

How Mobilizing Resentment Generates Scripted Violence

Analyzing the “Tools of Fear”

Chip Berlet

**Presented at the
Pennsylvania Sociological Society
Annual Meeting
Northampton Community College
October 25, 2018**

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The Building Blocks of Fascist Social Movements:

Racial, Religious, or Ethnic Nationalism

Authoritarianism

Use of Populist Rhetoric

Scapegoating of a Despised “Other”

Demonization of the “Other”

Conspiracy Theories of Subversion

Apocalyptic Narratives of Existential Threats

Scripted Violence

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I was Senior Analyst at
Political Research Associates 1981-2014

**An Investigative Journalist,
I was abducted by sociologists
to write peer review studies on
Right-Wing Social Movements**

Advisory Boards:

Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University

Journal of Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions

My partner Karen Moyer and I spent 10 years living on the southwest side of Chicago (1977-1987) working in the leadership of a multi-racial neighborhood organization, the Southwest Community Congress (SCC), to stop violent attacks on Black families visiting or moving into the predominantly White working class area around Marquette Park.

Below: Our colleague and friend Curt Koehler (left), key strategist for SCC, along with a local political ally (middle with sign), confront local Chicago Neonazi leader Art Jones (right) in a public park during a rally.



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I am Influenced by:

Eric Voegelin
Frankfurt School Analysis
Post-WWII Studies – AJC
Gordon Allport
Gabrielle Simon Edgcomb
Hannah Arendt
Sara Diamond
Jean V. Hardisty
Richard Landes
Michael Barkun

Jerome L. Himmelstein
Kathleen Blee
Margaret Canovan
Steven D. O’Leary
Matthew N. Lyons
Hans Georg Betz
Roger Griffin
Robert Altemeyer
Cas Mudde
Ruby Sales

...and many more scholars, journalists, and activists

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Thomas, W.I. and Thomas, D.S. 1970 [1928].

Situations defined as real are real in their consequences,

reprinted in *Social Psychology Through Symbolic Interaction*, edited by G.P. Stone and H.A. Faberman. Waltham, Mass: Ginn Blaisdell. 154–155 .

Right-Wing Populist movements are flourishing around the globe.

They base their political claims on constructions of national identity which must, by design, include and exclude people based on ethnicity, religion, race, gender identity, class, or political beliefs (Betz 1994; Taras, 2009, 2012; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2014, 2017; Abromeit, 2016; Scoones, et. al., 2017, and Cas Mudde who has written more than I can fit on this page).

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I build my analytical framework on the idea that race, gender, and class are inextricably linked in the construction of systems of oppression.

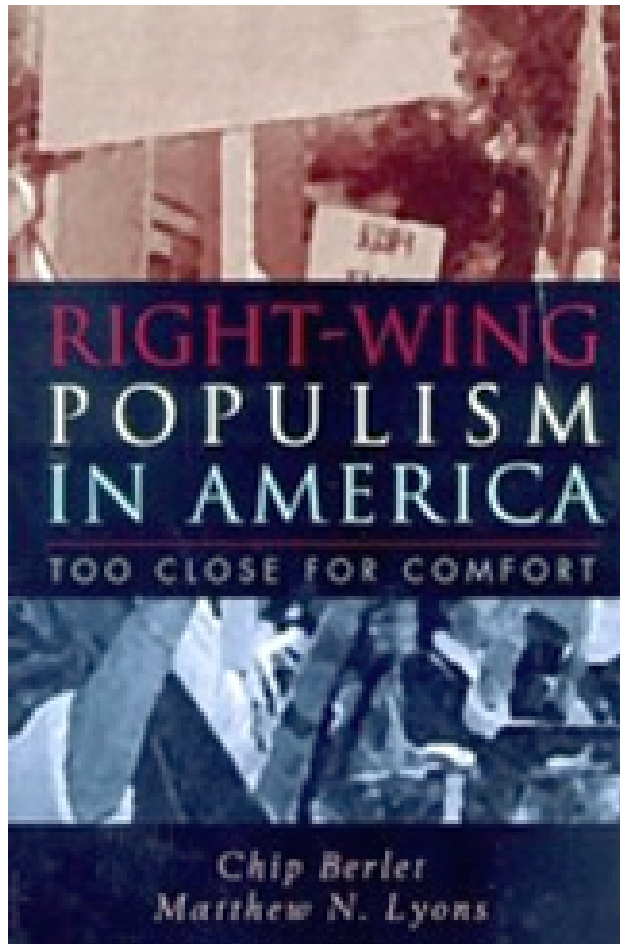
Buechler (2000) has observed that race, gender, and class are “omnipresent in the background of all forms of collective action” and have “institutional embeddedness within the social fabric at all levels.” Buechler further argues that these distinct yet overlapping power structures need to be analyzed independently and jointly in order to “theorize the different, specific, underlying dynamics that distinguish one structure from another” (2000, 105-107).

