October 16, 2024 / The minds behind MAGA

**[HALF SECOND OF SILENCE]**

**[BILLBOARD]**

SCORING IN – New Tension 01 Time’s Arrow

NOEL KING (host): In his first term, President Donald Trump was surrounded by a lot of Republican normies. Your Mike Pences and John Kellys and Jim Mattises... It didn’t go great for them. Many quit.

NOEL: In 2024, a few are back

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/josemdelpino?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1833910213096722479%7Ctwgr%5E657dc7e88f6b97e796fa22a87ffce198c61d72d7%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fnewrepublic.com%2Fpost%2F185899%2Fstephen-miller-blows-fuse-venezuela-propaganda-migrants)*> Stephen Miller: “I trust a ruthless dictator will empty his prisons and send their criminals to our country.*

But there’s also a whole NEW crew of influencers and they’ve got some deeply non-normie ideas —>

*<CLIP> Curtis Yarvin: “He had an Aryan wife, which I recommend to everyone. FADE.*

*<*[*CLIP>*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfNJvb0JpAk) *Christopher Caldwell: This expression People of Color sounds like it doesn’t mean anything. It sounds a little like the racial epithets people used to use in the 1960s ok…*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7UhkYODJNc)*> HARVEY MANSFIELD: “Men spit, and they cuss, and they tell dirty jokes and they read porn, and they drink beer. These are things that women don’t do.*

Noel: Up next on Today, Explained: the THINKERS who would inform Donald Trump’s second term.

**[THEME]**

NOEL: Andrew Prokop is a senior politics correspondent at Vox, who recently wrote about Stephen Miller for a Vox series called The present - and future - of the American Right. Andrew, tell us about Mr. Miller.

ANDREW PROKOP (senior politics correspondent, Vox): Stephen Miller is Donald Trump's most important advisor, who focuses most on the policy area of immigration. He was enormously powerful in the Trump White House last time around, and he is near universally expected to have a really important powerful role in a second Trump administration if Trump wins.

SCORING IN – (dorian) And The Moustache Was His Name-06

ANDREW: Stephen Miller grew up in Southern California.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.univision.com/univision-news/politics/exclusive-the-high-school-speech-by-stephen-miller-that-offended-students-and-got-him-thrown-off-stage)*> MILLER: Hi. I’m Stephen Miller. Some of you may or may not know who I am…*

He attended a diverse high school with many Latino students.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.univision.com/univision-news/politics/exclusive-the-high-school-speech-by-stephen-miller-that-offended-students-and-got-him-thrown-off-stage)*> MILLER: I will say and I will do things that no one else in their right mind would say or do.*

He very early on started challenging what he called political correctness at his high school.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.univision.com/univision-news/politics/exclusive-the-high-school-speech-by-stephen-miller-that-offended-students-and-got-him-thrown-off-stage)*> CLASSMATE: Like I do like that he’s really good about voicing his opinions but I don’t like the way he does it, for example…*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.univision.com/univision-news/politics/exclusive-the-high-school-speech-by-stephen-miller-that-offended-students-and-got-him-thrown-off-stage)*> MILLER: Am I the only one who is sick and tired of being told to pick up my trash when we have plenty of janitors who are paid to do it for us?*

*REVERB*

He started going on conservative talk radio while he was still in high school, complaining about how terrible his school was, complaining that There were lot of Latino students who weren't learning basic English skills

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52WoTVqeoJw)*> DEMOCRACY NOW:*

*Cynthia Santiago, former Miller classmate: He pointed out that there was a small number of Latino students in honor classes and it was therefore because they were lacking basic english skills. These comments were very degrading…*

ANDREW: Then going on to college and continuing to become not just a typical conservative activist, but a kind of hard right activist with a particular interest in racial or ethnic issues.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mLqb5H1o58)*> Katie Couric: Three former Duke Lacross players falsely accused of rape…*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8-qwj8RDXA)*> Miller: This was never about what happened to this particular woman according to her testimony, nor was it ever about these players. It was always for them about their political agenda. And their political agenda has been from day one has to make a big issue out of racism and gender and class warfare*

STINGER

SCORING OUT

NOEL: How does he get to Capitol Hill?

