sovereign Citizens, the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, and militias.



*Sovereign Citizens*



UPHOLD - DEFEND - PROTECT - SERVE

1990s militia activist, as a more decentralized version of the militias, which many believe are heavily infiltrated by law enforcement. Anyone can independently declare themselves a Three Percenter, although there are organized local and national groups as well. This model of “leaderless resistance” creates a more difficult political milieu to infiltrate than standing, membership-based organi-

zations, and illegal actions can then be taken with a greater level of anonymity. The name refers to the mythical portion of American colonialists who were said to have taken up arms against the British during the American Revolution. Three Percenters swear that they will forcefully resist new gun regulations—a promise that brings to mind Trump’s unnamed “Second Amendment people.” In general they have a similar ideology to the Oath Keepers, although with a greater focus on Islamophobia, and they tend to attract the more violent members of the movement. (Some Three Percenters are reported to have also joined the Soldiers of Odin, an anti-immigrant vigilante patrol group founded by Finnish neo-Nazis and recently active in the United States as well.)

Another grouping, the **Sovereign Citizens**, also follow the crank legal theories first developed by Posse Comi-

tours to cultivate followers.

Their tactics vary. Some file false liens against political opponents, engage in tax scams and fraud. Some set up their own courts and declare themselves judges. (At least two fake courts, overseen by self-proclaimed judges and targeting federal employees, were initiated by those connected to the Malheur occupation.) Some, like Scott Roeder, who assassinated abortion provider Dr. George Tiller, refuse to put valid license plates on their cars. Others have killed law enforcement officers, including Joseph and Jerry Kane, who in 2010 killed two police officers in West Memphis, Arkansas, before dying in a shootout.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the movement’s origins in the racist Right, today there are also a number of Black sovereigns. Veteran Gavin Long, the sniper who killed three police officers and wounded three others during a July 2016 Black Lives Matter march

movement with some level of popular support, including in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Arizona. (For a detailed analysis of the Oregon movement, see the Political Research Associates and Rural Organizing Project report *Up in Arms: A Guide to Oregon’s Patriot Movement*.<sup>24</sup>)

#### THE MOVEMENT TODAY

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, this third wave peaked in 2011, before declining over the next several years. But when rancher Cliven Bundy staged his Nevada standoff in April 2014, over his longstanding financial dispute over grazing fees with the Bureau of Land Management, the movement swelled to his defense. When federal authorities came to seize Bundy’s cattle, Bundy called in his Patriot movement allies, which included armed Oath Keepers and Three Percenters. After a brief armed standoff, federal agents retreated—apparently following the government’s playbook instituted after Waco and Ruby Ridge.

For almost two years, there were no arrests and Bundy continued to not pay his grazing fees. Perhaps for the first time in the movement’s history, it appeared that the armed Patriot movement strategy—of deploying paramilitaries to stop the federal government from enforcing laws they opposed—had succeeded. This victory, achieved without casualties, inspired a sudden upsurge in movement activity and made the Bundys into movement icons.

For years, Republicans have attempted to transfer federally owned lands—which account for almost 50 percent of the land in 11 Western states—to state or county governments, effectively privatizing them in order to circumvent regulations on logging, mining, ranching, and development.<sup>25</sup> Between the Bundy Ranch and Malheur wildlife refuge incidents, Patriot movement activists formed armed camps to support miners who were in conflict with federal agencies on at least two occasions. The first was in April 2015—the anniversary of the Bundy ranch standoff—at the Sugar Pine Mine in Josephine County, Oregon, and the second was at the White Hope Mine in Lincoln, Montana, in August 2015. Neither of these events garnered



Ammon Bundy (left) at the Malheur Refuge occupation. Photo: Shawn Records.

tatus. They believe most federal laws do not apply to them. The growth of a new wave of Sovereigns, as they are called, may have been spurred by the economic crisis starting in 2008; some have attempted to declare ownership of houses that underwent foreclosures. There are an estimated 100,000 “hardcore” Sovereigns, and 200,000 additional sympathizers. While there is clearly a large audience for these ideas, organized groups only play a minor role.<sup>20</sup> Many websites and videos promote these fake legal theories, while individuals—known as “gurus”—who spread their own versions of Sovereign Citizen ideas go on speaking

in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was part of a group influenced by Sovereign Citizen ideology.<sup>22</sup>

The size of these various wings of the movement is difficult to estimate. If based on the self-reporting of the CSPOA and the Oath Keepers, and online social media membership of Three Percenter group, it would appear that they represent a combined total of 130,000 activists—but this number is doubtlessly wildly inflated. It’s likely that their real numbers are between a quarter and a tenth of this.<sup>23</sup> The movement is spread across the United States; in certain Western states, it has the character of a mass

much national attention.

Then on January 2, 2016, Patriot movement activists held a march in a remote Oregon town to protest an unusual prison sentence for two local ranchers who had been convicted under the 1996 Terrorism Act for starting fires on federal land where they had grazing rights. At the end of the march, a small group of armed activists from other states—including Cliven Bundy's sons Ammon and Ryan Bundy, as well as well-known Islamophobic organizer Jon Ritzheimer—occupied the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, where one of the fires had burned. They demanded the ranchers be freed, and the refuge be transferred to county control. They occupied the refuge for 41 days and engaged in an intense, unsuccessful struggle to win local community support for their efforts. One militant was killed when he refused to surrender at a police checkpoint. Those involved in the earlier Nevada standoff, including Cliven Bundy, were then also arrested. Twenty-six people were originally arrested for the Malheur Refuge occupation, and seven went to trial in September 2016; as of October 17, the trials are ongoing. The Bundy Ranch standoff trials are slated to begin in February 2017.

### THE PATRIOT MOVEMENT AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

In the past, the Patriot movement's politics were considered extreme even by fellow conservatives. Today—coming on the tail of the armed takeover of federal property—it's an increasingly popular grassroots movement in rural areas of several Western states where there are high levels of federal land ownership. The Republican Party mainstream is moving into alignment with the politics, if not the tactics, of the Patriot movement. Some elected officials are open sympathizers, such as Nevada State Representative Michele Fiore, who helped negotiate the surrender of the last of the Malheur Refuge occupiers. When hard-line Patriot movement activists ran in the May 2016 Republican primary in Oregon—the state where the Malheur takeover occurred—almost none advanced to the November election. However, members of the movement did move into the state's Republican Party appa-

ratus itself. Many Patriots had run for positions as Precinct Committee People, the lowest level officials in the party. At the state's June 2016 party convention, a number of them took seats in the party infrastructure. One of them, Joseph Rice, then the state's most prominent Oath Keeper, became a delegate to the July 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland. On the convention floor he unveiled a small banner emblazoned with "Free the Bundys."<sup>26</sup>

While the tactics of the Patriot movement are not yet mainstream, the Republican Party platform has embraced the guiding conspiracy theories of the movement, noting that, "We emphatically reject U.N. Agenda 21 as erosive of U.S. sovereignty, and we oppose any form of Global Tax." A new plank now also calls for the immediate transfer of federal land to state governments.<sup>27</sup> The Patriot movement's xenophobic scapegoating and Islamophobia, taboo in mainstream circles even a year ago, have become part of mainstream political discourse.

