

Social Justice Watch 0806

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It's not just activists: Just yesterday, we learned of [a business-commissioned poll](#) that found that a majority of Seattleites support a 50% defunding of the SPD.

Given all of that, what happened on Friday afternoon at the City Council Budget Committee was absolutely mind-boggling.

That's when the political establishment finally unveiled their proposed changes to the 2020 Seattle Police Department (SPD) budget. Out of the remaining \$170 million left in this year's SPD budget, they would cut only about \$2.6 million.

Yes, that's right - \$2.6 million. Only a tiny fraction of the bloated SPD budget.

Our proposal, on the other hand, would defund SPD by \$69 million, on top of the \$16 million in SPD cuts that the Mayor has already conceded, for a total of \$85 million to Defund SPD.

Right about now you might be asking, "What the heck is going on here? Didn't 7 out of the 9 Councilmembers commit to defund the SPD by 50%, and reallocate the money to Black and Brown community needs?"

[Yes, they publicly promised to defund the SPD budget by 50 percent.](#)

And now they are backtracking.

According to an email sent by Councilmember Kshama Sawant and posted to twitter, Seattle City Council plans to betray their public promise to defund the Seattle Police Department by 50%, instead proposing a vote on a \$2.6 million budget cut. The current police budget is \$170 million.

<https://twitter.com/cmkshama/status/1289613617780813829>

**Being a stereotypical
“alpha male” with lots of
toxic traits is so normalized
that guys who actually
respect women are being
called simp. Respectful
men are being ridiculed
by toxic men for not being
toxic men.**

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I just got pulled over and for the first time i watched a white women record my whole traffic stop . [source](#)

[telegra.ph/Uighur-model-sends-rare-video-from-Chinese-detention-08-05](#)

Telegraph

Uighur model sends rare video from Chinese detention

Merdan Ghappar was used to posing for the camera. As a model for the massive Chinese online retailer Taobao, the 31-year-old was well paid to flaunt his good looks in slick promotional videos for clothing brands. But one video of Mr Ghappar is different....

“There absolutely are examples of ugly political correctness from the U.S. “left,” whatever that means in a country that, by historical standards, doesn’t have a left. But the vast, vast majority of political correctness in America is conservative. Conservative PC is so powerful in the U.S. that much of it is adopted by both political parties and all of the corporate media. Indeed, right-wing political correctness is so dominant that it’s politically incorrect to refer to it as political correctness. Instead, we call it things like “patriotism,” or simply don’t notice its existence.

A full examination of America’s conservative PC culture would take the rest of your life to read. So let’s limit this to four areas where the right’s PC causes some of the most harm: religion, foreign policy, the Republican Party, and police.

... All of that is just a few waves in America’s never-ending flood of right-wing political correctness. Can the surgeon general suggest that drug legalization

should be studied, and perhaps children should be taught about masturbation? Nope. Can you work for the Department of Agriculture and deliver an honest speech about your life without the right misrepresenting it and getting you fired? No. Can CBS broadcast a miniseries about Ronald Reagan that lightly fictionalizes the grotesque response of his administration to AIDS? Sorry; that has to be moved to a much smaller audience on Showtime. Can you tell the truth as you see it? No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

But even the endless concrete examples of conservative PC are not the end of the problem. Right-wing political correctness so hobbles our political imagination that we don't even dream of having debates on the deepest, most important problems of our lives. Imagine politicians or New York Times op-ed columnists or corporate TV hosts asking simple questions like:

If we followed the law, would the most powerful people in America, including Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and most Wall Street CEOs be in jail?

Is advertising all lies that are warping our humanity? If so, should we get rid of it?

Is there any way to heal the wounds of 500 years of European colonialism? Can we wind down the American empire without destroying the whole world in the process?

Even if we slow down the effects of the climate crisis, will capitalism still destroy the biosphere on which all human civilization depends?

There aren't any easy answers here, but let's at least be honest about the problem. If we're going to talk about political correctness, let's start with the truth about the kind of PC that matters most: the political correctness that is literally killing us."

telegra.ph/Political-Correctness-Is-Destroying-America-Just-Not-How-You-Think-08-05 | source

Telegraph

Political Correctness Is Destroying America! (Just Not How You Think.) AMERICA TODAY faces a terrifying danger: political correctness. It is an existential threat not just to the United States, but all of human civilization. By this, obviously, I mean right-wing political correctness. Maybe you're surprised to hear this. In the...

telegra.ph/Gender-reveals-should-be-mocked-but-dont-ignore-abuse-of-gender-non-conforming-kids-08-05

Telegraph

Gender reveals should be mocked, but don't ignore abuse of gender non-conforming kids

Last week, England football captain Harry Kane shared the news that his wife Katie is expecting a baby boy. He did so by kicking a ball at a balloon containing blue — as opposed to pink — powder. Blue for boys! How sexist, right? What a way to reinforce stereotypes!...

telegra.ph/Peter-Thiel-Gay-billionaire-PayPal-founder-funded-anti-LGBT-Republican-08-05

Telegraph

Peter Thiel: Gay billionaire PayPal founder funded anti-LGBT Republican
Gay billionaire PayPal founder Peter Thiel funded the campaign of an anti-LGBT+ Republican running for US senate in Kansas. Kansas US senate candidate Kris Kobach lost the GOP primary to representative Roger Marshall, a less divisive Republican, on Tuesday...

telegra.ph/Singapore-migrant-worker-mental-health-in-spotlight-after-self-harm-incident-08-05

Telegraph

Singapore migrant worker mental health in spotlight after self harm incident
SINGAPORE (Reuters) - A migrant in Singapore who self-harmed and was pictured bloodied in a stairwell has heightened concerns over the mental health of thousands of low-paid workers confined to dormitories in the city-state due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Funny how it's always "The Simpsons predicted the future" and never "We created ourselves a nightmare world beyond parody". [source](#)

Since our President is too busy watching his ratings plummet, I'll say it: On behalf of America, our hearts go out to the families and loved ones of those affected by the terrible tragedy in Lebanon. [source](#)

[telegra.ph/Kevin-Hart-defends-Ellen-DeGeneres-as-one-of-the-dopest-people-08-05](#)

Telegraph

Kevin Hart defends Ellen DeGeneres as 'one of the dorest people'

Kevin Hart has joined Scooter Braun and Katy Perry in defending Ellen DeGeneres as she faces a growing backlash over the "toxic" working environment on her show. The Ellen Show is currently under an internal investigation following reports of racism, fear...

[telegra.ph/Poland-ministers-continue-to-fan-flames-of-relentless-homophobic-hate-08-05](#)

Telegraph

Poland ministers continue to fan flames of relentless homophobic hate

The justice minister of Poland is raging over the withdrawal of EU funding to 'LGBT-free' zones, claiming it would soon lead to farmers losing their subsidies. Six towns that signed homophobic 'LGBT-free' pledges saw their requests for EU grants rejected...

[https://telegra.ph/Dear-White-People-If-you-have-ever-said-any-of-these-things-then-you-are-part-of-the-problem--The-Milwaukee-Independent-08-05](#)

Telegraph

Dear White People: If you have ever said any of these things then you are part of the problem | The Milwaukee Independent

My dear white friends, I'm about to lay some hardcore truth on you right now. Many of you are the problem. Yes, you read that right. Many of you are the reason why these riots are happening. Many of you are the reason why it has come to this. This is especially...

[telegra.ph/Calgary-police-launch-hate-crime-investigation-after-homophobic-attacks-08-05](#)

Telegraph

Calgary police launch hate crime investigation after homophobic attacks
Police in Canada have launched an investigation after three brutal homophobic attacks took place over the course of just four days. The attacks – which occurred in Calgary, Alberta — are being investigated as suspected hate crimes by local police. The first...

[telegra.ph/Drag-Race-Alexis-Mateo-says-India-Ferrah-cheated-her-out-of-100000-08-05](#)

Telegraph

Drag Race: Alexis Mateo says India Ferrah 'cheated her out of \$100,000'
Drag Race icon Alexis Mateo accused India Ferrah of “cheating” her out of \$100,000 as their All Stars 5 drama spills over into real life. Alexis Mateo let rip on India Ferrah in an hour-long Instagram video, telling her that their friendship is over and calling...

[telegra.ph/Lilly-Wachowski-confirms-that-The-Matrix-is-an-allegory-for-trans-experience-08-05](#)

Telegraph

Lilly Wachowski confirms that The Matrix is an allegory for trans experience
Lilly Wachowski, who co-directed and co-wrote The Matrix with her sister Lana Wachowski, has confirmed that the film series is a metaphor for the trans experience. Lana and Lilly Wachowski co-wrote and co-directed the initial Matrix trilogy, released between...

[telegra.ph/Thug-convicted-after-two-year-homophobic-campaign-against-his-cousin-08-05](#)

Telegraph

Thug convicted after two-year homophobic campaign against his cousin
A man who waged a two-year homophobic hate campaign against his cousin tried to blame his victim’s “bad manners” in a court appearance. Mahir Eroglu, 45, bombarded his cousin with homophobic abuse in a series of phone calls and text messages over the course...

telegra.ph/CBBC-airs-gay-coming-out-scene-after-same-sex-kiss-complaints-08-05

Telegraph

CBBC airs gay coming out scene after same-sex kiss complaints
Just days after CBBC received more than 100 complaints for airing a same-sex kiss, the children’s channel has shown a “beautiful” coming out scene on the teen drama Mystic. Set in New Zealand, Mystic follows a group of “horse-mad teenagers” who must save...

telegra.ph/Trans-Traveller-reveals-the-harsh-reality-of-living-through-the-pandemic-08-05

Telegraph

Trans Traveller reveals the harsh reality of living through the pandemic
A solidarity fund to combat the effect of the pandemic on isolation and mental health has been launched by Traveller Pride to support trans and non-binary Travellers. Traveller Pride, which made history at Pride in London last year as the first Gypsy, Roma...

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CBBC airs gay coming out scene after same-sex kiss complaints

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(Screenshot: CBBC/Mystic)

Just days after CBBC received more than 100 complaints for airing a same-sex kiss, the children's channel has shown a "beautiful" coming out scene on the teen drama *Mystic*.

Set in New Zealand, *Mystic* follows a group of "horse-mad teenagers" who must save their community from environmental disaster. Episode four sees Caleb (played by Joshua Tan) come out as gay to his best friend Issie.

In the emotional scene, London teen Issie (Macey Chipping) explains that she feels like she doesn't fit in with her New Zealand friends. Caleb then reveals that he too feels like "an outsider" because he likes boys.

"I've been thinking about what you said earlier, about trusting us and you know, feeling like an outsider and stuff," he says. "I do feel like that sometimes."

Issie suggests that Caleb is just "trying to make her feel better for being the

“weird girl”, but he admits it’s more than that.

“I’m weird too,” he replies. “I’m gay... I think. No, I know I am.”



I'm...I'm gay, I think.

After briefly fumbling with an awkward joke, Issie comforts her friend. “Thank you for telling me. It must have been really hard,” she says.

“Being gay is... it’s like one little piece of who you are. A good piece. You know that, right? Take your time. No pressure.”

The “beautiful” scene was applauded for giving children a realistic representation of LGBT+ characters on screen.

