

Social Justice Watch 0831

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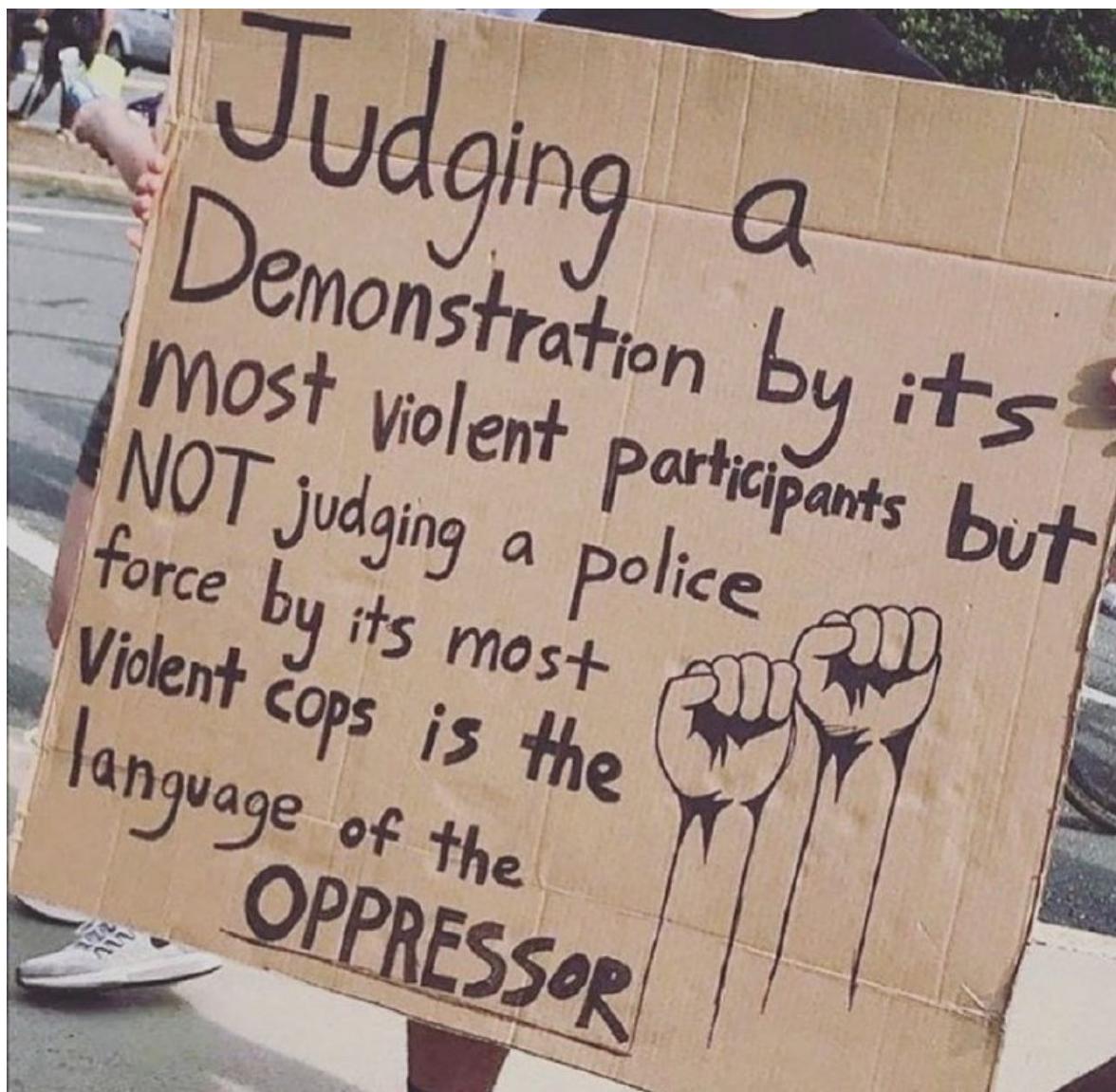
Andrew Lawrence
@ndrew_lawrence



Wow, weird how the same people who said they wanted "peaceful protests" are now Very Upset at NBA players for protesting in literally the most peaceful way possible



Germany is launching a new experiment in basic income [source](#)





[**#BREAKING**](#) Belarus police arrest tens of protesters in opposition march: AFP
[source](#)



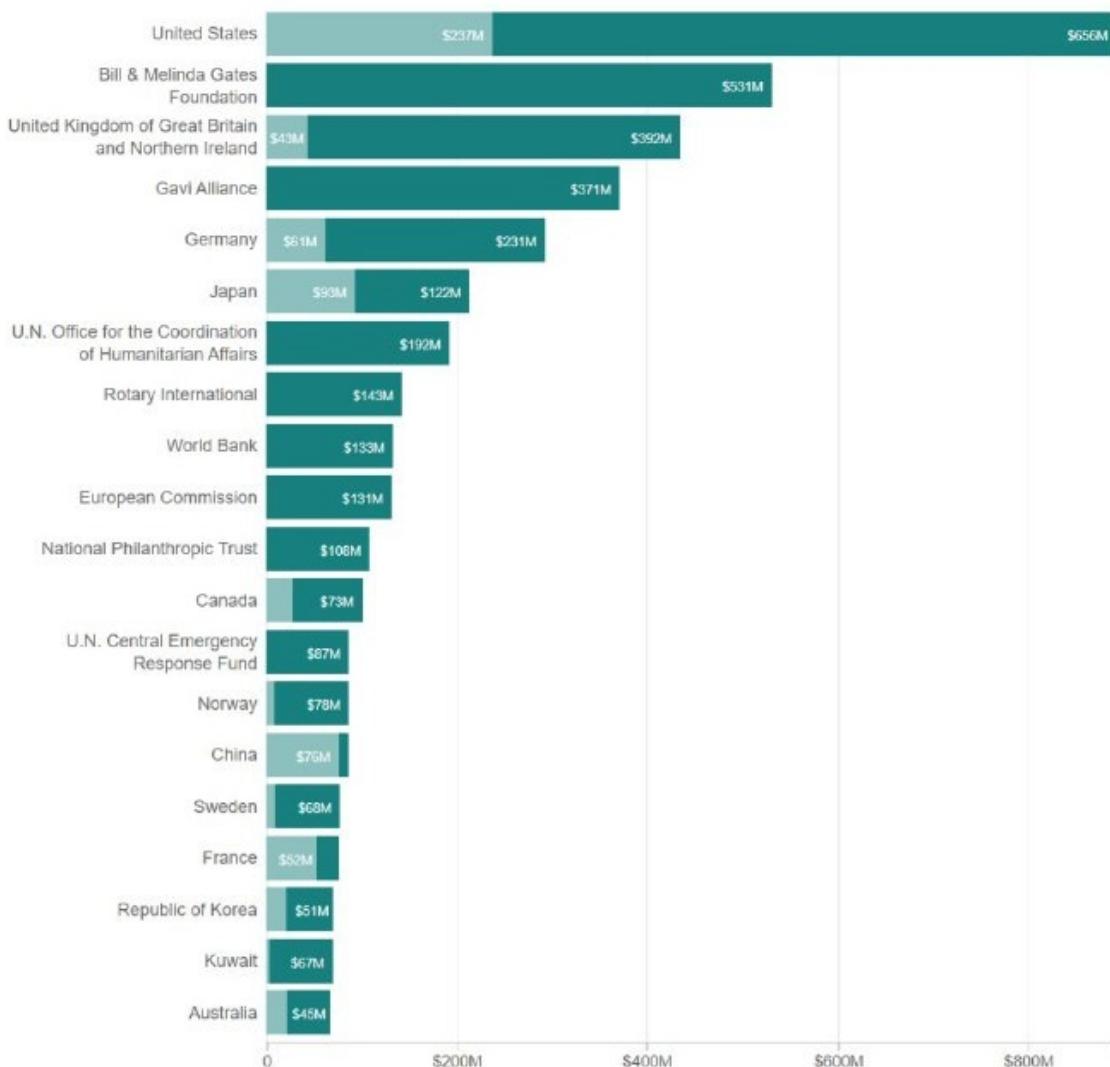
😊 **Narcissa Stique** 😊
@JMarcusGuevarra

Literally no gay person has approached me and forced me to be gay. I did, however, have some people from the church approach me and guilt me into joining their religion saying that I am going to hell for my choices. So who's forcing whose lifestyle now?

