

Facing the Genocidal Present

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**Abstract**

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This dissertation argues that genocide, in settler colonies like the US, is a processual and structural condition, not an event; one that does not require genocidal intent, since genocide is the background hum—the rhythm—that organizes and orients institutions and politics. Although my focus is, by and large, on violence directed and organized around Mexican and Central American immigrants, I argue that—not just anti-Brown violence, but racialized violence against nonwhite groups coded as “threats,” should be regarded as a form of structural genocide. This is because, if the settler colonial drive to “eliminate the native” is the background structure shaping politics and life in America, the dynamics this process unleashes are ones that can jump populations once these, like Indigenous people, get in the way or become surplus to the state’s requirements.

In order to explain some of the dynamics of the ebbs and flows of genocide, in particular the demographic targeting of immigrant males for sequestration and removal, I argue that another dynamic inherent in the settler project of American empire must be accounted for, and this has to do with the aim, as DuBois put it, of securing the future for white people in perpetuity. It was these fears of the coming majority-minority nation, and phobias about Mexican males, I argue, that formed part of the background assumptions of the immigration enforcement strategy of Prevention Through Deterrence, which expanded and militarized border security. Read in this context, I contend, the strategy meets key elements of genocidal harbingers that begin with the targeting of subordinate males.

Finally, I show how this genocidal tendency is part of an extended global system of racist and politicized violence characterized by torture—one whose construction is intended to destabilize the populations it targets as a method of racial control. I demonstrate this by arguing that the lynchpin for understanding this system is the old vision of American eugenicists, the vision, as I describe it, of a white settler empire, steered by an Anglo-supremacist racial elitism that recruits subject peoples and retools them for distinct purposes—as is happening, I claim, with the many Mexican Americans that staff immigration enforcement agencies.

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#### Conclusion.

##### The Expanding Future of Genocide

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## Introduction

On May 23, 2018, Claudia Patricia Gómez González stepped foot on American soil after a two weeks journey that would end in her death. She was 20 years old, a young woman of Maya-Mam descent from the Guatemalan highlands—the very same region of the country in which U.S.-backed death squads would massacre entire Indigenous villages during the Cold War. But if she thought she could escape the conditions created by decades of American-sponsored state violence and economic terror, she was tragically unaware of the extent to which the U.S. had transformed its own borderlands into a site and instrument of violence against trespassers of the global color-line.

Claudia Patricia was summarily executed—and that phrase is no rhetorical exaggeration—by a 15-year veteran of the Border Patrol. She would make it across the South Texas border in Rio Bravo, some 1500 miles from her home, only to be shot in her head minutes after arriving.<sup>1</sup> But that we know as much as we do about what happened, in fact, is largely accidental.

Customs and Border Protection, like other law enforcement agencies, has a record of lying<sup>2</sup> about “officer involved shootings,” a record of lying<sup>3</sup> about the risk their agents face in the course of their work, and a documented pattern of unaccountable

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<sup>1</sup> Daniella Silva, “Border Patrol Agent Kills Migrant near Texas-Mexico Line,” *NBC News* online, May 25, 2018), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/border-patrol-agent-kills-migrant-near-texas-mexico-line-n877331>.

<sup>2</sup> Adolfo Flores, “FBI Says No Evidence of Altercation In Border Patrol Agent's Death,” *BuzzFeed News*, February 8, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/fbi-says-its-found-no-evidence-of-an-attack-in-the-death-of>.

<sup>3</sup> Debbie Nathan, “How the Border Patrol Faked Statistics Showing a 73 Percent Rise in Assaults Against Agents,” *The Intercept Magazine* online, April 23, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/04/23/border-patrol-agents-assaulted-cbp-fbi/>.

violence<sup>4</sup> and racial animus<sup>5</sup> towards the population they police. At first, CBP claimed<sup>6</sup> that the officer who shot Claudia Patricia acted in self-defense after coming “under attack by multiple subjects [the group with whom Claudia Patricia travelled] using blunt objects.” CBP changed its story,<sup>7</sup> however, when a witness’s video-recordings went viral.<sup>8</sup> Claudia Patricia was no longer “one of the assailants.” The “blunt objects” disappeared. The story was now that “the group ignored [the agent’s] verbal commands [to get on the ground] and instead rushed him.”

“They’re saying they threw rocks at the agents,” the witness, Marta Martínez, would later say.<sup>9</sup> But, in her view, “the two migrants were scared and the one guy was scared—they didn’t have rocks in their hands.” “The girl was in the grass and trees; to me she [had been] hiding.” It was CBP agents who were excessively violent, even punitive. “See what happens?” she heard them scream at the group, “See what you caused? This is what happens with you people.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sarah Macaraeg, “Fatal Encounters: 97 Deaths Point to Pattern of Border Agent Violence across America,” *The Guardian* online, May 2, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/may/02/fatal-encounters-97-deaths-point-to-pattern-of-border-agent-violence-across-america>.

<sup>5</sup> Josiah Heyman, Jeremy Slack, and Daniel E. Martínez, “Why Border Patrol Agents and CBP Officers Should Not Serve as Asylum Officers,” *The Center for Migration Studies (CMS) Essays*, June 21, 2019, DOI: 10.14240/cmsesy062119, URL: <https://cmsny.org/publications/heyman-slack-martinez-062119/>.

<sup>6</sup> Samantha Schmidt, “‘Why Did You Kill My Child?’ Border Patrol Shooting of Guatemalan Woman Stirs Protests,” *Chicago Tribune* online, August 22, 2019, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-guatemala-immigrant-killed-border-patrol-20180529-story.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Adolfo Flores, “Border Patrol Changes Account In Fatal Shooting Of Migrant Woman,” *BuzzFeed News*, May 26, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/texas-border-patrol-changes-account-fatal-shooting-of>.

<sup>8</sup> Marta Martinez, “Killing of Claudia Patricia Gómez González,” Uploaded to *The Internet Archive* by The Memory Hole 2 on May 26, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/GomezGonzalezKillingVideos/Martinez-video-Gonzalez-killing1.mp4>.

<sup>9</sup> Molly Hennessy-Fiske, “Witness Recounts Fatal Border Patrol Shooting of Young Guatemalan Woman in Texas,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-border-shooting-20180526-story.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Adolfo Flores, “A Border Patrol Agent Shot And Killed A Migrant Woman In Texas,” *BuzzFeed News*, May 24, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/border-patrol-agent-shot-killed-migrant-woman-in>.

In the published video, Martínez can be heard yelling at CBP agents, “Why do you mistreat them?” “Why did you kill that woman? You killed her! I saw you with the gun.” In an unpublished video that was viewed by BuzzFeed News,<sup>11</sup> but has since been “turned over to the FBI,”<sup>12</sup> Martínez approaches and sees Claudia Patricia lying face-down “in a pool of blood and dirt.”<sup>13</sup> She is audibly shocked when an agent turns Claudia Patricia over and Martínez sees how young she was. “Oh my god, she’s a girl, and you guys shoot her in the face,” she says. “Why did you shoot the girl? You killed her! They killed the girl! She’s dead.” A CBP agent is heard telling her “Hey, we don’t want footage in there.”

Court documents from a suit brought later against the federal government by Claudia Patricia’s family would attest that, “As Claudia lay dying, she opened her mouth and gasped for air. It took her at least several minutes to die.”<sup>14</sup> Carrying the heavy burden of genocide from her parents’ and grandparents’ generations, Claudia Patricia had left Guatemala only to be ensnared in yet another “hub” in the global web of American power.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Adolfo Flores, “She Took 15 Days To Reach The US. In Minutes, The Border Patrol Shot Her Dead,” *BuzzFeed News*, September 1, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/border-patrol-shooting-immigrant-texas>.

<sup>13</sup> Azad Essa, “Indigenous Guatemalan Woman Shot Dead by US Border Patrol,” *Al Jazeera*, May 26, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/indigenous-guatemalan-woman-shot-dead-border-patrol-180526081614753.html>.

<sup>14</sup> For the lawsuit, see: Gomez Vicente, et al. v. United States of America, et al., 5:20-cv-00081 (S.D. Tex. 2020), accessed at Court House News, <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Border-Patrol-killing.pdf>. For details on the lawsuit, see: The ACLU of Texas, “Gómez González Et Al v. USA & Barrera,” ACLU of Texas, August 14, 2020, <https://www.aclutx.org/en/cases/gomez-gonzalez-et-al-v-usa-barrera>.

<sup>15</sup> Phrases like “heavy load” are used by survivors of genocide in Guatemala. Cf. Alison Crosby, M. Brinton Lykes & Brisna Caxaj, “Carrying a heavy load: Mayan women’s understandings of reparation in the aftermath of genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 18, no. 2-3 (2016): 265-283, DOI: [10.1080/14623528.2016.1186952](https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2016.1186952)

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When I found out about Claudia Patricia's killing, I was a graduate student at the University of Washington. I was living in Seattle, one of the most "liberal" cities in the country. By that time, though, I'd witnessed even "liberal Seattle" reveal an ugly underbelly in the wake of the Trump campaign and election.<sup>16</sup> On the night of the inauguration, a nonviolent activist had been shot and almost killed by Trump supporters, at a pro-Trump rally, right on UW campus.<sup>17</sup> Soon after, white nationalists began to regularly leaflet and rally in the area.<sup>18</sup> In the coming years, the Proud Boys would repeatedly bus into town for "free speech" and "second amendment" demonstrations, open-carrying military grade rifles on university grounds.<sup>19</sup> Recruitment flyers for neo-Nazi groups like Atomwaffen Division, Identity Evropa, and Patriot Front cropped up on campus and across Seattle. As hate crimes shot up in Seattle, and evidence emerged

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<sup>16</sup> Seattle and Washington experienced a rise in hate crimes. See, for example, Neal McNamara, "There Were 48 Racist, Anti-Semitic Incidents in Wash. In 2018," Seattle, WA Patch (Patch, March 7, 2019), <https://patch.com/washington/seattle/there-were-48-racist-anti-semitic-incidents-wash-2018>; and Christine Clarridge, "Hate Crime on the Rise in Seattle and Washington State, Study Finds," *The Seattle Times*, July 9, 2019, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/hate-crime-on-the-rise-in-seattle-and-washington-state-study-finds/>.

<sup>17</sup> CBS News/AP, "Man Shot Outside Milo Yiannopoulos Event in Seattle, Fire Department Says," *CBS News* online, January 21, 2017, <http://cbsnews.com/news/milo-yiannopoulos-unveristy-of-washington-seattle-man-shot/>.

<sup>18</sup> See McNamara, "There Were 48 Racist, Anti-Semitic Incidents..."

<sup>19</sup> For examples of their activities, see: Lester Black, "Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys Are Rallying in Seattle on August 18," *The Seattle Stranger*, August 8, 2018, <https://www.thestranger.com/slog/2018/08/06/30302621/patriot-prayer-and-the-proud-boys-are-rallying-in-seattle-on-august-18>. For their open-carrying on campus: Steven Hsieh, "UW Police Detained Joey Gibson and Other Far-Right Activists For Possessing Guns On Campus," *The Seattle Stranger*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.thestranger.com/slog/2018/05/21/26387417/uw-police-detained-joe-gibson-and-other-far-right-activists-for-possessing-guns-on-campus>.

of a more-than-friendly relationship between hate groups and the authorities in the broader region.<sup>20</sup>

I began to perceive at that point a larger shift in the social and cultural situation of the country at the national scale; this is not to say that this change wasn't *already* there, only that I hadn't *registered* it. By that time, the number of imprisoned children—who, we were finding out, were being kept in secretive conditions and even secretive locations<sup>21</sup>—had reached 15 thousand; it has since grown to 69,550.<sup>22</sup> Simultaneously, neo-Nazis across the country had begun to consolidate themselves in cells and networks, organizing paramilitary training camps.<sup>23</sup> Having rebranded themselves for the mainstream as “white nationalists” and as “the alt-right,”<sup>24</sup> those among them who were publicly inclined had by then also launched a campaign to penetrate universities

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<sup>20</sup> Erik Ortiz, “‘Disturbing’ Texts between Oregon Police and Far-Right Group Prompt Investigation,” *NBCNews.com*, February 16, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/disturbing-texts-between-oregon-police-far-right-group-prompts-investigation-n972161>.

<sup>21</sup> Detention facilities made headlines on several occasions for denying elected officials entry into their buildings. See, for instance, Emily Tillett, “Sen. Jeff Merkley Denied Entry into One Migrant Detention Facility, Claims He Saw Kids Caged in Another,” *CBS News* online, June 4, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/senator-jeff-merkley-barred-brownsville-texas-detention-center-refugee-children-2018-06-04/>. Angelina Godoy, director of the University of Washington Center for Human Rights, was recently also sued by ICE for calling attention to their black sites for immigrants, such as Cowlitz County’s Youth Detention Facility in Longview, Washington. See: Ray Alfonso, “‘Black Sites’ and Immigrant Detention: What ICE Is Doing in Washington State,” *The Daily* online, January 31, 2020, [http://www.dailyuw.com/news/article\\_fcb18100-43dc-11ea-8cea-7f6b62f670ff.html](http://www.dailyuw.com/news/article_fcb18100-43dc-11ea-8cea-7f6b62f670ff.html).

<sup>22</sup> For the 15 thousand figure, see Mona Chalabi, “How Many Migrant Children Are Detained in US Custody?,” *The Guardian* online, December 22, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2018/dec/22/migrant-children-us-custody>; for the 69.5 thousand figure, refer to Christopher Sherman, Martha Mendoza, and Garance Burke, “US Held Record Number of Migrant Children in Custody in 2019,” *AP News*, November 12, 2019, <https://apnews.com/015702afdb4d4fbf85cf5070cd2c6824>.

<sup>23</sup> Ben Makuch and Mack Lamoureux, “Neo-Nazis Are Organizing Secretive Paramilitary Training Across America,” *Vice Magazine* online, November 20, 2018, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_ca/article/a3mexp/neo-nazis-are-organizing-secretive-paramilitary-training-across-america](https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/a3mexp/neo-nazis-are-organizing-secretive-paramilitary-training-across-america).

<sup>24</sup> For the rebranding strategy, generally, see: Daniel Lombroso, “Rebranding White Nationalism: Inside the Alt-Right,” *The Atlantic Magazine* online, December 15, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/510533/rebranding-white-nationalism-inside-the-alt-right/>. For a closer look at a specific figure in the white nationalist movement, see: Eli Saslow, “The White Flight of Derek Black,” *The Washington Post* online, October 15, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/the-white-flight-of-derek-black/2016/10/15/ed5f906a-8f3b-11e6-a6a3-d50061aa9fae\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/the-white-flight-of-derek-black/2016/10/15/ed5f906a-8f3b-11e6-a6a3-d50061aa9fae_story.html).

and intimidate radical, even merely liberal, professors.<sup>25</sup> It hadn't been long into Trump's term when the first public victim of this new coalition, Heather Heyer, would be killed at Charlottesville's "Unite the Right" rally.<sup>26</sup> There are now new victims every week.<sup>27</sup>

It was in this context that, a few days after her killing, I saw a tweet circulating with Claudia Patricia's photograph.<sup>28</sup> Invoking some of the themes that have emerged from Black Lives Matter protests, it read: "Say her name: Claudia Patricia Gómez González. She was somebody. She mattered. She had people who loved her on both sides of the border. She was murdered by Border Patrol on Wednesday at the Texas border. Rest in power."

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<sup>25</sup> For the neo-fascist group Turning Point USA's "professor watchlist," see: Gabriella Paiella, "This Conservative College Group Started a Watch List of Left-Leaning Professors," *The Cut*, November 22, 2016, <https://www.thecut.com/2016/11/turning-point-usa-launches-professor-watchlist.html>. For white supremacist targeting of universities, generally, see: Emma Kerr, "'White Supremacists Are Targeting College Campuses Like Never Before'," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 22, 2020, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/White-Supremacists-Are/242403>.

<sup>26</sup> Chandrika Narayan, "Heather Heyer Died 'Fighting for What She Believed in'," *CNN* online, December 16, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/13/us/charlottesville-heather-heyer-profile/index.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Since the mass civil protests began in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by the police in Minneapolis, there has been corresponding uptick in white nationalist activity targeting protests. Until the recent killings of protestors by the 17-year-old militia-affiliated Kyle Rittenhouse, however, most of these events have been documented on social media, rather than in the mainstream press. Many of these incidents were documented by fascism scholar Alexander Reid Ross, who collected them in an Twitter thread and created an interactive webmap from the data. Building on Reid Ross's work, the Political Research Associates and The Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights (IREHR) in turn created a webmap with a more expansive data set.

For Reid Ross's thread, see: "Thread by @Areidross: 'Quick Thread Highlighting Several Reports from Yesterday about Violent, Armed Vigilantes Roaming around or Taking to Rooftops...,'" Thread Reader, June 2, 2020, <https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1267809836164476931.html>. For his untitled interactive webmap, see: <http://web.pdx.edu/~aross/incidents/incidents.html>. For the Political Research Associates and IREHRs report, see "Mapping Paramilitary and Far-Right Threats to Racial Justice," Political Research Associates, June 19, 2020, <https://www.politicalresearch.org/2020/06/19/mapping-paramilitary-and-far-right-threats-racial-justice>. Finally, for the killings that have occurred more recently, Jemima McEvoy, "14 Days Of Protests, 19 Dead," *Forbes Magazine* online, June 8, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2020/06/08/14-days-of-protests-19-dead>; and Philip Bump, "Few of the Deaths Linked to Recent Protests Are Known to Have Been Caused by Demonstrators," *The Washington Post* online, August 27, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/08/26/almost-none-deaths-linked-recent-protests-are-known-have-been-committed-by-protesters/>.

<sup>28</sup> Movimiento Cosecha, "Say Her Name: Claudia Patricia Gómez González...", Twitter, May 25, 2018, <https://twitter.com/CosechaMovement/status/1000137551305375744>.

In the photograph, Claudia Patricia wears her traditional Maya huipil. What is striking, knowing she'd been killed, is that she looks like she might still be a child—in fact, I assumed she *was* a child, which made the news all the more distressing. Small of stature, her face gave the impression that she could be as young as 12 years old.

Even so, in the replies to this tweet, many of which are no longer available, some people were jubilant. “She got what she had coming to her,” one man said.<sup>29</sup>

“Americans salute ALL of our Border Patrol agents,” another said; “Sad that this ILLEGAL immigrant was killed, however, she would still be alive if she entered the USA LEGALLY!!” Sure, she might look innocent, this same person added, but “A LOT of children ‘looked’ innocent and harmless in Viet Nam too as they fired thier [*sic*] Russian made weapons at Americans!!”<sup>30</sup>

At the time, I did not yet have the language to describe the injustice, the evil, at the heart of what had been done to Claudia Patricia. Like Julia Leiblich<sup>31</sup>—who says she

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<sup>29</sup> This tweet is from a Twitter user identified as Jon Jacobini (@JonJacobini), “She got what she had coming to her. If I went to the Guatemalan border and tried to enter THEIR COUNTRY ILLEGALLY I [*sic*] would expect the same. Wake up people!,” Twitter, May 26, 2018, <https://twitter.com/JonJacoboni/status/1000482826347692032>.

<sup>30</sup> The tweets in question are no longer available, but were published by the same user. The user appears to have deleted their account. They were both published on May 26, 2018 at <https://twitter.com/PropUSN/status/1000481122155835392>, and <https://twitter.com/PropUSN/status/1000482057833693184>. While these and other tweets—the worst of them—are no longer available, there are still others in the thread that communicate the same sentiment. See, for instance, a user who identifies himself as a former Marine (@BasfordRocky) says that Gomez Gonzalez “Shouldn’t have been here play games you win prizes,” Twitter, May 26, 2018, <https://twitter.com/BasfordRocky/status/1000510737335365635>. An anonymous user (@busseja) agrees: “She came here illegally and rushed an armed officer en mass [*sic*]. She was killed for her act. Period. No sympathy. Lesson is that no agent shoots one who goes to the immigration portal and doesn’t attack an agent. Easy to learn. Maybe that should be taught in Guatemalan schools,” Twitter, May 26, 2018, <https://twitter.com/busseja/status/1000354949899796485>. Finally, another anonymous user (@david780a) writes that “she had no business being in our country, she was trying to sneak [*sic*] in with the others and they all know its [*sic*] illegal the boarder [*sic*] patrol has every right to defend them selves [*sic*] and when they attacked him that was their mistake. stay in your own country or come here the right way,” Twitter, May 26, 2018, <https://twitter.com/david780a/status/1000463474672226305>

<sup>31</sup> Julia Lieblich, “Killed on the Border: Where Is the Justice for Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzalez?,” Chicago Tribune online, May 31, 2019, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-perspec-border-shooting-claudia-patricia-gomez-gonzalez-20190412-story.html>.

“cannot forget Gómez González, who looked like a young teenager... [who] reminded me of my own 20-year-old Guatemalan goddaughter,” what happened to Claudia Patricia had suddenly stunned me and filled me with dismay. How, I thought, could someone so physically unthreatening be seen as menacing enough to warrant lethal force? How could someone—anyone—not just be indifferent to her killing, but celebrate it?

This dissertation is my attempt to grapple with these questions. More specifically, it is my response to those who have come to use the language of terrorism to speak of the sort of violence that was visited on Claudia Patricia, the sort of violence that is represented in the practices of CBP and Immigration and Customs Enforcement—but, more generally, too, in the scattered incidences of vigilante violence against nonwhite people in America. To this group, state and non-state violence against the migrant family has seemed so shocking and gratuitous as to be outside of the realm of normal human affairs, crossing the threshold, perhaps, into what Bernard Williams once called the *unthinkable*—courses of action that would normally be ruled out in advance in the process of ethical deliberation; courses of action which would be dishonorable to even entertain as possibilities.

Because of the cruelty of the Trump regime, and the non-state violence it has inspired in vigilantes and “lone wolf” killers, this group claims that such violence is a consequence of an emerging atmosphere of racism and xenophobia that both undergirds rising hate crimes and state crimes under the Trump administration. They call this *white terrorism*.

But when I think about Claudia Patricia, I remember that her death was sanctioned by the very grammars of “terror” and national security. The hyper-militarization of the border that resulted in her death<sup>32</sup>—indeed, the policy of “Prevention Through Deterrence,” which has deliberately treated deaths of immigrants in the desert as a desirable an indicator of success,<sup>33</sup> and which has made CBP the largest federal security force in the country, is precisely rooted in rightwing paranoia that terrorists are present among refugees and immigrants,<sup>34</sup> and the deadly association this, alongside the War on Drugs, has nurtured between immigrants and criminality. In CBP’s statement that Claudia Patricia was killed in self-defense, that is, they were also claiming that it was *she* who was the threat that justified securitizing the border in the first place.

Thinking of this kind of violence as terrorism has thus seemed to me confused. Historically, whether it is carried out by state or non-state actors, violence directed at an

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<sup>32</sup> The militarization of the border is now well-documented in the work of scholars and journalist, such as Timothy Dunn’s *The Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1978-1992: Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine Comes Home* (Austin, TX: CMAS Books University of Texas at Austin, 1997); Todd Miller’s *Border Patrol Nation: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Homeland Security* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2014); and Miguel Antonio Levario’s *Militarizing the Border: When Mexicans Became the Enemy* (Texas A&M Univ Press, 2015). Indeed, in a 2015 article, Miller and Gabriel Schivone point out the cross-fertilization between Israeli security firms and US-Mexico border control concerns: Todd Miller and Gabriel M. Schivone, “Gaza in Arizona: How Israeli High-Tech Firms Will Up-Armor the US-Mexico Border,” *Mother Jones* online, January 26, 2015). For a critical appraisal of uses of the term “militarization” in the border context, consult Josiah Heyman and Howard Campbell’s “The Militarization of the United States-Mexico Border Region,” *Revista de Estudos Universitários* 38 (2012): 75-94.

<sup>33</sup> There is a growing literature on Prevention Through Deterrence (PTD), including Todd Miller’s *Border Patrol Nation*, Timothy Dunn’s *Blockading the Border and Human Rights: the El Paso Operation That Remade Immigration Enforcement* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010); and, notably, Jason De León’s *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015). Recently, some of the perceived failures of the strategy have resulted in the expansion of its reach into Mexico’s southern border. See: Jason De León, Eduardo “Lalo” García, and The Undocumented Migration Project, “A View From the Train Tracks,” *SAPIENS*, October 2, 2018, <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/prevention-through-deterrence/>.

<sup>34</sup> Kathy Gilsinan, “Trump Keeps Invoking Terrorism to Get His Border Wall,” *The Atlantic Magazine* online December 11, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/12/trump-incorrectly-links-immigration-terrorism/576358/>.

already oppressed group of peoples is never registered as “terrorism” at the historical moment in which it occurs; often, it is policy. Rather, “terrorism” has always been the language that powerful states and empires use to classify populations regarded as threats, real or otherwise, to the social and imperial order.

But the recent waves of violence against people of color by both state and non-state actors are not directed *at* “America;” they are intended to *protect* “America,” or some vision of what America “ought” to be. I do not disagree with those who call this “white terrorism” that what is happening has crossed the moral threshold into the unthinkable, therefore; I only disagree about the name, the category of evil to which it belongs.

At the same time, another puzzle presents itself in the sheer facts surrounding the demography of people targeted by anti-immigrant policy and action. It must be admitted here that, demographically, while Claudia Patricia is representative of the populations affected by immigration enforcement policies in terms of her age—as a whole, people in ICE custody comprise, on average, a relatively young population<sup>35</sup>—she is not representative in terms of gender or nationality. 80 percent of ICE “detainees” (they are really, as we will see, a species of political prisoners) are men and boys; most are Mexican. Furthermore, as Tanya Golash-Boza and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo have pointed out, at least 85 percent of the 4.2 million deportations carried out between 1997 and 2012 have been working class Latinx men, most of them Mexican.<sup>36</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>35</sup> See Emily Ryo and Ian Peacock’s report for the American Immigration Council, “The Landscape of Immigration Detention in the United States,” American Immigration Council, October 21, 2019, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/landscape-immigration-detention-united-states>.

<sup>36</sup> Tanya Golash-Boza and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, “Latino Immigrant Men and the Deportation Crisis: A Gendered Racial Removal Program,” *Latino Studies* 11, no. 3 (2013): 271-292, <https://doi.org/10.1057/lst.2013.14>, 272.

a 2013 report on the recovered remains of undocumented border crossers by the Binational Migration Institute found that “the overwhelming majority (80%) of decedents were male,” 82% of them being young Mexican males (the mean age for the whole group was 31 years old).<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, it is overwhelmingly women and not men who benefit from the very minimal protection against deportation that is offered by former President Barack Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

This is significant because it is not intuitively the situation we would expect under the liberal/left intersectional discourse. According to that view, which is now culturally dominant in the academy, women of color, facing a kind of "double-jeopardy" or unique extra penalty for being both women and nonwhite, should be expected to face heightened vulnerabilities and have less “privileges” than their male counterparts. The demographic data thus poses an explanatory challenge: if anti-immigrant policy has tended to target Latinx—particularly, Mexican—males, how can we explain cases like Claudia Patricia’s? How did her body come to be seen as a threat, when Mexican males have been, numerically, the primary targets of anti-immigrant policy? Similarly, if Mexican men have been the targets, why did Patrick Crusius, in the largest anti-Mexican massacre in recent memory, primarily kill elders in El Paso, Texas?<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Martinez, Daniel E. Reineke, Robin C., Rubio-Goldsmith, Raquel, Anderson, Bruce E., Hess, Gregory L, and Parks, Bruce O., “A Continued Humanitarian Crises on the Border: Undocumented Border Crosser Deaths Recorded by the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner 1990-2012,” Binational Migration Institute, Department of Mexican American Studies, University of Arizona (2013): 17. The report may be accessed at: <https://bmi.arizona.edu/publications>

<sup>38</sup> In total, Crusius killed 26 people and injured at least another 22. See Daniel Borunda, *et al.*, “El Paso Shooting Updates: 22 Killed in El Paso Walmart Shooting near Cielo Vista Mall,” *El Paso Times* online, February 6, 2020, <https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/crime/2019/08/03/el-paso-police-report-shooter-walmart-cielo-vista-mall/1910012001/>.

While there has been a focus on the literature on “Latinx threat” on fears of Latina “fertility,”<sup>39</sup> for instance, few have tried to square those explanations with the sheer number of anti-male targeting. This is by no means to suggest that women immigrants aren’t subject to distinct vulnerabilities by virtue of their being immigrant women—for instance, there is documentation that shows they experience sexual violence in the migrant journey.<sup>40</sup> But, to paraphrase genocide scholar Adam Jones, the fact that those targeted by immigration enforcement strategies are overwhelmingly male *should*, yet presently does not, form a major part of any analysis.<sup>41</sup>

I shall argue here that this “Gordian knot” of violence against Brown people, in which distinct social processes have become tangled together, is not best understood as “white terrorism,” although there is a history of racialized terror against nonwhites in the US; but that it is something much older, more deeply ensconced in the American way of life. By my reckoning, these are distinct manifestations of an age-old practice of

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<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, Leo Chavez, “A Glass Half Empty: Latina Reproduction and Public Discourse,” *Human Organization* 63, no. 2 (2004): 173–188. ; and Elena R. Gutierrez, *Fertile Matters: The Politics of Mexican Origin Women’s Reproduction*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Recent reports have brought to light the fact that Latinxs, especially women and children, are being sexually assaulted in detainment centers by ICE agents and correctional officers. Furthermore, it is well-known now that women experience sexual violence on the migrant journey. See, for instance, William Paul Simmons, Cecilia Menjivar, and Michelle Téllez’s “Violence and Vulnerability of Female Migrants in Drop Houses in Arizona,” *Violence Against Women* 21, no. 5 (2015): 551-570, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215573331>; and Yolanda Valencia, “Risk and Security on the Mexico-to-US Migrant Journey: Women’s Testimonios of Violence,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 24, no. 11 (2017): 1530-1548, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2017.1352566>. For recent discussions of women and children reporting sexual violence at the hands of border enforcement officers, see Matthew Haag, “Thousands of Immigrant Children Said They Were Sexually Abused in U.S. Detention Centers, Report Says,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/us/immigrant-children-sexual-abuse.html>, and Lomi Kriel, “ICE Guards ‘Systematically’ Sexually Assault Detainees in an El Paso Detention Center, Lawyers Say,” *The Texas Tribune* online, August 14, 2020, <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/08/14/texas-immigrant-detention-ice-el-paso-sexual-abuse/>

<sup>41</sup> Jones is himself paraphrasing Christina Lerner’s work on the witch hunts in Europe as a way to motivate his project of taking seriously the targeting of men in wars and genocides. The intuition here is the *sheer* number says *something*, and, whatever it is that they say, it currently remains unanalyzed. See Adam Jones, “Gendercide and Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, no. 2 (2000): 185-211, <https://doi.org/10.1080/713677599>, 194.

racialized killing, torture, and mutilation that the US has, for a long time, cultivated inside its borders, in its peripheries, as well as in its external economic colonies. They deserve to be called, therefore, by their proper name. What happened to Claudia Patricia, what's happening also in the onslaught of cases of racialized killings by state and non-state actors, is a genocide.

This essay is divided into three chapters. In the first, I proceed by first taking up the question of “white terrorism,” its emergence on the political scene and the implications of its assumptions particularly in the wake of 9/11, arguing that the discourse on white terror is a “colonizing trick” which grants a superficial type of recognition to targeted nonwhite groups while masking the complicity and reality of genocide. Once done, I show how and why—not just anti-Brown violence, but racialized violence against nonwhite groups coded as “threats” should be regarded as a form of genocide. I propose that genocide in settler colonial contexts is a special dynamic, baked into the social order, part of its heartbeat—the background rhythm of life; as such it threatens to always rise in tempo, convulse and terra through the social body.

Once this is shown, however, it is important to understand how we have arrived at this particular moment of genocidal violence, for that also reveals the dynamics which are producing the demographic targeting that I have already noted above. Thus, in the second chapter of this essay, I argue that fears of the coming majority-minority nation, combined with the gender-selective targeting of Mexican males was part of the background assumptions of Prevention Through Deterrence. As such, however, it served as a deliberate plan, if not de facto, to prepare the wider public for a new cycle of anti-Mexican violence—all of which has brought us to the present situation, in which

Department of Homeland Security Officers and CBP agents are being deployed by the Trump administration to quell uprising in the “inner cities” of the country. In the third chapter, I take up the matter of torture as a hallmark of genocidal situations, arguing that the traditional image of torture as a form of interrogation obscures the reality that torture abounds in America’s internal management of its racial populations, as well as how it has traditionally dealt with subject peoples abroad. This offers a connection to international politics and what we might call the “relays” and “feedback loops” between the domestic white settler colonial dynamic and international imperial dynamic of the US, in which systems of torture, I claim, are cultivated to destabilize the populations it targets as a method of racial control.

Before getting underway, however, I would like to here address on immediate concern. This is that, by nature, the project I am undertaking has certain pitfalls. For, as I conceive of the project, I am attempting to identify something that might be, by definition, unidentifiable—what in the 1970s Raymond Williams referred to as a *structure of feeling*. For Williams, a “structure of feeling” is an ambiguous social assemblage that has not yet fully emerged, an as yet socially unintelligible or unrecognizable social form—a “social form in solution,” since its precise shape and contours are not yet solidified (Williams, 1971:133-34). On Williams’ view, such structures are the unstated, or even unstateable, affective residue of collective life: recognizable only retroactively, at which point they have become “finished products” (*i.e.*, when they have become socially intelligible practices or activities), and thus cease to be structures of feeling, since structures of feeling *precede* articulation (Williams, 1971: 128). As a sort of “affective common” of social life, the crucial component of such

structures of feelings is how, as a consequence of the fact that we cannot *help but inhabit* them, they epistemically compromise our perspective on the present situation. And, in effect, what I am suggesting is that a structure of feeling is emerging that is a form of everyday violence that is normalizing a new cycle of genocide.

I thus acknowledge the extent to which my perspective—or anyone’s, for that matter—on this issue might thus be compromised. If I am right in my analysis, moreover, perhaps it is because it is now too late—the structure of feeling has solidified into intractable social structure, serving now corral-like as the calcified basis from which new structures of feeling can build. This latter, however, is a practical and political challenge, not a theoretical one.

As for the epistemic challenge, I think it can be mitigated against in two ways. First, by recognizing that there is not just one affective common from which all structures of feeling emerge. This can be thought of on analogy to the idea that, just because there is a hegemonic “commonsense,” this does not mean that the oppressed can’t themselves understand or articulate the character of their own oppression (cf. Dotson, 2012:31). In my view, however, this cannot be understood, as it usually is, only in terms of social epistemology—that is, just in terms of belief-sets, propositional attitudes, cognitive content. For it occurs also at the level of social practice, one’s phenomenological orientation and bodily-coping in and with the world and social and experiential ecology. To speak of this, however, is to speak of the *affective commons* that emerge within cultural groups that are, in some sense, “outside” of and/or “below” what Enrique Dussel calls the “totality”—“the horizon within which all beings (which can be objects or facts) find their meaning” (1985: 2.2.2.2); that is, the lifeworld of the ruling

socio-economic and political order and the implicit logic that serves to naturalize and which is native to that order. To inhabit that “exteriority” is therefore not just to offer an “alternative” epistemic perspective but have access to affective commons and structures of feeling inaccessible to those inside the totality—what Fred Moten (2013) has aptly called the “undercommons.” People targeted by systems of domination don’t just *see* or *believe* differently, they can also *feel* and *intuit* differently than do those who benefit from their oppression.

It is true enough, however, that being a subordinate position does not automatically grant one privileged epistemic access to the social truth—as standpoint theorists like Uma Narayan have shown. Similarly, it will be suggested that, if this is true of the epistemic, it must be true of the inchoate structures of feeling and affective commons that form the background of the social lives of a given group. Yet I do not require a claim so strong. Just as it remains true that epistemic standpoint at least creates the possibility of experiences that, if coupled with a critical and dialogical politics, can bring us closer to the truth; affective/phenomenological coping from a position of exteriority can disclose features of the totality’s affective structures that people inhabiting them will not be able to see.