CBBC hits back at homophobic criticism of same-sex *Next Step* kiss.

Viewers also praised the BBC for affirming its commitment to diversity in the wake of complaints about a same-sex kiss in another CBBC show, *The Next Step*.

Rejecting claims that the kiss was “inappropriate for the audience age”, the broadcaster said that “CBBC regularly portrays heterosexual young people dating, falling in love, and kissing, and it is an important way of showing children what respectful, kind and loving relationships look like”.

It continued: “This is an important part of our mission to make sure that every

child feels like they belong, that they are safe, and that they can be who they want to be.

“We believe that the storyline, and the kiss, was handled with sensitivity and without sensationalism, following as it did the portrayal of Jude and Cleo’s developing relationship.”

It added that same-sex relationships had already featured in several other CBBC shows, including *Jamie Johnson*, *4 O Clock Club*, *Dixie* and *Marrying Mum and Dad*.

Contrary to what was reported in the press, *The Next Step*’s same-sex kiss was far from the first on CBBC — that honour goes to *Byker Grove*, nearly 30 years ago.

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Calgary police launch hate crime investigation after homophobic attacks

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Police in Canada have launched an investigation after three brutal homophobic attacks took place over the course of just four days.

The attacks — which occurred in Calgary, Alberta — are being investigated as suspected hate crimes by local police.

The first incident occurred on Friday (July 31) near the intersection of 17 Avenue and 12 Street in the middle of the day. The victim was set upon by a group of men who attacked him while calling him homophobic slurs, before quickly fleeing the scene.

On Saturday (August 1), a drag king was spat on by a man while recording a video at the rainbow crosswalk at the intersection of Centre Street and Stephen Avenue Mall S.W.

Finally, on Monday (August 3), a queer couple were out walking near the intersection of 9 Street and Memorial Drive at around 5.30pm when they were approached by two men and two women on electronic scooters.

The two men proceeded to beat the men using a belt, rocks and a recycling bin. It is believed that the couple were targeted because of their sexual orientation.

Police have since identified the suspects photographed in the August 3 incident, but have not yet released their names. They have asked the public to remain patient while they collect evidence.

Homophobic attacks branded ‘extremely disturbing’ by Calgary Police.

“It is shocking to see anyone targeted for a crime because of a personal characteristic, but it is extremely disturbing to see the same community targeted three times in one weekend,” said sergeant Arlene Padnivelan of Calgary Police in a press release.

“It is unacceptable that this is happening and we will absolutely investigate anytime a crime is motivated by hate or bias.”

Calgary Police urged anyone who has been the victim of a hate crime in the city to report the incident.

“We fully recognise that sometimes people do not want to involve the police or don’t feel comfortable coming to us for help,” Padnivelan said.

“We respect the wishes of those who are most affected by the incident and never force a victim to participate in a police investigation.

“However, if there is a way we can help make a person feel safe enough to come forward, we want to try do that.”

Police are urging anyone with information in any of the three cases to come forward by calling 1-800-222-8477 or visiting its crimestoppers website.

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Dear White People: If you have ever said any of these things then you are part of the problem | The Milwaukee Independent

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My dear white friends, I'm about to lay some hardcore truth on you right now. Many of you are the problem. Yes, you read that right. Many of you are the reason why these riots are happening. Many of you are the reason why it has come to this. This is especially true if you've ever, and especially in the last weeks, said any of the following:

1. “It’s awful but...”

No. No buts. In the English language, the word “but” is often used to deflect or to justify behavior. Police murdering black people in the street is awful. Period. End. of. discussion.

2. “I support the movement but not these disruptive protests...”

No, you don’t. Right now the movement is taking the form of disruptive protests. They’re the same thing. You either want police to stop murdering black people in the street, or you don’t. If you do, then support the protests – even if you find them disruptive and frustrating – because that’s black people fighting for their lives.

3. “All lives / White lives matter too...”

No one said they didn't. The conversation is specifically about black lives right now because police are murdering them in the street. Until police stop doing that, and White people stop dismissing it, it's not "All lives Matter", it's "MOST lives matter." It's not "ALL Lives" until Black Lives Matter too. Stay focused.

4. "There are good cops..."

This isn't about the actions of individuals. It's about systemic, state-sanctioned violence against black people and other people of color. In fact, racism – historically and currently – is so embedded in policing that even if there weren't any bad cops, racism and racist police practices would still exist. Police forces are there to protect and advance the status quo. Period. The same so-called "good cops" who are sharing BLM hashtags and are kneeling with you now, won't think twice about kneeling on your neck at a later time. And if you think you're a good cop, but are silent when confronted with human rights abuses, then how good are you?

5. "I don't support the looting and destruction..."

No one says you have to, but please stop acting like looting nullifies the entire protest. And definitely stop acting like looting is "just as bad." That's like comparing someone stealing your car to someone murdering your child. They're not equally bad. Stop pretending they are. Police murdering black people in the street is definitely worse than robbing a Target.

6. "Just because I'm white doesn't mean my life has been easy..."

Of course not. Everyone struggles. But being white has never been one of those struggles. Being poor is a struggle. Being handicapped is a struggle. Being a woman is a struggle. Being gay is a struggle. Being an immigrant is a struggle. But being white has never been a struggle. The same can't be said for people of color. I could go on and on about white privilege but it would be so much easier if you educated yourself instead. This isn't about how you, a white, cisgender, straight man or woman has suffered in your life. This is about police murdering black people in the street. Stop trying to make it about you.

7. "I really wish they would protest peacefully..."

Of course you do. They're easier to ignore that way. And what you really want is for them to die more quietly. People of color have been peacefully protesting for

hundreds of years. It hasn't been all that successful. The reason riots and violent demonstrations work is because it makes people – especially white people – uncomfortable. You can't ignore them when they're waving torches in your faces. It scares you. It puts you on edge. Which is exactly where you need to be. People only pay attention to the extreme. If you have trouble recalling a single one of the hundreds of peaceful protests that BLM held across North America last year, but you can still recall, with crystal clarity, the 1992 Los Angeles riots, then you've just proven my point.

8. “I don’t see color...”

Congratulations! You’re lying to yourself. Of course you see color. And that’s good! Black people want you to see their color. Their colors are beautiful and the very foundation of who they are. If you don’t see their color, then you also don’t see their culture. If you don’t see color then you erase their very identity. If you don’t see their color, then you also can’t see the pattern of violence they’re confronted with every day. If you don’t see color, then you’re blind to more than just racial injustice. You’re blind to the world.

9. “They shouldn’t have committed a crime...”

This one is a big one for me. Consider me triggered. A boy who steals a can of pop from a 7-11 does not deserve to be shot in the back – three times. A man illegally selling CD’s on a street corner doesn’t deserve to be shot to death in front of a record store. A man selling cigarettes on the street does not deserve to be strangled on the streets of Staten Island. A man who runs a red light does not deserve to be shot while reaching for his registration. This isn’t about their crimes, this is about racialized policing. Stay on topic.

10. “Black people kill white people too...”

Yes, murderers exist in every race and walk of life. But, that’s not what we’re talking about. We’re talking police brutality, and the reality is, black officers are not murdering unarmed white men in the street. That seems to be almost exclusively white officer behavior. Stop gaslighting.

If any of you are guilty of saying any of the above, then I have unsettling news for you. You are the reason it has come to this. You are the reason peaceful protests haven’t worked. They haven’t worked because you haven’t been listening. You haven’t been learning. These riots are happening because you

have left black people no other choice.

These riots are happening because no matter how black people have said it: taking a knee, marching the streets, bumper stickers, banners, signs, or chants, you still don't get it. That doesn't mean you're bad people. That doesn't mean you're racist. It only means you're white. And that's not a crime, any more than being black is. The difference is, police aren't going to shoot you in the street for it.

- Written By

Patrick Benjamin

Editor's Note: When this essay was first published it was mistakenly attributed to the wrong author, who actually plagiarized the original work. The actual writer, Patrick Benjamin, granted us permission to allow the work to remain in place with corrected credit. It is with our apologies and thanks that we continue to share his voice on this important subject.

- BLM | Coverage

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Drag Race: Alexis Mateo says India Ferrah 'cheated her out of \$100,000'

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Drag Race icon Alexis Mateo accused India Ferrah of “cheating” her out of \$100,000 as their *All Stars 5* drama spills over into real life.

Alexis Mateo let rip on India Ferrah in an hour-long Instagram video, telling her that their friendship is over and calling out her partner for allegedly sending her private messages, demanding that she keep quiet over their feud.

Drag Race fans were shocked when, half way through *All Stars 5*, India accused Alexis and Mayhem Miller of campaigning against eventual winner Shea Couleé.

India was eliminated shortly after she made her bombshell claims. Alexis followed a week later after the other queens deemed her “backyard ball” look to be the worst, but the Puerto Rican star said she feels as though her name had

been tainted.

“A lot of people posted, ‘you got robbed’. I don’t think I got robbed, I think I got cheated,” she said Tuesday (August 4).

Alexis Mateo called a ‘sore loser because she’s brown’.

Alexis said that had she remained in the running, she feels as though she would have excelled in the penultimate week’s comedy challenge and ultimately progressed to the top three.

“I’m a very good dancer, I’m good at choreography, I’m a good singer, so I probably would have done very good in my final video clip too.”

She continued: “A lot of my friends are like, ‘this is very white privilege’. I am tired of this whole bulls**t situation, about, ‘if Alexis says something she’s a sore loser because she’s f***king brown’.

“If I was white everybody would be like, ‘oh I feel so sorry for her’. No b***h. No more.”

View this post on Instagram A post shared by Alexis Mateo (@miss_alexis_mateo) on Aug 3, 2020 at 5:18pm PDT

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Gender reveals should be mocked, but don't ignore abuse of gender non-conforming kids

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When Bailey comes down with a fever, Mary Anne rushes her to the hospital, where two doctors misgender her. Mary Anne firmly corrects them.

Misgendering is traumatic. This is one of the baseline ways cisgender people can show up for the trans people in their life
pic.twitter.com/EyrenC5QDK
— Netflix (@netflix) July 23, 2020

Last week, England football captain Harry Kane shared the news that his wife Katie is expecting a baby boy. He did so by kicking a ball at a balloon containing blue — as opposed to pink — powder.

Blue for boys! How sexist, right? What a way to reinforce stereotypes! And so the ritual mocking of the gender reveal started up once more.

“It’s 2020 — are we really still doing this?” harrumphed *Grazia* magazine. After all, “gender reveal parties perpetuate dangerous stereotypes: the idea that ‘girl’ equals pink princess and ‘boy’ equals blue Action Man is so outdated it’s almost too obvious to state.” How could Kane have been so foolish? Typical footballer — you can bet he won’t have read any Judith Butler.

Had this taken place a decade ago, I too would have joined in with the derision. Back then I was raising two boys (I now have three) and was heartily sick of being advised to read neurosexist classics such as Steve Biddulph’s *Raising Boys*, Simon Baron-Cohen’s *The Essential Difference* or Sexist McIncel’s *Why Pink Makes Boys’ Penises Fall Off*. “You must read them,” I was told, “because science has proven feminists wrong. Boys really are different, due to cavemen and neurons and stuff.” By which it was meant, boys are born to like the colour blue, playing with trucks, earning more and beating the crap out of other people.