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Trumping Democracy in the United States: from Reagan to Alt-Right

Chip Berlet



Forthcoming
from
Routledge

Book

← Co-authored by
Chip Berlet and
Matthew N. Lyons
published in 2000

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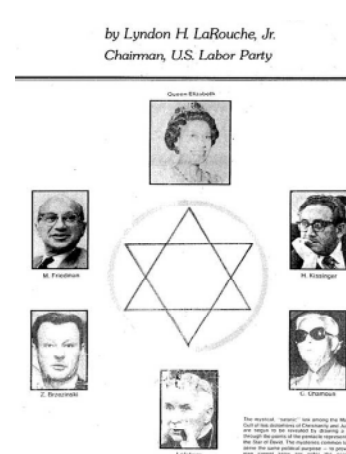
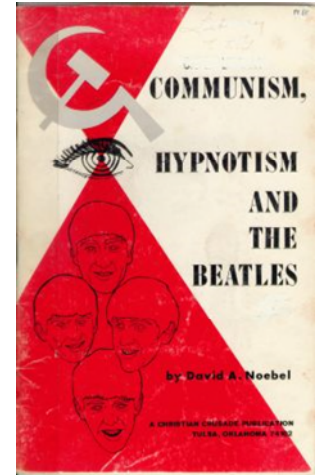
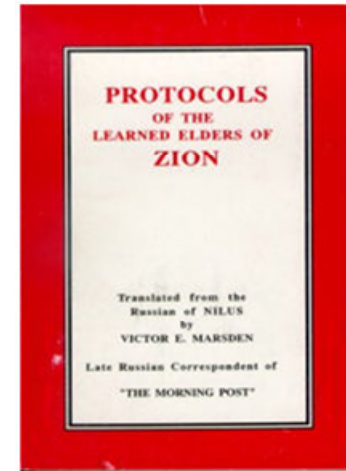
Right-Wing Posse Comitatus and Identity Christian organizers capitalized on the farm crisis of the 1980s by using antisemitism

“Rural America faced its worst economic slump in half a century, owing largely to unfair and inequitable policies by the federal government and private banks.

While most of society ignored angry and desperate rural families’ legitimate grievances, far-right activists urged resistance and offered ready scapegoats, namely, the Jews who supposedly controlled the Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Reserve.”

“In the early 1980s, Posse activists helped to split the influential American Agricultural Movement, while Identity theology and antisemitic conspiracy theories gained an alarming level of acceptance in rural America. One poll in 1985 found that in the farm belt 27 percent of respondents felt that ‘international Jewish bankers’ were responsible for the farm crisis.”

