

From Class War to Race War:
Historicizing the Devolution from New Deal Populism to
“Trumpism”.

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Abstract

This thesis historicizes the seemingly aberrant case of White working-class support for Donald Trump. Specifically, the debate focuses on three major tropes that recurred throughout Trump's speeches and campaign materials: an ongoing attack on a nebulous group of "special interests," an attendant demand for a return to "law and order," and a celebratory appeal to an undefined "silent majority". Using Ernesto Laclau's theorization of "floating signifiers" to frame my debate, this thesis analyzes campaign materials, polling evidence, and secondary sources to judge how said populist tropes gravitated away from their progressive connotations of class warfare during the latter half of the 20th century. The following project finds that Trump and his reactionary forebearers used these formerly progressive signifiers to channel post-Civil Rights White backlash towards a conspiratorial "special interest" network of liberal Washington elites that had overlooked a victimized "silent majority" of workers in favor of racially marginalized citizens through an "unfair" tax-and-spend agenda.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale for Theory

1.1 The Trump “Upset”

In the wake of the 2016 presidential election, multiple news outlets scrambled to find explanations for what was seen as an electoral “upset” in the race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. *ABC News* reporter, Meghan Keneally, aptly surmised the stunning ascendance of Trump, which started with his crass promise to build a wall on the Southern U.S. border with Mexico, then continued with a bullish primary campaign of ad hominem attacks on his “establishment” contenders, and ended with his surprising victory as a “political novice against the experienced stateswoman.”¹ What was more concerning, however, was the fact that Trump’s meteoric rise to the presidency was significantly indebted to a traditionally Democratic-leaning constituency: working-class Whites. In 2016, Trump made decisive electoral inroads among the Northern blue-collar bastions of Obama support, and won White voters with less than a bachelor’s degree by a margin of 62 to 30 percent.² To a certain extent, his 2020 bid for the presidency replicated these results. Across high White population and low-education and income counties, Trump improved on his vote share by 2.6 percent and 2 percent, respectively.³ In their analysis of Rust Belt politics, similar statistical conclusions led political sociologist Michael McQuarrie to posit that “for the first time in the history of the two parties, Republicans did better among poor white voters than among affluent whites.”⁴

¹ Meghan Keneally, “Donald Trump Captures Presidency in Historic and Stunning Upset of Hillary Clinton.” *ABC News*, November 9, 2016. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/donald-trump-president-elect-clinton-concedes-historic-contest/story?id=43369466>

² Nate Cohn. “How the Obama Coalition Crumbled, Leaving an Opening for Trump.” *The New York Times*, December 23, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/23/upshot/how-the-obama-coalition-crumbled-leaving-an-opening-for-trump.html>

³ Editors. “The 2020 Presidential Election and Working-Class Voters.” *Jacobin Magazine*, March 6, 2022. <https://jacobin.com/2021/02/the-2020-presidential-election-and-working-class-voters>

⁴ Michael McQuarrie. “The revolt of the Rust Belt: Place and Politics in the Age of Anger.” *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 68, Issue S1 (2017). S126.

Indeed, Trump’s support among non-college educated White workers exhibits an epochal shift in the political topography of the United States. Barring a few notable exceptions, this constituency of lower-middle and working-class voters constituted the backbone of the liberal New Deal Coalition responsible for the passage of the most significant social spending programs of the 20th century, namely Social Security and Medicare. Yet, according to Ruy Teixeira and Joel Roger’s survey of voting patterns during the 1990s, Democratic inroads within this “forgotten majority” of Whites without a four-year college degree had started to wane in 1960, with declines in support especially acute during the Nixon and Reagan administrations.⁵ This thesis evaluates Trump’s electoral “upset” by providing a more historicized account of the White working class’s political shift from Democratic liberalism to far-right populism. It attempts to answer the following research question: What continuities do past far-right populist movements in the United States share? Why do these continuities appeal specifically to White workers?

Two recurring themes featured prominently throughout Trump’s campaign speeches and rallies: an attack on the vaguely defined “special interests” in Washington, and a continuous demand for “law and order.” The following project endeavors to locate Trump’s emotionally resonant battle against the “special interests” and his attendant demands for law and order within a broader historical continuum of rightwing populism within the United States, starting in the 1960s. Specifically, this thesis considers the racially charged assumptions that undergirded many of these previous movements. Using Ernesto Laclau’s theorization of populism as a hegemonic project, this debate contends that modern rightwing populism in the U.S. stems from a longer far-right endeavor centered on replacing the class-based antagonisms of the New Deal coalition with an anti-federal

⁵ Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers. *America’s Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000). 31-32

animus predicated on an antagonistic conflict between a “silent majority” of hardworking, White producers and an allegedly parasitic group of liberal Washington insiders that favor racially marginalized citizens through an “unfair” tax-and-spend agenda. At the core of these populist movements endures a recurring appeal to “law and order”, which signifies a return to an emotionally resonant past where White, male workers were the politically dominant center.⁶

1.2 Returning to Laclau

Before further discussion, it is important to establish this debate’s definition of populism, and the rationale for its use, especially since “populism” itself resides within an academically contested space. One of the earliest 21st century academic meditations on populism undertaken in Paul Taggart’s 2000 publication, *Populism*, opens its discussion with the claim that “populism serves many masters and mistresses. At different times and in different places it has been a force for change, a force against change, a creature of progressive politics of the left.”⁷ Indeed, most contemporary accounts of populism avoid subjecting the term to any ideological straitjacket. Yet, some, as is the case with Davidson and Saull’s overview of global rightwing populism, stress how the contemporary “structural-institutional imbalance between an internationally organized and

⁶ This project deliberately chooses to avoid using the term “neoliberalism” or related neologisms. There are several rationales for this decision. First, the conservative populist appeal that this project focuses on predates the rise of neoliberalism during the 1980s and 1990s. While there *are* neoliberal characteristics endemic to modern conservative populism, the use of the term has a tendency to paper over the nuanced appeals that have historical precedent before the “rise” of neoliberal governance in the late 1980s. Second, this project’s primary objective was to focus on the increasing appeal that conservative populism garnered among White workers during the latter half of the 20th century, and, as it will become clear later in this debate, libertarian ideologies have historically struggled to cultivate a popular base. Third, the extent to which U.S. populism squares with neoliberalism is unclear. For instance, both Reagan and Trump’s commitments to protectionism and the latter’s advocacy for border control and public works projects remains inconsonant with neoliberalism’s objectives of state retrenchment, open borders (for labor competition), and free trade. Finally, neoliberal governance spans both sides of the political spectrum. There are reactionary politicians that emphasize neoliberal goals, such as Rand Paul, just as there are leftwing progressives with a neoliberal bend akin to Bill Clinton. Ascribing this term to conservative populism would suggest that neoliberalism is an exclusive property of the Trumps, Reagans, and Gingrichs, when in reality it is a modality of governing that suffuses other policy rationales.

⁷ Paul Taggart. *Populism*. (Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000). 10.

managed neoliberal capitalism with a democratic political imaginary confined to the nation-state,” makes it much easier for the far-right to prosper.⁸ That said, even discussions centered on the far right’s populist resurgence are punctuated with acknowledgements of popular left-leaning victories, such as Podemos in Spain or Syriza in Greece.⁹

Thus, contemporary definitions remove the substantive core of populist movements, and conceive of populism as a logic or ideational concept that straddles both sides of the political spectrum. In the words of Mudde and Kaltwasser, populism is best conceived as a “thin-centered ideology,” that separates society into “two homogenous and antagonistic camps, ‘the pure people’ versus the ‘corrupt elite,’” and is capable of co-opting any “thick-centred” ideologies (e.g., agrarianism, nationalism, neoliberalism, socialism) into this malleable social division.¹⁰ Consequently, most (if not all) modern debates over populism avoid positing definitions subject to the overly-deterministic typologies, rife with exceptions, that Laclau had criticized at the outset of *On Populist Reason*.¹¹ For instance, political theorist Margaret Canovan, who had originally received criticism for their attempt to sort populist movements into a typology based on imprecise “family resemblances,”¹² later accepted the thesis that “‘the people’ cannot be restricted to a group with definite characteristics, boundaries, structure or permanence, though it is quite capable of

⁸ Neil Davidson and Richard Saull, “Neoliberalism and the Far-Right: A Contradictory Embrace,” *Critical Sociology* Vol. 43, No. 4-5 (2017). 719. Other works that emphasize the far-right’s advantage in a neoliberal political economy include: Ray Kiely, “Assessing Conservative Populism: A New Double Movement or Neoliberal Populism?” *Development and Change* Vol. 51, No. 2 (2020). 400-401., Nancy Fraser, “From Progressive Neoliberalism to Trump-and Beyond,” *American Affairs* Vol. 1, Number 4 (2017). <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/11/progressive-neoliberalism-trump-beyond/> and Adrian Pabst, “Trump’s Triumph: The Failure of Clinton’s Progressive Politics and the Demise of the Liberal World Order,” *Telos* Vol. 177 (2016).

⁹ Neil Davidson and Richard Saull, “Neoliberalism and the Far-Right: A Contradictory Embrace.” 719. and Cas Mudde, “The Problem with Populism.” *The Guardian*, February 17, 2015.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/17/problem-populism-syriza-podemos-dark-side-europe>

¹⁰ Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). 6 and 19.

¹¹ Ernesto Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. (London; New York: Verso 2005). 5-10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

carrying these senses.”¹³ While other current definitions may add rules that define the function of the populist leader within these movements,¹⁴ or draft theses on the authoritarian and anti-liberal tendencies that populism tends towards,¹⁵ it has nonetheless become a general article of faith that populism lacks a deterministic ideological core and exists on a foundational people versus elite dichotomy. This is a step in the right direction, but the previously mentioned assumption that populism is a fundamental struggle between a fluid definition of “the people” and established elites requires reconsideration in light of the recent far-right resurgence in the United States. The following argument urges a return to Ernesto Laclau’s definition of populism since modern U.S. rightwing populists often transgress the clear elite-versus-people division by adding non-elite actors to the antagonistic camp as well.

Laclau contends that populism is a “political logic” comprising of “a system of rules drawing a horizon within which some objects are representable while others are excluded,” rather than a substantive or idiosyncratic movement with an identifiable “social base or ideological orientation,” that exists *a priori*.¹⁶ This theorization of populism builds on Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s previous theorization of hegemony, which rejects the “essentialist core” of class conflict in favor of an “unsutured character of the social” where hegemonic identities are constituted through an “equivalential articulation” between autonomous spheres of conflict.¹⁷ For the purpose of this discussion, three theoretical ideas are borrowed from Laclau’s conception of populism. First, “the people” are not a pre-given unity, but rather constituted through a process of “naming”, whereby a

¹³ Margaret Canovan. *The People*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006). 139-140.

¹⁴ Daniel Stockemer. “Conclusion,” In *Populism Around the World: A Comparative Perspective*. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019). 131, 135, 138.

¹⁵ Jan-Werner Muller. “Conclusion: Seven Theses on Populism.” In *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁷ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1985). 69, 183, 184, 193

chain of unsatisfied democratic demands form an irreducible (albeit, precarious) unity.¹⁸ Second, that a particular demand (an “empty signifier”) transcends its particularity and comes to unify the multitude of demands in a hegemonic “equivalential relation.”¹⁹ And third, this particular demand presents its own “partial” emancipation as equivalent to the emancipation of society as a whole,” from an oppressive establishment or “general crime.”²⁰ Consider the graphic borrowed from Laclau’s conception of a popular anti-Tsarist movement:

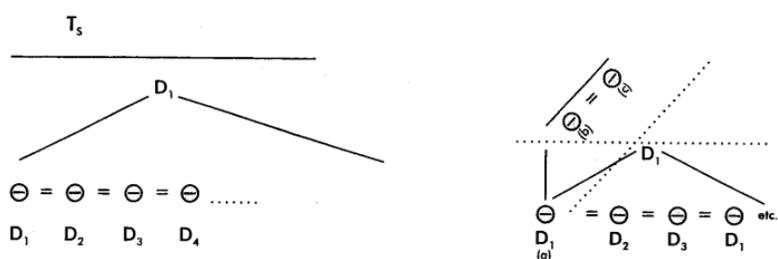


Figure 1 - Illustration of an empty signifier versus floating signifier’s function, borrowed from *On Populist Reason* 130-131. The Ts represents the antagonistic camp (divided with a dotted line), or the oppressive Tsarist regime, while the D1...D4 represents democratic demands. D1 resembles the particular claim that comes to exhibit the entirety of the chain as the face of popular inscription. The adjacent graphic exhibits a competition between two different frontiers over the substance of a floating universal claim (i.e., the floating signifier).

The second diagram exhibits the function of a “floating signifier”, and the hegemonic contest between two antagonistic equivalential chains. For example, the second instance would occur if the pro-Tsarist regime appropriated some of the popular demands inscribed in the anti-Tsarist movement.²¹ Assuming the antagonists are contingent expressions (not solely “elites”) and that popular demands are prone to historical shifts in content and expression is a necessary requisite to map the evolution of rightwing populism in the United States.

¹⁸ Ibid., 118.
¹⁹ Ibid., 130-131.
²⁰ Ernesto Laclau, “Identity and Hegemony: The Role of Universality in the Constitution of Political Logics,” in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, ed. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Zizek. (London; New York: Verso, 2000). 47 and 53.
²¹ Ernesto Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. 133.

1.3 Outline and Application of Theory

For instance, some of the signifiers and conceptions of “the people” that permeate the rhetoric of rightwing populist platforms within the U.S. had originally been a province of progressive politics. Namely, the conflict between producerism and parasitism, frequently framed by the GOP as a clash between a group of special interest “takers” and taxpayers,²² appeared in the rhetoric of the late 19th century farm-based Populist Party and the Interwar New Deal Coalition, both of which envisioned the arena of conflict as one between workers and immoral financiers. In the case of the Populist Party, such popular demands were codified in the “Omaha Platform”, which steeped its progressive calls for an income tax, monetized silver, and an eight-hour day in an emotionally resonant appeal that pitted the “the plain people” against “capitalists”.²³ During the height of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt emulated this populist dyad in his 1936 re-nomination acceptance speech, where he denounced a small group of “economic royalists” that “had concentrated into their own hands an almost complete control over other people’s property, other people’s money, other people’s labor – other people’s lives.”²⁴ Across both popular movements, the Federal Government was framed as a catalyst for equality. The Omaha Platform proffered the belief that “the power of government – in other words, of the people – should be expanded,” and Roosevelt’s address clung to a similar narrative that the American citizen “could

²² Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016). 247.

²³ Ignatius Donnelly, “National People’s Party Platform,” (transcript of platform, Omaha, Nebraska, July 4, 1892). History Matters. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5361/>

²⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Franklin Roosevelt’s Re-Nomination Acceptance Speech,” (speech, Washington, D.C., July 27, 1936). The American Presidency Project, <https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/23-the-great-depression/franklin-roosevelts-re-nomination-acceptance-speech-1936/>

appeal only to the organized power of Government,” to stave off the “tyranny” of monied elites.²⁵ These earlier populist movements framed Federal Government as a conduit of power for the everyday worker. By the 1960s, some of the same populist tropes brandished in the aforementioned progressive movements would be appropriated by conservative demagogues intent on fanning the flames of cultural and racial backlash.

Although the 1960s demarcated a crucial turning point for what became the New Right, the ensuing “culture wars” paid rhetorical homage to some of the tropes and threads of debate pioneered by the Old Right. Thus, before discussing the historical contingencies that the New Right capitalized on in the 1960s, it is important to provide a broad survey of the intellectual antecedents that came to define the central objectives of the populist Right. Then, chapter two focuses on Barry Goldwater’s use of Old Right themes to conceal an otherwise crass rejection of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Even though Goldwater lost, his opposition to comprehensive Civil Rights legislation under a pseudo-principled critique of federal overreach that borrowed heavily from the Old Right *did* succeed in driving a racial wedge into the New Deal Coalition, thus separating the traditionally loyal Dixiecrat voters of the South from the Democratic Party. Many of Goldwater’s populist appeals predicated on the “forgotten man” and “local rights” found fertile ground within the Deep South and growing trans-Mississippi sunbelt where such invocations became intimately bound up with a racially charged anti-federal message that would outlast the GOP’s ill-fated 1964 campaign.

While Goldwater initiated what became known as the Republican Southern Strategy, it was George Wallace and his contender Richard Nixon that instituted and expanded upon this

²⁵ Ignatius Donnelly, “National People’s Party Platform.” and Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Franklin Roosevelt’s Re-Nomination Acceptance Speech.”

popular core of White backlash during the 1968 Presidential Campaign. Although Wallace ran as an independent against Nixon in 1968, his platform “pointed the way,” for the New Right to forge a popularized, anti-liberal connection with the broader electorate predicated on a citizenry “harassed by arrogant but inept bureaucrats, slovenly and unpatriotic protesters, and criminal minorities.”²⁶ In many ways, Wallace echoed the rhetoric of his Populist Party forebearers when he claimed to campaign on behalf of the plain folk producers, but he had wholly displaced the popular objective of equity with pro-segregationist demands for law and order. Borrowing from both Wallace’s political lexicon and Kevin Phillip’s “Sunbelt Strategy,” Nixon pioneered a racially charged conception of “the people” which elided the old class based antagonisms of the New Deal through an anti-elitist umbrella appeal to White southern Democrats “by opposing further liberalization of federal civil rights policy or stronger enforcement of civil rights law” and Northern White workers “whom resented the Great Society antipoverty and welfare programs, and who were anxious over urban race riots and mass protests against the Vietnam War.”²⁷ Said appeal pitted a community of hardworking, law-abiding citizens of the “silent majority” against a permissive federal bureaucracy that allegedly favored the interests of racial minorities and Civil Rights protestors over the will of “the people”. The core demand of this popular mobilization consecrated itself in a call for law and order, which encompassed a broader reaction towards the New Left’s fight for greater participatory democracy. This strategy bore the consequence of exacerbating pre-existing racial animosity in the South while partially displacing Northern workers’ class-based concerns with conservative social backlash.²⁸ “The Hard Hat Riot” in May

²⁶ Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). 224.