The second way that this epistemic limitation can be overcome is more straightforward: empirically informed, *longue durée* analysis of the problematique at hand. For if exteriority by itself cannot aid us without a critical political orientation that looks outside of the self and towards the “Other” of the totality, even this will fail us if it is not properly sociologically, historically, and empirically informed. This means I will rely heavily on sources outside of philosophy, and will ask the reader to take informed inferential and

imaginative “leaps” from the available information. There is risk here, too, of coming to believe something that turns out to be wrong—a frightful prospect in modern Western thought (really, as I will show, an irrational phobia). But my wager is that the stakes are high enough that the cost of not believing and being wrong are much higher. For what I am attempting to identify is a form of social affect that is (re)emerging, but which not everyone is readily perceiving, or “feeling” for what it is. It’s in this sense that I am attempting to articulate the concept of a “genocidal moment” as a structure of feeling. By identifying it, the hope is that we take the first step towards being able to act against it.

## **Chapter 1. A Genocidal Moment**

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter challenges a central contention in public liberal politics, that the violence being directed at immigrants and people of color by both state and non-state actors in the aftermath of the Trump election constitutes a particular form of evil called “white terrorism.” My central contention is that violence against already oppressed peoples is not “terrorism”—which is a politicized concept always indexed to the interests of the state. These events are instead distinct manifestations of an age-old practice of extra-judicial and para-judicial killings in America which the language of terrorism both understates and serves to obscure. As such, they deserve to be called by their proper name, and that name is genocide.

I begin by considering the emergence of the concept of white terrorism, then asking why genocide was never on the table as a name for the phenomena at issue. The answer to this question is complicated, but the key reason I focus on here is that it would raise the question of complicity and benefit, and because of the weight of a particular memory of the Holocaust as industrial Judeo-cide that hangs over the social meaning of “genocide.” Using the work of Patrick Wolfe and Dirk Moses, I then demonstrate why this is mistaken and why settler colonial contexts are special cases in which genocide is sublimated into a background structure. In particular: I consider the case of anti-Black genocide and anti-Mexican-cum-anti-Latinx genocide. I conclude with some brief reflections on the question of innocence and evil.

### **2. “White terrorism.”**

Before El Paso, before the Gilroy Garlic Festival; before even Charleston, the language of terrorism was already being invoked to name the mass-murder of civilians by “disgruntled” white men.<sup>42</sup>

In the post-9/11 context, in the wake of the backlash against the War on Iraq, the point of using this term has been to criticize the hypocrisy of the white majority who denounced “Islamic terrorism” while ignoring the similar violence of their own clan and state. Appearing as early as the attempted murder of former Arizona congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords,<sup>43</sup> the label was thereafter increasingly applied to “lone shooter” events, and, more recently, to state actors, and policies.<sup>44</sup>

At first, the bulk of the “lone wolf” killings shared enough attributes to give rise to an uncritical tendency of lumping mass shootings together under the name of “terrorism.” The image here is of the unhinged gunman, typically a white male, who

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<sup>42</sup> For the massacre in El Paso, see, again, Daniel Borunda *et al.*, “El Paso Shooting Updates: 22 Killed in El Paso Walmart Shooting near Cielo Vista Mall.” For the killings at the Gilroy Garlic Festival, see Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs and Jacey Fortin, “Shooting at Festival in California Kills at Least 3,” *The New York Times*, July 29, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/28/us/gilroy-garlic-festival-shooting-california.html>. For the Charleston killings, see Radhika Chalasani, “Charleston Shooting,” *CBS News* online, January 16, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/charleston-south-carolina-church-shooting/>. For an example of one of the accusations of white terrorism, John R. Allen, “White-Supremacist Violence Is Terrorism,” *The Atlantic Magazine* online, February 24, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/white-supremacist-violence-terrorism/606964/>.

<sup>43</sup> Mehdi Hasan was one of the first commentators to apply the label in a major news site. See Mehdi Hasan, “What Makes Arizona’s Killer Just a Loner, Not a Terrorist?,” *The Guardian* online, January 13, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jan/13/jared-lee-loughner-loner-muslim-terrorists>.

<sup>44</sup> The white terrorism label began to be applied to state agents in many discussions of immigration enforcement, then subsequently to the Trump administration for inspiring state violence, stochastic terror, and for its own acts and policies as well. See, for instance, Gabriella Paiella, “Cynthia Nixon Says ICE Is a ‘Terrorist Organization,’” *The Cut*, June 22, 2018, <https://www.thecut.com/2018/06/cynthia-nixon-ice-terrorist-organization.html>; Michelle Goldberg, “Trump Is a White Nationalist Who Inspires Terrorism,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, August 5, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/05/opinion/trump-white-supremacy.html>; Henry Giroux, “Trump’s Act of State Terrorism against Children,” *The Conversation*, April 15, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/trumps-act-of-state-terrorism-against-children-98612>; and Masha Gessen, “Taking Children from Their Parents Is a Form of State Terror,” *The New Yorker Magazine* online, June 22, 2018), <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/taking-children-from-their-parents-is-a-form-of-state-terror>.

“inexplicably” goes on a killing spree, and whose motivations, we are told, “may never be known.”<sup>45</sup> Emerging, perhaps, as offshoots of the older “going postal”-style shootings,<sup>46</sup> these events were portrayed as social aberrations that we could abolish if we just adopted the appropriate gun control or mental health protocols.

More recently, others pointed out that shootings like the ones in Charleston and El Paso were manifestations of a specifically *racial* type of violence,<sup>47</sup> distinct, for instance, from the shootings in Dayton and Las Vegas.<sup>48</sup> Calling these racialized shootings “white terrorism” or “white supremacist terrorism,” those who use these labels underscore the fact that this kind of violence is no aberration in the US, and that it is not a matter of mental illness:<sup>49</sup> the problem is *the fact of* a racially specific vulnerability to targeted violence—the problem, in other words, is racism. With the election of Donald Trump, the label was then finally extended to encompass state policies and actions—

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<sup>45</sup> For an example of a headline emphasizing the unknowability of the intentions of these actors, see Richard Winton and Matthew Ormseth, “Gilroy Shooter’s Motive May Never Be Known as Investigation Finds Few Clues,” *Los Angeles Times* online, August 2, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-08-02/gilroy-shooters-motive-may-never-be-known-as-investigation-finds-few-clues>.

<sup>46</sup> Although these recent racial killings bear a resemblance to what Mark Ames and others have referred to as the “going postal” mass murders, it seems clear massacres of co-workers, or even the recent mass killing in Dayton, Ohio, belong to a wholly distinct type of violence that I can’t here address. My focus here is not these kind, but the mass murder of people who belong to already vulnerable racialized groups, as occurred in El Paso, Gilroy, and Charleston. For a discussion of “going postal” killings, confer Mark Ames, *Going Postal: Rage, Murder and Rebellion in America* (London: Snowbooks, 2007). For an precis of the basic argument of Ames’s book, consult Mark Ames, “Going Postal,” *The Daily Beast*, November 7, 2009, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/going-postal>.

<sup>47</sup> The attempt here is to connect these killings with the history of racist terror. See Dara Lind, “Why Calling the Charleston Shooting Terrorism Is Important to so Many People,” *Vox*, June 18, 2015, <https://www.vox.com/2015/6/18/8803721/charleston-terrorism-racism>.

<sup>48</sup> For the Dayton shooting, see Adeel Hassan, “Dayton Gunman Shot 26 People in 32 Seconds, Police Timeline Reveals,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, August 13, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/us/dayton-shooter-video-timeline.html>; for the Las Vegas shooting, Andrew Blankstein *et al.*, “Las Vegas Shooting: 59 Killed and More Than 500 Hurt Near Mandalay Bay,” *NBC News* online, October 3, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/las-vegas-shooting/las-vegas-police-investigating-shooting-mandalay-bay-n806461>.

<sup>49</sup> The former Vice President Joe Biden himself made this case. Zack Budryk, “Biden: ‘White Supremacy Is Wrong, but It’s Not a Mental Illness,’” *The Hill*, August 6, 2019, <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/456289-biden-white-supremacy-is-wrong-but-its-not-a-mental-illness>.

such as the concentration camps,<sup>50</sup> the mindbogglingly cruel family-separation policies.<sup>51</sup>

This attempt to weaponize the accusation of terrorism against the state and against those who regard themselves as “patriots,” however, is woefully confused. This is not only because the use of the term “white terrorism” makes the average white person angry.<sup>52</sup> It misses the fact that plausibly *explains* that anger, which is that “terrorism” in the US context is already racially coded to preclude white racist violence under its umbrella—whether or not it comes from the state. Indeed, the special and irreducible evil of “terrorism” for white folks in the post-9/11 world is derived precisely from one fact and one fact alone: that it’s Brown people, the perpetual foreigners, who do it. To the “vast, heedless, unthinking, cruel white majority” that James Baldwin once spoke of, a “white terrorist” is conceptually impossible.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> While some Jewish leaders have expressed objections to the use of the “concentration camp” label, many scholars, and some Holocaust survivors, have opined that the analogy is apt. In my own view, it seems clear that this is just a verbal dispute between those who think of the concentration camp as synonymous with the Nazi death camp, and those who understand the wider sense of the term. Thus, from this point onward I will refer to them as such, interchangeably with “detention center.” For some perspectives on this matter, see Jack Holmes, “An Expert on Concentration Camps Says That’s Exactly What the U.S. Is Running at the Border,” *Esquire* online, June 13, 2019, <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a27813648/concentration-camps-southern-border-migrant-detention-facilities-trump/>; Ben Sales, “These Jews Called out AOC over Her Use of ‘Concentration Camps.’ Here’s What They Think about the Detention Centers,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, July 9, 2019, <https://www.jta.org/2019/07/08/united-states/these-jews-called-out-aoc-over-her-use-of-concentration-camps-heres-what-they-think-about-the-detention-centers>; Doug Most, “Are ICE Detention Centers Concentration Camps?,” *BU Today*, June 27, 2019, <http://www.bu.edu/articles/2019/are-ice-detention-centers-concentration-camps>; and Alyssa Pry, “Holocaust Survivor: Yes, the Border Detention Centers Are Like Concentration Camps,” *The Daily Beast* (The Daily Beast Company, July 8, 2019), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/holocaust-survivor-yes-the-border-detention-centers-are-like-concentration-camps>.

<sup>51</sup> For an overview of these policies, see Dara Lind, “The Trump Administration’s Separation of Families at the Border, Explained,” *Vox*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2018/6/11/17443198/children-immigrant-families-separated-parents>.

<sup>52</sup> This was the outcome of a recent study, as reported by Timothy McGrath, “Turns out People Get Angry When You Say White Americans Are Terrorists, Too,” *The World from PRX*, July 8, 2015, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-07-08/turns-out-people-get-angry-when-you-say-white-americans-are-terrorists-too>.

<sup>53</sup> Baldwin made this comment in his famous interview with Kenneth Clarke. The excerpt was uploaded to YouTube in a channel called TheNoPCShow: “James Baldwin Moral Dilemma,” YouTube, November 17, 2016, <https://youtu.be/BrqwdOEPeD8>. For the full interview, see: “A Conversation With James Baldwin

It's true enough, however, that the dictionary definition of "terrorism" is that it consists in targeted and unlawful acts of politicized violence against civilian populations, where that violence is intended to instill fear in that population. Taken out of its context of use, this debate would be settled. But if we are talking about the mass murder of people who belong to already vulnerable groups, we ought to remember that violence against them has never been a *threat* to the social order in the US; it has been the state's policy for maintaining that social order.<sup>54</sup>

In a settler colonial capitalist system like ours,<sup>55</sup> two categories of people have consistently been marked as terroristic threats: people engaged in anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonial resistance and people thought to be at risk of engaging in anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonial resistance. This is clear from Nat Turner's and John Brown's insurgencies, to the historic anticommunist persecution of labor organizers and "subversives;" to the counterinsurgency operations which resulted in the murder of the Black Panther Party's leadership, down to the FBI's recent creation of the label of "Black Identity Extremism"<sup>56</sup> for Black activists in Ferguson. As Lakota

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[June 24, 1963]," WGBH Educational Foundation and the Library of Congress, <http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-15-0v89g5gf5r>.

<sup>54</sup> As an example, consider the MOVE bombing. Democracy Now!, "MOVE Bombing at 30: 'Barbaric' 1985 Philadelphia Police Attack Killed 11 & Burned a Neighborhood," Democracy Now!, May 13, 2015, [https://www.democracynow.org/2015/5/13/move\\_bombing\\_at\\_30\\_barbaric\\_1985](https://www.democracynow.org/2015/5/13/move_bombing_at_30_barbaric_1985).

<sup>55</sup> By "settler colonial," I refer to the colonial structure of states like the United States, which are founded on and structurally committed to the inherently territorial project of elimination through dispossession, and dispossession through elimination, of Indigenous people. As Patrick Wolfe puts it, in what has become a keystone writing in settler colonial studies, "Settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event." Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>, 388. While Wolfe is a seminal author in the field of settler colonial studies, it is important to point out, as J. Kehaulani Kauanui does—and as Wolfe himself insisted—that Wolfe did not invent the field of settler colonial studies; Indigenous scholars did. See: J. Kehaulani Kauanui, "A Structure, Not an Event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Lateral* 5, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.25158/l5.1.7>.

<sup>56</sup> Alice Speri, "The Strange Tale of the FBI's Fictional 'Black Identity Extremism' Movement," *The Intercept Magazine*, March 23, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/03/23/black-identity-extremist-fbi-domestic-terrorism/>.

historian Nick Estes notes,<sup>57</sup> the former Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo cited the 1873 Modoc War as a legal justification for the use of torture during the War on Terror since Indians and “terrorists” weren’t considered “lawful” combatants. In more recent times, the Trump administration has tried to brand antifascist protestors terrorists.<sup>58</sup>

As a matter of historical practice “terrorist” *just is* the name that powerful states give to two specific kinds of enemies: the insurgent elements that rebuke the legitimacy of the reigning social order—who themselves admit of a diversity of orientations towards political violence—and the populations that it serves states to scapegoat as threats in order to consolidate power. These are not necessarily the same population. As for the former, cultural geographer Bernard Nietschmann explains that the actions of such groups, when they have the concomitant of civilian or combatant blood, are nevertheless primarily directed at states, at social orders.<sup>59</sup> As for the latter, these are the expendable populations whose lives are treated as currency for achieving a particular political aim—such as social stability.<sup>60</sup> This is not to paint insurgent terrorism as necessarily justified—there is a legitimate moral presumption that the mass murder of non-combatants is seriously wrong. Nor is it to suggest all insurgents are morally on a

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<sup>57</sup> Nick Estes, “Indian Killers: Crime, Punishment, and Empire,” The Red Nation blog, January 11, 2017, <https://therednation.org/2017/01/11/indian-killers-crime-punishment-and-empire/>.

<sup>58</sup> Allan Smith, “Trump Says He Will Designate Antifa a Terrorist Organization as GOP Points Fingers at Extremists,” *NBC News* online, June 1, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/trump-says-he-will-designate-antifa-terrorist-organization-gop-points-n1220321>.

<sup>59</sup> Bernard Nietschmann, “The Fourth World: Nations Versus States,” in *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the Twenty-First Century* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 230, 235, 237.

<sup>60</sup> This is the view of Derrick Bell, who says that racism is a key stabilizing force in “an otherwise fragile and dangerously divided society.” I have taken this quote from a brief speech Bell gave a meeting of the National Urban League. But Bell develops this view across his oeuvre. See Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: the Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018). For the speech in question, “Derek Bell in 1991 on Racism in America,” YouTube, March 7, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQsd9KyRdBI>.

par—despite Trump’s desire to mystify the issue, there is a clear difference between non-violent protestors and ISIL. It is simply to point out that, in practice, what gets publicly accepted as “terrorism,” and who gets to define it, is shaped by the interests and aims of the powerful—terrorism is to the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries what “barbarism” was to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>: a language to justify colonial dispossession, extermination, and exploitation.

The recent decision by the FBI to at last prioritize white supremacists as a terror threat,<sup>61</sup> rather than being an objection, is in fact the exception that proves the rule. It comes only after Jewish people, a politically powerful if only conditionally “whitened” group, were themselves targeted,<sup>62</sup> forcing the hand of an administration long criticized for downplaying white supremacist violence.

Of the many domestic organizations that the State Department could have been prioritized, moreover, it was an organization based in St. Petersburg, the Russian Imperial Movement, that first received the terrorist label.<sup>63</sup> This is not accidental. It occurs amid the current power struggle between white liberals and conservatives, in which the intelligence community has found itself the target of the latter’s “anti-establishment,” “deep-state” conspiracy rhetoric, while the conservatives themselves have found themselves the target of liberal #RussiaGate conspiracy thinking.<sup>64</sup> In other

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<sup>61</sup> Erin Donaghue, “Racially-Motivated Violent Extremists Elevated to ‘National Threat Priority,’ FBI Director Says,” *CBS News* online, February 5, 2020, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/racially-motivated-violent-extremism-isis-national-threat-priority-fbi-director-christopher-wray/>.

<sup>62</sup> Conor Finnegan, “State Dept Warns of Rise in ‘Racially-Motivated’ Terrorism, Expansion of ISIS ‘Toxic Ideology,’” *ABC News* online, November 1, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/state-dept-warns-rise-racially-motivated-terrorism-expansion/story?id=66695308>.

<sup>63</sup> Tracy Wilkinson, “U.S. Designates Russian White Supremacist Group as Terrorist Organization,” *Los Angeles Times* online, April 6, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-04-06/russian-white-supremacist-group-terrorist-organization>.

<sup>64</sup> Investigative journalists Glenn Greenwald and Aaron Maté have shown, conclusively, in my view, that the concerns about Russian interference were fueled by conspiracy thinking rather than fact. See Glenn

words, it occurs at a moment in which the “us” of the nation is precisely the site of a power struggle requiring re-consolidation. Here, as in occasions passed, the terrorist label is marshalled to accomplish this. It’s no wonder, then, why the right, finding the phenomenon of white supremacist and fascist violence undeniable, allow themselves to acknowledge it only by shifting the conversation to talk of mental illness,<sup>65</sup> head fake towards “gun control,”<sup>66</sup> or lay the blame on foreigners (*i.e.*, Russian white supremacists). Having their “fingers plugged directly into the power source,” as a colleague once put it, they can hardly allow themselves to admit that domestic whites could be defined as terrorists.<sup>67</sup>

### 3. “...a pathetic, powerful it...”

But it is not only white conservatives that have their “fingers” at the source. Indeed, that the language of “white terrorism” has become so attractive, and not the language of genocide, among liberals itself is of sociological interest, a fact requiring its own explanation. And the simple truth is this, that if it is all too convenient to invoke the terrorist label, and with it the nationalistic power that this term has accrued, it is all too *inconvenient* to call forth the concept of genocide.

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Greenwald, “Robert Mueller Did Not Merely Reject the Trump-Russia Conspiracy Theories. He Obliterated Them,” *The Intercept Magazine*, April 18, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/04/18/robert-mueller-did-not-merely-reject-the-trump-russia-conspiracy-theories-he-obliterated-them>, and Aaron Maté, “The Mueller Report Indicts the Trump-Russia Conspiracy Theory,” *The Nation* online, May 2, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/russiagate-trump-mueller-report-no-collusion>.

<sup>65</sup> Example: Will Drabold, “Republicans Say Mental Health Care Prevents Mass Shootings. They’ve Tried to Gut Mental Health Care,” *Mic*, February 16, 2018, <https://www.mic.com/articles/188004/republicans-say-mental-health-care-prevents-mass-shootings-theyve-tried-to-gut-mental-health-care>.

<sup>66</sup> Anita Kumar and Caitlin Oprysko, “Trump to Release Gun Control Proposals, Including Background Check Updates,” *POLITICO Magazine* online, August 21, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/08/21/donald-trump-gun-background-checks-1470901>.

<sup>67</sup> I am referring here to Trans-Pacific studies scholar, Alan Michael Williams (in personal conversation).

This inconvenience is partly moral, since “genocide” carries so much moral opprobrium. We like to imagine that, if we *really* were to find ourselves in a genocidal situation, like that of a Nazi Germany, we would come to the aid of the oppressed and fight the oppressor. The paradox, of course, is that this easy morality itself militates against our willingness to ever accept the fact, if it were true, that we, ourselves participate in, benefit from, or are complicit in genocide. Only moral monsters commit genocide, and since I am not a monster, there is no genocide!

The truth is that the language of genocide makes demands on us that the language of terrorism sets aside—demands whose implications even the best among us rarely accept. By contrast, the label of “terrorism” is convenient in that it allows us to step back from social reality in order to cast blame on others, washing ourselves of our unavoidable involvement in the world we inhabit.

When the “good white folks” of America levy the charge of “white terrorism” against their compatriots, therefore, they do so in part because it allows them to distance themselves from the worst of themselves—and thus the worst *in* themselves, what Kiese Laymon calls *the worst of white folks*.<sup>68</sup> By this term, Laymon does not refer to “some gang of rabid white people in crisp pillowcases and shaved heads.” The worst of white folks, Laymon explains, is instead “a pathetic, [but] powerful ‘it.’” An “it,” he says, that

...conveniently forgot that it came to this country on a boat, then reacted violently when anything or anyone suggested it share... [that] wanted our mamas and grandmas to work themselves sick for a tiny sliver of an American pie it needed to believe it had made from scratch...<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Kiese Laymon, “The Worst of White Folks,” *Gawker*, August 22, 2016, <https://gawker.com/the-worst-of-white-folks-882334097>.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

“White Americans,” Laymon observes, “were wholly responsible for the worst of white folks, though they would do all they could to make sure it never wholly defined them.”<sup>70</sup>

By distancing themselves from “the worst of whites” in this way, in other words, the “good white folks” can pat themselves on the back and disavow benefitting from the genocidal episodes under discussion. In doing so, they perform a type of conceptual “colonizing trick” that implicitly lends legitimacy to that which this violence calls squarely into question: the foundations of this nation and of their comfortable lives within it.<sup>71</sup> To use the concept of terrorism, after all, is to create a distinction between “us” (the innocent nation) and “them” (the evil outsider; those who hate “us” without justification). By calling genocide *white terrorism*, the “good whites,” and the people of color who join them, implicitly identify themselves not only with the self-image of the nation, but with the *innocent nation*, that is, the non-racist “real us” that never existed: They conceptually couple two things that in reality were never joined, the powerful Anglo-Saxon core’s “us” with the nonwhite populations it occupies and polices. This not only buries the nation’s foundational genocides, it serves to whitewash the complicity of the “good” white folks’ participation in violent national projects.

White liberals latch on to “white terrorism” therefore because it obscures the ways that they themselves benefit from the social order that enables this kind of racial violence in the first place. This language not only helps to “cover the tracks” of today’s genocidaires,<sup>72</sup> however, it also relieves anyone who uses it of the need to contend with

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> The use of the term “colonizing trick,” though put to a distinct use there, originates in David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> Consider the hand-wringing regarding the perceived unknowability of the killers’ motives. Jorge L. Ortiz, “Weeks since Gilroy, El Paso and Dayton: What If Motives behind Mass Shootings Never Emerge?,” *USA*

the reality of past and ongoing genocidal episodes. It is nostalgic; an attempt to seize hold of a world, now slipping from their grasp, in which white progressive elites return to power and cast aside the “deplorables” who now threaten to undo the “benevolent” imperial order they believe is their patrimony.<sup>73</sup> But, if we peer beneath the phenomenology of the clash between liberals and conservatives, reality looks quite different—and it’s that reality that reveals the indispensability of the concept of genocide.

#### 4. “...Small wars, invisible genocides...”

If terrorism is primarily directed at states and the masters they serve, then *genocide*, by contrast, is primarily directed at *peoples*—a distinction (states vs. peoples) that is too often conflated. The term’s Greek root, *genos*, according to Raphael Lemkin<sup>74</sup>—the lawyer who coined the concept—does not simply refer to an aggregate (for instance, the collectivity of people in a workplace), or an association (for instance, the collectivity of people who are members of Rotary International). It is directed instead at members of a group that persist over time, a “tribe.” For this reason, as Patrick Wolfe

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*Today* online, August 19, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/08/16/mass-shooting-motives-what-if-we-never-learn-why/2000720001/>.

<sup>73</sup> There is, it would seem, a real fear that Trump threatens the US-led international liberal order, or to undo the accomplishments of that order in the American foreign policy aim of “preponderance” in the international arena. For a discussion of Trump’s foreign policy, see Jeanne Morefield, “Trump’s Foreign Policy Isn’t the Problem,” *Boston Review*, April 3, 2019, <http://bostonreview.net/war-security/jeanne-morefield-trump%E2%80%99s-foreign-policy-isn%E2%80%99t-problem>. For a discussion of the “pitfalls and prospects” of the US foreign policy of preponderance, see Stephen M. Walt, “American Primacy: Its Prospects and Pitfalls,” *Naval War College Review* LV, no. 2. (Spring 2002): 9-28. For the obvious implication that preponderance entails imperialism and colonialism, see Vijay Prashad, “Hybrid Wars and US Imperialism,” at “Holding the Future Hostage: A Conference on Hybrid Wars, Sanctions, and Solidarity,” held on Oct. 19, 2019 at The People’s Forum in New York City, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-uxlSFZbG8>.

<sup>74</sup> Raphaël Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 79.

explained: “Mass murders are not the same thing as genocide, though the one action can be both.”<sup>75</sup>

To be sure, when we think of “genocide” we tend to have in mind the centralized and large-scale organization and coordination of industrial slaughter, such as the Holocaust. But this is another mistake. As Wolfe points out, “a substantial number of the Nazis’ victims, including Jewish and Gypsy (Sinti and Roma) ones, were not murdered in camps but in deranged shooting sprees that were more reminiscent of sixteenth-century Spanish behaviour in the Americas than of Fordism.”<sup>76</sup> In the Third Reich, furthermore, “millions of Slav civilians and Soviet soldiers were simply starved to death in circumstances that could well have struck a chord with late-eighteenth-century Bengalis or mid-nineteenth-century Irish people.”<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, Greg Grandin has recently pointed out, in its aggressive outward expansion, it was the American national project that “prefigured the great genocides and dispossessions of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, among them Europe’s Scramble for Africa, the Holocaust, the Nakba, and the Indian Partition.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 398.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Greg Grandin, “American Extremism Has Always Flowed from the Border,” *Boston Review* online, September 19, 2019, <http://bostonreview.net/politics/greg-grandin-american-extremism-has-always-flowed-border>. This is one of a series of recent articles on this subject that Grandin has developed from his just published book, *The End of the Myth: from the Frontier to the Wall in the Mind of America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2019). Of course, by “prefigure,” Grandin also invokes the important historical fact that it was precisely these racial and imperial policies and strategies that inspired the Nazis. See, for instance, James Q. Whitman, *Hitler’s American Model: the United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), and Stefan Kuhl, *Nazi Connection Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Cary: Oxford University Press, USA, 2014). For an overview of that literature, see Alex Ross, “How American Racism Influenced Hitler,” *The New Yorker Magazine*, April 23, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/04/30/how-american-racism-influenced-hitler>.

Thus, while genocide has been achieved by mass murder—for example, in the frontier mass murder of Indigenous peoples, in the Holocaust, and in Rwanda—the fact is, as Wolfe says, “there can be summary mass murder without genocide, as in the case of 9/11, and there can be genocide without summary mass murder, as in the case of the continuing post-frontier destruction, in whole and in part, of Indigenous *genoi*.”<sup>79</sup>

In settler colonial contexts such as our own, furthermore, genocide does not require a formalized state project of extermination (although they have certainly been present, as in the US Cavalry, or the Texas Rangers).<sup>80</sup> Indeed, as Wolfe explains, frontier genocidal murder of Indigenous people in 1830s America were not practiced by the state apparatus. Just as much as Donald Trump today presents an ambiguous, if not approving,<sup>81</sup> attitude towards genocidal violence, the state in that epoch “notionally held itself aloof from such disreputable proceedings,” allowing the genocide to be practiced by “irregular, greed-crazed invaders who had no intention of allowing the formalities of federal law to impede their access to the riches available in, under, and on Indian soil.”<sup>82</sup>

This means genocide *in contexts like ours*—in contexts, that is, of institutionalized racial and colonial domination—does not require a sustained state campaign of extermination. It neither requires the aim of wholesale extermination, nor

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<sup>79</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 398.

<sup>80</sup> Borderlands racial atrocity against Mexicans and Indigenous people by both state agents like the Rangers as well as mob violence has received some media attention recently. See, for instance, Raul A. Reyes, “Porvenir, Texas’ Details Massacre of Mexican Americans by U.S. Soldiers, Rangers,” *NBC News* online, September 27, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/porvenir-texas-details-massacre-mexican-americans-u-s-soldiers-rangers-n1059146>.

<sup>81</sup> William Cummings, “‘Only in the Panhandle’: Trump Chuckles When Audience Member Suggests Shooting Migrants,” *USA Today* online, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2019/05/09/trump-chuckles-shooting-migrants/1150160001/>.

<sup>82</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 391.

even an explicitly eliminative intent. It also does not require industrial scale slaughter. As the basis of American society, *genocide* here is a processual and structural condition, not an event. Under certain conditions and in certain locales, it can be (as Wolfe puts it) “in abeyance,”<sup>83</sup> while in other moments we can have boarding schools for Native children, the sterilization of Black and Brown women, the mass police and vigilante killings of Black men, the concentration camps at the border, the license to murder, with virtual impunity, men, women, and children who look like Claudia Patricia.<sup>84</sup> But what’s crucial is that in settler-capitalist colonial contexts like ours, “genocidal moments,” as genocide scholar Dirk Moses refers to them,<sup>85</sup> are never beyond the horizon of possibility.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, to call racially motivated mass murder “terrorism” rests on a politically perilous conceptual mistake, that of confusing the genocidal episodes that many whites are indifferent to for something most whites already think of as evil—the limit of *their*

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<sup>83</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 403.

<sup>84</sup> As Eric Levitz recently put it, the history Americans need to fear repeating with the concentration camps at the border is not Germany’s history, but their own. Eric Levitz, “With Trump’s Migrant Camps, the History We Should Fear Repeating Is Our Own,” *Intelligencer*, June 20, 201), <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/06/aoc-holocaust-why-migrant-detention-centers-are-concentration-camps-explained.html>.

<sup>85</sup> A. Dirk Moses, “Genocide And Settler Society In Australian History,” in *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 3-48.

<sup>86</sup> This contrasts with some of the stipulations of the UN Convention on Genocide, but is not antagonistic to its spirit. According to the UN, genocide “means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” What this analysis adds is that, since the settler colonial relation is already a genocidal relation genocide is best understood in these contexts, not as an event, but a social structure. See UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 December 1948, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 78, p. 277, available at: [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1\\_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf)

moral world—that is, “terrorism.” By its turn, the whole array of expanding genocidal horror that is unfolding before our eyes is made invisible, and passes into a form of life that Nancy Scheper-Hughes describes as everyday violence<sup>87</sup>: the ordinary “peace-time” violence that, “like the steady evolution of US prisons into alternative Black concentration camps,” can give rise to “the ‘small wars’ and ‘invisible genocides’” that are made possible by the large-scale normalization of indifference to human suffering.

##### **5. “... a matter of race.”**

In making these claims, though, I am not lumping together the experiences of Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples. I am fully aware of how each are affected and targeted by distinct forms of violence. What I am claiming is that each is structurally vulnerable to genocidal acts in the US, and that this vulnerability is baked into the social order of the US itself.

To take the case of Black people in America, Wolfe remarks that their status as valuable commodities under slavery meant that they were only to be destroyed “in extremis.” Once captive peoples became redundant after emancipation, however, “Blacks became surplus to some requirements and, to that extent, more like Indians.” “Even after slavery,” he goes on, “Black people continued to have value [to the ruling caste] as a source of super-cheap labour (providing an incitement to poor Whites), so their dispensability was tempered.” But “it is highly significant that the barbarities of

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<sup>87</sup> Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “People Who Get Rubbished,” *New Internationalist*, July 5, 2017, <https://newint.org/features/1997/10/05/people/>. This concept of everyday violence has been developed by Scheper-Hughes, Phillipe Bourgois, and Paul Farmer. For instance, see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: the Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Phillipe Bourgois 2009. “Recognizing Invisible Violence: A Thirty-Year Ethnographic Retrospective,” in *Global Health in Times of Violence*, edited by Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Linda M Whiteford, and Paul Farmer (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press): 17-40; and Paul Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below,” *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (1996): 261-83.

lynching and the Jim Crow reign of terror should be a post-emancipation phenomenon.” Their *violability* “given,” in other words, their *eliminability* and *disposability* could only be tempered in proportion as they were useful for something else—for instance, for stabilizing the antagonisms that existed within the ruling caste,<sup>88</sup> or, later, for fighting foreign wars of containment, and so on.<sup>89</sup> Today, then, “the blatant racial zoning of large cities and the penal system suggests that, once colonized people outlive their utility, settler societies can fall back on the repertoire of strategies (in this case, spatial sequestration) whereby they have also dealt with the native surplus.” Contrary to what their enemies in the State Department claimed, therefore, it was not just ideological maneuvering or “communist propaganda” when Paul Robeson and William Patterson sought to charge the US with genocide against Black people.<sup>90</sup>

Anti-Black genocide, particularly in its tendency to target Black men,<sup>91</sup> also illustrates the inherent limitations of international law in understanding genocide, which

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<sup>88</sup> This is Anthony W. Marx’s view of the function of race and race-making in slaveholding societies. See Anthony W. Marx, “Race-Making and the Nation-State,” *World Politics* 48, no. 2 (1996): pp. 180-208, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.1996.0003>. For his book-length work on the topic, Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: a Comparison of South Africa, the United States and Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>89</sup> While Black people make up around 13.4% of the American population, the Pew Research Center found in 2019 that they make up almost 40% of the nonwhite active duty personnel—a drop from 51% two years earlier—yet, as Helene Cooper has reported, a vanishingly small number of them, or any person of color for that matter, ever makes it to the top of the military hierarchy. For the Pew study, see Amanda Barroso, “The Changing Profile of the U.S. Military: Smaller in Size, More Diverse, More Women in Leadership,” Pew Research Center, September 10, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/09/10/the-changing-profile-of-the-u-s-military>. For Cooper’s story, see her “African-Americans Are Highly Visible in the Military, but Almost Invisible at the Top,” *The New York Times* online, May 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/25/us/politics/military-minorities-leadership.html>. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/25/us/politics/military-minorities-leadership.html>

<sup>90</sup> For an overview of the significance of this campaign, see Susan A. Glenn, “‘We Charge Genocide’ The 1951 Black Lives Matter Campaign,” Mapping American Social Movements Through the 20th Century, accessed February 14, 2019, [http://depts.washington.edu/moves/CRC\\_genocide.shtml](http://depts.washington.edu/moves/CRC_genocide.shtml). For the document itself, see William Lorenzo. Patterson, *We Charge Genocide: the Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government against the Negro People* (New York: International publishers, 1970).

<sup>91</sup> See Robert Staples, “Black Male Genocide: A Final Solution to the Race Problem in America,” *The Black Scholar* 18, no. 3 (1987): 2-11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1987.11412757>. More recently,

tends to associate “intent” to commit genocide with state actors (despite the fact that the legal definition of genocide does not require that element). Even a recent case, like that of Ahmaud Arbery, illustrates why this is a meaningless distinction in slave-holding settler colonies. This young man was hunted down and killed by civilians, not state actors, who nevertheless saw themselves as acting on behalf of the racial state—that is to say, on behalf of the interests of white people. Joel Williamson, describing the system of slave patrols in the aftermath of Nat Turner’s rebellion, could be describing Arbery’s killing and the contemporary racial order when he wrote that the slave patrol had assumed the character of an emergency posse of conscripts (*a posse comitatus*) which pulled into its service any able bodied white person at a moment’s notice—a dynamic that has survived formal slave patrols and that was, in any case, much more than individuals acts of specific people, a *social* phenomenon.<sup>92</sup> “It was, in short,” Williamson concludes, “a system in which virtually all white men came together to enforce the racial establishment. In the patrol every white man was a policeman in the face of every [B]lack person... Slavery was no longer simply a matter of economics, nor of masters controlling slaves in a somewhat separated segment of society. It had become a matter of all whites controlling all blacks... a matter of race.”<sup>93</sup>

In settler-slaver colonies like the US, the law as a system of sanctions for creating and upholding the social order has always had an attendant regulatory racial dimension that pulled into its ambit informal and irregular actors to enforce the racial

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Tommy J. Curry has taken up and expanded this argument. See Tommy J. Curry, “Killing Boogeymen: Phallicism and the Misandric Mischaracterizations of Black Males in Theory,” *Res Philosophica* 95, no. 2 (2018): pp. 235-272, <https://doi.org/10.11612/resphil.1612>.