If Trump is elected, it's possible that the Patriot movement's most militant tendencies might subside as supporters see their politics represented on a national level—along the lines of what happened with George W. Bush's win in 2000. (Alternately, it could expand if he provides a warm ideological home for them, possibly turning a blind eye to, or even encouraging, illegal actions—although politicians often became more moderate once they are actually in power.)

If Trump fails to become president, some Patriot movement activists may turn to an armed struggle approach: the "second American Revolution" they've long threatened to carry out. For years, the movement's tactics have largely been in support of what they call "defensive" positions, such as defending Cliven Bundy's ranch from perceived federal intrusion. By contrast, the Malheur refuge occupation seemed to be a shift towards

an "offensive" position—where they proactively took over federal property, even though the occupiers avoided pointing weapons at authorities.

With that shift has come escalated rhetoric. Movement propagandists have claimed that the death of refuge oc-



Sign during the January 2, 2016 march in Burns, Oregon, claims that the Hammond family are allegedly victims of the Agenda 21 conspiracy. Photo: Jason Wilson.

cupier Robert "LaVoy" Finicum was an assassination by law enforcement, giving the movement a modern martyr. As Trump has sown the rhetorical seeds to legitimize revolutionary action, there is the possibility that escalated tactics could follow. If Hillary Clinton is elected, and her victory is portrayed by right-wing media as a stolen election, and she does promote further gun control measures—especially by executive orders or nominating a Supreme Court justice who supports them—armed revolt, by at least some members of this movement, would certainly be among the plausible outcomes. ☹

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## International Backlash The Religious Right at the UN

In a single two-day period this summer, the United Nations Human Rights Council gave advocates for LGBTQ equality their most significant victory yet at the UN and simultaneously gave anti-LGBTQ “traditional” family proponents a major win in their intensifying campaign against that progress.

With the first vote, the Council created an “independent expert” position charged with investigating and reporting on violence and discrimination against LGBTQ people, a milestone within the UN system that was won through years of hard work by advocacy organizations and persistent diplomacy by the U.S. and other pro-equality nations. But the very next day, social conservatives celebrated when the same Council, by an even wider margin, approved a resolution on the “protection” of the family while rejecting efforts to include language inclusive of diverse forms of family.

These seemingly contradictory results point to the complexity of the intense diplomatic and rhetorical struggles being waged every day within UN agencies and other international bodies over fundamental questions whose answers can affect millions of lives: Who does international law recognize as a family? Are human rights universal or are they subordinate to “traditional” religious and cultural beliefs about gender and sexuality?

Women and LGBTQ people have much at stake in these debates, and much at

stake in upcoming changes in two crucial leadership positions. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who has energetically promoted international recognition for the rights of LGBTQ people over



Ban Ki-moon at LGBTQ rights event on September 29th, 2015. Photo: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken via Flickr. License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>.

stiff opposition from many countries, will step down at the end of the year (to be replaced by António Guterres). Shortly thereafter, U.S. President Barack Obama, whose administration’s foreign policy has placed a high priority on advancing and protecting LGBTQ human rights, will complete his final term.

Under the best-case scenario, in which a new UN Secretary General and a new U.S. president are both committed to the principle of LGBTQ equality, the priority they place on its promotion and defense will make an important difference to the lives and rights of people around the world. And even with strong allies in these leadership positions, LGBTQ human rights will be threatened by a global movement that is committed to defending “traditional” ideologies regarding sexuality and gender and to resisting LGBTQ equality as a form of cultural imperialism.

American religious conservatives play an important role in this movement, which Political Research Associates LGBTQ & Gender Justice Researcher L. Cole Parke has written is “aimed at cementing a patriarchal and heteronormative family structure as the fundamental unit of society, and then using that as a tool to advance conservative, right-wing social policies through the UN and other international organizations.”<sup>1</sup>

In this global human rights struggle, U.S. Religious Right leaders are making their stand against LGBTQ people and with the world’s most repres-

sive regimes.

### AT THE UNITED NATIONS, HISTORIC PROGRESS BRINGS RESENTMENT AND RESISTANCE

On Human Rights Day in December 2010, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon gave a landmark speech calling for universal decriminalization of homosexuality, in which he declared, “Let there be no confusion: where there is tension between cultural attitudes and universal human rights, universal human rights must carry the day.”<sup>2</sup>

With help from Ban Ki-moon’s outspoken leadership and an active LGBT Core Group<sup>3</sup> whose member states provide most of the UN budget,<sup>4</sup> advocates for LGBTQ equality have made remarkable strides at the UN in recent years (see timeline online at [politicalresearch.org](http://politicalresearch.org)). Those efforts are supported by social media outreach from the UN Free &

Equal campaign, which was launched in 2013.<sup>5</sup> Free & Equal Director Charles Radcliffe says the campaign “complements the more traditional diplomatic methods” the UN uses to engage governments in promoting and protecting equal rights and fair treatment for LGBTQ people.<sup>6</sup> Its audience, he says, is neither enthusiastic supporters nor die-hard opponents of equality, but “people who might never have given these issues much thought, who never considered themselves LGBTQ allies, but who are willing to open their hearts and minds to change.”<sup>7</sup> The campaign has created a series of videos that have garnered worldwide attention; Radcliffe says that its Bollywood-style short, “The Welcome,” has become the UN’s most watched YouTube video.<sup>8</sup>

But that progress and visible advocacy have provoked resentment, resistance, and counter-organizing. Russia, members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and some African countries are leading the resistance among member states at the UN, with a key ally in the Holy See. They are being assisted by global networks of activist organizations of conservative evangelical Christians, Catholics, and Mormons that are fighting equality at the UN and in other international arenas such as the European Union and Organization of American States.

To the extent that the United Nations exists at all in the U.S. popular imagination, it may be seen as a large auditorium in which world leaders give weighty speeches, or, depending on your media source, a cesspool of anti-American rhetoric paid for with U.S. tax dollars. In reality, the UN is a complex ecosystem of agencies, commissions, and programs that carry out far-reaching work in many political and social arenas.

In the realm of human rights, the UN is guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by its General Assembly in 1948,<sup>9</sup> as well as by subsequent international agreements and the commissions and treaty bodies charged with interpreting and implementing them. It is within these bodies that pitched battles are fought over words and phrases that may seem innocuous by themselves, but which can shape the

work of UN agencies and the lives of people around the world.

When a particular formulation, such as language recognizing the human rights of LGBTQ people, gets codified in an official document, that document can then be cited by other agencies and bodies to support their own work. Navi Pillay, who served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2008-2014,<sup>10</sup> noted several years ago that sometimes history is made with great fanfare, and sometimes it is made in ordinary meeting rooms.<sup>11</sup>

For example, an Australian man argued to the Human Rights Committee in 1991 that the criminalization of consensual gay sex by the state of Tasmania violated his rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and in 1994 the committee agreed.<sup>12</sup> That ruling did not lead to a global repeal of laws that criminalize homosexual behavior, but it was an important step in establishing the still-contested principle that anti-gay discrimination is a violation of human rights and treaty obligations.

