

# Trumpism, Authoritarian Neoliberalism, and Subaltern Latina/o Politics

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A fascism of the future—an emergency response to some still unimagined crisis—need not resemble classical fascism perfectly in its outward signs and symbols. Some future movement that would “give up free institutions” in order to perform the same functions of mass mobilization for the reunification, purification, and regeneration of some troubled group would undoubtedly call itself something else and draw on fresh symbols. That would not make it any less dangerous.

—Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*

How do we explain the rise of Donald Trump? Most important, what type of political regime does his administration represent, and what are its political implications for Latino migrants, for social movements, and for Latino politics research?

Some scholars have rushed to argue that the rise of Trump’s isolationist and anti-free trade discourse signals an end to neoliberalism, the ideology of free-market capitalism that has dominated economic thought and policy since the late 1970s (West 2016). I argue instead that Trump represents a new form of neoliberal authoritarian governance that radically reconfigures the state toward a more repressive entity, curtails civil liberties, and promotes a new brand of racial politics that breaks with conventions of alleged color-blindness and rolls back the gains made by the migrant movement, and by other marginalized groups, over the last decade. The ultimate goal of this type of authoritarian neoliberal restructuring, as noted by critical theorists Ian Bruff (2014) and Priya Chacko and Kanishka Jayasuriya (2017), is to impose conditions that are optimal for capital accumulation. Neoliberal authoritarian governance is able to “shield the continuation

of an essentially neo-liberal set of policies from political dissent through an emphasis on supposedly ‘non-political’ issues such as race, religion, and law and order” (Chacko and Jayasuriya 2017). In the United States, authoritarian neoliberalism breaks with the myth of the “invisible hand” of laissez-faire capitalism and pushes the boundaries and institutions of liberal democracy to their limits. Instead of the invisible hand, we now have the iron fist, which unabashedly builds up a strong state and forces a set of relationships that advance the interests of capital through both consent and coercion (Bruff 2017). Authoritarian neoliberalism could be understood as a mode of governance that is cannibalizing the basic institutions of liberal democracy. Under Trump at least, it is accompanied by a contradictory populist rhetoric that critiques the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (Chacko and Jayasuriya 2017) while tapping into a white working-class and middle-class sense of victimization by immigrants, minorities, and foreign powers and mobilizing this racial resentment against “enemies” both foreign and domestic.

Authoritarian neoliberalism should be seen not as just a stagnant mode of governance, but as a dynamic political project that is still unfolding and that is subject to change in the face of intense national and international opposition. In the context of the nation under Trump, I see authoritarian neoliberalism as characterized by the following five components:

1. Corporate takeover of key governance institutions, massive deregulations, and insulation of strategic policy institutions from democratic and public controls.
2. Reconfiguration of the state into a more repressive entity through the buildup of prisons and police institutions along with a general militarization of civil society.
3. Curtailing of civil liberties in the name of order and national security.
4. Criminalization of social protest and a growing anti-intellectualism within the state and its base of support in civil society.
5. A shift in racial politics from so-called color-blind racism toward a resurgent white nationalism that seeks to dismantle rights regimes and programs won by racial minorities, indigenous peoples, women, LGBT communities, immigrants, and refugees.

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Although the advent of Trump signals a deepening of this authoritarian neoliberal mode of governance and its cultural and ideological undercurrents in civil society, I want to avoid reifying this trend as something that can be reduced to one man. As Stuart Hall referred to Thatcherism to represent the political movement and set of ideas and policies that brought about the rise of Margaret Thatcher, I deploy the term *Trumpism* in a similar way (Hall 1987; Robinson 2017).<sup>1</sup> In our specific case, it refers to Trump's brand of authoritarian neoliberal governance, which is reconfiguring the state and unleashing a violent backlash against people of color and social minorities in civil society.

What is most dangerous about Trumpism is that it exhibits many of the fascist tendencies that have historically led to constitutional crises and breakdowns of liberal democracy in the West. Fascist regimes in the past have achieved the dissolution of liberal democracy through a combination of measures, including the suspension of freedom of press and of political expression, as well as wholesale persecution of political opponents and social "undesirables" in the name of combating internal enemies of the state. Trump represents a very real and radical shift toward the right, with genuine fascist tendencies and contempt for liberal democracy.