<sup>92</sup> Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black/White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984): 18.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

status quo—a fact that we cannot fail to remember as we witness, today, dozens of apparently spontaneous manifestations of armed reactionary vigilantism against Black Lives Matter and antifascist protestors.<sup>94</sup> The distinction between informal and formal actors loses its meaning in polities built on the ideal of white racial domination. Both formal and informal violence acts as a kind of “field of force” that expels, eliminates, or assimilates disturbances to its equilibrium.

This happened in the pre-abolition period,<sup>95</sup> in the post-abolition period,<sup>96</sup> in the Civil Rights period<sup>97</sup>—and it might again be happening now. In accordance with Donald Denoon’s “golden law”<sup>98</sup>—that “every white bargain must be sealed by an African sacrifice”—each is a case in which major conflict involving large segments of the white ruling class required new compromises between contending elites. Thus, when Anthony Marx argued in 1996 that these conflicts were eventually contained at the expense of Black people, the imposition of new forms of racial domination acting as the guarantor

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<sup>94</sup> See, again, Reid Ross (2020) and Political Research Associates (2020).

<sup>95</sup> Consider, for instance, Theodore Allen’s argument of the centrality of the Bacon rebellion in cementing the racialization of slavery—a bargain struck between the white elites and indentured servants that they would never be “Black”/slaves so long as they never challenged the social structure. Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (London: Verso, 2012). For a summary of Allen’s argument, see Jeffrey Perry, “The Invention of the White Race,” *CounterPunch*, July 7, 2015, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2013/05/21/the-invention-of-the-white-race/>.

<sup>96</sup> As Anthony Marx observes in “Race-Making,” 190: “After Reconstruction a coalition of North and South was fostered by reinforced racial domination, as Fourteenth Amendment guarantees were effectively ignored. Further appeasing the South, the Plessy decision of 1896 reaffirmed states’ rights to enact their own rules of racial exclusion applicable also to mulattoes. Jim Crow segregation was enforced throughout the South by the 1890s, in particular after the defeat of the Populist movement. Later, Southern Democrats used their electoral power and vetoes to continually reinforce states’ rights in issue race. The North also practiced de facto segregation. As in South Africa, ‘the Negro paid a heavy price so that whites could be reunited in a common nationality.’ More than four thousand blacks (and some whites) who were seen to violate Jim Crow were lynched, while the federal government stood idly by. As described by W. E. B. Du Bois ‘All hatred that the whites after the Civil War had for each other gradually concentrated itself on [Black people].’” His quotes are, in sequence, from George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 191 fn.3; and W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 125.

<sup>97</sup> See Derrick Bell, Bell, Derrick A. “Racism Is Here to Stay: Now What?” *Howard Law Journal* 35, no. 1 (1991): 79-93.

<sup>98</sup> Marx, *Making Race and Nation*, 12.

of white unification, he was also implicitly confirming Derrick Bell's thesis that racism acts as a *stabilizing force*, a "bulwark" against national disintegration in an otherwise dangerously fragmented polity.<sup>99</sup> "Law" in such contexts, as the attorney Peter d'Errico has said, "is terror put into words."<sup>100</sup> But once we speak of terror against already vulnerable racial groups, we understand that the true meaning of this thesis is that, in a system in which punishment must be meted out, not just on those who transgress the racial order, but as an anticipatory method of racialized social control, law encodes elimination and, in it, all manner of torture, dismemberment, summary execution, sexual violation, and lynching, inhere.

**6. "To be ready to go to work when needed; to be gone when not needed."**

In the case of Latinxs, the work of historians on anti-Mexican violence, such as Monica Muñoz Martínez's *The Injustice Never Leaves You*, and William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb's *Forgotten Dead*, have reminded us that mass removals (such as "Operation Wetback") and mob attacks (such as lynching and summary executions in the Southwest) were part of a pattern of racialized violence against people of Mexican descent that has been, like other forms of colonial violence, both foundational to the US and all but erased in history textbooks.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Again, see Bell, "Racism Is Here to Stay," and Marx, "Race-Making."

<sup>100</sup> Peter D'Errico, "Law Is Terror Put Into Words: A Humanist's Analysis of the Increasing Separation Between Concerns of Law and Concerns of Justice," in *Before The Law: An Introduction to the Legal Process*, edited by John J. Bonsignore, Ethan Katsh, Peter d'Errico, Ronald M. Pipkin, Stephen Arons, and Janet Rifkin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 246-249; originally published by the American Bar Association's Section of Legal Education Admissions to the Bar as "The Law Is Terror Put into Words: A Humanist's Analysis of the Increasing Separation between Concerns of Law and Concerns of Justice" in *Learning and the Law*, 39, no. 2 (1975).

<sup>101</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Monica Muñoz Martínez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). There has also been a small movement to bring public visibility to this history. See, for instance, the Refusing to Forget Project, "The History of Racial Violence on the Mexico-Texas Border," Refusing to Forget, April 16, 2018, <https://refusingtoforget.org/the-history>. A number of news items have also recently been published

From a sociohistorical perspective, in fact, racialized violence against Brown people—beginning with the targeting of Mexicans that then later generalized to include Central Americans—has been a sustained and cyclical phenomena for at least a century, appearing periodical, scattered, and, at times, even novel, only as an artifact of powerful racial and political mythologies about American racial progress. Between 1848 and 1928, as Carrigan and Webb point out, mob violence against Mexicans in the Southwest far exceeded violence perpetuated against other immigrant groups, and was “comparable, at least on a per capita basis, to the mob violence suffered by African Americans.”<sup>102</sup> Moreover, it did not end in the 1930s. “It continued... [but] it couldn’t be the same public execution of Mexicans. It had to be secret, cover-of-night.”<sup>103</sup>

Fast forward to the early 2000s, and the pattern of open violence re-emerges in the wake of the xenophobia catalyzed by 9/11. In 2004, the late Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington was claiming that Latin American immigrants, especially Mexicans, and their high fertility rates, posed “the single most immediate and most serious challenge to America’s traditional identity.” By 2008, as Douglas Massey and Magaly Sánchez R. found, “random killings of Latinos had become common in headlines throughout the country,” with one 2009 article observing that physical attacks on Latinxs had become such “an established pastime that the youths... had a casual

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on the matte in order to promote awareness of the history of anti-Mexican violence. See, for instance, Marlon Bishop and Julia Shu, “The History of Anti-Mexican Violence and Lynching,” *Latino USA*, March 11, 2016, <https://www.latinousa.org/2016/03/11/the-history-of-anti-mexican-violence-and-lynching>; Anne Barnard, “Latinos Recall Pattern of Attacks Before Killing,” *The New York Times* online, January 9, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/09/nyregion/09patchogue.html>; and

<sup>102</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead*, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Carrigan, as interviewed by Marlon Bishop and Julia Shu, “The History of Anti-Mexican Violence and Lynching.”

and derogatory term for it, ‘beaner hopping.’”<sup>104</sup> As “one of the youths blithely told the authorities, ‘I don’t go out doing this very often, maybe once a week.’”<sup>105</sup>

Turning to the present, then, for Brown people living in the US today, the situation comes again to a head.<sup>106</sup> In the first place, it is inevitable that, for the worst of whites, the distinction between Central Americans and Mexicans is virtually non-existent.<sup>107</sup> The reigning racist language to talk about Mexicans, that has now been mainstreamed by Samuel Huntington,<sup>108</sup> has also been extended to proclaim us all unassimilable, invaders, an infestation<sup>109</sup>—terms that Lynne Tirrel<sup>110</sup> identifies with the genocidal language games of the Rwandan genocide. As part of a larger social pattern that provides ideological cover and paves the way for genocidal violence, this language of “Latino threat,” as Leo Chavez has called it,<sup>111</sup> has inscribed an image of Latinxs in the national imagination as licentious and lazy “aliens” who take advantage of the American system, who transgress national boundaries in order to have as many “anchor

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<sup>104</sup> Douglas S. Massey and Magaly Sanchez R., *Brokered Boundaries: Creating Immigrant Identity in Anti-Immigrant Times* (New York: Russell Sage, 2012),71.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. The quote in question is taken from Anne Barnard, “Latinos Recall Pattern of Attacks Before Killing,” *The New York Times*, January 9, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/09/nyregion/09patchogue.html>.

<sup>106</sup> A distinction must be adduced here between white Latinxs and nonwhite or Brown Latinxs. I am speaking of Brown Latinxs—thus, primarily Mexicans and Central Americans and their descendants—and Latinxs who refuse or are unable to culturally assimilate. See Brittny Mejia, “Must Reads: In the Trump Era, a Lighter Shade of Latino Can Make Life Easier,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles Times, November 23, 2018), <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-ln-latino-racism-20181123-story.html>.

<sup>107</sup> As a case in point, see Brian Stelter, “Fox News Apologizes for ‘3 Mexican Countries’ Headline,” *CNN* online, March 31, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/31/media/fox-news-mexican-countries-stelter/index.html>.

<sup>108</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?: the Challenges to American National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

<sup>109</sup> David A. Graham, “Trump Says Democrats Want Immigrants to ‘Infest’ the U.S.,” *The Atlantic Magazine* online, June 19, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/06/trump-immigrants-infest/563159/>.

<sup>110</sup> Lynne Tirrell, “Words Matter. Trump Bears a Responsibility for El Paso ,” *The Guardian* online, August 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/10/trump-el-paso-shooting-speech-words>.

<sup>111</sup> See Leo R. Chavez, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2013).

babies” on US soil as they can—and who, like vermin, threaten to out-procreate “native” whites, “take over our country,” “take our jobs,” and “rape our women.”

A simple, cruel extension of this logic is then inevitable: if it’s not just the bodies and cultures of these people who are potential enemies, but also their sexualities—what resides in their wombs and loins, so to speak—it follows logically that all immigrants, whether men, women, boys, or girls, are enemies-in-waiting against which “real” Americans have a right to preemptively act. We thereby arrive at the genocidal policies of “Prevention Through Deterrence”—a strategy that deliberately made the increased deaths of immigrants in the desert a desirable outcome; indeed, an indicator of success—the monstrous “zero-tolerance” and family separation policies at the border; the widespread mental, physical,<sup>112</sup> and sexual violation<sup>113</sup>—in a word, the systemic torture<sup>114</sup>—of immigrants by ICE and CBP, and the results are clear: the normalization of irregular actors self-deputizing themselves to clear out the presence of those they believe are “taking their country.”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Gillian Edevane , “Border Patrol Kicked, Punched Migrant Children, Threatened ...,” May 23, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/customs-and-border-control-beat-kicked-and-threatened-migrant-children-under-941385>.

<sup>113</sup> There are now many reports of this. For instance, PBS NewsHour, “While in ICE Custody, Thousands of Migrants Reported Sexual Abuse,” *PBS* online, July 22, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/while-in-ice-custody-thousands-of-migrants-reported-sexual-abuse>; Silvia Viñas, “Immigrant Detainees Say They Were Sexually Abused In CBP Custody,” *NPR* online, March 24, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/24/706295417/immigrant-detainees-say-they-were-sexually-abused-in-cbp-custody>; as well as the already cited Matthew Haag, “Thousands of Immigrant Children Said They Were Sexually Abused in U.S. Detention Centers,” and Lomi Kriel, “ICE Guards ‘Systematically’ Sexually Assault Detainees in an El Paso Detention Center.”

<sup>114</sup> The Trump administration has in fact been sued for torture—a category of violence to which I later return in this dissertation. See Jake Johnson, “Lawsuit on Behalf of 55,000 Migrants Accuses Trump Administration of Torture in ICE Detention Centers,” *Common Dreams*, August 20, 2019, <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/08/20/lawsuit-behalf-55000-migrants-accuses-trump-administration-torture-ice-detention>.

<sup>115</sup> For example, see the emergence of anti-immigrant militia, April Glaser, “Anti-Immigrant Armed Militias Posted Videos and Fundraised Through Facebook for Months,” *Slate Magazine* (*Slate*, April 23, 2019), <https://slate.com/technology/2019/04/anti-immigrant-armed-militias-border-posted-videos-fundraised-facebook-months.html>. There is also a case to be made, which I make later, that the stochastic genocidaire phenomenon was an inevitable and calculated result of Prevention Through Deterrence. See,

Now an objection might be made here that the role of immigrants in the economy should militate against this kind of dynamic, as Latinx have typically been regarded an “indispensable” source of labor power, and we have been incorporated into and racially coded in the US’s social system by our role in the labor market.<sup>116</sup> While this once was true, it is no longer the case—especially in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic—and especially for male immigrants, whose traditional job sectors in construction and manufacturing sectors have been rapidly contracting, in any case—certainly since the 2008 financial crisis, but beginning perhaps in the recession of the early 2000s.

The hard truth here is that Mexican immigrants were always a distinctive kind of labor problem for the white mind: at once necessary for generating wealth and comfort through their role in the menial, agricultural, industrial, construction, and service sectors, while at the same time threatening to engulf whiteness and destroy its civilization through sheer “fertility” and number. In the lead up to the mass deportations of Operation Wetback in 1954, the role of the Mexican in the economy had been succinctly expressed in the U.S. President’s Commission on Migratory Labor’s claim that what is expected of migrant labor was “To be ready to go to work when needed; to be gone when not needed.”<sup>117</sup> Without realizing it, the Commission had also articulated one of the organizing principles of anti-immigrant violence.

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for instance, Nick Alexandrov, “Prevention Through Deterrence: The Strategy Shared by the El Paso Shooter and the U.S. Border Patrol,” *CounterPunch*, August 16, 2019, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/08/16/prevention-through-deterrence-the-strategy-shared-by-the-el-paso-shooter-and-the-u-s-border-patrol/>.

<sup>116</sup> For the facts and figures, consult the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, and The Economics Daily, “Hispanics and Latinos in Industries and Occupations,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, October 9, 2015, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/hispanics-and-latinos-in-industries-and-occupations.htm>.

<sup>117</sup> United States and President's Commission on Migratory Labor, *Migratory Labor in American Agriculture: Report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 16.

In recent years, of course, the US has been increasingly willing to dispense with its reliance on surplus migrant labor.<sup>118</sup> The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, operating as a *Schutzstaffel*-like force, has historically targeted ordinary families<sup>119</sup>—which is to say, workers; not coincidentally, in fact, it emerged as an agency in 2002 in the wake of the early 2000s recession, in a period in which job growth slowed to less than half the pace of the 1990s, and on the heels of growing trade deficits in manufactured goods that would kill 3.6 million jobs in the manufacturing sector by 2007.<sup>120</sup>

At the same time, with the contraction of the traditional sectors of migrant male labor, and the projected expansion of the service sector, for which immigrant women are still needed, there has been a conversion of the role of male immigrants in the U.S political economy from the indispensable menial laborer to that of the sacrificial input for the immigration enforcement industrial complex and, arguably, too, for the control of service labor. As Sameer Ashar and Amna Akbar point out,<sup>121</sup> detention centers are frequently marketed as “economic development projects”<sup>122</sup> in de-industrialized and

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<sup>118</sup> Belief in the indispensability of the immigrant has been a strong enough background assumption that commentators, in their *almost* lucid moments, have been caught off guard by this, even wondering why immigration enforcement is so vigorously pursued when the economy “needs” immigrants. See Stuart Anderson, “Immigration Raids: Do The Goals Make Economic Sense?,” *Forbes Magazine* online, August 15, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2019/08/15/immigration-raids-does-it-make-sense-to-shrink-the-us-labor-supply/>.

<sup>119</sup> Camilo Montoya-Galvez, “Who Will Be Targeted in the Expected ICE Roundups of Immigrant Families?,” CBS News (CBS Interactive, July 13, 2019), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ice-raids-who-will-be-targeted-expected-roundups-of-immigrant-families-2019-07-13/>.

<sup>120</sup> Robert E. Scott, “Manufacturing Job Loss: Trade, Not Productivity, Is the Culprit,” Economic Policy Institute, August 11, 2015, <https://www.epi.org/publication/manufacturing-job-loss-trade-not-productivity-is-the-culprit/>.

<sup>121</sup> Sameer Ashar and Amna Akbar, “The Political Economy of Immigration Enforcement: Part I,” The Law and Political Economy Project (William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Economic Security Project, and Yale Law School., June 6, 2018), <https://lpeblog.org/2018/06/06/the-political-economy-of-immigration-enforcement-part-i/>.

<sup>122</sup> Ashar and Akbar cite the following items: Sarah Tory, “How Western Towns Profit from Detaining Immigrants,” High Country News, November 3, 2015, <https://www.hcn.org/articles/in-the-rural-west-confining-illegal-immigrants-means-big-business>; Amy Booe, “A Look at the Midwestern Town of Brazil,

underdeveloped zones without other sources of income, or as providers of “much-needed jobs for veterans.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, the role of the immigrant begins to look less like that of laborer and more like that of the derivative whose value in the economic system depends on something else<sup>124</sup>—in this case, his function in the expansion of what Samuel Bowles and Arjun Jayadev have called “guard labor”<sup>125</sup>—the sector of the economy required for securing conformity to institutions, which includes private security, police officers, members of the armed forces, prison and court officials, those producing weapons, prisoners themselves, among others. The rapid growth of the immigration enforcement sector, as Ashar and Akbar note, is a part of this expansion, and this expansion can only continue or, at least, not be reversed, if there is a continual feeding of bodies to it—a new kind of Satanic mill.

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the Home of Indiana's Only Immigration Detention Facility,” *Latino USA*, April 9, 2018, <http://latinousa.org/2018/04/09/brazilindianadetentioncenter>; and Jeremy Redmon, “Exclusive: A Look inside Georgia's Newest Immigration Detention Center,” *AJC* (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, March 7, 2018), <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/exclusive-look-inside-georgia-newest-immigration-detention-center/MSCIdSHtNOZSOTYyZELDeO>.

<sup>123</sup> The Geo Group's website has a dedicated page for veteran recruitment. “Hiring Heroes,” GEO Group (GEO Group Inc.), accessed August 12, 2020, <https://www.geogroup.com/HiringHeroes>.

<sup>124</sup> I owe this insight to Neferti Tadiar, who writes of Duterte's drug war killings in Philippines: “...the killings are a derivative economy. The police largely do it, but they are gains to be made all along the way. It is because in the world in which these people move, meaning the police and the people who are being targeted - which by the way is the same world; they are not two different people – they're all exchangeable. In some ways, they go back and forth, there is no clear difference all the time. The people who are being targeted for drugs are worth more dead than alive because, like the derivative, a whole series of attributes that they have can be priced, with their underlying referent (death) being the thing that moves. I am talking about this in economical terms because I think it is important for us to actually understand how it works.” See Neferti X. Tadiar, “The New Global Political Economy: Life-Times Lived and Expended (A Talk),” *The Global Condition*, February 2018, <http://livingcommons.org/neferti-tadiar-political-economy>.

<sup>125</sup> See Arjun Jayadev and Samuel Bowles, “Guard Labor,” *Journal of Development Economics* 79, no. 2 (April 2006): pp. 328-348, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2006.01.009>. For a more accessible version of the basic thesis of this paper, see Samuel Bowles and Arjun Jayadev, “One Nation Under Guard,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, February 15, 2014), <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/15/one-nation-under-guard/>.

While studies have not, to my knowledge, been executed on the second matter, it is also likely that the deported males serve a disciplining function on the remaining immigrants, who—at least before the COVID-19 pandemic—will tend to be women who themselves are to feed the service sector. Douglas Massey has noted, for instance, that “[w]orkplace raids have led to the widespread detention and deportation of male workers, which not only traumatizes their wives and children but leaves them in economically precarious circumstances.”<sup>126</sup> Such women face the choice between taking what is available or nothing at all.

Massey understands this as a choice between, on the one hand, “leaving their U.S.-born children behind with relatives or friends so they can enjoy the benefits of American schooling and health care and growing up in their native culture;” and “bring[ing] their children with them back to Mexico to live as undocumented foreigners,” on the other.<sup>127</sup> But a third possible choice would be to remain in the US and taking whatever job is available, hoping that things turn out for the best. My suspicion is that many undocumented women might opt to choose the latter, particularly if their children are culturally American—which means many would be pulled into low-paying and unhealthy jobs in the service sector. If that is so, the deportability of immigrant men will have acted as a de facto form of labor control, served as an example of the overall population’s deportability, thereby securing disposable/surplus labor pools for an expanding service sector.

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<sup>126</sup> Douglas Massey, “The Gendered Consequences of Immigration Enforcement,” Gender Policy Report, February 6, 2018, <https://genderpolicyreport.umn.edu/the-gendered-consequences-of-immigration-enforcement/>.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

There is another way to look at the matter which throws the gravity of the situation into stark relief. This is that, with the ramping up of deportations and the proliferation of profitable carceral spaces,<sup>128</sup> what we are witnessing is the emergence of a whole infrastructure to facilitate the removal of undocumented immigrants and refugees, in which the *sheer management* of these populations, the *sheer expenditure of their life* within these concentration camps, has become a mode of profit and simultaneous punishment in the name of “deterrence.”<sup>129</sup> As the populations within ICE “detention centers” dangerously swell,<sup>130</sup> and we see the disappearance of Central American children into foster homes<sup>131</sup>—a paradigm case of genocide; a de facto species of forced assimilation and, thus, elimination<sup>132</sup>—it is inevitable to conclude that

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<sup>128</sup> David Dayen, “Below the Surface of ICE: The Corporations Profiting From Immigrant Detention,” In *These Times*, September 17, 2018, <https://inthesetimes.com/features/ice-abolish-immigration-child-detention-private-prison-profiting.html>.

<sup>129</sup> I am again indebted here to Neferti Tadiar’s work on the new stratifications emerging from the ways “lifetimes” are reconfigured so as to mirror financial instruments. She has developed the notion of the lifetime across a series of articles—noteworthy among them: Neferti X. M. Tadiar, “Life-Times in Fate Playing,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (January 2012): pp. 783-802, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1724183>; Neferti X. M. Tadiar, “Life-Times of Disposability within Global Neoliberalism,” *Social Text* 31, no. 2 (2013): pp. 19-48, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2081112>; and Neferti X.M. Tadiar, “City Everywhere,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, no. 7-8 (November 2016): pp. 57-83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276416675676>.

<sup>130</sup> For information on this, see Guardian staff and agencies, “Texas Migrant Detention Facilities ‘Dangerously Overcrowded’ – US Government Report,” *The Guardian* online, July 2, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/02/migrant-detention-center-overcrowding-report-inspector-general>; and Zolan Kanno-youngs, “Squalid Conditions at Border Detention Centers, Government Report Finds,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, July 2, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/02/us/politics/border-center-migrant-detention.html>.

<sup>131</sup> EJ Montini, “Montini: The Feds Lost – Yes, Lost – 1,475 Migrant Children,” *The Arizona Republic*, May 31, 2018), <https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/ej-montini/2018/05/22/immigration-children-separate-families-lost-kirstjen-nielson/631627002/>.

<sup>132</sup> Susan Miller has argued that the relevant elements in the UN Convention’s definition of genocide are triggered by the detention of children at the border. See Miller, “That Debacle at the Border Is Genocide,” *CounterPunch*, August 16, 2019, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/08/16/that-debacle-at-the-border-is-genocide>.

particular segments of the Latinx and immigrant population have become increasingly disposable,<sup>133</sup> and by that measure more violable.<sup>134</sup>

Together with the transmorgrification of our distinct identities into one all-threatening Brown mass, this heightened, punitive violability and disposability of Latinxs announces an ominous development. In the case of Indigenous genocide, Wolfe notes that when there's no space left for removal "mass killings and assimilation become the only eliminatory options available." But, as I've said, to the worst elements of the ruling caste, our inassimilability has been a key doctrine, especially since the early 2000s. It is precisely for this reason that, in the gaps left open between ourselves and state power and law, "the rabble" among the worst of whites adopts as its mission the auxiliary solution of targeted murder.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, as I will later argue, this is simply the extension of the logic of Prevention Through Deterrence, in which this form of punishment, and its cascading effects onto the larger target group,<sup>136</sup> spillover beyond the physical

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<sup>133</sup> Thus, the Trump administration decided to deploy tactical forces on immigrants in "sanctuary cities." Nicole Narea, "Trump Is Sending Armed Tactical Forces to Arrest Immigrants in Sanctuary Cities," *Vox*, February 14, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/2020/2/14/21138272/cbp-tactical-ice-immigrants-sanctuary-cities>.

<sup>134</sup> For instance, the Trump administration's cynical argument that reuniting children with their families would be "traumatic." Jason Lemon, "Trump Administration Argues It Could Be 'Traumatic' to ...," *Newsweek* online, February 3, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/trump-administration-argues-it-could-be-traumatic-reunite-thousands-migrant-1316093>. This occurs simultaneously with the rise in anti-Latinx hate crime. Brad Brooks, "Victims of Anti-Latino Hate Crimes Soar in U.S.: FBI Report," *Reuters* online, November 12, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hatecrimes-report/victims-of-anti-latino-hate-crimes-soar-in-us-fbi-report-idUSKBN1XM2OQ>.

<sup>135</sup> The rise of these neofascist groups has by now been extensively documented. See: "Documenting Hate: New American Nazis," *PBS* online, November 20, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/documenting-hate-new-american-nazis>; *Charlottesville: Race and Terror*, *Vice News*, 2017, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/qvzn8p/vice-news-tonight-full-episode-charlottesville-race-and-terror](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/qvzn8p/vice-news-tonight-full-episode-charlottesville-race-and-terror); "The Base," Anti-Defamation League, accessed June 2020, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/the-base>; Latino Rebels, "Parts of the Manifesto From the White Supremacist El Paso Terrorist Shows Anti-Mexican, Anti-Immigrant Radicalization," *Latino Rebels*, August 3, 2019, <https://www.latinorebels.com/2019/08/03/manifestoelpasoterrorist>. As I already noted, Alexandrov in "Prevention Through Deterrence" has also made the connection between these developments and border policies.

<sup>136</sup> There is evidence now on the traumatic effects of the experience of deportation on the migrant family. See Edward D. Vargas and Viridiana L. Benitez, "Latino Parents' Links to Deportees Are Associated with

infrastructure of the border onto the social fabric the nation, unleashing waves of “lone-wolf” genocidaires. As an inherently punitive and, I claim, genocidal institution, immigration enforcement seeks not only to sanction individual migrants for seeking entrance into the US, but to sanction the whole population for daring to hope for a better life—the question remaining, to which I turn to in the next section, why our lives are so threatening.

But it is not only the actions of irregular gangs of neo-fascists and lone-wolf genocidaires that is worth calling attention to. ICE and the CBP have attracted large numbers of employees with white supremacist ideologies and sympathies<sup>137</sup>—a pattern endemic to corrections and law enforcement as a sector.<sup>138</sup> This, again, is not accidental. These agencies—some of which as an explicitly white supremacist organizations<sup>139</sup>—offer immunity for murder, freedom from even civil litigation, impunity,

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Developmental Disorders in Their Children,” *Journal of Community Psychology* 47, no. 5 (April 2019): 1151-1168, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22178>. For a precis of the findings, see Edward D. Vargas and Viridiana L. Benitez, “Knowing a Deportee Is Associated with Developmental Disorders in Latina/o Children,” *Latino Rebels*, March 7, 2019, <https://www.latinorebels.com/2019/03/07/knowningadeportee/>.

<sup>137</sup> For ICE, see Tess Owen, “ICE Detention Center Captain Was on a Neo-Nazi Website and Wanted to Start a White Nationalist Group,” *Vice News* online, January 6, 2020, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/y3mg9x/ice-detention-center-captain-was-on-a-neo-nazi-website-and-wanted-to-start-a-white-nationalist-group](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/y3mg9x/ice-detention-center-captain-was-on-a-neo-nazi-website-and-wanted-to-start-a-white-nationalist-group). For CBP, see A.C. Thompson, “Border Patrol Condemns Secret Facebook Group, but Reveals Few Specifics,” *ProPublica*, July 10, 2019, <https://www.propublica.org/article/border-patrol-condemns-secret-facebook-group-but-reveals-few-specifics>.

<sup>138</sup> Not only have investigative journalists revealed linkages between police and hate groups, the FBI has been well-aware of the white supremacist infiltration of law enforcement. See Will Carless and Michael Corey, “Inside Hate Groups on Facebook, Police Officers Trade Racist Memes, Conspiracy Theories and Islamophobia,” *Reveal News*, June 14, 2019, <https://www.revealnews.org/article/inside-hate-groups-on-facebook-police-officers-trade-racist-memes-conspiracy-theories-and-islamophobia>, and Alice Speri, “The FBI Has Quietly Investigated White Supremacist Infiltration of Law Enforcement,” *The Intercept Magazine*, January 31, 2017, <https://theintercept.com/2017/01/31/the-fbi-has-quietly-investigated-white-supremacist-infiltration-of-law-enforcement>.

<sup>139</sup> Greg Grandin, “The Border Patrol Has Been a Cult of Brutality Since 1924,” *The Intercept Magazine*, January 12, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/01/12/border-patrol-history/>.

not only in the present,<sup>140</sup> but potentially in the *longue durée* of history.<sup>141</sup> Their very existence as institutions who target Brown people are practically invitations for white power fanatics and sympathizers.

All of this means, cruelly, that the profit made by the sheer management of immigrants in these concentration camps may paradoxically be both one of the main buffers that stands between today's horror and something much worse, as well as the means by which the latter can be brought to fruition—as, perhaps, is being witnessed in Donald Trump's deployment of CBP and DHS across the country to brutalize protestors.

We have thus crossed a historical threshold into a new moment of genocidal violence. To focus on gun control and mental illness when it comes to mass shootings, to focus on how “un-American” or “terroristic” white nationalists, Trump supporters, or ICE/CBP behave, is to miss the very heart of the issue. If you are a person of color, in fact, it's you who'd be “crazy” not to consider buying a gun at this time. Racialized mass incarceration, modern-day lynching, and state murder is a form of genocide.<sup>142</sup> Racially-

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<sup>140</sup> This is true not only of the case of Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzalez, who still has not received justice, but also other cases. See: Julia Jacobs, “Border Patrol Agent Who Shot Mexican Teenager Is Acquitted of Involuntary Manslaughter,” *The New York Times* online, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/21/us/border-patrol-acquitted-involuntary-manslaughter.html>; Adolfo Flores, “The Supreme Court Said The Family Of A Mexican Teen Can't Sue A Border Patrol Agent Who Fatally Shot Him,” *BuzzFeed News*, February 25, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/supreme-court-family-cant-sue-border-patrol-mexico-border>; Ian Millhiser, “A Border Guard Shot and Killed a Mexican Boy. The Supreme Court Will Decide If He Gets off Scot-Free.,” *Vox*, November 6, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/11/6/20949529/supreme-court-hernandez-mesa-bivens-impunity-fourth-amendment-border-patrol>; and Chris Rickerd, “Whistleblower Says CBP Has Culture of Impunity and Violence,” American Civil Liberties Union, August 15, 2014, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/ice-and-border-patrol-abuses/whistleblower-says-cbp-has-culture-impunity-and>.

<sup>141</sup> By this I refer to the fact that ICE has attempted to erase a massive cache of internal records that contain documentation of agent abuses of immigrants. “Erasing History: The National Archives Is Destroying Records About Victims of Trump's ICE Policies,” *Democracy Now!*, February 6, 2020, [https://www.democracynow.org/2020/2/6/national\\_archives\\_record\\_retention\\_matthew\\_connelly](https://www.democracynow.org/2020/2/6/national_archives_record_retention_matthew_connelly).

<sup>142</sup> See Staples, “Black Male Genocide,” and Curry, “Killing Bogeymen.” Confer, also, Tommy J. Curry, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2017).

motivated mass deportations, family separations, and militarized borders are a form of genocide.<sup>143</sup> Why then should we hesitate to call racially-motivated vigilante killings, and the licentious and depraved behavior of ICE and CBP, a form of genocide? These are all direct manifestations of a culture in which killing, mutilating, beating, and raping Black, Brown, and Indigenous people are social practices that form part of a venerated tradition and ongoing history, regardless of state involvement.<sup>144</sup> Don't call it "Trump-inspired terrorism," "white terrorism," or even "state terrorism." Its roots and causes reach deep into the basic social and psychological structures of this nation. Its rightful name is genocide.

#### **7. "...When I think of the very lovely people, the innocent..."**

I want to conclude now with some personal reflections on my encounter with the Claudia Patricia's killing, which was an important part of a long chain of events that led me to the conclusions I am attempting to give a theoretical basis for here. I'd mentioned being a graduate student at the University of Washington when she was killed. But the circumstances in which I found out about it were significant.

When I found out about Claudia Patricia's killing, I was waiting for a friend in a public place in Seattle. It was one of those "Mexican-themed" hipster bars, the sort that can be found in gentrified neighborhoods across America that have all white staff working the front, despite their Spanish name.

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<sup>143</sup> In chapter 3, I return to this matter and Susan Miller's argument in "That Debacle at the Border is Genocide."

<sup>144</sup> Consider the veneration of the founding fathers: Gillian Brockell, "George Washington Owned Slaves and Ordered Indians Killed. Will a Mural of That History Be Hidden?," *The Washington Post*, August 25, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/08/25/george-washington-owned-slaves-ordered-indians-killed-will-mural-that-history-be-hidden/>.

It was as I waited for my appointment that I saw the tweet with Claudia Patricia's photograph, and the racist replies that either justified or rationalized her killing. As I processed what I was seeing, I also became uncomfortably aware of my immediate environment. I was surrounded by "Mexican" trinkets—piñatas and luchador masks—in a white-owned establishment. I was surrounded by the sort of white liberals who were happy to consume faux Latinidad on a night out, but who couldn't be bothered to show up for immigrants when it mattered, the sort who saw no irony in the fact they placed "Black Lives Matter" and "No Human Being is Illegal" signs on their apartment windows in gentrifying neighborhoods. Somehow, finding out about Claudia Patricia in this kind of situation while seeing the vicious reactions to her murder on social media clicked something into place, but which I could not yet articulate. I felt a growing sense that some profound incoherence, some gaping void, had opened up in the world.

I wanted to talk to someone, anyone around me, but I knew that, even if I had the ability to articulate that incoherence to someone there, most of these people around me, self-identified white progressives, would never quite understand this feeling, or its significance. The news of Claudia Patricia's death had shattered a phantasmagoria of safety: in my mind lay the nascent realization that these good white folks around me had a vested interest in never understanding, and that this itself made them a danger to me and mine. Claudia Patricia had died for their sake, for the sake of this kind of space. The drive to destroy people like her was a condition for it to exist, for the inner lives of these people around me to exist... and, to the degree that citizenship can grant an immigrant a reprieve from the same sort of disposability and punishment that was meted out to her, for my own life, and the life of others like me, to exist as it does.

Evil—and I don't mean the supernatural kind from scripture, or the mystification on offer from Hannah Arendt—exists. Its faces in circumstances of domination and structural genocide are these:

planner,  
perpetrator,  
collaborator,  
and beneficiary.

Of these, we may be tempted to exempt some of the beneficiaries of structural violence from blame. After all, a beneficiary need not be completely aware of what he's doing, of what is happening in his name, or of how he benefits. This may be true even of some of the perpetrators and collaborators; there are ways of coping even with the most morally tainted kind of work. Evil, as the Belgian resistance member and Auschwitz survivor Jean Améry wrote, overlays and exceeds ordinariness, overlays and exceeds "innocence." Arendt, he says, "knew the enemy of mankind only from hearsay, saw him only through the glass cage." But in his experience in Nazi custody, Améry came to understand that the concept of "the banality of evil" is an abstraction, that real evil cannot be grasped outside of its concrete experiential forms. "Many [evil] things do indeed happen approximately the way they were anticipated in the imagination," he observes; "Gestapo men in leather coats, pistol pointed at their victim."<sup>145</sup> But, then, he says, "almost amazingly," one arrives at the understanding of the true meaning of the word:

...it dawns on one that the fellows not only have leather coats and pistols, but also faces: not 'Gestapo faces' with twisted noses, hypertrophied chins, pockmarks, and knife scars, as might appear in a book, but rather faces like anyone else's. *Plain, ordinary* faces. And the enormous perception at a later stage, one that destroys all abstractive imagination, makes clear to us how the

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<sup>145</sup> Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 25.

plain, ordinary faces finally become Gestapo faces after all, and how evil *overlays* and *exceeds* banality.<sup>146</sup>

When you experience evil up close, “when an event places the most extreme demands on us,” Améry says, “one ought not to speak of banality.”<sup>147</sup> “Innocence,” therefore, has nothing to do with it.