²⁷ Scott J. Spitzer, “Nixon’s New Deal: Welfare Reform for the Silent Majority,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 42, No. 3 (2012). 458.

²⁸ Bruce J. Schuman, “Down to the Net-Cutting: The Nixon Presidency and American Public Life,” in *The Seventies* (New York: The Free Press, 2001). 36.

1970, which saw the violent escalation of conflict between White union workers and college demonstrators, aptly manifested the shift towards a “new class war,” that would be “waged not against the old corporate robber barons but the impudent snobs of the cultural elite.”²⁹

Chapter four traces the continuities between the previous far-right populists of the 1960s and the Reagan era. The discussion locates Ronald Reagan’s popular reception among working class voters within a broader anti-federal animus that grew in tandem with the macroeconomic perils of “stagflation” and regressive taxation during the 1970s. Squeezed from below with stagnant wages, and pressed from above due to an outdated federal tax structure, many White working-class Reagan Democrats turned to the GOP after Jimmy Carter’s underwhelming first (and only) term in office. Although many novel issues plagued workers during the late 1970s and early 1980s (the Iran Hostage Crisis, stagflation, globalization), Reagan opted to pursue “virtually the same coalition,” of disillusioned White working-class ethnics across the South and North in a similar manner to Nixon, with a major difference being that Reagan tethered this similar electoral strategy to a wholesale retrenchment in federal social spending.³⁰ Thus, Reagan drew up a similar conflict between the forgotten White worker and the elitist federal bureaucracy that unfairly benefitted a vague group of “special interests” through the conduit of welfare programs. Though “special interests” had originally designated the conflict between bankers and workers during the early 20th century progressive movements, Reagan conflated this term with the racially profiled non-elite recipients of federal transfers. The ensuing cuts to welfare programs predominantly associated with Black recipients (AFDC, SNAP, CETA) paralleled massive federal appropriations for policing during Reagan’s “War on Drugs”. Reagan’s own

²⁹ Jefferson Cowle, “The ‘Hard Hat Riot’ Was a Preview of Today’s Political Division,” *The New York Times*, May 11, 2020.

³⁰ Scott Spitzer. “Reagan’s Silent Majority: Conservative Welfare Politics after Nixon.” Paper presented at *the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association*, Hollywood, CA, March 28, 2013. 4.

demands for law and order continued to revive the far-right's popular objective to redefine federal activism as a clarion call for White protection rather than democratic equality.

The discussion then discerns the areas of overlap that Gingrich's 1994 midterms campaign for the "forgotten majority" maintained with Reagan's populist strategy. Both the racially charged symbolic appeals to welfare retrenchment and increased law and order were featured prominently in Gingrich's national platform, the "Contract with America". Said themes resonated with White working-class constituencies that associated burgeoning inequality with a Democratic Party that increasingly appeared to eschew values of hard work and self-dependency in favor of redistribution. Gingrich's ability to court this disillusioned group of voters ultimately culminated into a resounding victory for the GOP during the 1994 midterms, which resulted in both the House and Senate flipping to the Republican Party for the first time in forty years.

Chapter five considers the continuing emotional appeal borne by the invocation of a "silent majority" of White, hardworking taxpayers that continue to struggle against entrenched liberal "special interests". Specifically, the discussion begins with the rise of the Tea Party during the aftermath of the Great Financial Crisis and the 2008 election of President Barack Obama. Following the proposed HASP bailout of average homeowners proposed by the Obama Administration, the Tea Party arose as a nominal alternative to establishment politics after Rick Santelli's scathing critique of the Democratic plan to fund the "losers'" mortgages. While the Tea Party initially benefitted from an influx of top-down funding from libertarian donors, namely the Koch Seminaries, popular charges of the movement's "astro-turf" characteristics glossed over the historically pertinent themes that continued to mobilize grassroots Tea Party support. Ahead of the 2010 midterms, core Tea Party pundits recycled a similar narrative that celebrated a silent majority of workers who had been sold-out by Washington insiders that allegedly favored

minority groups. Again, the historical antidote for inequality and political alienation reoccurred in a comprehensive demand for law and order, which curtailed meaningful discussion over the global ramifications of financial deregulation in favor of (fallacious) suggestions that undocumented migrants constituted a new criminal class of federal recipients.

Although Tea Partiers achieved relative success across a wide spread of Southern and Midwestern districts during the 2010 midterms, when they were tasked with governing, their anti-establishment brand of politics proved to be either ineffective or self-destructive. Nonetheless, Tea Party candidates left their lasting mark on U.S. politics by normalizing the use of misinformation and name-calling to denigrate the political opposition. In this way, the Tea Party acted as a weather balloon for the ensuing “Trump phenomena” that would explicitly revive many of the misinformed conspiracies surrounding undocumented immigrants and federal welfare programs that Tea Partiers’ had developed earlier. While Trump’s crude remarks about “illegals” and their connection to “special interests” in Washington came to thrive within a novel political sphere of heightened polarity, his national appeal drew on a longstanding populist lexicon that had existed since the 1960s. Like Nixon and Wallace, Trump made overt references to the “silent majority” and rhetorically hammered his opposition’s soft-on-crime platforms. Yet again, “law and order” would continually resurface throughout Trump’s speeches and campaign materials as a universal signifier for White working-class hegemony. Trump’s unprecedented success across White working-class constituencies was only an upset insofar as it conflicted with the “overconfident” projections of highly publicized pundits and poll reports.³¹ Rather than viewing it as an upset or surprise, this thesis maintains the position that Trump’s overwhelming victory with White workers came on the heels

³¹ Andrew Gelman and Julia Azari. “19 Things We Learned from the 2016 Election.” *Statistics and Public Policy* Vol 4, No. 1 (2017). 1-3.

of a longer historical endeavor centered on breaking apart the New Deal Coalition through a racially charged rejection of federal power.

My closing remarks make three general conclusions drawn from a historical review of U.S. rightwing populism premised on a Laclauian conception of populism:

1. The workers, and “plain-folk” producers became co-opted into a reactionary conception of the people that went under the moniker of “silent majority”, “forgotten voter”, or “invisible man”. According to Laclau, these names bore the ontological need of “discursively constructing social division,” but lacked the ontic necessity to express said division in class-based terms.³² It follows then, that “the people” denote a “political category” rather than “a *datum* of the social structure,” since they do not designate a “given group, but an act of institution that creates a new agency out of a plurality of heterogenous demands.”³³ This new agency arose from a racist interpretation of “the workers” that conjures up an imagined populus of hardworking, self-dependent, family-oriented, White working-class citizens that had been allegedly circumscribed to the economic and sociodemographic margins due to the skewed political calculus of liberal Washington elites that increasingly came to favor racial minorities over their traditional base. Richard Nixon’s campaign strategist and staffer, Kevin Phillips, had provided the supposed rationale for this liberal miscalculation that future populists would exploit: “The Negro cause is a very useful adjunct of the Liberal Establishment... the Negro revolution and the ‘urban crisis’ provide much of the impetus for vast government urban planning, education, welfare, social research and housing expenditures... they are as essential to the prosperity of key vocational segments of the

³² Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. 87.

³³ Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. 224.

Liberal Establishment as defense spending is to the Southern California Military Industrial Complex.”³⁴

2. Such an alliance leads to the next critical conclusion that can be drawn about rightwing populism in the U.S.; that the people-versus-elite dichotomy is not an infallible premise of populism. According to Laclau, antagonism logically arises from the constituent building blocks, defined as unsatisfied democratic demands, that constitute the quilt of any populist coalition. Since democratic demands are “always addressed to somebody... we are confronted with a dichotomic division between unfulfilled social demands, on the one hand, and an unresponsive power, on the other.”³⁵ By itself, an autonomous democratic demand may delineate a specific local enemy or antagonist (e.g., local council, university authorities, protestors), but its passage into an equivalential relation with other demands requires the construction of an increasingly indeterminate global enemy.³⁶ The populist construction of an indeterminate global enemy permits a space of conceptual flexibility that can incorporate both elite actors (the lobbyists, Washington bureaucrats, Democratic congressmen) and non-elite actors (racialized recipients of welfare, protestors, sexual minorities) within the entrenched establishment. In the case of the United States, New Right populists capitalized on the feeling of political displacement that many White workers felt from the New Left movements of the 1960s. The old bastions of liberal strength in the North and South began to gravitate towards the GOP as the original “special interests” of economic royalists and bankers came to be displaced with a camp of permissive liberal elites and their favored minority groups. If the enemies of the “forgotten voter” are

³⁴ Kevin Phillips. *The Emerging Republican Majority*. (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969). 89.

³⁵ Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. 86.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

liberals in Washington and their racially profiled “adjuncts”, then Trump’s self-ordained efforts to fight the “special interest” establishment with his billionaire credentials loses its irony.

3. The “special interests” are responsible for the “gap which has emerged in the harmonious continuity of the social,” which all populist movements seek to fill.³⁷ To ameliorate this loss of harmony, conservative populists since Goldwater have urged for a return to law and order. “Law and order” undoubtedly evinces a racially charged call for policing, but its recurrence since the 1960s suggests that it contains a deeper emotional valence. Using Laclau’s interpretation of Lacanian psychoanalysis, law and order occupies the status of “*objet petit a*” and resembles “the name that fullness receives within a certain historical horizon” (i.e., an “empty signifier”).³⁸ In essence, law and order transcends its immediate demand for lower crime, and comes to integrate a broader social fabric of reactionary claims centered on protecting White working class political and economic power.

Thus, while the people-versus-elite dichotomy remains integral to any analysis of populism, it is not sufficient for a historical investigation of U.S. rightwing populism in the last half-century. Starting with the Southern Strategy, many U.S. populists continued to brandish an appeal that framed the main antagonists as liberal federal elites and their non-elite beneficiaries. Thereafter, the conspiratorial alliance between the liberal Washington establishment and a criminalized class of racial minorities came to constitute the cornerstone of radical rightwing populist appeals in the United States. This anti-democratic alliance serves as the antecedent for a racially charged demand for law and order, which acts as a universal surface onto which a multiplicity of democratic demands

³⁷ Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. 85.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 116, 127.

become grafted onto a reactionary request to protect the fleeting privileges of a “silent majority” of White workers.

Chapter 2: From Intellectualism to Populism: Goldwater and the Old Right

2.1 Introduction

The core contention of this thesis, which states that conservative populism in the United States establishes a dichotomic frontier between a White “silent majority” and an elitist federal bureaucracy that supposedly favors racial minorities more than “the people”, ultimately suggests that the U.S. populist right’s central objective is to pare back the Federal Government’s capacity to level the socioeconomic playing field through social spending. This goal, however, sets the U.S. experience apart from the European instances of far-right populism. For example, sociologist Nikolas Rose contends that some variants of rightwing populism in Europe continue to espouse a commitment to strong social spending institutions so long as they are reserved for “the true Finns, the real Danes, the authentic French and so forth.”³⁹ The following chapter contends that the ideological roots of modern U.S. populism originate with the Old Right conservatives that viewed the federal expansion undertaken by the New Deal as antithetical to core American values. Although he lost the presidential race, Barry Goldwater used the Old Right’s anti-federal principles to justify a racially charged rejection of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to flip the Democratic Deep South to the GOP during the 1964 election.

Goldwater was an integral catalyst for the Old Right’s transition towards New Right populism. Before Goldwater, the post-Depression Old Right struggled to establish a popular identity capable of appealing to a wide constituency of working Americans. Barring a few notable outliers that postured as “sensational foes of modernist culture,” such as Father Coughlin or the Ku Klux Klan, historian Michael Kazin notes that “until the 1940s, conservative populism

³⁹ Nikolas Rose, “Still ‘like birds on a wire’? Freedom after Neoliberalism.” *Economy and Society* Vol. 46, No. 3-4 (2017). 317.

was an oxymoron.”⁴⁰ On the one hand, historian William Russ Jr. argued that the GOP occupied a “permanent minority status,” due to a national sentiment of “intense distrust,” that prevailed among a generation of laborers that had suffered under Republican apathy during the Depression.⁴¹ On the other hand, the uncompromising support for constitutional property rights and public order placed the Old Right into fundamental opposition with majoritarian movements that sought to overturn status quo hierarchies.⁴² Despite the Old Right’s innate aversion towards majoritarian politics, Senator McCarthy’s Red Scare established a broad, albeit brief, popular animus against an alleged cadre of elitist communists that supposedly operated in Washington. Though he gravitated away from the red-baiting zeal of McCarthy, Goldwater established the staying power of Old Conservatism’s anti-federal appeal by connecting subversive Washington bureaucrats with desegregation and lawlessness in the South. The consequent “Southern Strategy” provided the Old Right with a racially charged populist identity premised on a return to law and order.

2.2 The Principles of the Old Right

Although the Old Right framed the initial objectives of the forthcoming New Right’s populist politics of the 1960s, it was by no means an intellectual monolith. Rather, the Old Right comprised of multiple different (and sometimes competing) rationales for refusing the statist expansion of the New Deal State. For example, E.J. Dionne notes that Richard Weaver’s appeal to traditionalist pre-modern values in *Ideas have Consequences* “pointedly suggests the

⁴⁰ Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. 166.

⁴¹ William A. Russ Jr., “The Great Depression in Retrospect,” *Social Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1958). 10.

⁴² Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. 166. and Robert Green McCloskey. *American Conservatism in the Age of Enterprise*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951). 22.

uneasiness of traditionalists with free market doctrine,” akin to that of Friedrich Hayek’s rationalist justification for libertarianism.⁴³ Thus, Old Conservatives deviated over the premises of their anti-statist threads of debate. Historical surveys of conservatism during this period generally sort the movement into three major categories: Libertarians, traditionalists, and anti-communists.⁴⁴

The libertarians, or traditional liberals, viewed economic liberty and Democracy as mutually constitutive, and likewise argued that state planning and unionism would inevitably lapse into dictatorship. With his bestseller defense of free market capitalism, *The Road to Serfdom*, Friedrich Hayek was among the most visible proponents of this credo. However, David Farber’s historical coverage of the Old Right accredits Ohio Senator, Robert A. Taft, with the movement’s early intellectual fervor. Senator Taft and his business allies “did not need an Austrian to tell them that capitalism was good and communistic state planning was bad,” since it was “the protection of economic liberty, at least on the domestic side of politics, that most moved Taft and so many other self-proclaimed conservatives,” during the Roosevelt era.⁴⁵ Taft had captured the national limelight in 1935 when he rebuked Roosevelt’s criticisms of wealthy elites as the precursor to a “general theory of a redistribution of wealth which would soon lead to a socialistic control of all property and income.”⁴⁶ In a similar speech delivered before the Ohio Chamber of Commerce in 1935, Taft’s scathing critique of the New Deal contended that “no

⁴³ E.J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991). 156.

⁴⁴ George Nash. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998). 1-127. and Patrick Allitt. *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). 159-173. and Mark Gerson. *The Neoconservative Vision*. (Lanham: Madison Books, 1996). 40-42.

⁴⁵ David Farber. *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). 12, 17.

⁴⁶ James T. Patterson. *Mr. Republican; A Biography of Robert A. Taft*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972). 152.

democratic government can be strong enough to regulate in detail the lives of businesses and individuals and remain in power. Socialism inevitably implies a dictatorship.”⁴⁷

Although Taft was not a dogmatic libertarian in all areas (he continually supported industry protectionism and nominal social programs), he nevertheless spearheaded efforts to reduce the size and scope of New Deal reforms before the *Road to Serfdom* had made its mark in the U.S. During his tenure, the Ohio Senator held the expansion of New Deal programs in check by pragmatically forming temporary alliances with conservative Southern Democrats based on the common ground they shared concerning states’ rights and anti-unionism.⁴⁸ This cross-party pact came to its zenith in 1947, when Taft successfully overrode President Truman’s veto of the Taft-Hartley Act with the crucial support of twenty Democratic Senators.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, Taft-conservatives’ commitment to isolation on the basis that a war would further expand the size and scope of the New Deal State left their faction vulnerable to allegations of Nazi sympathizing.⁵⁰

Thus, Hayek’s core thesis, which posited that state planning had initiated the degradative transition towards totalitarianism in *both* Germany and Russia during the 20th century,⁵¹ served to cut Nazism from its patently rightwing moorings and recast it as a collectivist phenomenon akin to socialism and communism.⁵² Such an argument proved to be invaluable for post-war conservatives that bore the stain of isolationism. Taft, who had been subject to the Ohio CIO Council’s wartime allegations that he would rather do business with fascists than fight them,

⁴⁷ Robert A. Taft. “The New Deal Recovery, Reform, and Revolution.” Speech to Chamber of Commerce in Warren, Ohio, April 9, 1935. In *The Papers of Robert A. Taft*. Ed. Clarence E. Wunderlin et al., (Kent: The Kent State University, Press, 1997). 481.

