Research Articles

Neoliberal Fascism's War on Immigrants Echoes a Dark and Haunting Past

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Abstract

In this paper Henry Giroux, the US theorist of critical pedagogy, examines the treatment of immigrants in America likening it to fascism's extreme nationalism. He draws a parallel between neoliberal capitalism and fascism to explain the suppression of freedom, anti-democratic sentiments and the growth of racism leading to a demonisation of the other. Giroux speaks to the formation of a form of "neoliberal fascism" under Trump and considers the horrors of the perpetration of state violence against children. He documents the way that Trump mobilises "fascist passions" to set up immigration detention camps that involves the separation of children from their parents. [Ed.]

Keywords

neoliberalism – fascism – immigrants – democracy – nationalism – white supremacists – Trump

After decades of the neoliberal nightmare both in the United States and abroad, the mobilizing passions of fascism have been unleashed unlike anything we

have seen since the 1930s and 1940s. Extreme capitalism has produced massive economic suffering, tapped into a combination of fear and a cathartic cruelty, and emboldened a savage lawlessness aimed at those considered disposable. In the United States, the Trump administration has accelerated neoliberalism as an enabling force that provides fertile ground for the unleashing of the ideological architecture, poisonous values, and racist social relations sanctioned and produced under fascism. While there is no perfect fit between Trump and the fascist societies of Mussolini, Hitler, and Pinochet, “the basic tenets of extreme nationalism, racism, misogyny, and disgust with democracy and the rule of law are essentially the same” (Johnson, 2018). In this instance, neoliberalism and fascism conjoin and advance in a comfortable and mutually compatible project and movement that connects the worse excesses of capitalism with fascist ideals – the veneration of war, a hatred of reason and truth; a populist celebration of ultra-nationalism and racial purity; the suppression of freedom and dissent; a culture which promotes lies, spectacles, a demonization of the other, a discourse of decline, brutal violence, and ultimately state violence in heterogeneous forms.

Neoliberalism creates a failed democracy and in doing so opens up the fascists’ use of fear and terror to transform a state of exception into a state of emergency. As a project, it destroys all the commanding institutions of democracy and consolidates power in the hands of a financial elite. As a movement, it produces and legitimates massive economic inequality and suffering, privatizes public goods, dismantles essential government agencies, and individualizes all social problems. Governance is now on the side of a war culture that transforms the political state into the corporate state, and uses the tools of surveillance, militarization, and law and order to discredit civil liberties while ridiculing and censoring critics. Under Trump, neoliberal fascism’s most distinctive feature is its war on undocumented children and immigrants, women, Muslims, and Blacks. The model of the prison and the state-sanctioned embrace of violence and lawlessness are now unleashed on youth, people of color, undocumented immigrants, and all those others considered disposable as part of a larger project of state terrorism that embraces white supremacist ideology, state violence, and authoritarian beliefs.

Reason and compassion give way to a rhetoric of rancid bigotry which works to inform policy and inflict humiliation, misery, and suffering on diverse groups at all levels of society who are viewed as degenerate and repugnant. How else to explain the transformation under the Trump administration of ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement), the largest police agency under the rule of the Department of Homeland Security, into what Cynthia Nixon, the candidate for the New York Democratic Governorship in 2018, calls

"a terrorist organization of its own, that is terrorizing people who are coming to this country" (Anapol, 2018). Congressman Mark Pocan (D-Wis) after visiting the southern border issued a statement calling for the abolishment of ICE. He writes:

During my trip to the southern border, it was clear that ICE, and its actions of hunting down and tearing apart families, has wreaked havoc on far too many people. From conducting raids at garden centers and meatpacking plants, to breaking up families at churches and schools, ICE is tearing apart families and ripping at the moral fabric of our nation. Unfortunately, President Trump and his team of white nationalists, including Stephen Miller, have so misused ICE that the agency can no longer accomplish its goals effectively... I'm introducing legislation that would abolish ICE and crack down on the agency's blanket directive to target and round up individuals and families. The heartless actions of this abused agency do not represent the values of our nation and the U.S. must develop a more humane immigration system, one that treats every person with dignity and respect (Pocan, 2018).