Chip Berlet & Matthew N. Lyons. *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*. Guilford Press, 2000, (p. 272)



Conspiracy theories about Jews, Communists, and “homosexuals” are historic themes

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"Even before the election I was saying **that the rhetoric used by Trump was going to cause violence before and after the election.** That was easy to predict. **It's sociology 101.** If you scapegoat a group from a high public place for long enough it's inevitable that some people will act out on that belief and say, 'If they're so evil and they're out to destroy America, why don't we get them before they get us.' **Some scholars call this [scripted violence](#).**"

--- Chip Berlet, Salon

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When Authoritarianism is mixed
with Right-Wing Populist rhetoric
it can be a core building block
for the crafting of
Fascist Social Movements
by a Demagogic Leader

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The Building Blocks of Fascist Social Movements:

- ➔ Authoritarian Political and/or Religious Leaders
- ➔ Exclusionary Racial, Religious, or Ethnic Nationalism
- ➔ Use of Populist Rhetoric by Respected Leaders
- ➔ Framing Scapegoats as Despised “Others”
- ➔ Demonizing “Others” as “Outsiders” Unfit for Citizenship
- ➔ Conspiracy Theories of Subversion and Treason from Above and Below
- ➔ Apocalyptic or Millenarian Claims of Threats to the “Real” Nation
- ➔ Narratives Prompting “Scripted Violence” against the Scapegoats

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When an authoritarian Leader
demonizes a scapegoated “Other”
and claims these targeted people
are conspiring to subvert the
idealized community of the nation it
can encourage acts of
“scripted violence”

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Roger Griffin on Fascism

...a revolutionary form of nationalism, one that sets out to be a political, social and ethical revolution, welding the 'people' into a dynamic national community **under new elites** infused with heroic values. The core myth that inspires this project is that only **a populist, trans-class movement of purifying, cathartic national rebirth (palingenesis)** can stem the **tide of decadence**

Roger Griffin, (1991). *The nature of fascism* New York: St. Martin's Press

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Roger Griffin on Fascism

...a genuinely revolutionary, trans-class form of anti-liberal, and in the last analysis, anti conservative nationalism. As such it is an ideology deeply bound up with modernization and modernity, one which has assumed a considerable variety of external forms to adapt itself to the particular historical and national context in which it appears, and has drawn a wide range of cultural and intellectual currents, both left and right, anti-modern and pro-modern, to articulate itself as a body of ideas, slogans, and doctrine. In the inter-war period it manifested itself primarily in the form of an elite-led "armed party" which attempted, mostly unsuccessfully, to **generate a populist mass movement through a liturgical style of politics and a programme of radical policies which promised to overcome a threat posed by international socialism**, to end the degeneration affecting the nation under liberalism, and to bring about a radical renewal of its social, political and cultural life as part of what was widely imagined to be the new era being inaugurated in Western civilization. The core mobilizing myth of fascism which conditions its ideology, propaganda, style of politics and actions is the vision of the nation's imminent rebirth from decadence.

Roger Griffin, *The palingenetic core of generic fascist ideology*, published in Alessandro Campi (ed.), *Che cos'è il fascismo? Interpretazioni e prospettive di ricerche*, Ideazione editrice, Roma, 2003, pp. 97-122.