Fascism was never identical in any one country in Europe or in the Americas, nor will a twenty-first-century fascism look exactly like its twentieth-century counterparts. Rather, I advance the position that we are living under the authoritarian neoliberal mode of governance in which the market has brought about the conditions that are cannibalizing the very foundations of liberal democracy in the name of security and social control. The United States is not the only country undergoing this radical shift to the right. As it was in the twentieth century, this is a global phenomenon with far-right movements and governments in Europe as well as a return of the right in Latin America to counter the Bolivarian left in South America and to prevent leftist governments and movements from advancing in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Authoritarian forms of governance from the great depression of the 1930s to the global economic crisis of 2008 were a structural phenomenon, in which right-wing political forces ascended to create the political conditions necessary to manage the inherent contradictions in capitalism (labor exploitation, severe inequality, and accumulation through disposition) and to keep the system intact in the face of crisis and opposition. However, I do not subscribe to an economic determinism that assumes that we have no agency to change the political relationships. On the contrary, I want to emphasize

that there are strategic openings in which Latino communities, along with other subaltern groups, could advance an alternative united-front politics from below that could potentially counter the authoritarian neoliberal turn. Finally, I suggest that this authoritarian turn must be resisted not only by Latino communities engaged in social movement organization and political struggle but also through critical intellectual production. Along these lines I advance a new approach to Latino politics research that political theorist Raymond Rocco and I call subaltern Latino politics.

To advance my argument, I will first elaborate on the political context in which Trump was elected. Second, I will discuss Trump's newest migration control policies and analyze how they are part and parcel of the authoritarian neoliberal restructuring of the state and at odds with some of the most basic elements of liberal democracy. Finally, I will discuss the implications of this trend for politics in Latino communities and for subaltern Latino politics research that is grounded, oppositional, and well suited for advancing a radical critique in times of authoritarian crisis.

## **The Crisis of Global Capitalism and the Rise of Trumpism**

One cannot understand the rise of Trumpism without understanding the crisis of global capitalism in 2008 and the failures of the Barack Obama administration, and ultimately of liberalism, to resolve the great social conflicts of our time, such as racism, class conflict, and cascading ecological crises. With the 2008 global economic crisis, in which markets crashed, banks closed, and financial capital lost legitimacy after numerous scandals, capitalism entered a crisis, just as Marx predicted in his critique of classic political economy. As noted by William Robinson (2017), modern neoliberalism has led to massive class polarization, social conflict, and problems of political legitimacy. Indeed, as Chacko and Jayasuriya (2017) write, "The crisis of 2008 . . . unleashed a range of austerity measures—at the local and national levels—that brought problems of legitimacy to the fore. This was reflected in growing political and policy paralysis and grinding political deadlock that eroded trust in democratic institutions."

This systemic crisis of capitalism and loss of legitimacy on the part of US political elites has brought on state and civil society violence against Latinos and migrants, African Americans, indigenous people, women, and members of the LGBT community. Trumpism emerged in part as a punitive response to social movements led by these communities. A populist rhetoric of white victimization demands that the state roll back the "excessive gains" made by black and Latino social movements, allegedly at whites' expense. Joe Walsh,

a former Republican member of Congress, echoed this rhetoric in a tweet about the shooting of five police officers by an African American veteran at a rally in Dallas: “This is now war. Watch out Obama. Watch out black lives matter punks. Real America is coming after you” (Demirjian 2016).

The idea that blacks and Latinos have gone too far in their rights claims is based on gross exaggeration and outright lies by the Trump campaign and its advisers. However, it is true that there have been some gains. The migrant rights movement successfully pressured the Obama administration to make significant changes in the area of migration control, especially with respect to enforcement priorities in the country’s interior. During Obama’s second term, and especially after 2014, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) prioritized the removal of only those undocumented immigrants with significant criminal records, at least in theory. DHS offices on the ground, as well as DHS lawyers in immigration court, also had what is known as prosecutorial discretion, in which they could decide whether or not to prosecute undocumented people in removal proceedings. Moreover, the Obama administration, under pressure from Latino migrant activists and their allies, rescinded the Secure Communities program and drastically scaled back the 287(g) program. Under these two initiatives, local law enforcement could choose to permit police officers to enforce federal immigration laws and could be asked by ICE to detain any undocumented migrant in custody. Perhaps one of the most important victories for the movement against migrant detention was the announcement in 2016 that the Department of Justice would discontinue federal contracts with private detention facilities, such as the GEO Group and Corrections Corporation of America. Stocks in these corporations immediately plummeted, and activists across the country rejoiced. These were major achievements for the immigrant rights movement. However, the most prized victories were the enactment of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), programs that offered temporary renewable permits for undocumented youth and for parents of US citizen children who met certain requirements.