Aida Chavez reports in *The Intercept* that "in addition to physical and sexual assaults, immigrants in detention are often subject to bigoted remarks by facility personnel" (Chavez, 2018). For example, an immigrant who refused to fight another detainee as part of a game refused and threatened to lodge a complaint only to be told that "No one will believe baboon complaints" (ibid). Officers also "denied him hygiene products and his food was thrown away" (ibid). The guards "continued to refer to him as a... 'gorilla,' and encouraged others to 'rattle his cage'" (ibid). In a jail in Florence, Arizona "a guard told a man to 'look in the mirror to see King Kong'" (ibid). In other instances, immigrants have been sexually assaulted and denied pain medication. In public records obtained by *The Intercept*, more than a 1,000 complaints have been made about sexual abuse in immigration detention centers (Speri, 2018). The systemic nature and scope of the sexual abuses are horrifying and reveal the underpinnings of a fascist police state. As Alice Speri observes:

But the sheer number of complaints – despite serious obstacles in the path of those filing them, as well as the patterns they reveal about mistreatment in facilities nationwide – suggest that sexual assault and harassment in immigration detention are not only widespread but systemic, and enabled by an agency that regularly fails to hold itself accountable.

While the reports obtained by The Intercept are only a fraction of those filed, they shed light on a system that operates largely in secrecy, and they help hint at the magnitude of the abuse, and the incompetence and complicity of the agency tasked with the safety of the 40,000 women, men, and children it detains each day in more than 200 jails, prisons, and detention centers across the country (ibid).

It is impossible to separate these vicious acts of dehumanization and assault from the enabling force of Trump's rhetoric of racial hatred. His toxic discourse of bigotry has a long history and became a defining public feature of his white supremacist ideology the moment he kicked off his presidential bid with the insulting claim that Mexican immigrants are "bring drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume are good people." The racist invective has been a hallmark of Trump's presidency surfacing again and again. Another highly publicized example took place at the beginning of 2018 when it was reported he told lawmakers working on a new immigration policy that the United States shouldn't accept people from "shithole countries" like Haiti, El Salvador, and various African nations (Dawsey, 2018). Given his support for white nationalism and his vaguely coded call to "Make America Great (White) Again, Trump's overt racist remarks reinforce echoes of white supremacy reminiscent of fascist dictators in the 1930s. Yet, make no mistake. There is much more at work here than a politics of incivility. Behind Trump's use of vulgarity and his disparagement of immigrants and countries that are poor and non-white lies the terrifying discourse of white supremacy, ethnic cleansing, and the politics of disposability. This is a vocabulary that considers some individuals and groups not only faceless, voiceless, and subject to terminal expulsion.

This is the language of the police state. The endpoint of the language of racial cleansing and a politics of disposability is a form of social death, or even worse. What is frightening about Trump's racist vocabulary is that it registers a move from the coded language of benign neglect to policies marked by malignant cruelty and legitimates forms of state violence that act unapologetically and with impunity. It also mirrors both a shift in politics and popular opinion. White supremacists and neo-Nazi moves are on the rise as is a growing popular support and tolerance for such groups – matched by an uptake in violence against Blacks, Muslims, Jews, and other who are the object of this growing bigotry, hatred and anti-Semitism.

At a time when any reference to a Nazi past is denounced as unrealistic or inapplicable, moral witnessing is disconnected from historical memory and the horrors of another age surface in different forms. Under such circumstances,

once again the architecture of fascism resurrects itself. Trump's zero tolerance policy which involves the kidnapping and stealing of children from the parents of immigrant families provides moving and crucial testimony to the power historical memory and the necessity to listen to the warnings of the past, particularly in an era of accelerating state terrorism. Fascism begins with words and its ideology, values, and production of identities are learned testifying to the necessity of making the teaching of historical memory and civic literacy central to politics and crucial to analyzing the institutions and formative cultures designed to cancel out the future, especially for young people, immigrants, and others considered less than human and disposable. Under the current era of neoliberal fascism, historical memory and moral witnessing are especially dangerous when they do the bridging work between the past and the present, the self and others, and allow the public to translate private troubles into broader systemic considerations. Under Trump's regime of state terrorism, critical thought and education become dangerous because they exemplify as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Hannah Arendt, among others have argued, that "democracy is "a way of life," an ethical ideal that demands *active* and *constant* attention. And if we fail to work at creating and re-creating democracy, there is no guarantee that it will survive" (Bernstein, 2005, p. 25). This is particularly true at a time of emerging illiberal democracies across the globe.