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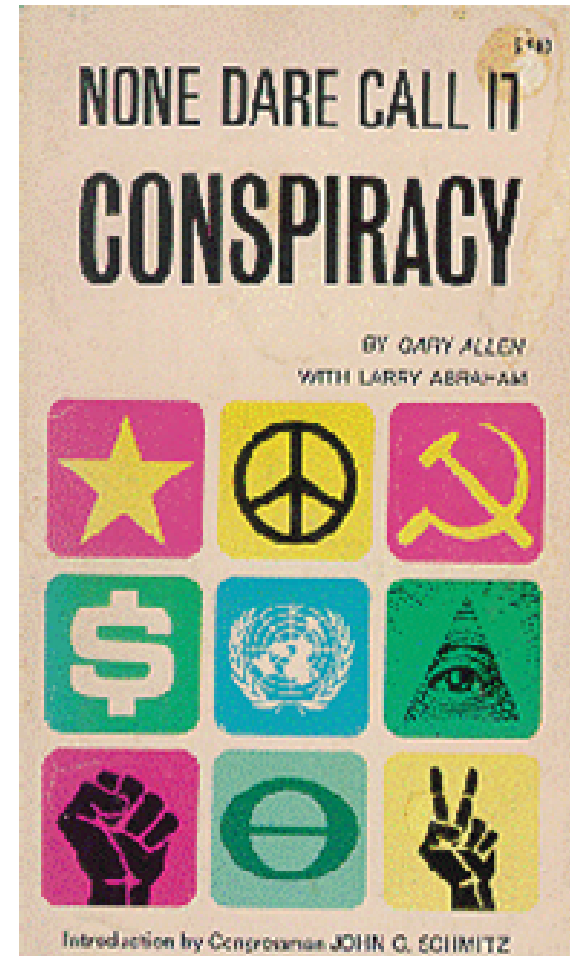
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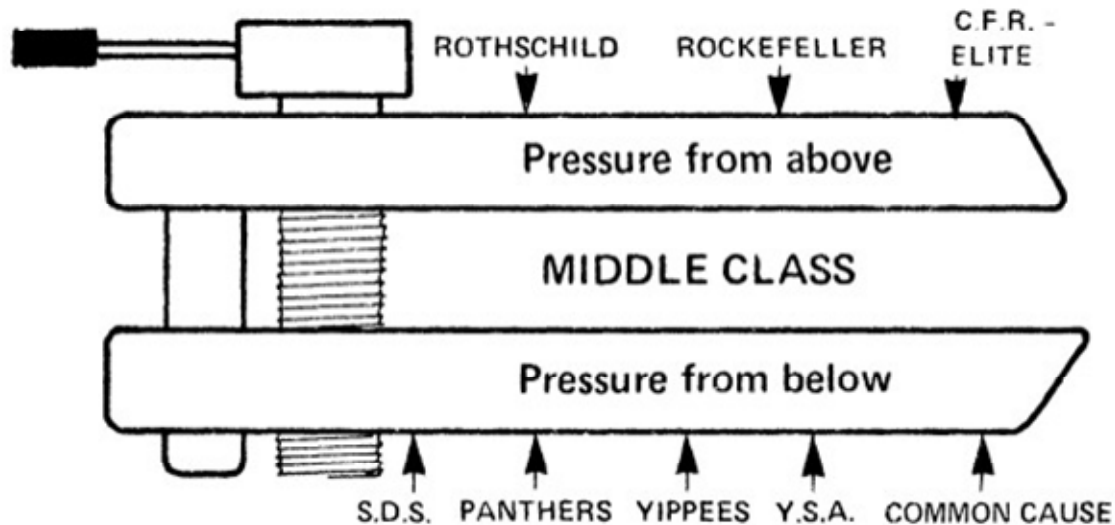
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Conspiracy Theories
warning of subversion and
treason are the
mechanism by which a
mass movement is
organized to protect the
idealized nation