Battles over language are an important part of the continual debates in UN bodies over sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Advocates for LGBTQ equality look for opportunities to promote equal rights for LGBTQ people and generate official recognition that there are multiple kinds of families, while opponents fight for language that explicitly defines family as a married man and woman and their children, or at least includes more inclusive formulations. As PRA’s Kapyra Kaoma said in remarks at a 2014 Human Rights Day event at the UN, “Defending the ‘traditional family’ has come to mean demonizing sexual minorities.”<sup>13</sup>

While votes in UN bodies are ultimately cast by representatives of nations, nongovernmental organizations, often referred to collectively as “civil society,”

play a significant role in providing delegates with research, talking points, and public and political pressure. Simply collecting data can make a difference. Human rights consultant Sheherezade Kara says that one of the main reasons that the UN Human Rights Council has addressed these issues is because civil society groups have brought attention to human rights violations against LGBTQ people.<sup>14</sup> Civil society organizations also play an important role, says the UN Foundation’s Peter Yeo, in bringing member states together to think about common vision and strategies.<sup>15</sup>

One site of many language struggles has been the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This year, the conservative Family Watch International (FWI) reported that it fielded a team of 22 volunteers from six countries to attend the CSW’s March meeting to counter Western countries’ attempt “to force their sexual rights/abortion agenda on developing countries” by replacing the term “the family” with “various forms of the family” in the meeting’s “outcome document”—an official report of a gathering’s findings and/or agreements.<sup>16</sup> FWI celebrated the deletion of explicit references to SOGI and SRHR but complained that the document still included language on reproductive rights, contraception, and the phrase “the right to

**For a web-exclusive Timeline of LGBTQ Progress and Resistance at the United Nations, go to: [www.politicalresearch.org](http://www.politicalresearch.org).**

have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality,” which FWI notes “is often interpreted to include controversial LGBT rights.”<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes these battles end in a sort of draw. The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, adopted last year, are intended to guide UN policy from 2016 to 2030. After extensive lobbying reached an impasse, the SDGs, also known as Agenda 2030, ended up achieving consensus by including no explicit referenc-

es to LGBTQ people or to the role of the family in achieving the goals.<sup>18</sup> While “pro-family” groups had pushed hard to have the role of the family explicitly included in the goals, they celebrated the role of Nigeria’s Ambassador, “who vocally denounced any attempt to impose LGBTQ rights on his country, and demanded that the draft agreement be ‘cleaned’ during negotiations.”<sup>19</sup> He also “denounced ongoing attempts to read abortion and LGBTQ rights into the agreement through implementation efforts that are already underway.”<sup>20</sup>

### CLASH OF WORLDVIEWS AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council has been one of the arenas in which pro-LGBTQ organizing has borne fruit. In June 2011, the Council adopted a resolution, sponsored by the government of South Africa, which expressed “grave concern” over violence and discrimination against people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and requested a report on the topic from the High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>21</sup>

The Council adopted a similar resolution again in 2014; by this time South Africa had ceded its leadership on the issue under fire from other African countries, and a group of Latin American countries led by Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Uruguay stepped in.<sup>22</sup> The following June, when the High Commissioner’s office released its report on discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, it called for decriminalization, repeal of “anti-propaganda” laws that restrict public advocacy for LGBTQ equality in the name of protecting youth, and legal recognition for same-sex couples and their families, among other steps.<sup>23</sup>

The next move for LGBTQ human rights advocates was to push for a vote on the creation of an “independent expert” position that would be given the responsibility of investigating human rights abuses based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Because this would represent a significant victory, the effort was resisted even more fiercely by conservative groups like C-Fam (the Center for Family and Human Rights, formerly

known as the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute), which warned that it would be a “major catastrophe” to have sexual orientation and gender identity given this kind of standing in international law.<sup>24</sup> Pro-LGBTQ civil society organizations lobbied heavily for the resolution, which was supported by 628 non-governmental organizations from 151 countries, 70 percent of them from the Global South.<sup>25</sup>

On behalf of most members of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, Pakistan fought “tooth and nail” against the resolution, says Peter Yeo at the UN Foundation.<sup>26</sup> Saying the resolution would override local values and sovereignty, Pakistan introduced a number of amendments that were intended to weaken it.<sup>27</sup> Amendments to strip out references to sexual orientation and gender identity failed, but among the amendments that passed were those that encouraged respect for local values and “religious sensitivities” and condemned “coercive measures” taken to push countries to change their laws and policies.<sup>28</sup>

On June 30, 2016, the amended resolution was approved 23-18 with six countries abstaining; it affirmed that all people are “entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” decried violence and discrimination committed against people on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, and appointed, for a period of three years, an “Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.”<sup>29</sup>

Human rights groups praised its passage as a “historic victory for the human rights of all persons who are at risk of discrimination and violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.”<sup>30</sup> But C-Fam’s Austin Ruse described the independent expert position

as an “LGBT Enforcer” who “will travel the world making sure that traditional people may no longer practice their sincerely held religious belief,” adding that it was created “via threats and intimidation by UN, EU, and US bureaucrats.”<sup>31</sup>

Ruse’s organization praised countries that spoke against the independent expert, including Pakistan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>32</sup> C-Fam quoted Nigeria’s representative complaining that the United Nations agenda had been “hi-



Participants at the 16th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland. Photo: UN/Jean-Marc Ferré via Flickr. License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>

jailed to promote attitudes offensive to other states” and promising that such attempts will meet with a “stone wall.”<sup>33</sup>

Indonesia, where some political and religious leaders have been waging a campaign of homophobia this year, was among the countries that said they will not cooperate with the expert’s investigations.<sup>34</sup> Given the leadership role previously played by South Africa, its abstention was especially disappointing to LGBTQ advocates.<sup>35</sup> South Africa’s

ambassador criticized the sponsors' "arrogant and confrontational approach" and suggested that his country's collaborative path out of apartheid should be a model for the Council's deliberations.<sup>36</sup> The comparison drew a rebuke from South African LGBTQ advocate Graeme Reid, who heads the LGBTQ program at Human Rights Watch. "The ambassador's statement is a betrayal of the essence of South Africa's constitution," he said. "To invoke the struggle

that "the entire international framework of human rights" was endangered by the attempt to expand the notion of human rights for individuals to "the family" or to give traditional beliefs equal weight as human rights in setting policy.<sup>41</sup>

The next year, the Human Rights Council approved "protection of the family" language in a resolution about the role of the family in alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable development. Sharon Slater, president of the conservative Family Watch International, called the 2015 resolution "by far the strongest and most comprehensive pro-family UN document ever" and said "pro-family UN delegations worked hard to achieve this in the face of great opposition."<sup>42</sup> Slater declared:

"This is a tremendous victory for the family and represents the first major fruits of the work of a new, growing and vigorous coalition of governments at the UN, which are deeply concerned about the worldwide disintegration of the family. It is essential that all of us around the world, especially those of us living in the developed countries that push anti-family policies, show our support for the courageous and vital work of these pro-family countries."<sup>43</sup>

The 2016 family protection language was part of a resolution on the rights of people with disabilities. It reaffirms

"that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and is entitled to protection by society and the State"—language contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Efforts by pro-equality nations to insert language recognizing "various forms of the family" were rejected.<sup>44</sup>

Many countries that would have preferred more inclusive family language nonetheless felt that politically they could not vote against "protecting families." Kara, who previously worked for Arc International, a pro-LGBTQ organization, and now consults on human

rights issues, says conservative civil society groups have helped mobilize the opposition, gathering diplomats together for meetings and doing trainings around language on the protection of the family.<sup>45</sup> Jessica Stern, executive director of the pro-LGBTQ group OutRight Action International (formerly known as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission) says the inability to get inclusive language in the family "protection" resolution suggests that progressive advocates are losing ground in the discourse around "family."<sup>46</sup>

#### THAT VIGOROUS 'PRO-FAMILY' COALITION

In something analogous to the plethora of new right-wing coalitions created in the U.S. after the election of Barack Obama,<sup>47</sup> the past decade has seen a flowering of collaboration between anti-LGBTQ organizations around the world in response to the push for LGBTQ human rights at the UN and at the national level. Newer groups join an extensive network of existing organizations and alliances, often with overlapping leadership structures, that have worked together for years to resist progress on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including access to abortion.