Though Obama certainly made some concessions to African American, Latino, and Native American social movements under intense pressure, he nonetheless adhered to an authoritarian neoliberal mode of governance. One must be clear that the authoritarian reconfiguration of the state did not start with Trump’s presidency; it has been an ongoing process that transcends party lines. In twentieth-century Europe, as Giorgio Agamben (2005) has written, the state of exception—that is, the legal suspension of

the legal order in the name of enforcing the law—did not start with Hitler in Germany. It was also used by the German Weimar Republic, for example, to suppress labor movements in the early twentieth century (Agamben 2005; Paxton 2005). Hitler, along with Mussolini, simply used the extant laws, created by liberal democratic regimes in times of crisis, to create a permanent authoritarian police state that ultimately dissolved liberal democracy. So too, today's authoritarian neoliberalism did not start with Trump; it has actually been a hallmark of modern governance in recent decades. The danger with Trumpism is that its brand of authoritarian neoliberal governance may bring us to a tipping point, toward a complete fascist break with liberal democracy.

Obama represented the ultimate aspirations of liberalism—and exposed its inherent limitations. Classic liberalism rests on the idea of the separation of powers and the use of rational deliberation to make decisions in a democratic polity. It asserts that the state is a neutral set of relationships, governed by a set of constitutional rules and democratic principles that can be put to the service of the public good by those entrusted with the power of government. A liberal state allegedly supports pluralism, the idea that no single group or interest should dominate the political system. While scholars have always been critical of the relationship between liberalism and the rights of racialized minorities in the United States (Hero 1992; Mills 1997), the great hope and appeal of President Obama was that he would finally realize the promises of liberalism. As in boxing, in politics—great hopes fall hard.

Rather than vindicate the virtues of liberal democracy, the Obama administration proved that the capitalist state, even when governed by social democratic forces, could provide only limited spaces for immigrant integration, as evidenced by the coexistence of DACA and DAPA with state repression against migrants and refugees. The Obama administration deported nearly 3 million people (Golash Boza 2017); violated key principles of the 1951 Refugee Convention (Goodwin-Gill 2014); used detention camps against women and children asylum seekers; allowed the National Security Council to spy on United States citizens (Gonzales 2014); used drone warfare against nations in the Middle East and South Asia; and used military force against numerous governments throughout the world. Moreover, Obama sought to secure trade deals, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, that would expand neoliberal policies around the globe. His administration sought to combine the use of repression with the promise of liberal democracy, in such a way that the limits of liberal democracy were ultimately exposed. What emerged were battles over Latino migrant and refugee rights as well as heated protests against anti-black violence in Baltimore, Ferguson, Los Angeles, New York, and other urban centers.

It is in this context that Obama's gestures toward reform appeared to be too much for nativist and ultra-right-wing forces operating within civil society and government sectors—especially among the security forces and their civilian sympathizers. As did the social democratic governments of Europe in the aftermath of World War I, Obama aroused great hopes with his promises of change. He made some actual changes that benefited working-class people and pacified radical social movements in the United States, but he did not alter the fundamental organization of a market society. This is one of the principal contradictions and limits of all liberal democracies. It is also the fertile ground on which fascist movements organize.