Two years since Claudia Patricia’s gruesome murder have now passed. But the anniversary of her killing, on this last 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, passed without commentary by the pundit class. Few on social media remembered her life and death. Only a handful of local news agencies, and a little noticed *Time* article, bothered to remind the public about her killing.<sup>148</sup> The agent who killed her remains free, his unspeakable crime, almost completely wiped from social memory.

Meanwhile, on the CBP website, a page dedicated to agents who died “in the line of duty” lists the dates marking their “End of Watch.”<sup>149</sup> Imagining themselves, one surmises, as “the shield that guards the realms of men”<sup>150</sup>—the “thin green line” between civilization and the savage hordes<sup>151</sup>—the reality is that most of these deaths

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<sup>146</sup> Améry, *At the Mind's Limits*, 25; my emphasis.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> “Family of Guatemalan Woman File Lawsuit against BP Agent,” KGNS TV, May 18, 2020, <https://www.kgns.tv/content/news/Family-of-Guatemalan-woman-file-lawsuit-against-BP-agent--570582461.html>; César Rodríguez, “Court Records Reveal Details after Family of Woman Fatally Shot by BP Agent near Laredo Files Suit,” Laredo Morning Times (Laredo Morning Times, May 15, 2020), <https://www.lmtonline.com/local/article/Court-records-reveal-details-after-family-of-15272413.php>. The time article appears to have been taken down. The URL was: <https://time.com/5836005/claudia-gomez-gonzalez-shooting-border-patrol-lawsuit/>

<sup>149</sup> “In Memoriam to Those Who Died in the Line of Duty,” U.S. Customs and Border Protection, <http://cbp.gov/about/in-memoriam/memoriam-those-who-died-line-duty>.

<sup>150</sup> This is a theme in the HBO series *Game of Thrones*. See: “Night’s Watch,” *Game of Thrones* Wiki, [https://gameofthrones.fandom.com/wiki/Night's\\_Watch](https://gameofthrones.fandom.com/wiki/Night's_Watch).

<sup>151</sup> The idea of the “thin green line” is the Border Patrol’s analog, of course, to the idea “thin blue line” for the police. See Raoul Lowery Contreras, “Opinion: The Thin Green Line at the U.S.-Mexico Border,” *Fox News* online, April 19, 2016, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/opinion-the-thin-green-line-at-the-u-s-mexico-border>.

are accidents,<sup>152</sup> or natural deaths,<sup>153</sup> 2 of the 5 total felonious deaths in the last 17 years occurring while the agents in question were not even on the job.<sup>154</sup> The fact is, this is not dangerous work—not for the agents themselves in any case—it is *dirty work*, that is, work that leaves a *moral taint*.<sup>155</sup>

In the aftermath and in the process of genocide, perpetrators, collaborators, beneficiaries, and perhaps even planners, have expended great energies imagining themselves as “good people”—a psychological exercise commensurate to the importance that maintaining the racial order has assumed in American society.<sup>156</sup> To neutralize their own feelings of guilt, the basic response of perpetrators, collaborators, and beneficiaries is to double-down on their “good character”: since no one who’s a good person would commit such acts, or be implicated in them, there is no genocide to reckon with. Therefore, anything threatening to undermine the latter claim cannot be countenanced, and—as we have seen from the response of security forces to protestors who simply demand, “Stop killing us!”—even a violent response is preferable to a collective reckoning. For CBP, for ICE, for the internal police forces that murder and

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<sup>152</sup> For example, “Donna Doss,” U.S. Customs and Border Protection, March 16, 2020, <https://www.cbp.gov/about/in-memoriam/donna-doss>.

<sup>153</sup> For example, “David R. Delaney,” U.S. Customs and Border Protection, March 11, 2014, <https://www.cbp.gov/about/in-memoriam/david-r-delaney>.

<sup>154</sup> For example, “Javier Vega, Jr.,” U.S. Customs and Border Protection, January 5, 2017, <https://www.cbp.gov/about/in-memoriam/javier-vega-jr>.

<sup>155</sup> As far as I know, there is no adequate theorization of this phenomenon. There one suggestive but problematic exploration of a related matter, “emotional taint,” by Kendra Dyanne Rivera, “Emotional Taint,” *Management Communication Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2014): 198-228, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318914554090>. It is problematic, however, because the author, whether deliberately or not, implicitly paints CBP agents as being somehow victims of societal disapproval of their jobs. She uses the language of “emotional taint,” rather than my preferred “moral taint,” in order to investigate how Border Patrol agents manage their emotions. By framing the issue as one of “emotional” rather than “moral” taint, however, she elides the serious abuses that CBP personnel commit and never directly confronts the hard questions it raises. In short, this is a missed opportunity to investigate forms of moral corruption that lead to human atrocity. Nevertheless, it is a useful starting point for future analyses of the residues left by immoral actions in politicized contexts, a project that I cannot undertake here.

<sup>156</sup> Hollie Nyseth Brehm, “Perpetrators of Genocide Say They're 'Good People',” *Ohio State News*, October 5, 2017, <https://news.osu.edu/perpetrators-of-genocide-say-theyre-good-people/>.

mutilate people of color, *they* are the victims of unjust persecution,<sup>157</sup> *they* are the martyrs of a legitimate cause.<sup>158</sup> For the good white folks who abjure their communion with these genocidaires while benefiting from their devastation, it is their “innocence,” as James Baldwin told his nephew, “which constitutes the crime.”<sup>159</sup>

By contrast, then, to Améry’s situation, in contexts of structural genocide, evil does not simply “overlay and exceed” the ordinary, it *precedes* it—the latter of which being what I caught a glimpse of in that bar, and what Baldwin refers to by “innocence.” In a settler colony, evil is in the air we breathe. To undo genocidal logics that are baked into the society itself will require sacrifices of the sort that “the innocent” have never been willing to countenance. They can’t even be bothered with economic reform, let alone abolishing genocide: for as the collective response—not just the response of the leadership—to the coronavirus pathogen has shown, the majority remains affectively invested in returning to some version of the country’s former life. That investment is seen in many of the everyday taken-for-granted expectations that do not even enter consciousness as problematic—the need to have access to certain goods, or a certain range of selection of goods, always cheaply available for purchase at every supermarket; the very existence of “supermarkets,” for that matter—but which require a disposable labor force we might never meet eyes with to maintain. Many of those things

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<sup>157</sup> This is my interpretation of the “Blue lives matter” phenomenon. Natasha Lennard, “Call Congress’s ‘Blue Lives Matter’ Bills What They Are: Another Attack on Black Lives,” *The Intercept Magazine*, May 19, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/05/19/blue-lives-matter-bill-police-brutality/>.

<sup>158</sup> As I said, and as CBP’s framing of the deaths of many of its personnel reveals, the dangers of this work are exaggerated by CBP in order to portray themselves as good martyrs of border control. See Bob Ortega, “Is Border Patrol Work Dangerous? Not Compared to Being a Cop,” *CNN* online, May 1, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/01/us/border-patrol-agent-less-dangerous-than-being-police-officer-invs/index.html>.

<sup>159</sup> James Baldwin, “My Dungeon Shook,” in *The Fire Next Time* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Michael Joseph, 1964).

which make life comfortable would need to be given up for social transformation, and, from the looks of things, the innocents are too lulled, too invested to live without them.

But history will not wait for the innocent. The right in this country, which contains the largest armed white supremacist movement in the world, continually raises the stakes while the liberals in power offer no counter—they can't, as I have said, because doing so would be an admission of their complicity.

Another prisoner, prophet, and victim of genocide, George Jackson once wrote to a white supporter of that, “when I think of the very lovely people, the innocent, my mind strays momentarily from the fact that I’ll never be safe.” Later—under the guise now of the revolutionary, George Jackson, in a letter to Angela Davis, asks the really brutal question. “The question is,” he says, “do these nice people really want to hear what I have to say—as a victim of the first order—will they mistake it—as extreme—can these wonderful people understand that some situations call for extreme remedies?”

Much more remains to be said concerning the dynamics, origins, and trajectories of these peculiarly American forms of genocide—their narratives of legitimation, their gender-selectivity, their historical manifestations across time; the multi-form and heterogenous structures that undergird them, and their imbrications with ideological imperial designs. Still more than I can say here is needed to reckon with our complicities in genocide, with the possibility of coalition against genocide, with genocide prevention—which, as scholars like Anton Weiss-Wendt have demonstrated, was never a serious aim of leaders during the UN Convention.<sup>160</sup> The truths of structured domestic

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<sup>160</sup> Anton Weiss-Wendt, *The Soviet Union and the Gutting of the UN Genocide Convention* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2017). Other scholars have also problematized the very idea of preventability. See Thomas Cushman, “Is Genocide Preventable? Some Theoretical Considerations,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, no. 4 (2003): 523-542, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462352032000149486>.

genocide upset the ways we have thought about racialized domination hitherto, not only the status quo premises of the American project. I will have an opportunity in the second chapter of this dissertation to trace the contours of answers to some of these question.

## Chapter 2. How Did We Arrive Here?

### 1. Introduction

In his “White Genocide Manifesto” (ca. 1988) the white supremacist David Lane argued that there was a society-wide conspiracy to destroy “the white race.”<sup>161</sup> The Jews, using the media, were advancing the “mongrelization” of the white race by promoting miscegenation between non-white men and white women. As terrorism scholar George Michael explains, Lane believed this conspiracy sought to produce the biological extinction of whites, and to do so in part by demoralizing “white men, who see their women taken away from them.”<sup>162</sup> Thus, government programs like affirmative action—despite primarily benefiting white women—“take away economic opportunities for white men, thus making them less suitable as marriage partners.”<sup>163</sup> Even professional sports, populated with athletic nonwhite males, for Lane, were about interracial sex, as they “promote non-white athletes and diminish the sense of racial uniqueness among whites.”<sup>164</sup> Everything in society gesturing towards racial equality amounted to a sexualized threat against white civilization from the mongrel hordes.

By the time of Trump’s election, Lane’s propagandizing had had a significant impact in shaping the ideology of the global white power movement, whose ideas have in turn influenced key figures that have staffed, or currently staff, the Trump administration<sup>165</sup>—including, reportedly, Trump himself—to say nothing of his

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<sup>161</sup> For general information on this term, see “White Genocide,” Anti-Defamation League, accessed May 2020, <https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/white-genocide>.

<sup>162</sup> George Michael, “David Lane and the Fourteen Words,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 1 (2009): 43-61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14690760903067986>, 51.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> I am referring to Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller. Then there is Trump himself. See: Rachel Revesz, “Steve Bannon ‘Connects Network of White Nationalists’ at the White House,” *The Independent*, February 7, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/steve-bannon-white-house-white->

constituency; and, given the problem of white supremacist gangs in corrections and immigration enforcement, it undoubtedly also shapes the outlook of this sector, independent of top-down coordination.

Three months before Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzalez was murdered, the Department of Homeland Security posted a bulletin on its website that read, “We must secure the border and build a wall to make America safe again”<sup>166</sup>—a statement that observers could not help noticing torturously mimicked the infamous neo-Nazi “14 words” credo, another ideological innovation of David Lane.<sup>167</sup> Comprising a call on whites to do whatever may be necessary to forestall their own demographic and political decline, the 14 words say, “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” Of course, it is tempting to dismiss the idea that this is a deliberate racist “dogwhistle” as conspiratorial, but I will argue here that this is too quick—too convenient.

In the prior chapter, I argued that that genocide, as the basis of American civilization, is a processual and structural condition, one that does not require genocidal intent. In doing so, I wanted to suggest that genocide is a background super-ordinate imperative that organizes institutions, politics, and social life.

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nationalist-colleagues-books-donald-trump-chief-strategy-nsc-a7567336.html; Jason Wilson, “Leaked Emails Reveal Trump Aide Stephen Miller’s White Nationalist Views,” *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, November 14, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/nov/14/stephen-miller-leaked-emails-white-nationalism-trump>; and Amanda Marcotte, “Donald Trump’s ‘White Genocide’ Rhetoric: A Dangerous Escalation of Racism,” *Salon* (Salon.com, August 27, 2018), <https://www.salon.com/2018/08/27/donald-trumps-white-genocide-rhetoric-a-dangerous-escalation-of-racism/>.

<sup>166</sup> “We Must Secure The Border And Build The Wall To Make America Safe Again,” Department of Homeland Security, February 15, 2018, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2018/02/15/we-must-secure-border-and-build-wall-make-america-safe-again>.

<sup>167</sup> For general information about this slogan, see “14 Words,” Anti-Defamation League, 5AD, <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/14-words>.

This has its roots in settler colonialism—which is, as Patrick Wolfe argued, a structure of “eliminating the native” by whatever means are deemed expedient and politic in a given moment. Robert Staples, describing the specific targeting of Black men, had similarly observed that the contemporary genocide of Black men had its “prototype” in the genocide of Indigenous people. “Because their conformity to Anglo-Saxon demands could not be elicited, American Indians, Maoris and Aborigines were perceived as continuing threats to the existence of white rule,” he said. “As the capacity of the economy to function without them occurred, they became excess baggage and a competitive threat to the privileges of white males.”<sup>168</sup> It’s within this framework that I asked us to rethink the situation of immigrants today so that we can more fully understand its urgency.

But now we must confront a question that inevitably emerges in genocidal and post-genocidal contexts—one whose answer will serve as evidence for the claim that the DHS bulletin is no coincidence, even if it isn’t a direct reference to the “14 words.” The question emerges from the observation that, looking back, it is incredible that so many of us missed the warnings, didn’t see the genocidal processes unfolding, or are still in denial that it is happening: *how* could we have missed it? The racial rhetoric, racial anxieties, and the racial policies that have brought us to this moment have a clearly defined history.

In this chapter, I argue that fears of the coming majority-minority nation, combined with the gender-selective targeting of Mexican males was part of the background assumptions of the strategy of “Prevention Through Deterrence,” otherwise

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<sup>168</sup> Robert Staples, “Black Male Genocide: A Final Solution to the Race Problem in America,” *The Black Scholar* 18, no. 3 (1987): 10.

known as the “enforcement first” approach to immigration policy. As such, however, it served as a deliberate, if not de facto, plan to prepare the wider public for a new cycle of anti-Mexican violence. It is important to understand this for it helps us see how we have arrived at this particular moment of genocidal violence—which will, in turn, reveal the dynamics which are producing the puzzling demographic targeting that I noted at the outset.

I proceed by first arguing that the exploring the genealogical antecedents to the white genocide conspiracy theory, concluding that this way of thinking about immigrants, as sexualized threats to the country’s national security,<sup>169</sup> is not in itself so remarkable in American history, as are the current political and social circumstances that once again raise its stakes—in particular, the heightened fear of white demographic decline that has led to a kind of “post-racial” mainstreaming of white power politics and a ramping of state (as well as non-state actors’) capacities for administering removal or killing. Once this sub-argument is completed, I show that the fear of white demographic decline is demonstrably pervasive and undergirded by something much nastier than the liberal bugbear usually summoned to save white moral character, that is, “implicit bias.” This helps to explain, I then claim, why the American government has in fact converted the border into an instrument of mass death and disappearance—to forestall the demographic threat posed by immigration—and that there is evidence of this even in the key documents that outlined the strategy. Finally, I show that the gendered dynamics of immigration enforcement, in particular as they target Latinx males, are precisely those

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<sup>169</sup> Jake Miller, “Donald Trump Defends Calling Mexican Immigrants ‘Rapists,’” *CBS News* online, July 2, 2015, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/election-2016-donald-trump-defends-calling-mexican-immigrants-rapists/>.

that one would expect in the preparatory phases of genocide that scholars like Adam Jones have identified—and, once again, that the document of the original plan itself appeared to recognize this in its calculus.

**2. “We must secure the border and build a wall to make America safe again.”**

The dominant racial fear that today shapes anti-immigrant discourse, the fear of “white genocide,” descends from a very specific century-old philosophy, and is, consequently, also sibling to a more mainstream version of the same—Nordicism, on the one hand, and the Huntingtonian discourse that Leo Chavez has labelled the “Latino Threat Narrative,” on the other. My claim here is that this is functionally the same discourse as that of the eugenicists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century—and is, similarly, ideological cover for genocide.

As we saw in the prior chapter, Latin American immigrants of a certain hue in media have historically been depicted as social and reproductive threats and as “public charges” (*i.e.*, unworthy economic burdens on “real” American families). Indeed, Trump’s rise was propelled, as we already saw, by his willingness to openly label Mexican men and boys as a sexual threat to the nation. In the 1980s, almost four decades earlier, however, Ronald Reagan was already calling Central American refugees—the same ones created by the US-Contra interventions—“terrorists and subversives” that were “just two days’ driving time from [the border in] Harlingen, Texas.”<sup>170</sup> Invoking the notion of a “fifth column,” Reagan even claimed that

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<sup>170</sup> Ronald Reagan qtd. In Douglas S. Massey and Magaly Sanchez R., *Brokered Boundaries: Creating Immigrant Identity in Anti-Immigrant Times* (New York: Russell Sage, 2012), 69.

Communists were ready “to feed on the anger and frustration of recent Central and South American immigrants.”<sup>171</sup>

Anticommunism, however, could only remain a plausible cover for American xenophobia as long as “the Evil Empire” actually existed. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the image of the immigrant lost its value as a Cold War prop. But it would appreciate in political value a hundred-fold in the aftermath of the War on Terror—most noteworthy through that new utility assigned to the immigrant in 2004 by Samuel Huntington’s claim that “the single most immediate and most serious challenge to America’s traditional identity [*sic*] comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially Mexico, and the fertility rates of those immigrants compared to [B]lack and white American natives [*sic*].”<sup>172</sup> By 2014, a high profile politician like Texas governor Rick Perry could say, without a hint of irony, that the thousands of unaccompanied refugee children arriving at the border were disposed towards murder and rape and that they had “substantial terrorist ties,” requiring the mobilization of 1000 National Guard troops to the border.<sup>173</sup> By 2020, DHS and CBP would be repurposed for political repression of Black people and their allies in American cities.

What Leo Chavez calls the “Latino Threat Narrative,” therefore, is a crucial part of the patterns in public discourse on national security that has paved the way for the genocidal moment I have been discussing—as well as, I fear, for a further genocidal

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 141 (2004): 30.

<sup>173</sup> Martin Pengelly, “Texas Governor Rick Perry Warns of Migrants from Terrorist-Linked Nations,” *The Guardian* online, August 3, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/03/texas-governor-rick-perry-migrants-terrorist-linked-nations>.

episode that may be already emerging, hatched, as it were, from the runaway expansion border military and paramilitary forces. Originating probably in the 1920s, the narrative of Latinx threat's themes, Chavez observes, have remained remarkably consistent at least over the course of the last 60 years, though its "stakes" have been raised in the wake of 9/11—and, I claim, raised again in the wake of the 2016 election. So, what is this narrative?

The narrative of the Latinx—really, Mexican-cum-Central American—threat revolves around 5 key themes. These are the themes of: 1) Mexican and Central American "illegality"—an identification of migrant identity with criminality; 2) Mexican "reconquest"—the fear that Mexicans were "flooding" or "invading" the US, and that the too-strong ethnic identities they brought with them were a demographic "time-bomb" waiting to fracture American society; 3) Central American and Islamic terrorism—the hysteria that migratory flows were a pipeline for would-be terrorists or, in the Reagan era, of feeble-minded Central Americans who could easily be radicalized by communist subversives; finally, 5) Mexican fecundity—the idea that the "out-of-control" fertility of Mexicans, particularly Mexican women, by itself, was a security threat.

To be sure, "undocumented migration," as Douglas Massey explains, "has always been confounded in the public mind with threats to the nation's security—be they from Jacobins, papists, or Communists."<sup>174</sup> But in its distinctively sexual dimension, the "narrative of Latinx threat" in fact has ideological sources originating in eugenic theories during the Progressive Era—in which the ideal of technocratic rule by a strong state of managerial experts extended this same thinking to include the idea of managing

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<sup>174</sup> Douglas S. Massey, "America's Immigration Policy Fiasco: Learning from Past Mistakes," *Daedalus* 142, no. 3 (2013): 5-15, [https://doi.org/10.1162/daed\\_a\\_00215](https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_00215), 9.

sexual (and thus racial) reproduction. As Historian of science Garland E. Allen explains, American eugenicists, such as Madison Grant, saw “the human germ plasm” as literally being a natural resource that, like any other resource held in common, belongs to the whole of society, not the individual.<sup>175</sup> Thus, “for any society, like any animal species, to survive, it must preserve the best of its ‘germ plasm’” understood in racial terms.<sup>176</sup> The racial germ plasm—just like any other natural resource—was to be managed by the appropriate ministry of experts so as to *preserve* in undiluted form the “sources of the race” for future generations.<sup>177</sup> On this way of thinking, therefore, “culling the herd in game management and sterilization of the ‘unfit’ [=the feeble-minded, the undesirable, etc.] in the human population involved the same sort of biological intervention into the reproductive process.”<sup>178</sup>

Madison Grant, in *The Passing of the Great Race* (1915),<sup>179</sup> had explicitly applied such theories to immigrant populations. Anticipating by two decades the Nazi notion of “the enemy within,” Grant lamented that in America the “Nordic” ruling class might have already “sold [its] birthright in a continent to solve a labor problem.”<sup>180</sup> Regarding the Black population as a naturally servile class “who ask only to obey and to further the ideals and wishes of the master race, without trying to inject into the body politic their own views, whether racial, religious or social,” Grant worried that the importation of white “ethnic” servants, Chinese “coolies,” and Japanese laborers, had invited the

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<sup>175</sup> Garland E. Allen, “‘Culling the Herd’: Eugenics and the Conservation Movement in the United States, 1900–1940,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 46, no. 1 (2012): 31-72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10739-011-9317-1>.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>179</sup> Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1936).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 87, 12.

demise of the Nordic whites, since, even at that moment, “the immigrant laborers are now breeding out their masters and killing by filth and by crowding as effectively as by the sword.”<sup>181</sup>

“The danger,” Grant warned, “is from within and not from without.”<sup>182</sup> While the aristocratic whites have military might, “if the valuable elements in the Nordic race mix with inferior strains or die out through race suicide, then the citadel of civilization will fall for mere lack of defenders.”<sup>183</sup>

Indeed, such conspiratorial fears of “white genocide”— called “racial suicide” at the time—became so prevalent that in congressional hearings addressing widespread labor shortages during WWI, advocates of open access to Mexican labor, like Texas congressman Carlos Bee, were careful to reassure northerners that there would be no nationwide “invasion” of Mexicans, that they posed no threat to political security, and that they would not threaten the American way of life—even at a time in which scientific racism had begun to fall from favor in open public discourse.<sup>184</sup> The Mexican, Bee said, “is a hot-weather plant” who only migrates to Texas in the summer because of his need for “*frijoles* and *tortillas*.”<sup>185</sup> There would be no political insecurity or Bolshevik subversion, furthermore, since “He cares nothing at all of government in his primitive state.”<sup>186</sup> Furthermore, Bee suggested, the Mexican is needed because he is perfectly fitted by his constitution and psychology to be a menial: unlike the white man, “the

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., xxxi.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> United States Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission of Illiterate Mexican Laborers. Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, Sixty-Sixth Congress, Second Session, on H.J. Res. 271 Relating to the Temporary Admission of Illiterate Mexican Laborers* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1920).

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

Mexican is adapted for that special character of labor... specially fitted for the burdensome task of bending his back to picking the cotton and the burdensome task of grubbing the fields.”<sup>187</sup>

The biological terms of the narrative had changed, but the eugenic underpinnings remained. The threat that the pendulum would swing in favor of mass removals and mob violence never went away.

In fact, just as open season on Mexicans came to a close in the 1930s, mass sterilization programs picked up the slack. While the total scope of anti-Mexican/anti-Latinx sterilization is unknown, Novak, Lira, *et al.* found that, between 1920-1945, Spanish-surnamed men were at 23% greater risk of sterilization than other men, and Spanish-surnamed women were at 59% greater risk.<sup>188</sup> While they are separate population, furthermore—insofar as “Latinx” can be treated as a unit of analysis—it is also noteworthy that more than one third of Puerto Rican women were sterilized by 1970.<sup>189</sup>

Eugenics—in particular, the toxic combination of eugenic thinking with conservationism—is, for this reason, the unacknowledged backbone of contemporary anti-Latinx discourse. Having never really disappeared, the fear of demographic decline re-emerges today as part of the ideological counterpart to a renewed pattern of genocidal violence. Faced by what the sociologist Tufuku Zuberi has called a *racial*

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<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>188</sup> Nicole L. Novak et al., “Disproportionate Sterilization of Latinos Under California’s Eugenic Sterilization Program, 1920–1945,” *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 5 (2018): pp. 611-613, <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2018.304369>.

<sup>189</sup> Erin Blakemore, “The First Birth Control Pill Used Puerto Rican Women as Guinea Pigs,” *History.com* (A&E Television Networks, May 9, 2018), <https://www.history.com/news/birth-control-pill-history-puerto-rico-enovid>.

*demographic transition* that will transform whites into a minority,<sup>190</sup> multiple studies in social psychology have demonstrated that white people exposed to this data become angry, resentful, and fearful that what it means to be “prototypically American” will change.<sup>191</sup> Not only this, but it heightens their sense of vulnerability to a (non-existent) “antiwhite” racism. It increases both their preference for white-only social interactions and settings and their negative evaluation of racial outgroups, as well as their support “for racial exclusionary policies designed to protect whites’ political, economic, and social privileges.”<sup>192</sup> In fact, white people exposed to the racial shift data only fail to have a racist reaction when they are also assured that their societal status as a group won’t be affected—that is, when they are assured that “their relative hierarchical position... is unlikely to change [even] in a significantly more racially diverse United States.”<sup>193</sup>

Stated differently, these studies implicitly reveal the fundamentally colonial mentality of American whites. This is why some familiarity with the Nordicism of figures like Grant turns out to be crucial. Fearing that the racial shift will knock them down in the

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<sup>190</sup> Tukufu Zuberi, “The Final Demographic Racial Transition,” University of Pennsylvania Arts & Sciences. Lecture presented at the BEN Talks, n.d., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZX9vWUbaE>

<sup>191</sup> The studies are numerous now and the data is robust. For an overview of the findings, see Maureen A. Craig, Julian M. Rucker, and Jennifer A. Richeson, “Racial and Political Dynamics of an Approaching ‘Majority-Minority’ United States,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 677, no. 1 (2018): pp. 204-214, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218766269>. See also: Maureen A. Craig and Jennifer A. Richeson, “On the Precipice of a ‘Majority-Minority’ America,” *Psychological Science* 25, no. 6 (2014): pp. 1189-1197, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614527113>; Maureen A. Craig and Jennifer A. Richeson, “Majority No More? The Influence of Neighborhood Racial Diversity and Salient National Population Changes on Whites’ Perceptions of Racial Discrimination,” *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 4, no. 5 (2018): p. 141, <https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2018.4.5.07>; Maureen A. Craig and Jennifer A. Richeson, “Information about the US Racial Demographic Shift Triggers Concerns about Anti-White Discrimination among the Prospective White ‘Minority,’” *Plos One* 12, no. 9 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185389>.

<sup>192</sup> Craig, Rucker, and Richeson, “Racial and Political Dynamics of an Approaching ‘Majority-Minority’ United States,” 208.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

US's caste system, what the studies show is that the white majority will countenance ethnic diversity only if nonwhite groups remain in a subordinate position both symbolically and materially. White people will accept the demographic change, that is, as long as prototypical "Americanness" remains unchanged, as long as ethnic groups assimilate, and as long as whites continue to have greater access to resources and opportunities.

Notice, however, that this is structurally analogous to the eugenicist vision of a settler colony in which "the natives" have been replaced by whites and the remaining population is subordinated by an Anglo-supremacist racial aristocracy, and has assumed other necessary or desired functions within the social order—for instance, as security or military forces, as entertainers, etc. Within this plantation mentality, "culling the heard," by whatever means are deemed expedient and politic at a specific moment, is a necessary intermittent biological intervention to preserve in undiluted form the "sources of the race" for future generations. The behavior of the research subjects captured in these psychological studies—and we are speaking here about studies covering a range of white demographics, including the young, educated white people at elite institutions—turns out to be just another version of the "white genocide" panic, couched in other terms.

There is an implication to this kind of thinking that remains unreckoned with by either liberals or leftists, but which is important for us to register here. This is that white racial thinking, contrary to a well-known leftist piety, has never in fact been confused about what political choices or policies are in their interest. As sociologist Oscar Mayorga points out, the question of why poor whites continue to support candidates and

policies that “go against their own interests” is confused—as much as the question of why educated well-to-do whites voted for Trump despite their education—because it is premised on the assumption that such actors are only weighing their immediate and personal interests.<sup>194</sup> But, Mayorga argues, such whites are, indeed, acting in their collective *racial* interests based on how they want the future to look, and they want it to look *white*—they are acting on what he calls their “white imagined future”: a set of beliefs and attitudes according to which “the ‘economy’ is white-owned, in service to whites, and that whites thus have a destiny to wealth and economic success.”<sup>195</sup>

Even though Mayorga does not consider the data on demographic threat, or the fear of demographic collapse that spurs reactionary politics in today’s America, it is indisputable that the research on demographic threat shows that white people think in a distinctly future-oriented way that mirrors Mayorga’s idea of a white imagined future. If we shift our perspective to thinking about white behavior in terms of *intergenerational* racial power, and expand its focus to include not only economic, but also social and political behavior, policies and actions that seem completely immoral begin to make perfect sense. White support of such policies and actions, by their turn, are in fact the attempt to forestall a nonwhite future in which they are no longer in control—that is, precisely an attempt to “secure a future for white children.”

These findings also reveal the extent to which the shibboleth of appealing to “implicit racial bias” as an explanation for ongoing forms of racial discrimination is just

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<sup>194</sup> This paper is unpublished. I heard Mayorga speak at the Race & Capitalism Project’s conference, “Race and Capitalism Defined: A Graduate Student Symposium” at the University of Chicago on February 28, 2020, <https://www.raceandcapitalism.com/new-events/defining-racial-capitalism-graduate-student-symposium>. The draft version of the manuscript is available at Oscar J. Mayorga, “Citizens as Consumers: White Imagined Futures,” SocArXiv, May 26, 2020, doi:10.31235/osf.io/gcjwf.

<sup>195</sup> Mayorga, “Citizens as Consumers: White Imagined Futures,” 5.

another mechanism to absolve white people of responsibility of and for their own clan. Writing in the 1950s, in fact, Frantz Fanon had already identified this liberal invention as an ideological hang-up. “Racism,” he said, “bloats and disfigures the face of the culture that practices it... This means that a social group, a country, a civilization, cannot be unconsciously racist.” It cannot be “unconsciously” racist, because racism, in societies built around the organized domination and assault on the cultural patterns of subordinate populations, is just the “the negative of a more gigantic work of economic, and even biological, enslavement”—or, in the context of the US-Native relations, dispossession and elimination.<sup>196</sup> “Racism,” in such contexts, he says, “is not the whole but the most visible, the most day-to-day and, not to mince matters, the crudest element of a given structure.”<sup>197</sup> Since it is a part of the culture, however, this means does not “encyst.” It does not harden and calcify, making itself vulnerable to removal or isolation. “It has had to renew itself, to adapt itself, to change its appearance. It has had to undergo the fate of the cultural whole that informed it.”<sup>198</sup>

But if racism, as Fanon puts it, “is only one element of a vaster whole: that of the systematized oppression of a people,” then “the evolution of techniques of production, the industrialization, limited though it is, of the subjugated countries, the increasingly necessary existence of collaborators”—all of these things will “impose a new attitude upon the occupant.”<sup>199</sup> It is thus inevitable that “vulgar racism in its biological form corresponds to the period of crude exploitation of man's arms and legs,” while “the

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<sup>196</sup> Frantz Fanon, “Racism and Culture,” in *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*, translated by Haakon Chevalier (New York, NY: Grove, 1964), 31.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-5.

perfecting of the means of production inevitably brings about the camouflage of the techniques by which man is exploited.”<sup>200</sup> When, in Fanon’s time, “psychologists spoke of a prejudice having become unconscious,” therefore, they were simply registering how “the need to appeal to various degrees of approval and support, to the native’s cooperation, [had] modified relations in a less crude, more subtle, more ‘cultivated’ direction.”<sup>201</sup> What they were registering, in fact, was “that the rigor of the system [of exploitation] made the daily affirmation of a superiority superfluous... The commercial undertaking of enslavement, of cultural destruction, progressively gave way to a verbal mystification”—it had become possible for the settler to now accuse those seeking liberation of racism!<sup>202</sup>

It is thus, Fanon concludes, “not as a result of the evolution of people’s minds that racism loses its virulence. No inner revolution can explain this necessity for racism to seek more subtle forms, to evolve;” what explains it is that racism is simply the cultural refraction of the evolving total system.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, he muses—in what should strike us as uncannily similar to the speedy commodification of Black Lives Matter in the wake of recent mass protests—“the interesting thing about this evolution is that racism was taken as a topic of meditation, sometimes even as a publicity technique.”<sup>204</sup> It is for these reasons that “the habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw, must be abandoned.”<sup>205</sup> “It is not a hidden, dissimulated element,” he writes, “No super human efforts are needed to bring it out.... [it] stares one in the face

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 36-7.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 38.

for it so happens that it belongs in a characteristic whole: that of the shameless exploitation of one up of men by another.”<sup>206</sup>

This isn't to say that studies on implicit bias aren't track something. It is just to point out that what many people think these studies are tracking—a kind of moral schizophrenia—is a lie because racism is articulated to the total system, not to the deeply held convictions of “the well-meaning” (—another shibboleth): what it's tracking is the new form of racism, a racism which—in advance—cloaks itself *qua* racism. *Pace* the popular wisdom of many “structural” analyses of oppression and racism, like that of Iris Marion Young—according to which domination does not require the dominating class to have racist content in their heads—it is simply silly to think there can be racism *without* racists.

### **3. “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”**

Returning to the issue of migration, it is clear that the form of racism I have described above is at work in the massively coordinated effort to forestall the demographic threat posed by immigration through the militarization of the border, and its transformation into an instrument of death. As described in Jason De León's award winning *The Land of Open Graves*,<sup>207</sup> the US's immigration strategy of “Prevention Through Deterrence” (PTD) weaponized the dangers of the desert by funneling migratory “flows” away from urban centers and towards the hinterlands with the

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 37

<sup>207</sup> Jason De León, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

deliberate aim of producing migrant death as a deterrent.<sup>208</sup> Hatched in 1994 by former architects of counterinsurgency at the Department of Defense's Center for Low Intensity Conflict (CLIC), PTD has claimed the lives of at least killed 7,216 people.<sup>209</sup> It has, by its own measure, been so successful, in fact, that the total deaths it has produced remain unknown, with journalist Todd Miller suggesting that the real number must be at least triple the 7,216 figure.<sup>210</sup> Mirroring the political disappearances that plagued Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzalez's parents' and grandparents' generations in Central America—fact that will be significant for the next chapter—De León remarks that “the desert cleans up all the government's dirty work—there's no evidence. The bodies simply disappear.” The borderlands have, in effect, been transformed into a kind of open air elimination chamber in which the sun, the heat, the terrain, the fauna, CBP, ICE, and, once within the US, white vigilantes, all act in concert as simultaneous poison, prison guard, and acid bath.

—One might object against this comparison to the gas chambers of Nazi Germany, of course, but to this respondent I must ask why they think dying poisoned by Zykon B in a death camp is morally different than experiencing your body melting in the desert as a result of deliberate policy. I believe the burden of argument here is on the respondent. (The issue of choice can be brought up, to be sure, but given the “push” factors created by global capital—which happens to be controlled by US interests—this

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<sup>208</sup> US Border Patrol, “Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond: National Strategy,” July 1994. <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=721845>.