I simply didn't buy it, and thankfully wasn't the only one.

The early 2010s were an interesting time to be trying to raise children the non-sexist way. The early 2000s had been dominated by a slew of books repackaging standard sexism as cutting-edge science, most of them authored by men who, as Cordelia Fine put it, "like to position themselves as courageous knights of truth, who brave the stifling ideology of political correctness." To challenge this new sexism was risky: one risked being told one's over-emotional female brain just wasn't up to understanding the science. Towards the end of the noughties, however, a tipping point seemed to have been reached.

This came in part through the painstaking debunking work of academics such as Fine and Deborah Cameron, but there was also grassroots activism — not least through Mumsnet, where pressure groups such as Let Toys Be Toys started to form. As a mother who let her boys wear pink, grow their hair and play with dolls' houses, I knew which side I was on. And I thought my side was finally winning. Now I'm not so sure.

By the time my middle son was wearing his first dress to a school disco, I thought the stereotype monster might be in its death throes, overwhelmed by its own ridiculousness. Surely the patriarchy could not survive being reduced to kicking footballs at powder-filled balloons and insisting on his-and-hers toy globes. The fragility on show was just too blatant, right? Alas, I was wrong. What I — and many others like me — had not counted on was the repackaging of conservative beliefs about gender as their exact opposite. Bye bye, old gender stereotyping; say hello to the new, faith-based, drug-and-surgeons-knife-powered version.

We feminists might have won the argument that it makes zero sense to predict a child's likes, dislikes, desires, presentation, and most intimate beliefs on the basis of his or her sex. As for the argument that it makes zero sense to determine a child's sex on the basis of his or her likes, dislikes, desires, presentation and most intimate beliefs? That, apparently, is totally different and anyone who proposes this is a raging bigot in need of some serious re-education.

Take, for example, a recent episode of Netflix's television reboot of *The Babysitter's Club*, in which one of the young sitters, Mary Anne, takes care of a trans child named Bailey. There's much to say about the rampant stereotyping that runs through the whole storyline, but one particularly egregious scene

occurs when Bailey has a temperature and is taken to hospital. The doctor and nurse, on seeing Bailey's medical records, assume that the child is a boy and use male pronouns, in spite of Bailey's long blonde hair and a glittery butterfly top. This is good, right? Because boys can have long hair and wear butterfly tops, right? Apparently not. By failing to realize that a boy couldn't possibly look the way Bailey does, the medical staff reveal themselves to be ignorant bastards, whom Mary Anne must take to task.

"I know you guys are busy," our righteous sitter says to the doctor and nurse, "but, as you would see, if you look at her and not her chart, Bailey is not a boy. And by treating her like one, you are completely ignoring who she is."

The doctor and nurse nod solemnly, duly chastened. That's the last time they'll be using medical records to determine biological sex rather than glitter and pink stuff. As the mother of a boy who looks not unlike young Bailey, I guess I should be delighted?

But I've been told countless times that this is not my problem: having a trans child is not the same as having a gender non-conforming child. Why should I compare my son to Bailey, or his real-life counterpart: nine-year-old transgender actor Kai Shappley? Well, there's the fact that gender stereotypes affect all children, and if you demand that people determine whether someone is a girl or a boy in accordance with how you situate them on that great continuum between Barbie and GI Joe, you are, as the *Grazia* piece argues with reference to Harry Kane, encouraging children to assume "there is only one direction for them in life — that a boy should be everything that comes with being 'blue,' which is to be 'macho' [...] and [that girls] have to be everything the colour 'pink' represents: pretty, a princess, feminine." It is entirely incoherent to see the conflation of femaleness with femininity, and maleness with masculinity as harmful in some instances, but benign in others, when we are dealing with one economy of human relationships, in which everyone is defined in relation to others.

If you squint a bit and work very hard at not thinking, you could represent the rise in children claimed to have been "born in the wrong bodies" as a yet another rejection of traditional stereotypes (as though having a sexed body is itself a stereotype). Then again, if you listen to an interview with Kai Shappley's mother, a different picture emerges:

"I remember even thinking before Kai was three, I think this kid might be gay, and I thought that that could not happen, that would not happen. We started praying fervently. Prayers turned into googling conversion therapy and how can we implement these techniques at home to make Kai not be like this. Putting her on time out for acting like a girl, putting her on time out for stealing girl toys, spanking her, really spanking her, every time she would say 'you know I'm a girl.'"

This is a description of a parent terrorizing and abusing a child for failing to conform to gender norms — a parent using violence to teach their child what girls and boys are permitted to do and be, a parent utterly horrified at the slightest possibility her child might be gay. It is appalling and once you have heard this woman speak, it's impossible to look at the way Kai plays Bailey, who cowers in fear at the prospect of having to wear a blue gown instead of the pink one, in the same way. Of course that child can portray the horror of not getting it right, of fearing something terrible might happen if declared sex and presentation "don't match." That child really *knows*.

Those who mock gender reveals rarely dare raise their voices to protest gender stereotyping and homophobia when they are found in the stories of parents of transgender children. Susie Green, CEO of Mermaids, a charity and lobby group for "trans kids," wouldn't allow her child, pre-transition, to play with the "wrong" toys. One former employee of the Tavistock Clinic in London claims seeing "so many families who would talk about not wanting their daughters to be lesbian." The impact of this kind of parental bullying and shaming on children is unclear, but the absence of criticism — when it's open season on those who throw gender reveals — is remarkable. Hit a child, take away their toys, shame them for having a crush on someone of the same sex: silence. Throw a jokey party with pink balloons and you are responsible for "closed doors, forbidden opportunities, stifled dreams."

It's safe to say Harry Kane and his ilk won't be welcomed into woke fold any time soon. The gender reveal harks back to a traditionalism which anyone armed with a gender studies degree can mock as ignorant and foolish. The entire concept of gender identity — and indeed, pretty much everything Judith Butler has ever written — might be incoherent, but it's precisely the kind of incoherence that can make those grappling with it feel they must nod in agreement, just in case something important is going over their head. The hypocrisy of those who criticize Kane, but not the mother of children like Kai

Shapley, is fuelled by both fear and intellectual insecurity.

Judith Herman notes that, in the presence of abuse, “it is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing.” Fifteen years ago no one wanted to be called a flat-earther for rejecting the “boys are different” narrative; now no one wants to be called a bigot for questioning the idea that some children’s bodies don’t match their true selves. Call out gender reveal parties all you want (you should — they are ridiculous), but know that this won’t cover your back or compensate for the abuses you ignore. A balloon is just a balloon; a terrorized child is something else.

Victoria Smith is a UK-based writer and editor. Her work has appeared in the New Statesman, the Independent, the Guardian and elsewhere.



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Kevin Hart defends Ellen DeGeneres as 'one of the dopest people'

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I love to love.... Hurry up & get here 2021....this year is fucking ASS...throw this shit in the can

A post shared by Kevin Hart (@kevinhart4real) on Aug 4, 2020 at 2:45pm PDT

Kevin Hart has joined Scooter Braun and Katy Perry in defending Ellen DeGeneres as she faces a growing backlash over the “toxic” working environment on her show.

The Ellen Show is currently under an internal investigation following reports of racism, fear and intimidation on set, while DeGeneres herself is plagued by rumours of “notoriously mean” behaviour towards her staff which seemingly contradict her famously sunny reputation.

A number of celebrities leapt to Ellen DeGeneres’ defence, including Kevin

Hart, who told fans he'd never seen the star mistreating others and suggested the criticism was down to the internet's "crazy negativity".

"It's crazy to see my friend go thru [sic] what she's going thru [sic] publicly," he wrote on Instagram. "I have known Ellen for years and I can honestly say that she's one of the dopest people on the f***king planet. She has treated my family and my team with love and respect from day one.

"The internet has become a crazy world of negativity... We are falling in love with people's downfall. It's honestly sad... When did we get here? I stand by the ones that I know and that I love. Looking forward to the future where we get back to loving one another... this hate s***t has to stop. Hopefully it goes out of style soon..."

"This post is not meant to disregard the feelings of others and their experiences," he continued, "it's simply to show what my experiences have been with my friend. Love you for life Ellen."

Hart is likely remembering his own experiences as the subject of controversy. DeGeneres famously stood alongside him when he was widely condemned for a series of homophobic tweets he made between 2009 and 2012.

At the time a number of prominent LGBT+ figures and journalists slammed DeGeneres for dismissing Hart's critics as "haters" and urging him to backtrack on his decision to quit as host of the Academy Awards.

Now Hart has been similarly condemned for backing the star, as he shared a video complaining of the "roar of frustration" he received in response to his supportive post.

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Lilly Wachowski confirms that The Matrix is an allegory for trans experience

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Director Lilly Wachowski accepts award for Outstanding Drama Series onstage during the 27th Annual GLAAD Media Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on April 2, 2016 (Frederick M. Brown/Getty)

Lilly Wachowski, who co-directed and co-wrote *The Matrix* with her sister Lana Wachowski, has confirmed that the film series is a metaphor for the trans experience.

Lana and Lilly Wachowski co-wrote and co-directed the initial *Matrix* trilogy, released between 1999 and 2003, before either had come out as trans, and rumours have swirled that the iconic film series is an allegory for the trans experience.

Critics have suggested that the double life of hero Thomas Anderson/ Neo,

played by Keanu Reeves, could signify a closeted trans existence, the “red pill” could symbolise red estrogen pills, and that the Matrix’s warnings being described by Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) as being “like a splinter in your mind” is a metaphor for gender dysphoria.

In 2016, film critic and YouTuber Film Runner pointed out the parallel that authority figures in the film always only refer to Neo as Mr Anderson, while his “friends use the name he has chosen for himself”.

Now, after years of speculation, Lilly Wachowski has finally confirmed that a trans narrative in *The Matrix* was the sisters’ “original intention”.

In an interview with Netflix Film Club on the 21st anniversary of the first film’s release, she said: “I’m glad that it has gotten out that that was the original intention. The world wasn’t quite ready for it. The corporate world wasn’t ready for it.”

Wachowski continued: “I’m glad people are talking about *The Matrix* movies with a trans narrative.

“I love how meaningful those films are to trans people and the way that they come up to me say, ‘Those movies saved my life.’

“Because when you talk about transformation, specifically in the world of science fiction, which is just about imagination and world-building and the idea of the seemingly impossible becoming possible, that’s why it speaks to them so much.

“And I’m grateful I can be a part of throwing them a rope along their journey.”



Wachowski explained that the character of Switch, played by Belinda McClory, was originally written to be gender fluid, but the idea was ultimately thrown out.

She said: “*The Matrix* stuff was all about the desire for transformation, but it was all coming from a closeted point of view.

“We had the character of Switch, who would be a man in the real world and then a woman in the Matrix, and that’s where [both of] our head spaces were.”

“I don’t know how present my transness was in the background of my brain as we were writing it,” she continued, “but it all came from the same sort of fire that I’m talking about.

“Especially for me and Lana, we were existing in this space where the words didn’t exist, so we were always living in a world of imagination.

“It’s why I gravitated toward science fiction and fantasy and playing Dungeons and Dragons.