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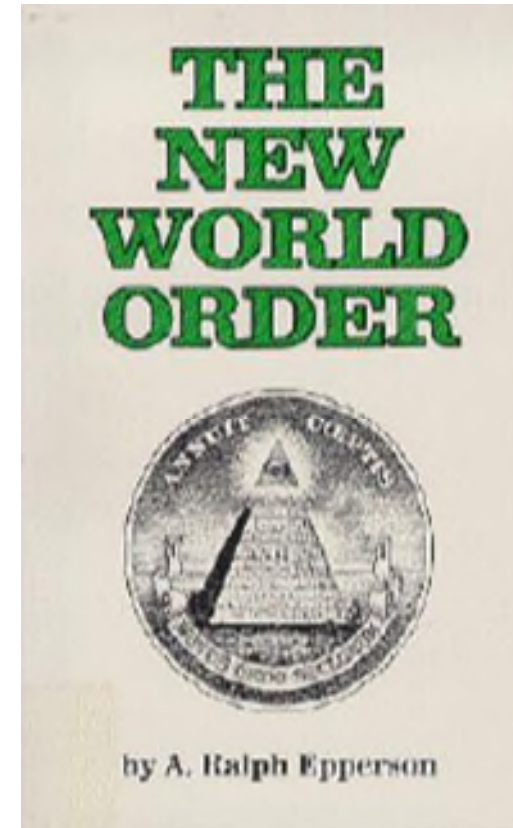
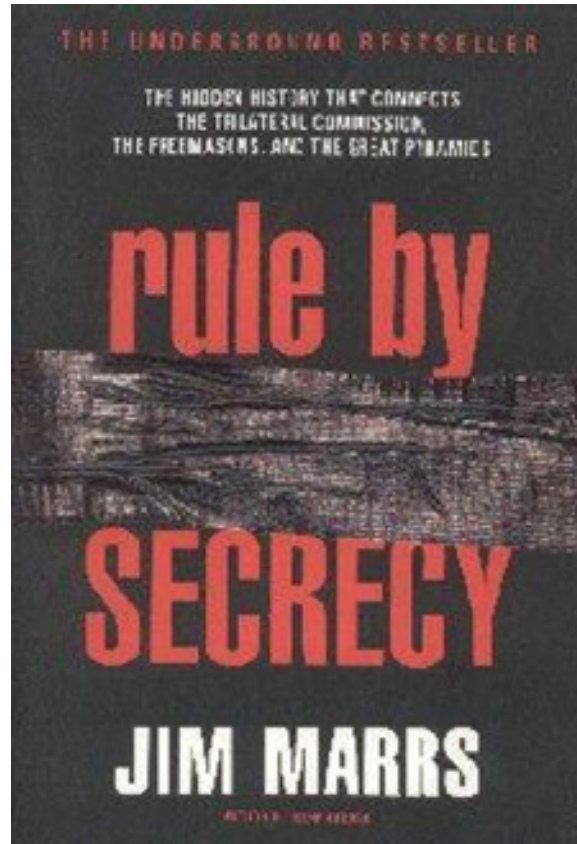


The conspiracy is said to involve traitorous national leaders in league with lazy, sinful, or subversive forces below the middle class pulling them down into poverty and sloth

None Dare Call it Conspiracy by Gary Allen
with Larry Abarham, 1971, illustration on page 125.
Introduction by Congressman John G. Schmitz

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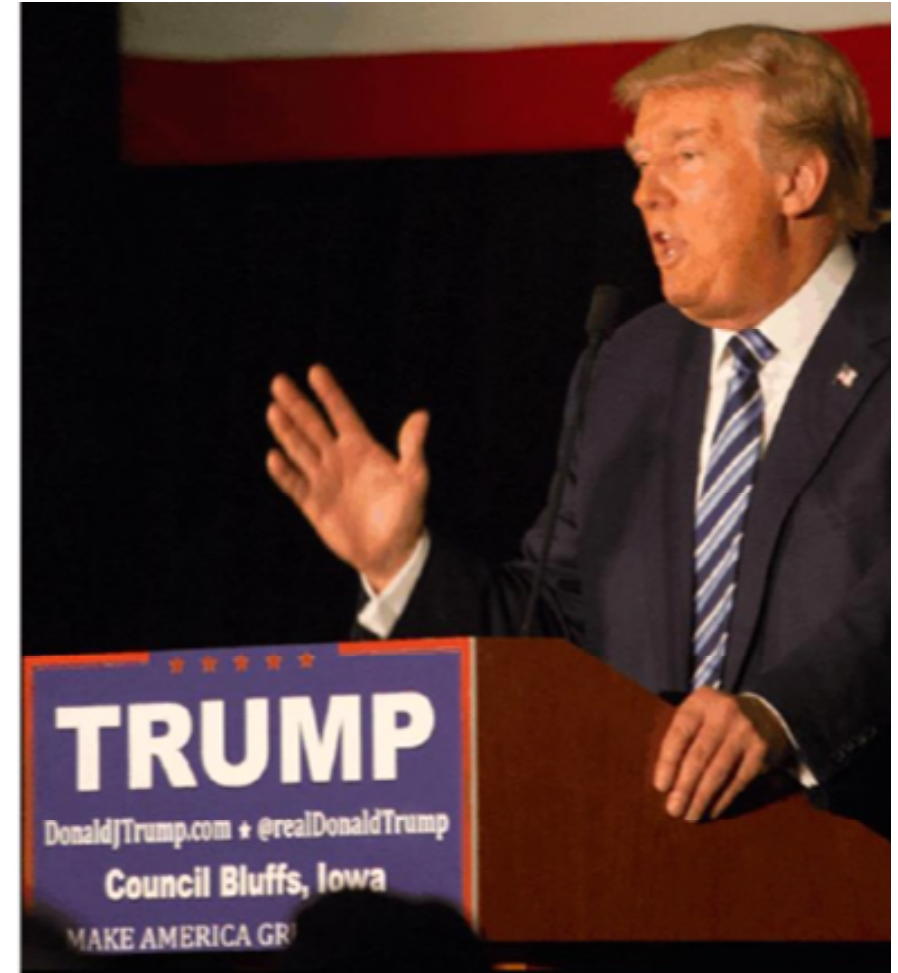
Books, videos, and online websites detail the alleged vast conspiracy by liberals and Democrats