State terrorism and its offspring illiberal democracy come in many forms, but one of its most cruel and revolting expressions is when it is aimed at children. Even though U.S. President Donald Trump backed down in the face of a scathing political and public outcry and ended his administration's policy of separating migrant children from their parents, make no mistake: His actions were and remain a form of terrorism.

That he was defiant until his back was against the wall points not only to a society that has lost its moral compass, but has also descended into such darkness that it demands both the loudest forms of moral outrage and a collective resistance aimed at eliminating the narratives, power relations and values that support it. In addition, while Trump stopped the kidnapping and disappearing of children from their families, both the children and families are now incarcerated together indefinitely in detention camps that often lack minimal humanitarian conditions. As a rebuke to his critics, Trump has also stated in a vicious attack on both undocumented "immigrants and the judicial system that handles them...that those who cross into the United States illegally should be sent back immediately without due process or an appearance before a judge" (Rogers & Stolberg, 2018).

The caging of children, even infants, and their separation from their families points not only to a standard fascist tactic. That is, using children as an

instrument of fear to threaten those considered enemies or disposable. It also reflects a deep seated hatred of the women who reproduce them—a line of thought rarely mentioned in the immigration debates. The old fascism invested in young people in an effort to socialize them to adapt to fascist ideologies and values. Neoliberal fascism moves in the opposite direction by writing large sections of American youth out of the future while keeping undocumented immigrant youth in cages. What both groups of racialized youth share is the criminalization of their behavior and escalating representations of them as threatening, dangerous, and underserving of both human dignity and human rights. If white childhood is seen as a paragon of innocence, non-white youth are the victims of long-standing colonial policies and are relegated to spaces marked as zones of social abandonment, spaces of terminal exclusion, and the frightening spaces of violence and invisibility.

Underneath and rarely mentioned in the new fascism is the connection between white men who feel left out and define themselves as victims and their fear of women, which largely supports Trump's war on women. What is crucial to understand is that fascism is largely normalized by anchoring identities in notions of hyper-masculinity and organized irresponsibility that kills off any notion of the social, social culpability, and collective struggle. At the same time, it eviscerates the notion of freedom and reduces it to a sclerotic consumerism, an adoration of unchecked self-interest, and the freedom to hate. Neoliberal fascism is heavy on state power and that power is now largely defined by the financial elite and corporate interests. What is unique about such power in the current historical moment is its war on youth and its bold-face demonization and violence against immigrants.

State violence against children and those considered enemies of the state has a long dark history among authoritarian regimes. As Juan Cole reminds us, Josef Stalin's police took children from the parents he labelled as "enemies of the people." Adolf Hitler, Francisco Franco, and Augusto Pinochet all "separated children from their families on a large scale" as a way to punish political dissidents and those parents considered disposable (Cole, 2018). Now we can add Trump to the list of the depraved. While it is true that Trump is not re-enacting the holocaust or sending children to their deaths, there are echoes that strike a disturbing and frightening resemblance to the machineries of racial purity, ethnic cleansing, and death put into place in the 1930s.¹

1 See, for instance, the cautious and insightful commentary on contemporary comparisons with Nazi Germany in Jonathan Freedland, "Inspired by Trump, the world could be heading back to the 1930s," *The Guardian* (June 22, 2018). Online: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/22/trump-world-1930s-children-parents-europe-migrants>.

Amnesty International (2018) has called Trump's current decision to separate children from their parents and warehouse them in cages and tents as a cruel policy that amounts to "nothing short of torture" Amnesty International (2018). Moreover, many of the parents whose children have been taken away from them entered the country legally, unwittingly exposing what resembles a state sanctioned policy of racial cleansing. Allegations of abuse against the children while detained are still emerging. CNN reports that allegations of abuse in these shelters is widespread and "range from unsanitary conditions and invasive monitoring of mail and phone calls to unair-conditioned rooms in hot Texas summers and dosing children with cocktails of psychotropic drugs disguised as vitamins. At one facility, children recounted being held down for forcible injections, which medical records show are powerful antipsychotics and sedatives" (Ellis, et al., 2018).

Federal U.S. officials have said despite Trump's about-face, children who have already been separated from their parents – more than 2,300 of them – will not be reunited with them. Moreover, a McClatchy report states that over 12,000 immigrant children are now being held in Health and Human Services shelters.