Last Year's Top Contributors To The World Health Organization

For the two-year budget cycle of 2018 and 2019, the U.S. government pledged to contribute \$893 million to WHO's budget – consisting of "assessed contributions" (dues paid by member countries) and voluntary contributions.

 Assessed Voluntary



Source: *World Health Organization*

Credit: *Stephanie Adeline/NPR*

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Why you should care about the Hatch Act [source](#)

telegra.ph/This-Is-Silicon-Valley-08-27

Telegraph

This Is Silicon Valley

I am privileged to live in Silicon Valley. I was born here, I grew up here, and now I work here as a product manager at Google. The weather is lovely, the crime rate is low, and the schools are well funded. The adults have cushy jobs and the kids have endless...

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/stories-46199347>

BBC News

How you can stop the spread of fake news

Five top tips from professional fact checker Maarten Schenk

<https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>

Mapping Police Violence

America's most comprehensive database of killings by police. Learn the facts about police brutality and how to address it.

telegra.ph/Taking-Hard-Line-Greece-Turns-Back-Migrants-by-Abandoning-Them-at-Sea-08-29

Telegraph

Taking Hard Line, Greece Turns Back Migrants by Abandoning Them at Sea
RHODES, Greece — The Greek government has secretly expelled more than 1,000 refugees from Europe's borders in recent months, sailing many of them to the edge of Greek territorial waters and then abandoning them in inflatable and sometimes overburdened life...

My cousin's salary was already around 8k RMB in Ghulja city as an insurece saleswoman. For what reason did you think she needs job skills ? [@ziba116](#)'s mom is a doctor, [@akida_p](#)'s mom is a scholar and [@RayhanAsat](#)'s brother is an IT genius. Why on Earth did you take them? [link source](#)

Twitter

Chinese Embassy in US

Vocational training programs are provided in #Xinjiang to remedy lack of occupational skills and employment difficulties. The education and training centers regard vocational skills as an important channel to improve the trainees' employability. <https://t.co/uUYzLEYEJM>

1. Most (alt-right bishops, Youtube stars, evangelical pastors) started their speeches by announcing the enormous number of children they had fathered – as though success comes with the capacity to ejaculate.
2. Like Jung, Gramsci showed that our subconscious shapes how we see the world. But unlike Jung, he was able to explain how our subconscious is itself shaped by the world: not by mystical interventions or mythical memories, but by human institutions, like schools, churches, armies and the arts.
3. The alternative to fighting depression is to see it as a business opportunity. Neoliberalism makes millions miserable, producing vast markets for fake cures. Pablo Escobar, Billy Graham, Mark Zuckerberg and Jordan Peterson all got rich hawking false solutions to the crisis of disconnection.
4. The problem is isolation in communities torn apart by brutal inequality, a world where we're told to run ever-faster to keep up.
5. Peterson's message isn't just "Don't change the world." It's "Don't change

who the world tells you that you are.” And it does profound damage.

telegra.ph/Queer-Eye-Jordan-Peterson-and-the-battle-for-depressed-men-08-29-2

Telegraph

‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men

‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men Progressives need to learn from the Netflix show’s battles against toxic masculinity. And the Fab Five need to recruit a trade union organiser.

telegra.ph/Germany-is-launching-a-new-experiment-in-basic-income-08-29

Telegraph

Germany is launching a new experiment in basic income

Starting this month, life is about to get easier for 120 Germans. They will receive 1,200 euros (\$1,430) every month for three years as part of a new experiment in basic income.

telegra.ph/The-end-of-liberal-democracy-in-the-Philippines-08-29-2

Telegraph

The end of liberal democracy in the Philippines

On July 3 2020, despite waves of popular resistance and incisive legal critique, President Rodrigo Duterte passed an Anti-Terrorism law that would give the executive government sweeping powers to imprison and repress political activists under the guise of...

lausan.hk/2020/beyond-politics-of-survival

Lausan

Beyond a 'politics of survival': Transforming Singapore's migrant domestic worker labor regime - Lausan

Singapore must reckon with the centrality of indentured servitude to this “politics of survival” and to transform the conditions of its contemporary workforce.

Something is seriously wrong when a prosecutor agrees to release a person today if he pleads guilty but if he pleads not guilty and demands a jury trial he is too dangerous to be released and has to wait in jail for jury trials to reconvene while a deadly virus runs rampant. [source](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9v6givfTEA>

YouTube

Covid-19: why the economy could fare worse than you think | The Economist
Three months after lockdown was relaxed in China, its economy is now running at around 90% of normal levels. Although 90% may sound fine, for many it could be catastrophic. Read more here: <https://econ.st/2AeZ86k>

Further reading:

...

<https://lausan.hk/2020/11-articles-voice-of-hongkongers/>

Lausan

11 articles on revolution in the words of Hongkongers themselves - Lausan
On the one-year anniversary of the Prince Edward MTR attacks, revisit our writing and translating that center the voices of Hongkongers in struggle

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Germany is launching a new experiment in basic income

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Jürgen Schupp, left, a senior research fellow at the German Institute for Economic Research, is leading a new long-term study on basic income.

Starting this month, life is about to get easier for 120 Germans. They will receive 1,200 euros (\$1,430) every month for three years as part of a new experiment in basic income.

The general idea behind basic income — that the government should give every citizen a regular infusion of free money with no strings attached — has moved from the fringes into the mainstream over the past few years, with several countries running trials to test its effects.

The coronavirus pandemic has only made basic income more popular. With the crisis generating so much financial loss and uncertainty, advocates around the world are arguing that citizens desperately need some sort of guaranteed income. In the US, a coalition of mayors is pushing for this, while in Spain, monthly payments have been going to the nation's poorest families since June.

In Germany, the amount being given to the 120 participants in the new study is just above the country's poverty line. It certainly won't make them Rockefellers, but it may ease their experience during the pandemic. They will fill out questionnaires about how the basic income has affected their emotional wellbeing, home life, and work life. Their responses will then be compared with the responses of a control group: 1,380 people who are not receiving a basic income.

The German Institute for Economic Research is conducting the study. It is funded by 140,000 private donations collected by a nonprofit group called Mein Grundeinkommen.

That group has been active in this arena for years. In 2014, it used crowdfunding to set up a basic income raffle. By the end of 2019, it had awarded almost 500 basic incomes to people all over the world who had submitted their names. Each received about \$1,100 per month for a year. According to FastCompany, 80 percent of recipients said the income made them less anxious, more than half said it enabled them to continue their education, and 35 percent said they feel more motivated at work.

This is consistent with the evidence available so far about basic income, which suggests that it tends to boost happiness, health, school attendance, and trust in social institutions, while reducing crime. The effect on employment status is a bit more equivocal, but a major trial in Finland found that basic income doesn't seem to be a disincentive to finding work — a concern that critics have raised about basic income.

Still, those worries persist. And critics claim that a basic income could cheat economies out of productivity, and cheat individuals out of the sense of meaning that work can bring. Plus, they say, it's just plain unaffordable for the government to pay every citizen enough to live on regardless of whether they work. The evidence so far does not support these critiques.

Jürgen Schupp, who is directing the new experiment in Germany, told *Der Spiegel* that the study will allow everyone to have a more evidence-based debate.

"The debate about the basic income has so far been like a philosophical salon in good moments and a war of faith in bad times," he said. "It is — on both sides

— shaped by clichés: Opponents claim that with a basic income people would stop working in order to dull on the couch with fast food and streaming services. Proponents argue that people will continue to do fulfilling work, become more creative and charitable, and save democracy.”

Schupp said he wants to raise the quality of the debate by replacing clichés with empirical knowledge. That’s something everyone should be able to get behind, whatever their preexisting notions about basic income.

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Taking Hard Line, Greece Turns Back Migrants by Abandoning Them at Sea

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Many Greeks have grown frustrated as tens of thousands of asylum seekers languished on Greek islands. Now, evidence shows, a new conservative government has a new method of keeping them out.

RHODES, Greece — The Greek government has secretly expelled more than 1,000 refugees from Europe's borders in recent months, sailing many of them to the edge of Greek territorial waters and then abandoning them in inflatable and sometimes overburdened life rafts.

Since March, at least 1,072 asylum seekers have been dropped at sea by Greek officials in at least 31 separate expulsions, according to an analysis of evidence

by The New York Times from three independent watchdogs, two academic researchers and the Turkish Coast Guard. The Times interviewed survivors from five of those episodes and reviewed photographic or video evidence from all 31.