⁴⁸ James T. Patterson. *Mr. Republican; A Biography of Robert A. Taft*. 260. and James T. Patterson. “A Conservative Coalition Forms in Congress, 1933-1939.” *The Journal of American History* Vol. 52, No. 4 (1966). 763.

⁴⁹ “HR 3020. Passage Over the President’s Veto.” Govtrack. June 2, 2022, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/80-1947/s86>

⁵⁰ David Farber. *Modern American Conservatism*. 26 and E.J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 153.

⁵¹ Friedrich Hayek. *The Road to Serfdom*. (Reprint 1944; London: Routledge Reprint, 2008). 67, 69, 107. 63 and 63.

⁵² E.J. Dionne. *Why the Right Went Wrong*. 153.

actively sought to reverse the narrative during his 1948 bid for the presidential nomination when he ran a radio spot claiming that “President Truman wanted to draft strikers in the army... that would have been slave labor – just like Hitler did.”⁵³

While the Old Right libertarians emphasized their commitment to economic liberty, the traditionalists made a concurrent endeavor to revive pre-modern concepts of morality and ethics. George Nash’s historicization of the postwar conservative intellectual movement associates the traditionalist branch with “a return to traditional religions and ethical absolutes and a rejection of the ‘relativism’ which had allegedly corroded Western values and produced an intolerable vacuum that was filled by demonic ideologies.”⁵⁴ Though the traditionalists centered their focus on morals and culture, their movement nominally held some principles in common with the libertarian wing. Both libertarians and traditionalists upheld a mutual conservative disdain for the New Deal, but while the liberals viewed the statist subversion of individual material liberty as the precursor to dictatorship, prominent traditionalists, such as Russel Kirk, went a step further by decrying the materialist “super-bureaucracy... encompassing not merely the economy proper, however, but the whole moral and intellectual range of human activities.”⁵⁵

Furthermore, both libertarians and traditionalists celebrated the institution of private property. However, libertarians viewed property rights as an end, while traditionalists saw private property as a means to an end. For instance, Richard Weaver celebrated private property’s ability to encourage virtues of providence and industriousness, yet he detested the “kind of property brought into being by finance capitalism,” such as stocks and bonds, since

⁵³ James T. Patterson. *Mr. Republican; A Biography of Robert A. Taft*. 275 and 398.

⁵⁴ George Nash. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. Xx.

⁵⁵ Russel Kirk. *The Conservative Mind*. (Reprint 1953; Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001). 467.

these abstractions inevitably destroyed “the connection between man and his substance.”⁵⁶

Likewise, Kirk asserted that private property made possible “the variety of personality, the wealth, the leisure, and the fertility of invention that sustain civilization,” while simultaneously cautioning that “materialism confused with tradition” led to the degeneration in moral fiber.⁵⁷

Although they armed themselves with ideas, both the traditionalists and libertarians lacked a popular base to carry them out. On the political front, Reinhard notes that the GOP struggled to carry its pre-Depression image as the Unionist, “Full Dinner Pail” party of prosperity that had carried a broad coalition of “midwestern farmers, Negroes, urban workers, small businessmen, and corporate moguls.”⁵⁸ Barring the isolationist constituencies of the Midwest and conservative businessmen,⁵⁹ Roosevelt successfully co-opted Black voters, Southern Bourbons, and urban White blue-collar ethnics into a new coalition.⁶⁰ In a country where the vast majority of poll respondents indicated support for federal social spending, ranging from free medical care for those unable to pay to covering the living expenses for those without work,⁶¹ Taft’s warnings of New Deal socialism struggled to gain popular traction.

Within the intellectual sphere, both traditionalists and conservatives held fundamentally anti-populist ideas. In part, this aversion towards majoritarian politics stemmed from the earlier writings of the idyllic individualist, Albert Jay Nock. In the words of George Nash, Nock had

⁵⁶ Richard Weaver. *Ideas Have Consequences*. (Reprint 1948; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999). 132, 133, 138, 139.

⁵⁷ Russel Kirk. *The Conservative Mind*. 439, 451, 452.

⁵⁸ David Reinhard. *The Republican Right Since 1945*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983). 4.

⁵⁹ For Sources on midwestern isolationism: Geoffrey Kabaservice. *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party; From Eisenhower to the Tea Party*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 6-10. and Murray M. Rothbard. *The Betrayal of the American Right*. (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007). 38-40.

⁶⁰ David Reinhard. *The Republican Right Since 1945*. 5.

⁶¹ Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril. *The Political Beliefs of Americans*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1967). 10. This was a sample of Gallup poll questions taken during the latter half of the 1930s.

“abandoned his early Jeffersonian idealism,” due to his contempt for the “hopeless, uneducable masses.” Though Nock’s educational traditionalism and near-anarchist anti-statism were readily accepted by post-war traditionalists and libertarians, many of these academics also found refuge in his romanticized conception of the “remnant” which referred to a small and enlightened circle of intellectuals that stood above the irrational masses. For the base of post-war conservative intellectuals that felt “superfluous” within a world dominated by the welfare state, politics were subordinated to the overarching objective of ideas.⁶² While the traditionalist and libertarian wings of the Old Right struggled to bridge the gap between their intellectual creed and the voters, the third wing, anti-Communists, provided a potential blueprint for conservative populism.

2.3 Anti-Communist Populism

Admittedly, libertarians and traditionalists shared a unanimous hatred for Communists, but the anti-Communists “made the issue its *raison d’etre*.”⁶³ Post-war anti-Communism bore its roots in the writings of ex-radical, Eugene Lyons, who claimed that American liberals willingly cooperated with Communists as part of an anti-fascist front.⁶⁴ If Lyons’ critique of the “Red Decade” (the name he assigned to Roosevelt’s New Deal during the 1930s and early 1940s) suggested liberal hypocrisy, the testimonials delivered by ex-Communists, implicating state officials with actual Communist treason, added a partisan dimension to the anti-Communist right.⁶⁵ Most notable in this was Whittaker Chambers’ documented incrimination of senior State

⁶² George Nash. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. 17-20.

⁶³ Mark Gerson. *The Neoconservative Vision*. 41.

⁶⁴ George Nash. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. 131-132.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

Department official, Alger Hiss, for communist espionage and Truman's subsequent dismissal of the case, all of which led to a cleavage between the "plain men and women of the nation," and "the enlightened and the powerful, the clamorous proponents of the open mind and the common man, who snapped their minds shut in a pro-Hiss psychosis."⁶⁶

Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy exploited this division between the common people and the liberal elite that allegedly carried out the orders of the Kremlin. On February 9, 1950, he delivered his famously caustic anti-Communist speech before the Women's Republican Club in Wheeling, West Virginia. McCarthy's claim that the "State Department, which is one of the most important departments, is thoroughly infested with Communists,"⁶⁷ coupled with his ability to spin narratives that directly implicated State Department officials with domestic subversion, revived an internal state of siege akin to that of the 1919 Red Scare. Yet, unlike the anti-immigrant 1919 Red Scare, McCarthy set his crosshairs on those "bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths,"⁶⁸ that worked in the State Department, thereby tethering a communistic federal bureaucracy with elitism.

As Michael Kazin observes, McCarthy's brand of terror, which capitalized on "plebeian resentments," presented a brief opportunity for Republicans to cast off their widely perceived image as the party of big business and thus "close the gap between ideological conservatives and white working people (especially Catholics) that the Depression had opened wide."⁶⁹ A Gallup Poll taken during the height of the McCarthy Scare on January 15, 1954 reinforces Kazin's

⁶⁶ Quoted in: Nash. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. 152.

⁶⁷ Joseph McCarthy, "'Enemies from Within' Speech Delivered in Wheeling, West Virginia" (Speech, Wheeler West Virginia, February 9, 1950). Digital History project, University of Houston. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&andpsid=3633.

⁶⁸ Ibid., http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&andpsid=3633.

⁶⁹ Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. 186.

claim, with the largest plurality of surveyed respondents (50 percent) claiming to have a favorable opinion of the Wisconsin Senator. Broken down by education, college educated respondents generally held a negative view of McCarthy while the majority of non-college and high school educated respondents maintained a favorable opinion. A similar pattern was identified by occupation as well, with a larger percentage of white-collar workers reporting an unfavorable view of McCarthy in comparison to manual workers (37 to 23 percent).⁷⁰ Another poll conducted on March 15 of the same year discerned comparable survey outcomes based on respondents' education and occupation, with an added section for religion, which indicated overwhelming Catholic support (56 percent).⁷¹

Consequently, McCarthy's version of anti-Communist populism had established a veritable rift in the U.S. electorate. According to Seymour Lipset's overview of the McCarthy phenomenon, the key to the Senator's broad popular support laid with the historically resonant "campaigning against the same groups Midwest Populism always opposed, the Eastern conservative financial aristocracy."⁷² In contrast to the Midwest populists, McCarthy had replaced the East coast banking class with another group of subversive elites comprising of Ivy League educated, eastern Anglo-Saxon Episcopalians.⁷³ Of course, Lipset's in-depth analysis of McCarthyism was a direct product of this new class cleavage as well. McCarthy's redbaiting reciprocally fomented distrust from Lipset and the other liberal authors of *The New American*

⁷⁰ George Horace. *The Gallup Poll Volume; public opinion, 1935-1971*. Volume 2. (New York: Random House, 1972). 1201-1202. Polled college graduates held a majority unfavorable opinion (50 percent) and minority favorable opinion (47 percent) while college non-graduates (51 percent favorable, 30 percent unfavorable) and high school graduates (54 percent favorable to 29 percent unfavorable) overwhelmingly supported McCarthy. By occupation, the differences were smaller. White-collar respondents were more unfavorable (49 percent favorable, 37 percent unfavorable) to McCarthy while manual workers were generally more favorable towards the senator (50 percent favorable, 23 percent unfavorable).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1220-1221.

⁷² Seymour Lipset. "The Sources of the "Radical Right." In *The Radical Right*, ed. Daniel Bell. 3rd Edition. (Reprint 1955; New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002). 361.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 362.

Right, towards “the very kinds of white Americans-Catholic workers, military veterans, discontented families in the middle of the social structure-who had once been foot soldiers of causes such as industrial unionism, Social Security, and the GI Bill.”⁷⁴

Eventually, McCarthy’s reign of terror would lose momentum after a June 9, 1954 televised debate with the army’s Counsel, Joseph Welch, who rebuked the Senator’s erroneous allegations towards the military by admonishing McCarthy’s lack of morality (“Have you no sense of decency?”).⁷⁵ McCarthy’s disastrous interview with Welch and the ensuing loss of image he suffered after criticizing the U.S. army cost the Senator his credibility.⁷⁶ A month after the televised exchange with Joseph Welch, another Gallup Poll indicated that the vast majority of respondents supported McCarthy’s removal from the Senate investigation’s subcommittee.⁷⁷ In spite of this critical blow to the red hunters, Richard Hofstadter wrote that the political wing of conservative anti-Communism would continue to live on through the retired candy manufacturer, Robert Welch, who went on to found the well-organized John Birch Society.⁷⁸

Like McCarthy, the Birchers’ main priority was to rout all Communist influence from the United States. Robert Welch carried on the McCarthyite claim that “our danger remains almost entirely internal, from Communist influences right in our midst and treason right in our government.”⁷⁹ Unlike McCarthy’s populist base, the John Birch Society generally comprised of “affluent Republican Protestants,” the majority of which were college-educated professionals.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. 190-193. Seymour Lipset’s archetype of “The ‘Tory’ Worker,” in his anthology essay, “The Sources of the ‘Radical Right,’” (p. 343-348 in *The New American Right*) illustrates this implicit disdain for the conservative workers.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁷⁷ George Horace. *The Gallup Poll; Public Opinion, 1935-1971*. Volume 2. 1253.

⁷⁸ Richard Hofstadter. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. (New York: Knopf, 1965). 27.

⁷⁹ Robert Welch. *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*. (Western Islands, U.S.: Appleton, 2000). 22.

⁸⁰ Richard Hofstadter. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. 70-71 and Seymour Lipset, “Three Decades of the Radical Right.” In *The Radical Right*, ed. Daniel Bell. 424.

Although the Birchers did not command the same popular base akin to McCarthy, Hofstadter noted that the group nonetheless “won its successes through tightly organized and militant cadres of workers,” that linked itself to the Republican party “not through publicity but by active work in district, precinct, and community organizations where ideological affinities can be translated into power.”⁸¹ As a consequence, the Birchers exerted far more political authority than their enrolment numbers would otherwise suggest.

Both McCarthy and the John Birch Society also existed during a pivotal juncture in U.S. politics. Straddling the transitional period between an Old Guard Republican Party predominantly concerned with anti-Communism and a New Right that began to apprehend the poignancy of racial populism, McCarthy and his Bircher heirs played a pivotal role in pushing the GOP to the right on racial matters. Certainly, the Old Guard Republicans were in no way sympathetic to the cause of Black Americans, evidenced by Senator Taft’s suggestion that a graduating class of Black students enrolled at Howard University could only fight legally enforced discrimination through “your own efforts, and the efforts of your group, without leaning on the white people or the government.”⁸² However, Taft’s racial indifference became increasingly displaced with the anti-Communists’ militant reaction towards integration. Throughout the HUAC and McCarthy era, the Black left became a primary target of the anti-Communist purges. At eighty years old, W.E.B. Du Bois was arrested and hauled before a court due to his activism in the global peace movement, and the NAACP had to purge its membership of Communist fellow travelers that had fought hard for racial equality.⁸³ Historian D. J. Mulloy’s coverage of the Birchers during the Civil Rights Movement notes that Robert Welch took an

⁸¹ Richard Hofstadter. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. 72.

⁸² Quoted in: David Farber. *Modern American Conservatism*. 20.

⁸³ Paul Heideman. “How McCarthyism and the Red Scare Hurt the Black Freedom Struggle.” *Jacobin Magazine*, May 21, 2020. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/05/mccarthyism-red-scare-civil-rights-movement>

increasingly pro-segregation stance following the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) ultimate success in desegregating Birmingham.⁸⁴ In response to the increasing militancy and popularity of the Civil Rights Movement after Birmingham, Robert Welch venomously denounced the "Communist plot aimed at creating a 'Soviet Negro Republic' in the Southeastern states."⁸⁵

2.4 From the Old Right to the New Right

With McCarthy discredited and the John Birch Society only ever reaching a high watermark of one hundred thousand enrollees in 1966,⁸⁶ Old Right anti-Communism lacked the popular respectability that it had once commanded. However, the core claim that a liberal, Northeastern elite had captured the Federal Government would continue to live on through the pivotal 1964 presidential campaign. Despite his resounding defeat to President Johnson, Arizonan Senator Barry Goldwater acted as a critical catalyst for the Old Right's transition from anti-Communist populism towards the New Right's racially charged anti-federal populism. Goldwater achieved this feat through two methods. First, Goldwater drew on the relatively temperate rhetoric of the libertarian and traditionalist Old Right to legitimize the fear of federal encroachment. This meant equating the fear of federal "collectivization" with a breakdown in law and order, rather than a far-fetched Communist plot. Second, and most importantly, Goldwater used this "principled" rejection of federal expansion and attendant call for law and order to capitalize on popular Southern White backlash against the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

⁸⁴ D.J. Mulloy. *The World of the John Birch Society: Conspiracy Conservatism and the Cold War*. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014). 123-126.

⁸⁵ Gladwin Hill. "Birch Head Sees Red Rights Plot." *The New York Times*, August 16, 1963.

⁸⁶ D.J. Mulloy. *The World of the John Birch Society: Conspiracy Conservatism and the Cold War*. 2.

The realization of Goldwater's first goal was heavily indebted to the intellectual consolidation of the post-war right that occurred in the late 1950s. In particular, the "fusionist" overlap between libertarians and traditionalists removed some of the contradictions and fringe beliefs that had undercut the cogency of Old Right arguments. The core proponent of this thesis was a former anti-Communist-turned-libertarian, Frank Meyer. Frank Meyer endeavored to overcome the "tragic 'bifurcation'" that had occurred between libertarian thought that seemed "increasingly indifferent to the 'organic moral order,'" and traditionalists that were "rightly concerned for virtue and order but wrongly willing to use government to achieve their ends."⁸⁷ Meyer's move to find consonant principles between the two aforementioned wings of the Old Right led to the conclusion that individuals could voluntarily achieve virtue only through the freedom granted by free market economies.⁸⁸

Meyer's arguments gained traction with another key figure in the consolidation of the Old Right, William F. Buckley. Buckley had founded the *National Review* after ending his tenure as an editor at another conservative magazine, *American Mercury*, which shortly after Buckley's leaving, devolved into a mouthpiece for anti-Semitism.⁸⁹ During this time, Buckley had also anxiously perceived the growing fissures in conservatism when one of the few other right-wing magazines, *Human Events*, began to struggle with division between pro-Cold War libertarians and anti-Cold War libertarians.⁹⁰ Thus, Buckley was intent on starting a magazine that could act as a reservoir for respectable conservative ideas and avoid the schism that plagued *Human Events*.⁹¹ As a regular columnist for the *National Review*, Frank Meyer's conception of

⁸⁷ Nash. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. 268.