While it would be wrong to view this global culture war as simply an American export, it is nonetheless true that American Religious Right groups and leaders play a significant role in organizing these networks and using them to share information, resources, and strategies. For example, C-Fam's Austin Ruse, whose group has special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council,<sup>48</sup> has his fingers in many pots: he organized the new Civil Society for the Family coalition,<sup>49</sup> helped organize an event with anti-LGBTQ countries at the UN,<sup>50</sup> and helped launch the Political Network for Values,<sup>51</sup> an effort to bring activists together with legislators who have the means to influence national policy directly. His group also runs a fellowship program for graduate students designed to train a new generation of "pro-family" activists. Similarly, Brian Brown not only serves as presi-



against apartheid as justification for not supporting a resolution on violence and discrimination is both inaccurate and cynical."<sup>37</sup>

The day after passage of the independent expert resolution, the Human Rights Council approved by a larger margin a resolution calling for the protection of the family,<sup>38</sup> rejecting amendments that would have recognized that various forms of the family exist.<sup>39</sup> This resolution built on a previous family "protection" resolution passed in 2014.<sup>40</sup> Writer Jay Michaelson warned, after the passage of the 2014 resolution,

dent of both the National Organization for Marriage and the World Congress of Families,<sup>52</sup> he also serves on the boards of CitizenGo,<sup>53</sup> a conservative platform for mobilizing online activism, and the Political Network for Values.<sup>54</sup>

The U.S.-based World Congress of Families has for two decades convened international summit meetings of “pro-family” groups—read anti-abortion,

tarian and it is becoming totalitarian,” she said, warning that this new “crazy, delusional” theory is entering international law through the door of human rights and antidiscrimination law.<sup>58</sup>

The “Tbilisi Declaration” adopted in the gathering’s closing session asserted that “Governments and transnational entities should end efforts that redefine marriage, returning to the conventional

West. This characterization has been embraced by American Religious Right leaders; WCF’s Larry Jacobs has said Russians “might be the Christian saviors of the world.”<sup>61</sup>

After the U.S. imposed sanctions in the wake of Russia’s seizure of Crimea, the World Congress of Families withdrew formal sponsorship for its 2014 summit in Moscow, but the event went forward essentially as planned, in cooperation with the Orthodox church, and with the participation of WCF leaders.<sup>62</sup>

Russia plays a leading role in the resistance to LGBTQ recognition in the Human Rights Council and other UN bodies, both by itself and as part of what one LGBTQ activist calls an “unholy trinity” of Russia, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and the Holy See. As a result, Religious Right leaders seem willing to overlook Putin’s increasing hostility to political dissent, freedom of the press, and religious freedom for non-Orthodox churches.<sup>63</sup>

Russia is also a founding member of the Group of Friends of the Family, a network of 25 countries



Six new stamps to promote the UN Free & Equal campaign for LGBTQ equality were unveiled at UN headquarters in February. Photo: United Nations. License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>.

anti-LGBTQ, and in some cases anti-sex-education and anti-contraception—for movement-strengthening cross-fertilization.<sup>55</sup> In recent years, resistance to the advance of LGBTQ equality has become a top priority. At the 2016 WCF summit in Tbilisi, Georgia, German sociologist Gabriele Kuby attacked “the cultural revolutionists of our time” whose goals, she said, are now the agenda of the UN and the EU.<sup>56</sup> According to Kuby, what had been a necessary struggle for women’s rights was “seized by radical mostly lesbian feminists and turned into a war against men, against marriage, against motherhood, and against the unborn child.”<sup>57</sup> Kuby echoed the Catholic Church’s rhetorical war on transgender identity. “Because gender-theory is grounded in lies it must become totali-

and natural understanding of one man in a voluntary union with one woman for life” and “Governments and transnational entities should cease all propaganda in favor of ‘gender theory’ and ‘sexual orientation’ which has no basis in biological reality.”<sup>59</sup>

As Christopher Stroop noted in the Winter 2016 issue of *The Public Eye*, Russian conservatives played a key role in the founding of the World Congress of Families, and the WCF maintains close ties with Russian Orthodox officials and financiers.<sup>60</sup> Vladimir Putin has made strategic partnership with the Russian Orthodox Church a centerpiece of his “hard right turn” since 2012 and has used it to position Russia as the champion of Christian civilization and religious values against a secular and hedonistic

that was created in 2015 to push the United Nations to adhere to a traditional understanding of “the family” and to respect “national laws, traditions and religious and cultural background of the States Members of the United Nations related to the family and its role in society.”<sup>64</sup> GoFF strenuously objected to the February 2016 issuance of LGBTQ-themed UN postage stamps, a project of the Free & Equal campaign. The group’s letter declared that the stamps promoted an agenda and priorities that “are vehemently and as a matter of strongly held principle opposed” by a majority of UN member states.<sup>65</sup>

At a Group of Friends of the Family “high-level event” at the UN in May 2016, the Russian representative bragged about Putin’s promotion of

“traditional family values” and noted that the Commonwealth of Independent States, a confederation of former Soviet republics, has named 2017 the Year of the Family. He urged supporters of “traditional” families to be more vocal in opposing UN agencies that stray from their mandates and to be more active at the Human Rights Council.<sup>66</sup>

At the May event, the group kicked off a campaign promoting the importance of “pro-family” policies to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Family Research Council’s Peter Sprigg, a long-time anti-LGBTQ activist, decried attempts to create a new definition of marriage that he said would distance marriage from its roots in the “order of nature itself.” He declared that “it is not the place of government to redefine or interfere with the natural family.”<sup>67</sup> Sprigg spoke at the 2015 World Congress of Families summit and at an anti-LGBTQ pre-WCF event at which he challenged the “gay identity paradigm” and said that compromise with the LGBTQ movement is “unwise” and “unsustainable.”<sup>68</sup>