“It was very inhumane,” said Najma al-Khatib, a 50-year-old Syrian teacher, who says masked Greek officials took her and 22 others, including two babies, under cover of darkness from a detention center on the island of Rhodes on July 26 and abandoned them in a rudderless, motorless life raft before they were rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard.

“I left Syria for fear of bombing — but when this happened, I wished I’d died under a bomb,” she told The Times.

Illegal under international law, the expulsions are the most direct and sustained attempt by a European country to block maritime migration using its own forces since the height of the migration crisis in 2015, when Greece was the main thoroughfare for migrants and refugees seeking to enter Europe.

The Greek government denied any illegality.

“Greek authorities do not engage in clandestine activities,” said a government spokesman, Stelios Petsas. “Greece has a proven track record when it comes to observing international law, conventions and protocols. This includes the treatment of refugees and migrants.”



Since 2015, European countries like Greece and Italy have mainly relied on proxies, like the Turkish and Libyan governments, to head off maritime migration. What is different now is that the Greek government is increasingly taking matters into its own hands, watchdog groups and researchers say.

For example, migrants have been forced onto sometimes leaky life rafts and left to drift at the border between Turkish and Greek waters, while others have been left to drift in their own boats after Greek officials disabled their engines.

“These pushbacks are totally illegal in all their aspects, in international law and in European law,” said Prof. François Crépeau, an expert on international law and a former United Nations special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants.

“It is a human rights and humanitarian disaster,” Professor Crépeau added.

Greeks were once far more understanding of the plight of migrants. But many have grown frustrated and hostile after a half-decade in which other European countries offered Greece only modest assistance as tens of thousands of asylum seekers languished in squalid camps on overburdened Greek islands.

Since the election last year of a new conservative government under Prime

Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Greece has taken a far harder line against the migrants — often refugees from the war in Syria — who push off Turkish shores for Europe.

The harsher approach comes as tensions have mounted with Turkey, itself burdened with 3.6 million refugees from the Syrian war, far more than any other nation.

Greece believes that Turkey has tried to weaponize the migrants to increase pressure on Europe for aid and assistance in the Syrian War. But it has also added pressure on Greece at a time when the two nations and others spar over contested gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean.

For several days in late February and early March, the Turkish authorities openly bused thousands of migrants to the Greek land border in a bid to set off a confrontation, leading to the shooting of at least one Syrian refugee and the immediate extrajudicial expulsions of hundreds of migrants who made it to Greek territory.

For years, Greek officials have been accused of intercepting and expelling migrants, on a sporadic and infrequent basis, usually before the migrants manage to land their boats on Greek soil.

But experts say Greece's behavior during the pandemic has been far more systematic and coordinated. Hundreds of migrants have been denied the right to seek asylum even after they have landed on Greek soil, and they've been forbidden to appeal their expulsion through the legal system.

"They've seized the moment," Professor Crépeau said of the Greeks. "The coronavirus has provided a window of opportunity to close national borders to whoever they've wanted."

Emboldened by the lack of sustained criticism from the European Union, where the migration issue has roiled politics, Greece has hardened its approach in the eastern Mediterranean in recent months.

Migrants landing on the Greek islands from Turkey have frequently been forced onto sometimes leaky, inflatable life rafts, dropped at the boundary between Turkish and Greek waters, and left to drift until being spotted and rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard.

“This practice is totally unprecedented in Greece,” said Niamh Keady-Tabbal, a doctoral researcher at the Irish Center for Human Rights, and one of the first to document the phenomenon.

“Greek authorities are now weaponizing rescue equipment to illegally expel asylum seekers in a new, violent and highly visible pattern of pushbacks spanning several Aegean Islands,” Ms. Keady-Tabbal said.

Ms. al-Khatib, who recounted her ordeal for The Times, said she entered Turkey last November with her two sons, 14 and 12, fleeing the advance of the Syrian Army. Her husband, who had entered several weeks earlier, soon died of cancer, Ms. al-Khatib said.

With few prospects in Turkey, the family tried to reach Greece by boat three times this summer, failing once in May because their smuggler did not show up, and a second time in June after being intercepted in Greek waters and towed back to the Turkish sea border, she said.

On their third attempt, on July 23 at around 7 a.m., they landed on the Greek island of Rhodes, Ms. al-Khatib said, an account corroborated by four other passengers interviewed by The Times. They were detained by Greek police officers and taken to a small makeshift detention facility after handing over their identification documents.

Using footage filmed at this site by two passengers, a Times reporter was able to identify the facility’s location beside the island’s main ferry port and visit the camp.

A Coast Guard officer and an official at the island’s mayoralty both said the site falls under the jurisdiction of the Port Police, an arm of the Hellenic Coast Guard.

A Palestinian refugee, living in a disused slaughterhouse beside the camp, confirmed that Ms. al-Khatib had been there, recounting how he had spoken to her through the camp’s fence and bought her tablets to treat her hypertension, which Greek officials had refused to supply her.

On the evening of July 26, Ms. al-Khatib and the other detainees said that police officers had loaded them onto a bus, telling them they were being taken to a camp on another island, and then to Athens.

Instead, masked Greek officials transferred them to two vessels that ferried them out to sea before dropping them on rafts at the Turkish maritime border, she and other survivors said.

Amid choppy waves, the group, which included two babies, was forced to drain the raft using their hands as water slopped over the side, they said.

The group was rescued at 4:30 a.m. by the Turkish Coast Guard, according to a report by the Coast Guard that included a photograph of Ms. al-Khatib as she left the life raft.

Ms. al-Khatib tried to reach Greece for a fourth time, on Aug. 6, but said her boat was stopped off the island of Lesbos by Greek officials, who removed its fuel and towed it back to Turkish waters.

Some groups of migrants have been transferred to the life rafts even before landing on Greek soil.

On May 13, Amjad Naim, a 24-year-old Palestinian law student, was among a group of 30 migrants intercepted by Greek officials as they approached the shores of Samos, a Greek island close to Turkey.

The migrants were quickly transferred to two small life rafts that began to deflate under the weight of so many people, Mr. Naim said. Transferred to two other rafts, they were then towed back toward Turkey.

Videos captured by Mr. Naim on his phone show the two rafts being tugged across the sea by a large white vessel. Footage subsequently published by the Turkish Coast Guard shows the same two rafts being rescued by Turkish officials later in the day.

Migrants have also been left to drift in the boats they arrived on, after Greek officials disabled their engines, survivors and researchers say. And on at least two occasions, migrants have been abandoned on Ciplak, an uninhabited island within Turkish waters, instead of being placed on life rafts.

“Eventually the Turkish Coast Guard came to fetch us,” said one Palestinian survivor who was among a group abandoned on Ciplak in early July, and who sent videos of their time on the island. A report from the Turkish Coast Guard corroborated his account.

In parallel, several rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have documented how the Greek authorities have rounded up migrants living legally in Greece and secretly expelled them without legal recourse across the Evros River, which divides mainland Greece from Turkey.

Feras Fattouh, a 30-year-old Syrian X-ray technician, said he was arrested by the Greek police on July 24 in Igoumenitsa, a port in western Greece. Mr. Fattouh had been living legally in Greece since November 2019 with his wife and son, and showed The Times documents to prove it.

But after being detained by the police in Igoumenitsa, Mr. Fattouh said, he was robbed and driven about 400 miles east to the Turkish border, before being secretly put on a dinghy with 18 others and sent across the river to Turkey. His wife and son remain in Greece.

“Syrians are suffering in Turkey,” Mr. Fattouh said. “We’re suffering in Greece. Where are we supposed to go?”

Ylva Johansson, who oversees migration policy at the European Commission, the civil service for the European Union, said she was concerned by the accusations but had no power to investigate them.

“We cannot protect our European border by violating European values and by breaching people’s rights,” Ms. Johansson said in an email. “Border control can and must go hand in hand with respect for fundamental rights.”

Patrick Kingsley reported from Rhodes, Greece, and Karam Shoumali from Berlin.