⁸⁸ E.J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 161.

⁸⁹ David Farber. *Modern American Conservatism*. 61.

⁹⁰ Patrick Allitt. *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History*. 175.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 175.

“fusionism” (originally a denigrative term assigned by Catholic traditionalist, Brent Bozell) gained ideological purchase due to two reasons that George Nash outlines in his overview of the magazines factional strife: First, many conservatives wanted “practical collaboration,” or some coherent base of cooperation, and second, both wings found a common foe in Communism.⁹²

If Buckley’s *National Review* served as an effective conduit for conservative unity, it simultaneously functioned as a gatekeeper as well. Buckley saw to it that his brand of “respectable” conservatism would not be tainted by conspiratorialists or radicals. For instance, Ayn Rand’s atheistic commitment to the free market chafed against the traditionalist idealism espoused by the *National Review*, prompting Whittaker Chambers to issue a harsh condemnation of Rand’s “merciless pursuit of individual pleasure.”⁹³ Furthermore, some discretion was used to police *National Review*’s commitment to what historian Patrick Allitt defines as the magazine’s “two clear adversaries: communism abroad and liberalism at home.”⁹⁴ Although Buckley had supported McCarthy, David Farber’s coverage of the *National Review*’s early years observes that the Senator’s eventual downfall “gave credence to the mainstream mass media claims that Americans sought a moderate, consensus-building, civil politics,” which compelled Buckley’s relatively moderate stated commitment to “fighting conventional wisdom and powerful segments of the intelligentsia.”⁹⁵ Against the wishes of his publisher, William Rusher, Buckley denounced Robert Welch’s extreme red-baiting allegations, though he made sure not to denounce Welch’s energetic (and useful) grassroots membership.⁹⁶

⁹² Nash. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in American Since 1945*. 277.

⁹³ Quoted in Farber. *Modern American Conservatism*. 69.

⁹⁴ Patrick Allitt. *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History*. 175.

⁹⁵ David Farber. *Modern American Conservatism*. 64.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

2.5 Between the Old Right's Racism and the New Right's Racism

It was easier for Buckley to disavow Welch since radical anti-Communist hysteria generally faded into the background towards the end of the 1950s. Yet this gatekeeping project kept uneasy company with Southern segregationists. In the early 1950s, Gallup Polling consistently indicated that the greatest plurality of survey respondents thought that domestic Communism and war with Communist countries abroad was the most important issue facing the nation.⁹⁷ However, polling conducted two months after the passage of the 1957 Civil Rights Act demonstrated that “integration, racial problems” had firmly surpassed anti-Communism as the chief domestic concern of the nation.⁹⁸ It was within this realm of debate, that the *National Review* would begin to translate some of its “respectable” tenets of conservatism into a popular base.

Buckley himself maintained a hypocritical embrace of segregation that straddled the Old Right era of overt racism and the New Right embrace of racially charged law and order. Here, Geoffrey Kabaservice's claim that “Buckley would try to distance the conservative movement from the overt racism and anti-Semitism that had characterized the Old Right before World War II,”⁹⁹ requires reevaluation. Indeed, Buckley's 1959 publication, *Up From Liberalism*, initially indicated a tangential shift away from the pseudo-scientific racism in the early passages of the text when he contested that “it is a historical fact that separate schooling was not deemed in violation of the [14th] Amendment by the men who framed and passed it.”¹⁰⁰ Later on,

⁹⁷ George Horace. *The Gallup Poll; public opinion, 1935-1971*. Volume 2. The following pages demonstrate this trend starting in 1951: 1199, 1108, 1225, 1241.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1523. “Integration, racial problems,” exhibited the largest plurality, with 29 percent identifying it as the most important issue facing the nation.

⁹⁹ Geoffrey Kabaservice. *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, From Eisenhower to the Tea Party*. 26.

¹⁰⁰ William F. Buckley. *Up From Liberalism*. (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959). 38.

Buckley's "enthusiasm for white southerners' cause," leads him to "forget that the individual, not the 'race'," is the cornerstone of conservative claims to assure freedom.¹⁰¹

In the South, the white community is entitled to put forward a claim to prevail politically because, for the time being anyway, the leaders of American civilization are white... it is unpleasant to adduce statistics evidencing the median cultural advancement of the white over the Negro; but the statistics are there, and are not easily challenged by those who associate together and call for the Advancement of Colored People.¹⁰²

Certainly, Buckley's stance on Civil Rights displayed antiquated traditionalist beliefs concerning racial hierarchy. His belief that desegregation fundamentally violated constitutional law, however, would live on through the Goldwater campaign.

Goldwater and the popular conservatism of the "Forgotten Man"

Goldwater himself was not an intellectual conservative like his Ivy League-educated counterparts writing at the *National Review*. On the eve of the 1964 campaign, Goldwater had cautioned that "I'm not even sure that I got the brains to be the President of the United States," to the Chicago Tribune.¹⁰³ Still, David Reinhard contends that Senator Goldwater acted as a "salesman" for conservatism by playing to his strengths as a charismatic public figure, unlike the former conservative torchbearer and shrewd legislator, Robert Taft.¹⁰⁴

Goldwater started his political career as a resolute fiscal conservative on the Phoenician Charter Government Committee slate in 1949, when he surpassed 22 other candidates for council

¹⁰¹ David Farber. *Modern American Conservatism*. 73.

¹⁰² William F. Buckley. *Up From Liberalism*. 127-128.

¹⁰³ Rick Perlstein. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the unmaking of the American consensus*. (New York: Nation Books, 2009). 254.

¹⁰⁴ David Reinhard. *The Republican Right Since 1945*. 159-161.

with the largest plurality of 1,582 votes.¹⁰⁵ According to Elizabeth Tandy Shermer's historicization of the post-War sunbelt region's development (a term used by future Nixon Campaign strategist, Kevin Phillips, to refer to the South and Southwest), Goldwater was among an incipient cadre of business "boosters" that sought to lure "firms eager to leave the union strongholds in the nation's industrial cores," by establishing their hometowns as "oases from the powerful, intrusive, liberal regulatory state." Shermer's conservative "boosters" equated continuous growth and employment with regional tax incentives, curbed union power, infrastructure, and the construction of schools.¹⁰⁶ Shermer continued that the construction of these novel business climates "required southern and southwestern businessmen to have real political power," via the channels of municipal reform or the creation of ostensibly "nonpartisan civic reform leagues," tasked with drafting revised city charters or candidate endorsement.¹⁰⁷

Goldwater's election on the CGC slate was one such case. The local pro-business conservative newspaper, *The Arizona Republic*, celebrated their civic league's oligarchic slate, arguing that the CGC-backed council members "have all been successful in their own business or professional lives," and therefore "are dedicated to the city's best interests."¹⁰⁸ To cast the CGC as an apolitical will of the people, *The Republic* continuously presented the Committee as a bipartisan governing entity comprising of "both Democrats and Republicans," that have been "giving the city an honest, efficient government," over the longue durée of its post-1949 electoral success.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ "Vote Margin Dims Need For Runoff," *The Arizona Republic*, November 9, 1949. Page 1.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, "Sunbelt Boosterism: Industrial Recruitment, Economic Development, and Growth Politics in the Developing Sunbelt." *Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Space, Place, and Region*, edited by Michell Nickerson and Darren Dochuk. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). 33, 37-39.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁰⁸ Eugene C. Pulliam. "A Good Ticket," *The Arizona Republic*, August 10, 1955. Pg. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Eugene C. Pulliam. "Too Much Control," *The Arizona Republic*, November 5, 1963. Page 6.

Thus, Goldwater imported this dogmatic conviction to paring back the New Deal State when he ascended to the Senate in 1953. In 1958, Goldwater firmly embedded himself into the conservative camp when he accused President Eisenhower for embracing “the swan song of socialism” following the president’s proposal to increase the federal budget to a record \$71.8 billion.¹¹⁰ After the Republican Party’s disastrous performance in the 1958 midterms, Goldwater’s ability to hold onto his Arizonan Senate seat in a “come-from-behind upset” against Arizona Governor McFarland further strengthened his image as a strong conservative candidate.¹¹¹ Though he was a junior senator to Carl Hayden, the chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, his energetic performance as chair of the Senate Republican Committee after the 1958 midterms cultivated his image as the new leader of conservatism.¹¹² Former dean of Notre Dame Law School and ardent pro-Taftite, Clarence Manion, viewed Goldwater as the inheritor of the conservative cause. Manion urged Goldwater to publish a conservative manifesto under his name, and selected Brent Bozell (Buckley’s Brother-in-Law and former columnist at the *National Review*) to ghostwrite the draft.¹¹³ The product of this exchange, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, drew directly on the fusionist tenets of the Old Right.

At the outset of the book, Goldwater’s belief that “man is, in part, an economic, an animal creature; but that he is also a spiritual creature with spiritual needs,” appealed to the traditionalists that prioritized pre-modern virtue over materialism. Likewise, Goldwater’s conviction that “man’s political freedom is illusory if he is dependent for his economic needs on the state,” and that “socialism-through-welfarism,” would inevitably lead to a “state that is able to deal with its citizens as wards and dependents and is thus able to rule as absolutely as any

¹¹⁰ Rick Perlstein. *Before the Storm*. 33.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 26-42.

¹¹³ David Reinhard. *The Republican Right Since 1945*. 161.

oriental despot,”¹¹⁴ could have appeared in similar form within the libertarian arguments made by Friedrich Hayek or Frank Chodorov. Although Goldwater equated “welfarism” with inevitable dictatorship, he was careful not to embrace the discredited claims of McCarthy and the Bircherites, instead opting to denounce the proponents of statism as a misled group of “collectivists”.¹¹⁵ Rather, anti-Communism was embraced through an aggressive foreign policy that pitched the international competition with the Soviet Union as a life or death struggle,¹¹⁶ thus appealing to the anti-Communists concerned with the “responses to the threats from abroad,” and liberal weakness at home.¹¹⁷

While Goldwater’s ghostwritten book undoubtedly strengthened the fusionist thesis, the two chapters of “States’ Rights,” and “And Civil Rights” began to explicitly tether the Old Right to a popular base of White backlash in the Deep South. Most importantly, *The Conscience of a Conservative* elided the overtly racist charges that Buckley had leveraged towards the end of his book. Fully cognizant of the fact that Buckley’s support for anti-Democratic disenfranchisement would fail to sell at the ballot box outside of the South, Bozell decided to frame the integration issue as a matter of Constitutional law.¹¹⁸ The chapter “States’ Rights” starts with a condemnation of federal matching funds as a system of “blackmail and bribery” that wrests decision making power from the states.¹¹⁹ However, *Conscience* took this line of argumentation a step further and denied all forms of federal intervention as illegitimate since it illegally violated the powers delegated to the states in the Constitution, and practically disenfranchised local

¹¹⁴ Barry Goldwater. *The Conscience of a Conservative*. (Reprint 1960; Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990). 66.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80-117.

¹¹⁷ Nash. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. 134.

¹¹⁸ Joseph E. Lowndes. *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). 53.

¹¹⁹ Barry Goldwater. *The Conscience of a Conservative*. 20.

communities from solving problems that “are best dealt by the people most directly concerned.”¹²⁰ This “principled” rejection of federal intervention provided a neat segue into a “respectable” repudiation of Civil Rights premised on a lawful maintenance of Constitutional statutes. “If we condone the practice of substituting our own intentions for those of the Constitution’s framers, we reject, in effect, the principle of Constitutional Government: we endorse a rule of men, not laws,” wrote Bozell. *Conscience* continued, “Social and cultural change, however desirable, should not be effected by the engines of national power.”¹²¹ Goldwater’s message stood in stark contrast to Eisenhower’s claim that “mob rule cannot be allowed to overrule the decisions of our courts,” following the move to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.¹²² Since it was steeped in Constitutional law, *Conscience* insinuated that White segregationists were the law-abiding citizens while the courts, social workers, and federal bureaucrats were the lawbreakers. According to Goldwater, the law *should* exist to preserve order. The useful adjuncts of the Kremlin working in the Northeastern Establishment were being replaced with condescending, leftist social engineers. Far right populists would echo this sentiment throughout the latter half of the 20th century.

The pseudo-principled rejection of federal efforts to end desegregation established the critical foundations for the New Right’s anti-statist, racially charged populism geared towards defending what Goldwater would term as the “forgotten American”. Goldwater had coined this phrase in his 1961 statement of proposed Republican Principles when he claimed to speak on behalf of the millions of “silent Americans,” (a term Nixon would later recycle in his own speeches) who “cannot find a voice against the mammoth organizations,”¹²³ that had seized

¹²⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹²¹ Ibid., 31.

¹²² Quoted in: Jill Lepore. *These Truths*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2018). 587.

¹²³ Barry Goldwater, “A Statement of Proposed Republican Principles.” *Human Events*, January 27, 1961. 57.

influence at the federal level. Goldwater continued, “they thereby become the forgotten Americans despite the fact that they constitute the majority of our people.”¹²⁴ The invocation of the “forgotten American” or the “forgotten man” had originally been mobilized by Roosevelt to justify federal aid to heavily indebted farmers (“the unorganized but the indispensable units of economic power...”) during the height of the Great Depression.¹²⁵ As the Civil Rights Movement increasingly occupied the foreground of White Americans’ attention, Goldwater’s mobilization of this unheard constituency based itself on a simple, albeit, affective narrative: The Federal Government had unlawfully usurped power from the people and their communities.

2.6 The “Law-and-Order” Campaign

Nonetheless, Goldwater had to contend with the racially moderate wing of the GOP party in order to secure the presidential nomination. In 1960, Goldwater’s presidential nomination had been frustrated when Richard Nixon secured the support of New York Governor, Nelson Rockefeller, based on a compromise platform that demanded the abolition of racial segregation and endorsed Civil Rights activists’ non-violent sit-ins.¹²⁶ Goldwater begrudgingly declared the Rockefeller-Nixon meeting as the “Munich of the Republican Party” and subsequently held back his withdrawal speech at the 1960 Chicago Republican Convention.¹²⁷ In response to this sellout,

¹²⁴ Ibid., 57.

¹²⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt. “Radio Address From Albany, New York: ‘The Forgotten Man’ Speech.” (Speech, Albany, New York, April 07, 1932). <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/radio-address-from-albany-new-york-the-forgotten-man-speech>

¹²⁶ Joseph E. Lowndes. *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. 58.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 58.

gifted campaign strategist, Fredrick Clifton White, stepped up his efforts to devise a convention strategy that would circumvent the need for moderate, Northeastern delegates.

Part of this strategy hinged on a fundamental realignment in the GOP's base of support. White would later write that "I recognized that any conservative candidate – even a dedicated integrationist – would have great difficulty making inroads in the North," thus necessitating the GOP's wholesale shift to the South.¹²⁸ Working in tandem with *National Review* publisher, William Rusher, and Ohio GOP Congressman John Ashbrook, White recruited the funds and assistance of Southern, anti-union industrialists, Roger Milliken and George Shorey, and established the innocuously named "3505 Project" (named after the suite in which White's Draft Goldwater group worked).¹²⁹ While White's project intensified the forthcoming shift in political loyalties that would irreparably fracture the New Deal coalition along racial lines, historian Joseph E. Lowndes notes that his schema for Southern realignment had "directly descended from the Eisenhower efforts to create a moderate party there," during the 1950s.¹³⁰ Of course, the "moderate" strategists for "Operation Dixie" (White was among one of them) ran staunch opponents of segregation on their GOP tickets across the South in order to win traditionally loyal Democratic voters over to the Republican fold.¹³¹

White's plans for continued realignment relied on the mobilization of grassroots conservative groups, such as the Young Republicans and National Federation of Republican

¹²⁸ Ibid., 66-67.

¹²⁹ Rick Perlstein. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the unmaking of the American Consensus*. 181. and Joseph E. Lowndes. *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. 62.

¹³⁰ Joseph E. Lowndes. *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. 61.

¹³¹ Ibid., 60-62.

Women, to train candidates to stand for election at precinct conventions.¹³² Carrying the precincts would allow conservatives to field delegates for county conventions, and conservative counties would select the national convention delegates integral for primary victories.¹³³ Milliken and Shorey's initial injection of funds and the generous donations from a political action committee dedicated to fighting socialized healthcare, the American Medical Association, kept the group afloat.¹³⁴ Both the funding and White's strong acumen for precinct organization yielded formidable results, with a Gallup Poll conducted on March 29 of 1964 finding the vast majority of polled Republican county chairmen preferring Goldwater (878 votes to Nixon's 383).¹³⁵ A second trial heat conducted on April 3, demonstrated the degree to which Southern county chairs were loyal to the Draft Goldwater movement, when 464 of 739 polled county chairs in the South (the only region to express a majority opinion on this question) resolutely believed in a Goldwater victory over Johnson during a hypothetical 1964 presidential race.¹³⁶ Since most national delegates were selected by conventions rather than primaries, Goldwater was immediately slated for victory in the 1964 primary race.