ANDREW: So basically he had impressed some powerful activists and important figures in the far -right anti -immigration activist world who helped get him early jobs right after graduation for first Representative Michelle Bachman of Minnesota. and then eventually for Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama. And at that point, Sessions was a very fringe figure. He was kind of a colorful crank who was known for ranting and raving about how terrible immigration and free trade were.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27YDCn57w2E)*> SESSIONS: Surely citizenship the capstone of what america gives ought not to be given to people who entered the country in violation of our very laws give me a break \*CHEERS\**

And Miller was the guy who sent out his emails. He formed allies with right -wing media figures like Steve Bannon of Breitbart and Tucker Carlson of then of Fox News and he worked closely to drive coverage on Breitbart to any sort of lurid crime that was committed by an illegal immigrant. And he was sending along stories from racist and white nationalist websites. He just seemed obsessed with the race and ethnicity of criminals.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8YSbyLghzE)*> MILLER: As a result of uncontrolled migration into this country you can look this up this is a statistic from equality now, half a million U.S. girls in this country are at risk of female genital mutilation  
PANEL: Oh my god. No …. LAUGHS*

After that, Donald Trump ran for president, and he brought on Stephen Miller to his campaign.

And then when Trump won, anti -immigration figures had extremely powerful roles in the Trump administration after that.

NOEL: Once Miller is there in the White House, what specifically does he focus on?

ANDREW: He was the top White House policy aide and he carved out this space of immigration policy for himself. And he spent the first few years of the Trump administration really learning how to operate the levers of power in the bureaucracy and in the executive branch.

SCORING IN – India Melody - Alternate Version (moving forward, upbeat, mysterious)-04

So at first, he was a little crude. know, Trump's first week in office, he issued his infamous travel ban

*<CLIP> CROWD: Let them in! Let them in!*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWw-fT0xEBo)*> REUTERS: U.S. President Donald Trump’s executive order barring refugees and blocking visitors from 7 predominantly muslim countries sparking despair overseas, outrage at home and seems likely to land the Trump administration in court*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkL4geujbNc)*> CNN: this comes as protestors gather outside of New York’s JFK airport right now after word spread that at least 2 iraqis were detained there despite holding valid us visas*

total mess. The courts blocked it, and it was generally viewed as a big disaster for the Trump administration. But Miller, you know, he wasn't giving up.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ns0JdlYKz14&t=152s)*> MILLER: This is the apex of presidential power delegated to the president by Congress and by the constitution to suspend the entry of aliens into the United States.*

He recalibrated. He crafted a new version of the travel ban. And this somewhat less blatantly discriminatory version did end up being upheld by the Court.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2RQYWhC-fs&t=76s)*> NBC: Thousands of migrant Children being separated from their parents*

*KEEP RUNNING under*

So Miller became kind of the face of the family separation policy

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2RQYWhC-fs&t=76s)*> NBC: … and now newly released audio, you can hear their desperation*

*\*kids crying\**

SCORING BACK IN

He's constantly looking for ways to get tougher and harsher at the border.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pU4RaPC3Rgg)*> CBS:*

*MILLER: The media and the whole world will soon see as we begin to take further actions that the powers of the president to protect our country are very substantial and will not be questioned.*

*STINGER*

ANDREW: He continued in that vein by issuing policies like the Remain in Mexico policy, which said that asylum seekers had to stay outside the U .S. while their claims were processed. And Title 42, which turned away arriving migrants for public health reasons once the pandemic began.

SCORING OUT

ANDREW: At the end of Trump's first term, he hadn't really succeeded in Trump's promises to deport a whole lot of people. Trump ended up deporting fewer people than Barack Obama did in either of his terms. And so Miller regrets that and has spent the interim years since Trump lost, like, dreaming up new ways to achieve what he wasn't able to last time around.

NOEL: And how do we know that?