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The end of liberal democracy in the Philippines

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President Rodrigo Duterte delivers a message at the Heroes Hall in Malacañan on September 12, 2016

On July 3 2020, despite waves of popular resistance and incisive legal critique, President Rodrigo Duterte passed an Anti-Terrorism law that would give the executive government sweeping powers to imprison and repress political activists under the guise of combating terrorism. These powers include the ability of the executive branch to authorize what amount to warrantless arrests, the arbitrary detention of those suspected of aiding or inciting terrorism for up to 24 days, and the complete supersession of judicial checks on presidential authority. Understandably, many Filipinos are concerned that the law's passage will usher in a new era of repression, akin to martial law under the Marcos dictatorship. Yet unlike the Marcos dictatorship, **Duterte's right wing populism stems from decades of liberal democracy that failed to address the economic needs of the Filipino people.**

The proponents of Philippine liberal democracy, from President Corazon “Cory” Aquino to her son Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino, essentially promised the Filipino people that poverty and economic inequality could be quelled through anti-corruption measures and liberal political reform. However, liberal reforms only ended up entrenching the institutional power of

political dynasties without meaningfully improving the lives of the most oppressed, providing the stage for Duterte's rise to power on a populist, anti-elite platform. The Anti-Terrorism Bill, now codified into law, is the resurgence of right wing populism, sprouting from the carcass of the EDSA Revolution's co-optation by the liberal elite.

In 1986, the People Power Revolution (also known as the EDSA revolution) led to the ousting of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the presidency of Corazon "Cory" Aquino. As the wife of assassinated senator and Marcos-opponent Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Cory's rise was hailed worldwide as the triumph of democracy against Marcos' dictatorial regime. She symbolized a newfound Filipino commitment to the ideals of liberal democracy, which were enshrined as principles in the 1987 Constitution. Yet despite Cory's widespread support, she was never able to unify the various political forces who challenged or who stood against the Marcos regime. Instead, her presidency is best understood as a tug-of-war between a wide range of coalitions who sought to influence the new spokesperson of the Filipino people.

Roughly, these coalitions can be divided up into the radical (primarily national democratic) left, who wanted to extend the promise of liberal democracy into genuine agrarian reform and economic justice; the more centrist upper-middle classes, which consisted of Church officials, and business leaders who despite welcoming an end to Marcos-era repression, only paid lip service to the ideals of free elections and speech; and right-wing military groups such as the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, whose aspirations for a strong repressive state in the mold of Marcos led them to launch a series of failed coups against the Aquinos. In the end, Cory's own strong ties to landholding interests (her family's landholdings included the over 6,000 hectare sugar plantation Hacienda Luisita), coupled with internal strife within the Philippine left, led her government on a path of socially conservative, economically neoliberal policy making coupled with a public commitment to liberal democratic norms.

The national democratic left, who broke decisively with Cory after she oversaw the killing of 21 peasants protesting for land reform on Mendiola Bridge in January 1987, remained the most vocal critics of her new liberal order. They rightfully saw that Cory's commitment to democratic principles and constitutional freedoms meant nothing if those principles were not coupled with economic justice and genuine agrarian reform. Yet the left's own political

legitimacy had been weakened after they failed to participate in the broad coalition that helmed the People Power Revolution. As such, their critique of Cory went unheeded by the government. Despite reforming the Constitution to place greater checks on presidential power, she simultaneously continued the neoliberal economic agenda of Marcos' regime.

Today, around one million Filipinos leave the country each year to work abroad.

Cory's now infamous refusal to repudiate the national debt upon her rise to power, alongside her continued pursuit of foreign investment and loans from the IMF and the World Bank, caused the Philippines to be further incorporated into the neoliberal world system. The primary consequence of this rising debt was a state-sponsored surge in overseas Filipino workers, who today can be seen throughout the globe doing precarious labor as seafarers, nurses, and domestic workers. This turn to overseas employment for Filipinos was first encouraged by the Marcos government, which sought to service the national debt with the remittances workers sent home. Despite rejecting Marcos' dictatorial regime, Cory essentially continued his policies of labor export. Under Cory, the Philippine state brokered contracts with foreign states to have Filipino workers fill labor demand; meanwhile, at home, her government began recasting overseas Filipino workers as national heroes, pushing more and more Filipinos to consider work abroad as a preferable alternative to a lack of domestic opportunities. Today, around one million Filipinos leave the country each year to work abroad.

Cory's popular global and national appeal arose from her reputation as an icon of emergent democracy. Describing her presidential campaign against Marcos before the United States Congress in 1986, she presented herself as a self-conscious champion of a people who longed for the restoration of democratic norms: "Wherever I went in the campaign, slum area or impoverished village, they came to me with one cry, democracy. Not food, although they clearly needed it but democracy. Not work, although they surely wanted it but democracy." However, despite her lip service to democratic practice, Cory continued the brutal military repression of activists who challenged the fragile consensus between center and right that she had brokered, with extrajudicial killings rising under her regime.

Filipinos who were born in the early to late '90s live in a post-Cory era where the subsequent presidents combined economic liberalization, a rhetorical

commitment to anti-corruption measures and political reform, and the military repression of dissent under the broad banner of “liberal democracy.” Under Cory’s successor Fidel Ramos, the police and military apparatus were given more powers, forcing communist and Muslim separatist revolutionary movements in the southern Philippines to cede ground. Meanwhile, Ramos’ socio-economic Philippines 2000 program, which was designed to hasten industry development, only further increased the hold of foreign capital on the Filipino people. Under Ramos, state and paramilitary forces conducted military operations against local communities to clear the way for foreign mining and other projects of resource extraction.

By the time the Philippines’ subsequent presidents came into power, the cracks of decades of neoliberal policies began to show. Corruption grew rampant. Foreign capital remained among a clique of landlords, business tycoons, local politician-warlords, who allied with whichever regime was in power. Elections and protests remained regular, but felt more like empty gestures towards an unrealized aspiration for democracy than genuine power to the people. These democratic practices continued to be marred by political violence; in a particularly egregious case in 2009, 57 people were murdered by the militia of Maguindanao mayor Andal Ampatuan, Jr. for their support of an opposition candidate. During this time, the government also disappeared many activists who went too far in their demands for economic justice. Among the middle and upper classes, political disaffection replaced the democratic enthusiasm of the EDSA revolution.

While bankers, real estate developers, and business owners benefited from lower interest rates and a rising GDP, the share of agricultural and manufacturing sectors in the economy stagnated or shrunk.

President Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino’s presidency was, in retrospect, the dying breath of a liberal democratic consensus that for the preceding decades had tried to keep the masses pliant. Noynoy became a popular candidate after the death of his mother Cory Aquino because he promised to continue her legacy of democratic reform and ran on a presidential slogan that promised to end poverty by ending corruption. However, Noynoy only oversaw increasing economic inequality. While bankers, real estate developers, and business owners benefited from lower interest rates and a rising GDP, the share of agricultural and manufacturing sectors in the economy stagnated or shrunk. Meanwhile, his ostensible commitment to combating dynastic corruption was belied by his own

membership in one of the most prominent political families in the Philippines. Increasingly, it became clear to the Filipino people that Aquino's version of liberal democracy and economic growth ultimately benefited the elite—from enterprising business owners to entrenched political dynasties.

This environment of political disillusionment set the stage of Rodrigo Duterte's rise to power as a presidential candidate who rhetorically positioned himself as an outsider—a foul-mouthed, truth-telling strongman from southern Mindanao who would not put up with the pretensions of an imperial elite that ranged from Manila to Washington. His strong stance against criminals and drug dealers provided a popular scapegoat for the socioeconomic ills of the country, deftly situating the blame for poverty not on a lack of economic justice or agrarian reform, but rather on the poor choices of social malcontents. His campaign painted an image of a nation on the brink of disaster, assailed by drug lords and armed communist insurgents, which required a leader who could substitute democratic practice with the violent exercise of political will. Ultimately, Duterte's election can be understood as the people's verdict on the failure of the Aquinos to deliver on the promises of their cacique-led liberal democracy.

Liberal democracy, as practiced by the landed elite and dynastic families of our nation, has never worked.

More than 30 years after the EDSA revolution, we stand in a new era of executive power and political repression. If we fail to recognize that Duterte's popularity is a result of the past few decades' inability to create economic justice for ordinary people, we risk making the same mistakes as our predecessors. Liberal democracy, as practiced by the landed elite and dynastic families of our nation, has never worked. Neither will Duterte's military authoritarian regime, despite its promises of social change through the eradication of drug users and leftist dissenters. As we condemn Duterte's dictatorial rule, let us also call for a democracy that challenges the limits of economic liberalism, one that is committed to overturning the economic status quo in favor of the masses.