The initial "Southern Strategy", which capitalized on racially conservative social issues to draw Southern voters into the GOP base, exhibited the most promising avenue through which rightwing idealists could channel their ideology into ballots. Goldwater's campaign would actively broker this alliance. William Rusher had published a 1963 *National Review* article titled "Crossroads for the GOP" which stated that "Goldwater, and Goldwater alone... can carry

¹³² David Reinhard. *The Republican Right Since 1945*. 179. and Rick Perlstein. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the unmaking of the American Consensus*. 181.

¹³³ Rick Perlstein. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the unmaking of the American Consensus*. 181.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 181-184.

¹³⁵ George Horace. *The Gallup Poll; public opinion, 1935-1971*. Volume 3. (New York: Random House 1972). 1871.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1872.

enough southern and border states to offset the inevitable Kennedy conquests in the big industrial states of the North and still stand a serious chance of winning the election.”¹³⁷ Goldwater continued to brandish his Constitutionalist rejection of integration during the primary season when he voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act on the basis that Title II’s public accommodations and Title VII’s fair employment stipulations were unconstitutional.¹³⁸ This “lawful” rejection of Civil Rights came after countless years of grassroots struggle and a debate over a bill that had endured for “just one year after it had first been submitted to Congress by Kennedy,”¹³⁹ which included a 75-day filibuster that finally terminated with the Senate’s 71 to 29 vote to invoke cloture.¹⁴⁰ Among those 29 votes was Senator Goldwater, who premised his stand against the legislation on a so-called principled rejection of the nuanced “clauses dealing with public accommodation and employment” which would invariably lead to the creation of “a vast federal police force,” and its attendant “informer psychology in great areas of our national life.”¹⁴¹

Thereafter, Goldwater’s victory speech at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco signaled an unbending commitment to racially charged conservative principles. As he finished his speech with the infamous opinion that “extremism in defense of liberty is no vice... moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue!” around 40,000 Civil Rights activists arrived at the city’s Civic Center to protest Goldwater’s nomination.¹⁴² Of the 1308 delegates counted at

¹³⁷ William Rusher. “Crossroads for the GOP.” *The National Review*, February 12, 1963. 110. Quoted in: Gregory L. Schneider. *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution*. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2009). 106.

¹³⁸ Jonathan Schoenwald. *A time for choosing: The Rise of modern American conservatism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). 142.

¹³⁹ Richard Scott, “Mr. Goldwater takes the plunge on civil rights,” *The Guardian*, June 20, 1964. 9.

¹⁴⁰ David W. Reinhard. *The Republican Right Since 1945*. 190.

¹⁴¹ “Goldwater to vote against civil rights,” *The Guardian*, June 19, 1964. 1. and Scott Richard, “Mr. Goldwater takes the plunge on civil rights,” *The Guardian*. 9.

¹⁴² Jonathan Schoenwald. *A time for choosing: The Rise of modern American conservatism*. 142.

the convention, only twenty-five were African Americans, further demonstrating the GOP's internal turn towards racial conservatism.¹⁴³

The ensuing campaign would shamelessly echo Goldwater's earlier projections that "we are not going to get the Negro vote as a bloc in 1964 and 1968, so we ought to go hunting where the ducks are."¹⁴⁴ In part, Goldwater cultivated his Southern appeal through the clarion call of "states' rights". What had originally been South Carolinian Senator John C. Calhoun's Antebellum demand for the maintenance of Southern slavery, would now be used to keep the Federal Government out of desegregation efforts:

Just think about it for a moment. Don't you want a President who, above all, respects the Constitution – who respects the independence of the other branches of government, and the rights of our sovereign states? Don't you want a President who opposes the forced bussing of children from their normal neighborhood schools – who opposes the principle of forced integration as well as forced segregation?¹⁴⁵

Goldwater's provocative revival of a demand intimately associated with the institution of Southern slavery emotionally resonated with a White Southern electorate that cautiously guarded its legally sanctioned racial privileges under Jim Crow. By lamenting that "an Administration that attempts to tear down the Constitutional role of the states is tearing down the very structure of our freedom,"¹⁴⁶ Goldwater was firmly aligning himself with the Southern lost cause.

These historical privileges refer to the longstanding exclusion of the Southern Black citizenry from politics via Jim Crow laws, or the intensive use of the 1937 *Breedlove v. Suttles*

¹⁴³ Ibid., 142.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in: John A. Aistrup. *The Southern Strategy Revisited*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996). 25.

¹⁴⁵ Barry Goldwater. "Campaign Speech in Cleveland Auditorium." (Speech, Cleveland, Ohio, October 27, 1964). ASU Library PRISM. Stock speech also delivered at Columbia Township Auditorium, Columbia, South Carolina (October 31, 1964).

¹⁴⁶ Barry Goldwater. "Speech by Senator Barry Goldwater before the United Republicans of California., Civic Auditorium" (speech, Bakersfield, California, May 2, 1964). ASU Library PRISM.

Supreme Court ruling to justify the implementation of expensive poll taxes during the lead up to the 1964 Civil Rights Act.¹⁴⁷ Black and Black's 1987 analysis of widespread Black migration from the South concisely delineated "two compelling motivations," for the maintenance of Southern *tradition*: The "fear of potential challenges to white supremacy" and the "determination to perpetuate a way of life that provided many benefits and advantages to whites."¹⁴⁸ Such tradition conferred material benefits for white laborers in the form of "color lines in industrial jobs," which ensured an ongoing supply of cheap, surplus Black labor relegated to traditionally "lower-class jobs" to the benefit of the old planting class and expanding White working class.¹⁴⁹ Black political participation and the accompanying demands for communal inclusion threatened this order.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the exclusion of Black citizens from substantive participation in the political community was necessary to maintain the crucial one-party system that became necessitous for leveraging the largest possible Southern bloc capable of resisting any significant federal endeavors to interfere with the race question.¹⁵¹

Although Goldwater himself could claim that he voted for and supported previous Civil Rights legislation in 1957 and 1960 (as he did across several speeches), or that Americans cannot "equate states' rights with civil rights," or even an explicit promise that he would "use the great moral influence of the Presidency to promote prompt and peaceful observance of civil rights laws," journalists Edsall and Edsall aptly surmise that "for white voters of the deep South, Goldwater's personal opposition to segregation was far less important," than the implicit

¹⁴⁷ Ben A. Franklin, "U.S. Bench Backs Virginia Poll Tax," *The New York Times*, November 13, 1964. 19.

¹⁴⁸ Earl Black and Merle Black, *Politics and Society in the South*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1987). 76

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵¹ V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1949). 8-9.

outcomes that his conservative policies signified for racial (in)equity.¹⁵² Indeed, ardent segregationist Dixiecrat, Strom Thurmond, easily grafted his cause onto the rhetoric of Goldwater. A week after his defection from the Democratic Party, Senator Thurmond justified his political realignment before a South Carolinian audience, arguing that the Democratic Party had come to neglect “spiritual values and political principles,” and had “forsaken the people to become the party of minority groups, power-hungry union leaders, political bosses and big businessmen looking for government contracts and favors.”¹⁵³ His subsequent endorsement of Goldwater was thus predicated on the fellow Senator’s racially coded commitment to “freedom, Independence and the Constitution,” as evidenced by “his votes in the United States Senate.”¹⁵⁴

Demands for federal retrenchment often recurred in tandem with a demand for “law and order”. Law and order itself was not new to the U.S. political climate, and had been mobilized by Pre-war Republicans against working class demands for fair recompense. As early as 1919, the phrase was used in a speech title by then Massachusetts governor, Calvin Coolidge, following a Boston police strike that had attempted to unionize the department.¹⁵⁵ The term also featured prominently as a rationale to call in federal troops to dispatch the Bonus Army protests during

¹⁵² Barry Goldwater, “Campaign Speech At Conrad-Hilton Hotel, Chicago, Illinois.” (Speech, Chicago, Illinois, October 16, 1964). ASU Library PRISM. 5. and “Campaign Speech in Cleveland Auditorium, Cleveland, Ohio.” (Speech, Cleveland, Ohio, October 27, 1964) ASU Library PRISM. 4. and “Campaign Speech at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,” (Speech, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, October 29, 1964). ASU Library PRISM. 5. and “Campaign Speech at the Columbia Township Auditorium, Columbia, S.C.” (Speech, Columbia, South Carolina, October, 31, 1964). ASU Library PRISM. 4. and Barry Goldwater, “Issues and Answers,” by Howard K. Smith, ABC News, May 24, 1964. ASU Library PRISM. and Barry Goldwater, “Remarks by Senator Barry Goldwater, Delivered to the Republican Unity Conference, Hershey, PA.,” (Speech, Hershey, Pennsylvania, August 12, 1964). ASU Library PRISM. 4. and Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991). 41.

¹⁵³ Strom Thurmond, “Why I am a Republican for Goldwater,” *Human Events*, September 26, 1964. 15.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵⁵ Terence McArdle, “The ‘law an order’ campaign that won Richard Nixon the White House 50 years ago.” *The Washington Post*, November 5, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2018/11/05/law-order-campaign-that-won-richard-nixon-white-house-years-ago/>

Herbert Hoover's presidency.¹⁵⁶ Its content and meaning changed entirely following the landmark desegregation of Little Rock Central Highschool, Arkansas. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy had thereafter used the phrase to denote the peaceful and orderly integration of school districts via federal enforcement in the South.¹⁵⁷

Goldwater's campaign reversed the conceptual meaning of "law and order" to delineate the conservation of "a nation of individually responsible citizens."¹⁵⁸ It is within the domain of "law and order" where Goldwater forged another direct connection between the Old Right and the New Right. His complaint that the "lights of law and order" were "flickering out in the streets that are running riot with disregard for traditional standards of decency and the due process of law,"¹⁵⁹ and his belief that the law should solely exist "to protect person and property"¹⁶⁰ flexibly accommodated the traditionalist and libertarian foundations of fusionism. The core adversary of these American values was the federal bureaucrat: "Telling people again and again that the Federal Government will take care of everything for them, leads to the decline of personal and individual responsibility which is the base cause of the rise in crime and disregard for law and

¹⁵⁶ Herbert Hoover. "Statement About the Bonus Marchers." (Speech, Washington, D.C., July 28, 1932). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-about-the-bonus-marchers> and Herbert Hoover to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia on providing Federal troops to deal with the Bonus Marchers, July 27, 1932. The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/letter-the-commissioners-the-district-columbia-providing-federal-troops-deal-with-the>

¹⁵⁷ Both Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Statement by the President Regarding Occurrences at Central High School in Little Rock." (Speech, Washington, D.C., September 23, 1957). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-the-president-regarding-occurrences-central-high-school-little-rock> and John F. Kennedy. "Statement by the President on the Peaceful integration of Schools in the South and Southwest." (Speech, Washington, D.C., September 06, 1961). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-the-president-the-peaceful-integration-schools-the-south-and-southwest>

¹⁵⁸ Barry Goldwater. "Campaign Speech at Minneapolis, Minnesota." (Speech, Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 10, 1964. ASU Library PRISM.

¹⁵⁹ Barry Goldwater. "Excerpts of remarks by Senator Barry Goldwater at a campaign meeting at the Keene High School cafeteria." (Speech, Keene, New Hampshire March 4, 1964). ASU Library PRISM.

¹⁶⁰ Barry Goldwater. "Campaign Speech at Milwaukee Arena." (Speech, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 13, 1964). ASU Library PRISM.

order.”¹⁶¹ In contrast to Eisenhower and Kennedy’s commitment to using federal power as a conduit for racial integration, Goldwater would contend that “we do not want and we do not need a federal police force to restore law and order in this land. We need leadership and example that will encourage law enforcement at the local level,” before an audience in Los Angeles.¹⁶²

Behind this veneer of morality was Clifton White’s attempt to draw both Northern and Southern White workers away from the New Deal coalition. On the one hand, Southern segregationists readily accepted Goldwater’s conclusion that federal policing was wholly illegitimate due to its immediate implications. However, White sought to expand the base of racial backlash beyond the Deep South by pressing harder on the issue of “law and order”. In as early as 1963, campaign staffer and former CIA employee, Ted Humes, undertook an extensive survey of Northern White ethnic workers’ attitudes towards Civil Rights across the major industrial centers of Cleveland, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh.¹⁶³ His research discerned a deep-seated cultural incomprehension towards the plight of African Americans. According to Hume, many first and second generation urban White ethnics felt that “they have brought themselves up by their own bootstraps neither giving nor asking favor,” and they resented what they perceived were unearned federal bequests of “privileges” onto Black communities.¹⁶⁴ Regardless of whether or not these urban White workers understood Goldwater’s actual reasons for protesting the 1964 CRA, they nonetheless “admired him for it since ‘somehow they equate this with resistance to the continued clamor for civil rights and its concomitants, rioting and disorder.’”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Barry Goldwater. “Remarks By Senator Barry Goldwater to the Illinois State Fair.” (Speech, Springfield, Illinois August 19, 1964). ASU Library PRISM.

¹⁶² Barry Goldwater. “Campaign Speech at the Sport Arena.” (Speech, Los Angeles, California, October 30, 1964). ASU Library PRISM.

¹⁶³ Jonathan Schoenwald. *A time for choosing: The Rise of modern American conservatism*. 149

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.

White, who had hired Humes after an infamous *U.S. News* column called the potential for capitalizing on urban “reverse discrimination” a “political goldmine,”¹⁶⁶ came to perceive the popular valence of law and order. In an effort to counter Johnson’s attacks on Goldwater’s extremism, White attempted to exploit law-and-order backlash through the dissemination of a documentary called “Choice” which featured “bare-breasted women, reveling ‘beatniks,’ and black rioting.”¹⁶⁷ Though Goldwater rejected White’s initial overture, he continued to play up the issue of crime and the need for law and order through his speeches and the release of a relatively moderate campaign ad that cautiously used White actors for a rioting clip.¹⁶⁸

2.7 The Aftermath

Clifton White’s designs on a complete political realignment of Southern and Northern workers would not fully materialize until the later campaigns of Nixon and Wallace. Since Gallup Polling indicated that approximately two thirds of the voting U.S. populace approved of legal measures to end de jure segregation in public spaces,¹⁶⁹ Goldwater’s repudiation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act struggled to gain widespread traction outside of the Deep South. Northern unions also played a critical role in mobilizing workers against Goldwater’s racist campaign. Despite the fact that the self-reported unionization rate had dropped from a high 26.8 percent in 1960 to 24.1 percent in 1964,¹⁷⁰ unions were still a considerable political force during the 1960s.

¹⁶⁶ Rick Perlstein. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the unmaking of the American Consensus*. 213-214.

¹⁶⁷ E.J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 180.

¹⁶⁸ Rick Perlstein. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the unmaking of the American Consensus*. 486.

¹⁶⁹ George Horace. *The Gallup Poll; public opinion, 1935-1971*. Volume 3. 1723. A June 21 poll conducted in 1961 found that 66% of the voting public approved of desegregation in trains, buses, and in public waiting rooms. Polling on June 23 indicated a similar score of 62% of voters that supported school desegregation.

¹⁷⁰ American National Election Studies (ANES). “1960 Time Series Study.” <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1960-time-series-study/> and American National Election Studies (ANES). “1964 Time Series Study.” <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1964-time-series-study/>

Labor had endorsed Johnson as early as August 4th in the 1964 campaign during the quarterly A.F.L-C.I.O meeting in Chicago after George Meany and other union leaders “had studied their private survey on racial prejudice among union members,” and decided on an immediate stand against Goldwater’s divisive Civil Rights position.¹⁷¹ This August 4th attack on Goldwater was followed by a formal endorsement of Johnson on September 2nd, when “Big Labor” earmarked \$2 million for a “political education” campaign.¹⁷²

Percentage of Union Vote in 1960 and 1964 Presidential Elections

	Democratic - Kennedy (1960)	Democratic - Johnson (1964)	Republican - Nixon (1960)	Republican - Goldwater (1964)
Self-Reported Union Household	63.8	94.4	36.2	15.6

Table 1 - Self reported union household votes for president. Answers were recoded using data from 1960 and 1964 pre- and post-election survey data. Derived from American National Election Studies (ANES). “1960 Time Series Study.” and American National Election Studies (ANES). “1964 Time Series Study.”

As a result, Goldwater performed dismally among self-reported union voters when compared to the 1960 Nixon-Kennedy race.

Nonetheless, the conservative movement that had once occupied the fringes of political influence now had an operative base of voters to translate their ideas into ballots. Though he carried only 38.5 percent of the popular vote and a mere 52 electoral votes, Goldwater’s law-and-order campaign decisively flipped five states in the Deep South. The states of Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia, had voted Republican for the first time since Reconstruction (or, for the first time in history, in the case of Georgia).¹⁷³ Furthermore,

¹⁷¹ Cooke, Alistair. “US Labour rejects Goldwater,” *The Guardian*, August 5, 1964. 9.

¹⁷² James Reston, “Washington, How to Unify the Unions: Just Mention Barry,” *The New York Times*, September 2, 1964. 36.