Fascism thrives on the weakness of the left. In Germany between the wars, rising fascist forces sought to blame the difficult times facing Germans on the Weimar Republic, the liberal democratic government that emerged in 1919 and lasted until 1933. The other key component in the rise of European fascism was that the 1920s was a decade in which militant unions, socialists, anarchists, and communists of multiple stripes engaged in intense struggles to radically transform their societies amid deepening economic distress in the aftermath of the Great Depression. Much like the Obama administration, the Weimar Republic attempted to pacify the radical social movements of its day in the aftermath of a major war. Hitler and the Nazi party mobilized desires for law and order among ordinary Germans in the face of this social upheaval and an overwhelming feeling that Germany had been humiliated by its defeat in World War I and by the Treaty of Versailles. Similarly, Trump's main campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," stoked a desire for law and order among middle-class whites in the aftermath of the Iraq War and in the context of vigorous labor organizing and social struggles among Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans. The slogan was strategically selected to play on the narrative of white victimization in ways that resemble the German and Italian fascists' strategies for building bases of support. For instance, Trump's repeated insistence that the United States has been humiliated by Mexico, Mexican immigrants, China, and the rest of the world generally was consistent with the hallmark of fascism: its promise to restore national pride and patriotism to a nation that has been humiliated by enemies foreign and domestic.

## **Trump's Immigration Policies and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy**

Trump is imposing, or preparing to impose, authoritarian policies in nearly every realm of government, including education, environment, housing, foreign policy, environment, and labor. Perhaps no other set of policies,

however, is more illustrative of Trumpism's brand of authoritarian neoliberal governance than his immigration measures. Trump has already sought to expand the power of the homeland security state in significant ways. Soon after his inauguration he imposed a highly controversial travel ban on seven majority-Muslim countries; as of this writing in August 2017, the courts have allowed for a limited version of Trump's initial ban to remain in effect until they hear the matter in October 2017. Meanwhile, he has instructed the head of the Department of Homeland Security to issue changes within the agency that greatly expand the apprehension, detention, and prosecutorial powers of the US government while weakening the few protections offered to immigrants. These changes are consistent with authoritarian neoliberalism's central characteristics: the reconfiguration of the state into a more repressive set of institutional relationships, along with the curtailment of civil liberties and protections writ large.

Trump has accomplished this reconfiguration of the migration control apparatus through the use of executive orders that essentially roll back any gains made by the migrant rights movement over the last several years. In order to carry out the executive orders, DHS published two policy memorandums on February 20, 2017 (DHS 2017a, 2017b). Signed by Secretary John Kelly, the memos lay out DHS guidelines for implementing Trumpism's migration control policies. These memos nullify all conflicting memos written by the Obama administration, with the exception of those on DACA and DAPA, which will be addressed by a future executive action.

"Implementing the President's Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements Policies" (DHS 2017b) calls for the massive expansion of detention facilities and the detention of nearly everyone who is apprehended. An analysis by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA 2017) notes that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) currently holds 40,000 to 50,000 people in detention on any given day. For Trump to realize his enforcement goals, it would likely require holding 200,000 people per day. The DHS memo also calls for an additional 5,000 border patrol agents and 500 military personnel to "ensure complete operational control of the border" (2017b). The memo calls for immediate construction of the border wall where possible and for a study on completing the wall in areas not immediately accessible. Executive agencies are to be asked to quantify the amount of direct and indirect aid that goes to Mexico. Expedited removal is to be expanded to apply to anyone apprehended anywhere who has been in the United States less than two years (previous policy allows these summary removals



only within 100 miles of the border and for people who have been in the country less than fourteen days). The memo also calls for people to appear via satellite for their immigration hearings while in Mexico or Canada, and suggests that they be detained while in Mexico or Canada. It suggests a more rigorous “credible fear interview” and provides more recourses to detect fraud during this interview process. The memo expands detention facilities and capabilities near the border, changes the definition of Unaccompanied Alien Children so that many children currently on the minor’s docket can be tried in adult court, and calls for measures to be taken against the parents of unaccompanied children for “[conspiracy] to violate our immigration laws” (DHS 2017b).