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By Using Right-Wing Populist Rhetoric Trump Mobilized a Mass Base of Predominantly White Angry, Fearful, Alienated Voters

- Authoritarian Political and/or Religious Leaders
- Exclusionary Racial, Religious, or Ethnic Nationalism
- Use of Populist Rhetoric by Respected Leaders
- Framing Scapegoats as Despised “Others”
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Scripted Violence

While scholarly research exists on its own intellectual merits, we need to recognize that helping unravel the complexity of bigotry and xenophobia assists those working to extend human rights.

The leaders of organized political or social movements sometimes tell their followers that a specific group of ‘Others’ is plotting to destroy civilized society. **History tells us that if this message is repeated vividly enough, loudly enough, often enough, and long enough—it is only a matter of time before the bodies from the named scapegoated groups start to turn up.**

This term “scripted violence” was used at meetings of the Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University, and the Collective Behavior and Social Movements Section of the American Sociological Association, but I have been unable to find a citation.

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Read More About Scripted Violence

[“Heroes Know Which Villains to Kill:
How Coded Rhetoric
Incites Scripted Violence”](#)

by Chip Berlet

at independent.academia.edu

A chapter in Matthew Feldman and Paul Jackson (eds),
Doublespeak: Rhetoric of the Far-Right Since 1945,
Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag.

Resistance is not Futile

Hannah Arendt, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* concluded that evil was banal, and that if there was one clear universal truth, it is that ordinary people have a moral obligation to not look away from individual or institutional acts of cruelty or oppression. We recognize the processes that lead from words to violence, they are well-studied, and the theories and proofs are readily available.
Silence is consent. Denial is simply evil.

Resistance is not Futile

Resistance is not Futile

**How Mobilizing Resentment Generates Scripted Violence
Analyzing the “Tools of Fear”
Chip Berlet**

**Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Sociological Society
Northampton Community College
Friday, October 25, 2018**

My thanks to Elizabeth Tyler Bugaighis, Ph.D., Dean of Education & Academic Success
at Northampton Community College
and the staff of Northampton Community College in Bethlehem Township, Pennsylvania;
and to Jeffrey A. Langstraat, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology
Department of Social Sciences and Education,
Community College of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, serving the Pittsburgh area.

As the conference reconvened on Saturday we learned that a right-wing gunman had attacked a synagogue in Pittsburgh, killing congregants and injuring others including law enforcement first responders.

We turned the closing plenary into a forum on antisemitism, racism, toxic masculinism, and right-wing violence.