¹⁷³ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 41. and E. J. Dionne. *Why The Right Went Wrong*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016). 56. Here, the decisive margins are worth comparing to the previous 1960 results:

Goldwater's victories across these states heavily relied on rural, segregationist counties, rather than the metropolitan centers of the South.¹⁷⁴ Edsall's historicization of the Goldwater election surmises that these "poor southern whites in the pre-civil rights period were among the nation's most liberal constituencies on non-racial economic issues."¹⁷⁵ Goldwater had lost 7 million ballots from Richard Nixon's 1960 total, including the two solid Republican states of Maine and Vermont,¹⁷⁶ but his racially charged rejection of federal power provided "a cloak with which to protect racial segregation."¹⁷⁷ The idea that a group of subversive federal elites were meddling with a moral order so deeply valued by the "forgotten man" or "silent majority" would become the cornerstone of the New Right's populist appeal.

Alabama flipped from 56.8 percent in favor of Democrats to 69.5 percent in favor of Republicans, Georgia from a decisive Democratic lead of 62.5 percent to a solid Republican lead of 54.1 percent, South Carolina from 51.2 percent to 58.9 percent, Louisiana from a razor-thin Democrat lead of 50.4 percent to a comfy 56.8 percent Republican lead, and finally, Mississippi, which exhibited a definitive shift from an undeclared Democratic plurality of 38.9 percent to an unparalleled 87.1 percent. Data taken from History, Art and Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, "Election Statistics: 1920 to Present," July 19, 2022. <https://history.house.gov/Institution/Election-Statistics/>.

¹⁷⁴ E. J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 184-185.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 41.

¹⁷⁶ E. J. Dionne. *Why The Right Went Wrong*. 57.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 41.

Chapter 3: Wallace, Nixon, and “The Silent Majority”

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter centers on the historical continuity of law and order as a populist signifier during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Specifically, the discussion centers on Southern segregationist George C. Wallace’s attempts to reuse this conservative trope to construct a national coalition predicated on White workers’ backlash towards the failures of the Great Society, and Republican Richard Nixon’s strategic appropriation of the American Independent Party’s (AIP) platform. Though Wallace retained the states’ rights appeal of the 1964 presidential campaign, the Alabaman demagogue popularized the racist message by tethering federal integration efforts with an upper-class network of liberal intellectuals, thereby recycling the old right’s populist use of establishmentarian conspiracies. The grassroots growth of the anti-war and Black Power movements alongside rising crime rates and urban deterioration also provided the exigencies for Wallace’s racially coded invocation of law and order, which served as an empty container for White workers’ feeling of displacement within the New Left.

As Wallace’s projected electoral support grew, presidential candidate Richard Nixon strategically co-opted parts of the AIP platform. After the 1968 victory, both Kevin Phillips’ “Southern Strategy” and Scammon and Wattenberg’s *The Real Majority* posited compelling arguments for the continued institutionalization of law and order. To procure future Republican majorities, Nixon persistently emphasized his anti-federal commitment to restoring order to America through the conduits of an anti-busing and a war on crime platform. Comprehensively, the following debate contends that Nixon’s careful adoption of Wallace’s platform provided conservatives with two mainstay methods of reaching working class voters: A pseudo-principled opposition to further integration efforts founded on a racially charged repudiation of federal

involvement in local communities, and a simultaneous expansion of federally funded law and order initiatives tacitly charged with the protection of the White “silent majority’s” privileged status.

3.2 Problems with the Great Society

In the first half of the 1960s, New Deal liberalism would reach its zenith under Lyndon B. Johnson’s ambitious program to eliminate national poverty known as the Great Society. But before the Great Society, there was John F. Kennedy’s “New Frontier”. Kennedy had launched his presidency with a promise to combat the preceding “eight years of drugged and fitful sleep” with a platform that offered the American people “the promise of more sacrifice instead of more security.”¹⁷⁸ However, unlike his running mate, Lyndon B. Johnson, Kennedy was a relative political novice. According to Tom Wicker’s account of the Kennedy presidency, JFK had maintained an “expansive idea of the office and the opportunity confronting the man who would be elected in November 1960.”¹⁷⁹ Wicker continued, “It seems of greater moment, in retrospect, that he came there with a highly developed determination to be a ‘strong President’ at a time when he had small opportunity to be such a President.”¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Kennedy’s “New Frontier” proposals for increased aid to health care, education, area redevelopment, and civil rights all met a Congressional logjam.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in William E. Leuchtenburg, *The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton*. (New York: Oxford, 2015). 376-377.

¹⁷⁹ Tom Wicker. *JFK and LBJ*. (New York: Morrow, 1968). 25.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁸¹ Bruce J. Schulman. *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). 65.

In contrast to Kennedy, Johnson understood the need for legislative compromise. Historian Bruce Schulman contends that “Johnson’s political predicament and his political philosophy revolved around one thing: effectiveness.”¹⁸² For Johnson, “liberalism revolved around delivering concrete things to people, not abstract principles.”¹⁸³ After securing his position as the youngest Senate Majority Leader in history following the 1954 Congressional midterm elections, Johnson proved his strong acumen for political horse trading by steering progressive legislation, such as minimum wage and public housing laws, through the Senate.¹⁸⁴ Consequently, historians note that Johnson felt underwhelmed in the relatively unencumbered role of Vice President.¹⁸⁵ Working in collaboration with the new Senate Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield, Johnson’s first attempt to maintain some semblance of legislative duties and party control was left to flounder when a sizeable portion of Democratic Senators voted “nay” on a resolution that would permit the Vice President (rather than the Senate Majority Leader) to chair the Democratic Conference.¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, the astute Texan legislator that had risen out of abject poverty to claim one of the highest national offices, felt fundamentally out of place within the elitist Northeastern milieu of writers and scholars that regularly attended events at the Kennedy White House.¹⁸⁷ In addition to this cultural disconnect, Johnson’s principal task of desegregating federal contracts through his position as the overseer of the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity came into constant conflict with Kennedy’s moderate

¹⁸² Ibid., 41.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 41.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸⁵ Marc J. Selverstone. “The Vice Presidency.” In *A Companion to Lyndon B. Johnson*. Ed. Mitchell B. Lerner. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell 2012). 42. and Doris Kearns Goodwin. *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*. (Norwalk: Easton Press, 1987). 165.

¹⁸⁶ Doris Kearns Goodwin. *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*. 164.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 166.

objective of keeping Southern Dixiecrats from defecting.¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Johnson kept respectful deference towards the Senate backbencher that was 9 years his junior.¹⁸⁹

Kennedy's assassination thrust Johnson into a role for which he was better equipped. In order to avoid the Congressional stalemate that had plagued Kennedy's presidency, Johnson undertook two major policy endeavors at the outset of his tenure. First, Johnson took an uncompromising stance in support of Kennedy's proposed Civil Rights legislation in order to dispel notions that the Texan Vice President would serve as a regional segregationist Dixiecrat.¹⁹⁰ Johnson finally signed the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Bill into law by securing the bipartisan support of Republican Senate Minority Leader, Everett Dirksen (R-IL), thereby invoking cloture after a 72-day Dixiecrat filibuster that had been led by Johnson's former Senate mentor, Senator Richard Russell Jr. (D-GA).¹⁹¹ Second, both the sympathy generated by Kennedy's assassination and the massive 16-million margin of victory over Goldwater presented the new president with a clear-cut mandate to carry out an ambitious domestic program that would extend beyond the "New Frontier".¹⁹² As early as May 22, 1964, President Johnson had charted his ambitious plans to expand the scope of the New Deal State before a broad audience at the University of Michigan, stating that the nation had "the opportunity to move not only toward the rich and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society." This ambitious plan centered itself on the immediate objectives of urban renewal, environmentalism, and expanded educational opportunities for the nearly "54 million – more than one quarter of all America," that

¹⁸⁸ Bruce J. Schulman. *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism*. 59-60.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁹⁰ Doris Kearns Goodwin. *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*. 191.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁹² Bruce Schulman. *Lyndon B. Johnson*. 82.

had not finished high school.¹⁹³ These goals were later formalized into the 1964 Democratic platform titled “One Nation, One People,” which endeavored to “make the national purpose serve the human purpose; that every person shall have the opportunity to become all that he or she is capable of becoming,” via a wide array of federal programs ranging from rural consumer and commodity subsidies to more ambitious objectives of urban revival premised on the creation of “a department devoted to urban affairs,” which would work in “full cooperation among local, state, and federal governments,” to ease the burgeoning ailments of inner city poverty and lawlessness.¹⁹⁴

This energetic commitment to national progress tempered itself with moderate proposals for “flexible and innovative fiscal, monetary, and debt management policies, recognizing the importance of low interest rates,” through tax cuts, the removal of tax inequities, and a stringent account of “every penny of federal spending... to continue a frugal government, getting a dollar’s value for a dollar spent.”¹⁹⁵ Both Johnson’s campaign speech and its attendant platform brokered promises of a responsibly run, Democratic welfare state. While these guarantees for the ever-expanding scope of government’s role in American opportunity won Johnson the election, it would ultimately inaugurate what historian Adrian Pabst observes as the liberal Democrats’ shift towards a rhetorical platform that wholly “abandoned the idea of creating an industrial democracy by fighting cartel capitalism.”¹⁹⁶ The Great Society entirely elided the populist antagonism that Roosevelt had established between the common workers and the “economic

¹⁹³ Lyndon B. Johnson, “‘Great Society’ Speech,” (speech, University of Michigan, Michigan, May 22, 1964). Teaching American History. <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/great-society-speech/>

¹⁹⁴ “1964 Democratic Party Platform,” (transcript, Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 24, 1964). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/1964-democratic-party-platform>

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.,

¹⁹⁶ Adrian Pabst, “Trump’s Triumph: The Failure of Clinton’s Progressive Politics and the Demise of Liberal World Order.” *Telos* Vol. 177 (2016). 192.

royalists,” 30 years before.¹⁹⁷ Without this articulatory frontier between a homogenous conception of the *people* and their antagonists, the Great Society continually chafed under novel political issues and their accompanying democratic claims.

The ensuing 1964 Revenue Act was held captive by similar assumptions that undergirded the 1954 Internal Revenue Act that Eisenhower’s Administration had signed into law a decade earlier. The idea that the Federal Government could alleviate poverty by eliciting corporate “confidence” with a tax cut, which would in turn lead to the creation of jobs,¹⁹⁸ established a convenient syllogistic relationship that could satisfy both labor and corporate earners. According to Jill Lepore’s historical recount of the tax cut, Johnson had also hoped to “turn the poor from tax eaters to taxpayers,” through the economic expansion that would presumably follow.¹⁹⁹ While Johnson undoubtedly bought into the debate that Democrats could keep both labor *and* business happy with tax cuts, the ensuing tax package was largely a product of fiscally conservative House Ways and Means Chair, Wilbur D. Mills (D-AR). During his tenure as Chair, Mills had operated off of the presumption that stability and prosperity could only be realized by a tax structure that incentivized investment.²⁰⁰ Thus, the passage of the 1964 Revenue Act reversed a “long upward trend in corporate tax rates,” by cutting corporate tax rate on earnings in excess of \$25,000 from 52 to 50 percent, and additionally reducing the individual

¹⁹⁷ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Speech before the 1936 Democratic National Convention: A Rendezvous with Destiny,” (speech, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 27, 1936). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/acceptance-speech-for-the-renomination-for-the-presidency-philadelphia-pa> and The Use of Kazin’s argument in *The Populist Persuasion*. 125-126.

¹⁹⁸ Jonathan Levy. *Ages of American Capital*. (New York: Random House Publishing, 2022). 521, 522, 535, 536.

¹⁹⁹ Jill Lepore. *These Truths*. 619.

²⁰⁰ Kay Collett Gross. *Mr. Chairman: The Life and Legacy of Wilbur D. Mills*. (Little Rock: Parkhurst Brothers 2012). 101.

“top bracket rate from 91 to 70 percent.”²⁰¹ In addition to the corporate tax cuts, legislation also offered an abundance of tax incentives to direct private investment.²⁰²

Yet Johnson’s epochal tax cut bore several major consequences that would severely cripple New Deal liberalism. The macroeconomic boom that followed the tax cut only brought racial inequality into sharper perspective since the aggregate growth furnished by business “confidence” failed to redress a postwar political economy that predominantly funneled increased wages and economic security into the hands of White male breadwinners.²⁰³ Lepore further notes that the distinction between “tax eaters” and “taxpayers” had “crippled liberalism” since it failed to defend a “broad-based progressive income tax as a public good, everyone’s interest; nor could they separate it from issues of race.”²⁰⁴ While the tax-eaters-versus-taxpayers distinction would constitute the bedrock of future national discontent under Reagan, the immediate issue of the Vietnam War throttled enthusiasm for Johnson’s ambitious Great Society.

The U.S.’s escalated engagement in Vietnam during the late 1960s led to a combination of “accelerating price increases and sharp hikes in payroll and income taxes,” thereby capping the long-term annual increase in real wages by more 2 percent that most average blue- and white-collar Americans had enjoyed during the Post War period.²⁰⁵ As wages stagnated, federal appropriations for the war mounted, so much so that Historian Jonathan Levy contends that both the Kennedy-Johnson tax cut and the substantial draw on federal resources caused by the Vietnam war left Johnson’s Great Society “insufficiently funded.”²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Richard E. Slitor, “What Business did with the ‘Windfall,’” *Challenge* Vol. 14, Issue 4 (1966). 27 and 28.

²⁰² Jonathan Levy. *Ages of American Capitalism*. 536.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 536.

²⁰⁴ Jill Lepore. *These Truths*. 620.

²⁰⁵ Dan T. Carter. *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996). 28.

²⁰⁶ Jonathan Levy, “Preface: Control,” in *Ages of American Capitalism: A History of the United States*.

Though Mills had acceded to Johnsons' push for Medicare with the landmark passage of HR 6675, the powerful Ways and Means Chair adamantly refused to implement an extra surcharge tax to fund both the acceleration of the Vietnam War *and* Johnson's Great Society unless federal expenditure was pared back.²⁰⁷ As prices and wages climbed, Johnson had hoped to pass a temporary 10 percent surcharge tax on individual and corporate income in order to slow the upward spiral of inflation.²⁰⁸ Mills did not buy Johnson's argument. Rather, Mills believed in the "cost-push" theory of inflation, which stipulated that the higher wages won by workplace unions had translated into higher prices, something a surcharge tax would not fix.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, an extra tax, Mills held, should be coupled with budget reductions in order to ensure that the revenue windfalls procured by the surcharge would not be funneled into more inflationary federal programs.²¹⁰ Johnson's Great Society was caught between a rock and a hard place. Mills ultimately had the final word on all revenue-raising legislation since he had further consolidated the power of the Ways and Means Chair by dispensing with the use of subcommittees and by keeping the number of employed staffers abnormally low (numbering in the low twenties) during his tenure.²¹¹

In order to appease the "Wilbur Mills' committee," Johnson eventually accepted the surcharge trade off, and signed the Revenue and Expenditure Control Act of 1968 into law, thereby implementing the 10 percent surcharge tax in tandem with \$6 billion in domestic

²⁰⁷ Kay Collett Gross. *Mr. Chairman: The Life and Legacy of Wilbur D. Mills*. 133.

²⁰⁸ Julian Zelizer. *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2015). 271, 279.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 280.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 281.

²¹¹ Kay C. Goss. "Congressman Wilbur D. Mills' Influence on Social Legislation." *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (1995). 2.

spending cuts.²¹² In the words of political historian Julian Zelizer, the surcharge debate had “shifted liberals from the politics of expansion to the politics of protection... Congress had shifted the debate from liberal growth to austerity, where talk about the creation of big new programs that required more spending would be difficult.”²¹³ To make matters worse, Johnson’s Great Society had been decisively curtailed at a time when immense federal resources were needed to address burgeoning inequality and urban deterioration. The struggle with Congress’s fiscally conservative Ways and Means Chair combined with the fragmentation of the New Deal coalition along new fault lines augured the death knell for Johnson’s Great Society.

3.3 Fissures in the Great Society

Johnson’s initially popular decision to escalate the Vietnam War bore the unforeseen consequences of mass social unrest.²¹⁴ The zealous determination to carry on the war fostered an unprecedented outpouring of grassroots resistance throughout the United States. At the forefront, the student-led, anti-war movement picked up momentum as Johnson’s Vietnam commitment intensified. Smaller protests, such as the 200-person May 16 demonstration that halted the

²¹² Kay C. Goss. “Congressman Wilbur D. Mills’ Influence on Social Legislation.” 2. and Julian Zelizer. *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society*. 301.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 302.

²¹⁴ George Horace, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935 – 1971*. Vol. 3 (1972). 1882, 1899, 2087; Gallup polling conducted during the lead up to the 1964 election demonstrated the waxing resolve many Americans were beginning to feel towards a conflict that had previously resided outside of mainstream interest, previously exemplified by a poll conducted on May 22, 1964, where 63% of respondents asked, “have you given any attention to developments in South Vietnam,” responded with “little or none.” By August 26, the number of indecisive “No opinion” respondents had decreased substantially following the August 2nd Gulf of Tonkin incident, and as many as 71% of Americans, asked if the United States “is handling affairs in South Vietnam as well as could be expected,” responded with “As well as could be expected.” Broken down further, 27% of respondents wanted an explicit show of military strength, 12% demanded that the U.S. “get tougher, more pressure (military not specified), 9% opted for military action in any capacity, and a meagre 4% desired a withdrawal from conflict. January 31, 1965, exhibited a high watermark of support, with 50% to 28% of Americans responding positively to the war. Thereafter, polling taken on October 25, 1967, exhibited an even split in responses, indicating diminished support for the war.