The other memo, “Enforcement of the Immigration Laws to Serve the National Interest” (DHS 2017a), makes critical changes to enforcement priorities that essentially widen the apprehension net. Toward this end, it calls for DHS to expeditiously hire 10,000 new agents. Rather than focus on priority individuals as the previous administration did, DHS now seeks to deport “all removable aliens.” There has been an abrupt drop in prosecutorial discretion during the Trump administration, from an average of 2,400 per month to fewer than 100 per month during the same five-month period in 2016 under Obama (TRAC 2017). In other words, if a DHS or ICE agent apprehends an undocumented student who previously qualified for the DACA program, the young person could no longer receive discretionary protection from prosecution or deportation and would have to be removed by ICE agents or DHS attorneys in immigration court. Such removals have already occurred in Washington state and in San Antonio, Texas (Lussenhop 2017; Reuters 2017). The Trump administration has also begun to reopen cases of hundreds of people who were given prosecutorial discretion under the Obama administration.

The same memo reinstates the Secure Communities program and expands the 287(g) program, both of which involve state and local law enforcement personnel in enforcement of federal immigration laws. It also creates a Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE) unit to provide information to the victims of crimes committed by undocumented people. In order to create such a program, the DHS memo rescinds privacy protections for undocumented migrants detained or removed from the United States. A publicly accessible system will list individuals’ country of citizenship, the nature of their crime, their alleged gang membership status, their detention status, and, if they are released, the time and location of their release. Finally, the memo calls for DHS to publish a weekly list of

all migrants released from detention, with the location of and reason for their release (DHS 2017a).

In addition to the two DHS memos, Attorney General Jeff Sessions published a new memo on April 11, 2017, “Renewed Commitment to Criminal Immigration Enforcement” (OAG 2017), which will shift the prosecutorial priorities of the attorney general and create regional coordinators to ensure that the new memo is enforced throughout the Department of Justice. According to the memo, which was announced in a spectacular fashion before customs and border patrol officers at the Arizona border while invoking the threat of “MS 13” and “Mexican drug cartels,” the attorney general is calling for the prosecution of those caught “harboring or transporting” undocumented people. It also calls for the prosecution of reentry cases across the board, a practice that was not always enforced but that Sessions now sees as a priority. The memo also calls for the prosecution of all undocumented people caught with false documents—or “identity theft”—and for anyone “assaulting, resisting, or impeding” an officer. In essence, the memo is calling on federal prosecutors to enforce the law to its most extreme interpretation and to criminalize and prosecute any immigrant for the smallest infraction. The last provision of the memo is designed to criminalize social movement tactics used by the immigrant rights movement, such as sit-ins and protests at or against immigration detention centers and other sites of state power. The Department of Justice has also begun to threaten pro bono attorneys that work on behalf of detained migrants and refugees with letters that order the attorneys to cease and desist conducting know-your-rights workshops. Taken together, the executive orders and their implementing memos create a more powerful deportation regime and slash protection for migrants in terms of discretionary relief and rights to privacy.

The most recent bill coming from the Senate and endorsed by the Trump administration, Reforming American Immigration and Strong Employment (RAISE), promises to be one of the most controversial proposals in recent memory. The proposed legislation would reduce legal immigration to the United States in half by changing the criteria for obtaining a visa or a green card from one that prioritizes family reunification, as has been the case since 1965, to one that gives preference to highly skilled workers and applicants who speak English. It proposes this while also putting a cap on refugee admissions at 50,000 and ending the visa lottery system that has mostly benefited African migrants. In essence, the bill is one designed to bring migrants from Europe and those of the

English-speaking world. Regardless of the advancement or failure of this bill in Congress, the RAISE bill represents an endorsement of the position that immigration policy should be used for social engineering, with a clear preference for English speakers—a position long held by nativist policy groups with eugenicist origins.

As an ensemble, the immigration policies coming from the Trump administration emerge from long-standing policy proposals made by nativist organizations such as the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and the Federation of American Immigration Reform (FAIR), whose goals have been to create a deportation machinery that can cleanse the nation of Latinos and other non-white immigrants, skirt civil liberties and democratic protections, and drastically reduce legal immigration except for European immigrants that they perceive to be racially fit for American citizenship.

In fact, several staff members of the CIS and FAIR, both of which were founded by the eugenicist-nativist John Tanton, are now working directly for the Trump administration, the attorney general's office, or the DHS (Kulis 2017). Mark Krikorian, executive director of CIS, for instance, told the *New York Times*, "This is inconceivable a year ago. . . . Frankly, it's almost inconceivable six months ago" (Kulis 2017). The antimigrant think tanks and intellectuals of the nativist right are no longer working to influence immigration policy from civil society in support of any specific legislative package as they have done over the last three decades: they are now actively designing immigration policy within the entrails of the homeland security state.