Underlying this assault on children is the crucial recognition that in any democratic society the primary index through which a society registers its own meaning, vision, and politics is measured by how it treats its children, and its commitment to the ideal that a civilized society is one that does everything it can to make the future and the world better place for youth. By this measure, the Trump administration has done more than fail its commitment to children, it has implemented a zero tolerance policy that is as cruel as it is punitive. Moreover, this policy has been ludicrously initiated and legitimated by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a notorious anti-immigrant advocate, with a bible verse, that was used historically by racist to justify slavery. In the name of

For a sustained theoretical analysis of this issue, see Henry A. Giroux, *American Nightmare: Rethinking the Challenge of Fascism* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2018); Richard J. Bernstein, *Why Read Hannah Arendt Now* (London: Polity, 2018).; (Steven Lefivsky & Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018); Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Loaded: A Disarming History of the Second Amendment* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2017); David Neiwert, *ALT-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in The Age of Trump* (New York: Verso, 2017); Brian Klaas, *The Despot's Apprentice: Donald Trump's Attack on Democracy* (Delaware: Hot Books, 2017); Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lesson From the Twentieth Century*, (London: Polity Press, 2017); Sheldon S. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*, (Princeton University Press, 2008); Robert O" Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage, 2005) and Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973).

religion and without irony, Sessions has put into play a policy that has been a hallmark of authoritarian regimes.

At the same time, Trump has justified the policy with the notorious lie that the Democrats have to change the law for the separations to stop when in actuality the separations are the result of a policy inaugurated by Sessions under Trump's direction. Trump wrote on Twitter, "The Democrats are forcing the breakup of families at the Border with their horrible and cruel legislative agenda." Yet, according to Julie Hirschfeld Davis, 2018 in the *New York Times*:

But Mr. Trump was misrepresenting his own policy. There is no law that says children must be taken from their parents if they cross the border unlawfully, and previous administrations have made exceptions for those traveling with minor children when prosecuting immigrants for illegal entry. A "zero tolerance" policy created by the president in April and put into effect last month by the attorney general, Jeff Sessions, allows no such exceptions, Mr. Trump's advisers say.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen on Twitter actually elevated Trump's lie to a horrendous act of wilful ignorance and complicity by claiming that "We do not have a policy of separating families at the border." This is more than what *the Washington Post* claims is a form of zombie politics, it is an extension of the carceral state to the most vulnerable groups, putting into play a punitive policy that signals a descent into fascism—American style (Rizzo, 2018). *The New Yorker's* Marsha Gessen got it right in comparing Trump's policies towards children to those used by Putin in Russia, both of which amounts to what she calls "an instrument of totalitarian terror" (Gessen, 2018).

Both countries "arrest" children in order to send a powerful message to one's enemies. In this case, Trump's message is designed to terrorize immigrants while shoring up his base and Putin's message is to squelch dissent in general among the larger populace. Referring to Putin's reign of terror, Gessen writes:

The spectacle of children being arrested sends a stronger message than any amount of police violence against adults could do. The threat that children might be removed from their families is likely to compel parents to keep their kids at home next time – and to stay home themselves.

Within the latter part of June 2018, painful and heart wrenching reports and images have appeared in which children, including infants, are forcibly separated from their parents, relocated to detention centers understaffed by professional caretakers, and housed in what some reporters have called cages.

The consequences of Trump's xenophobia are painfully clear in reports of migrant children screaming out for their parents, babies crying incessantly, infants housed with teenagers who don't know how to change diapers, and shattered families broken in spirit and hope for their children. Norman Merchant of *The Associated Press* reported that inside a run down warehouse in McAllen, Texas, there were 20 children in a cage created by metal fencing. Scattered around the fenced cage were bottles of water, bags of chips, and "large foil sheets intended to serve as blankets" (Merchant, 2018). Merchant states that one teenager in the facility was helping care for a young child and was showing "others in her cell how to change the girl's diaper" (ibid).