Armed Forced Day Parade with chants to “End the War in Vietnam”,²¹⁵ progressively gave way to massive anti-war protests. By 1965, a *New York Times* column noted that “much of the opposition has centered in the country’s intellectual community, notably among university students.”²¹⁶ Most prominent among these early student-led associations was University of Wisconsin’s National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam, which “put forth its biggest effort to date,” with a “series of nationwide demonstrations,” including a 10,000 participant march down New York’s Fifth Avenue.²¹⁷ Thereafter, similar student movements sprouted across the nation’s college campuses. University of California at Berkeley students started their own anti-war association, the Vietnam Day Committee, and coordinated an 8,000-person march into De Fremery Park.²¹⁸ On April 17, “more than 10,000 students from all over the country,” attended an anti-war protest hosted by the Students for a Democratic Society.²¹⁹ By October 20 of 1967, the anti-war front had grown exponentially to include a “sponsoring National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam – a coalition of roughly 150 organizations,” ranging from church groups to progressive labor parties.²²⁰ Michael Kazin observes that such protests were historically exceptional in U.S. history insofar as they “had begun to organize near the start of the war,” and had only “grown larger and more powerful as battles continued... no previous anti-war movement endured long enough to celebrate the victory of the enemy in what became the most humiliating defeat the United States had ever suffered.”²²¹

²¹⁵ Bernard Weinraub, “Vietnam Protest Blocks Fifth Ave,” *The New York Times*, May 16, 1965. 1.

²¹⁶ “The Nation,” *The New York Times*, October 17, 1965. E2.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, E2.

²¹⁸ Wallace Turner, “8,000 War Critics March on Coast,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 1965. 32.

²¹⁹ Special to The New York Times, “Protests on Vietnam in Capital Today,” *The New York Times*, April 17, 1965. 3.

²²⁰ E. W. Kenworthy, “Thousands Reach Capital to Protest Vietnam War,” *The New York Times*, October 21, 1967. 1.

²²¹ Michael Kazin, “Not with My Life, You Don’t,” in *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation*.

While pacifist movements were nothing new in the annals of U.S. history, two peculiar features of the Vietnam protests made these movements especially easy to earmark as anti-American. Michael Kazin's historical sketch of the war protests' global proliferation alludes to the potential danger borne by international coordination. Even though American protestors featured a diverse array of New Left interests, "in capitalist nations outside the U.S., most young leftists remained loyal to the socialist tradition."²²² Conservatives could easily designate these cross-border alliances as patently anti-American. For instance, Ray Vicker's 1967 column in the *Wall Street Journal* argued that "Leftist groups that oppose the American war effort in Vietnam, primarily those in Europe, are beginning to coordinate their activities." Specifically, Communist-friendly Bertil Swahnstroem's coordinating committee, "spawned by the Stockholm Peace Conference this summer," was directly linked to the November 24 march on the Pentagon.²²³ In addition to this foreign element, overzealous fringe groups within the broader anti-war movement stained the popular reputation that protestors tried to establish. E. J. Dionne observes that although "critics of American foreign policy have always been labeled 'anti-American' by their foes," it was rare that "dissenters cooperated so willingly to validate the claims of their enemies," as radical protestors did through their effigial burning of the U.S. flag.²²⁴ While this "zealous, if minute, minority," comprised of traditional Communist enemies of American liberalism, newer groups, such as the Weathermen, sought to emulate the guerilla models of the Third World to coerce change.²²⁵

²²² Ibid.,

²²³ Ray Vicker, "'Stop the War': European Organizations Coordinate Protests Abroad Over Vietnam." *Wall Street Journal*, November 24, 1967. 1.

²²⁴ E. J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 52.

²²⁵ Michael Kazin, "Not with My Life, You Don't," *American Dreamers*.

As the Vietnam conflict wrought its economic and social turmoil on the nation, questions over the extent to which the Great Society could assuage racial injustice initiated new conflicts that had been previously relegated to the South. Although the Civil Rights Act and the subsequent passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act formally outlawed segregation and discriminatory voting practices that had existed since the Civil War, the material impacts of institutional racism continued to perpetuate a “vicious circle – the poverty cycle – in which the black communities are denied good jobs, and therefore stuck with a low income and therefore unable to obtain a good education with which to obtain good jobs,” which, according to Stokely Carmichael, manifested itself most acutely in the “de facto” segregated neighborhoods and school systems of urban America.²²⁶ Johnson had indicated his administration’s commitment to racial integration when he cautioned that “you do not take a person, who for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, ‘you are free to compete with all the others,’ and still justly believe that you have been completely fair,” during his 1965 commencement address at Howard University.²²⁷ Yet the energetic commitment to racial justice faltered as White voters became increasingly skeptical of federally enforced integration.²²⁸ Evidently, the fissures in Johnson’s Great Society became increasingly visible as the administration was unable to wrangle with domestic strife over the critical issues of foreign war and racial integration.

²²⁶ Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton, “White Power: The Colonial Situation.” and “Dynamite in the Ghetto.” In *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*.

²²⁷ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Commencement Address at Howard University: ‘To fulfill these rights.’” (Speech, Howard University, Washington D.C., June 4, 1965). The American Presidency Project.

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/commencement-address-howard-university-fulfill-these-rights>

²²⁸ George Horace, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935 – 1971*. Vol. 3 (1972). 1933 and 2030; While April polling in 1965 demonstrated that 76% of Americans favored Johnson’s 1965 Voting Rights Bill, responses to whether or not the “Johnson Administration is pushing integration too fast, or not fast enough,” yielded ambivalent results, with 34% of respondents answering, “too fast” compared to 38% of those that responded with “about right” and an even smaller 17% arguing “not fast enough”.²²⁸ By September 28, 1966, the same question garnered an even larger “too fast” majority of 52%.²²⁸

The urban riots of the long, hot summers that followed the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act bore testimony to the reality of Black American exclusion from the “Great Society”. In 1965, the Los Angeles riots that occurred in response to the enduring slum-like conditions in Watts, where one sixth of Los Angeles’ Black population lived, touched off two other violent race riots in Springfield and Chicago.²²⁹ Following the summer of 1967, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders published a comprehensive investigation into the causes of nationwide race riots. After a concise historical sketch, the commission observed that the multiplicity of Civil Rights groups that began to diverge around 1963 still continued to agree on two core objectives: First, any future civil rights activity “would have to focus on the economic and social discrimination in urban ghettos,” and second, major demonstrations would work in tandem with “the political potential of the black masses.”²³⁰ While there may have been disagreement within the movement over the second objective’s realization, the Kerner Commission’s subsequent outline of the urban crisis undoubtedly demonstrated how national efforts had fallen short of the first goal.

Although Black migrants had originally moved to the “older sections” of Northern and Western cities in order to take advantage of growing industrial employment and lower rent akin to other historical immigrant groups, the ongoing prospect of housing discrimination forced Black families to reside within ghettoized slums, even when they “attained incomes, living standards, and cultural levels matching or surpassing those of whites who have ‘upgraded’ themselves from distinctly ethnic neighborhoods.”²³¹ Housing discrimination thus created an urban sprawl subject to de facto racial segregation, evidenced by the commission’s finding that

²²⁹ “Hot Summer,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 1965. E1.

²³⁰ *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. *The New York Times* ed. (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1968). 232.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

the segregation index of the United States' 207 largest cities remained "relatively stable, averaging 85.2 in 1940, 87.3 in 1950, and 86.2 in 1960."²³² Poverty within these racially marginalized enclaves persisted throughout the 1960s. By 1966, the proportion of nonwhite families "living in poverty within central cities," had remained "about the same", dropping from 39 to 35 percent, while the absolute number of non-white families living in "poverty areas" had actually increased from 1,561,000 in 1960 to 1,588,000 in 1966.²³³ National efforts towards integration were underwhelming, to say the least.

Thus, hard-fought Civil Rights victories in the early 1960s were tempered with the ongoing existence of a New Deal status quo that only procured economic and political benefits for White communities and workplaces. The response to the daunting challenge of economic marginalization fostered two deviating responses within the Civil Rights movement. Martin Luther King continued to emphasize the Civil Rights movement's need to "master the art of political alliances," to achieve greater power within the traditional big-city machines.²³⁴ While King still saw promise for liberation within the parameters of U.S. politics, Stokely Carmichael's conception of post-1964 Black Power adopted a structural critique of White supremacy that amounted to a comprehensive rejection of American political institutions. Carmichael and other young reformers resented the political sellout that had occurred at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, when the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's objective to replace Southern Dixiecrat Seats was frustrated by Johnson's moderate designs on maintaining the South's electoral support during the racially divisive Goldwater campaign.²³⁵ In their critique of White

²³² Ibid., 247.

²³³ Ibid., 259.

²³⁴ Martin Luther King, "Martin Luther King Defines 'Black Power'," *The New York Times*, June 11, 1967. 248.

²³⁵ This turning point is referenced in a few notable works: Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 82 and Patrick Diggins. *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992). 258. and Richard

supremacy within the United States, Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton came to the emphatic conclusion that “the economic relationship of America’s black communities to the larger society reflects their colonial status. The political power exercised over those communities goes hand in glove with the economic deprivation.”²³⁶

By mid-July of 1966, the Civil Rights leadership had discernibly split into a “moderate” (consisting of the NAACP and the Urban League) camp committed to realizing “legislative triumphs” through non-violence and a “radical” (CORE and SNCC) camp that exuded the growing impatience with “the slow workings of the democratic process,” geared towards Black integration into a “white society.” These fundamental disagreements over the content of Black power “came at a time when violence was erupting in another Negro ghetto,” in the Near North Side of Omaha, Nebraska.²³⁷ The “radical” camp’s prioritization of “cultural integrity” alongside the wholesale rejection of integration as a project of White assimilation led to an exploitable ambiguity that Christopher Lasch’s overview of Leftism in the 1960s identified as a contradictory embrace of ethnic solidarity as a means to secure material and political advancement alongside a wholesale rejection of colonial American society.²³⁸ This divisive uncertainty provided racial conservatives with a politically salient opportunity to distort the objectives of the Civil Rights movement. According to Dionne, the invocation of Black separatism fostered a reactionary “rationale for halting progress towards integration.”²³⁹

Rorty. *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). 69.

²³⁶ Carmichael and Hamilton, “I: White Power: The Colonial Situation,” in *Black Power*.

²³⁷ “‘Black Power’: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy; Will the Summer Be Long and Hot?” *The New York Times*, July 10, 1966. 143.

²³⁸ Christopher Lasch. *The Agony of the American Left*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969). 130-131.

²³⁹ E. J. Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 86.

Amid the social disillusionment caused by the Vietnam War and the crawling pace of racial integration, was a rapid spike in crime rates. The “urban crisis” and the consequent rise in crime stemmed from an increase in capital mobility during the 1960s which threatened to unsettle the previous “illiquid capital of the historic northeastern-midwestern manufacturing belt.”²⁴⁰ During the era of “Cold War liberalism,” this capital typically flowed towards the suburbs, especially the Sunbelt suburbia, where business friendly inducements in the form of tax credits and Right to Work legislation began to sap the old manufacturing centers of private investment.²⁴¹ As inner cities suffered from capital divestment, unemployment and crime rates surged. From 1960 to 1965, there was approximately a 40 percent increase in all crime and a 34 percent increase in violent crime.²⁴² To stymie the wave of crime, Johnson sent Congress the Law Enforcement Act, thus initiating the United States’ inveterate war on crime with the creation of a new Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Funds originally appropriated for antipoverty programs became designated for an increasingly militarized police network.²⁴³ Starved of funds and with “nowhere near the fiscal capacity to even attempt economic development policies of their own,” many municipal governments followed suit and began to shift their already strapped budgets towards policing.²⁴⁴ Said developments were nationally perceptible as early as April 25 of 1965, when a survey question asking “do you think that there has been more or less crime in your area during the last five years,” exhibited that the majority of respondents (51 percent) felt that crime had noticeably increased.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Jonathan Levy. *Ages of American Capitalism*. 536.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 537.

²⁴² Statistics taken from table supplied by the FBI, *Index of Crime, United States, 1960-1988*; and *Crime Index Rate, United States, 1960-1988* in Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 112.

²⁴³ Jill Lepore. *These Truths*. 623.

²⁴⁴ Jonathan Levy. *Ages of American Capitalism*. 541.

²⁴⁵ George Horace, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935 – 1971*. Volume 3 (1972). 1935.

3.3 George Wallace as “The Waystation” for Racial Anti-Federalism

The aforementioned defects of the Great Society provided George Wallace’s American Independent Party (AIP) with a promising opportunity for national popularity. Contrary to Wallace’s public optimism, the Alabaman populist was fully knowledgeable of his dim prospects for an absolute majority. Instead, *New York Times* columnist Ray Jenkins observed that at best, Wallace would only need 34 percent of the vote in a three-way contest, and at worst, Wallace saw the realistic possibility of “bringing about some kind of 20th-century version of the Hayes-Tilden compromise which signaled the end of military reconstruction in the South,” by carrying enough electoral votes to force a coalition government.²⁴⁶ Jenkins continued, “even beyond the Electoral College,” Wallace could hope for an election delegated to the House of Representatives if no candidate could secure a clear majority of electoral votes.²⁴⁷ Of course, Wallace’s entry as a third-party candidate elicited another question about “which party Wallace would hurt most in 1968,” to which Wallace replied, “I’ll hurt Republicans in the South, because without me they could carry it again over Johnson like they did in 1964. I’ll hurt Johnson in the North, where I’ve got a lot of support among factory workers, taxi drivers, beauticians, Polish people, Italians – a lot of people like that who vote Democratic.”²⁴⁸ Undoubtedly, Wallace had great reason to vest his faith in such a strategy.

Before the 1968 election, Wallace had consolidated his position in the national limelight as the populist candidate of White backlash after his 1963 gubernatorial victory in Alabama. Borrowing from the playbook of his 19th century “Populist forebears,” Wallace’s inaugural

²⁴⁶ Ray Jenkins, “George Wallace Figures to Win Even if he Loses,” *The New York Times*, April 7, 1968. 79.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁴⁸ Thaddeus L. Knap, “George Wallace Maps His Way to the White House,” *New Republic* Vol. 156, Issue 17 (April 29, 1967). 7.

address celebrated the common folk producers of American society: “I want the farmer to feel confident that in this State government he has a partner who will work with him in raising his income and increasing his markets, and I want the laboring man to know he has a friend who is sincerely striving to better his field of endeavor.”²⁴⁹ This aforementioned appeal to the state working on behalf of the everyday laborer drew on a pre-existing reservoir of historical appeal present in the earlier Populist Party’s commitment to redefine the government’s role as “an enhancer of democracy instead of the servant of plutocracy.”²⁵⁰ Moments after this revival of the Populist appeal, Wallace launched a reactionary attack on “the tyranny that clanks its chains upon the South,” and delivered his infamous guarantee of “segregation now... segregation tomorrow... segregation forever.”²⁵¹ These invocations of the old Populist Party’s antagonistic dyad of “tramps and millionaires”²⁵², became displaced insofar as Wallace appropriated similar tropes of the common folk producers, but furnished a new enemy of the people: Liberal Washington bureaucrats and their supposed beneficiaries.

Consequently, Wallace could readily count on a solid bloc of anti-integrationist support in the South. As *New Republic* writer Thaddeus Knap contended, the very “foundations of the Wallace campaign are his stands at the schoolhouse doors.”²⁵³ Due to Goldwater’s previous racially charged anti-federal campaign, Wallace only had to slightly adjust the rhetoric he had used during his gubernatorial contests to constitute a nationally palatable message. As an editorial-page editor for the *Alabama Journal* in Montgomery, Ray Jenkins’ familiarity with

²⁴⁹ Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*. 17. and George C. Wallace, “The Inaugural Address of Governor George C. Wallace,” (speech, Montgomery, Alabama, January 14, 1963). Alabama Digital Archives. <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/voices/id/2952>

²⁵⁰ Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. 42.

²⁵¹ George C. Wallace, “The Inaugural Address of Governor George C. Wallace.”

²⁵² Ignatius Donnelly, “National People’s Party Platform.”

²⁵³ Thaddeus L. Knap, “George Wallace Maps His Way to the White House.” 8.

Wallace's campaigning could credibly verify that the transition to a national platform "requires no more than a few artful renditions": Either by substituting his traditional enmity towards Alabamian liberal papers with the nationally left-leaning *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, or by replacing his old campaign slogan "stand up for Alabama" with "Stand up for America," or through the modulation of his old pro-segregationist stance with an anti-federal support for state and local communities.²⁵⁴ Perhaps the only consistent theme that Wallace did not have to amend was his ongoing attacks on the group he defined as "pseudo intellectuals". Although this denigratory title had originally referred to anti-segregationist liberal newspaper editors, federal officials, Supreme Court Justices, and college professors, Wallace seamlessly lumped the nationally pervasive student-led Vietnam protests under this banner when he labelled participants in a 1967 October march on the Pentagon as "bearded pseudo intellectuals."²⁵⁵ This rhetorical transposition exhibited a plan to "use the peace demonstrators in his Presidential campaign the way he once used civil rights demonstrators in his gubernatorial campaigns in Alabama,"²⁵⁶ thereby giving his regionally-bound message a nationally pertinent enemy.