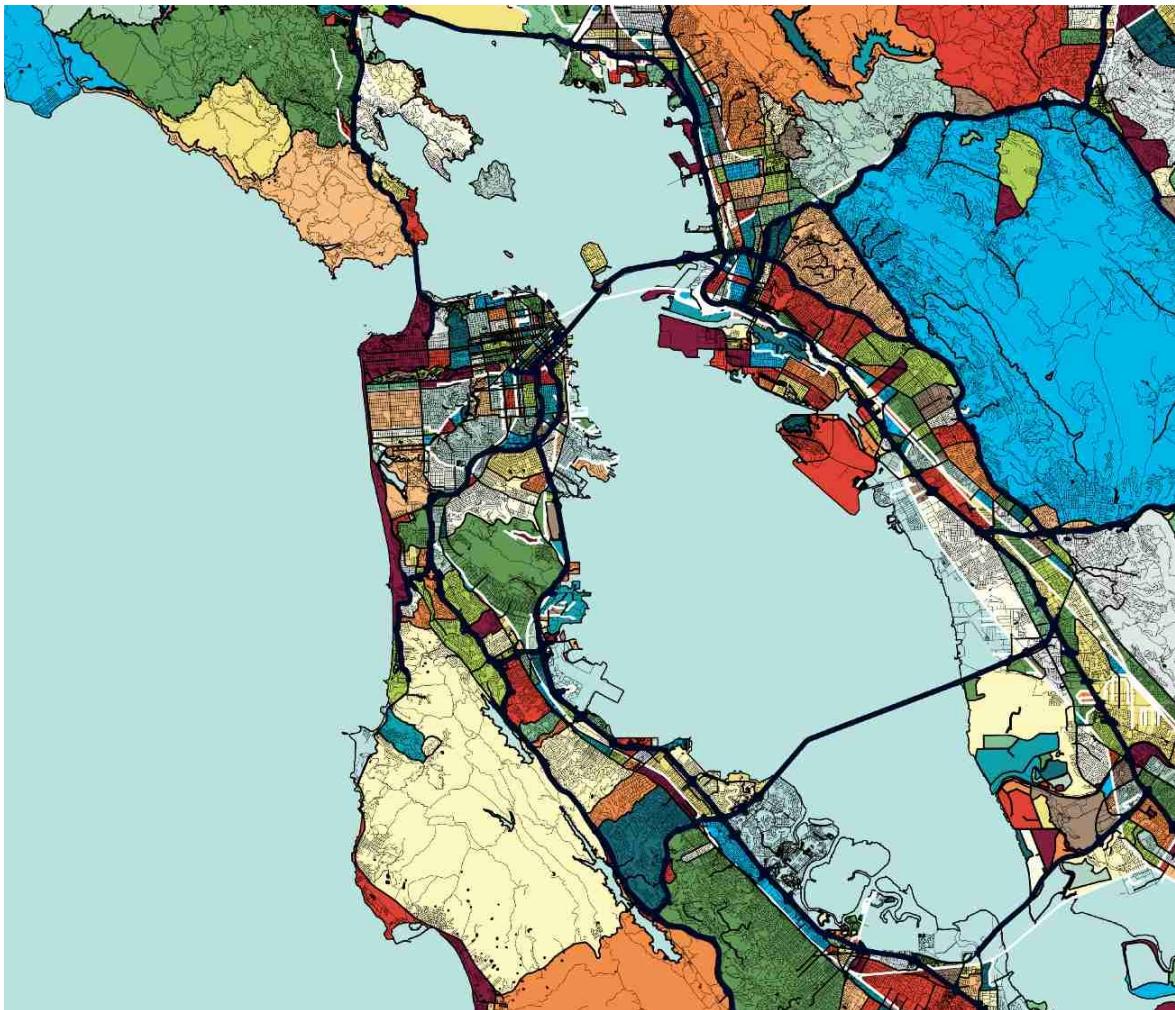
In the face of terror, let us continue to dream. *Makibaka, huwag matakot.*

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This Is Silicon Valley

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Credit: shoushu/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty

I am privileged to live in Silicon Valley. I was born here, I grew up here, and now I work here as a product manager at Google. The weather is lovely, the crime rate is low, and the schools are well funded. The adults have cushy jobs and the kids have endless resources. People feast on \$15 sushirritos and \$6 Blue Bottle coffees. The streets are filled with Teslas and self-driving cars.

It's a place of opportunity. Many new graduates, myself included, are making six-figure salaries straight out of college, plus equity, bonuses, and benefits on top of that. I get unlimited free food at work — three full meals a day and as many snacks as I want in between. There's a place to do laundry and get a haircut. There's even a bowling alley and a bouldering wall.

This is Silicon Valley. Who wouldn't want to live here?

When I was in eighth grade, over a six-month period four students at a nearby school committed suicide by jumping in front of the Caltrain. During my sophomore year of high school, a schoolmate I used to walk with to the library took her own life. In my senior year, every single one of my peers had a college counselor. Some paid up to \$400 an hour for counselors to edit their essays, and I witnessed other students paying to have their essays literally written for them. My classmates cried over getting an A- on a test, cried over getting fewer than 100 likes on their profile pictures, and cried over not getting into Harvard. (I admit, I cried over that one, too.) They pulled multiple all-nighters every week to survive their seven AP classes and seven after-school activities, starved themselves to fit in with the “popular kids,” stole money from their parents to buy brand name clothing, and developed harrowing mental health disorders that still persist today, years after high school graduation.

This is Silicon Valley.

During my four years of high school, there were a total of three black students and around a dozen Latinx students in my school of 1,300 kids. On my floor at work, at a company that puts so many resources into diversity and inclusion, there are no black or Latinx engineers. In 2017, of all tech hires at Google, 2 percent were black, 3 percent were Latinx, and 25 percent were female. Upper management statistics are worse, and numbers throughout the Valley are just as depressing.

The lack of diversity doesn’t stop at work — it permeates every aspect of life. Everyone wears Patagonia and North Face, everyone has AirPods hanging from their ears, and everyone goes to Lake Tahoe on weekends. And everyone talks about the same things: startups, blockchain, machine learning, and startups with blockchain and machine learning.

This is Silicon Valley.

In my liberal arts college, conversations varied dramatically, from British literature to public policy to moral philosophy to socioeconomic inequality. Compare this to my product management program filled with new grads, where even social conversations revolve around tech — whether it’s spilling the hottest gossip on the new VP, plotting how to get “double promoted” from a Level 3 to a Level 5 product manager in exactly 22 months, or debriefing where the top angel investors get drinks on Thursday nights. (And yes, Silicon Valley has an

alcohol and drug problem, too). Attempts to hold discussions about social issues are often met with bored faces and are quickly terminated. For example, a friend in the program and I have brought up climate change on many occasions, since it's an issue we're particularly passionate about. We've mentioned the worsening air quality in light of the Camp Fire that devastated more than 150,000 acres of Northern California, lamented the fact that Google still uses plastic water bottles and straws, and encouraged others to donate to environmental organizations during our company's giving week. Each time, we were met with silence.

Money comes from changing a button from green to blue.

In Silicon Valley, few people find things like climate change important enough to talk about at length, and even fewer find it important enough to work on. It's not where the money is at. It's not where "success" is at. And it's certainly not where the industry is at. Instead, money comes from changing a button from green to blue, from making yet another food delivery app, and from getting more clicks on ads. That's just how the Valley and the tech industry are set up. As Jeffrey Hammerbacher, a former Facebook executive, told Bloomberg, "The best minds of my generation are thinking about how to make people click ads."

This is Silicon Valley.

Houses are being sold for up to \$2,800 per square foot. Gentrification and homelessness in the San Francisco Bay Area are so bad that they have their own Wikipedia pages. And it's not just in the city, and it's not just "uneducated people." In December 2018, 4,300 students at San Jose State University — over 13 percent of the student body — reported experiencing homelessness over the past year. Income inequality levels, in both San Francisco and San Jose, rank among the 10 worst cities in the nation and the gap between the poor and the rich continues to increase.

In 2018, San Francisco passed Proposition C, a measure aimed at fighting homelessness by raising taxes on big businesses. Executives from Salesforce and Cisco supported the measure, while companies like Square, Stripe, and Lyft pushed back against the tax due to the way it would be collected.

Who wouldn't want to live here?

One could argue that some companies in Silicon Valley do care about the poor.