ANDREW: So there was a very detailed New York Times article that came out toward the end of 2023 headlined

*<CLIP> VO AMANDA LEWELLYN: , Sweeping Raids, Giant Camps, and Mass Deportations: Inside Trump's 2025 Immigration Plans.*

And the source was Stephen Miller. He just went on in great detail about what he planned to do. He wanted to use red state governors to deputize their National Guard as immigration enforcement officers, he wanted to build massive camps, he said, probably in Texas, to just like put people there while far more people than the US can currently hold while their claims were being processed.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wSmTsF--64)*> MILLER: You would establish a large scale staging grounds for removal flight.So you grab illegal immigrants and then you move them to the staging grounds and that's what the planes are waiting for federal law enforcement…*

If Trump is elected for next term, he would be once again playing a top role in setting the official policy of the United States government to try and make his dreams of deportation and immigration restrictions happen.

NOEL: I wonder what the informed thinking is on whether he could. Donald Trump didn't deport as many people as Obama. That is notable. But Donald Trump, during his four years, he did make a lot of people's lives harder, whether you agree with what Donald Trump did or not. If Trump is elected and Stephen Miller has four more years, is this Miller harder, better, faster, stronger?

*<CLIP> KANYE: Harder, better, faster, stronger…*

Does it go further this time?

ANDREW: I think it will definitely go further. And the question is just how much further? And no one really knows but Stephen Miller had never held a powerful role of any kind, really. The first time he got essentially put in charge of United States immigration policy in 2017, but he is He is savvy and he has learned to be a very effective bureaucratic operator. Now he’s, he’s raring to go.

SCORING IN – Dressing On The Side (footwork, bouncy, high energy)

NOEL: That was Vox’s ANDREW Prokop. Alright, temperamentally, as you heard, Stephen Miller is more of an emotional guy

<[CLIP](https://x.com/josemdelpino?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1833910213096722479%7Ctwgr%5E657dc7e88f6b97e796fa22a87ffce198c61d72d7%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fnewrepublic.com%2Fpost%2F185899%2Fstephen-miller-blows-fuse-venezuela-propaganda-migrants)> Stephen Miller: “Children are dead! And you are wasting my time!”

Than an intellectual. But the 2024 Trump team DOES have idea men. They are all men. Coming up: Donald Trump’s Thinkers.

**[BREAK]**

**[BUMPER]**

NOEL: Donald Trump’s thinkers. Who are they? Vox’s Zack Beauchamp, author of The Reactionary Spirit, has been writing about them for Vox, as part of a series of stories called the present – and future – of the American right.

Zack, let’s start with Curtis Yarvin. We’ve talked about him on the show before. J-D Vance has cited him as an influence. He’s a genuinely interesting guy and in 2024, his ideas are closer to the presidency than ever before. Tell us about Yarvin.

**Zack Beauchamp (senior correspondent, Vox):** So Curtis Yarvin, he's an idiosyncratic guy. He was a Silicon Valley guy and started writing anonymously under the pen name or pseudonymous, I should say, under the pen name, Mencius Moldbug, which is in and of itself a very odd name to begin with, writing a series of obscure references. But he was he was sort of the leading voice in what was called the neo reactionary movement, which was an effort to theorize a vision of politics that argued that democracy was bad.

SCORING IN – #DoYourJobDoSomeResearch (minimal kick, polyrhythm, moving forward, figuring things out)-01

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDTtxMItva0)*> CURTIS YARVIN: When you look at all across human history, the absolute normal form of government is monarchy.*

So Yarvin’s ideal system of government has one person who's in charge of everything. He likes to call him a CEO slash monarch, and then a board of directors who doesn't really have policy power but has the ability to supervise the action of this one person.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDTtxMItva0)*> YARVIN: The literal words of the constitution say that the president is chief executive of the executive branch. That they have in other words the power of Elon Musk who’s the chief executive of Tesla*

And he’s spent a lot of time recently trying to explain how the U.S. government might be refashioned along those lines.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDTtxMItva0)*> YARVIN: For the most part you wouldn't even keep most of the existing civil service.*