Among the other non-governmental speakers at the Group of Friends of the Family event were Americans Jim Gallow, who made a national name for himself organizing church support for California’s anti-equality Prop 8; Gregory Mertz with CitizenGo and HazteOir; Helen Alvaré, a law professor and activist who served as a spokesperson for a 2014 Vatican conference on the complementarity of men and women; and pro-family activists Susan Yoshihara with C-Fam and Shenan Boquet with Human Life International. Also speaking were Imam Shamsi Ali of the Jamaica Muslim Center in Queens and Catholic Bishop John O’Hara of the Archdiocese of New York, who assured the group that they have the “enthusiastic” support of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to plenty of speeches, the GoFF event included some political theater as well: half-a-dozen children took turns reading “A Declaration on the Rights of Children and Their Families: A Call from the Children of the World,” a document promoted by the UN Family Rights Caucus.<sup>70</sup> The Caucus, which

claims members in more than 160 countries, was founded in 2008 “in response to the growing attacks on the family at the UN.”<sup>71</sup> Its first event at the UN was a 2008 panel “promoting a family-based approach rather than a sexual rights-based approach to HIV/AIDS prevention.”<sup>72</sup> It complains that pro-equality advocacy at the UN is “contributing to the family’s widespread disintegration.”<sup>73</sup> Its Declaration asserts that every child has a right to a married mother and father and the “right to innocence and childhood” and it calls on countries and the UN system to “fully respect” the right of parents to guide the moral, religious, and sex education of their children.<sup>74</sup>

As I pointed out in *Right Wing Watch*, there is significant overlap between members of the Group of Friends of the Family and the countries identified by the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) as the worst in the world for religious freedom, including Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Malaysia, Egypt, and Iraq.<sup>75</sup> C-Fam’s Austin Ruse praised Saudi Arabia and Sudan by name for having “saved” UN documents from unwanted language on the family; the USCIRF calls Saudi Arabia “uniquely repressive” and says Sudan’s government “represses and marginalizes the country’s minority Christian community.” Also among the “Friends of the Family” are countries where political and religious leaders have taken actions that threaten the lives and freedom of LGBTQ people, including Nigeria, Uganda, Indonesia, and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>76</sup>

The Group of Friends of the Family gathering at the UN was also a coming out party for a new network of nongovernmental organizations called “Civil Society for the Family.” The UN has already had a Family Rights Caucus, but apparently its focus was not specific enough for anti-LGBTQ activists; when C-Fam announced the formation of Civil Society for the Family in April, it called the new network “the first-pro-family coalition to explicitly push back against UN entities attempting to redefine the family to include same-sex relations.”<sup>77</sup>

The organizing committee for Civil Society for the Family has a strong

American presence. Its members include C-Fam, the National Organization for Marriage, Institute for Family Policy, Human Life International (which gave birth to C-Fam), Family Research Council, Transatlantic Christian Council, Novae Terrae Foundation, HazteOir, CitizenGo, Derecho a Vivir, the European Center for Law and Justice, and the Institute for Legal Culture.<sup>78</sup>

Civil Society for the Family says that UN agencies and staff “may not expand their mandate unilaterally” or read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in a way that includes “relations between individuals of the same sex and other social and legal arrangements that are not equivalent or analogous to the family.”<sup>79</sup> In its platform, which it calls “The Family Articles,” CSF declares that same-sex relationships “are not entitled to the protections singularly reserved for the family in international law and policy.”<sup>80</sup> Many of the American civil society organizations that participate in the World Congress of Families and these other global ventures share funding sources as well as leadership. The Center Against Religious Extremism has documented that the National Christian Foundation, “the leading domestic U.S. funding source for organizations and institutions involved in anti-LGBT rights activism,”<sup>81</sup> plays a key role in funding “the global evangelical war on LGBT rights.”<sup>82</sup> Nearly half of the speakers at the first six WCF summits represented groups funded by the National Christian Foundation, which is structured to allow funders to maintain anonymity while directing funds through the foundation to specific groups.<sup>83</sup>

For example, between 2001 and 2012, the National Christian Foundation gave more than \$36 million to the Alliance Defending Freedom, the U.S. based legal group that is expanding its reach around the globe.<sup>84</sup> ADF’s logo could be seen prominently displayed behind some speakers at the Tbilisi World Congress of Families.<sup>85</sup> In 2013 ADF co-sponsored a seminar on the UN’s Millennium Development Goals, which featured sociologist Mark Regnerus, author of an infamous—and widely condemned—study that suggested same-sex parenting is harmful to children;<sup>86</sup>

the following year ADF sent an alert charging that abortion rights advocates were using LGBTQ rights as a bargaining chip—in other words, trying to get governments to capitulate on “reproductive rights” language in return for keeping LGBTQ issues out of the SDGs.<sup>87</sup> ADF, C-Fam and others co-sponsored a GoFF “side event” in February 2016 at which the Russian ambassador “expressed great disappointment that the family was not included in Agenda 2030.”<sup>88</sup>

### THE BATTLEGROUND AHEAD

In the fall, C-Fam was predicting that the 54-state African Group might try to challenge in the General Assembly the Human Rights Council’s appointment of Thai diplomat Vitit Muntarbhorn to the newly created independent expert position. According to C-Fam, the OIC said none of its members would interact with the expert, a position a Russian delegate reportedly declared “does not exist as far as we are concerned.”<sup>89</sup>

Pro-equality advocates are organizing as well. In July, at the Global LGBTI Human Rights Conference in Montevideo, Uruguay, the U.S. welcomed and joined a new Equal Rights Coalition,<sup>90</sup> a group of 30 nations founded by Uruguay and the Netherlands to “share, as appropriate, information between States on how best to advance the human rights of LGBTI persons, and to consider measures needed to protect and advance these rights, working in close engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including regional and multilateral organisations, civil society organisations, and the private sector.”<sup>91</sup> The new collaboration may also be a forum for pro-equality nations to consider whether their public strategies have sometimes been harmful to activists in countries whose goal is basic protection of human rights, and where issues like marriage equality are not on the agenda.

Bruce Knott, a former U.S. Foreign Service officer who heads the Unitarian Universalist’s UN office and co-chairs the NGO Committee on Human Rights, says the leadership role that Latin American countries have played in recent years is vital. Given the accusations of “neocolonialism” and charges that the U.S. and Western Europe are forcing LG-

BTO equality on the rest of the world, he says, it’s crucial to have leadership from the Global South.<sup>92</sup>

With the term of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon coming to a close at the end of the year it’s an open question whether his replacement, former prime minister of Portugal and former UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres,<sup>93</sup> will devote personal energy and institutional resources to advancing LGBTQ human rights. The same question holds true for the next U.S. president; Barack Obama’s administration has made LGBTQ human rights a centerpiece of its foreign policy, and advocates say U.S. leadership has played a crucial role in recent years’ successes. At the 2015 World Congress of Families gathering in Salt Lake City, some African delegates urged Americans to elect a president who would abandon the Obama administration’s efforts.<sup>94</sup> “If the U.S. political commitment to advancing LGBTQ human rights wanes,” says OutRight’s Jessica Stern, “it will have repercussions that will reverberate around the world.”<sup>95</sup>

Free & Equal’s Charles Radcliffe says he believes the institutional commitment to LGBTQ human rights at the UN is more than skin-deep. More than 100 countries have implemented legal changes in response to UN human rights recommendations regarding LGBTQ people, he said, noting that last year a dozen UN agencies “endorsed an unprecedented statement committing themselves to work with countries to address discrimination and violence against LGBTQ and intersex people and to protect, help and listen to LGBTI civil society.”<sup>96</sup>

“We’re now way past the point of no return,” said Radcliffe. But his opponents are committed to turning back the tide.<sup>97</sup>

After this summer’s vote in the Human Rights Council on the independent expert resolution, Arvind Narrain at Arc International, a pro-LGBTQ organization, said that the concerted efforts to amend and weaken the independent expert resolution reflect that “the world we live in is one where homophobia and transphobia is a deeply significant system of power” and should be taken as

“a warning of the nature of the struggle ahead.”<sup>98</sup> Indeed, across the world, anti-LGBTQ governments are not only restricting the rights of LGBTQ people, but are also clamping down on civil society organizations that advocate for equality.