Many companies have annual holiday giving campaigns. At Google, employees are allocated \$400 to give to an approved organization, like a food bank or a homeless shelter. But while Silicon Valley employees may donate to these causes, they also complain about the tent camps in the city “ruining the view,” and they complain about the very people they claim to care about. Over 2,200 complaints have been filed, in the last decade, about homeless people on San Francisco’s Hyde Street alone, and reports suggest that some homeless people are even harassed in an attempt to drive them out.

This is Silicon Valley.

It's my everything. It's where my parents live. It's where my high school friends have returned and where my college friends have moved. It's where I first fell in love and where I first had my heart broken.

It's also where classmates stole my homework and cheated off of my tests. It's where I watched parents threaten teachers for giving their children a B+ and watched teachers threaten tutoring centers for handing out copies of past exams. It's where friends cut themselves, drugged themselves, and even killed themselves. It's where acquaintances tried to sabotage my relationships, my grades, and my career.

It's where everything is about networking. It's where everyone wants something from you, and you never know when someone will betray you because they want something from someone else more.

It's my everything. But Silicon Valley is no longer my home.

Silicon Valley is no longer my home. I feel myself being influenced by the tech bubble. I feel myself shifting my focus to money and career trajectory rather than serving those in need locally and worldwide, and I see myself being applauded and fitting in because of it. I feel myself becoming part of the machine. Living here, I reflect on my high school experiences and am filled with misery and anger. The mental health crisis among Silicon Valley high schoolers is getting worse. I think about the negative impacts of social media on mental health that my friends and I suffered in high school and how ironic it is that those same friends now work at Facebook.

I've been told that in every shitty situation there are three options: you can ignore the situation, you can try to improve it, or you can leave. Ignoring it is an

option, but it doesn't lead to any positive change. Trying to improve the situation is a good idea when you feel there is hope that you can make it better. And leaving is good when you don't think things will change and you don't know what to do.

I don't know what to do. Since moving back, my depression has returned after a four-year hiatus, paired with anxiety, a growing disappointment in humanity, and an influx of fake, self-serving, status-seeking "friends" and acquaintances.

So, I'm leaving. But I do hope to come back someday.

I hope to come back to a different Silicon Valley. One that takes care of the mental health of its students. One that doesn't just strive for diversity, but embraces and celebrates and exemplifies it, not only in the people, but also in their lifestyles and conversations and interests. One where people recognize that their picture-perfect lives come at a cost to others, and one where they strive to help those that they hurt.

Most importantly, I hope to return to a Silicon Valley where people care about others and want to work on things that actually improve our world, even if it doesn't generate clicks.

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‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men

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‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men

Progressives need to learn from the Netflix show’s battles against toxic masculinity. And the Fab Five need to recruit a trade union organiser.



The Fab Five: Jonathan Van Ness, Karamo Brown, Bobby Berk, Tan France, and Antoni Porowski. | (Photo By Sthanlee B. Mirador/Sipa USA)

While I was undercover at a far Right conference in Italy last year, it was easy to hide how I really felt about the people I was ‘befriending’. I’d been feigning enthusiasm for years.

Just before I went on that trip, I'd finally gone to see my GP. After nine months of therapy I was still utterly miserable, and my counsellor had suggested it was time to start trying pills.

It had felt good to say the words out loud – “I think I have some combination of depression and ADHD.” And it had felt even better when the doctor listened, asked careful questions, prescribed fluoxetine for the former and referred me to a specialist for the latter – leading to a diagnosis this spring.

We'd agreed I'd start on the pills after my time posing as an alt-Right donor in Verona (the snooze-inducing side effects in the first month wouldn't sit well with the work). And so as I hustled my way into the ultra-conservative networks at the World Congress of Families – spinning my cover story to a senior adviser to Marine Le Pen, breakfasting with a rock-star of alt-Right YouTube, conspiring with the man who does phone-tracking for Trump – I had to spend half my brainpower on grinding back against an endless cycle of unwanted thoughts. To pretend that my torso was something other than an insatiable black hole.

But that was nothing new.

Netflix therapy

I'd got through the previous months with patient support from my partner, and two brilliant Netflix shows, Rachel Bloom's mental-health musical ‘Crazy Ex-Girlfriend’, and the rebooted ‘Queer Eye’, a careful exploration of toxic masculinity and male depression in the dying days of neoliberalism, neatly tucked into the format of a makeover reality TV show.

In each ‘Queer Eye’ episode, the ‘Fab Five’ co-hosts give a struggling hero – usually a depressed man – a lifestyle refresh: teaching him to cook something scrumptious, buying him stylish clothes, grooming him, doing up his house and supporting him to confront troubles in their life.

What this means for each character varies. But the underlying message of every cry-athon episode is the same. Toxic masculinity and competitive ultra-capitalism have taught men life lessons which make us miserable. To find joy, we need to unlearn.

While reality TV is notoriously cruel, the ‘Queer Eye’ cast specialise in kindness. Each of them opens up about their own struggles: grooming expert Jonathan Van Ness is an HIV+ non-binary former sex worker and ex-meth addict. Interior designer Bobby Berk is estranged from his Bible-belt family, and was a homeless teenager.

Culture expert Karamo Brown is of Jamaican-Mexican heritage, grew up “very poor” and became a father at 17. Fashion aficionado Tan France comes from a “very strict” Muslim household in Doncaster, and is one of the first openly gay people of South Asian descent on a major show. Chef Antoni Porowski, the son of Polish migrants to Canada, is estranged from his mother.

Each episode, I would sob to a stream of touching moments and familiar feelings, and an unbearable pressure would slip from my chest.

Far Right masculinity

As I gossiped around that Veronese conference hall, I realised I had rarely met people who so desperately needed to learn from the Fab Five.

The event was a sort of rally for far Right forces hoping to storm the European elections. But the combination of speakers seemed a bit incongruous: Catholic bishops and alt-Right YouTube stars; Italian far Right politicians and American evangelical pastors. **While most started their speeches by announcing the enormous number of children they had fathered – as though success comes with the capacity to ejaculate** – they were otherwise an odd mix.

When you met their audience, it all made sense. This was a world which gave struggling men meaning. Rather than helping us confront our demons, it suggested we worship them, weaving myths about masculine superiority, encouraging a world in which husbands and fathers are mini-dictators. A world where “the strong and the weak will know their place”, as Franco’s great grandson, the self-proclaimed heir to the French throne, declared from the main stage.

The key preacher in this world wasn’t any priest. He wasn’t even there: it was Jordan Peterson.

The rise of Peterson

Over the previous year my brothers and male friends and I – most of us stalked by our own black dogs – had watched in horror as the alt-Right Canadian psychology professor conquered YouTube. Like an addictive substance, he lured depressed young men back to the toxic behaviours and power hierarchies which crushed their souls. And he won fame.

Initially, he got it by demanding a return to traditional gender roles. Peterson first became famous pretending that new Canadian laws would require him to use trans people's preferred pronouns, and raging against this invented injustice. He has criticised the Pill, and its impact on the relationship between women and men, and is best known for comparing humans to lobsters, which he claims have strict social hierarchies.

He also has a history of sympathising with Adolf Hitler.

Peterson says he's a follower of Carl Jung, the Swiss founder of analytic psychology most famous for the idea of 'collective unconscious'. But like too many in a field which tends to treat problems as personal rather than social, Peterson treats our shared instincts and archetypes as almost mystical and unchanging forces, rather than the product of a society in which we all participate. He encourages fans to accept their place in a world where we almost all suffer from collective and unconscious racism, sexism and snobbery, rather than seeking to change it.

Peterson tries to understand the collective unconscious by glimpsing the flickerings of dreams and reading between the lines of myths. But social scientists have shown how the invisible lenses through which we all see the world aren't cast down by the gods or conjured up by magic. They are ground by history and economics and culture and the struggles of people against power. They are best explained not by Carl Jung in his tower on Lake Zurich, but by Antonio Gramsci in his prison cell on the Adriatic.

Like Jung, Gramsci showed that our subconscious shapes how we see the world. But unlike Jung, he was able to explain how our subconscious is itself shaped by the world: not by mystical interventions or mythical memories, but by human institutions, like schools, churches, armies and the arts. For nearly a century, rigorous research has developed our understanding of what he called 'hegemony', challenging us to question the 'common sense' we're taught to intuit.