<sup>209</sup> “Study Points to Undercount of Migrant Deaths on US-Mexico Border,” Agencia EFE, July 27, 2018, <https://www.efe.com/efe/english/life/study-points-to-undercount-of-migrant-deaths-on-us-mexico-border/50000263-3704296>.

<sup>210</sup> Todd Miller, “Over 7,000 Bodies Have Been Found at the US-Mexican Border Since the '90s,” The Nation, July 24, 2018, <https://www.thenation.com/article/over-7000-bodies-have-been-found-at-the-us-mexican-border-since-the-nineties/>.

just expands the “goal posts” of the question to include both deliberately constructed migratory *and* economic policy.)

Now, because of its cruel calculus, studies of PTD have tended to emphasize the rather shocking fact that the planners treat the deaths of immigrants as a necessary “cost” of simply doing immigration enforcement. This has come at the cost, however, of obscuring another dimension of the strategy that is nakedly genocidal. This is that the logic of this form of punishment—and it is a form of punishment; for it must be, if it is to deter—it must inflict a cost that one has “merited” by one’s actions.

Indeed, as Jessica Ordaz’s research has shown, while immigration officials have historically maintained sought to frame the quality of life in detention in idealized terms—for instance, claiming that detention centers are “humane” places that observe the highest standards while immigrants await deportation, testimonies of immigrants—since the 1980s—evidence patterns of everyday violence in peoples’ experience of detention.<sup>211</sup> In 1985, for instance, she documents that the primary motivations for one of the largest hunger strikes of detainees was the fact that Immigration and Naturalization Services agents “created an inhumane environment that caused psychological and physical distress.”<sup>212</sup>

Of course, this punitive aspect is part of the legacy of how immigrants have been criminalized and interpellated as threats—particularly in what we might call the “gestation” period of PTD, when anti-narcotics was used as the primary anti-immigrant policing mechanism. Indeed, as Patrisia Macias Rojas has shown, the punitive turn in

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<sup>211</sup> Ordaz, “Protesting Conditions Inside El Corralón: Immigration Detention, State Repression, and Transnational Migrant Politics in El Centro, California,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 38, no. 2 (2019): 65-93, doi:10.5406/jamerethnhist.38.2.0065.

<sup>212</sup> Ordaz, “Protesting Conditions,” 75.

immigration enforcement strategy has its sources in the broader shift of the post-Civil Rights moment's approach to crime in the 1980s and 90s, which produced a "deportation-to-prison" pipeline.<sup>213</sup>

My point in emphasizing the punitive element, however, is that this anti-immigrant punitive mentality, and its cascading effects onto the larger target group, was always intended to extend beyond the physical infrastructure of the border, and onto the very social fabric the nation. In fact, this is one of the striking implications of the Border Patrol's 1994 memorandum outlining the strategy—which, if read in its sociohistorical context, transparently lays out a genocidal plan that clearly understands its purposes in connection to the control of internal racial demography. "In protecting our borders against unlawful activities [*i.e.*, 'massive illegal entry']," the planners say, "we improve national security and protect the immigration heritage that helped to form the nation's institutions."<sup>214</sup> In other words, the planners justify PTD on the premise of the need to protect the white settler heritage ("immigration heritage" being a euphemism for white settler colonizers), to protect "the white imagined future," to—again—"secure a future for white children"—by means of producing mass immigrant death.

But this violence was never intended to remain at the border or in the Sonoran hinterlands. Buried in the "indicators of success," across the phases that the plan outlines, are a host of conditions that point to the conclusion that the strategy's success was conceived as requiring or implying that it must have a broader impact on national politics, that it would need to shape public opinion and manage social perception—in

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<sup>213</sup> Patrisia Macias-Rojas, *From Deportation to Prison: The Politics of Immigration Enforcement in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: NYU Press, 2016).

<sup>214</sup> US Border Patrol, "Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994," 2.

short, that “securing the border” required imprinting the violent character of the Border Patrol, which began, as I have already noted in chapter 1, as an explicitly white supremacist organization, onto the whole of the nation.

In my view, this is arguably *the key* aim of the strategy, since it is judged to be necessary for “securing the border”—that is, securing a white future. Peeling back its euphemisms, implicatures, omissions, and elisions, the 1994 document, in fact, outlines the preparatory phases of a genocidal moment. For among the key assumptions of the document is the idea that “the INS must maintain a multi-program perspective that includes but is not limited to strengthening control of the southwest border.”<sup>215</sup> In other words, the strategy is not just aimed at border zones, but is a comprehensive articulation of how the Border Patrol is to integrate its “vision for the future with a systematic means to achieve that vision.”<sup>216</sup> In a section titled “Where does the Strategy Take Us?,” the planners state that the purpose of strategizing at all is to travel a “well defined path leading to effective border control” that itself “sharpens the Border Patrol focus, improves public image, employee morale, and facilitates justification for allocation of resources.”<sup>217</sup> But, how can one improve public image, employee morale, and secure more resources when one is planning to create the conditions that will kill thousands?

Answer: one would need a massive public relations campaign that manufactured the fear of immigrants coupled with congressional support to secure moral legitimacy—one supplied by image after image of the migrant threat, of “hordes”, and infestations. “In order to achieve the level of border control that we determine to be

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid..

acceptable to the INS and the American public,” the planners write, “support and coordination with other INS programs and outside agencies must be maintained” in order to increase, for example, “visibility to promote public awareness.”<sup>218</sup> “Political pressure to loosen border,” the “potential for more protests against immigration policy,” “more violence at attempted entries,” an “increase in complaints (Mexico, interest groups, *etc.*),” and “improved public perception”<sup>219</sup> —all of these are projected “change conditions” or “indicators of success” that, together, imply foreknowledge on the part of the planners that there would be an increase of immigrant deaths, violence towards immigrants, but that, by working with “outside partners,” social perception would be sufficiently “managed” so that, no matter the death toll, the public would prefer this to seeing more immigrants in their neighborhoods.

A subsequent 1997 Government Accountability Office report, in an oblique admission of what deterrence will involve, notes that if the strategy is successful “abuses of aliens by INS officers” “may vary, depending on type of enforcement effort.”<sup>220</sup> Note, they do not care about stopping abuses; they are here acknowledging that they will not decrease, but “vary.” We might think of these two documents, then, as markers of the moment in which immigration enforcement, not entirely dissimilarly from the evolution of slave patrols into police, had become a matter of racial—in this case, specifically, demographic—control. They were thus harbingers of the ICE concentration camps and of Patrick Crusius.

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-2.

<sup>220</sup> Government Accountability Office, “Report to the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, and the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives; Illegal Immigration: Southwest Border Strategy Results Inconclusive; More Evaluation Needed,” 84, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/230/224958.pdf>.

#### 4. A Gendercidal Moment<sup>221</sup>

This does not yet complete the argument for PTD as preparation for genocide, but it brings us closer—and puts us now in a position to examine the gendered dimension to the dynamics of immigration enforcement, which, together with the sexualized dimensions of the narrative of Latinx threat, in my view, is as conclusive as we can get without the documented confessions of the perpetrators and planners.

At the outset, I noted that the male-selective targeting of immigration enforcement efforts has escaped the radar of many commentators. For instance, it is a fact that the vast majority of deportees and detainees are males of reproductive age. As a whole, people in ICE custody comprise, on average, a relatively young population, and 80 percent of them are men and boys.<sup>222</sup> While a lot of attention in advocacy circles is given to the category of “the family” as well as queer and trans detainees, Tanya Golash-Boza and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo have pointed out that nearly all—at least 85, but as much as 90 percent—of the 4.2 million deportations carried out between 1997 and 2012 have been working class men and most of these men have been Latinxs—Mexicans comprising the majority.<sup>223</sup>

The scale here is astonishing given that the total number of people deported before 1997 was less than 2 million. On the authors’ view, this is puzzling, however, since, originally, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, it was women who were regarded as

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<sup>221</sup> My thinking in this section of the paper is deeply indebted to and inspired by Tommy J. Curry’s work on the targeting of racialized males.

<sup>222</sup> Emily Ryo and Ian Peacock’s report for the American Immigration Council, “The Landscape of Immigration Detention in the United States,” American Immigration Council, October 21, 2019, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/landscape-immigration-detention-united-states>.

<sup>223</sup> Tanya Golash-Boza and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, “Latino Immigrant Men and the Deportation Crisis: A Gendered Racial Removal Program,” *Latino Studies* 11, no. 3 (2013): 271-292, <https://doi.org/10.1057/Ist.2013.14>, 272.

reproductive threats, and it was immigrant men who were recruited for work in the Bracero Program (1942-1964), at the expense of women. But this would not be surprising, as we'll see, if the victimhood of Mexican and Central American men and boys were taken seriously.

The authors believe that three factors have made Latinx men redundant and thus deportable—the urban criminalization of men of color, the contraction of construction and manufacturing jobs (the traditional labor markets of Latinx men), and the expansion of the service, caregiving, cleaning, and nursing sectors (the labor markets that traditionally draw immigrant women). For these reasons, they urge social scientists to investigate whether Latinx males have become disposable, since it is clear that immigration enforcement is a “gendered racial removal program” that targets them specifically.

In emphasizing the idea that there is a rupture or reversal in how white society racially codes immigrant women and not men as a reproductive threat, however, the authors have missed the homoeroticism of depictions of working class Latinx men.<sup>224</sup> As Mary Pat Brady has pointed out, the images that have circulated to construct what Leo Chavez calls the “narrative of Latinx threat” depict a kind of “heterosexual rape fantasy” in which America is simultaneously alluring and under siege. Similarly, in Sara Ahmed’s analysis of the language of the Aryan Nation’s website, she notices that “it is love for the nation that makes the white Aryans hate those whom they recognize as strangers, ...the

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<sup>224</sup> Mary Pat Brady, “The Homoerotics of Immigration Control,” *The Scholar and Feminist Online*, no. 6.3 (2008), [http://sfonline.barnard.edu/immigration/print\\_brady.htm](http://sfonline.barnard.edu/immigration/print_brady.htm)

ones who are taking away the nation and the role of the Aryans in its history, as well as their [very] future.”<sup>225</sup>

If the nation is a woman, that is, she must be defended. Indeed, the draw of a revenge fantasy is that, as in the satisfaction that can be had in some forms of anger, there is a similar sweetness in the fantasy of retaliation against the injuring party. Yet, at the same time, Brady can’t help notice something else in magazine depictions of “a man climbing through what might be an anus made from the U.S. flag” and “police groping or maybe searching men while the image itself draws our attention to the tight butts and crotches of the supposed ‘aliens.’” What this speaks in favor of is a homoerotic desire for Mexican male bodies. Nativist anti-Mexican sentiment, she concludes, is simultaneously heterosexual rape fantasy and homoerotic desire for Mexican men’s bodies, and this homophobic response “lays siege to the nation and enables the slow-motion massacre of migrants”—is it any surprise that Republican states are most inclined to search for interracial cuckold porn?<sup>226</sup>

Yet Brady’s analysis, like Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo’s, is also limited in explanatory scope because it ultimately finds it difficult to conceptualize Latinx men as entities feared as reproductive threats and a subject to specifically gendered targeting *as male*. Even at the moment in which commentators, like Leo Chavez, were emphasizing the threat posed by “Latina fertility,” though, the 1994 memorandum detailing the strategy of PTD knew very well who its targets would be. Emphasizing here, once again, that the aim of the strategy was to “protect the immigration heritage

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<sup>225</sup> Sara Ahmed, “Affective Economies,” *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 117-139, [https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2\\_79-117](https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-117), 118.

<sup>226</sup> Brian Hickey, “Fact Check: Are There More ‘Cuck’ Video Searches in Red or Blue States?,” *PhillyVoice* online, July 22, 2016, <https://www.phillyvoice.com/phub-search-red-vs-blue/>.

that helped to form the nation’s institutions,” the planners observe in a section titled “Enforcement Challenges” that the vast majority of people apprehended in prior years are poor and young (“under the age of 25”), are primarily Mexican (97% of the 1,263,490 apprehended in 1993) and—though they acknowledge it only obliquely—are largely men and boys, noting that only “twenty percent are women and children who are attempting to reach their husbands and or fathers who are already in the United States.”<sup>227</sup>

Correspondingly, a 2013 report on the recovered remains of undocumented border crossers by the Binational Migration Institute found that “the overwhelming majority (80%) of decedents were male,” they were Mexican (82%), and they were young (mean age =31).<sup>228</sup> Since 2013, the Southern Border Communities Coalition has tallied a total of 102 immigrant killings in encounters with CBP.<sup>229</sup> By my count (as they do not themselves disaggregate by gender), 65 of these people were men, 12 were women, 1 was a transwomen, and the information on the remaining 25 was, as far as I can tell, never released. Nevertheless, the ratio of male to female deaths in encounters with CBP each year skews towards a higher male death—in chronological order since 2013, the ratios are 5:0, 7:1, 9:0, 6:0, 3:2, 3:?, 5:1, 10:1, 3:6, 13:2, 1:0. In the 25 deaths reported by ICE since April 2018, the case is similar: 22 male deaths, 2 female deaths, and 1 transwoman’s death.

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<sup>227</sup> US Border Patrol, “Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994,” 2.

<sup>228</sup> Martinez, Daniel E. Reineke, Robin C., Rubio-Goldsmith, Raquel, Anderson, Bruce E., Hess, Gregory L, and Parks, Bruce O., “A Continued Humanitarian Crises on the Border: Undocumented Border Crosser Deaths Recorded by the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner 1990-2012,” Binational Migration Institute, Department of Mexican American Studies, University of Arizona (2013): 17.

<sup>229</sup> “Deaths by Border Patrol,” Southern Border Communities Coalition, accessed April 23, 2020, [https://www.southernborder.org/deaths\\_by\\_border\\_patrol](https://www.southernborder.org/deaths_by_border_patrol).

Pace Brady, then, this is not simply a homophobic response to a homoerotic portrayal of immigrants. If it is true this society is structured by super-ordinate aims that are inherently genocidal—if, as I have shown, racial demography is a subject of such white disquiet that the attitudes discovered in the racial shift research mirror the eugenic and white power conspiracy theories—we should expect there to be a serious concern about how subordinate males threaten white endogamy: “you will not replace us” is gendered—the “us,” in the white nationalist mind, are white men.

One key reason for this is premised on a myth about basic male physiology. There is, as in Tommy Curry points out in his analysis of Black male victimization, a simple physiological arithmetic, according to which a man can have a considerably greater number of offspring than a woman, since (among other factors) a woman has the highest chance to reproduce for a considerably smaller fraction of her lifetime, and she can only have (roughly) one pregnancy per year. I say this is a myth because the idea has been shown to be exaggerated.<sup>230</sup> But this has not stopped it from clearly having resonance with today’s would-be genocidaires: Dylann Roof’s final words before gunning down nine churchgoers in Charleston were, after all, “You rape our women and you are taking over our country”<sup>231</sup>—words that, while directed at Black people, sound a clear resemblance to Huntingtonian discourse about Mexican fecundity. Similarly, in his manifesto, Patrick Crusius took himself to be a kind of martyr attempting to stop the “great replacement.”

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<sup>230</sup> Dorothy Einon, “How Many Children Can One Man Have?,” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 19, no. 6 (1998): 413–426, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1090-5138\(98\)00026-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1090-5138(98)00026-9).

<sup>231</sup> Laura Flanders, “I Am Not Dylann Roof’s Woman,” Truthout, July 1, 2015, <https://truthout.org/audio/i-am-not-dylann-roof-s-woman/>.

Accustomed as we are to thinking women—particularly women of color—would be the most vulnerable to harms, this dynamic might be confounding. Under the rubric of genocide studies, however, it follows an established pattern of how a population is prepared to administer and countenance atrocity. As genocide scholar Adam Jones has argued, both historically and presently, the most vulnerable and consistently targeted group in situations of war and genocide—immigration enforcement being, as Doug Massey has put it, a form of low intensity warfare—“is non-combatant men of ‘battle age,’ roughly 15 to 55 years old.”<sup>232</sup> Citing the Jamaican scholar Errol Miller, he observes that subordinate males “not covered by the bonds of kinship... are nearly universally perceived as the group posing the greatest danger to the conquering force, and are the group most likely to have the repressive apparatus of the state directed against them.”<sup>233</sup>

Of particular interest in the context of immigration enforcement as a deterrent—and, thus, as a mode of punishment—is the idea Jones borrows from Vahakn Dadrian of *retributive genocide*, a limited form of genocidal violence that uses “localized atrocities” to mete out punishment to a segment of a population regarded as threatening to the dominant group.<sup>234</sup> Jones observes that the Armenian genocide began with the “emasculatation” of the target group. “Once the ‘battle-age’ Armenian males swept up in military conscription had been exterminated,” he writes, “a similar cull of remaining community males was carried out *before* the wider program of deportation was

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<sup>232</sup> Adam Jones, “Gendercide and Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, no. 2 (2000): pp. 185-211, <https://doi.org/10.1080/713677599>, 191.

<sup>233</sup> Miller qtd. In Jones, “Genocide and Gendercide,” 186-7.

<sup>234</sup> Vahakn Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 207.

effected.”<sup>235</sup> Similarly, during the Jewish holocaust, *Einsatzgruppen* officers needed to psychologically prepare and habituate their men into killing women and children by first having them kill men. Quoting Daniel Goldhagen, Jones points out that, by first shooting primarily teenage and adult Jewish males, Nazi soldiers “could believe that they were selectively killing the most dangerous Jews, which was a measure that they could conceive to be reasonable for this apocalyptic war. Once the men became used to slaughtering Jews on this sex-selective and smaller scale, the officers could more easily expand the scope and size of the killing operations.”<sup>236</sup>

Now notice that this is the very same kind of anticipatory logic described in PTD’s admission that its goal was to protect its white “immigration heritage” by means of producing mass death of male immigrants. As a pre-emptive mechanism, this sort of gender-selective killing, on Jones’ view, can act as kind of “tripwire or harbinger” to a fuller scale “root and branch” genocide.<sup>237</sup>

Of course, I am not saying what we are seeing is a root and branch genocide, but certainly the massive sequestration and abuses of immigrants in ICE facilities, the family separation policies, even the open killing of young men and women like Claudia Patricia, required a preparatory phase of dehumanization, part of which was provided by the normalization of male migrant deaths in the desert and the amplification of the narrative of Latinx threat—the latter being pursued so implacably that it quickly stopped mattering what was said of immigrants. “We no longer paid heed to what we said,” a Rwandan génocidaire has said of the genocidal speech in Rwanda; “We could toss

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<sup>235</sup> Jones, “Genocide and Gendercide,” 202.

<sup>236</sup> Goldhagen, qtd. In *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>237</sup> Jones, “Genocide and Gendercide,” 201.

around awful words without awful thoughts... The Tutsis did not even get very upset. I mean, they didn't draw apart because of those unfortunate discussions."<sup>238</sup> Indeed, before the killings started, "we could fool around among ourselves and say we were going to kill them all, and the next moment we would join them to share some work or a bottle. Jokes and threats were mixed together... Since then we have seen: those words brought on grave consequences."

All of this means, then, that the case of Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzalez with which I began is not representative in terms of gender, but what I am arguing is that her case is still not understandable without the gender variable since, as Adam Jones has argued, gender-selective killing of out-group males is precisely the vanguard that creates the desensitization that can lead to atrocities of a wider scope. The end result, as we have seen, is Patrick Crusius who, when he launched his genocidal attack against Mexicans in El Paso, justified it in his manifesto by invoking the white genocide/Latinx Threat Narrative. Since "2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Hispanics form interracial unions at much higher rates than average," he wrote, "it is not cowardly to pick low hanging fruit." In saying this and going on to kill 26 people, a great number of whom were elders and one of whom was a teenager, he was not only extending the logic of PTD, but he understood that its true underlying significance of anticipatory genocide.

## **5. Conclusion**

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<sup>238</sup> Léopold Twagirayezu qtd. In Lynne Tirrel, "Genocidal Language Games," in *Speech and Harm: Controversies over Free Speech* edited by Mary Kate McGowan and Ishani Maitra (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 202.

Was the DHS bulletin, then, a dogwhistle? After what I have said, it should be clear that dismissing this possibility is too quick. But, even more so, it should be clear that getting hung-up on that kind of question is a distraction. The evidence is out in the open, and can be apprehended with minimal speculation. At the end of the day, it doesn't even matter if it is a dogwhistle. The sentiment expressed in the 14 Words and the bulletin are the same, whether the latter directly references the other or not. And while the roots of this sentiment reach much deeper than the 1980s and 90s, what Lane had done in his manifesto was simply to capture, in concentrated form, a widespread white moral panic of demographic collapse that predated him, that has never gone away, and that now animates white fears, both liberal and conservative—for, we would be careless to forget that Operation Gatekeeper, the pilot program of PTD, was created under the Clinton administration.

Importantly, what I have said here has important implications for how we think about race and race relations in the US. For many decades, the theorization of institutional racism in the U.S. has resulted in an abstraction called “white supremacy” that is discussed as a kind of a homogenous structure of oppression, conceived as an institutional, not individual, form of racism. But the reality is far more terrifying in that we find forms of racial thinking in ordinary white people that are structurally analogous to the views of eugenicist at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century—which in turn have been mainstreamed and “koshered” by the likes of political thinkers like Samuel Huntington in order to provide ideological cover for the gendercidal and genocidal policies of immigration enforcement agencies. This calls for a rethinking of white political power, not as an abstraction, but as a formation of concrete relations that whites have

established in order to secure something very like the eugenicist vision of racial/colonial aristocracy destined to be served by racial subordinates in perpetuity: “Whiteness,” as DuBois well-knew, “is the ownership of the Earth forever and ever, amen!”

Keeping in mind that at least half of the Border Patrol is Latinxs, and that at least 30 percent of ICE agents are Latinxs, this finding also calls on us to reckon with the ways that white power incorporates elements of these subordinates into functional appendages in the enforcement of the racial order—white power’s “extended phenotype,” if you like. Especially as we wade deeper into the Donald Trump presidency, and the prospect looms of a Trump reelection, it is crucial to understand that, beyond its sheer infrastructure, the moral and ideological preparation for atrocity was always the intention of PTD. Looking back, the warnings were always there. It is by way of missing these signs that we have arrived, as Maya Angelou put it, “so late and lonely to this place.”

## **Chapter 3. A New Dirty War**

### **1. Prologue: The Horror of Torture**

Writing about torture, the Auschwitz survivor and Belgian resistance fighter Jean Améry has written that there are horrors—and this is one of them—that can never be grasped purely intellectually without direct experience. “Torture,” Améry says, “is the most horrible event a human being can retain within himself;” to communicate its pain, one would have to become a torturer oneself. Only in torture, he says, is one “allowed” to experience a living death—what he describes as the “transformation of the person into flesh.” In the experience of torture, which Améry defines by the fact that “there can be no defense” against it and that “no helping hand will ward [it] off,” “a part of our life ends and it can never again be revived.” “It is,” he says, “like a rape, a sexual act without the consent of one of the two partners.” That thing which is lost, Améry then suggests, may constitute what people mean when they speak of “human dignity”—and alongside it dies our “trust in the world.”

One of the twin siblings of extermination across many genocides has been torture, a fact that we cannot omit in this discussion. The legal theorist, Robert M. Cover, already suggested as much when he wrote that, to inflict this kind of pain, the pain of torture, is “to destroy the victim’s normative world and capacity to create shared realities.” Citing the work of Elaine Scarry, he observed in his essay “Violence and the Word” that, in an interrogation, the interrogation itself “is rarely designed to elicit information,” but is instead just another form of torture. The interrogation itself, he says, “is designed to demonstrate the end of the normative world of the victim—the end of what the victim values, the end of the bonds that constitute the community in which the

values are grounded.” This is also why, in cases of interrogation, “torturers almost always require betrayal—a demonstration that the victim’s intangible normative world has been crushed by the material reality of pain and its extension, fear.” In the end, however, “the torturer and victim do end up creating their own terrible ‘world,’ but this world derives its meaning from being imposed upon the ashes of another. The logic of that world is complete domination, though the objective may never be realized.”

In one of the most remarkable pieces of anti-war music, “The Electrician” by The Walker Brothers, singer Scott Walker attempts precisely to capture the process by which the prisoner’s normative world is destroyed and a new normative order of domination is erected upon it. In the song, a low-lit room sets the context for the “relationship” between a CIA torturer and a political dissident in Cold War Latin America.

The structure of the song itself is a kind of “trptych,” the center of which is a glowing orchestral section, preceded and followed by a slow, haunting drone with sinister strings and parallel vocal sections—interrupted only by an emotional bridge from the first segment of the triptych to the orchestral centerpiece. The lyrics themselves alternate between the sadistic homoerotic narration or speech of the torturer (“Baby, its slow/ When lights go low/ There’s no help no”) and the ecstatic suicidal rebellion of the prisoner who calls for and hopes that, whatever mutilation comes next, it will mean his own death and liberation. In the bridge from the first part of the triptych to the orchestral section—the most exhilarating part of the song—Walker sings the part of the prisoner:

He’s drilling through the Spiritus Sanctus tonight  
Through the dark hip falls  
Screaming, “Oh, you mambos  
Kill me and kill me and kill me.”

—In response to which, the torturer rejoices:

If I jerk the handle  
You'll die in your dreams  
If I jerk the handle, jerk the handle  
You'll thrill me and thrill me and thrill me.

What's astonishing about the song is how perfectly it maps on to Jean Améry's description of torture, even portraying the homoerotic dimensions of the torture of male captives. When the torturer sings, "Baby, it's slo-ow/ When lights go lo-ow/ There's no help no-oh," we are to understand one of the key elements of torture, for Améry, has been triggered: the act of breaking apart the relations that affixed the prisoner to the normative order of human beings and the reconstruction of new relations according to which he is no longer a man, but a thing, mere meat, flesh.

Similarly, when the torturer drills through the prisoner's hip, Walker is alerting us to the fact he is "drilling through the Spiritus Sanctus," through the very dignity of the person, and with this the very concept that God is real and good. It is, in short, an assault on the prisoner's trust in the world.

The structure of the song and its melodic transitions is intended to convey something like the anticipative emotions that are typically associated with youthful love and longing that is too powerful to be satiated. This is the hunger of the torturer for the flesh of the prisoner. At the precise moment at which this action dies down—the torturer, as the lyrics suggest, appearing to sexually climax as the prisoner curses him and asks for death—the orchestral section sweeps into the composition: it is a new beginning, the ephemeral birth "their own terrible 'world'." The song then reverts back to the dark, droning synth, accompanied by the few initial lines of the first section of the triptych: "Baby, it's slo-ow/ When lights go lo-ow/ There's no help no-oh."

The structure of the song thus allow us, the listeners, to exit the horror of this world whose “logic is complete domination,” leaving the torturer and his prisoner behind; a world that the victim, as Améry, who would himself eventually commit suicide, can never leave—for in that “transformation of the person into flesh” which torture brings about, that part of our life that “ends and can never again be revived,” remains there, in that place.

**2. “... she opened her mouth and gasped for air. It took her at least several minutes to die.”**

I began the introduction to this essay with an extended discussion of the execution of Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzalez. I did this because I understand the moment that I found out about her killing as the moment which opened up this terrifying vision of social reality to me which I have here tried to articulate. Part of what makes it terrifying, however, is the brute mode of her death.

It will be recalled here how court documents describe Claudia Patricia’s final moments. “As Claudia lay dying,” the brief says, “she opened her mouth and gasped for air. It took her at least several minutes to die.” Abbreviated in just these two sentences is an experience, however, that is extremely difficult to contemplate, that words will never be able to describe, that the mind even recoils—balks—at the mere attempt to imagine. If Améry is right, understanding and communicating that violence will always be outside of the grasp of the capacities of the mind: Claudia Patricia died asphyxiating after her body had been irreparably maimed. It is awful to even write this, and I believe it may be harmful (to myself, to others?) to write those words. But these were her final

moments of consciousness—this is the evil that must be faced, that cannot now be looked away from, for it is an evil done in the name of this nation.

That unthinkable experience is not a unique one, however. Cruz Velazquez Acevedo,<sup>239</sup> a 16-year-old boy, was coaxed into drinking lethal doses of liquid meth by CBP and subsequently died of acute methamphetamine intoxication. 21-year-old Gustavo Antonio Vásquez Chaj<sup>240</sup>, similarly, died of pneumonia after being kept for several days in a refrigerated cell, wet and unclothed. In their final moments of desperation, too, an ever<sup>241</sup> increasing<sup>242</sup> in<sup>243</sup> number<sup>244</sup> of immigrants have been driven to suicide in ICE facilities. Away from the borderlands, across the country, meanwhile, countless Black men—men like George Floyd, Eric Garner, and Freddie Gray—are being killed in a similar manner, and at much higher rates, by both state and non-state actors—the *primary* genocide/gendercide underway in America today.

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<sup>239</sup> Kristine Phillips, “Video Shows U.S. Border Officers Telling Mexican Teen to Drink the Liquid Meth That Killed Him,” *The Washington Post* (WP Company, April 28, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/07/29/video-shows-u-s-border-officers-telling-mexican-teen-to-drink-the-liquid-meth-that-killed-him/>.

<sup>240</sup> Carlos Ventura, “Familia Acusa a Migración De EE. UU. Por Muerte De Quetzalteco,” *Prensa Libre*, August 20, 2014, <https://www.prensalibre.com/ciudades/quetzaltenango/joven-muere-neumonia-xela-0-1146485399/>.

<sup>241</sup> Robin Urevich, “Newly Released Documents Reveal Mounting Chaos and Abuse at a Troubled ICE Detention Center,” *Fast Company* (Fast Company, January 29, 2019), <https://www.fastcompany.com/90298739/newly-released-documents-reveal-mounting-chaos-and-abuse-at-a-troubled-ice-detention-center>.

<sup>242</sup> Joseph Luiz, “Immigrant at Mesa Verde ICE Detention Center Dies by Suicide,” *KGET 17* (KGET 17, May 19, 2020), <https://www.kget.com/news/local-news/immigrant-at-mesa-verde-ice-detention-center-dies-by-suicide/>.

<sup>243</sup> Joe Jurado, “During the Last 4 Months, 3 People Have Committed Suicide in ICE Custody,” *The Root* (The Root, January 30, 2020), <https://www.theroot.com/during-the-last-4-months-3-people-have-committed-suici-1841313819>.

<sup>244</sup> Justin Rohrlich and Zoë Schlanger, “‘Bodies and Minds Are Breaking down’: Inside US Border Agency’s Suicide Crisis,” *Quartz* (Quartz, July 2, 2019), <https://qz.com/1656790/inside-the-us-border-agencys-suicide-crisis/>.

Asphyxiation, literal and figurative; torture<sup>245</sup>, physical and mental; genocide, cultural and biological; these are all are names for the fates of peoples the US has regarded as “terrorists” and as “threats” to its power both domestically and abroad, and it is a detail about Claudia Patricia’s death—her asphyxiation—that can only be dismissed as coincidental if it wasn’t a fact that Indigenous immigrants from the Guatemalan highlands, like her, are fleeing the circumstances created by US counterinsurgency and economic terror<sup>246</sup> that produced regimes of torture, of genocide, in Latin America, on a massive scale. “To tell the story of the United States,” my colleague Stephanie Rivera-Berruz<sup>247</sup> has written, “is to tell a story of many asphyxiations.” To be sure, she is speaking of the anti-Black violence of the state. But this story is not restricted to the domestic security forces who kill Black people on whim—it is the story of how the US’s hemispheric and global designs as an empire have created “relays,” “feedback loops,” and aftershocks across the world.

In this third chapter, I aim to follow the lead of Rivera-Berruz in thinking of the confluence of asphyxiation and mutilation by, first, exploring torture and asphyxiation as “mnemonics” for how to understand American imperialism. Because of the nature of these reflections, I caution, however, that what I have to say will be more suggestive of lines of further inquiry than a definitive statement. What I am willing to stake a claim on, however, is that deaths like those of Claudia Patricia, as well as the more frequent and

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<sup>245</sup> Jake Johnson, “Lawsuit on Behalf of 55,000 Migrants Accuses Trump Administration of Torture in ICE Detention Centers,” Common Dreams, August 20, 2019, <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/08/20/lawsuit-behalf-55000-migrants-accuses-trump-administration-torture-ice-detention>.

<sup>246</sup> gabriel m, “The U.S. Roots of the Central American Immigrant Influx,” NACLA, accessed September 2, 2020, <https://nacla.org/blog/2014/7/8/us-roots-central-american-immigrant-influx>.

<sup>247</sup> Dr. Stephanie Rivera Berruz, “The Demand for Breath: Milwaukee, Wisconsin,” Medium (Medium, June 5, 2020), <https://medium.com/@dr.srb/the-demand-for-breath-milwaukee-wisconsin-d9258fb801b>.

voluminous killings of Black men—constitute not only genocide, but a systematized form of torture intended to destabilize the populations it targets as a method of racial control. The lynchpin for understanding both, I am suggesting here, is to be found in the linkages between American settler imperialism and generalized political repression—though I will not here have the space to provide a full account of these connections.

I will proceed by considering the concept of torture and examining the limitations of the legal notion, and reconstructing the moral notion of torture that is useful for thinking about it in the context of genocide. I then place torture within the long *durée* of American imperialism and the systems of torture and murder it has cultivated abroad, explaining some ways in which this has been co-constituted with process in the domestic politics of the US. I explore two cases of genocidal torture in the US: the violence against Black men and I advance the argument that Prevention through Deterrence’s punitive character makes it also a machine of genocidal torture. I conclude picking up a loose end pertaining to how the argument here fits within the framework of white supremacy that I began to develop in the preceding chapter.

### **3. Torture: Legal and Moral**

Now, in speaking of torture, I am speaking of the moral fact, not of the legal doctrine. The legal doctrine of torture, like that of genocide, is inadequate in settler colonial contexts. According to UN Convention, torture is any act undertaken by an agent of the state or any person acting in an “official capacity” by which “severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as”: (i) extracting information, (ii) punishment, (iii) intimidation, and (iv) discrimination.

The key element of the Convention is as follows. Pain and suffering (including mental pain) intentionally or deliberately inflicted for any of the foregoing purposes makes it an act of torture under international law, *but only when* it is inflicted “by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.”

Not included in this definition, therefore, is “pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in, or incidental to, lawful sanctions.” But as I have already shown in the prior chapter, the distinction between informal and formal actors has little meaning in settler colonial contexts, because both formal and informal violence join hands in the enforcement of racial order—racialized police violence, furthermore, *just is* “suffering arising only from, inherent in, or incidental to, lawful sanction.” The two restrictions in the UN definition of torture thus evidence the limits of international law when it comes to racialized evil, and it speaks in favor of a need to go beyond the politicized international conventions of powerful states.

What does remain useful in the UN Convention definition of torture, in terms of the moral argument, however, is the punitive hallmark it describes—the point at which the definition touches down with what is essential in both Cover’s and Améry’s discussion of torture. For in contexts of war and genocide, in accordance with Dadrian’s notion of anticipatory violence, one thing that is clear about killing and torture is that it not only seeks to punish the individual who is tortured or killed, but that this act itself is a sanction against the group who is regarded as a threat.

But immigration policies, as I’ve already noted in the preceding chapter, do fit this structure since they are intended to sanction not only individual migrants seeking

entrance into the US, they are sanctions against the whole population for daring to hope for a better life—a life that would, again, demographically threaten the dominance of whites. The act of sequestration of immigrants in ICE facilities, of stripping them naked and tossing them into cold isolation cells, of maiming them, laughing at their suffering, of elaborating euphemisms (“tonks”) which directly communicate their violability, etc.—these are all part and parcel to the process of the cultural diffusion of the logic of immigration enforcement onto the everyday life of the country. But now we can see that the sanction itself is aimed not only at destroying “the victim’s normative world and capacity to create shared realities,” but that, in doing so, it aims to facilitate the removal of the psychologically unbearable presence of immigrants as a sexualized “threat.” “The cruelty,” Adam Serwer<sup>248</sup> astutely observed, “is the point.”

That cruelty, that violence, reveals that the traditional image of torture as a form of interrogation obscures the reality that torture abounds in America’s internal management of its racial populations, as well as how it has traditionally dealt with subject peoples’ abroad. It is therefore meaningful, and cannot be overemphasized, that Claudia Patricia, that Vasquez Chaj, die gasping for air. Carrying the heavy burden of genocide<sup>249</sup> from their parents’ and grandparents’ generations, they’d left Guatemala only to be ensnared in yet another “hub” in the global web of American power.