So in a few writings and a podcast interview that he did with a former Trump administration official, actually, Yarvin outlines this theory of how Trump could mobilize a coup, essentially in which he concentrates executive power in his own hands…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://podcasts.apple.com/fr/podcast/the-stakes-the-american-monarchy/id1439372633?i=1000523635124)*> YARVIN: You should be executing executive power from day one in a totally emergency fashion. You don't want to take control of these agencies through appointments. You want to defund them. You want them to cease to exist. //*

*MICHAEL ANTON, FORMER TRUMP OFFICIAL: You're essentially advocating for someone to, you know, okay, age old move, right, which is gain power lawfully through and through an election through legal means and then exercise it unlawfully. And what do you think the actual chances of that happening are?*

*YARVIN: It wouldn't, uh, it wouldn't be unlawful. It would be a, you'd simply, you'd declare a state of emergency in your inaugural address.*

and dismantle the legal apparatus of the U.S. government and bring it something closer to Yarvin's ideal monarcho-capitalist vision for politics.

*SCORING OUT*

**NOEL:** That sounds ridiculous. Like sorry, Curtis Yarvin, Mencius–

**Zack:** It does sound ridiculous.

**NOEL:** Sounds absolutely ridiculous. And so the question is what is the part of Yarvin that deserves to be taken seriously?

**Zack:** This particular form of anti-democratic politics is influential among really important people in the conservative world, including the vice presidential nominee…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/live/PMq1ZEcyztY)*> JD VANCE: There’s this guy Curtis Yarvin who has written about some of these things…*

Vance has explicitly cited Yarvin as an influence on his view of executive power.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/live/PMq1ZEcyztY)*> VANCE: I think what Trump should do like if I was giving him one piece of advice, fire every single mid-level bureaucrat every civil servant in the administrative state replace them with our people and when the courts because you will get taken to court and when the courts stop you stand before the country like Andrew Jackson did and say the chief justice has made his ruling now let him enforce it…*

**ZACK:** we have to take the direction in which it's pushing Republican politics seriously, right towards a belief in a more strongman style of politics and a disdain for checks on that on, you know, the president's authority to do whatever he wants. That that is a really serious part of the contemporary right, even if the whole architecture of a CEO monarch is, you know, like it it reads like a like a rejected sci fi script. But the influence is deadly serious.

**NOEL:** You mentioned strongman, strongman politics. All of the thinkers that you profiled were men. I know that you didn't do that to exclude women, but because this is quite gendered in a lot of ways.

**Zack:** That's right.

**NOEL:** What are the ideas about gender driving this campaign, other than childless cat ladies, and where do they come from?

**Zack:** Well, so here I used a guy named Harvey Mansfield, who's a recently retired Harvard professor as a way in to talk about gender. In his capacity as a Harvard professor. He trained lots and lots and lots of future influential Republicans ranging from Never Trumpers like Bill Kristol to Trump aligned Republican Senator Tom Cotton from Arkansas.

SCORING IN – BEES AMBIENT 3 MARBLE STRUCTURES

in 2006, he wrote this book called Manliness, which was quite, quite controversial at the timehis view is that men have this willingness to go out and do things and lead the charge and be their own person

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlcCmInIEi8)*> Harvey Mansfield: The confidence of a manly man gives him independence of others he's not always asking for help or directions or instructions he's in control…*

And this manliness, he argues, is part of a general truth that men are a certain way and women are a certain way. In general…

<[CLIP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlcCmInIEi8)> *MANSFIELD: Men are hard. Women soft. Men assertive. Women sensitive. Men seek risk. Women security Men are frank… KEEP RUNNING*

And because of that, we can't. I have a gender neutral society or as I would call it, an egalitarian society

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlcCmInIEi8)*>MANSFIELD: …. Men don’t cry women do …*

because, you know, you're trying to get men to do women's stuff and that's never going to work because of who men are and who women are.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlcCmInIEi8)*> MANSFIELD: Men are stoic, women complain.*

SCORING OUT

ZACK: The reason I cited it as an example of of modern Republican thinking is that it's insistence on the gender binary really helps explain so much of why the trans issue has become essential and integral to the way that Republicans talk about gender, because there's a deep faith in conservative ideology, right? That human nature is fixed, right? Any time you read something about how conservatives define themselves against liberals, they'll say we stand for the idea that human nature is real and that people cannot be made into what they are not right. And gender is a really important component of that.