It gets worse. Trump's fascist assault on immigrants involves not only separating them from their children but also reported acts of abuse and extreme cruelty within the detention centers. For example, Curtis Johnson (2018) observes that the stories emerging about the child detention centers include:

children being ripped from the arms of their parents, locked in cages, infants incarcerated in "tender age" facilities, kids screaming in terror for their parents and separated across the country without hope of finding each other... Immigrant mothers held under charges of "illegal entry" to the US at a federal detention center near Seattle reported to US Rep. Pramila Jayapal that after their children were forcibly taken away without even being able to say goodbye, they could hear their children screaming for them in the next room. One mother reported to Jayapal that a Border Patrol agent told her, "You will never see your children again. Families don't exist here. You won't have a family anymore." After kidnapping their kids, these officials wouldn't even tell the parents where their kids were. Mothers who cried were mocked by agents. Federal defenders said authorities separated parents from kids by lying that the kids were just being taken out to be given a bath.

The Trump administration has detained over 2000 children and the numbers are expected to grow exponentially in light of Trump's refusal to change the cruel policy. Unsurprisingly, as reported in the *Miami Herald* in June of 2016, "the government had likely lost track of nearly 6,000 children whose sponsors had not kept in contact with federal officials" (Smiley et al., 2018). Moreover, the Trump administration "has taken more than 3,700 children from their parents and it has no systemic plans for reuniting the families it has torn apart (Devereaux, 2018). In some cases, it has deported parents without first uniting them with their detained children (Lanard, 2018). What is equally frightening

and morally reprehensible is that previous studies such as those done by Anna Freed and Dorothy Burlingham in the midst of World War II indicated that children separated from their parents suffered both emotionally in the short run and were plagued by long-term separation anxieties (Mills, 2018). It is no wonder that the American Academy of Pediatrics refers to the Trump administration's policy of separating children from their families as one of "sweeping cruelty" (Jenco, 2018).

There is more at work here than Trump's lack of respect for the responsibilities of democratic governance, there is also the mobilization of a rhetoric of hate and culture of cruelty that represents what Fintan O'Toole (2018) calls a trial run for the normalization of fascist tendencies in the United States particularly through the erosion of moral boundaries. He writes:

You have to undermine moral boundaries, inure people to the acceptance of acts of extreme cruelty. Like hounds, people have to be blooded. They have to be given the taste for savagery. Fascism does this by building up the sense of threat from a despised out-group. This allows the members of that group to be dehumanized. Once that has been achieved, you can gradually up the ante, working through the stages from breaking windows to extermination.

The language of dehumanization is on full display in Trump's reference to immigrants as rapists, criminals, and rife with diseases. The echoes of a fascist past are hard to miss here. Fascism is largely normalized by anchoring identities in a notion of individual responsibility that kills off any notion of the social, social responsibility, and collective struggle, and it begins with the rhetoric of demonization and dehumanization. A crucial tool for forging a culture of fascism is to accelerate the culture of cruelty with an endless discourse of reification—backed up by a massive state-aligned propaganda machine in the form of the ethically bankrupt Fox News, Sinclair Broadcasting, Breitbart News, and other corporate mouthpieces. Hence, Trump and his spineless anti-public intellectuals use words when referring to immigrant children such as "infest" "vermin," "animals," and "child actors,"

In one instance, ex-Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski made a crude "womp womp" sound at the mention of a Down Syndrome child being separated from his parent. This is about more than Trump's endorsement of coarse language, increased acts of incivility or public conversations turning ugly. On the contrary, this is language in the service of extreme violence and is designed to test the limits of moral revulsion and the capacity for collective resistance. This weaponized discourse is part of war on both the most

fragile and vulnerable elements of society and the social bond itself (Balibar, 2015). This level of cruelty is hard to make up, especially when aimed at children. This level of discursive violence is part of the pedagogy of fascism whose aim is to teach Americans to learn to think the unthinkable, unimaginable, and the morally repulsive. As Aviya Kushner (2016) observes, Trump's willingness to characterize immigrants as "vermin" and carriers of disease is alarming given the fascist use of such language. She writes:

The president's tweet that immigrants will "infest our Country" includes an alarming verb choice for anyone with knowledge of history. ...Characterizing people as vermin has historically been a precursor to murder and genocide. The Nazis built on centuries-old hatred of Jews as carriers of disease in a film titled "Der Ewige Jude," or "The Eternal Jew." As the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum notes on its website, in a section helpfully titled "Defining the Enemy:" "One of the film's most notorious sequences compares Jews to rats that carry contagion, flood the continent, and devour precious resources".