Trump's immigration and refugee policies are certainly harmful to the families and communities that they target, and this alone should be good reason for protest and social anxiety. But the most dangerous aspects of Trumpism's authoritarian neoliberal project are its contempt for the separation of powers and democratic control over the public security forces. For instance, Congressman Luis Gutiérrez and Congresswoman Norma Torres, members of the Hispanic Congressional Caucus, were told to leave a meeting with the head of ICE and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan just days after ICE had apprehended almost 700 people in a first round of highly publicized raids by the Trump administration (Bernal and Lillis 2017). The removal of the lawmakers from a meeting with a security agency that is supposed to be under civilian control is a reflection of Trump's reconfiguration of the state into a less accountable and more insular set of political institutions. Indeed, under this new administration, the DHS and ICE view themselves as not accountable to the legislative

branch of government. Trump's comments about protesters and liberal judges on social media allow him to speak directly to his base and evade the scrutiny of the traditional media. His messages resonate with the sense of victimization that Trumpism thrives on. The criminalization of social protest and an anti-intellectual ethos have been pillars of fascism in both Europe and Latin America. These actions toward members of Congress, Trump's repeated attacks on the media as being the alleged "enemy of the American people" (Grynbaum 2017), and his personal attacks on federal immigration judges speak to an encroaching constitutional crisis brought about by Trump's authoritarian neoliberalism. Such a crisis occurs when the separation of powers, the political process, and the established norms of liberal democracy are ignored by political rulers who are ready and willing to impose their rule in the name of defending the "people."

### **Implications for Latino Social Movements and Subaltern Latino Politics Research**

Since Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2017, there have been several major marches and mobilizations against him and his policies, along with countless smaller actions across the country. It is clear that a new age of social protest against Trumpism is upon us. This was most evident in the Women's March on January 21, in the spontaneous occupation of airports following the Muslim ban, and in the Day Without Immigrants on February 16, 2017, just days after the new administration arrested more than 600 people in raids throughout the country.

The Day Without Immigrants came together spontaneously, primarily through social media, with no single group taking the lead. It picked up steam all over the country, especially on the East Coast. New York City and Washington, DC, were among the cities that felt the strongest impact of the protest, especially in the service sector. In New York, restaurants, construction sites, and the garment and jewelry districts were hit hard by the strike. In the nation's capital, many restaurants, even some inside the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill, closed for the day, out of solidarity with immigrants or simply because their staff did not report to work (Kopan 2017). Detroit and Milwaukee saw major mobilizations of immigrant workers. And in the Jurupa Valley, one hour east of Los Angeles, youth participated in the strike—and then organized a school walkout a day later after teachers made racist and disparaging remarks about their participation in the Day Without Immigrants protest (Sanchez 2017).

There are two important lessons to be drawn from these actions. First, the protests provide an entry into social movements for people opposed to immigration policy under Trumpism. Second, such protests, especially those in New York, brought Latinos together with other immigrant communities and with nonimmigrant supporters in what could eventually become a multiracial immigrant and nonimmigrant working-class united front. Such a movement could provide a militant defense against the authoritarian turn. While it is too early to tell, such movements contain the seeds of transformation, and they could potentially have an effect on mainstream politics in the context of mass opposition to Trumpism and the absence of strong Democratic Party leadership.

The building of a strong US social movement capable of exerting leadership over a united front from below is critical given the weakening of the Democratic Party as well as the traditional institutions of liberal democracy. We must recall that twentieth-century fascism first appeared as a social movement of the right in nearly every country among the advanced democracies of the world, including the United States. Fascism, after all, was a response to weak social democratic governments. Fascist movements were defeated, at least before the Nazi occupation of most of Europe, in England and France by strong coalitions and in Russia by a revolutionary government that emerged in place of traditional conservatism or liberalism. Fascism was defeated where radicals out-organized the fascists and where leftist leaders were able to enter into united fronts with traditional liberals and conservatives in order to prevent fascism from taking root. Socialists and radicals, including Antonio Gramsci, who were too inflexible and purist, and who consequently failed to build alliances, were eventually railroaded by fascist regimes that liquidated their political opposition through wholesale political repression.