In his remarkably bitter opening remarks to the World Congress of Families event in Georgia this year, host Levan Vasadze, a businessman and conservative activist, attacked the West for funding nongovernmental organizations that he said attack the church and family. “No Christian family,” he said, had been “left unhumiliated” by a system that is “poisoning” the minds of the younger generation and breeding a “spirit of anti-traditional cynicism” through the “totalitarian dictatorship of liberals” in media and educational organizations.<sup>99</sup>

At the same World Congress of Families meeting, Brian Brown said there is rising discontent with tolerance for abortion and “cultural imperialism” on LGBTQ and “family” issues. “Our task,” he said, “is to take that discontent and direct it toward the fashioning of a thriving, growing, and vibrant global movement.” Brown complained that the pro-family movement is outspent and called for supporters from around the world who “understand what is at stake and have the courage and charity to sacrifice their wealth to change history.”<sup>100</sup> German sociologist Gabriele Kuby, author of *The Global Sexual Revolution: The Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom*, had similar words for the gathering: “Let us rise. Let us resist.”<sup>101</sup> 

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## Whole Woman's Health's Unexpected Win for Science



Rally in front of the Supreme Court during the *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* hearing on March 2nd, 2016. Photo: Victoria Pickering via Flickr. License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>.

In June 2016, the Supreme Court struck down a Texas anti-abortion TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) law that threatened to shutter all but a handful of the state's clinics by requiring them to meet costly ambulatory surgical center standards and for their doctors to obtain admitting privileges at local hospitals.

The law, known as Texas Senate Bill 5, was an example of how the anti-abortion movement has used false scientific claims to incrementally cut off abortion rights. Americans United for Life (AUL), a "bill mill" that provides anti-abortion model legislation for conservative lawmakers,<sup>1</sup> recommends these restrictions under the guise of its "Women's Protection Project," which deploys false claims about women's health to enact medically unnecessary regulatory obstacles that force many clinics to close.<sup>2</sup> (Meeting detailed ambulatory surgical standards, for instance, would require prohibitively expensive renovations for most reproductive health clinics without improving quality of care. And requiring hospital admitting privileges presents a particularly absurd catch-22, since some hospitals only grant privileges to doctors regularly needing to hospitalize patients—a rarity for abortion providers.<sup>3</sup>) This has been an effective tactic; by the time of the *Whole Woman's Health* ruling, at least 18 clinics in Texas had closed due to the

law's requirements.<sup>4</sup>

Prior SCOTUS decisions upholding abortion restrictions deterred advocates from attempting legal challenges to much of the legislation chipping away at reproductive rights. But this time, the Supreme Court delivered a significant victory. Writing the majority opinion in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, Justice Stephen Breyer rejected the lower court's argument "that legislatures, and not courts, must resolve questions of medical uncertainty," such as whether Texas' restrictions were medically warranted. Ironically, Breyer's opinion built on case law established by a prior ruling that upheld restrictions on abortion access, but which also established that the "Court retains an independent constitutional duty to review factual findings where constitutional rights are at stake."<sup>5</sup>

Beyond protecting the rights of Texas women, with this ruling Breyer established a new standard: no longer would the courts turn a blind eye while conservative state legislators use junk science and specious claims about women's health to circumvent the prohibition enshrined in *Roe v. Wade* on creating an "undue burden" to abortion access.

It's been a longstanding right-wing tactic to deploy false evidence to support TRAP laws such as the one at stake in *Whole*

*Woman's Health*, and to misleadingly claim that there is scientific uncertainty around an issue or procedure by putting forward its own dubious research. Writing for *The Public Eye* a decade ago, Pam Chamberlain concluded that advocates of "Biased, Agenda-Driven" science should be seen as "efficient cogs in the machinery that drives the current movement to limit women's reproductive health and freedom."<sup>6</sup> Devoted to undermining medical evidence as "fraudulent," anti-abortion scientists substitute their own discredited "facts": for instance, the persistent claim that abortion causes breast cancer, which disregards the findings of multiple large-scale peer-reviewed studies and conclusions from the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute.<sup>7</sup>

This right-wing research almost never makes it into peer-reviewed journals that screen for flaws in methodology or analysis that yield biased results. For instance, the American Cancer Society details the methods of rigorous studies on abortion and breast cancer, explaining how factors such as recall bias, in which "women with breast cancer are more likely to accurately report their reproductive histories, including a history of having an abortion," can produce the appearance of a link where none exists.<sup>8</sup> In a rare case in which a study claiming a link between abortion and mental illness successfully passed itself off as legitimate, journal editors later discovered significant errors that led them to disavow the finding as unsupported by the data.<sup>9</sup> So when scientists talk about reaching "scientific consensus," they mean findings supported by overwhelming agreement from peer-reviewed sources and experts—not from a proliferation of illegitimate, ideologically-driven studies.

But that's not the way "science" is being used in making anti-abortion law. The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) coined the incendiary nonmedical term "partial-birth" abortion to help pass a federal ban on a late-term proce-

dure.<sup>10</sup> The resulting 2003 Act asserted, "A moral, medical, and ethical consensus exists that the practice of performing a partial-birth abortion ... is a gruesome and inhumane procedure that is never medically necessary and should be prohibited."<sup>11</sup> Reproductive rights advocates challenged the ban in *Gonzales v. Carhart* for denying access to a standard late-term abortion practice, intact dilation and extraction (intact D&E, also known as D&X) without an exception to protect women's health.

In explaining the *Carhart* decision, which upheld the ban, swing vote Justice Anthony Kennedy assumed (admitting he lacked "reliable data") that some women suffer regret and depres-

sion after abortion and would "struggle with grief more anguished and sorrow more profound" upon learning details of the procedure. This concern suggests the influence of a popular piece of anti-abortion science, "Post-Abortion Stress Syndrome," a condition not recognized by the American Psychological Association or American Psychiatric Association in which women are supposedly traumatized by regret.<sup>12</sup> Kennedy further wrote, "There is documented medical disagreement [on] whether the Act's prohibition would ever impose significant health risks on women...The Court has given state and federal legislatures wide discretion to pass legislation in areas where there is medical and scientific uncertainty."<sup>13</sup>

NRLC argued in a January 2015 memo that *Carhart* would support their new legislative focus, the "Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment Abortion Act," which again used nonmedical terminology to stir emotion while obfuscating the actual practice being restricted—dilation and evacuation, the non-intact D&E procedure that *Carhart* pointed to as a sufficient alternative.<sup>15</sup> The NRLC aims to appeal to Justice Kennedy's apparent personal discomfort with abortion with

this as well as another legislative focus: 20-week abortion bans that are based on an alleged fetal capacity for pain, despite medical evidence to the contrary.<sup>16</sup>