“It was all about creating worlds. And so I think it freed us up as filmmakers because we were able to imagine stuff at that time that you didn’t necessarily see

on screen.”

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Peter Thiel: Gay billionaire PayPal founder funded anti-LGBT Republican

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Donald Trump shakes the hand of Peter Thiel during a meeting with technology executives at Trump Tower, December 14, 2016. (Drew Angerer/Getty)

Gay billionaire PayPal founder Peter Thiel funded the campaign of an anti-LGBT+ Republican running for US senate in Kansas.

Kansas US senate candidate Kris Kobach lost the GOP primary to representative Roger Marshall, a less divisive Republican, on Tuesday, 4 August, despite an influx of cash from the gay PayPal billionaire.

According to Recode, Thiel put \$850,000 into a super PAC funding Kobach's campaign and Patrick Miller, a political scientist at the University of Kansas, described the billionaire as "the lifeblood of the pro-Kobach campaign".

Kobach is a former Kansas secretary of state who, according to GLAAD, previously compared marriage equality to polygamy and drug use, accused the Human Rights Campaign of promoting "homosexual pedophilia", suggested that greater numbers of legal Hispanic immigrants could lead to "ethnic cleansing" in the US and advised that Donald Trump create a "Muslim registry".

In 2015, Kobach slammed LGBT+ adoption and said: "Now we have a situation where gay couples are adopting on the same terms and must be allowed to adopt on the same legal terms as heterosexual couples and, you know, that's certainly not good for the kids."

Although Kobach's rival Marshall managed to beat him in the Republican primary on Tuesday, Kobach used the money from Thiel to fund anti-LGBT+ attack ads against him during his campaign.

The super PAC, which Thiel poured almost \$1 million into, funded mailers which accused Marshall of having voted to support "transgender plays" and "Rosie O'Donnell summer camp".



Gay PayPal founder and billionaire Peter Thiel is an avid Trump-supporter.

Peter Thiel endorsed Donald Trump before his 2016 election, and donated more than \$1 million to the now-president's campaign.

Thiel later joined anti-LGBT+ activists as part of his presidential transition team executive committee, and in 2016 he made history as the first openly gay speaker at the Republican National Convention.

Speaking about Trump's vehemently anti-LGBT+ vice president Mike Pence in 2017, Thiel said: "You know, maybe I should be worried but I'm not that worried about it."

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Poland ministers continue to fan flames of relentless homophobic hate

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The justice minister of Poland is raging over the withdrawal of EU funding to ‘LGBT-free’ zones, claiming it would soon lead to farmers losing their subsidies.

Six towns that signed homophobic ‘LGBT-free’ pledges saw their requests for EU grants rejected last month on the grounds that they were no longer respecting “EU values and fundamental rights”.

Zbigniew Ziobro, who is also the country’s prosecutor general, hit back at the Commission with apoplectic rhetoric.

“The Polish government should... defend Polish governors against the illegal

actions of the European Commission,” Ziobro declared on state TV on Monday (3 August).

“LGBT+ activists have strong EU financial backing, but despite their hooligan excesses, Commissioner Dalli won’t spare a thought for taking away their money,” EU Observer reported.

Although the towns in question were able to apply for grants of up to €150,000 through the EU scheme, the symbolic fines actually amounted to less than €25,000 each.

But for Ziobro, it was only the beginning. He claimed it would lead to the EU Commission one day “taking away [Polish] farmers’ subsidies or money for road infrastructure because Poland didn’t legalise homosexual marriage”.

The financial penalties to homophobic regions shouldn’t have come as a surprise, given the European Parliament’s strident and repeated condemnation of Poland’s ‘LGBT-free’ zones and thinly-veiled threats to reduce funding.

Yet Ziobro wasn’t the only one to react with outrage; several other members of Poland’s ruling party, PiS, also took to the airwaves to denounce the EU.

Janusz Kowalski, the PiS’ deputy minister for state assets, called for a law banning Polish state funds that “pay for any actions and institutions which are aimed at openly promoting LGBT+ ideology”.

“The entire territory of Poland should be designated as an LGBT+ ideology-free zone, since the Polish constitution clearly identifies a family as a relationship between a man and a woman,” he told *Reuters*.

Przemysław Czarnek, another PiS MP, went further.

“There’s no doubt, that LGBT+ ideology grew out of... the same root as Germany’s Hitlerian National Socialism, which was responsible for all the evil of World War II,” came the bizarre claim.

An estimated 10-15,000 gay men was murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

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Political Correctness Is Destroying America! (Just Not How You Think.)

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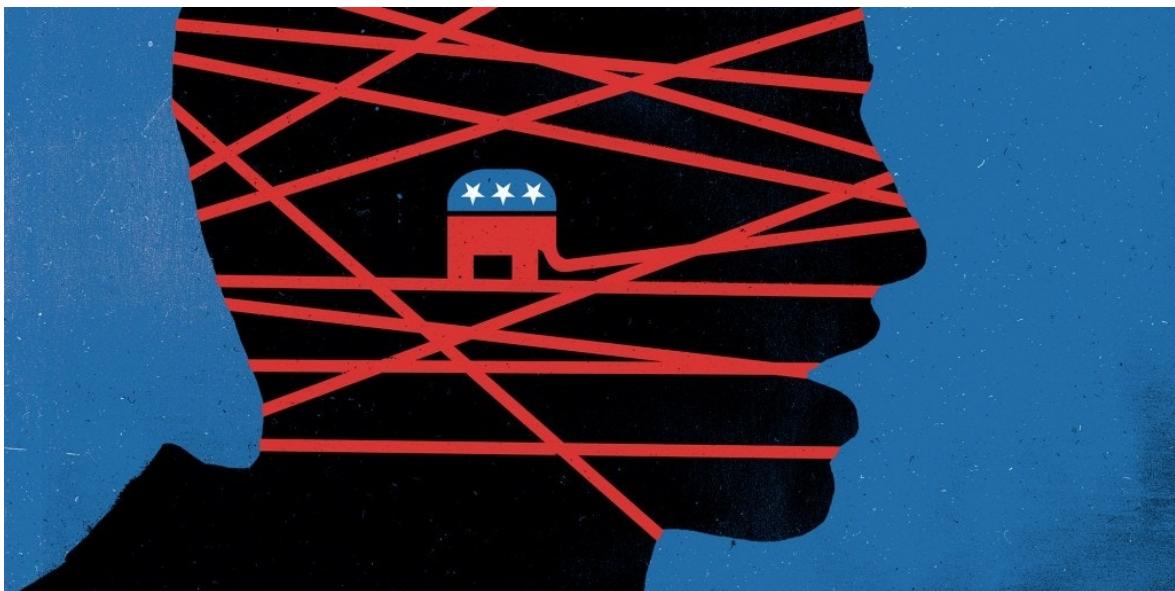


Illustration: Rob Dobi for The Intercept

AMERICA TODAY faces a terrifying danger: political correctness. It is an existential threat not just to the United States, but all of human civilization. By this, obviously, I mean right-wing political correctness.

Maybe you're surprised to hear this. In the U.S. media, there's no shortage of lamentations about political correctness and how it chills debate — but they're almost always about the threat of left-wing PC.

In reality, political correctness, or cancel culture, or whatever it's called, is not a phenomenon of the left, right, or center. It's a phenomenon of human nature. All humanity's infinite tribes are prone to groupthink and punishing heretics. That's why the principle of free thought has to be defended: It is, unfortunately, a weird and unnatural fit for humans.

There absolutely are examples of ugly political correctness from the U.S. "left," whatever that means in a country that, by historical standards, doesn't have a

left. But the vast, vast majority of political correctness in America is conservative. Conservative PC is so powerful in the U.S. that much of it is adopted by both political parties and all of the corporate media. Indeed, right-wing political correctness is so dominant that it's politically incorrect to refer to it as political correctness. Instead, we call it things like "patriotism," or simply don't notice its existence.

A full examination of America's conservative PC culture would take the rest of your life to read. So let's limit this to four areas where the right's PC causes some of the most harm: religion, foreign policy, the Republican Party, and police.

Religion

It probably doesn't surprise you that exactly zero U.S. presidents have been open atheists. But since Congress first convened in 1789, it's only had one openly atheist member: Pete Stark of California. Stark retired in 2013, so there are currently none.

According to a 2019 Pew Research Center survey, 23 percent of Americans identify as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular." This means, Pew says, that "by far the largest difference between the U.S. public and Congress is in the share who are unaffiliated with a religious group."

So there are likely many members of Congress right now who are "in the closet" when it comes to not believing in God. The only explanation? They're all too cowed by PC to come out.

This isn't surprising, since the U.S. still demonstrates informal and formal discrimination against atheists. A recent poll found that 96 percent of Americans said they'd vote for a Black candidate for president; 95 percent for a Catholic; and 66 percent for a Muslim. Only 60 percent said they'd vote for an atheist. While it's unenforceable, the constitutions of eight states actually prohibit atheists from holding office. This includes Maryland, one of the most liberal states, whose constitution also declares that "it is the duty of every man to worship God." (Maryland women are seemingly free to putter around ignoring the Almighty.)

Pro-religion PC is practiced on both sides of the aisle. In one of the hacked

Democratic National Committee emails published by WikiLeaks in 2016, the DNC chief financial officer suggested forcing Bernie Sanders to go on the record about whether he believes in God. “He had skated on saying he has a Jewish heritage,” the CFO argued. “My Southern Baptist peeps would draw a big difference between a Jew and an atheist.”

Even if, someday, a few national politicians screw up enough courage to admit that they’re atheists, it’s impossible to imagine any announcing that they’re actively *anti-theistic*. No member of the House is going to go on the CBS morning show and say, “I think all religion is pernicious, it’s a gross form of brainwashing children, and every religious leader is a con artist, including the Pope.”

No one on this plane of existence can say whether or not atheism is correct. What we can be sure of is right-wing PC has sharply limited free political speech in this area, and that’s made us less skeptical and more prone to authoritarianism.

Foreign Policy

America’s ironclad political correctness on religion plays into another aspect of our PC: The ferocious conservative restrictions on discussions of U.S. foreign policy. Since 9/11, many powerful Americans have demonstrated openness, perhaps even eagerness, for war between Christianity and Islam. Before the invasion of Iraq, then-President George W. Bush told French President Jacques Chirac that he saw “Gog and Magog at work” in the Middle East. President Donald Trump’s former adviser Steve Bannon has spoken about “the long history of the Judeo-Christian West struggle against Islam.” When the Christian Broadcasting Network asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo whether God sent Trump “just like Queen Esther to help save the Jewish people from the Iranian menace,” Pompeo responded, “I certainly believe that’s possible.” The right’s yearning to mix religion and violence is incredibly dangerous, yet is a staple of our daily political diet. Few politicians or powerful figures notice, much less attack this.

But our conservative PC on foreign policy goes much further. Everyone in the foreign policy establishment is aware that 9/11 and almost all Islamist terrorism is direct blowback from U.S. actions overseas. As a Defense Department report explained, “Muslims do not ‘hate our freedom’” — i.e., what

Bush claimed in front of Congress on September 20, 2001 — “but rather, they hate our policies.” The problem from the establishment’s perspective is that *they* like those policies, and don’t want to change them just because they get Americans killed. Top members of the military apparently say in private that our deaths are “a small price to pay for being a superpower.”