Trump is mobilizing those fascist passions that inevitably lead to a plethora of prisons, detention centers, acts of domestic terrorism and state violence. Echoes of the Nazi camps, Japanese internment prisons, and the mass incarceration of Black and Brown people and the destruction of their families weigh on the trump administration with a degree of shame and cruelty that marks the neoliberal fascism that now shapes American society and increasingly in countries such as Turkey, Hungary, and Poland. Memories of the horrors of the past disappear under Trump only to return within a culture violence that is both revealing and ugly in both its visibility and expansiveness. What Trump is doing is a form of hostage taking in which the children become bargaining chips in his attempts to implement his racist policy of building a wall while demonstrating his politics of white supremacy to his core base. Children are now being used as part of an attempt to extort support for his racist politics from the Democratic Party.

But let's be clear. While the caging of children provoked a great deal of moral outrage across the ideological spectrum, the underlying logic has been largely ignored. These tactics run deep in American history and in recent years have been intensified with the collapse of the social contract, expanding inequality, and the increasing criminalization of a range of behaviors associated with immigrants, young people, and those populations considered most vulnerable. The horrible treatment of immigrant parents and children by the Trump regime signals not only a hatred of human rights, justice, and democracy, it lays

bare a growing fascism in the United States in which politics and power are now being used to foster a larger discourse of disposability. White supremacists, religious fundamentalists and political extremists have now moved from the margins to the center of power in the Trump administration.

Trump's cruel policy of separating immigrant children from their families is a logical extension of his plans to deport over 248,000 refugees, including 200,000 Salvadorans and 86,000 Hondurans, by revoking their temporary protected status. The cruelty of this racist policy is also evident in Trump's rescinding of DACA for 800,000 Dreamers and the removal of temporary protected status for 248,000 refugees. Trump's policy of "Making America Great Again" and "America First" is an unprecedented act and unapologetic act of terrorism against immigrants. While the Obama administration also locked up the families of immigrants, it eventually scaled back the practice. Under Trump, the savage practice accelerated and intensified. His administration refused to consider more humane practices, such as community management of asylum-seekers (Gupta, 2018). Trump's war against immigrants, Muslims, and those considered outside of the ideological and political boundaries of white nationalism functions as shorthand for making American white again and signals the unwillingness of the United States to break from its past and the ghosts of a lethal authoritarianism.

It's also makes visible Trump's love affair with the practices of other dictators like Putin and now Kim Jong Un. And it signals a growing consolidation of power that is matched by the use of the repressive powers of the state to brutalize and threaten those who don't fit into Trump's white nationalist vision of the United States. There is more at work here than the collapse of humanity and ethics under the Trump regime, there are also echoes of the darkest elements of fascism's tenets that include the systemic process of dehumanization, racial cleansing and a convulsion of hatred toward those marked as disposable. Under Trump's cruel policy of separating families and caging children, the United States has entered into a new era of racial hatred, vengeful ferocity, and what the writer Pankaj Mishra calls a period of "moral, imaginative and emotional failure" which amounts to a "reflexive repugnance at the sight" of the suffering of those who do not fit into Trump's vision of a return to a past dominated by the racist purifying logics of white supremacy (Mishra, 2018).

When children are subjected to the vilest punishing apparatuses of the state, undocumented immigrants are constructed through the language of contempt, and state violence becomes a substitute to for compassion and justice, a barbaric politics is put into play that paves the way for a democracy disappearing into the dark abyss of fascism. What is happening to the children

and parents of immigrants does more than reek of cruelty, it points to a country that in which matters of life and death have become unmoored from the principles of justice, compassion, and democracy itself.

The horrors of fascism's past have now travelled from the history books to modern times. The steep path to violence and cruelty can no longer be ignored. Neoliberalism is the face of a new fascism. As Walter Benjamin reminds us, fascism is the product often of failed democracies and under the reign of neoliberalism we are in the midst of not simply a dysfunctional democracy, but in the grip of an extreme form of gangster capitalism wedded to corporate power that produces the pathology of massive inequalities in wealth and power, and aggressively wages war on everything crucial to a vibrant democratic society. It is time to repudiate the notion that capitalism and democracy are the same thing, renew faith in the promises of a democratic socialism, create new political formations around an alliance of diverse social movements, and take seriously the need to make education central to politics itself. A historical moment is upon us in which the elements of barbarism have become normalized while the fascist script unfolds with even greater horrors. The time has come for the American public, politicians, educators, social movements and others to make clear that resistance to the emerging fascism in the United States and elsewhere is not an option – but a dire and urgent necessity.

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