Just as Gramsci was jailed by Mussolini, the propagandists of the powerful have long sought to shut these thinkers down, and sold us nonsense instead.

Writer and publisher Dan Hind offers an explanation for Peterson's cult. Because they focus your mind on your mood, any self-help book delivers positive feelings – briefly: the average is six weeks. But that's long enough to encourage friends to buy the book, and to crave a return to the nice feelings once they have passed.

This is why self-help is great for publishing companies. A world that makes people depressed endlessly produces mini-cults and sales booms. But like any addictive substance, the buzz soon goes, leaving victims pining for the next fix, and publishers with the next hit.

There are exceptions. Rumi's reflections endure. Much of religion can be seen as self-help. But Peterson was only different from the more fleeting examples of his genre because he tapped into a vast alt-Right YouTube universe.

The fan boys

I've interviewed people in streets across Central Europe about the far Right, and I've run into many who are susceptible to the firm hand of ultraconservative psychobabble. The well-dressed young man in Košice, eastern Slovakia, who I met in February and who raged, in English, against 'gender ideology'. The multilingual middle-class woman in Poprad in the High Tatra Mountains who was a member of the neo-Nazi party because of her opposition to LGBTQI rights. The young far Right activists in Zagreb in 2018 who were campaigning against the Istanbul convention on gendered violence, because its definition of gender is trans-inclusive.

And there was Madrid last year. At the end of my time at the World Congress of Families in Verona, the half of me that was there trudged onto a plane to Spain, having connected with the far Right party Vox. A few days later, I sat, soulless, in the lobby of a swanky hotel trying to focus past the grinding in my head and onto my conversation with the man behind Vox, the Spanish-American Ivan Esponosa de Los Monteros, who had been told I was a potential donor.

He talked smoothly in the language of the World Congress of Families, gently suggesting that gender-violence laws discriminated against men, that equal

marriage gives same-sex couples not equality, but superiority, because they ‘uniquely’ couldn’t have children. Marriage, apparently, is intended for biological parents.

Like Peterson, he tried to frame himself as the real warrior for human rights, the true liberal.

Esponosa invited me to a vast Vox rally in a bullring outside Madrid. There, the tone was different. Wrapped in flags and with the energy of the crowd, the party’s neo-fascist roots were showing. But while the racism was implied, the sexism was clear: the testosterone in the amphitheatre gave it the aroma of a Trumpian locker room.



The Vox rally. The flag reads "España do Facha, Vox" - roughly "fascist Spain, Vox". | Adam Ramsay

The attraction of these movements shouldn’t be surprising. If you are the sort of person who is accustomed to being given power by social hierarchies – white, male, straight – then those who tell you to wield that power with pride, that doing so will make you feel alive, will always be a source of temptation.

One reason that openDemocracy’s Tracking the Backlash project focuses on the war on women’s and LGBTQI rights is that toxic masculinity is a key ingredient

in the cocktail that has intoxicated so many young men in recent years, and drawn them into far Right movements.

Just as we can't fully understand the rise of Trump without understanding Gamergate, incels, and the 4Chan community, we can't understand the elite institutions driving us to authoritarian capitalism without understanding the sociology, psychology and social movements of toxic masculinity.

'Queer Eye' season five

In late 2019, Jordan Peterson checked into rehab in Russia, crashing from public life. A fad steak-and-salt diet “the world’s most influential intellectual” had promoted to millions seems to have left him gravely sick. The cosmic battle between Peterson with his ‘toughen up’ masculine individualism and the Fab Five with their emotional solidarity was a key front in the culture war. And the new season of ‘Queer Eye’ is a victory parade.

In season five, released on Netflix this summer, the politics stops being subtle. They help a gay pastor accept himself. They study the psychological violence of Black impoverishment in three episodes with heroes bound by its chains. They show the struggle of migrant families through the eyes of a fishmonger and a pediatrician.

They even spend a week with a young climate activist, helping ensure that she and her Sunrise Movement housemates don’t burn out in their drive to stop the planet from burning. And of course they return to their old theme of toxic masculinity.

While it’s easy to criticise the show as consumerist ‘change your wardrobe, change your life’ claptrap, the underlying messages are much more positive. Again and again, men are supported to open up to those around them, and ask for help.

Where Jordan Peterson sees a world of individuals who must make themselves strong, the Fab Five understand that we rely on each other. It’s no coincidence that the show isn’t based around a single, charismatic, middle-aged White male guru, but instead, a collective. It’s not just chance that, while Peterson is only really an expert in magical thinking, the Fab Five each have their own, specific craft.

Fulfilment doesn't come from reaching up, but from reaching out to those around you.

This ideology underpinning the show is perhaps best expressed through Karamo Brown, the culture expert. Netflix's 'Queer Eye' is a re-boot of the 2003-7 programme 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy', which had a different Fab Five. In that version, the "culture vulture" Jai Rodriguez focussed on culture as in 'the arts', often giving the shows' heroes tickets to a performance of some kind.

But when Brown – a former social worker in the LGBTQI Black community – applied for the role in the reboot, he pitched it as referring to culture as 'how we live together'. That he got it tells us why the new version is successful, and points to a deep shift in US politics.

At the turn of the millennium, when the original aired, liberals in the US still largely believed in the American dream. Help people access the spaces of the class above them, and you give them a ladder to socially climb. The world is made of winners and losers, and the original Fab Five helped you win.

As we arrive in the 2020s, the next generation of liberals in the world's declining superpower are beginning to see through that mythology. Fulfilment doesn't come from reaching up, but from reaching out to those around you.

Drugs and disconnection

The alternative to fighting depression is to see it as a business opportunity. Neoliberalism makes millions miserable, producing vast markets for fake cures. Pablo Escobar, Billy Graham, Mark Zuckerberg and Jordan Peterson all got rich hawking false solutions to the crisis of disconnection.

My addictions are Facebook and Twitter. There, I've invented a constantly connected version of me. I have a stage on which to show off. Flickering screens command my attention. Internet debates distract from internal quarrels. Reality becomes a shadow and I become comfortably numb.

But just as lonely rats will choose cocaine over food, while rats kept in groups will get high in moderation, the drug is no more cause than cure. **The problem is isolation in communities torn apart by brutal inequality, a world where we're told to run ever-faster to keep up.** A society of spectacle, which taught

me to aspire to celebrity.

That neoliberalism changed us isn't a side-effect. It was the point of turning every joy of human life into a commodity. In 1981, Margaret Thatcher famously told the Sunday Times: "Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul." She did. By the time she left office, the suicide rate among young men had increased by 50%.

In search of class

Despite the role of our economic system in producing the depression pandemic, 'Queer Eye' – like the American liberalism it grows from – is missing an understanding of class.

That's not to say that it doesn't look at poverty. A number of its heroes are clearly imprisoned by lack of funds. But again and again, the lesson it teaches is that the path to financial security runs through entrepreneurialism. More than one of the Fab Five gained access to the middle class by building their own firms, and a huge number of the people they help are struggling business owners.

And this is where modern American liberalism evaporates in the daylight of reality. Of course a small number of people can find their way out of poverty through their own business ventures. But with limited access to capital, they will usually end up being crushed by a bigger beast, and most people won't be given an investment by Netflix. The data shows that people in the US consistently overestimate the possibility of social mobility, and repeating that bedtime story helps no one.

The final episode focuses on a gym owner in an historically Black area of Philadelphia. Gentrification threatens his business and his community. But the only response to this from the team is to modernise the gym – which, in all likelihood, won't be enough as the area's landlords jack up the rent.

Just as you can only really explain the astonishing popularity of the musical 'Hamilton' when you understand it is an attempt by liberal America to snatch their country's foundation myth from the shadow of Trumpism, the popularity of 'Queer Eye' makes most sense when you see it as an attempt to reframe the national myth: the American dream.

Know your place

In the twelve years from the collapse of the global financial system to the pandemic-induced collapse of the real economy, Western economies massively inflated the prices of their assets with billions of dollars of quantitative easing.

As a result, those who already owned assets – houses or otherwise – did OK. Those who didn't struggled. Wages have been stagnant in the US for decades, and millions who believed that by now they would have entered the middle class have discovered that they are very definitely working class.

It's not surprising that many of the characters the show focuses on feel they haven't made much financial progress in recent years. Most Americans haven't.

For Jordan Peterson, the solution to this situation – and the reason he is beloved of the powerful – is to accept it. The sixth of his famous '12 Rules for Life' – the title of his bestselling 2018 book – is "Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world." In other words, 'know your place'.