Yet perhaps the only national-level politician who’s spoken clearly and openly about this is former Rep. Ron Paul of Texas. In 2004, a senior Bush administration official was willing to say that without U.S. actions in the Middle East, “bin Laden might still be redecorating mosques and boring friends with stories of his mujahideen days in the Khyber Pass” — but without his or her name attached. The 9/11 Commission’s report makes glancing reference to reality, but as one member later wrote, “The commissioners believed that American foreign policy was too controversial to be discussed except in recommendations written in the future tense. Here we compromised our commitment to set forth the full story.”

As with the conservative PC about God, Democrats also obey the conservative political correctness about foreign policy. For instance, in then-President Barack Obama’s famous 2009 speech in Cairo, he was too PC to tell the truth. Instead, he mumbled that “tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims,” whatever that means exactly. In 2010, when Obama’s then-counterterrorism adviser John Brennan was asked why Al Qaeda was so determined to attack the U.S., he responded, “I think this is a, uh, long issue.” He did not elaborate.

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The PC line on foreign policy extends far beyond terrorism. Israel is one of the most powerful examples. Every American politician who cares to know is aware that of Israel’s dozen or so wars, it was clearly the aggressor in all but two — the 1948 War of Independence and the 1973 Yom Kippur War — and even those are arguable. They also understand that Israel has rejected numerous offers to create a just, two-state solution with the Palestinians. In private, U.S. officials say that Israel has constructed “apartheid” in the West Bank. While a minor glasnost on

this subject is currently in progress, this clear reality remains inexpressible by U.S. politicians.

And what about the media, that hotbed of freethinking radicalism? Even rich, famous TV hosts who deviate from the right's PC line must issue groveling apologies or get canceled, literally. Sometimes they issue groveling apologies *and* get canceled. After Bush called the 9/11 hijackers "cowards," Bill Maher took issue on his old ABC show "Politically Incorrect." "We have been the cowards," Maher said, "lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away." Maher immediately said he was sorry, but it was too late: His show lost big advertisers and was taken off the air the next year. In other words, the moment "Politically Incorrect" was *genuinely* politically incorrect, Maher was yanked off-stage.

Next, in February 2003 just before the invasion of Iraq, Phil Donohue's MSNBC show got the ax. It had the highest ratings on the network, but as executives fretted in an internal memo, it could become "a home for the liberal antiwar agenda at the same time that our competitors are waving the flag at every opportunity." In other words, since all of the rest of American TV was ultra-PC, and they had to be too. The same channel soon signed Jesse Ventura to a three-year contract for a new show but then found out he was anti-war and so paid him to do nothing.

Other TV figures made sure not to suffer similar fates. "I remember," Katie Couric later said, "this inevitable march towards war and kind of feeling like, 'Will anybody put the brakes on this? And is this really being properly challenged by the right people? ... Anyone who questioned the administration was considered unpatriotic and it was a very difficult position to be in.'" At the time, when it actually mattered, Couric chirped on "The Today Show" that "Navy SEALS rock!"

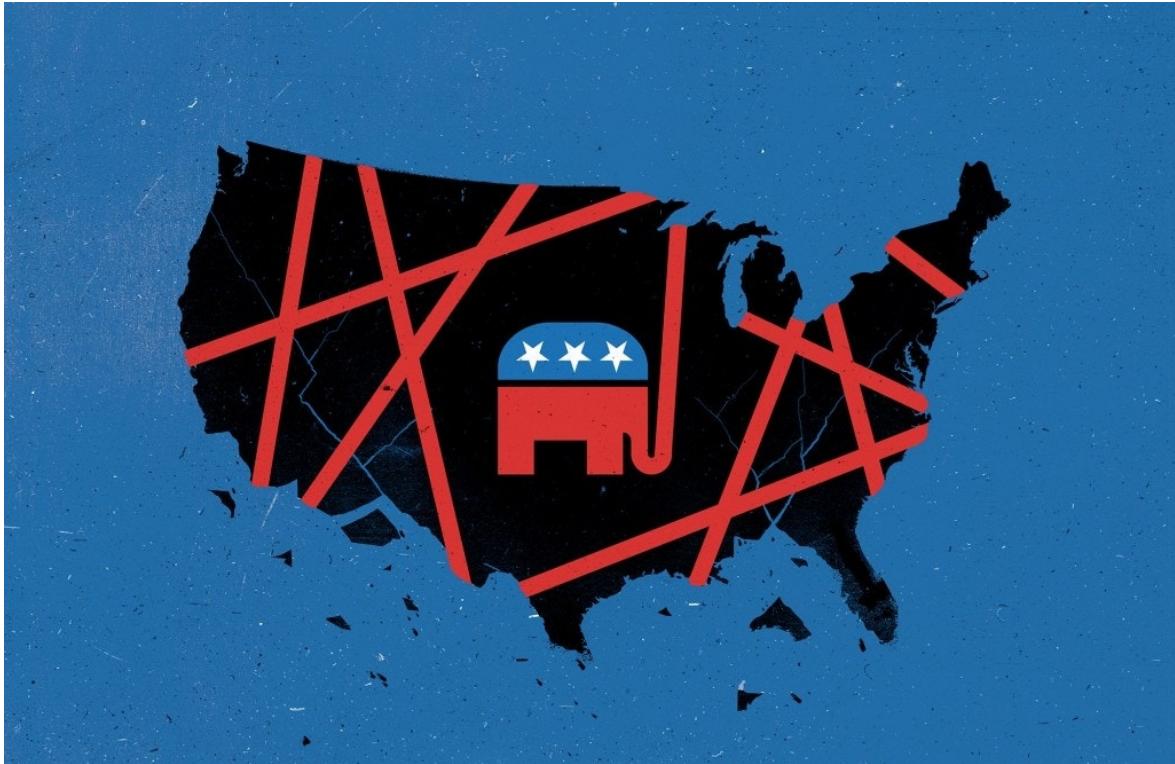
Then there's Chris Hayes, another MSNBC host. In a broadcast just before Memorial Day 2012, Hayes expressed exactly the kind of sentiment you'd expect to hear in an honest debate on war: "It is, I think, very difficult to talk about the war dead and the fallen without invoking valor. ... I feel uncomfortable about the word 'hero' because it seems to me that it is so rhetorically proximate to justifications for more war. And I obviously don't want to desecrate or disrespect the memory of anyone that's fallen. ... But it seems to me that we marshal this word in a way that is problematic." The freakout from

the right was so intense that Hayes immediately said he was “deeply sorry” because “it’s very easy for me, a TV host, to opine about people who fight our wars, having never dodged a bullet or guarded a post or walked a mile in their boots.”

Even opinions on events from a lifetime ago must be politically correct. After Jon Stewart said on “The Daily Show” that he believed Harry Truman was a “war criminal” for using atomic weapons on Japan, he came under immediate attack, and quickly came crawling for forgiveness. “I walk that back because it was in my estimation a stupid thing to say,” Stewart pleaded in a tone recognizable from any of history’s struggle sessions. “You ever do that, where you’re saying something, and as it’s coming out you’re like, ‘What the fuck?’ And it just sat in there for a couple of days, just sitting going, ‘No, no, [Truman] wasn’t, and you should really say that out loud on the show.’”

With no critiques about specifics permissible, a broad discussion about U.S. foreign policy is light years away. There won’t be any politicians or TV hosts anytime soon who’ll consistently emphasize Martin Luther King Jr.’s position that America is “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.”

No one knows what foreign policy Americans would choose after an open debate. But it’s manifestly true that the current one, shaped overwhelmingly by right-wing PC, has caused gigantic damage to the U.S. and the world.



Illustration

The Republican Party

Today's GOP often enforces internal ideological purity more strictly than the Chinese Communist Party. This matters because the U.S. political system is so sclerotic it requires some buy-in from the opposition party for almost anything to change. So as long as Republicans stay in lockstep with each other, nothing will happen.

The GOP's PC has been particularly disastrous with the climate crisis. The Republican president of the United States constantly calls it a "hoax." For a decade, GOP politicians and the party's apparatus have almost all refused to acknowledge that it even exists. Newt Gingrich said in 2008 that "our country must take action to address climate change" — but when GOP PC changed, so did he. When Gingrich ran for president in 2012, Rush Limbaugh horrified listeners by telling them of a rumored chapter in a forthcoming Gingrich book that addressed global warming honestly. Gingrich obediently cut it. Then he began posting pictures on Instagram with captions like "More evidence of global warming, the Potomac iced over last night."

Things are slowly shifting now as younger Republicans begin to understand the

frightening future staring them in the face. Currently the party's split between a faction that wants to continue denying reality, and one which wants to stop denying reality while doing nothing effective about it.

The GOP's political correctness on climate change flows from a broader rejection of Enlightenment methods of figuring out reality. Limbaugh, whom Trump recently awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, has famously proclaimed that science is one of the "corners of deceit" used by liberals to create "The Universe of Lies." No prominent Republican politician has ever disavowed Limbaugh's view.

Beyond this is further rigid GOP political correctness on almost all issues. A Republican politician must publicly profess belief in American exceptionalism. Cutting taxes causes government revenue to go up. Any increase in taxes on the rich and corporations will cause economic devastation. Evolution is a lie. Abortion is a titanic moral evil. Trump is a super-duper president. They have a great idea for bringing low-cost, high-quality health care to every citizen but don't want to mention it right now and ruin the secret.

But facts don't care about conservatives' feelings. Our Republican-led coronavirus carnage is a preview of what's coming with the climate crisis.

Police

With millions of people turning out in demonstrations against police brutality, there are some obvious questions we should be asking ourselves: Why are cops acting this way? Why are the so-called bad apples never removed? No politicians or TV hosts are providing the simple answer: political correctness.

Police officers will almost never report another officer mistreating a civilian. This is understandable, since the best case for these "snitches" is usually having their careers destroyed. Some, such as the NYPD's Adrian Schoolcraft, fare even worse. In 2009, after Schoolcraft found that his supervisors were manipulating crime statistics, his fellow cops broke into his apartment, abducted him, and committed him to a psychiatric hospital. Whatever you want to say about Oberlin's student council, they're not doing that.

Police department PC has been enabled by another layer of conservative political correctness on top of it. Until recently, the idea that police routinely engage in

unjustifiable violence, and then lie about it, was generally unutterable for an American politician. Then there was even higher-level layer of PC on top of that in U.S. culture: Reality shows have continually glorified cops engaging in barbarity, and in scripted shows, there's no greater cliché than hero cops.

For 100 years, various commissions charged with police reform have come and gone. Most often any gains are minor and prone to backsliding. The only way to change reality is to face reality, not live in a comfortable fantasy concocted by right-wing PC.