We are living a critical moment in the United States, in which an array of disparate forces, ranging from the immigrant rights movement, Black Lives Matter, and Native American movements on the left to moderate Republicans on the right, are growing worried about the authoritarian tendencies of the Trump administration. Not only have undocumented youth and their family members and allies taken to the streets to protest Trump but also middle-class white Americans have come to town hall meetings across the country to hold their elected officials accountable. Even members of the mainstream media and traditional conservatives such as Senator John McCain have emerged to question the authoritarian tendencies of the Trump administration and denounce his treatment of immigrants and

refugees (Wang 2017). I am not suggesting that Latino social movements should settle for returning to the good old days of the Obama administration, when millions of people were still deported under the veneer of due process and liberal democracy. Rather, I am suggesting that Latinos have to work with other people of color, with organized labor, and also with strange but strategic bedfellows to prevent a complete fascist break with liberal democracy. The maintenance of liberal democracy, with all of its shortcomings and contradictions for people of color, who have never been afforded true citizenship to be sure, at least allows us to organize openly and legally assert our rights, whether in a basic traffic stop or in moments of resistance to authoritarian crisis. Moreover, contemporary Latino social movements alone could not develop the organizations, leaders, and strategies necessary to turn the tide against a fully entrenched fascist project. The conjuncture demands that such movements work with other people of color social movements to create the tools and political infrastructure necessary to build a more progressive and viable alternative to Trumpism, as well as to the “business-as-usual” brand of authoritarian neoliberalism that characterized the Obama years.

This moment, under Trump and the authoritarian turn, demands that we develop an approach to Latino politics research that takes as its point of departure what twentieth-century revolutionary theorist Antonio Gramsci called the “philosophy of praxis” (1971). He was referring to a philosophy of social science that advances a theory and pedagogical philosophy for fighting fascism. A research agenda inspired by the philosophy of praxis requires that we move beyond the mainstream approach to Latino politics research, much of which is based on the assumption that as long as Latinos register to vote and participate in liberal democratic institutions, everything will be just fine (Bowler and Segura 2012). This approach uses a set of methodological tools and epistemological and ontological assumptions that are well suited for testing causal relationships and for measuring outputs and inputs in a stable political system to inform scholarly audiences, primarily in political science. Though important and useful for understanding Latino voting choices, among other aspects of political behavior, this approach is nonetheless too limited when it comes to understanding the macro-structural and historical processes that structure the political system that Latinos actually engage in. As such, it is of limited relevance in informing grassroots political strategy (García Bedolla 2009; Rocco 2014). Latino politics research must also study historical processes that involve questions

of state power, political economy, citizenship, political strategy, and the dynamic nature of white supremacy.

Inspired by the oppositional ethos of the first generation of *Chicano* political scientists (Barrera 1979; Muñoz 1989; Rocco 1983; Sosa-Riddell 1974), a constellation of scholars have begun to advance an approach to Latino politics that some call subaltern Latino politics (Beltrán 2011; Félix 2011; Gonzales 2014; Ponce 2013; Sampaio 2015; Zimmerman 2016). Oppositional in nature, this approach is theoretically driven and is concerned with the historical structures, such as colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, that underlie the relationship between subaltern Latino communities and the nation-state. Subaltern Latinos are those who live their lives at the intersection of race, class, and other forms of difference and on the margins of history, *latinidad*, the nation-state, and capitalism (Green 2013). This approach to Latino politics allows us to step back from traditional paradigms that may attribute the election of Trump to faulty polling or to a misunderstanding of why likely Latino voters did not turn out, and instead think about the nature of the conjuncture and of the prospects for democracy and for defending the rights of subaltern Latinos. It is from this epistemic and ontological approach that I write this critique and invite others to do the same. I sustain that a subaltern Latino politics research agenda should at the very least, in the words of Karl Marx (1978), be “a ruthless criticism of everything existing, ruthless in two senses: The criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the powers that be.”

## Notes

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1. William Robinson (2017) was the first to use the term *Trumpism*.

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