And his implicit message goes a lot further than that. The prominence that he – and so many of his fellow travellers – give to **their refusal to accept trans people only makes sense when you understand that for them, there is no greater sin than refusing to accept your place in the social hierarchy**. After all, if you endlessly work hard to accept your rank in a world which makes you miserable, you resent no one more than those who refuse to follow. To be trans is to transgress against their world order, and they can't stand it.

Peterson's message isn't just "Don't change the world." It's "Don't change who the world tells you that you are." And it does profound damage. In January last year, my friend Danielle, a brilliant activist who had started to come out as a trans woman, took her own life. Like thousands of others every year, she was struggling with a world that refused to accept her.

Ripping society apart

Too often, mental health is individualised. As with physical health, we are taught to believe that it is down to us, on our own, to sort it out. And as with physical health, this is essentially a neoliberal lie.

In June 2018, the World Psychiatric Association published a paper which gathered research from across the developed world and showed that there is “a statistically significant positive relationship between income inequality and risk of depression”. Equally, people at the rough end of racism are much more likely to suffer from poor mental health.

This shouldn’t surprise anyone. Inequality rips society apart. It tears us away from those around us, severing the connections of community.

I can only really speak to the impact it has on the ultra-privileged, like me. Boarding school forced me to grow up fast, but incompletely. I endlessly replay the terrible lessons I learned there, showing off but closing up. So much of life became performance without connection. Social media addiction hardly helps.

But the woes of the posh boys aren’t really the point. If I struggle to live in this world, how does everyone else cope? The same 2018 meta-study shows it is those with the lowest incomes who are hit hardest by the depression pandemic.

My neighbour is a doctor in one of Scotland’s poorest areas. Many of his patients who want help with depression face, he says, lifelong circumstances which would make any rational person miserable. But he can’t prescribe the abolition of poverty.

Progressive alienation

For much of the Left, the reaction is the opposite to the right’s individualism. It is: “Organise with millions of others to overthrow an economic system which makes us all sick.”

Of course this is something we should do. But exhortations to join the revolution aren’t much help to those who are desperately miserable now. Our political systems – particularly in Britain and the US – are *designed* to alienate. The purpose of them is to put off mass participation. And most people are put off. The prospect of wading through the factional flame wars of party politics, or of being beaten off the streets by increasingly militarised police, is unlikely to salve to the hole in your chest where your soul has been ripped out.

So many progressive groups are full of people searching for salvation from the depression pandemic. And, fairly consistently, they fail. We fail. Because while

hurling yourself at the great injustices of the world is a great way to feel significant, it's also a brilliant way to distract yourself from inner turmoil, rather than resolving it.

Exhortations to join the revolution aren't much help to those who are desperately miserable now

And in activist communities, feelings so often play out in over-intellectualised power politics. If everyone is telling themselves they are there for the greater good, then it's hard to admit the real reason you're upset is that your ego has been bashed. It's hard to admit that you're just performing your own neuroses when the planet's burning. It's easier to disguise hurt feelings behind ideological spars. Too often, people find it easier to split a movement than confront their own demons.

In this context, Jordan Peterson's suggestion that you "tidy your bedroom" can seem to many like the only option: it answers the crisis of alienation by showing you something you do have power over. And it works: tidying your room is a remarkably effective way to feel better, for a bit. For a generation living in shared flats or parental homes longer than they expected, your bedroom may be the only space that you can control on your own.

Fortunately, the idea that you have control on your own or not at all is just the propaganda of the powerful. Because while activist groups are a terrible alternative to therapy, organising with our peers is the best tool we have for taking back control of our lives.

The challenge for the left, then, is to learn how to organise miserable people, and to learn to organise while miserable. Depressed people shouldn't be encouraged to treat politics as a distraction from their misery, but to look straight into their misery, and use it as a lens to better understand the world and a motivation to change it, together.

And that has to include giving the sort of depressed young men lured to Peterson the chance to connect with those who are different from them, to emancipate themselves from social hierarchies which are making them miserable, too.

This learning is already happening in many ways, through political networks, unions, and campaign groups. It's a major theme of openDemocracy's Transformation section. But what it needs is the touch of popular culture.

The super six

And this is why ‘Queer Eye’ needs a makeover. Because just as social movements need to learn from ‘Queer Eye’ about masculinity, misery and joy, ‘Queer Eye’ needs to learn from social movements about how real change happens. What better time than season six to introduce a sixth character, specialising in helping people organise not just the objects around them, but their community?

In some episodes, they might focus on workplace struggle, establishing a trade union branch with colleagues and helping them negotiate better conditions with employers. After all, the data is stark: US workers who are members of unions earn significantly more than those who aren’t. And yet trade union membership has halved since 1983.

In some, they might knock on neighbouring doors and set up a tenants’ union. All across the Western world, renters have responded to the housing crisis by getting organised.

And in others, maybe they’d organise a marginalised neighbourhood to confront a local oppressor. Every community has plenty.

Rising through the US class system is impossible for most. Even more than most Western countries, ‘success’ is hereditary. Yet generation after generation of US TV shows repackage the lie of the American dream, leading millions to miserable attempts that are doomed to fail, and luring them away from the statistically proven route to improving their prospects: workplace organising.

But with Black Lives Matter launching under the first Black president, the US has started to understand that change isn’t a matter of individual progress. ‘People like you’ getting to the top of the ladder doesn’t make it easier to reach the rungs. Emancipation is achieved together, or not at all.

All politics is culture war: we interpret our material interests through lenses ground by society. And as the critic Raymond Williams powerfully argued, you can’t separate culture as ‘how we live together’ from culture as ‘the arts’. The latter is a powerful tool for carving the former.

And so as the ‘Queer Eye’ crew look ahead to their next season, glinting with

medals for their battles against patriarchy, it's time for them to start to unpick the American dream and expose it for what it is: the core lie at the heart of American nationalism.

Winning the culture war

In last year's European elections, the far Right didn't do as well as many had projected. Since Trump's 2016 election, millions everywhere have been inspired to take part in politics, desperate to oppose his cruelty.

It's easy to focus on the hard misogyny, racism and transphobia I find when I go on my wanderings around Europe, but they don't dominate. In most communities, most bigotries are more subtle. In most places – including places with significant support for far Right parties – most people hate the far Right.

In a day in Nyíregyháza, an eastern 'stronghold' of Hungary's far Right governing Fidez, I found lots of people who reluctantly vote for them. But very few who actually like them. Hanging around Czechia's communist-era housing estates, where thousands vote for the country's supposed 'populists', I struggled to find anyone who did so enthusiastically. They really aren't very popular.

Across the world, White supremacists and defenders of patriarchy aren't feeling dominant. Their shouts are the squeals of the losers, the howls of White men failing to adjust to a world we're increasingly being made to share.

The Fab Five/Peterson grudge match is really only an Anglosphere millennial phenomenon. Netflix doesn't release viewer data, but, like the shows' hosts, and me, its audience is surely mostly in its thirties. We are the children of the 1990s, whose future taught us to be alone. And we aren't really young anymore: half the people in the US are younger than us.

In the coming years, millions of members of Generation Z will arrive in polling booths for the first time, and, across most of the Western world, polling consistently shows this is a cohort inspired not by Peterson, but by Greta Thunberg, Bernie Sanders and Black Lives Matter.

These are the K-pop stans and the TikTok teens who trolled Trump in Tulsa and drown out White supremacists in floods of memes. The culture war of that generation will be fought out in a boxing ring in Madison Square Gardens,

between the British-Nigerian YouTuber and Black Lives Matter activist KSI and Jake Paul, the White US rival he has accused of being racist. That'll happen once the pandemic is over. But it's another story. And you'll need someone younger than me to write it for you.

Finding the joy

The pills have helped, as have kung fu classes. Getting better at talking about it has helped too, perhaps more. I sometimes think that depression is the word we give to disconnection produced by an atomised society. Perhaps most importantly, opening up brought me closer to my partner.

In February, Juliette got the train across Europe and met me in Vienna. There, she asked me to marry her.

A couple of months later, early one morning, I sat up in bed, filled with hope. After what felt like too many minutes, she came back into the room with a serene smile on her face and showed me the test: positive. She's due in January, and I've never been happier.

With thanks to Dan Hind, Danielle Myriam, George Ramsay and, most of all, Juliette Daigre.

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