And So Much More

All of that is just a few waves in America's never-ending flood of right-wing political correctness. Can the surgeon general suggest that drug legalization should be studied, and perhaps children should be taught about masturbation? Nope. Can you work for the Department of Agriculture and deliver an honest speech about your life without the right misrepresenting it and getting you fired? No. Can CBS broadcast a miniseries about Ronald Reagan that lightly fictionalizes the grotesque response of his administration to AIDS? Sorry; that has to be moved to a much smaller audience on Showtime. Can you tell the truth as you see it? No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

But even the endless concrete examples of conservative PC are not the end of the problem. Right-wing political correctness so hobbles our political imagination that we don't even dream of having debates on the deepest, most important problems of our lives. Imagine politicians or New York Times op-ed columnists or corporate TV hosts asking simple questions like:

- If we followed the law, would the most powerful people in America, including Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and most Wall Street CEOs be in jail?
- Is advertising all lies that are warping our humanity? If so, should we get rid of it?
- Is there any way to heal the wounds of 500 years of European colonialism?
- Can we wind down the American empire without destroying the whole world in the process?
- Even if we slow down the effects of the climate crisis, will capitalism still destroy the biosphere on which all human civilization depends?

There aren't any easy answers here, but let's at least be honest about the problem. If we're going to talk about political correctness, let's start with the truth about the kind of PC that matters most: the political correctness that is literally killing us.

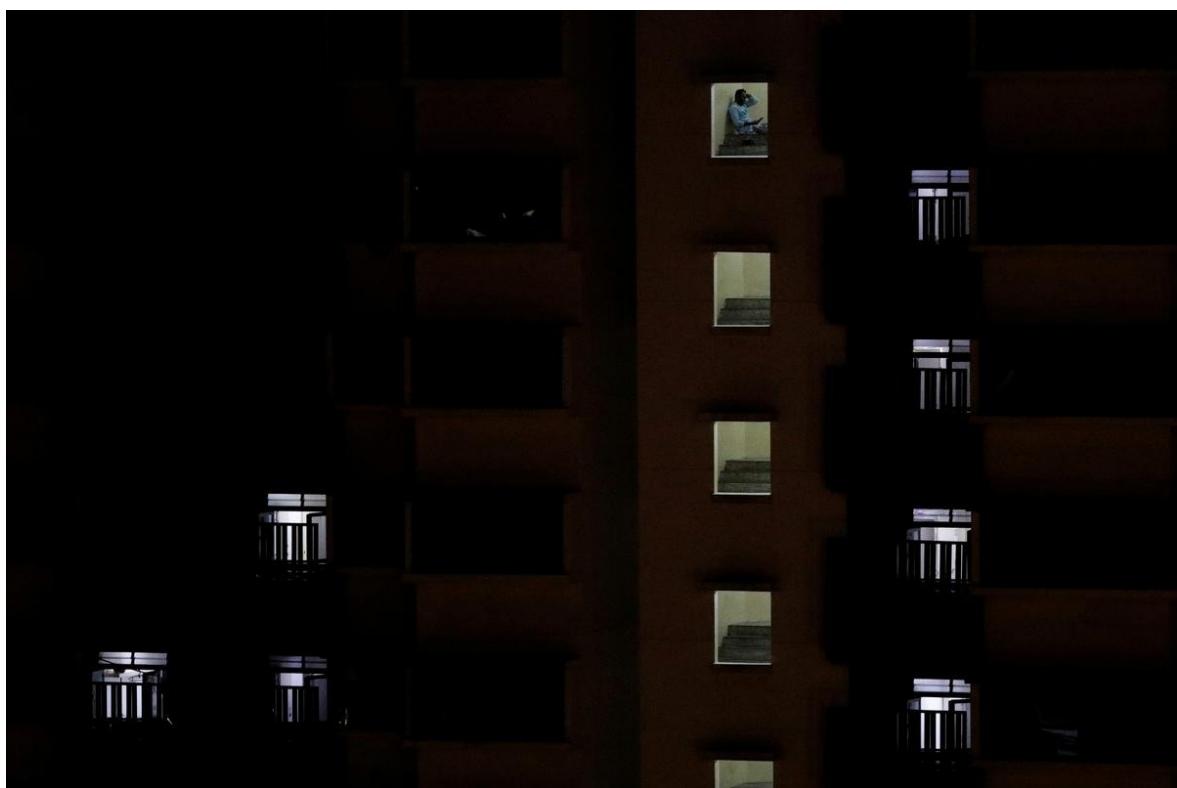
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Singapore migrant worker mental health in spotlight after self harm incident

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SINGAPORE (Reuters) - A migrant in Singapore who self-harmed and was pictured bloodied in a stairwell has heightened concerns over the mental health of thousands of low-paid workers confined to dormitories in the city-state due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



A migrant worker sits outside his room in a dormitory amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Singapore April 30, 2020.

In April, Singapore sealed off sprawling housing blocks where its vast population of mainly South Asian labourers live in crowded bunk rooms, in an

effort to ring-fence a surge in virus cases among the workers.

Four months on, some dormitories remain under quarantine, and even migrants who have been declared virus-free have had their movements restricted and face uncertainty over the jobs on which their families back home depend.

Rights groups say this has taken a heavy mental toll on workers, pointing to recent reports that migrants have been detained under the mental health act after videos showed them perched precariously on rooftops and high window ledges.

“We’ve heard of the extreme distress due to the inability to provide for families, inability to service debts to money lenders and banks and inability to fund medical care for children and elderly parents,” said Deborah Fordyce, president of migrant rights group, Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2).

“Many of the workers now say that the mental anguish is a more serious problem than the virus.”

Singapore has recorded over 53,000 COVID-19 cases, mainly from dormitories in which around 300,000 workers from Bangladesh, India and China are housed. Only 27 people have died from the disease in the city-state.

Authorities have said they expect to lift quarantines on all dormitories this month, with the exception of some blocks serving as quarantine zones, and that 89% of workers have either recovered or are virus-free.

But reports and images published in local media on Wednesday of a man in blood-stained clothing at the foot of some stairs have fuelled concerns about the mental toll of the lockdowns.

Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower - which has overseen the quarantines - said it was aware of the incident in which a worker had “harmed himself”, adding that he was now in a “safe and stable condition”. Police said the 36-year-old man was detained under the mental health act.

Checks had found there was no indication the man was in distress prior to the incident or was owed any salary, the ministry said in a statement, urging workers not to “act rashly” and reach out to non-governmental organisations for help.

The ministry did not immediately have further comment, but referred to previous

remarks saying it was working with NGOs to address mental health needs of migrants by providing services including counselling.

Reporting by John Geddie; Editing by Lincoln Feast

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Thug convicted after two-year homophobic campaign against his cousin

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A man who waged a two-year homophobic hate campaign against his cousin tried to blame his victim's "bad manners" in a court appearance.

Mahir Eroglu, 45, bombarded his cousin with homophobic abuse in a series of phone calls and text messages over the course of two years.

He was also charged with stalking his cousin, with reported incidents in Best Kebab in Keptie Street, Arbroath and Marmaris in Peterhead.

Eroglu, from Peterhead, Scotland, pleaded guilty yesterday before Sheriff

Gregor Murray at Forfar to the charges, *The Courier and Advertiser* reports.

The man threatened violence against his cousin and told him his business – a kebab shop – would be damaged.

Peterhead man Mahir Eroglu claimed he enacted a two-year homophobic hate campaign because of his cousin's 'bad manners'.

Eroglu's campaign of hate began on 1 March, 2018, and ended on 22 April of this year.

He initially represented himself in court, where he claimed that he had initiated the campaign of hate because of his cousin's "bad manners".

Whatever may be the cultural perception in your homeland of your cousin's relationship, it does not entitle you in this country to seek to abuse and threaten him.

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Trans Traveller reveals the harsh reality of living through the pandemic

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A solidarity fund to combat the effect of the pandemic on isolation and mental health has been launched by Traveller Pride to support trans and non-binary Travellers.

Traveller Pride, which made history at Pride in London last year as the first Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) group to march in a UK Pride parade, announced the new solidarity fund this week.

The UK's network for LGBT+ Gypsies and Travellers said the trans solidarity fund was aimed at counteracting the negative effects of COVID-19 on people's wellbeing, especially given the current negative discourse about trans people in the UK and uncertainty for Travellers with "the Home Office's renewed interest

in criminalising Nomadism”.

“The situation for many of us is bleak right now,” said Tyler Hatwell, the founder of Traveller Pride. “There’s a hostility in the air around our identities which is worsened by the isolation and fear due to COVID.

“Many of us have jobs which have been gutted by lockdown and so we’re pleased to be able to offer some tangible services to people in this moment.”

Traveller Pride also announces free, ‘culturally aware’ LGBT+ therapy service.

As well as the trans and non-binary solidarity fund, Traveller Pride is also launching a free therapy service for LGBT+ Travellers, where people can “be heard”.

“A lot of people may be reluctant to engage in therapy,” Tyler said, “worrying that they will be rejected due to their sexuality or because they’re a Traveller. We are first giving free training to any interested therapists to ensure we are getting people with a good level of cultural awareness.”

Trans Travellers can apply for the solidarity fund – with pots of up to £50 per person available – on the Traveller Pride website. The idea is for funds to be used for something material that will help people feel more at ease in themselves, such as binders, packers, make-up, clothes or anything else that makes transitioning more accessible to trans and non-binary Travellers.

James*, a trans man who wished to remain anonymous out of concerns his neighbours would find out he is trans and a Traveller, told *PinkNews* that being a trans Traveller in the UK right now is like “how a mouse feels when it’s standing on the trap, but hasn’t sprung the wire yet”.

“Any little movement is going to inevitably trip the spring, and we’ll be blamed for not stepping carefully enough, or for being too keen on cheese, rather than putting the blame squarely on the person who chose to convince the public that we’re dangerous vermin, and set the trap,” he said.

Living at the intersection of two minority groups is also “a bit of a lonely feeling”, James added. “There’s a common stat that comfortable, safe,

appropriate housing and land could be provided for every Traveller in the UK with a square mile of land. I worked out that, statistically, every trans Traveller in the UK could fit into an average-sized church hall.”

Travellers ‘particularly vulnerable’ during pandemic, government admits.

In April, the government admitted that Travellers are “particularly vulnerable and have the potential to be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19”, but left providing support up to local authorities.

While James told *PinkNews* he’s been “extremely lucky to be housed in bricks”, his friends and family living roadside or on sites have suffered violence, water supplies being turned off – making it difficult to control the spread of COVID-19 infection – evictions, and “blanket injunctions”, which are when a council bans Travellers from stopping anywhere in the local area, often at short notice.

“Obviously,” he added, “during the pandemic, if you’re not allowed to travel, but not allowed to stop, you quickly end up in sticky legal and practical territory.”

And for Travellers who are also trans, there can also be pandemic-related challenges relating to their gender identity.

“Many trans Travellers who usually wouldn’t spend much time at home with their parents have been crammed back into close quarters with them, which is inconvenient at best and an absolute nightmare if your family isn’t supportive, or don’t know that you’re trans,” he said.

Tyler added that the community-led Traveller Pride hopes that the trans solidarity fund and free therapy sessions will “provide some relief, either a space where you can be heard or something material to help you feel more at ease as yourself which can be so vital at a time when we’re so often stripped of personhood in the popular imagination.”

“As a trans person,” James said, “it can feel very vulnerable and disorienting to be seen ‘wrongly’ by others – not to mention that it’s dangerous, when safety can rely on passing as cis.