The recent decision in *Whole Woman's Health*, though, breathes meaning back into science and cracks the foundation of the right-wing strategy of using manipulative, junk research. The ruling immediately thwarted efforts to maintain similar TRAP laws in Alabama, Mississippi, and Wisconsin.<sup>17</sup> In August, the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), whose lawyer Stephanie Toti argued the *Whole Woman's Health* case, threatened legal action if Texas enacts legislation based on a new AUL model bill that would require abortion providers to bury or cremate aborted fetuses. This measure is intended to raise clinic costs by claiming ludicrous public health risks (like HIV contamination of the water supply) and using manipulative rhetoric about fetal dignity.<sup>18</sup> A CRR press release stated: "the regulations offer no public health or safety benefit and therefore fly directly in the face of

**The ruling established a new standard: no longer would the courts turn a blind eye while conservatives use junk science to create "undue burdens" to abortion access.**

However, as a press release from the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists pointed out at the time, this was not in fact an area of medical uncertainty. Rather, the release explained, "This decision discounts and disregards the medical consensus that intact D&E is safest and offers signifi-

the Supreme Court's decision in *Whole Woman's Health v Hellerstedt*.<sup>19</sup>

The *Whole Woman's Health* decision and the reasoning given for it provided an energizing victory not just for reproductive rights and justice supporters, but more broadly for policy grounded in rigorous, evidence-based science. The Right relies on biased science in other areas as well, such as abstinence-only education or denying transgender rights. *Whole Woman's Health* has already motivated lower courts to strike down voting restrictions that are based on "mostly phantom election fraud."<sup>20</sup>

The impact of the assault on science goes beyond the courts and legislative arena to influence conservative movement mobilization as well. From the 72 percent of Republicans who deny human causes of climate change to the 40-odd percent of Americans who believe in creationism over evolution, the confident dismissal of reputable scientific sources is a core part of the U.S. right-wing identity today.<sup>21</sup> In studying the persistence of climate change doubt in the face of 97 percent scientific consensus,<sup>22</sup> Yale University professor Dan Kahan found that "people tend to use scientific knowledge to reinforce beliefs that have already been shaped by their worldview."<sup>23</sup>

Right-wing organizations can take advantage of this disposition by broadcasting misinformation suited to their agenda. For example, at the July 2016 NRLC convention, one workshop promised to expose the fraud behind "a cold, callous, commercial abortion and aborted baby parts trafficking chain"—an attack on Planned Parenthood, which was falsely portrayed as selling fetal tissue in manipulated footage released in 2015 by the Center for Medical Progress, an anti-abortion group presenting itself as a legitimate medical watchdog organization.<sup>24</sup> (The workshop was led by Ryan Bomberger, co-founder of The Radiance Foundation, infamous for putting up billboards claiming that abortion is a

form of "black genocide."<sup>25</sup>)

These approaches may be based on fabrications, but they serve their function well: energizing believers and providing an enemy—the "fraudulent" scientific establishment—to rally against. And sometimes, a justification to go further. As former PRA analyst Chip



Planned Parenthood protest in Washington, D.C. Photo: American Life League via Flickr. License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/>.

Berlet has written, "coded" rhetoric in which leaders rely on demonization and conspiracy theories often helps incite "scripted violence," where leaders can engender a violent response from followers without technically calling for an attack.<sup>26</sup> When violence occurs, the broader movement can dismiss the perpetrator as mentally disturbed or a lone wolf. (Some commenters have referred to this psychological phenomenon as "stochastic terrorism."<sup>27</sup>)

Although multiple Republican-led investigations of Planned Parenthood following the "fetal tissue" videos failed to yield evidence of wrongdoing (and one actually indicted the video producers instead), blockades, threats, and

violence targeting abortion providers increased.<sup>28</sup> In November 2015, three people were fatally shot at a Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood.<sup>29</sup> The confessed shooter stated his belief that Planned Parenthood sold "baby parts" as motivating the attack.<sup>30</sup>

These attacks demonstrate the uniquely dangerous confluence of false science and coded rhetoric in the movement against abortion rights. Illegitimate science has provided an effective tool to conservatives in blocking vital policy initiatives—even life-saving policies at a global scale, as with climate change. In addition to endangering women's health by abridging reproductive rights, the tenor of anti-abortion science creates a further hazard of imminent violence against reproductive health providers and bystanders.

Despite *Whole Woman's Health's* stand for scientific integrity, the Right won't readily abandon a strategy that's long helped it mobilize supporters and pass legislation. Anti-abortion advocates hold out hope that many restrictions will continue to pass constitutional muster and tout the importance of the next Supreme Court nominee. Meanwhile, AUL and NRLC continue to offer a large repertoire of model bills based on junk science,<sup>31</sup> from the 20-week

"fetal pain" bans, to requiring doctors to read scripts fabricating risks from abortions, to banning telemedicine services for rural areas only for abortion and not other medical care.<sup>32</sup> Until they're brought under court scrutiny, laws undermining reproductive rights based on misinformation and fraudulent science will stand across the country. ☹

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**Commentary, continued from page 3**

their futures, Goldwater's campaign was steeped in the fear of enemies. The Civil Rights movement constituted a criminal assault on individual liberty and states' rights that would produce a federal police state in which people would lose the freedom to live as they choose (that is, in segregation). Protest was framed as a breakdown of moral order and an indicator of criminal unrest. Such "welfare state" initiatives as Medicare and Social Security could only foster pathological and parasitical dependencies—primarily in Black communities, we understood. But vicariously, through Goldwater, we would beat back those enemies. We would win.

Liberals cheered Goldwater's epic defeat. But their glee was misplaced. Even in losing, Goldwater changed mainstream political possibilities. He'd been willing to wage tactical nuclear warfare. His campaign helped set the stage for what would become the Republican "Southern Strategy," which refined racist dog whistling to an art and ultimately delivered the historically Democratic South to the GOP. Fear, resentment, and the presumption of superiority were the glues that bonded people, including me, to his campaign. Paradoxically, to supporters, those sentiments had felt comforting, even hopeful. I was stunned by the magnitude of the loss. That liberal glee, stamping me once again as a loser, cut to the quick.

My arc towards progressivism began in 1965, during my last two years of high school, thanks to one courageous classmate and three remarkable teachers who challenged me to reconsider my views. They did it individually, in a multitude of ways, including sharing their own beliefs and telling me more about themselves. While often putting me uncomfortably on the spot, they were never demonizing, ridiculing, or demeaning. No one tried to tell me what I should believe. They listened as much as they talked.

When I could so easily have been a symbolic representation of everything they held in contempt, my classmate and these teachers looked more deeply and, with no guarantees, reached for the most human and the best in me. And at

some point, I started to reach back.

I began to see what was obvious, but what I'd never paid attention to before. Poverty was widespread in my hometown, and it was intensely raced, as was every aspect of civic, social and economic life. The Red Scare was a way to avoid facing injustice at home while barricading yourself against danger and creating a military on steroids. The Goldwater folks taught me to build community by defining myself against enemies, but when you do that, you're always anxious about anyone who isn't just like you.

It's excruciating to feel your own edi-

**People didn't write me off. I must do the same.**

fice of defense begin to crumble, to see your own beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors in a clearer, harsher, light. But those three teachers and that classmate made it possible for me to come through it without feeling so cornered that I had no choice but to hit back out of anger and shame.

