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Journal of Right-Wing Studies

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Letter from the Editor

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Journal

Journal of Right-Wing Studies, 2(2)

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Publication Date

2025-01-18

DOI

10.5070/RW3.41978

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Letter from the Editor

We are publishing this special issue of *JRWS* in an extraordinary moment, near the end of a time of fearsome liminality. A friend of mine told me the Biden-to-Trump interregnum reminded her of the stretch between a defendant's sentencing and the day—a month or two thereafter—to present themselves for detention. The illiberalism of Trumpism is empowered and blueprinted as never before, including aspirations toward deportation and ethnic cleansing on an unheard-of scale. Movements like Christian nationalism, which have used Trumpism as a vehicle from the start, have been joined by health and anti-vaccination fanaticism. They were joined as well by an extreme free-market libertarianism that aspires to obliterate the welfare state and that has grown out of a branch of the tech world already deeply inserted in US defense and space policy, and that seems intent on scripting the future of cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence.

On the world stage Trump 2 tips the balance toward the othering nationalist regimes and parties that by now span the globe. In parallel to how they scoffed at the institutional principles and norms of liberal democracy's domestic politics, these forces have now taken increasingly bellicose steps toward undermining the values and practices of the international order liberal democracy created in the wake of World War II. Certainly, that system was breached so frequently by even its loudest champions that it paved the way for its own disintegration. But the coming US regime looks primed to make the qualitative leap toward sanctioning land grabs through war in Ukraine and Palestine, while Trump himself is openly talking of aspirations to take over Greenland and the Panama Canal.

In 2016 Trump's presidential campaign mobilized an online manosphere of alienated young men who were networked via gaming and were predisposed to a self-pitying misogyny. By 2024, this world had morphed into a hypermasculine and anti-gender online industry given to far-right views of sexuality and traditional male and female roles. This special issue of *JRWS*, guest edited by Catherine Tebaldi and Scott Burnett, probes this online world in a variety of countries, uncovering its dynamics using linguistic and psychoanalytic tools. We believe this makes an essential contribution to understanding the current "anti-woke" and often atavistic march to the right that already has the wind in its sails and seems poised to profit expansively from the new American government that we await.

Lawrence Rosenthal
December 31, 2024