“Being unable to get away from other people can really heighten that stress – I

know trans men who have gone from binding just at work, to staying in their binder from when they get up at 8am to when they go back to their trailer at bedtime, which is incredibly dangerous, and trans women reporting going through make-up at twice the normal speed, from never getting time alone to go bare-faced.

“Hopefully, the trans solidarity fund will help to cover that kind of expense, as well as maybe providing a bit of a bright spot in a dark time – letting other trans GRT people know that they’re not alone, there are more of us out here, and we want to help them.”

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Uighur model sends rare video from Chinese detention

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An image sent by Merden Ghappar appears to show him handcuffed in a cell

Merden Ghappar was used to posing for the camera.

As a model for the massive Chinese online retailer Taobao, the 31-year-old was well paid to flaunt his good looks in slick promotional videos for clothing brands.

But one video of Mr Ghappar is different. Instead of a glitzy studio or fashionable city street, the backdrop is a bare room with grubby walls and steel mesh on the window. And in place of the posing, Mr Ghappar sits silently with

an anxious expression on his face.

Holding the camera with his right hand, he reveals his dirty clothes, his swollen ankles, and a set of handcuffs fixing his left wrist to the metal frame of the bed - the only piece of furniture in the room.



The video Uighur model Mergan Ghappar filmed inside China's detention system.

The video of Mr Ghappar, along with a number of accompanying text messages also passed to the BBC, together provide a chilling and extremely rare first-hand account of China's highly secure and secretive detention system - sent directly from the inside.

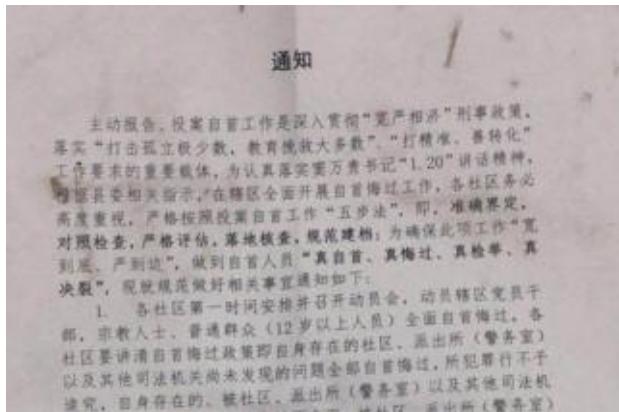
The material adds to the body of evidence documenting the impact of China's fight against what it calls the "three evil forces" of separatism, terrorism, and extremism in the country's far western region of Xinjiang.

Over the past few years, credible estimates suggest, more than one million Uighurs and other minorities have been forced into a network of highly secure camps in Xinjiang that China has insisted are voluntary schools for anti-extremism training.

Thousands of children have been separated from their parents and, recent research shows, women have been forcibly subjected to methods of birth control.

In addition to the clear allegations of torture and abuse, Mr Ghappar's account appears to provide evidence that, despite China's insistence that most re-education camps have been closed, Uighurs are still being detained in significant numbers and held without charge.

It also contains new details about the huge psychological pressure placed on Uighur communities, including a document he photographed which calls on children as young as 13 to "repent and surrender".



Part of a document sent by Merdan Ghappar calling on children to 'repent and surrender'

And with Xinjiang currently experiencing a spike in the number of coronavirus infections, the dirty and crowded conditions he describes highlight the serious risk of contagion posed by this kind of mass detention during a global pandemic.

The BBC sent detailed requests for comment to the Chinese Foreign Ministry and Xinjiang authorities but neither responded.

Mr Ghappar's family, who have not heard from him since the messages stopped five months ago, are aware that the release of the four minute, thirty-eight second video of him in his cell might increase the pressure and punishment he faces.

But they say it is their last hope, both to highlight his case and the plight of the

Uighurs in general.

His uncle, Abdulhakim Ghappar, who now lives in the Netherlands, believes the video could galvanise public opinion in the same way that footage of the police treatment of George Floyd became a powerful symbol of racial discrimination in the US.

"They have both faced brutality for their race," he says.

"But while in America people are raising their voices, in our case there is silence."

In 2009, Merdan Ghappar - like many Uighurs at that time - left Xinjiang to seek opportunity in China's wealthier cities in the east.

Having studied dance at Xinjiang Arts University, he found work first as a dancer and then, a few years later, as a model in the southern Chinese city of Foshan. Friends say Mr Ghappar could earn up to 10,000 Rmb (£1,000) per day.

His story reads like an advert for the country's dynamic, booming economy and President Xi Jinping's "China Dream". But the Uighurs, with their Turkic language, Islamic faith and ethnic ties to the peoples and cultures of central Asia, have long been viewed as an object of suspicion by Chinese rulers and faced discrimination in wider society.

Mr Ghappar's relatives say that Mr Ghappar was told it would be best for his modelling career to downplay his Uighur identity and refer to his facial features as "half-European".



Merden Chappar moved from Xinjiang in 2009 to pursue a modelling career

And although he had earned enough money to buy a sizeable apartment, they say he was unable to register it in his own name, instead having to use the name of a Han Chinese friend.

But those injustices now seem mild by comparison with what was to come.

Ever since two brutal attacks targeting pedestrians and commuters in Beijing in 2013 and the city of Kunming in 2014 - blamed by China on Uighur separatists - the state has begun to view Uighur culture as not only suspicious but seditious.

By 2018, when the state had come up with its answer - the sprawling system of camps and jails built rapidly and extensively across Xinjiang - Mr Ghappar was still living in Foshan, where his life was about to take an abrupt turn for the worse.

In August that year, he was arrested and sentenced to 16 months in prison for selling cannabis, a charge his friends insist was trumped up.

Whether truly guilty or not, there was little chance of an acquittal, with statistics showing that more than 99% of defendants brought before Chinese criminal courts are convicted.



Up to a million Muslims are thought to have been detained in prison camps across Xinjiang

But, upon his release in November 2019, any relief he felt at having served his time was short lived. Little more than a month later, police knocked on his door, telling him he needed to return to Xinjiang to complete a routine registration procedure.

The BBC has seen evidence that appears to show he was not suspected of any further offence, with authorities simply stating that "he may need to do a few days of education at his local community" - a euphemism for the camps.

On 15 January this year, his friends and family were allowed to bring warm clothes and his phone to the airport, before he was put on a flight from Foshan and escorted by two officers back to his home city of Kucha in Xinjiang.

There is evidence of other Uighurs being forced to return home, either from elsewhere in China or from abroad, and Mr Ghappar's family were convinced that he had disappeared into the re-education camps.

But more than a month later they received some extraordinary news.

Somehow, he had managed to get access to his phone and was using it to communicate with the outside world.

Merdan Ghappar's text messages, said to have been sent from the same room as his self-shot video, paint an even more terrifying picture of his experience after arriving in Xinjiang.

Written via the Chinese social media app WeChat, he explains that he was first kept in a police jail in Kucha.

"I saw 50 to 60 people detained in a small room no bigger than 50 square metres, men on the right, women on the left," he writes.

"Everyone was wearing a so-called 'four-piece-suit', a black head sack, handcuffs, leg shackles and an iron chain connecting the cuffs to the shackles."

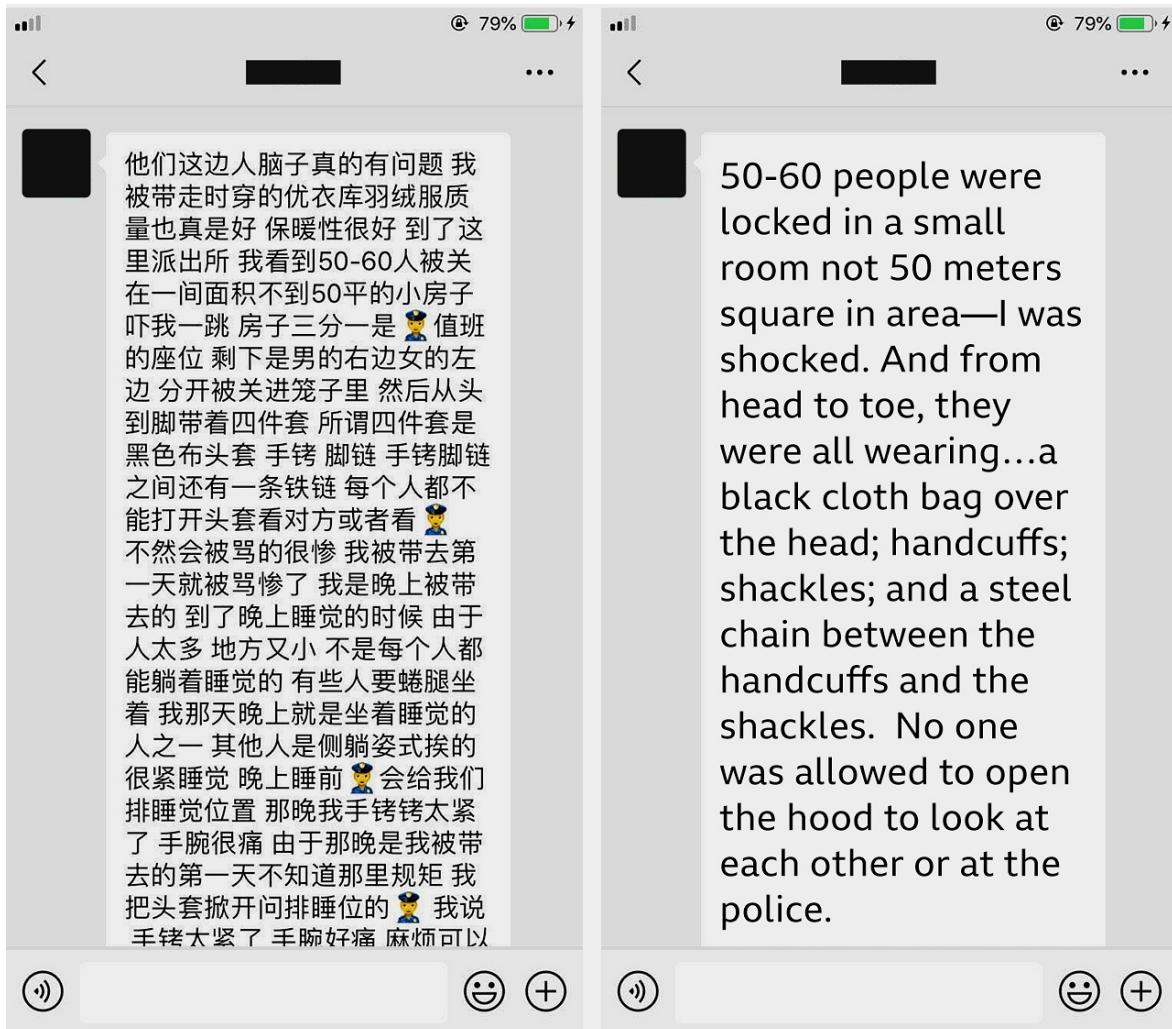
China's use of these combined hand and leg cuffs has been criticised in the past by human rights groups.

Mr Ghappar was made to wear the device and, joining his fellow inmates in a caged-off area covering around two-thirds of the cell, he found there was no room to lie down and sleep.