#### **4. The Global Anticommunist Imperial Spider**

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<sup>248</sup> Adam Serwer, “The Cruelty Is the Point,” *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, October 18, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/the-cruelty-is-the-point/572104/>.

<sup>249</sup> Alison Crosby, M. Brinton Lykes, and Brisna Caxaj, “Carrying a Heavy Load: Mayan Women’s Understandings of Reparation in the Aftermath of Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 18, no. 2-3 (2016): pp. 265-283, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2016.1186952>.

It is no coincidence—in fact, it’s retrospectively uncanny—therefore, that Naomi Klein described the neoliberal Shock Doctrine<sup>250</sup> as the economic parallel to physical torture. Genocidal violence, domestic and international, is bound together by US imperial policies. The dynamic of immigration enforcement, in particular, illustrates, as Samir Ashar and Amna Akbar point out, “how violence in the Global North extends the dominance of white capitalism over [B]rown and [B]lack bodies—wherever they are—and how neo-colonial logics in the Global South can be replicated and reinvigorated everywhere.” For the “darker” races of the Global South, just as those in the domestic colonies of the North, there is no “sanctuary” from the lethal forces of global white power. Thus, when in 2015 Barack Obama asserted<sup>251</sup> that the U.S. security state had global jurisdiction, he was incidentally describing what was already the situation of Latin American immigrants—and, we could add, of the Black urban poor: “If you threaten America, you will find no safe haven.”

“To tell the story of the United States,” Rivera-Berruz said, is indeed “to tell a story of many asphyxiations.” But, as I added, this story is not restricted to domestic security forces and includes the US’s hemispheric and global designs. In *The Jakarta Method*, Vincent Bevins documents<sup>252</sup> how torture, mass murder, and political disappearance were unleashed by the US on Indonesia, practices which were to be exported<sup>253</sup> later to Latin America as part of a process that created a global network of

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<sup>250</sup> John Gray, “Review: The Shock Doctrine by Naomi Klein,” *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, September 15, 2007), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/sep/15/politics>.

<sup>251</sup> Amelia Mae Wolf and Micah Zenko, “The Myth of the Terrorist Safe Haven,” *Foreign Policy*, January 26, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/01/26/al-qaeda-islamic-state-myth-of-the-terrorist-safe-haven/>.

<sup>252</sup> Vincent Bevins, *The Jakarta Method: Washington's Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program That Shaped Our World* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, Hachette Book Group, 2020).

<sup>253</sup> Philip Luke Johnson, “The Jakarta Method Comes to Latin America (Review),” *NACLA*, May 27, 2020, <https://nacla.org/news/2020/05/27/jakarta-method-review>.

anticommunist elimination. In almost every place in the world where support of democratic reform (called communism by the Americans) has been widespread enough, the US has engineered the society-wide—even continent-wide—repression of ordinary people to stamp it out and ensure it does not return. In Indonesia, the CIA-backed coup engineered the mass murder, disappearance, and torture of more than 1 million people. In Chile, 50,000 were killed, 30,000 disappeared. In Guatemala, 166,000 Maya people alone were killed or disappeared. These figures, like the figures of the dead and disappeared immigrants in the desert, are based just on the cases that are known.

But we don't have to go abroad to for such examples. The US has run its own “low intensity” Dirty Wars for decades. In *Empire's Workshop* Greg Grandin argues that the US and its allies' experiments in political and economic terror in Latin America were a rehearsal for global expansion *as well as* a means by which to create a similar situation *inside* the United States. After the US supported Operation Condor in South America under the administration of Richard Nixon, it also made it very clear in its reaction<sup>254</sup> to the Pinochet regime's assassination of Orlando Letelier on American soil that it did not want Pinochet and his accomplices to expand to the United States, where the Americans were running their own an internal repression<sup>255</sup> programs, separate from the external ones—which were, after all, “labs” for experimentation. As early as

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<sup>254</sup> “Ghosts of Sheridan Circle: How a Washington Assassination Brought Pinochet's Terror State to Justice,” *ReVista Harvard Review of Latin America*, (2019), <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/ghosts-sheridan-circle-how-washington-assassination-brought-pinochet's-terror-state>.

<sup>255</sup> Rob Urie, “Police Killings Are a Political Tactic,” CounterPunch.org, June 15, 2020, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/06/15/police-killings-are-a-political-tactic/>.

With respect to the border zones, Greg Grandin observes<sup>256</sup> that “The history of that border, as it moved first from the Mississippi, then to the Sabine and Red Rivers, and finally to the Rio Grande and Pacific,” “as it passed over Native American homelands and large swaths of Spanish and Mexican territory,” “is a history of nearly unimaginable terror and grief, land theft, ethnic cleansing, forced marches, concentrated resettlement, war, torture, and rape.” As Sameer Ashar and Amna Akbar<sup>257</sup> remark, “the Border Patrol was created less than one hundred years ago, after the formal end of enslavement and colonialism, and the continued expansion of the United States into new territories.” Since then, “immigration enforcement has subsequently merged with other projects of racial subordination, such as the Wars on Drugs and Terror.” With the criminalization of the migrant as “illegal,” therefore, “immigration enforcement... emerged as a post-colonial tool in white settler nations like the United States and Canada as a way to limit and exclude the arrival of former colonial subjects.”

There is a nexus here where American settler-imperialism, internal racial repression, the war on immigrants, and its external “Dirty Wars” meet—and what connects them, I suggest, is the sort of racial control I discussed in the preceding chapter. But these distinct processes are rarely<sup>258</sup> investigated, or conceived of, as a single process in the academy—the connection does not occur, for instance, in the emerging literature on the global Cold War<sup>259</sup>—and American internal repression is

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<sup>256</sup> Greg Grandin, “American Extremism Has Always Flowed from the Border,” *Boston Review*, January 9, 2019, <http://bostonreview.net/politics/greg-grandin-american-extremism-has-always-flowed-border>.

<sup>257</sup> Sameer Ashar and Amna Akbar, “The Political Economy of Immigration Enforcement: Part I,” LPE Project, June 6, 2018, <https://lpeblog.org/2018/06/06/the-political-economy-of-immigration-enforcement-part-i/>.

<sup>258</sup> Kojo Koram, “The War on Drugs and the Global Colour Line,” 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvdmwxn7>.

<sup>259</sup> Odd Arne Westad, “The Global Cold War,” 2005, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511817991>.

certainly never labeled a “Dirty War.” Yet both emerged<sup>260</sup> from the same toxic compost of racism, white settler nationalism, and federal countersubversion. America’s settler-imperial projects has thus created “relays” and “feedback loops” across the world—some of whose reverberations now come back to haunt the US in its moment of danger, as both state and non-state forces coalesce around an eliminatory id squarely aimed at Black protestors and their allies.

The global anticommunist spider web<sup>261</sup>—the informal network of global anticommunist repression—applied itself universally, not just in the peripheries of empire, implying, as Black radicals like Assata Shakur and George Jackson well knew, that the US waged its own domestic “Dirty War.” COINTELPRO repression of Black, Chicano, Native, and Puerto Rican radicals in the US, and the later, more general, racial repression of Black and Brown communities with the War on Drugs, occurred in concert with these proxy wars and wars of containment. The threat of their return, therefore, has never gone away, and, since at least the Reagan era, they have expanded to include a kind of low-intensity war against Latin American immigrants—and, now, in the after math of 9/11, a global War on Terror.

Currently, there are at least 54 nominally “visible” political prisoners from what Joy James has called “The Revolutionary Period,” which spanned from the late 1950s-early 1970s. During that time COINTELPRO killed at least 28 Black Panther Party members and imprisoned another 750 more. While the lethality was always reserved for

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<sup>260</sup> Charisse Burden-Stelly, “Constructing Deportable Subjectivity: Antiforeignness, Antiradicalism, and Antiracism during the McCarthyist Structure of Feeling,” *Souls* 19, no. 3 (2017): pp. 342-358, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999949.2017.1389626>.

<sup>261</sup> Nick Fischer, *Spider Web: the Birth of American Anticommunism* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

Black revolutionaries, there was also surveillance, infiltration, and imprisonment of Chicano, Native and Puerto Rican radicals.

At the end of that era, The War on Drugs and the war on immigrants—and later even the war on terror—would replace the old rationales (of anti-communism) for domestic racial repression. But this was never really about crime, or terrorism, it was about controlling and destabilizing populations deemed a threat to global white power and, as a result, there are hundreds of thousands, particularly racialized males, in prison for this; and there have been millions, particularly Mexican males, deported for this. Of course, there is also the little matter of torture of “terrorists” in Guantanamo Bay.

Nothing perhaps better illustrates the “relays” and “feedback loops” than the recent assassination of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis. In the first place, we can’t allow ourselves to forget, as the comedian Dave Chappelle has movingly emphasized, that Mr. Floyd was asphyxiated by Chauvin for 8 minutes and 46 seconds<sup>262</sup> before he died. What’s significant about Chappelle’s statement on Mr. Floyd’s killing is how effectively it dislodges our stereotypical association of torture with interrogation, and makes evident that, in settler/slaver contexts, it is perhaps the *primary* mode that retributive genocide takes, given that the primary target is typically a Black male. Because this is so important to understand, I quote Chappelle’s monologue here at length:

This man [Chauvin] kneeled on his neck *for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Can you imagine* that?! This kid thought he was gonna die; he *knew* he was gonna die. He called for his mother. He called for his *dead* mother. I’ve only seen that one other time in my

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<sup>262</sup> (June 6, 2020).

life: my father, on his death bed, called for his grandmother. When I watched that tape, I understood this man knew he was gonna die.

And people watched it; people filmed it. And for some reason I still don't understand why all these fucken police have their hands in their pockets! *Who are you talking to? What are you signifying* that you can kneel on a man's neck for *8 minutes and 46 seconds* and feel like you wouldn't get the wrath of god? That's what is happening right now. It's not for a single cop; it is for *all of it*. Fucking *all of it*.

Like Jean Améry, Chappelle straight away asks us to contemplate the unthinkability of the horror of torture. This is not the fanciful notion of the “banality of evil” which Hannah Arendt describes.

As I discussed in chapter 1, Améry's key observation is that evil, like torture, cannot be entirely grasped outside of its concrete specificity. Arendt “knew the enemy of mankind only from hearsay, saw him only through the glass cage,” he said. Real evil, on Améry's view, is never banal because it is not a part of the ordinary—it “overlays and exceeds” the ordinary—transforms the ordinary in unimaginable horror.

Dave Chappelle, similarly, isn't talking about the banality of the evil—some event which can be explained by the unremarkable fact of “widespread implicit bias,” say. At the same time, what he does say resists being assimilated entirely into something like Améry's analysis. This is because what he says goes well beyond one of Améry's definitional element of torture, that it destroys one's “trust in the world.” It also goes beyond something like Cover's element, that torture is intended to demonstrate “the end of the normative world of the victim.” Chappelle's analysis, I suggest, speaks to the special status of anti-Black male violence.

This can be seen by considering Améry's definition of "trust in the world," by which he refers to a set of background of expectations and beliefs that the world is reliable—most importantly, that other people will respect "the boundaries of my body" and thus also "the boundaries of my self." "At the first blow," he thinks, "this trust in the world breaks down"—"the other person, *opposite* whom I exist physically in the world and *with* whom I can exist only as long as he does not touch my skin surface as border, forces his own corporeality on me with the first blow. He is on me and thereby destroys me."

This is cannot be true, however, for a social group—Black men—that has strong reason not to have trust in the world in the first place. This is why, as I said in chapter 1, racialized evil in settler contexts not only exceeds and overlays the ordinary, but *precedes* it. What is transferable from the Améry experience is the homoeroticism of the violation—the act, not so much of placing the knee on the victim's neck, but its implacable temporal extension, its brutal and unrelenting insistence—an insatiable desire for the victim's flesh like that described in Walker's song. But by addressing the act to the public—in his gesture and posture—Chauvin was implicitly revealing that they were, as it were, always already participants in the spectacle, as in the lynching's of old. Evil here is not obvious, it's not boring; it "overlays and exceeds" and precedes the ordinariness of Derek Chauvin's ordinary face, which did not become, but always already was a "Gestapo face"—evil here was present in public, it walks among the public. The public wears a Gestapo face.

The same is true, again, of the Cover element. In the act of killing a Black man via torture—suffering, you will notice, "arising only from, inherent in, or incidental to,

lawful sanction” and inflicted by “a public official... acting in an official capacity”—the purpose is different than to “end the normative world of the victim” and thus create a little world of domination between the victim and perpetrator—that world already exists, or, at least, there is a propensity in the social ecology to, wormhole-like, open up and devour Black men whole. The violence is not intended to establish the fact that the victim is *violable*, that he has no recourse to self-defense, no appeal to passersby. This is already given. The purpose is to maintain it as given.

The purpose of a vulgar display of power (the hands in the pockets) like Chauvin’s is to show that he, as a cop—as an enforcer of the racial order—had the capacity and willingness kill, that if *you, too*, viewer, passerby, get in the way, *you, too*, will be helpless, no one will come, nothing will stop him, and he can reliably expect no repercussions. Chauvin’s display was a signal not only that Mr. Floyd did not belong to the order of “the human,” it was also a sanction, an example set, against Black men as a whole.

In that respect, there is an aspect of Cover’s element that is helpful for this case, contained in the idea that torture breaks apart the relations that hold a person fast to his social world. The difference here, though, is that the act is a form of psychological warfare, not against the person, but the social group to which he belongs. It is a way of destabilizing social relations, through the creation of group trauma, fear, and a sense of helplessness. In this way, it can be seen as sharing the hallmarks of counterinsurgent violence in the Third World—disappearances, for instance, being a technology specifically designed to create paralysis. The difference here, however, is that in targeting racial populations, it satisfies as a method of destabilizing the population.

This brings us to the connection of this case, and of domestic forms of racial torture, to American empire. In all the protesting and online chatter that has erupted in the wake of this killing, what has been lost is precisely the fact *it is* directly connected to American imperialism abroad. Writing about U.S.-backed “anti-drug” military operations in Colombia, Thomas Power<sup>263</sup> points out, incidentally, that “Derek Chauvin, the police officer who murdered George Floyd, served at Fort Benning<sup>264</sup> in the 1990s” as a military police officer. But Fort Benning, named after Confederate general Henry Benning, also houses the School of the Americas/WHINSEC<sup>265</sup>, a military academy that has trained Latin American military officers for generations in counterinsurgency tactics and torture<sup>266</sup>. As Power writes, it is “the undercurrent of racism in the U.S. military and policing [that] connects both North and South at Fort Benning. Immigration and Customs Enforcement also trains<sup>267</sup> there.”

Incredibly, here we have a direct connection between torture, counterinsurgency abroad and racial repression in the domestic sphere. But this should not be surprising given the fact that deterrence, which was always the practice, if it wasn’t the explicit policy, of U.S. foreign affairs, has become the overarching language of the criminal law, and of immigration enforcement. So, while the dynamics at play in anti-Black gendercide have different sources, and carry a distinct lethality in the domestic arena,

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<sup>263</sup> Thomas Power, “Colombians Question Deployment of U.S. Security Forces,” June 30, 2020, <https://nacla.org/news/2020/06/29/colombia-us-security-forces>.

<sup>264</sup> Bernard Condon, Todd Richmond, and Michael R. Sisak, “What to Know about 4 Officers Charged in George Floyd’s Death,” ABC7 New York (WABC-TV, June 3, 2020), <https://abc7ny.com/derek-chauvin-thomas-lane-tou-thao-j-alexander-kueng/6229951/>.

<sup>265</sup> “About,” SOA Watch, September 14, 2018, <https://soaw.org/about/>.

<sup>266</sup> Pablo, “SOA Manuals,” SOA Watch, February 12, 2020, <https://soaw.org/soa-manuals/>.

<sup>267</sup> Nick Wooten, “ICE Is Building ‘Hyper-Realistic’ Houses at Fort Benning to Train for Immigration Raids,” *ledger* (Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, September 12, 2019), <https://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/local/article235009152.html>.

the dimension of punishment across the cases is the same, and speaks in favor of an analysis that I will call “super-national”—that is, an analysis that considers the genocidal processes across the world that are directly attributable to machinations and designs of American empire.

### **5. Prevention through Deterrence and Torture**

Turning back to immigration enforcement, I’ve already noted here that I am primarily concerned here with the moral fact, not the legal definition of torture. Still, it is worth emphasizing that illegal torture has and does occur in detention centers. I am not here referring to cases I cited above, like that of Vazquez Chaj. But, as Jessica Ordaz reports, reports of torture go back to the 1980s when the INS frequently denied Salvadorans legal counsel. They did so, she says, quoting Robert Kohn “by threats, lies, beatings, sexual abuse, drugs, and occasionally torture—anything to get a refugee to sign INS form 1-274, which waive[d] the right to seek asylum and request[ed] ‘voluntary repatriation’ to Central America” (Kohn, qtd in Ordaz, 2019: 69). More recently, immigrants in ICE detention centers have sued the agency on accusations of torture.<sup>268</sup>

In the preceding chapter, I emphasized this punitive dimension of PTD to bring it into a discussion of retributive gendercide. PTD, or the “enforcement first” approach, is about punishment, I said, because if it is to deter—it must inflict a cost that the target has “merited” by his undesirable action. But more than this, the idea offers an important framework for understanding a propensity, not just among ICE/CBP agents, but large

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<sup>268</sup> Sam T Levin, “Caged Alone 24 Hours a Day, Denied Medicine: Lawsuit Claims 'Torture' in US Migrant Jails,” *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, August 19, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/aug/19/us-immigration-detainee-class-action-lawsuit>.

sectors of the society, to wish to inflict or be unconcerned about the infliction of forms of mental and physical harm on immigrants that would amount to torture.

I thus also argued that it was important to understand the punishment meted out to immigrants, as well as the cascading trauma effects<sup>269</sup> enforcement is having on the larger target group, as part of a larger-scale process of extending the logic of PTD beyond the physical infrastructure of the border, and onto the social fabric the nation. With respect to Mexican and Central American immigrants and their Brown descendants in particular, I argued that this was a matter of race and power: a matter, specifically, of maintaining white control over the destiny of the country. It is the guarding against this which is the motivation for gendercidal removal.

Now it is clear, as I have already explained, that forms of torture play a part, and it certainly produces the deaths of immigrants. But if the threat is demography, physical elimination is not the only means by which to control a threatening population. Torture, in settler colonial contexts, can function not primarily as method of extermination, but as a means of population control.

This is evident when we consider the great number of young people and children inside ICE facilities and those being disappeared into the foster system. It is useful here to compare their situation with that of Indigenous children in the residential schools. Although the circumstances and purposes of the institutions are distinct—the residential schools' explicit "civilizing" aim was Christianization—they are yet the closest analog we might have to the situation of detained immigrants; children in German death camps, of course, were summarily executed.

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<sup>269</sup> "Knowing a Deportee Is Associated With Developmental Disorders in Latina/o Children," *Latino Rebels* (Latino Decisions, March 7, 2019), <https://www.latinorebels.com/2019/03/07/knowningadeportee/>.

What happens, then, when you inflict harms on children of the sort that, as Améry suggested, break a person's "trust in the world"? In her account<sup>270</sup> of the abuses of children in the residential schools in Canada, Dian Million explains and denounces the precise kind of harm at issue child torture. "Fear and pain permeated Indigenous peoples' individual narratives of their school lives," she says; "isolation from parents, denials of food and comfort, and the violation of their bodies and sense of integrity, plus the 'total' institution, all point to an intensely shared affective environment...They were beaten, they were lonely, they were frightened and in pain. Alternately, they were defiant, curious, bored, and excited, and they sometimes pulled off hope for the future, separately and together." Above all, however, residential school existence meant genocide for the very simple reason that, "in practice ['Christianization'] meant preventing Indian communities and families from modeling their own domestic relations to their children." The experience, for children, thus became "basic training in helplessness." "A child who has no opportunity to experience control over his or her body," Million writes, "cannot learn very easily how to make other boundaries that can be acted from."

But this is exactly what they are doing to immigrant children and young people in ICE facilities and in CBP detention. In chapter 1, I noted how ICE and CBP agents, like the regular security forces in this country, have a tendency to lie and misrepresent incidents of abuse or killing. As I mentioned, there are in fact reports of widespread

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<sup>270</sup> Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014).

mental, physical<sup>271</sup>, and sexual<sup>272</sup> violation<sup>273</sup>—and, of course, the “zero-tolerance” family separation policies must be understood as itself being a calculated and deliberate policy of institutional cruelty—in a word, a organized form of torture<sup>274</sup>. Borderlands anthropologist Josiah Heyman writes that “In a systematic survey of 1,095 deported Mexicans, 11 percent reported being physically abused by U.S. authorities and 23 percent reported verbal abuse. The Border Patrol was involved in 67 percent of the physical abuses and 75 percent of verbal abuse incidents. ICE was involved in 11 percent of each” (Heyman, 7).<sup>275</sup> Furthermore, “Between 2007 and 2012, approximately 1,700 allegations of excessive force were leveled against CBP” (Ibid., 6).

I also documented how these positions have drawn white power loyalists and sympathizers. But, it is also the case that, in the surge to hire more agents, they also inevitably draw in members of organized crime looking for an easy cover for smuggling narcotics, weapons, and, of course, human flesh. A *New York Times* article in 2017 reported that “dozens of [ICE] agents and contract guards responsible for the detention and removal of undocumented immigrants have been arrested and charged with beating people, smuggling drugs into detention centers, having sex [*sic*; this is rape]

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<sup>271</sup> Gillian Edevane, “Border Patrol Kicked, Punched Migrant Children, Threatened Some With Sexual Abuse, ACLU Alleges,” *Newsweek*, May 23, 2018, Border Patrol Kicked, Punched Migrant Children, Threatened Some With Sexual Abuse, ACLU Alleges.

<sup>272</sup> PBS NewsHour, “While in ICE Custody, Thousands of Migrants Reported Sexual Abuse,” PBS (Public Broadcasting Service, July 22, 2018), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/while-in-ice-custody-thousands-of-migrants-reported-sexual-abuse>.

<sup>273</sup> Silvia Viñas, “Immigrant Detainees Say They Were Sexually Abused In CBP Custody,” NPR (NPR, March 24, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/24/706295417/immigrant-detainees-say-they-were-sexually-abused-in-cbp-custody>.

<sup>274</sup> Jake Johnson, “Lawsuit on Behalf of 55,000 Migrants Accuses Trump Administration of Torture in ICE Detention Centers,” *Common Dreams*, August 20, 2019, <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/08/20/lawsuit-behalf-55000-migrants-accuses-trump-administration-torture-ice-detention>.

<sup>275</sup> Josiah Heyman, “PERSPECTIVE | APRIL 2017 By Josiah Heyman, Ph.D. Why Caution Is Needed Before Hiring Additional Border Patrol Agents and ICE Officers” (American Immigration Council, 2017).

with detainees and accepting bribes to delay or stop deportations.”<sup>276</sup> Importantly, “One agent took pictures of himself having sex with a minor in a foreign country after dropping off deportees.”

It is for reasons like these that, in another article, Heyman, Jeremy Slack, and Daniel Martinez had argued that border agents should not be allowed to function as asylum officers.<sup>277</sup> Before a refugee can seek asylum before an immigration court, an interview must be conducted whether the person’s story passes the “credible fear” test: does the applicant have a credible fear of persecution or torture? The point of this, however, is not for it to be negative or positive, but to “elicit all relevant and useful information bearing on whether the applicant has a credible fear” (8 CFR § 208.30. qtd in Heyman). As Heyman observes, the reason is that “the United States would rather afford people the benefit of the doubt and give them access to a full immigration hearing than to send them back home where they may be persecuted or killed.”

The ordering of these outcomes, however, is flipped for the Trump administration and CBP officers who are trained to see immigrants as criminals. Of course, for a population who comes in already traumatized, an interview of that is a very delicate undertaking requiring human care and compassion. But by having the Border Patrol brass function as asylum officers, they wanted to ensure that refugees got sympathy than trained asylum officials with civilian backgrounds because robust data I explain below suggests that an alarmingly large percentage of them are openly racist or anti-

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<sup>276</sup> Ron Nixon, “Is ICE’s Help-Wanted Sign a Welcome Mat for Rogue Applicants, Too?,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 12, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/12/us/politics/trump-ice-agents-deportations-immigrants.html>.

<sup>277</sup> Josiah Heyman, Jeremy Slack, and Daniel E. Martínez, “Why Border Patrol Agents and CBP Officers Should Not Serve as Asylum Officers,” *Center for Migration Studies*, June 21, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.14240/cmsesy062119>.

immigrant. The whole rationale behind the proposal to make Border agents function as asylum officers, therefore, is to make it the case that a different ranking of outcomes be materialized: that asylum seekers be sent them back home where they may be persecuted or killed (it doesn't matter) rather than giving them the benefit of the doubt and access to an immigration hearing. If they did the latter, remember, they would be precisely inviting what Madison Grant feared the most and warned against: "race suicide." In this case, however, if "the citadel of civilization will fall for mere lack of defenders," it wouldn't even be, as Grant lamented was the case, to solve a labor problem—the whites would have sold their "birthright in a continent" because they were too compassionate, too merciful. The solution, therefore, is to be cruel, to be brutal.

In a comprehensive survey, the Migrant Border Crossing Study (MBCS), Heyman et al. surveyed 1,109 Mexican migrants who'd been apprehended and deported between 2010 and 2012. Once again, as before, we are talking here about a majority young male population: the typical survey respondent was between 18 and 34 years old. They found that:

- "11 percent of the 1,095 MBCS respondents who answered the question on physical abuse reported being hit, pushed, grabbed, or attacked physically while in US custody" (Martinez, Slack, and Heyman 2013, 3).
- "Sixty-seven percent of the physical abuse reports were attributed to the Border Patrol" (ibid., 7).
- "Twenty-three percent of the 1,092 respondents who answered the question reported being yelled at, threatened, or verbally abused while in US custody" (ibid., 5).
- "Seventy-five percent of those verbal abuses reports were attributed to the Border Patrol" (ibid., 7).
- But it is the verbal abuse, which is perhaps most revealing, including such statements as:
- "We don't want you here. What bastards you are. Don't complain because it is going to be worse." (Note: unless otherwise noted, these are translations from Spanish)

- “what are you doing here you fucking immigrants, we don’t want you here.” (English)
- “we don’t want Mexicans and there is no work [here].”
- “you are a fool, what are you doing here, this is not your land”
- “we don’t want you, go back to your country”

Heyman et al. treat this category of utterances separately from explicitly racial or nationalistic insults. Given the history I have already discussed in prior chapters, it is inevitable perhaps that the vast majority are anti-Mexican insults, even when directed at non-Mexicans. One migrant reported that the agents “speak angrily, insult in English because they think you can’t understand. Racist[s], talk[ing] about [my] country badly.” Unsurprisingly, “‘wetback’ and ‘beaner’ were widely reported.” Another immigrant said that “a migra [Border Patrol agent] referred to me as a ‘filthy Indian.’” “Mexicans are worthless. Return to your country, we do not want you here,” a Border agent said. “Thank God you’re leaving this country, you’re useless without being able to speak English. Oh, you just come over to pop your baby out, that’s a bigger crime,” said another. As Heyman et al. note, many of the immigrants are in fact indigenous, Afro-Latinx, or “mestizx.”

Although regarded by the authors as smaller categories of verbal abuse, there are two other noteworthy kinds of insults. These are anti-LGBTQ insults—so, for instance, agents yelling and making fun of women “for being lesbian,” or making calling others “*puto[s]* [=male prostitute] faggot[s], fucking Mexican[s].” But the more underappreciated category is what I will call *dehumanizing* insults, “including being described as stupid, as animals, and smelling/stinking (10 diverse insults).”

These latter are significant because associations with filth and nonhumanness or subhumanness are a key hallmark of genocidal speech—that is, speech which has, as Lynne Tirrel (2012) explains, already contained a set of inferential next steps. Her

concern, of course, is the *inyenzi* epithet in Rwanda: during the preparatory phases of genocide, she says, when a speaker S asserts “A is an *inyenzi*,” she also licenses the hearer H “to make specific assertions about A” (Tirrel, 2012: 201). It is as if “inyenzi” has “a network of possible inferential next-steps; these are inferences one is licensed to draw” (ibid.) The important thing, of course, is that “*inyenzi*,” which means “cockroach” is metaphorical. There is a set of possible inferential steps, of course: “A is nocturnal, a domestic pest, likely to multiply rapidly, hard to completely eliminate, spreads disease, shows emergent tendencies when in groups, and so on” (ibid). Thus, it becomes possible to make jokes with these associations or to posit them when speaking of what is believed to be the target group’s literal behavior. Recall, as the genocidaire said, how jokes and threats began to mix together: “We could toss around awful words without awful thoughts... we could fool around among ourselves and say we were going to kill them all, and the next moment we would join them to share some work or a bottle.” As a metaphorical epithet, however, there is an inevitable inferential extension to “cockroach” and this is that it “should be eliminated,” and the question of genocide typically hangs on the balance of how immediate, how ready at hand, that extension is, in a given community of linguistic practice.

To return to the speech directed at immigrants, this is genocidal speech because the inferential networks of the speech conclude with elimination: filth must be managed and disposed of; animals must be managed and controlled, culled, if there are too many of them. Another insult that Heyman et al. do not treat in this article is the well-known “tonk.”<sup>278</sup> There has been some discussion online about whether the term is a coded

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<sup>278</sup> Daniel Gonzalez and Rafael Carranza, “Is the Term 'Tonc' an Acronym or a Derogatory Term for Migrants?,” The Arizona Republic (The Republic | azcentral.com, May 19, 2018),

slur or otherwise derogatory. According to some Border Patrol agents, it is an acronym for “Territory Origins Not Known” used “to describe an individual who has not yet been intensively interviewed by the Border Patrol to determine his or her country of origin” (cf. Gonzalez and Carranza, 2018). Others have said it is an acronym for “Temporary Outside Native Country.”

But both explanations are forms of gaslighting. Heyman’s investigations have found that “tonk” is an onomatopoeic term originated as a way to describe “the sound of a person’s head being hit by a flashlight.” (Heyman qtd in Gonzalez and Carranza). That, he notes, is “their [own] explanation. It is derogatory. [It] Implies [a category of] people against whom one exercises violent force. That is my interpretation but [it’s] pretty clear.” He elaborates that, “I was *specifically* told by several BP agents that it is the sound of a flashlight hitting a head... I was never told [about] either of those acronyms (or any others). I suspect that those are after-the-fact rationalizations of a disturbing word, but I cannot prove that (I do not directly have evidence). What I do have evidence of is that it was described to me by agents as the sound of a flashlight blow to the head.” (ibid., my emphasis) In this case, the inferential content of the onomatopoeic term, “tonk,” is clear: in the sort of toxic culture of the Border Patrol, for them to call an immigrant a “tonk” is to license each other to make the inference that his body is violable—indeed, I would go farther and suggest the immediately inferential next-step is that his body is no longer his to control, safeguard, or set up boundaries around. In the metaphor of the sound, “tonk,” it is a foregone conclusion, an effortless inevitability, that the immigrant be physically trespassed upon and violated.

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<https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/border-issues/2018/05/19/meaning-border-patrol-term-tonc-tonk-migrants/624251002/>.

Indeed, as Heyman et al. found, verbal abuse went hand-in-hand with threats and physical violence. One immigrant reported that an “agent in a green uniform [Border Patrol] took out his gun and threatened [us], using bad words,” saying “Go back to your country” as he “shoved him to the floor.” Another respondent remarked that “I didn’t have any rights. I better shut up or they were going to beat us. Said we were invading the US. They threatened you all the time but you just stay quiet, so you don’t have problems.”

Physical violence and legal threats were meted out for even smallest “infractions.” One immigrant was threatened with a year in prison, when he annoyed the perpetrator by reading what he was asked to sign: “I hate when these fucking people try to read everything! What are they trying to read!” It must here be recalled that the point of detention is that it is itself a form of punishment, not a temporary, humane segue situation for awaiting trial or deportation. The experience of threat and violence tended to have a punitive dimension. Immigrants who responded to survey reported experiencing or witnessing violence or threats of violence or legal punishment, including the following:

- “[T]hey were going to hit us because we didn’t understand... We didn’t learn and we were going to try again [to enter the United States].”
- “they said, ‘don’t move you *potos* or you are going to see bullets.”
- “[T]hey thought we were drug mules... they asked him for marijuana, and they were going to kill him.”
- “they accused him of lying, they said he was Guatemalan [he was Mexican] and for this he would be buried for two years in prison.”
- “[he received] threats of years in prison, and additionally they [agents] tried to convince him to confess something that he had not done.”

A number of cases were reported of “being denied legal rights or told they have no rights.” As Heyman et al. found, CBP agents exhibited “a general resentment of legal due process. This is expressed shockingly in the use of threats to try to force migrants

to sign forms and otherwise capitulate on process issues.” In fact, of the “96 percent of interviewees who signed paperwork during their most recent apprehension, 28 percent felt forced to sign, 28 percent were not informed about what they were signing, and 27 percent did not know what was being signed.” Among the threats that came along with this, immigrants reported the following experiences:

- “they insulted us a lot, they treated us poorly because of not wanting to sign a paper, and he threatened him by saying ‘the desert is very big and some accident could happen.’”
- “[He said] ‘Don’t run or [I] will shot.’ To not talk because they [migrants] had no right, ‘they had not rights’” [*sic*, exactly as reported in English].

There is one last dimension to the conditions of custody that is significant. This is how frequently yelling, and cursing was a part of these incidents (as well as forming, separately, their own incidents). While Heyman et al. find that it would be too tedious to list the incidents, it is significant because it reveals the creation of a total climate of hostility, which the authors do not appropriately register.

Together with the foregoing details, this suggests the conditions in Border Patrol custody is something very like how Million characterizes the residential schools. As she put it, “Fear and pain permeated Indigenous peoples’ individual narratives of their school lives... isolation from parents, denials of food and comfort, and the violation of their bodies and sense of integrity, plus the ‘total’ institution, all point to an intensely shared affective environment... They were beaten, they were lonely, they were frightened and in pain.” For children in ICE and CBP custody, furthermore, separated from their families, or having arrived unaccompanied and now entirely reliant on the good will of their captors, the abuses they witness and suffer under that kind of climate is—just as Million describes the situation of Indigenous children in the residential schools—“basic training in helplessness.”

Currently, there are reports of widespread neglect of the children in detention. A legal team that interviewed 60 detained children in 2019 warned that “kids are taking care of kids, and there’s inadequate food, water and sanitation for the 250 infants, children and teens at the [El Paso] Border Patrol station.”<sup>279</sup> As the Associated Press reports, some of these children had stopped speaking. Attorneys reported that during the interviews “little kids are so tired they have been falling asleep on chairs and at the conference table.” An 8-year-old girl who is taking care of “a very small 4-year-old with matted hair couldn’t convince the little one to take a shower.” The children told the attorneys that their diets consisted of little more than “oatmeal, a cookie, and a sweetened drink in the morning;” “instant noodles for lunch, and a burrito and cookie for dinner.” They were not provided the fresh fruit or vegetables that are so important for so crucial periods in childhood development; and “they said they’d gone weeks without bathing or a clean change of clothes” (my emphasis).

Under the Flores Settlement of 1997, it is required that minors in immigration custody be given access to food and water, emergency medical services, bathroom facilities, and ventilated, temperature-controlled surroundings—which DHS and Health and Human Services (HHS) are responsible for.<sup>280</sup> In addition, the 2008 William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) requires that children be held for less than one month.<sup>281</sup> However, as the ACLU reports,

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<sup>279</sup> Cedar Attanasio, Garance Burke, and Martha Mendoza, “Attorneys: Texas Border Facility Is Neglecting Migrant Kids,” AP NEWS (Associated Press, June 21, 2019), <https://apnews.com/46da2dbe04f54adbb875cfbc06bbc615>.

<sup>280</sup> “The Flores Settlement and Family Incarceration: A Brief History and Next Steps,” Human Rights First, October 18, 2018, <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/resource/flores-settlement-and-family-incarceration-brief-history-and-next-steps>.

