have found that when people highlight their shared experiences, even when they belong to what appear to be opposing, if not adversarial, social groups, they experience an increase in empathy and harmony. Rather than dividing people, the act of reflecting on the marginalization of one's own social group—be it current or historical—can encourage societal cohesion.

In the United States, an honest accounting and acknowledgment of what it has meant to be American could reveal Americans' shared vulnerability and their common capacity for wrongdoing, as well as their resilience in the face of mistreatment. This sentiment is echoed by the lawyer and civil rights activist Bryan Stevenson, who has argued for the need to engage honestly with the history of racial injustice in the United States. "We can create communities in this country where people are less burdened by our history of racial inequality," Stevenson told an interviewer last year. "The more we understand the depth of that suffering, the more we understand the power of people to cope and overcome and survive."

That sounds like a unifying national creed that would allow Americans to embrace their own identities, encourage them to respect the identities embraced by others, and affirm shared principles of equality and justice. Fukuyama appears to believe that this more complex form of national identification is not possible. I think it is. It may even be the only path toward a diverse nation that lives up to its democratic principles.

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Fukuyama Replies

I appreciate these thoughtful comments on my article. But all three responses, which contain a number of common themes, fundamentally miscast my thinking about identity politics. One reason for this might be that the article focuses more on the kind of identity politics characteristic of the contemporary progressive left, whereas the book from which the article was adapted, *Identity*, focuses more on my central concern: the recent rise of right-wing nationalist populism. This development threatens liberal democracy because populist leaders seek to use the legitimacy they gain from democratic elections to undermine liberal institutions such as courts, the media, and impartial bureaucracies. This has been happening in Hungary, Poland, and, above all, the United States. Populists' distrust of "globalism" also leads them to weaken the international institutions necessary to manage the liberal world order.

I concur with the commonplace judgment that the rise of populism has been triggered by globalization and the consequent massive increase in inequality in many rich countries. But if the fundamental cause were merely economic, one would have expected to see left-wing populism everywhere; instead, since the 2008 financial crisis, parties on the left have been in decline, while the most energized new movements have been anti-immigrant groups, such as the far-right party Alternative for Germany and the populist coalition now governing Italy. In the 2016 U.S. presidential election, enough white working-class voters abandoned the Democratic Party to put Donald Trump over the top,

capping a 40-year trend of shifting party loyalties. This means that there is something going on in the cultural realm that needs explaining, and that something is concern over identity.

BALANCING IDENTITY

The concept of "identity," as I use the term, builds on a universal aspect of the human psyche that Plato labeled *thymos*, the demand for respect for one's inner dignity. But there is a specifically modern expression of *thymos* that emerged after the Protestant Reformation and that values the inner self more highly than society's laws, norms, and customs and insists that society change its own norms to give recognition to that inner self. The first major expression of modern identity politics was nineteenth-century European nationalism, when cultural groups began to demand recognition in the form of statehood. I believe that much of modern Islamism is similarly driven by identity confusion among Muslims in modernizing societies who feel neither Western nor traditional and see a particular form of politicized religion as a source of community and identity.

But is not correct to say, as John Sides, Michael Tesler, Lynn Vavreck, and Jennifer Richeson do, that identity politics as I define it drove white-supremacist and anti-immigrant movements in the nineteenth-century United States. Racism and xenophobia have always existed. But a generation or two ago, white Americans did not typically think of themselves as a victimized minority mistreated by elites who were indifferent to their problems. Today, many do, because contemporary racists have borrowed their framing of identity from groups on the left, in ways that resonate with people who are not necessarily racist.

Another major misunderstanding of my argument has to do with my view of contemporary identity movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo. Of course they are rooted in real social injustices such as police violence and sexual harassment; they legitimately call for concrete policy remedies and a broad shift in cultural norms. But people can walk and chew gum at the same time. Even as Americans seek to right injustices suffered by specific social groups, they need to balance their small-group identities with a more integrative identity needed to create a cohesive national democratic community. I am not arguing, contrary to Richeson, that this will be an adequate substitute for narrower identities; rather, it will be a complement to them.

Liberal democracy cannot exist without a national identity that defines what citizens hold in common with one another. Given the de facto multiculturalism of contemporary democracies, that identity needs to be civic or creedal. That is, it needs to be based on liberal political ideas that are accessible to people of different cultural backgrounds rather than on fixed characteristics such as race, ethnicity, or religion. I thought that the United States had arrived at such a creedal identity in the wake of the civil rights movement, but that accomplishment is now being threatened by right-wing identitarians, led by Trump, who would like to drag Americans backward to identities based on ethnicity and religion.

WINNING VS. GOVERNING

Stacey Abrams criticizes my desire to return to class as the defining target of

progressive politics, since class and race overlap strongly in the United States. But it is absurd to see white Americans as a uniformly privileged category, as she seems to do. A significant part of the white working class has followed the black working class into underclass status. Communities facing deindustrialization and job loss have experienced increases in crime, family breakdown, and drug use; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that 72,000 Americans died in 2017 of drug overdoses related to the opioid epidemic. So although part of the populist vote both in the United States and in Europe is driven by racism and xenophobia, part of it is driven by legitimate complaints that elites—the mainstream political parties, the media, cultural institutions, and major corporations—have failed to recognize these voters' plight and have stood by as this decline has occurred.

Abrams knows much better than I do what is required to win an election in the contemporary United States, and I'm sorry that she did not succeed in her bid for governor of Georgia. But I'm not sure that a successful electoral strategy would necessarily translate into a sustainable governing strategy. The country's single greatest weakness today is the intense polarization that has infected its political system, a weakness that has been exploited by authoritarian rivals such as China and Russia. In practical terms, overcoming polarization means devising a posture that will win back at least part of the white working-class vote that has shifted from the left to the right. Peeling away populist voters not driven by simple racism means taking seriously some of their concerns over cultural change and national identity. I agree that the burden is on Republican politicians to stop defending Trump, but they will do so only when they realize that their own voters are turning against him.

The contemporary Middle East, like the Balkans before it, is an extreme example of out-of-control identity politics and what ultimately happens to countries that do not invest in integrative national identities. The United States is fortunately far from that point of state breakdown. But what is happening in the country is part of a larger global shift from a politics based on economic ideas to a politics based on identity. In the 2018 midterm elections, Trump was reportedly advised by Paul Ryan, the Republican Speaker of the House, to campaign on the 2017 tax cut and economic growth; Trump chose instead to go the identity route by railing against migrant caravans and birthright citizenship. This is identity politics on steroids.

This shift, echoed in other countries, is not compatible with modern liberal democracy. The latter is rooted in the rights of individuals, and not the rights of groups or fixed communities. And unless the United States counters this trend domestically, it will continue to set a bad example for the rest of the world.