"I lifted the sack on my head and told the police officer that the handcuffs were so tight they hurt my wrists," he writes in one of the text messages.

"He shouted fiercely at me, saying 'If you remove your hood again, I will beat you to death'. And after that I dared not to talk," he adds.

"Dying here is the last thing I want."



He writes about the constant sound of screaming, coming from elsewhere in the jail. "Interrogation rooms," he suggested.

And he describes squalid and unsanitary conditions - inmates suffering from lice while sharing just a handful of plastic bowls and spoons between them all.

"Before eating, the police would ask people with infectious diseases to put their hands up and they'd be the last to eat," he writes.

"But if you want to eat earlier, you can remain silent. It's a moral issue, do you understand?"

Then, on the 22 January, with China at the height of its coronavirus crisis, news of the massive, nationwide attempt to control the epidemic reached the prisoners.

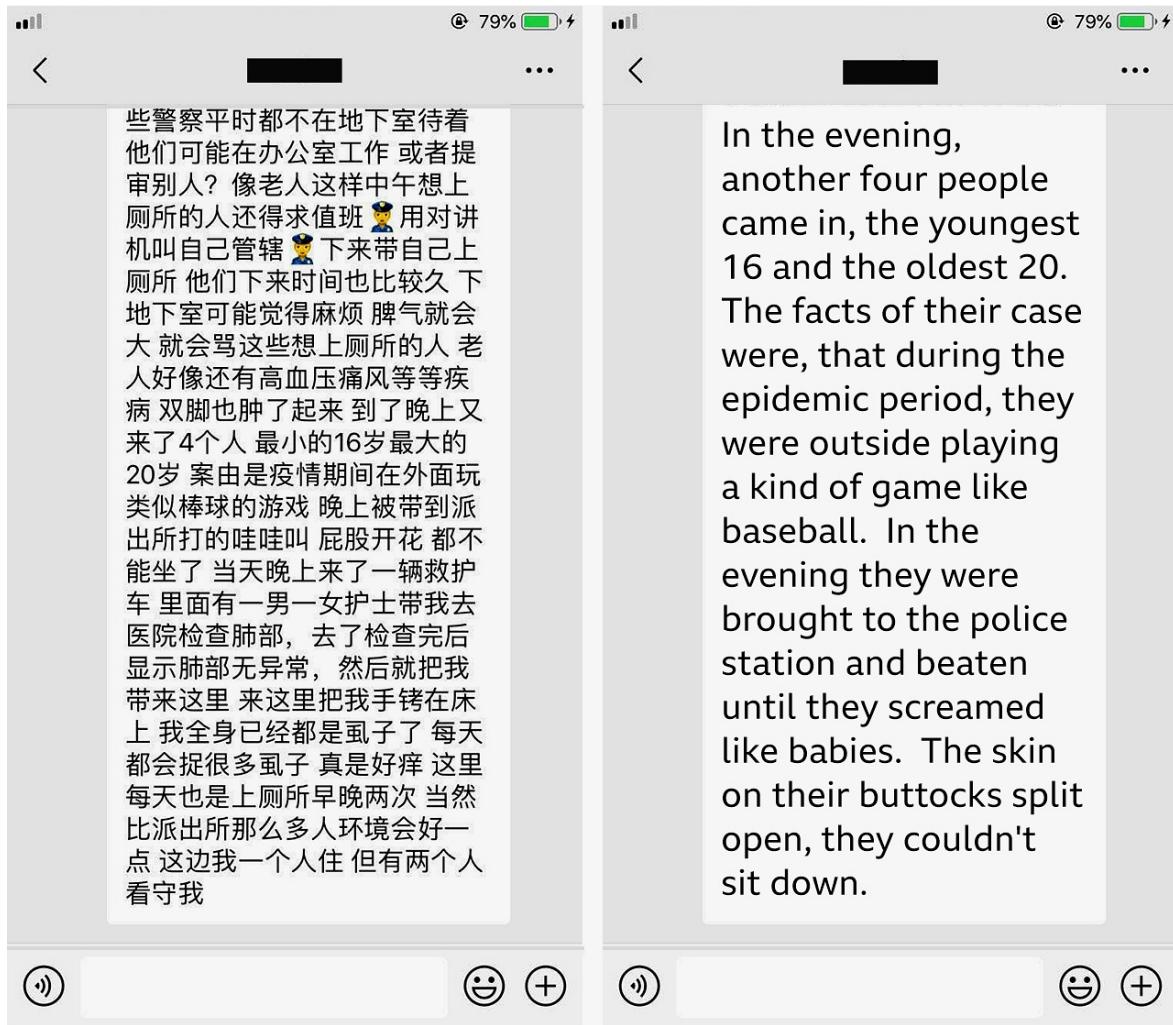
Mr Ghappar's account suggests the enforcement of quarantine rules were much stricter in Xinjiang than elsewhere. At one point, four young men were brought into the cell aged between 16 and 20.

"During the epidemic period they were found outside playing a kind of game like baseball," he writes.

"They were brought to the police station and beaten until they screamed like babies, the skin on their buttocks split open and they couldn't sit down."

The policemen began making all the prisoners wear masks, although they still had to remain hooded in the stuffy, over-crowded cell.

"A hood and a mask - there was even less air," he writes.



When the officers later came around with thermometers, several inmates including Mr Ghappar, registered higher than the normal body temperature of 37C (98.6F).

Still wearing his "four-piece suit", he was moved upstairs to another room where the guards kept the windows open at night, making the air so cold that he could not sleep.

There, he said, the sounds of torture were much clearer.

"One time I heard a man screaming from morning until evening," he says.

A few days later, the prisoners were loaded onto minibuses and sent away to an unknown location. Mr Ghappar, who was suffering from a cold and with his

nose running, was separated from the rest and taken to the facility seen in the video he sent - a place he described as an "epidemic control centre". Once there, he was handcuffed to the bed.

"My whole body is covered in lice. Every day I catch them and pick them off from my body - it's so itchy," he writes.

"Of course, the environment here is better than the police station with all those people. Here I live alone, but there are two people guarding me."

It was the slightly more relaxed regime that gave him, he says, the opportunity he needed to get word out. His phone appears to have remained unnoticed by the authorities among his personal belongings, some of which he was given access to in his new place of imprisonment.

After 18 days inside the police jail, he was suddenly and secretly in touch with the outside world.

For a few days he described his experiences. Then, suddenly, the messages stopped.

Nothing has been heard from Mr Ghappar since. The authorities have provided no formal notification of his whereabouts, nor any reason for his continued detention.

It is impossible to independently verify the authenticity of the text messages. But experts say that the video footage appears to be genuine, in particular because of the propaganda messages that can be heard in the background.

"Xinjiang has never been an 'East Turkistan'", says an announcement in both Uighur and Chinese from a loudspeaker outside his window.

"Separatist forces at home and abroad have politicised this geographical term and called for those who speak Turkic languages and believe in Islam to unite," the announcement says.

James Millward, a professor of history at Georgetown University and an expert

on China's policies in Xinjiang, translated and analysed Mr Ghappar's text messages for the BBC.

He says they are consistent with other well documented cases, from his transportation back to Xinjiang and the initial processing in crowded, unsanitary conditions.

"This firsthand description of the police holding cell is very, very vivid," Professor Millward says.

"He writes in very good Chinese and gives, frankly, a lot of horrific detail about the way these people are treated. So, it's quite a rare source."

Dr Adrian Zenz, a senior fellow in China studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, and another leading Xinjiang scholar, suggests that the video's real value is what it says about the Chinese government claim that the camp system is being wound down.

"It is extremely significant," Dr Zenz says. "This testimony shows that the whole system of detaining people, sorting them and then feeding them into extra judicial internment... that this is very much ongoing."



China's ambassador: "There is no such concentration camp in Xinjiang"

Another layer of credibility is provided by a photograph of a document that sources say Mr Ghappar sent after finding it on the floor of one of the epidemic control centre toilets.

The document refers to a speech made by the Communist Party Secretary of Aksu Prefecture, and the date and location suggest it could well have still been circulating in official circles in the city of Kucha around the time of Mr Ghappar's detention.

The document's call for children as young as 13 to be encouraged to "repent for their mistakes and voluntarily surrender" appears to be new evidence of the extent of China's monitoring and control of the thoughts and behaviours of the Uighurs and other minorities.

"I think this is the first time I've seen an official notice of minors being held responsible for their religious activity," says Dr Darren Byler, an anthropologist at the University of Colorado, Boulder who has researched and written extensively about the Uighurs.

Despite the risk that the publication of Merdan Ghappar's video and text messages will put him at risk of longer or harsher punishment, those close to him say they no longer have any choice.

"Staying silent will not help him either," says his uncle, Abdulhakim Ghappar, from his home in Amsterdam.



Demonstrators in Paris hold signs calling for an end to the Uighur "genocide"

Abdulhakim says he kept in regular touch with his nephew before he was taken into detention, and he believes - as has been well documented in other cases - that this overseas connection is one of the reasons Mr Ghappar was detained.

"Yes, I am 100% sure about it," he said. "He was detained just because I am abroad and I take part in protests against Chinese human rights abuses."

Abdulhakim's activism, which began in 2009 in Xinjiang when he helped hand out flyers ahead of a large-scale protest in the city of Urumqi, was the reason he fled to the Netherlands in the first place.

The protest in Urumqi later spilled into a series of violent riots which, Chinese authorities say, claimed nearly 200 lives and are seen as another one of the major turning points towards its tightening control over the region.

Told that the Chinese authorities were seeking his arrest, Abdulhakim got himself a passport and left. He has never been back.

He insists that all of his political activities, both inside China and abroad, have been peaceful, and his nephew, he says, has never shown any interest in politics at all.

The list of questions sent by the BBC to the Chinese authorities asked them to confirm whether Merdan Ghappar or his uncle are suspected of any crime in China.

It also asked why Mr Ghappar was shackled to a bed, and for a response from the authorities to his other allegations of mistreatment and torture.

None of the questions was answered.

Wherever Merdan Ghappar is now, one thing is clear.

Whether his earlier conviction for a drugs offence was just or not, his current detention is proof that even well-educated and relatively successful Uighurs can become a target of the internment system.

"This young man, as a fashion model, has a successful career already," said Professor Millward. "He speaks wonderful Chinese, writes very well and uses fancy phrases, so clearly this is not someone who needs education for a vocational purpose."

Dr Adrian Zenz argues that this is the point of the system.

"It doesn't actually matter so much what the background of the person is," he says.

"What matters is that their loyalty has been tested by the system. At some point almost everybody is going to experience some form of internment or re-education, everybody is going to be subjected to this system."

The Chinese government denies that it is persecuting the Uighur population. After heavy criticism over the issue recently from the US, a spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry, Hua Chunying, invoked the death of George Floyd, saying that Uighurs in Xinjiang were free in comparison to African Americans in the US.

But for Merdan Ghappar's family, haunted by the image of him chained to a bed in an unknown location, there is a connection between the two cases.

"When I saw the George Floyd video it reminded me of my nephew's own video," says Merdan's uncle Abdulhakim.

"The entire Uighur people are just like George Floyd now," he says. "We can't breathe."

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