**NOEL:** Donald Trump's first term in office, you may recall, was defined by a lot of divisiveness over race and ethnicity. So immigration and the fights over immigration during his four years fit in there, George Floyd's murder and what followed, including the president's actions fit in there.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itihfcD0_-4)*> TODAY: The president making his position clear writing these thugs are dishonoring the memory of George Floyd and I won’t let that happen. Any difficulty and we will assume control, but when the looting starts the shooting starts*

How do the next four years respond to the last eight years? And where are the ideas about race and ethnicity and how a multicultural, multiracial America works? Where are those ideas coming from?

<SCORING IN> (locrian) snails attack!

**Zack:** So I looked at Christopher Caldwell, who's an op-ed contributor to the New York Times and the editor sort of fancy intellectual review in Paris, you know, a guy with a lot of establishment credentials. Caldwell wrote a book recently where he argued that American whites were being in many ways formally discriminated against by the political system, A state of affairs that he blamed on the Civil Rights Act.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfNJvb0JpAk)*> CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL: For all the good that that Act did and for the all the admirable motivations that it had, it has evolved in ways that have caused great problems for the country…*

**Zack:** In his book he seems to suggest,, that the cure is worse than the disease. Well, if the cure of the Civil Rights Act was worse than the disease of segregation, well, yikes. That's a pretty big claim you're making. Right? And the gist of it is that he believes that in a variety of different ways, the architecture put into place by the Civil Rights Act and by the American civil rights regime in general has created a society that discriminates against whites.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuGziWtfMNk)*> CALDWELL: the new civil rights Constitution created a group of non people of color it made white people a political reality in the United States in a way that they had never been so while this constitution didn't disfavor whites it favored every other group that it touched and whose interests it it protected which amounts to the same thing*

SCORING HARD OUT

**NOEL:** Polling shows, you know, that Americans like Donald Trump a lot, but they don't like these ideas. Americans don't want a king. Women like having jobs. It's 2024. Even the biggest bigot has a black niece or a black nephew. Like, this is America in 2024. It's not America in 1951. What do you say to a skeptic who says Americans don't want this? These guys can sit in their library and type up as many blog posts as they want. You are worried about nothing. You're worried about ideas.

**Zack:** Yeah. The question is what you mean by “want this”. Democracy is popular. Racial equality is popular in the abstract. But when it comes down to it, when people start to look at what that society looks like, a democratic, more racially egalitarian one, it makes them uncomfortable. And I'm not saying a majority. I'm saying a significant number of people in the American public want this.

So a lot of the task of Trump era politics and you see this in the way that he talks about immigration. You see it especially in the way that he talks about race, is to articulate those grievances in a publicly palatable fashion, to turn the politics of extremism into one that just barely toes the line of acceptable discourse. So so that's the strategy, which means what happens in these intellectual salons matter, right? Because they're formulating the foundations of the strategy, the core ideas that are aimed to be turned into practice.

SCORING IN – white spiders

You can't predict every single policy, especially with a candidate that barely ever talks about policy in specific terms at all. But we can try to understand what the forces are that are going to be influencing the people, not just Trump, but all of the people who are gonna have pretty significant autonomy to make policy in this White House.

NOEL: Vox’s Zack Beauchamp. His book is The Reactionary Spirit. Zack and many other very smart Vox reporters compiled their reporting into *The present - and future -of the American Right.* It’s quite good. It’s at Vox.com. Peter Balonon-Rosen produced today’s show. Amina al-Sadi edited. Andrea Kristinsdottir and Patrick Boyd engineered. Laura Bullard and Avishay Artsy fact-checked. I’m NOEL King. It’s Today, Explained.

**[10 SECONDS OF SILENCE]**