<sup>281</sup> “William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 - United States Department of State,” U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, January 1, 2008), <https://www.state.gov/william-wilberforce-trafficking-victims-protection-reauthorization-act-of-2008/>.

overcrowding in detention centers is being used as a justification for keeping the children longer.<sup>282</sup> The Trump administration, they note, is attempting to dismantle the Flores Settlement's requirements, "arguing in court that it *doesn't require CBP to provide basic toiletries to keep children clean*" (my emphasis).<sup>283</sup>

Multiple doctors who have visited the detention centers have referred to them as "torture facilities."<sup>284</sup> Pediatrician Dolly Lucio Sevier observes that: "there are a lot of ways that you can torture a human and [demoralize] their spirit: by not allowing them to keep clean, keeping them uncomfortably cold for weeks, keeping the lights on 24 hours in a warehouse, keeping them inside of a cage for weeks." She goes on to say that "all of the children had signs of trauma. *Every single one*. I see kids all day long and an 18-month old should not want you to examine them. And they should scream ... and go to their mother. And a 2-year-old should be a little bit fearful, and then willing to talk. *They were all inappropriately subdued*. I mean, they clearly were very fearful of me, but completely let me do my entire physical exam without any fight, which was entirely inappropriate for their age and stage of behavior." Here we must remember Dian Million's words: "A child who has no opportunity to experience control over his or her body cannot learn very easily how to make other boundaries that can be acted from."

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<sup>282</sup> Cynthia Pompa, "Immigrant Kids Keep Dying in CBP Detention Centers, and DHS Won't Take Accountability," American Civil Liberties Union (American Civil Liberties Union, June 24, 2019), <https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/immigrants-rights-and-detention/immigrant-kids-keep-dying-cbp-detention>.

<sup>283</sup> Sanford Nowlin, "Trump Administration Tells Federal Judges That It Shouldn't Be Required to Provide Toothbrushes or Soap to Detained Migrant Children," San Antonio Current (San Antonio Current, June 20, 2020), <https://www.sacurrent.com/the-daily/archives/2019/06/20/trump-administration-tells-federal-judges-that-it-shouldnt-be-required-to-provide-toothbrushes-or-soap-to-detained-migrant-children>.

<sup>284</sup> Meghna Chakrabarti, "'Torture Facilities': Eyewitnesses Describe Poor Conditions At Texas Detention Centers For Migrant Children," "Torture Facilities': Eyewitnesses Describe Poor Conditions At Texas Detention Centers For Migrant Children | On Point (WBUR, June 25, 2019), <https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2019/06/25/texas-border-control-facilities-migrant-children>.

The data is conclusive. As Heyman et al. note, their findings are consistent “with other studies using different methods and samples.” This is not even the whole story, in fact—and much is changing—getting worse—as the pandemic reaches these concentration camps. Some experts have taken to suggesting CBP, especially, but ICE included, have a “culture” problem—but this is a euphemism. These agencies have a problem of institutionalized moral corruption, they are an expression of an systemic form of organized evil on a society-wide scale. When we talk about corruption, we have to understand that it’s much more than taking bribes or rigging elections. But this is mistaken. At its extreme, *moral* corruption is an inversion of morality: it is when one convinces oneself that that which is good is bad and that that which is bad is the good. In a different context (that of climate change), Stephen Gardiner (2011) speaks of moral corruption in terms of moral discourse: it is what happens in ethical discourse when the speakers find ways of thinking and talking that disguise what they are really doing when they do evil. By moral corruption, however, I have in mind something more expansive than ethical discourse. As I put it elsewhere, moral corruption “is a kind of moral sickness that sets in on the social fabric. It’s this sickness that lets the shameless get away with what should be shameful.”<sup>285</sup> In other words, moral corruption either loosens or fosters the internal norms that act as sanctions against dishonorable behaviors and intentions. It is not simply about ethical discourse, but about practice.

This is a form of moral corruption, moreover, which is genocidal. I mean this in my sense, but I believe that it also is straight-forwardly genocidal according to the UN Convention. As Susan Miller has pointed out, while proving genocidal intent is probably

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<sup>285</sup> Julio Covarrubias, “United States of Sinverguenzas,” The Anarres Project, April 2, 2020, <http://www.anarresproject.org/united-states-of-sinverguenzas/>.

impossible, other elements of the UN definition of genocide are clearly triggered by the treatment of children in the concentration camps.<sup>286</sup> We are, she says, speaking of serious mental and physical harm, including bodily harm, sexual assault, withholding of needed medicine, and nutrition. Furthermore, the seizure and incarceration of children triggers the element of “forced transfer of children from a targeted group to another group.” Even though the child separation policy was rescinded, moreover, “the Trump administration had no system for reuniting children with their families.” Indeed, Miller notes, “a former acting director of ICE said, ‘I think we’re going to see hundreds of cases’ in which children will never be reunited with their families.” Thousands of these children, moreover, have been “lost” in foster care and many others given to adoption agencies. All of these amount to forms of genocide. It amounts, as Dian Million put it, to preventing these “communities and families from modeling their own domestic relations to their children”—which is a way to disarticulate the social bonds that make them who they are as a people.

The whole *raison d’etre* of these facilities is, as I have shown, to safeguard white dominance in the face of the racial demographic transition. If that is the case, then the punitive cruelty of detention, the violence experienced therein by children in particular, must thus be seen as one of its devices. The question must be asked, what does the traumatization of all these children, of all these young adults, accomplish? My claim here is that, like the lethal violence directed at Black males, there is a similar function to this particular though quite different form of violence.

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<sup>286</sup> Susan Miller, “That Debacle at the Border Is Genocide,” CounterPunch.org, August 15, 2019, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/08/16/that-debacle-at-the-border-is-genocide/>.

The structural parallel in this case is that punitive acts are directed towards the group, not individuals. Why would it be directed at the social group to which they belong? My claim has been that it is a weaponization of trauma, intended to create a “bulwark,” such that, even if these young people eventually stay within the borders of the US, the violations they will have experienced at the camps will ensure that this population is too traumatized to be a viable political, economic, or even social bloc in the foreseeable future. These violations which immigrants are suffering will have an enduring psychological impact, one which, presently, we can only begin to fathom<sup>287</sup>, as I said, when we consider the analogy of Indigenous peoples in the boarding and residential schools—or perhaps the mass incarceration of young Black males that wrought havoc on Black communities. This is not to assert an equivalence. From an transnational/hemispheric perspective, however, the conclusion is inescapable—if genocidal destabilization is a means of racial control, that what is being meted out to Central American and Mexican families is what has always been meted out to Indigenous and Black families.

## **6. Conclusion**

The argument I have put forward here cuts in a lot of directions. I have argued that American settler-imperial power congeals as a global system of genocidal violence characterized by torture—one whose construction is intended to destabilize the populations it targets as a method of racial control. That cruelty, that violence, reveals that the traditional image of torture as a form of interrogation obscures the reality that

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<sup>287</sup> Claire Hutkins Seda, “Children at the Border: Layers of Trauma Compounded By Detention,” Migrant Clinicians Network, June 19, 2018, <https://www.migrantclinician.org/blog/2018/jun/children-border-layers-trauma-compounded-detention.html>.

torture abounds in America's internal management of its racial populations, as well as how it has traditionally dealt with subject peoples abroad.

The lynchpin for understanding this, I suggested, is to be found in the linkages between American settler imperialism and generalized racial and political repression. Although I have been unable to provide the complete argument here, I believe these imbrications, in thinking of racial control, can only be understood within the old vision of American eugenicists, the vision, as I described it, of a white settler empire, directed by an Anglo-supremacist racial aristocracy—a formation whose super-ordinate imperative is to maintain global geographical and temporal preponderance and control; a formation that adapts and incorporates subordinate populations to perform distinct functions for the empire: what I referred to as the “extended phenotype” of white power. It is not possible, in my thinking, to understand all the phenomena/processes here discussed without this explanation forming a part of the explanation.

Among the consequences of this view, however, is a reconceptualization of much of what and how we think we know American transnational history, particularly as it is articulated to the border—that border whose history is, as Greg Grandin said, “nearly unimaginable terror and grief,” a border which inspired and prefigured, in the US's aggressive outward expansion, “the great genocides and dispossessions of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” Moreover, if the history of the US is, as Rivera Berruz put it, a history of asphyxiations—this must also be understood not just domestically: America has applied its boot on the necks of Third World peoples across the planet.

But now I must ask the brutal question. In *At the Mind's Limit*, Jean Améry describes those experiences that broke something in him but that, at the same time, honed his vision of the reality of the country that broke him. "I am convinced," he said, "beyond all personal experiences, that torture was not an accidental quality of the Third Reich, but its essence" (Améry, 24). In torture, Améry wrote, "the Third Reich materialized in all the density of its being." (ibid, 30)

Yet will not the immigrant child who manages to survive an ICE or CBP facility say something quite similar of America? Won't she say that acts of "police brutality"—and this phrase, we must now understand, is a euphemism for genocidal torture—whether committed on the street, on the border, or in the jail cell, are not accidental to US, but that in them the United States "materialized in all the density of its being"? Won't she claim that, in the cruelty and brutality of that geopolitical thirst for preponderance<sup>288</sup> that transformed the borderlands into an open air elimination chamber, can be found, in concentrated form, the *very stuff* of American civilization? This will be hard to take for many, but, to amend one of Ta-Nehisi Coates' most well-known quips: it is not just tradition, in America, to murder, mutilate, and maim the bodies and psyches of Black, Native, and Third World peoples, it is an institutionalized social order.

But now I hear an indignant objection. Améry had distinct reasons for making this claim. National Socialism, he observed, did not invent torture, but torture had a special and central role in the Third Reich, he thinks, because it was not only its highest expression, it was an organizing principle of the regime's ideology. "The Hitler vassal,"

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<sup>288</sup> R.D. Hooker (Institute for National Strategic Studies, n.d.).

he notes, “did not yet achieve his full identity if he was merely as quick as a weasel, tough as leather, hard as Krupp steel.” (Améry, 31). To be “a fully valid representative of the Fuhrer and his ideology... [h]e had to *torture*, destroy, in order to be great in bearing the suffering of others.” (ibid)

This is why it is important to understand an element that I have not been able to satisfactorily explore here, and that is anticommunism. One thing that the Nazis and the Americans have always had in common is their virulent anticommunism. The commonality originates in a shared anti-egalitarian ethos which is deeply engrained—and socialism, however imperfect; however anti-democratic and disastrous in its historical manifestations, has arguably been the ultimate utopian expression in the Western egalitarian tradition’s ideal of nondomination and emancipation from social hierarchies, from misery, and poverty.

Let me emphasize here that I do not mean to imply that *communist regimes* were democratic. I do not need this to be true for my argument. All that I require is that communism, and anything even slightly resembling it—which, in practice, means anything that infringes American interests—be perceived as a threat to the hierarchies of the American imperial order. As a matter of fact, “communists,” like “terrorists,” are conjured into existence when people oppose American capitalist interests—they are “made” in the process of their targeting. In Indonesia, which is a foundational case in the development of global anticommunism, the organizations targeted as communist consisted of unarmed civilians. These were ordinary people, interested in meager reforms, in making their own lives and that of their families less miserable—not violently overthrowing the ruling classes, not installing the joint-dictatorship of the proletariat. As

Vincent Bevins notes, “they didn’t [even] resist their own annihilation because they had no idea what was coming”—they couldn’t have suspected it. How could they have known their attempts to simply live would be so offensive as to result in their extermination? To get in the way of American empire all they had to do was try to better their stations.

At the same time, though, it cannot be denied that that vast amounts of energy and intellectual reserves have been expended in the US to obscure the fact that *what gets labelled* as “communism”—namely, anti-racism and authentic democracy—were always *the key* threat to the white Anglo-supremacy. “Anticommunism,” as an ideology—meaning here that those labelled communists may never have even read Marx—has therefore always been one of its crucial organizing principles, a claim that I will attempt to substantiate shortly.

To return to the objection, then, my point here is that, when it comes to anticommunism, the US’s vassal states, the dictators installed by the US across the Third World, have always pursued it even more fervently than the Americans themselves. Just like the Hitler vassal to which Améry refers, to be “a fully valid representative of the Fuhrer and his ideology,” the American vassal “had to *torture, destroy, in order to be great.*” In this case, the ideology of the “Fuhrer,” however, is the free market—the interests of the US being, at times, *even more implacably pursued* by vassals than by the Americans themselves.

There is, of course, a second element to the objection that must be addressed—that while torture was elevated as a principle of the Nazi ideology, this cannot be said of American ideology. Here, I believe I can answer this challenge by providing

substantiating the claim, left open above, that anticommunism is a crucial organizing principle of American racism. I should clarify here, though, that by “American racism” I am referring to the transnational genocidal leviathan whose contours I have attempted to trace throughout this essay. While the immensity of the topic makes it impossible to address it in all of its dimensions here, I believe I can provide a compelling first approximation by tying that leviathan to my evaluation of Madison Grant—a figure who looms large in my analysis.

In the course of explaining how the sources of the ideological justification of genocide in the US reside in old eugenicist theories, and tying domestic genocides to the American empire, I also suggested that there were “relays” or “feedback loops” between internal racial repression and the process of expansion. What still requires further investigation, however, is the tie between the origins of politicized countersubversion and eugenics. Federal countersubversion, of course, beginning as anti-Jacobin, anti-anarchist, and anti-labor repression, would eventually transform into global anticommunism. And here, it must be emphasized—against critics of communist regimes, however destructive they have been—and they have been themselves genocidal—that global anticommunism has been *the single most destructive and genocidal political orientation or ideology of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*.

Among the “woke” or “intersectional” nonwhite left, there is still an unfortunate tendency to suspect or dismiss the work of foundational philosophers of emancipation, like Karl Marx or Vladimir Lenin, as just another two white oppressors who, like Enlightenment figures before them, were racist and Eurocentric—and, therefore, that their theories are useless to contemporary anti-racism. Yet in *The Passing of the Great*

*Race*, Madison Grant cites the Russian Revolution as a harbinger of what the Nordic race in the U.S. faces if it doesn't act, if it doesn't plan and anticipate. According to Grant, Revolutionary Russia was a case in which the degenerate "lower" races outbred their masters and were able to take power from the "superior" caste. At the same time, the doctrine of *herrenvolk* to which Grant is indebted compelled him to maintain the master race remained superior even when defeated. Since the subordinate class was supposed to be inferior, mere numbers could not undo a superior race unless something else intervenes. This was a warning—and here, once again, he anticipated the concept of "white genocide"—that lower races, if they "outbreed" their masters, can only seize power from subdue and seize power from them if the superior race allows it by committing racially suicidal blunders, or the lower orders engage in what would amount to subaltern genocide/eliticide. For Grant the Russian Revolution is a case of the latter. "The temporary advantage of mere numbers enjoyed by the inferior classes in modern democracies," he says, "can only be made permanent by the destruction of superior types—by massacre, *as in Russia*, or *by taxation*, as in England."

In this sentence alone, we not only find the germ of what became modern American libertarianism/neoliberalism, which equates progressive taxation that benefits the unworthy under-castes with violence against the deserving whites, but also the origins of the juncture of racialization and federal countersubversion. Communism, as I said, *whether it was in reality a threat to white supremacy*, was nevertheless always already regarded as a threat to the white Anglo-supremacy of the U.S.

One way to see that is in what is implicit. This is that Grant considers the lower orders of Russia a distinct race from its aristocratic class—a debt, once again, which he

owes to the doctrine of *herrenvolk*. Of course, this runs against the contemporary idea that all Europeans are “white.” As I said before, this is a product of the mystification of the concept of white supremacy, and a retroactive application of this contemporary notion to the past. In its contemporary sense, many have come to imagine white supremacy as a structure of racial domination in a way that homogenizes racial groups—making it difficult, for instance, to account for the fact that there can be groups *within* racially subordinate castes that have antagonistic interests; or, as in this case, that political ideology can matter for whether you are included in the white communion of Anglo-supremacy. I believe, though I cannot here demonstrate, that one of the great successes of white power since the Civil Rights era has been to foster this kind of confusion and historical amnesia about how white power—to reiterate—evolves and recruits from subordinate populations. It was, too, convenient, especially, in the era of Barack Obama.

It would be important to understand this because the eugenicist vision upon which contemporary white power is built, and which it constantly references, always understood egalitarian social movements—especially socialism—as a distinct threat to the *herrenvolk* social order of a white colonial aristocracy. There is here a deeply elitist and anti-democratic streak to progressivism—which, after all, called for the rule of experts, of technocrats. Grant’s remarks must be placed in the context of a recurring anti-democratic theme in the book. “The great lesson of the science of race,” he said, “is the immutability of somatological or bodily characters, with which is closely associated the immutability of psychical predispositions and impulses” (Grant, ix). But, he observed, “this continuity of inheritance has a most important bearing on the theory of

democracy and *still more upon that of socialism*, for it naturally tends to reduce the relative importance of environment.” (ibid., x; my emphasis). What follows from this? “Those engaged in social uplift and in revolutionary movements are therefore usually very intolerant of the limitations imposed by heredity.” (ibid)

But then there is a problem about the founding fathers. “Philanthropy and noble purpose dictated the doctrine expressed in the Declaration of Independence,” he explains. But “the men who wrote the words, ‘we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,’ were themselves the owners of slaves and despised Indians as something less than human.” (Grant, xxi) Saying the “quiet part out loud,” as the saying goes, Grant understood—it was as clear as day to him, though it has been mystified now—that equality in the minds of the founders “meant merely that they were just as good Englishmen as their brothers across the sea.” (ibid) The attempt to extend the meaning of the words “equal” to “free,” he says, is a “falsification”: “no such expression is found in the original document and the teachings based on these altered words in the American public schools of to-day would *startle* and *amaze* the men who formulated the Declaration.” (Grant, xxi; my emphases).

Placed alongside the long history of foreign intervention, destabilization, torture, outright genocide, that the US has happily fostered to prevent peoples of the Third World from achieving sovereignty, emancipation, equality; the long history of domestic racial repression justified, as Charisse Burden-Stelly has shown, by anticommunist discourse—from the surveillance and sabotage in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century of Black Radical Peace Activists, like Paul Robeson, onward to the killings of Black activists in Ferguson after Michel Brown’s killing; and the little known history of CIA-tied domestic

rightwing terror performed by Cuban exiles; the evidence, to me, is unequivocal: the real ideology of the United States is not egalitarian—despite its external trappings of liberalism—but its opposite.

Given the fact that all the “communist regimes” the United States has toppled in the Third World were in reality aspiring social democracies, given the fact that the US has always subverted, decimated, stigmatized, and murdered movements for democratic equality in the very heart of the US, we must conclude that the true purpose of anticommunism is anti-democracy. Real democracy would upset the racial order; a counterfeit democracy must be upheld whose principles, by definition, militate against real racial democracy.<sup>289</sup> In societies built around the organized domination and assault on the cultural patterns of subordinate populations, it will be necessary to recruit from and control the diverse populations under subjection, to rely on collaborators; to appeal, as Fanon put it, “to various degrees of approval and support, to the native’s cooperation”—the appearance of “progress” being just “the camouflage of the techniques by which man is exploited” (Fanon, 1967: 37).

This is also what George Jackson meant when he said that fascism “has established itself in a most disguised and efficient manner in this country.” “Intellectuals still argue whether Amerika is a fascist country,” he wrote. But, “this concern is typical of the Amerikan left’s flight from reality... This is actually a manifestation of the authoritarian process seeping into its own psyche.” The apotheosis of such a system in something like the election of Barack Obama, therefore, amounts to the *perfection*, not

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<sup>289</sup> This, in my view, has in recent years come to be called *neoliberalism*, whose normative major premises against state intervention in the market imply, in practice, allowing the wealthy do what they want on the hope their plunder will eventually trickle down to the rest of us—though that argument goes beyond the scope of this project.

the negation, of white supremacy. As Fanon might have put it, “the rigor of the system [had] made the daily affirmation of a superiority superfluous”—it had become commonplace for the racist to now “point accusingly to a manifestation of racism among the oppressed.” (ibid., 37, 36) All of this is already contained, already logically possible, in the doctrine of *herrenvolk*, which did not die with scientific racism.

It is tempting here to speculate about the extent to which contemporary political figures hold this vision. Of course, one would have to look at both the words spoken by them in conjunction with their actions in their sociohistorical contexts.

An example that immediately comes to mind here is Hillary Clinton. In 2007, at a time when identifying as a “liberal” was political death, Hillary Clinton was asked in a presidential debate whether she was a liberal.<sup>290</sup> “Unfortunately, in the last 30, 40 years, [the word “liberal”] has been turned up on its head and it’s been made to seem as though it is a word that describes big government, totally contrary to what its meaning was in the 19th and early 20th century,” she said; “I prefer the word ‘progressive,’ which has a real American meaning, going back to the Progressive Era at the beginning of the 20th century.” Since the use of the term “progressive” today has come to be associated with left of center politics, we might not immediately register that she is, by her own admission, claiming to identify with the “real American meaning” of the term which originates, precisely, in the era of eugenics. While not all progressives were eugenicists, Madison Grant, as I mentioned in chapter 2, was a progressive, and the idea quite easily dovetails with eugenic Nordicism, as Garland and other scholars have explained.

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<sup>290</sup> “Part I: CNN/YouTube Democratic Presidential Debate Transcript,” CNN (Cable News Network, July 24, 2007), <http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/07/23/debate.transcript/>.

Clinton does elaborate that what she means by this term. “I consider myself a modern progressive,” she said, “someone who believes strongly in individual rights and freedoms, who believes that we are better as a society when we’re working together and when we find ways to help those who may not have all the advantages in life get the tools they need to lead a more productive life for themselves and their family. I consider myself a proud modern American progressive, and I think that’s the kind of philosophy and practice that we need to bring back to American politics.”

This is still vague enough to mean many things. On the one hand, what she says about individual rights is just signaling that she is committed to the free market. On the other, what she says about helping families, etc., is entirely consistent, on one interpretation, with both social welfare programs—though that is unlikely, given her husband’s role in dismantling the social safety net—and, on another interpretation, at least some versions of the racial elitism and racial clientelism of the eugenic program. For instance, on this interpretation, giving someone poor “the tools to lead a productive life” does not amount to justice; it is a retooling of that person’s life for the purposes of the racial state in exchange for their family’s survival. Equality, notably, is not a part of her definition of “progressive”—just as for Grant it had a limited extension. (I am not sure I have ever heard or seen Hillary Clinton speak of equality.)

What it would be a mistake here to do, though, is to approach this statement with contemporary associations of the term. What Clinton meant, I suggest, must be interpreted within the context of her staunch advocacy of the Crime Bill and her popularization of the racist “super-predator” theory. Both, as Tommy Curry (2017) has argued, were a method of controlling and destabilizing the Black population—which

resulted, and was intended to result in, the mass incarceration of Black males, a cull, if ever there was one. It also has to be understood within the constraints Clinton herself put on her identification as a progressive: she has emphatically regarded her position as incompatible with socialism or social democracy, and she has repeatedly highlighted that her “liberalism” is pragmatic—the latter of which, in context, indexed the compatibility of her political identity with the American imperial project. It ought to give us pause, therefore, that her move is to tie her political identity to the Progressive Era, and then says “I think that's the kind of philosophy and practice that we need to bring back to American politics.” At the very least, it offers a line of inquiry that cannot be ignored.<sup>291</sup>

To understand the full dangers of the present moment—in which racialized and political violence threatens to engulf the U.S., requires that we thus recognize the dynamics of that have brought about the invisibilization of genocide in America, the concentration camps we call “detention centers” at the border, and the cruelty of family separation. It will also help us to see the new—and rapidly unfolding—genocidal processes at work in a world that now belongs to COVID-19. While I cannot discuss these events here, I fear—though I hope I am wrong—that there is a deadly new shift in the genocidal id I have been attempting to understand.

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<sup>291</sup> Note: I am not saying she believes all of the same things that Madison Grant did. I am just suggesting these comments are compatible with some version of the ideology.

## **Conclusion.**

### **The Expanding Future of Genocide**

#### **1. Introduction**

As the basis of American society, I have argued, genocide is a processual and structural condition, not an event, one that does not require genocidal intent, since genocide is the background hum—the rhythm—that organizes and orients institutions and politics. Although my focus has, by and large, been Latin American immigrants, I argued that—not just anti-Brown violence, but racialized violence against nonwhite groups coded as “threats” should be regarded as a form of structural genocide. In order to explain some of the dynamics of the ebbs and flows of genocide, in particular the demographic targeting of immigrant males for sequestration and removal, I argued that fears of the coming majority-minority nation, combined with the gender-selective targeting of Mexican males was part of the background assumptions of Prevention Through Deterrence—and, moreover, that the latter met key elements of genocidal harbingers that begin with the targeting of subordinate males. Finally, I have sought to show how this genocidal tendency is part of an extended global system of racist and politicized violence characterized by torture—one whose construction is intended to destabilize the populations it targets as a method of racial control. This allowed me to demonstrate that the lynchpin for understanding this system is the old vision of American eugenicists, the vision, as I described it, of a white settler empire, steered by an Anglo-supremacist racial elitism that recruits subject peoples and retools them for distinct purposes—as is happening, I claim, with the many Mexican Americans that staff ICE and CBP.

All of this has brought us to the present situation, in which Department of Homeland Security Officers and CBP agents are being deployed by the Trump administration to quell uprising in the “inner cities” of the country. I completed the initial drafts of this essay before COVID-19 landed on American soil. Then, as I was completing the essay, the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis sparked what some observers suggest might be the largest mass movement in the history of the country. In response to this, the federal government, after an initial lockdown/quarantine, and one \$1200 check, has done almost nothing about the virus. At the same time, since the protests began, President Trump has decided to deploy unidentified federal agents—from the Border Patrol, DHS, ICE, and the Department of Corrections—into the cities with unrest in order to back up policing power on the streets.

In the midst of this, irregular white militias, neo-Nazis/white nationalist vigilantes, and other paramilitary forces have responded to the President’s calls to, at first, “liberate” their states from the COVID-19 lockdowns, then to aid in the repression of the protestors. These informal actors are engaging in a range of actions, from running down protestors in their cars, to policing their neighborhoods and streets, to shooting into crowds of protestors and hurling pipe bombs at them.<sup>292</sup> There is unequivocal evidence of forced temporary kidnappings/detentions of protestors in unmarked vehicles by federal agents; and there is talk, unmentioned as of now by the mainstream media, of white nationalists kidnapping Black protestors off the street. On Twitter.com, Trump

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<sup>292</sup> *I Was Ending a Stream When It Happened. You Can See the Perpetrator Driving behind Me Then Hear the Bomb Go off and See Some of the Sparks and Smoke. Happened Right up on 5th and Main, 2020, <https://twitter.com/R3volutionDaddy/status/1294773825863745536>.*

barely even bothers to mask the dogwhistles, the Nazi and white power symbology and rhetoric. — And all of this is just to focus on the domestic situation.

What is frightening now, is that what I have said about the contemporaneity of genocide in America has seemed to suddenly become so much more transparent, signaling, I hazard to believe, a shift into a new phase. Even as I write this, genocidal energies are being gathered and marshalled by the Trump regime in response to the mass mobilization against police brutality, as well as, I believe, in the ways the regime is taking strategic advantage of the pandemic. By way of conclusion, therefore, I would like to reflect on the meaning and future of the genocidal present by situating these events within the analysis I have provided of the long durée of American imperialism and the systems of torture and murder it has cultivated at home and abroad.

## **2. Expendability Unto Death**

By now, it is known that the coronavirus is disproportionately impacting Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. In keeping with some of the main arguments of this essay, moreover, the US is already using the language of war and national security to talk about the response—an indicator that casualties are to be normalized—and using that same language of security as a justification to ramp up genocidal aggression in the international sphere towards Latin America and the Middle East. At the same time, it undertakes decisions at home that are devastating the most vulnerable populations.

On the international sphere, the state department has placed what amounts to a kidnapping bounty<sup>293</sup> of \$15 million on the head of Venezuela's leftist President Nicolas

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<sup>293</sup> Anthony Faiola and Matt Zapotosky, "United States Indicts Venezuela's Maduro on 'Narco-Terrorism' Charges - The Boston Globe," BostonGlobe.com (The Boston Globe, March 26, 2020),

Maduro for alleged “narcoterrorism” ties—a poorly substantiated lie for which no concrete evidence has been offered. All the while, according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research<sup>294</sup>, US sanctions on food and medicine against Venezuela have managed to directly kill over 40 thousand people—and this was before the pandemic hit the country. As in the case of Venezuela, sanctions against Iran—the aftermath of an escalation initiated by the US’s assassination of Iranian general Qaseim Soleimani—were already producing dead civilians. Then, with close to 5000 deaths from COVID-19 (as of 15 April 2020), the US announced new sanctions<sup>295</sup>. Notably, as in the case of accusations of Maduro’s “narcoterrorism,” the rationale for Soleimani’s assassination has never been substantiated with any concrete evidence.

Such actions deserve to be called genocidal, yet they are regarded as a normal part of international politics. No one, to my knowledge, has yet pointed out that these sanctions meet Raphael Lemkin’s early definition of genocide in “Acts Constituting a General (Transnational) Danger Considered as Offences Against the Law of Nations”<sup>296</sup>. . Before coining the concept, Lemkin had written that *acts of extermination* “directed against the ethnic, religious or social collectivities whatever the motive (political, religious, etc.)” consisted not only of massacres and pogroms, but “actions undertaken to ruin the economic existence of the members of a collectivity.” In this case, of course, the motive is to coerce these nations into toeing the line on economic

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<https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2020/03/26/united-states-indicts-venezuela-maduro-narcoterrorism-charges/dgo1X1TxUF2JfJPuXY5paN/story.html>.

<sup>294</sup> Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs, “Economic Sanctions as Collective Punishment: The Case of Venezuela” (Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2019).

<sup>295</sup> Amanda Macias and Kevin Breuninger, “US Slaps New Sanctions on Iran Following Strikes on US Targets,” CNBC (CNBC, January 10, 2020), <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/10/us-will-slap-new-sanctions-on-iran-following-strikes-on-us-targets.html>.

<sup>296</sup> <http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/madrid1933-english.htm> \*\*\*

policy and capitulating to American interests—and doubly murderous in the middle of a pandemic. By imposing its singular model on the rest of the world, subcomandante Marcos<sup>297</sup> long ago pointed out, “neoliberalism imposes the destruction of nations and groups of nations... This is a planetary war, of the worst and cruelest kind, waged against humanity.”

Meanwhile at home, whether through malice, political calculation, or indifference, Brown, Black, and Indigenous people are being made to bear the brunt of the pandemic<sup>298</sup>. As of July 2020, there have been more than 8,200 cases and 401 deaths reported on the Navajo nation since the pandemic began.<sup>299</sup> There are now 9,394 cases and 478 deaths.<sup>300</sup> According to a report put together by the Center for American Progress in June, the Navajo nation also had the highest infection rate in the country—higher than New York City. In New Mexico, they added, “Native people make up only around one-tenth of [the] population but more than 55 percent of its coronavirus cases; in Wyoming, [American Indian/Alaska Native] people are less than 3 percent of the state population but make up more than one-third of its cases.” The causes of this, of course, are the pre-existing underlying conditions created by US settler colonialism.

Taking advantage of the crisis, Trump regime has also launched a campaign to sell off, poison, and pollute Indigenous lands, forcing, once again, confrontations between Indigenous nations and the state. In March, his administration revoked the

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<sup>297</sup> Subcomandante Marcos, “The Fourth World War Has Begun.,” trans. Nathalie de Broglio, *Nepantla: Views from South* 2, No. 3 (2001): pp. 559-572. [muse.jhu.edu/article/23936](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/23936).

<sup>298</sup> Jan Wolfe, “African Americans More Likely to Die from Coronavirus Illness, Early Data Shows,” April 6, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-race/african-americans-more-likely-to-die-from-coronavirus-illness-early-data-shows-idUSKBN21O2B6>.

<sup>299</sup> ““No Additional Virus Deaths Reported Monday on Navajo Nation,” AP NEWS (Associated Press, July 13, 2020), <https://apnews.com/d3106fe9aa0f6945ecb72033f13bbdbbe>.

<sup>300</sup> Dikos Ntsaaígíí-19 (COVID-19) ,” Navajo Nation Department of Health, accessed September 3, 2020, <https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>.

reservation status of the Mashpee Wampanoag in Massachusetts.<sup>301</sup> Although a judge later ruled in favor of Mashpee, if the decision had been allowed to stand it would have dismantled the institutions the nation has been creating that are the basis of their sovereignty.<sup>302</sup> To protect their communities, the Ogala Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux in South Dakota set up COVID-19 checkpoints to screen people coming into their territories. In response, Republican Governor Kristi Noem's attempted to force their territories open, by asking the Trump administration for federal assistance in what she regarded as an essential state interest in commerce.<sup>303</sup> Trump then brazenly decided to hold a rally at Mount Rushmore on Oglala land on the eve of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, without the consent of the tribal leadership.<sup>304</sup> More recently, Noem had welcomed a 250 thousand person biker rally in Sturgis, many of whom would need to cross through tribal land. Given all of the risk she has placed the people of South Dakota in, not just the Sioux, it is perhaps unsurprising that she since decided to build a \$40 thousand security wall around her home.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Guardian staff and agency, "Trump Administration Revokes Tribe's Reservation Status in 'Power Grab'," *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, March 31, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/mar/31/trump-administration-revokes-mashpee-wampanoag-tribe-reservation-status>.

<sup>302</sup> PBS NewsHour, "While in ICE Custody, Thousands of Migrants Reported Sexual Abuse," PBS (Public Broadcasting Service, July 22, 2018), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/while-in-ice-custody-thousands-of-migrants-reported-sexual-abuse>.

<sup>303</sup> Erik Ortiz, "Dispute over South Dakota Tribal Checkpoints Escalates after Gov. Kristi Noem Seeks Federal Help," *NBCNews.com* (NBCUniversal News Group, May 21, 2020), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/dispute-over-south-dakota-tribal-checkpoints-escalates-after-gov-kristi-n1212161>.

<sup>304</sup> PBS NewsHour, "While in ICE Custody, Thousands of Migrants Reported Sexual Abuse," PBS (Public Broadcasting Service, July 22, 2018), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/while-in-ice-custody-thousands-of-migrants-reported-sexual-abuse>.

<sup>305</sup> CBS News, "South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem Getting \$400,000 Security Fence around Home to Protect Her," *CBS News* (CBS Interactive, August 13, 2020), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/south-dakota-governor-kristi-noem-security-fence/>.

The impact of COVID-19 on American Indian communities continues to grow, with no sign of aid in sight. The Nation Congress of American Indians (NCAI) reports that the number of cases continue to rise, tracking the recent nation-wide surge. In Indian Country, there were 36,380 cases as of August 12<sup>th</sup>, an increase in every area served by Indian Health Services (HIS); with a total of 1301 deaths.<sup>306</sup> In a letter to Congress, the Congressional Native American Caucus wrote that COVID-19 had impacted every area of American Indian life, noting that tribal governments were “projected to lose over \$40 billion in critical government revenue as a result of the pandemic” (3). “The pandemic,” they write, “has devastated tribal economies resulting in lost revenue which impairs tribal nations’ ability to deliver government services and retain employment.” (ibid) Tribal health programs do not have sufficient “resources to protect and preserve human life.” Tribal Colleges and Universities, “do not have the resources and educational infrastructure to ensure a safe return for students.” (ibid). Existing deficiencies in food systems, unemployment, and food shortages, alongside the pandemic, they fear, will devastate rural communities. Tribal governments, they claim, simply cannot provide basic services, and the demand for them is growing (ibid., 4). In its refusal to take responsibility, by even aiding in the attacks on their sovereignty, the Trump administration reveals a genocidal intent.

Other racialized populations are also living through an emergency. A recent report by the National Urban League said that “Black people and Latinos are four times more likely than white people to be hospitalized for COVID-19.”<sup>307</sup> Indeed, they

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<sup>306</sup> “Research Policy Update: COVID-19 Data - Situation Summary” (Washington DC: NCAI Policy Research Center National Congress of American Indians, n.d.).