This is why I think it's so important to try, as progressives, to compete for the part of Trump's audience that may be reachable. People didn't write me off. I must do the same.

**BEYOND GOLDWATER, WALLACE, AND TRUMP**

In 1968, in the wake of the King and Kennedy assassinations, so-called "race riots" broke out in more than 100 U.S. cities. Anti-war protesters at the Democratic National Convention were met with violent responses from Chicago police. And George Wallace ran for president as an independent. Although he ultimately lost, I was shocked by how much support he elicited in my hometown, then a reliably Democratic stronghold.

From the outside, Wallace's right-wing populist crusade looked like nothing more than crude demagoguery. But people I knew who supported Wallace felt that he alone understood their struggles and fears. The local steel mill, a huge employer, was already feeling the discomfiting stirrings of what, in a little more than a decade, would become a

full-fledged steel market crash. Simultaneously, Anglo supremacist norms were being challenged. The world they knew was coming apart, and they desperately wanted someone to put it back together. In Wallace's vision, their lives became meaningful, their futures more hopeful. Unlike Goldwater, Wallace played directly to people whose lives were of no concern to those who dominated the political discourse.

I see so much of Wallace in Trump. Like the former governor, Trump has an instinct for tapping racial and economic anxieties in emotionally-charged and, to many, compelling ways. But ghost stories, whether told by the Right or the Left, only amplify anxiety. They don't produce more just societies.

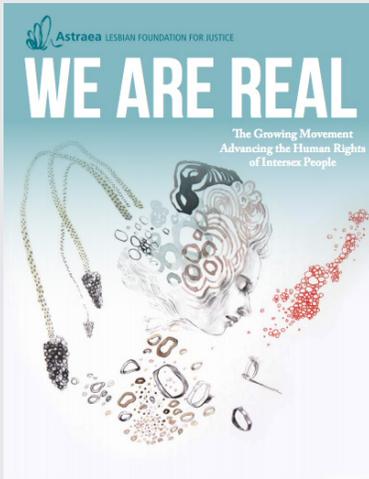
Somebody's got to do the work of engaging ordinary White folks who support Trump, as well as other right-wing agendas. If we don't, right-wing populism will reappear again and again, in forms that have evolved to adapt to changing conditions.

It's not sexy work. It requires a kind of radical compassion that resists the easy politics of contempt and dehumanization. It would be so much easier to simply distance ourselves from people we've come to regard as bigoted, benighted, and lost—the "basket of deplorables," if you will. But "easier" never created political transformation. And believe me, as someone whose almost 50 years of progressive activism speaks to the power of engagement with real human beings rather than demonized ghosts, I know that it can be done. ☐

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## We Are Real: The Growing Movement Advancing Human Rights of Intersex People

Astrea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, August 2016



[Definition:] *Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe people who are born with genetic, hormonal, genital or other sex characteristics that do not align with stereotypical definitions of male or female bodies.*

Due to the pioneering efforts of activists and organizations, there has been a recent rise in intersex visibility. In 2015, the Argentinian National Institute Against Discrimination recommended revised standards of care for intersex people; seven United Nations bodies publicly condemned non-consensual surgeries on intersex individuals; and Malta became the first country to ban medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex infants and children. But despite these advances, society at large still denies the world's naturally

occurring diversity and many intersex people are not afforded recognition of their identity, even within LGBTQ spaces.

In August the Astrea Lesbian Foundation for Justice released a new report, "We Are Real: The Growing Movement Advancing Human Rights of Intersex People," which documents issues intersex communities have faced today and in the past. The majority of intersex people will face discrimination during their lifetime, including non-consensual, medically unnecessary surgeries, like the surgical removal of reproductive tissues, genital surgeries, and hormone treatments. These procedures stem from the pathologization of intersex bodies and laws that give doctors more choice in gender assignment than the individuals themselves—and as such the procedures often infringe on protections enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Further, intersex individuals have no legal recourse for violations of their human rights as most anti-sex discrimination protection laws are on the grounds of gender and not sex characteristics.

Despite the importance of these concerns, intersex-led organizations are severely underfunded, operating at median budgets of approximately \$5,000. In the report, Astrea profiles intersex-led groups across the globe, from Iceland to China, who are working to provide culturally relevant resources to an international audience (an important consideration, given that most resources to date have been English-language only). There's a need for human rights organizations to partner more effectively with intersex organizations, Astrea found, concluding its report with words from the Third International Intersex Forum (also known as the Malta Declaration): that "intersex people must be supported to be the drivers of social, political and legislative changes that concern them."

-Purvaja Kavattur

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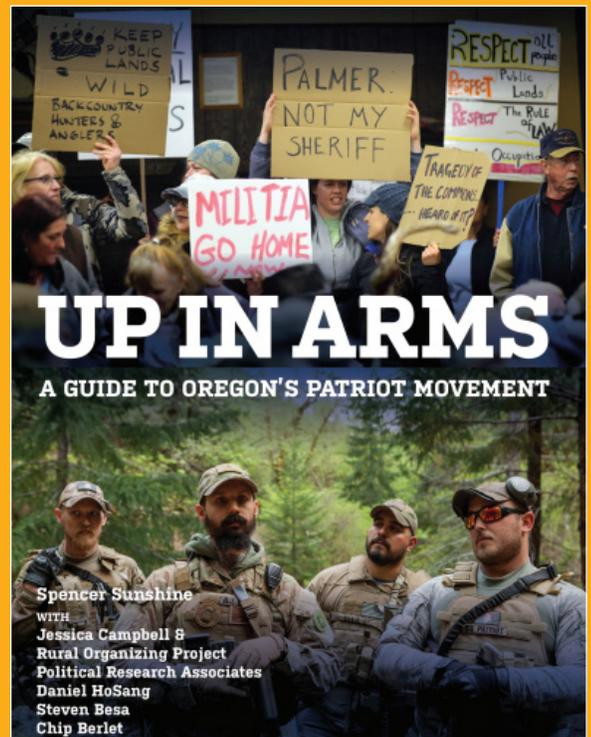
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## Up in Arms: A Guide to Oregon's Patriot Movement

In early 2016, the nation watched as a small band of right-wing activists seized control of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge outside Burns, Oregon. The armed occupation, which lasted 41 days, was the second highly visible campaign of the Patriot movement—a coalition of militias and other Far Right groups that reject the authority of the federal government—in just a few years.

In a groundbreaking new report, *Up in Arms: A Guide to Oregon's Patriot Movement*, PRA, in partnership with Rural Organizing Project, maps the current Patriot landscape, which is estimated to include dozens of groups and thousands of supporters across the state. The report, which includes a toolkit designed to support community activists and public officials under siege from Patriot groups, explains how the movement has taken advantage of the collapse of rural economies and funding cuts in Oregon, and offers alternatives for communities being targeted for recruitment. With case studies of effective community resistance from five Oregon counties, the report demonstrates how residents can successfully counter Patriot movement messaging and intimidation, and help build inclusive and egalitarian communities.



*Up in Arms: A Guide to Oregon's Patriot Movement* was co-published by Political Research Associates and Rural Organizing Project in October 2016.

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