<sup>307</sup> Bart Jansen, “‘This Is a Crisis’: National Urban League Finds Persistent Racial Disparities Exacerbated during Pandemic,” USA Today (Gannett Satellite Information Network, August 13, 2020),

reported, Black people have an infection of 62 per 10 thousand; and it is 73 for Latinxs. For whites it is 23 per 10 thousand for white people. Per capita, 213 Black people and 205 Latinxs infected with the virus require hospitalization, compared with 46 for whites. Then there are the death rates: 1 in every 1,450 Black person and 1 in every 3,000 Latinx dies of COVID-19, compared to 1 in 3,350 white death.

As Stephanie Rivera-Berruz<sup>308</sup> has pointed out, a number of factors contribute to these skewed numbers. Large numbers of Black and Latinx populations can't afford not to work and can't work from home. The National Urban League reported that just 19.7% of Black people and 16.2% of Latinxs can afford this new luxury, as compared with 29.9% of white people. In addition, as Rivera-Berruz explains, large numbers of both populations are consigned to specific labor markets, many of which, right now, are considered "essential" (the service and food<sup>309</sup> industries, construction, building and grounds cleaning, maintenance); and large numbers of both groups already have higher rates of the sorts of health conditions that risk complicating a COVID-19 infection (hypertension, respiratory disease, diabetes, etc.). At the same time, since Latinxs have been disproportionately hit by job loss<sup>310</sup> during the quarantine, and no relief<sup>311</sup> is

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<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/08/13/urban-league-black-people-latinos-suffer-disproportionately-pandemic/3333858001/>.

<sup>308</sup> Dr. Stephanie Rivera Berruz, "COVID-19 Is Telling Us What We Already Know: Death and Debility Are Produced," Medium (We Are Marquette, April 6, 2020), <https://stories.marquette.edu/covid-19-is-telling-us-what-we-already-know-death-and-debility-are-produced-e23d0aff9d8a>.

<sup>309</sup> Claire Hutkins Seda, "Farmworkers and COVID-19: FAQ," Migrant Clinicians Network, March 26, 2020, <https://www.migrantclinician.org/blog/2020/mar/farmworkers-and-covid-19-faq.html>.

<sup>310</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Luis Noe-Bustamante, "U.S. Latinos among Hardest Hit by Pay Cuts, Job Losses Due to Coronavirus," Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, April 3, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/03/u-s-latinos-among-hardest-hit-by-pay-cuts-job-losses-due-to-coronavirus/>.

<sup>311</sup> Monique O. Madan, "Millions of Immigrant Families Won't Get Coronavirus Stimulus Checks, Experts Say," Miami Herald (Miami Herald, March 26, 2020), <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article241531211.html>.

coming to immigrant families, or even to US citizens who've married immigrants<sup>312</sup>—a “white genocide” tax, if you will—it is not only the virus that threatens our lives and well-being: there is talk of a new Great Depression.

As others<sup>313</sup> have<sup>314</sup> already<sup>315</sup> pointed<sup>316</sup> out<sup>317</sup>, all these facts are the result of long-standing forms of structural<sup>318</sup> racism, such as environmental<sup>319</sup> racism, and even interpersonal<sup>320</sup> racism. However, these recent developments in how the powers of death are being geographically and racially concentrated merit further consideration than the too-easy “structural” ascription that nowadays masks more than it tells: after all, particular people make decisions that affect these lives, not social structures.

For example, a map put together by the Association of Housing and Neighborhood Development recently showed that, in New York City, “neighborhoods with the highest rates of positive COVID-19 cases also have some of the highest

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<sup>312</sup> Jenny Jarvie, “These U.S. Citizens Won't Get Coronavirus Stimulus Checks - Because Their Spouses Are Immigrants,” Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles Times, April 20, 2020), <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-04-20/u-s-citizens-coronavirus-stimulus-checks-spouses-immigrants>.

<sup>313</sup> Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “The Black Plague,” The New Yorker, April 16, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-black-plague>.

<sup>314</sup> Jeffery C. Mays and Andy Newman, “Virus Is Twice as Deadly for Black and Latino People Than Whites in N.Y.C.,” The New York Times (The New York Times, April 8, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/nyregion/coronavirus-race-deaths.html>.

<sup>315</sup> James E. Garcia, “African Americans Hard Hit By COVID-19: Are Latinos Facing A Similar Fate?,” Latino USA, April 8, 2020, <https://www.latinousa.org/2020/04/08/pocccovid19/>.

<sup>316</sup> <https://news.yahoo.com/ibram-x-kendi-data-research-130629323.html>

<sup>317</sup> Ann Choi, Ese Olumhense, and Yoav Gonen, “Bronx Residents Twice as Likely to Die From COVID-19 in NYC,” THE CITY (THE CITY, April 3, 2020), <https://thecity.nyc/2020/04/bronx-residents-twice-as-likely-to-die-from-covid-19-in-nyc.html>.

<sup>318</sup> Rev. Dr. Williams J. Barber and William J. Barber, “Racism and Covid-19 Are a Lethal Combination,” The Nation, April 21, 2020, <https://www.thenation.com/article/activism/environmental-racism-death-coronavirus/>.

<sup>319</sup> Danielle Muoio, “Coronavirus Underscores Need to Address Environmental Inequities, Report Says,” Politico PRO, April 21, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2020/04/20/coronavirus-underscores-need-to-address-environmental-inequities-report-says-1278015>.

<sup>320</sup> Michel Martin, “Racism Is Literally Bad For Your Health,” NPR (NPR, October 28, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/28/560444290/racism-is-literally-bad-for-your-health>.

numbers of service workers, rent-burdened households, and people of color.”<sup>321</sup> The case of Milwaukee, where I currently reside, is tells a similar story. When the Milwaukee County COVID-19 Dashboard, which visually tracks the spread of the virus, first went up, it showed that the spread is was concentrated in the historically Black north side of the city, tracking, as Rivera-Berruz observed, the segregation in Milwaukee. Now that map shows that the spread has moved to the Latinx and Native communities in Milwaukee's Southside, segregation, once again, producing death.<sup>322</sup>

There are now 394 deaths in Milwaukee, 149 of them Black and 54 of them Latinx, out of a total of 21,885 infections (as of August 16<sup>th</sup> 2020). The numbers are striking because Black people represent just 6.7 percent of the Wisconsin population, as Latinxs 6.9 percent; yet as of these figures, Black deaths account for 37 percent of the total, and Latinx deaths 13 percent. For comparison, white deaths in Milwaukee number 173 while, which is 44 percent, while they account for approximately 83 percent of the Wisconsin population.

Here, it seems that there is an odd new formation. It will be recalled that that I claimed in an earlier discussion that there has always been an ambivalence in the white mind towards migrant labor: at once necessary for generating wealth and comfort through their role in the menial, agricultural, industrial, construction, and service sectors, while at the same time threatening to engulf whiteness and destroy its civilization through sheer fecundity. There was an idea there that the market's need for a specific labor pool militates against disposability, but that idea would seem to be confounded in

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<sup>321</sup> EJ Dickson, “New Map Shows COVID-19 Is Hitting People of Color Hardest,” Rolling Stone (Rolling Stone, April 2, 2020), <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/covid19-coronavirus-pandemic-low-income-people-new-york-city-976670/>.

<sup>322</sup> Thanks to Jodi Melamed for pointing this out to me.

times of pandemic. For what has become evident today is that even though the lower orders of the racial caste system are “essential” to the supply lines and the health of white people, that does not lead to relative safety, care, or reprieve from genocidal treatment—in fact, there is a doubling down on the latter.

A contradiction would seem to emerge here that the “essential worker” in COVID times—that is, in times of generalized conditions of disposability—is, in virtue of this status, violable and thus disposable. There is a frightening thought, in fact, that—like the slavery experienced by Indigenous peoples under Spanish colonialism, or like concentration camp labor—this labor power has been retooled to be *expended unto death*. In effect, if one considers the actions of the anti-lockdown protests within this practical and ideological context, what they are demanding is that Latinx and other economically exploited workers should work until they die, not be folded into care. Rather unexpectedly, among the many scandalous signs and slogans and shouts of these protestors, an old Nazi slogan reemerges: *Arbeit Macht Frei*—“work will set you free,” the very same phrase written at the gates of Auschwitz.<sup>323</sup> If, as I have argued, Prevention through Deterrence transformed the borderlands into an instrument of genocidal terror, the pandemic—and, as we’ll see, the political repression of protestors—was just the catalyst necessary for extending the reach of that open-air elimination chamber into the urban metropolises.

There is another dimension to this contradiction, however, that requires attention. This is that, in some sense, the contradiction is not new, but has only—as Marx himself

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<sup>323</sup> Allison Kaplan Sommer, “Arbeit Macht Frei: Nazi Slogans Show up at Illinois Rally Protesting Coronavirus Lockdown,” Haaretz (Haaretz.com, April 5, 2020), <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-arbeit-macht-frei-nazi-slogans-at-illinois-rally-against-coronavirus-lockdown-1.8815257>.

might have put it—been *sharpened* by the pandemic. Recalling the principle of Latinx disposability—“to be here when needed, to be gone when not needed”—the paradoxically element of the situation is resolved if placed within the context of the type of *herrenvolk* ideology which I have been suggesting is diffusely spread across the hearts and minds of white people in this country. Given the need to secure what Oscar Mayorga called a white imagined future—conceived now, as I proposed, not only in economic but racial terms—it must also be conceded that the pandemic has created conditions for the realization of a desired ethnic cleansing that few in power would have risked themselves bringing about.

There is a mistake made here of wishing to reduce the “mishandling” of the pandemic to a profit issue or an issue of incompetence. But this shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the trajectory of American empire—which I have already detailed. The ugly truth is this: that the pathogen is advantageous for clearing out undesirable populations, populations regarded as a demographic threat to the future of the racial order. While “essential” work, before COVID-19, could be said to be foisted on disposable populations who were deemed fit to be worn down by backbreaking or stigmatized labor, it has now become *identical with* disposability. “Essential work,” like the Nazi *Arbeit Macht Frei*, is now just a euphemism for peoples regarded as *expendable unto death*: populations deemed fit to die for white people to remain in control, for white people to remain “white,” even just for white people to be comfortable.

There is a pair of distinctions in settler colonial theory that can be useful here for grasping the situation I have described of Black, Brown, and Native people. For Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism means settlers want the land, not the labor of subject

peoples—which is why the Native must be eliminated. In a response to Wolfe, Robin D.G. Kelley (2017) wrote that South Africa presented a case in which the settlers wanted the land *and* the labor of the Native, but not the *people*. By this, Kelley meant that settlers wanted “eliminate the culture, identity, and consciousness [of the Native] while preserving the body for labor” (Kelley, 2017: 268). Of course, for the case of the US, the settlers still want the land of Indigenous people—that relationship is functionally the same: hence the sheer indifference to the fates of Native people under COVID. But with the case of Black and Latinx workers, we are seeing a case in which the settlers want not only their bodies for labor; they see a third category as a good to had in forcing the reopening, and this is their lives. Under the herrenvolk ideology the United States, a negative externality to some is a positive externality to others.

In her essay on Milwaukee, Rivera-Berruz finds it useful to describe the combined effects of segregation and the pandemic using the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe’s concept of “necropower<sup>324</sup>.” Mbembe defines this as the state’s ghoulish<sup>325</sup> authority and capacity “to dictate who may live and who must die.” If we take Mbembe’s idea seriously, we can see that the geographic concentrations of the viral spread are places where inhabitants have been marked for death by virtue of how their pre-existing disposability came together with the priorities of the state in wake of the disaster. We might thus call these areas “necro-zones.”

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<sup>324</sup> J.-A. Mbembé, “Necropolitics,” trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. no. 1 (2003): pp. 11-40. [muse.jhu.edu/article/39984](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/39984).

<sup>325</sup> Dr. Stephanie Rivera Berruz, “COVID-19 Is Telling Us What We Already Know: Death and Debility Are Produced,” Medium (We Are Marquette, April 6, 2020), <https://stories.marquette.edu/covid-19-is-telling-us-what-we-already-know-death-and-debility-are-produced-e23d0aff9d8a>.

Although these categories can be useful, I am still not sure, however, that they explain the sources of “necro-power” or how those who engage in “necropolitics” have the power to produce necro-zones in the first place. Nor does it explain the reappearance of Nazi slogans<sup>326</sup> demanding that the vulnerable sacrifice their lives and health for the benefit of the wealthy. As Trump threatens to withhold<sup>327</sup> COVID-19 aid from sanctuary cities; as ICE refuses to relent<sup>328</sup> its sweeps during the pandemic; and as the detention centers threaten<sup>329</sup> to become<sup>330</sup> death camps if immigrants are not released—the concentration camp model being retooled, now, less a place of holding until death, than of accelerating death—I suggest we cannot have a full understanding of these events without placing them against the backdrop of the underlying beat, the rhythm of a society like ours; and this is underlying rhythm, and what it is in the process of generating, is genocide.

### **3. A New Dirty War (Revisited)**

When it comes to the protests, the situation is perhaps even grimmer. There is a constellation of what we can call “data points” or processes underway that I would like

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<sup>326</sup> Morgan Gstalter, “Auschwitz Museum Condemns Nazi Slogan at 'Re-Open Illinois' Protest,” *The Hill* (The Hill, May 2, 2020), <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/495800-auschwitz-museum-condemns-nazi-slogan-at-re-open-illinois>.

<sup>327</sup> Douglas Jones (TEGNA), “Trump Hints State Bailouts Could Depend on Policies of Sanctuary Cities,” *Khou-11*, April 28, 2020, <https://www.khou.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/president-trump-hints-that-state-bailouts-could-depend-on-sanctuary-cities-policies/285-5ccacfec-7502-4fc1-af4f-35bf64871393>.

<sup>328</sup> Fiona Harrigan, “Even as COVID-19 Grips Nation, ICE Remains Ruthless: Opinion,” *Sun* (South Florida Sun-Sentinel, April 20, 2020), <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/opinion/commentary/fl-op-com-harrigan-coronavirus-ice-immigration-arrests-20200419-o5jzosh3qfcltklywb633gcz6q-story.html>.

<sup>329</sup> Dianne Solis, “Immigrant Detention Center in North Texas Erupts in COVID-19 Cases,” *Dallas News*, April 20, 2020, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/public-health/2020/04/20/immigrant-detention-center-in-alvarado-erupts-in-covid-19-cases/>.

<sup>330</sup> Jeffery Martin, “60 Percent of ICE Detainees Tested Have Coronavirus,” *Newsweek* (Newsweek, April 28, 2020), <https://www.newsweek.com/60-percent-ice-detainees-tested-have-coronavirus-1500817>.

to separately identify here. The first data point is the threats of force coming from the executive. It must be noted that from the start of the protests, which began as a response to the brutal killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Trump and other politicians have consistently advocated for a violent response to the protests, calling for governors to “dominate” protestors by using the National Guard, while labeling as “weak” the Democratic officials of cities with large mobilizations, such as Seattle, New York, and Portland.<sup>331</sup> Having threatened protestors repeatedly on Twitter—notably, by invoking the history of racist violence behind the phrase “when the looting starts, the shootings starts,”<sup>332</sup> the history of the use dogs against Black activists,<sup>333</sup> as well as the memory of the Tulsa genocide<sup>334</sup>—he then manufactured the justification for actually deploying troops against the protestors by labeling antifascist and anti-racist protestors *terrorists*.

This is the second data point: the attempt to label a group a national enemy. Trump’s tweets and the discourse they are creating among his followers are dedicated to instilling the association, not just between “Black Lives Matter,” “Antifa,” and “terrorism.” Importantly, in my view, they are also trying to create the equation between these and communism, which, as I already explained, is *the* political ideology most

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<sup>331</sup> *Trump Called on Governors to ‘Dominate’ Protesters* | *NowThis, YouTube* (NowThis, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQPARrzgHy0>.

<sup>332</sup> Katelyn Burns, “The Racist History of Trump’s ‘When the Looting Starts, the Shooting Starts’ Tweet,” *Vox* (*Vox*, May 29, 2020), <https://www.vox.com/identities/2020/5/29/21274754/racist-history-trump-when-the-looting-starts-the-shooting-starts>.

<sup>333</sup> Riley Beggin, “Trump Threatens Protesters with ‘Vicious Dogs.’ Some Note They’ve Seen That before.,” *Vox* (*Vox*, May 30, 2020), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/5/30/21275643/trump-george-floyd-protests-vicious-dogs-civil-rights>.

<sup>334</sup> Kevin Breuninger, “Trump Threatens ‘Protesters, Anarchists, Agitators, Looters or Lowlifes’ the Day before His Tulsa Rally,” *CNBC* (*CNBC*, June 19, 2020), <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/19/trump-threatens-protesters-the-day-before-his-tulsa-rally.html>.

threatening to the racial order. This is important because the history of red-baiting in the US makes it a particularly volatile accusation—it is has been, until recently, *palpable* how afraid the ordinary American has been of communism, and this fear has only dissipated because of Bernie Sanders' presidential campaigns and because of how stark the income inequalities have become.

This is not to say that Trump or his followers actually believe there is a communist threat. That doesn't matter. It is such a powerful shibboleth that communism is bad that asserting the label is sufficient evidence, by itself, to condemn one's opponents. Thus, Trump calls the Democratic National Committee's apparatchiks as communists and radical leftists, though they are staunch centrists—even conservatives in some respects.

It seems to me that something strange and, perhaps, new is happening with these terms. Old meanings from the Cold War are being mapped onto new populations, in a sense, haphazardly, so that not all of them stick. But security forces are acting on that basis, even though they don't. It's almost as though there is an attempt to impose the sheer subjectivity the Trump regime onto social reality and imprint it with his character. The worst part, of course, is that the liberals offer no counter to this build of organized (and organizing) politicidal and genocidal violence. This kind of deployment of the terrorist label thus also offers yet another reason why, as I emphasized in chapter 1, it cannot be weaponized against white power.

The third data point, then, is the actual use of state power. In June, finally, Trump made good on his promise to use force when he announced that he was declaring a curfew and “dispatching thousands and thousands of heavily armed soldiers, military

personnel and law enforcement officers to stop the rioting, looting, vandalism, assaults and the wanton destruction of property.”<sup>335</sup>

By July, there were widespread reports of unidentifiable and heavily armed federal agents who looked and behaved more like paramilitary units than a government agency.<sup>336</sup> Made up of personnel from ICE, CBP, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Coast Guard, and The U.S. Marshals Service, federal forces have been deployed across the country, in Kansas City, Seattle, Washington D.C.; and Trump has threatened to deploy them to Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee—even New York City and Oakland, Baltimore. In Portland, witnesses have documented these agents assaulting protestors and even snatching people off the street in ways that are obviously reminiscent of the political disappearances of the Dirty Wars in Latin America, and elsewhere.

In the lead up to this, of course, local police themselves were brutalizing protestors. A report by ProPublica reviewed 400 videos documenting “incidences of violence” in the protests, finding that it was the police who nearly always escalated the conflict.<sup>337</sup> In a Google Sheet, Lawyer T. Greg Doucette and mathematician Jason Miller have compiled 833 clips and images of police violence against protestors.<sup>338</sup> In early

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<sup>335</sup> Donald J. Trump (June 1, 2020).

<sup>336</sup> Angela Dewan, “Trump Is Calling Protesters Terrorists. That Puts Him in the Company of the World's Autocrats,” CNN (Cable News Network, July 26, 2020), <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/25/politics/us-protests-trump-terrorists-intl/index.html>.

<sup>337</sup> Lucas Waldron et al., “We Reviewed Police Tactics Seen in Nearly 400 Protest Videos. Here's What We Found.,” ProPublica, July 16, 2020, <https://projects.propublica.org/protest-police-tactics/>.

<sup>338</sup> Katie Way, “Activists Are Collecting Crowdsourced Videos of Cops Hurting Protesters,” Activists Are Collecting Crowdsourced Videos of Cops Hurting Protesters, June 7, 2020, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/7kpbmy/police-violence-at-protests-is-undeniable-all-the-videos-are-right-here](https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/7kpbmy/police-violence-at-protests-is-undeniable-all-the-videos-are-right-here).

June, there were 150 documented cases of press freedom violations;<sup>339</sup> by the end of July there were 500 and counting.<sup>340</sup> Some of these cases have resulted in serious harm, even death.<sup>341</sup> Meanwhile, arrested protestors are being charged with felonies.<sup>342</sup> There are think-pieces now suggesting, as one op-ed put it, that it is Trump who “brought America’s Dirty Wars home.”<sup>343</sup> Of course, as I have already explained, they were already here before and, thus, always threatened to return. This is why the communist label is significant.

Such events signal the fourth data point. In “Architects of Abolition,” an unpublished lecture, Joy James reminds us that, in response to the brutal killing of Freddie Gray by the police in 2015, President Obama, confronted by the clamors for justice, said that couldn’t “federalize” the police. “The challenge for us as the federal government,” he said, “is that we don’t run these police forces. I can’t federalize every police force in the country and force them to retrain.”<sup>344</sup> Now “federalize,” as James pints out, “is not a standard verb in American language.” What he, the President of the US, was saying was that he was unable “to stop the police from committing racist

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<sup>339</sup> Charlotte Godart, “Visualizing Police Violence Against Journalists At Protests Across The U.S.,” Bellingcat, June 5, 2020, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/americas/2020/06/05/visualizing-police-violence-against-journalists-at-protests-across-the-us/>.

<sup>340</sup> Eric Neugeboren, “500 Cases and Counting: Unprecedented Press Freedom Violations at US Protests,” Voice of America, July 20, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/press-freedom/500-cases-and-counting-unprecedented-press-freedom-violations-us-protests>.

<sup>341</sup> KUT Staff, “Man Shot At Downtown Austin Protest Dies From His Injuries,” KUT, July 25, 2020, <https://www.kut.org/post/man-shot-downtown-austin-protest-dies-his-injuries>.

<sup>342</sup> Adam Gabbatt, “Felony Charges against BLM Protesters Are ‘Suppression Tactic’, Experts Say,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, August 16, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/16/felony-charges-blm-protesters-suppression-tactic>.

<sup>343</sup> Stuart Schrader, “Trump Has Brought America’s Dirty Wars Home,” The New Republic, July 21, 2020, <https://newrepublic.com/article/158580/trump-portland-dirty-wars>.

<sup>344</sup> Adam Bates, “President Obama Wields Much More Influence over Police than He Admits,” Cato Institute, April 30, 2015, <https://www.cato.org/blog/president-obama-wields-much-more-influence-over-police-he-admits>.

killings and rapes” (James). He was admitting, astonishingly, that the most powerful person in the world, was ineffectual; either willing or unable to control the police.

By contrast, the Police Benevolent Association—New York’s largest police union, with 24 thousand members—endorsed Trump’s reelection bid, an atypical move the union.<sup>345</sup> He counts on the support, too, of the National Police Association, which represents 1000 police units.<sup>346</sup> Although they haven’t announced their endorsement yet, both the National Border Council, a union for Border Patrol agents numbering in 16 thousand members, and the ICE union, endorsed Trump in 2016.<sup>347</sup> The private prison industry which controls ICE detention centers, predictably, has endorsed Trump.<sup>348</sup>

In light of Obama’s statements, it is meaningful that the loyalty and power all of these, largely unaccountable agencies is being articulated to Trump—not the office of the president, but the *man*. Among the reasons CBP union cited for endorsing Trump in 2016, they said that:

We need a person in the White House who doesn't fear the media, who doesn't embrace political correctness, who doesn't need the money, who is familiar with success, who won't bow to foreign dictators, who is pro-military and values law

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<sup>345</sup> NBC New York, “New York’s Largest Police Union Endorses President Trump,” NBC New York (NBC New York, August 15, 2020), <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/new-yorks-largest-police-union-endorses-president-trump/2569188/>.

<sup>346</sup> Rebecca Klar, “National Association of Police Organizations Endorses Trump,” The Hill (The Hill, July 15, 2020), <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/507596-national-association-of-police-organizations-endorses-trump>.

<sup>347</sup> For the CBP endorsement, see: Eric Bradner, “Border Patrol Union Endorses Donald Trump,” CNN (Cable News Network, March 30, 2016), <https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/30/politics/border-patrol-union-endorses-donald-trump/index.html>.

For ICE: Politico Staff, “ICE Union Endorses Trump,” Politico, September 26, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/09/immigration-customs-enforcement-union-endorses-trump-228664>.

<sup>348</sup> Nomaan Merchant and Associated Press, “Private Prison Industry Backs President Trump, Prepares If Biden Wins,” KPRC (KPRC Click2Houston, August 15, 2020), <https://www.click2houston.com/news/texas/2020/08/16/private-prison-industry-backs-president-trump-prepares-if-biden-wins/>.

enforcement, and who is angry for America and NOT subservient to the interests of other nations. Donald Trump is such a man.

We should recall here the lesson I extracted from the PTD documents: the strategy's success, as the planners themselves conceived of it, implied that the Border Patrol should have a broader impact on national politics, that it would need to shape public opinion and manage social perception, that it would require, in short, to imprint its violent character on the whole of the nation.

The police, of course, have long developed their own interests as a class. The same is true, it appears, of the Border Patrol, who—as we saw—have long held national political aspirations. A former Border Patrol Senior Officer Jenn Budd has written, in fact, that the agency has “long wanted to become a national police force.” What would make that a disaster, she says, is that the agency is “primed for the president and would do practically anything he says, including separating children from their families and violating domestic and international asylum laws.” The Border Patrol, as I've already mentioned, is now the largest armed federal security force in the country. As Budd notes, it “has spent decades waiting quietly in the wings, stocking up on weapons and nearly tripling in size since 2001. Waiting for that moment when a president would see them for the heroes they believe themselves to be. Waiting for that moment when a president would fully activate these extraordinary powers to do his/her bidding.”<sup>349</sup> They are, as another commentator put it, like the Trump's very own Praetorian Guard.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Jenn Budd, “Border Patrol's Dream of Becoming a National Police Force Is Becoming a Reality,” Southern Border Communities Coalition, June 4, 2020, [https://www.southernborder.org/border\\_patrol\\_s\\_dream\\_of\\_becoming\\_a\\_national\\_police\\_force\\_is\\_becoming\\_a\\_reality?fbclid=IwAR3-CciuduJVcURVvnmok8TEQSLHUcAdmT0KMmwsCqD4TjBBh2GbQS12K](https://www.southernborder.org/border_patrol_s_dream_of_becoming_a_national_police_force_is_becoming_a_reality?fbclid=IwAR3-CciuduJVcURVvnmok8TEQSLHUcAdmT0KMmwsCqD4TjBBh2GbQS12K).

<sup>350</sup> Paul Matzko, “Paramilitarization of Border Patrol - an American Secret Police?,” Las Vegas Sun, July 23, 2020, <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2020/jul/23/paramilitarization-of-border-patrol-an-american-se/>.

But this is not all. The fifth and, perhaps, the most alarming data point, is the emergence of irregular and informal forces alongside these “Praetors,” some of them of a fanatical and fantastical religious zeal. There is not as yet an official count of all the rightwing violence by such actors, but on Twitter Alexander Reid Ross has been tracking vigilante incidents against anti-racist protesters and people of color across the U.S. and compiled them in an interactive map<sup>351</sup> and long Twitter thread.<sup>352</sup> On his count there are at least 425 incidences of vigilante violence. They include “the throwing of lighter fluid and burning<sup>353</sup> an 18-year old bi-racial Jewish woman in her car in Wisconsin, the attempted lynch<sup>354</sup> of a Black man in the woods in Indiana, and the gang beating<sup>355</sup> and stabbing-by-flagpole of a small group of antifascists in a ditch by ‘Blue Lives Matter’ protesters in Colorado.”<sup>356</sup>

One of the early such events was a nightmare scenario that a multi-racial family was subjected to when they tried to go camping near in Forks, Washington. Stopping for camping supplies, they were confronted and repeatedly accused of being “Antifa.” They were then stalked by armed men in four vehicles. Hearing gunshots and power saws

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<sup>351</sup> Alexander Reid Ross, “Recent Hatewatching Activities,” Alexander Reid Ross, June 19, 2020, <https://alexanderreidross.net/2020/06/19/recent-hatewatching-activities/>.

<sup>352</sup> Alexander Reid Ross, “Quick Thread Highlighting Several Reports from Yesterday about Violent...,” Twitter (Twitter, June 2, 2020), <https://twitter.com/areidross/status/1267809836164476931>.

<sup>353</sup> Marcy Oster, “Family of Biracial Jewish Woman Set on Fire in Wisconsin Thanks Public for ‘Overwhelming Outpouring of Support’,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 2, 2020, <https://www.jta.org/quick-reads/family-of-biracial-jewish-woman-set-on-fire-in-wisconsin-thanks-public-for-overwhelming-outpouring-of-support>.

<sup>354</sup> Marquise Francis and Christopher Wilson, “2 Men Charged in July 4 ‘Attempted Lynching’ at Indiana Lake,” Yahoo! News (Yahoo!, July 17, 2020), <https://news.yahoo.com/two-men-charged-in-july-4-attempted-lynching-at-indiana-lake-161736211.html>.

<sup>355</sup> Serena Bettis, “Violence, Conversation Breaks out at Back the Blue Rally,” The Rocky Mountain Collegian, August 8, 2020, <https://collegian.com/2020/08/category-news-violence-conversation-breaks-out-at-back-the-blue-rally/>.

<sup>356</sup> Alexander Reid Ross, “America’s Armed, Antisemitic Far Right Is Prepping to Defend Trump in November: Opinion,” Haaretz.com (Haaretz.com, August 16, 2020), <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-militias-proud-boys-trump-u-s-armed-violence-1.9069770?v=1597646914704>.

from their camp site, they finally decided to just leave. But as they drove back, they found that someone had fell trees across the road to prevent them from leaving.<sup>357</sup> If it wasn't for a group of kids who came across them and helped them clear the roads, there is no telling what might have happened to them. (It was later found that state official might have been involved in stoking the hysteria.)

This phenomenon together with the toxic language coming out of the Trump White House force the conclusion that nearly everything coming out of the Trump White House is incitement to violence, including incitement to genocide. Here again, I mean this in a normative sense, not the legal sense. I believe this not because it meets any definition of incitement in international law, but because it is obvious to me that the message in Trump's equation, that Back activism/Black Lives Matter are "Antifa" and "Antifa" are terrorists, non-state actors receive this as permission to self-deputize in order to remove localized occurrences of the "threats." But this is just the pattern of retributive genocide. From the label of "terrorist," the immediate inferential next-step triggered, if we use Tirrel's language, is the possibility of elimination. In the demonization of egalitarian social movements as, not just bad or confused, but evil, what occurs conceptually and psychologically is a mapping yet another layer of toxic associations onto the target groups. There is a moral inversion: the good is the bad, and the bad is the good.

This association with evil comes from the religious undertones of many of these forces. In particular, I have in mind here the "QAnon" conspiracy theorists/Trump

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<sup>357</sup> David K. Li, "Multiracial Family on Washington State Camping Trip Is Accused of Being Antifa and Menaced," NBCNews.com (NBC Universal News Group, June 9, 2020), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/multiracial-family-washington-state-camping-trip-accused-being-antifa-menaced-n1228281>.

cultists. In terms of ideology, QAnon is a hodgepodge of crackpot ideas that, separately, might have been comical in an earlier era—when conspiracy thinking was a quirk, rather than an racialized existential threat—but that now, especially as they come together, are quite dangerous. Followers of “Q”—believed to be an investigator who is leaving a trail of clues for the devotees to decipher the message—think, as one reporter put it, that an “evil cabal of Democrat, Satan-worshipping, pedophile sex-traffickers rule the world” and President Donald Trump is trying to stop them by reining in the “deep state” that enforces their power.<sup>358</sup>

I refer to them as “cultists” because, if one looks closely at how they speak of Trump, they quite literally deify him as having a “grand plan” that, once fulfilled, will reveal that all actions that seem like imperfections now are, in fact, part of a larger rationality. This is cultish because it is how one reasons about God, not a politician. Indeed, on social media like Twitter, it is easy to miss that a great amount of their energies are apparently expended in trying to maintain their own belief in Trump and in encouraging others to hold fast to their belief. Among the hashtags and phrases and themes that they frequently deploy are: “stick to the plan,” “you don’t know what’s coming,” “can’t wait for mass arrests.” In short, phrases that stoke collective anticipation. It is thus also easy to miss that this is also a harbinger of mass murder: Predictions and warnings, anticipations, these are all among the linguistic hallmarks that presage genocide, or, in this politicide.

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<sup>358</sup> Frank Figliuzzi, “Republican QAnon Candidate Marjorie Taylor Greene’s Win Highlights Coming 2020 Crisis,” NBCNews.com (NBC Universal News Group, August 15, 2020), <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/republican-qanon-candidate-marjorie-taylor-greene-s-win-highlights-coming-ncna1236845>.

What is particularly concerning about this coalition between Trump cultists and neo-Nazis, and militiamen, of course, is that this is a population bloc that is heavily armed. As Reid Ross remarks, while most of incidents of vigilante violence “appear to have been carried out by violent radicalized individuals with little to no specific training,” there is an emerging pattern of “an increasingly coordinated right-wing vigilante movement, fueled by organizers with counterinsurgency skills, committed to using their military or security forces experience against Black Lives Matter and the ever-amorphous ‘Antifa.’” Thus, he observes, “from being a panoply of disorganized and marginal micro-groups, there is a new spirit of organization, tactical experience and militarized violence, and it is a reasonable assumption that that ‘upgrade’ is being led by the increasing involvement and profile of counterinsurgency veterans, former CIA contractors, and law enforcement officers in the anti-protest far right.”<sup>359</sup>

In an interview somewhere, historian Greg Grandin says that the reason Cuba never succumbed to US imperial designs had a lot to do with two important factors: 1) strong political education—Fidel Castro, after all, personally gave real lessons on political economy and philosophy on live TV—and 2) the state’s willingness to arm the people in moments of crisis, as in the Bay of Pigs Invasion. The US effectively has a farcical version of this: widespread far right indoctrination and an unhinged, rampant gun culture. The right in this country, in other words, has groomed a whole population to act as a bulwark for the racial and economic order. There is a whole *stratum of creeps*, we might call them, *primed* to take it upon themselves to “clear out” anti-racist

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<sup>359</sup> Alexander Reid Ross, “America’s Armed, Antisemitic Far Right Is Prepping to Defend Trump in November: Opinion,” Haaretz.com (Haaretz.com, August 16, 2020), <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-militias-proud-boys-trump-u-s-armed-violence-1.9069770?v=1597646914704>.

protestors and Black and Brown people. It is like the slave patrols of old, as Joel Williamson described: posse comitatus that pull the regular people into their service, at a moment's notice. Predictably, ICE has thus recently launched a program to deputize civilians.

So, there we have it. The genocidal present—and, it pains to say, what I fear is an expanding genocidal future. We know, as I have already remarked before, that in places where support of democratic reform (called “communism”) has been widespread enough, the US has engineered the mass repression of ordinary people to stamp it out and make sure it never returns. How is this done? The nightmare case here is Indonesia, in which the CIA might—though it can never be asserted with complete confidence—have deliberately engineered the mass murder, disappearance, and torture of 1 million people. But, again, we don't have to go abroad to for similar examples even if they were smaller in scale. The US has run its own “low intensity” Dirty Wars for decades; there are, right now, at least 54 nominally “visible” political prisoners from what Joy James has called “The Revolutionary Period,” which spanned from the late 50s-early 70s. During that time COINTELPRO killed at least 28 Black Panther Party members and imprisoned another 750 more. And while the lethality was always reserved for Black revolutionaries, there was also surveillance, infiltration, and imprisonment of Chicano, Native and Puerto Rican radicals.

At the end of that era, as I have here suggested, The War on Drugs and the war on immigrants—and later even the war on terror—would replace the old rationales of anti-communism for domestic racial repression. But this was never really about crime, or terrorism, it was about controlling and destabilizing populations deemed a threat to

global white power and, as a result, there are hundreds of thousands, particularly racialized males, in prison for this; and there have been millions, particularly Mexican males, deported for this.

Now tell me, or ask yourself, what might the state be willing to do to stamp out what they're seeing out in the streets right now? What might the state be willing to do to crush what things like the Sanders campaign, flawed as it was, what Ferguson, what Standing Rock, and now Minneapolis, have awoken in the hearts of ordinary people? It brings no satisfaction for me to point out that we should make no mistake, if you read the signs, contained already in the idea of "MAGA," is the foregone conclusion that everyone left of Trump must be eliminated.

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