Seymour Lipset's concise overview of the "New Right" determined that part of Wallace's national resonance drew upon the anti-communist conspiratorialism of old conservatism, but it lacked the strict reliance on the "kind of attacks on individuals for being Communists" that Senator McCarthy had mobilized fifteen years earlier.²⁵⁷ Instead, Wallace typically limited his militant anti-communism to a vague, hawkish foreign policy of total war in Vietnam. Alleged anti-American subversives continued to live on, but the communists lost their privileged status as

²⁵⁴ Ray Jenkins, "George Wallace Figures to Win Even if he Loses," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1968. 70.

²⁵⁵ Gene Roberts, "Wallace Derides War Protestors: Cry of 'Pseudo Intellectuals' Wins Him Applause," *The New York Times*, October 29, 1967. 45.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁵⁷ Seymour Lipset, "New Right," *New Society*, Vol. 12 (July 4, 1968). 479.

the primary adversaries of the people. Evidenced by Wallace's fiery 1968 speech before a collection of far-right racist fringe groups and New York workers in Madison Square Garden, the enemies of the American people spanned a broad spectrum of "a few anarchists, a few activists, a few militants, a few revolutionaries, and a few Communists."²⁵⁸ Like Goldwater, Wallace blamed the political unrest on a vast conspiratorial network of "pseudo-intellectuals" that included liberal columnists, high ranking bureaucrats and professors at leading Northeast educational institutions, all of which had corrupted the morality of young people.²⁵⁹ Whereas Goldwater had inaugurated the initial move away from McCarthyite condemnations of domestic Communism by labelling his liberal adversaries as inept and negligent agents of collectivization, Wallace remained loyal to the old conservative tradition by articulating an internal state of siege. But the novel exigencies of the Vietnam War and racial integration gave Wallace the foundation to brand a new group of domestic traitors that had become disconnected from the "little man".

This "little man" extended beyond the traditional bases of Southern support that Wallace had cultivated during his segregationist political career. Even before the 1968 Election, Wallace had received sizeable shares of primary votes within Northern bastions of liberal support during the 1964 Democratic Primaries. Across the three Northern states Wallace campaigned in, he achieved a "surprisingly strong showing in the Wisconsin presidential preferential primary," with 25 percent of vote,²⁶⁰ 29 percent of the vote in Indiana,²⁶¹ and a substantial amount of support in Maryland where he "polled 42.8 percent of the vote," against a stand-in for President Johnson,

²⁵⁸ George Wallace, "Speech at Madison Square Garden, October 24, 1968." (Speech, New York City, New York, October 24, 1968). Teaching American History. <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/speech-at-madison-square-garden/>

²⁵⁹ Seymour Lipset, "New Right." 479.

²⁶⁰ Claude Sitton, "Wallace: South's Mood, Alabama Governor's Strong Showing in Wisconsin primary is Gratifying Segregationists," *The New York Times*, April 12, 1964. E5.

²⁶¹ Austin C. Wehrwein, "Wallace Gets 29% of Indiana Votes; Welsh is Winner," *The New York Times*, May 6, 1964. 1.

thus foreshadowing what Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff of Connecticut saw as proof “that there are many Americans in the North as well as the South who do not believe in civil rights.”²⁶² As Civil Rights and antiwar protests ramped up in the latter half of the 1960s, Wallace’s regional appeal to Southern White workers began to travel north of the Mason-Dixie Line. *New York Times* journalist and labor expert A. H. Raskin’s survey of Northern Wallace support observed that workers’ core gripe was aptly surmised by the president of the million-member International Association of Machinists, P. L. Siemiller, during a keynote at the union’s convention in Chicago: “Union members who have worked so hard to build this country are pretty sick of rioters, looters, peaceniks, beatniks and the rest of the nuts who are trying to destroy it.”²⁶³ Wallace took this resentment, and channeled it towards the elites in Washington. Across his speeches, Wallace constantly insinuated that the “briefcase-carrying bureaucrats” and their pallid leader, Lyndon B. Johnson, were either irresponsible, or worse, responsible for the street protests.²⁶⁴

Wallace also attempted to bridge the gap between Southern White agrarians and Northern machinists by targeting the expanding project of racial integration. In particular, federally enforced integration of urban schools occupied the foreground of the public’s attention following two crucial developments. Both the Department of Health, Education and Welfare’s 1967 decision to shift its focus towards school integration in the North and the Supreme Court’s illegalization of “freedom of choice” in the 1968 *Green v Country School Board of New Kent County, Va.* cemented the Federal Government’s commitment to urban busing initiatives outside

²⁶² E. W. Kensworthy, “Senators Doubt Wallace Impact on Rights Action,” *The New York Times*. May 21, 1964. 1-2.

²⁶³ A. H. Raskin. “...And the Pro-Humphrey Labor Chiefs are Worried.” *The New York Times*. September 15, 1968.

²⁶⁴ Joseph E. Lowndes. *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. 93-95.

of the South.²⁶⁵ Wallace immediately seized upon these issues in an effort to sever Northern workers' traditional support for the New Deal state. In a 1968 rally at Long Beach Arena, Los Angeles, Wallace set his crosshairs on "those bureaucrats in Washington who send us guidelines telling us when we can go to sleep at night and when we can get up in the morning." The guidelines in question, columnist Kenneth Lamott notes, were the federal initiatives to desegregate urban schools.²⁶⁶ According to Lipset, Wallace's attack on integration resonated with urban White workers, especially union workers, that "see the pressures for school desegregation as coming from the well-educated middle class which lives in the suburbs or sends its children to private schools."²⁶⁷ While White backlash against integration was undoubtedly present, its existence as an exclusively working class phenomenon may be overstated.

A nominal survey of Gallup Polling evidence suggests that anti-integration sentiment was fairly ubiquitous by September of 1966, with as many as 52 percent of Whites outside of the South answering that Johnson's push for integration was "too fast".²⁶⁸ Across income groupings, respondents answering "too fast" actually steadily climbed as income increased.²⁶⁹ Richard F. Hamilton's anthology chapter, "Black Demands, White Reactions, and Liberal Alarms," further problematized the conception of a patently racist Northern White working class. Their survey findings identified a negligible difference in anti-integration attitudes between Northern White workers and White middle class survey respondents:

²⁶⁵ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 57.

²⁶⁶ Kenneth Lamott "It Isn't a Mirage They're Seeing,' Says George Wallace." *The New York Times*, September 22, 1968.

²⁶⁷ Seymour Lipset, "George Wallace and the U.S. New Right." 478.

²⁶⁸ George Horace. *The Gallup Poll; public opinion, 1935-1971*. Volume 3. 2030.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2031.

Civil Rights Attitudes of Non-South Whites by Class, 1968 (Married White Respondents, Head Economically Active) - Percent in Favor of

Question	Percent in Favor (of those with opinions)			
	Operative, laborer, service	Skilled	Lower Middle	Upper Middle
"Government should see that Negroes get fair treatment in jobs."	49	44	43	45
"Government should see that Negroes can go to any hotel or restaurant."	67	62	64	65
"Government should see to it that white and Negro children go to the same schools."	55	40	48	47
"Negroes have a right to live where they can afford to."	82	88	85	82

Table 2 - Richard F. Hamilton, "Black Demands, White Reactions, and Liberal Alarms," in *Blue Collar Workers: A Symposium on Middle America*. ed. Sar A. Levitan. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971). 135.

Furthermore, Hamilton finds that although support for integration efforts among White skilled workers and middle-class respondents declined precipitously following 1964, there was actually a "small increase in approval for government action among the less-skilled blue-collar workers."²⁷⁰

3.4 Law and Order

Howard L. Reiter's "Blue-Collar Workers and the Future of American Politics," details the new foci of resonant working-class issues within these constituencies. Using data derived from the Survey Research Center, Reiter reinforces Hamilton's findings that anti-integration sentiment was not relegated to Northern White workers. However, Reiter's "Target Group" of White lower-middle-income blue-collar workers exhibited less tolerance of "protest and civil

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 137.

disobedience than other groups- even other whites in the same income bracket.”²⁷¹ Even though Reiter’s findings exhibit a gap of approximately 8 to 10 percentage points between workers’ disapproval for protesting and the national average, there was an even sharper divide in opinion by class, suggesting that Northern workers were principally concerned with the protests.

Wallace’s rhetorical attacks on the antiwar protestors yielded the greatest emotional resonance with Northern White workers for two reasons. First, it preyed upon working class fears of domestic anti-American subversion that had existed since McCarthy’s Red Scare. Second, Wallace’s identification of an elitist cadre of apathetic, immoral intellectuals foregrounded the cleavages in class-based opinion regarding the legitimacy of the protests. While many upper-middle class and upper-class neighborhoods remained unscathed, inner-city working-class neighborhoods usually resided on the front lines of protest. Evidenced by 1968 survey responses collected by the ANES, this materialized into very different rates of support for (legal) protests across working class and upper-class income brackets.

How do you Feel About Legally Permitted Protests? (1968)

	Approves of Protesting	Depends	Disapproves of Protesting
Upper Class	38.5	42.3	19.2
Working Class	19.7	23.0	57.3

Table 3 - Data derived from American National Election Studies (ANES). “1968 Time Series Study.” <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1968-time-series-study/>. Respondents’ self-reported income for class assignment used for cross-table.

These deviating attitudes towards New Left protests lent credence to Wallace’s anti-elitist message. His rhetorical attacks on all protestors brokered a poignant avenue through which Northern workers could be pitted against a socially permissive upper class. On the other hand,

²⁷¹ Howard L. Reiter, “Blue-Collar Workers and American Politics,” in *Blue Collar Workers*, ed. Sar A. Levitan. 112 – 113 (Table 16 for figures).

Wallace's disdain for intellectual elitism recast Goldwater's dogmatic anti-statist rhetoric within a populist mold that directly targeted the "working class folks". This appeal was most demonstrable in a 1968 survey conducted on White voters in Gary, Indiana, by Robert T. Riley and Thomas F. Pettigrew, which found that Wallace performed best among voters that identified as "strong working-class".²⁷² From the umbrella term "pseudo intellectuals", both hardline Southern segregationists and urban White working class ethnics could discern a common enemy in the New Deal state.

Wallace further capitalized on urban White workers' nativist hatred of protesting by connecting Carmichael's anti-colonial conception of Black solidarity with foreign revolutionaries. While indecision on the contents and strategy of Black Power hampered the movement's unity, Wallace decisively moved to deny Black Power's legitimacy by late August of 1966 when he spoke before the national convention of the Fraternal Order of Police. Wallace ignored the structural and racial issues the riots responded to, and instead argued that they were part of a wider, un-American "conference of world guerilla warfare chieftans [meeting] in Havana, Cuba," where Communists deliberately planned to destabilize the United States from within.²⁷³ Although the frontline protestors were branded with the traditional anti-American stigma of Communism, the novel enemy of federal "bearded beatnik bureaucrats" resurfaced when Wallace blamed the federal judiciary, intellectuals, and government workers for enabling the rioters.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Quoted in Seymour Martin Lipset. *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). 365. The actual figure was 43.7 percent of voters that identified as "strong working-class" voted for Wallace.

²⁷³ Quoted in Dan T. Carter. *The Politics of Rage*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995). 305.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 305.

Nonetheless, issues of authority and protest were not wholly removed from broader political economic and racial quandaries. Wallace's answer of "law and order" generated a nationally palatable signifier that flexibly engendered the variegated claims of political alienation felt among Northern White workers. On the surface, law and order could refer to the increasing rate of urban crime and protests (both of which, Wallace had lumped together²⁷⁵) or to a deep-seated sense of structural displacement that White workers felt within the ailing Great Society. This displacement occurred as White workers lost the privileged status they had enjoyed under the New Deal coalition. For the first half of the 20th century, most of the working-class victories won by what philosopher Richard Rorty delineated as the "reformist American Left" had solely benefitted White men.²⁷⁶ To ameliorate the rigid economic determinism that old reformers believed would inevitably remove the capitalist by-products of discrimination, the New Left, (Rorty's "cultural Left") sought to address the social plights of people "who are humiliated for reasons other than economic status."²⁷⁷ But the New Left's struggle towards greater participatory democracy lacked any coherent program or substantive alternative. The lack of an alternative system, Lasch argues, placed New Left activists into a purely reactive state of constant struggle against authority that inevitably gave rise to "more and more militant tactics."²⁷⁸ This diametric opposition to all forms of authority served as an irreconcilable point of contention between young revolutionaries and older reformers. Workers ultimately "proved indifferent to the New Left and hostile to its libertarian lifestyle."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 349.

²⁷⁶ Richard Rorty. *Achieving Our Country*. 75.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 80.

²⁷⁸ Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left*. 212.

²⁷⁹ John Diggins. *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*. 265.

Loss of White workers' privileged status within the Great Society paralleled a growing sense of diminished political and economic power. The aforementioned Riley and Pettigrew survey of Gary voters also found that 40 percent of voters that agreed with the statement, "in spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better," were Wallace voters.²⁸⁰ The economic dislocations caused by urban stagnation during the 1960s provided the fertile topsoil necessary for Wallace's racially charged anti-statist message to cultivate a Northern base of support among White workers that had come to associate integration efforts with unfair Black "favoritism". Dan T. Carter's historical account of racial backlash locates part of this resentment with the relatively higher wage growth that nonwhite workers enjoyed in comparison to White workers between 1961 and 1968.²⁸¹ The fact that nonwhite workers had made great (albeit, incomplete) strides towards wage parity coupled with the relative slowdown in wage growth for White workers made the Black poor "increasingly appealing scapegoats."²⁸² The Bureau of the Census's "Income in 1968 of Families and Person in the United States," corroborates with Carter's contention through its indication of a 7 percent increase (\$410) for White workers compared to a higher 11 percent increase (\$360) among Black workers from 1967 to 1968.²⁸³ The report's breakdown of family earnings by residence further elucidates the potential sources of urban White discontent.

White workers enjoyed a higher median average of income than Black workers. Yet, in medium-sized cities (defined as less than one million inhabitants) White families' median

²⁸⁰ Quoted in E.J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 91.

²⁸¹ Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*. 29. Specific figures cited: 56 percent increase among White workers and 110 percent increase among nonwhite workers.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁸³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 66. "Income in 1968 of Families and Persons in the United States," (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC., 1969). 2.

income of \$8,815 resided below the national White family median of \$8,937.²⁸⁴ This level of income still dwarfed the average Black families' median income of \$5,585 within these mid-sized cities, but this same cohort of central city Black families enjoyed a higher income than the national Black family's median of \$5,360.²⁸⁵ Of course, it was within these Northern medium-sized cities that Ross et al.'s 1976 publication titled "Patterns of Support for George Wallace: Implications for Racial Change," identified the peculiar "curvilinear pattern for both sexes, especially among the poorly educated males," within Northern urban centers of less than a million inhabitants.²⁸⁶ After a million inhabitants, Ross et al., identifies the confounding decline in Wallace support, but the aforementioned publication released by the Bureau of Census explains this discrepancy:

Families living in metropolitan areas of 1,000,000 or more persons have a median income of \$9,900, which is 12 percent greater than the median of \$8,900 for families residing in metropolitan areas of less than 1,000,000 inhabitants... the higher median incomes in the larger metropolitan areas are partly the result of the greater concentration of the higher paying professional and managerial occupations in these areas as well as the higher incomes received by persons in these occupations.²⁸⁷

The Bureau's findings suggest the comparative stagnation of mid-sized centers of industry across the nation. Wallace found an attentive audience among the White working families within these urban centers that had felt their relative material status decline against a backdrop of federal integration efforts.

Nominal economic gains coincided with \$121 billion worth of federal transfers to individuals living below the poverty line between 1961 to 1968, approximately a third of which

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 2.

²⁸⁶ Michael J. Ross, "Patterns of Support for George Wallace: Implications for Racial Change," *Journal of Social Issues* Vol. 36, No. 2 (1976). 77.

²⁸⁷ Bureau of the Census, "Income in 1968 of Families and Person in the United States." 1.

were Black Americans.²⁸⁸ The larger case load of Black Americans was aided by the extensive efforts of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) headed by George Wiley (the former associate national director of the CORE), which achieved great strides in extending welfare authorizations to nonwhite Americans.²⁸⁹ Between 1966 and 1969, the NWRO launched a multiracial movement to secure the guaranteed income rights of marginalized recipients, especially poor Black women, that had originally struggled for authorization.²⁹⁰ In addition to this, the NWRO tirelessly undertook lawsuits and popular demonstrations in order to end insensitive bureaucratic hurdles to welfare entitlements.²⁹¹ New Deal programs that had previously been monopolized by the White poor came to increasingly represent racially and sexually marginalized groups that had historically struggled to receive state assistance.

The increasing perception that White labor's coalitional hegemony within the Democratic coalition was being circumscribed to the margins also served as a potential source of backlash towards the New Left. First, Travis M. Johnston's recent analysis of agenda setting during President Johnson's 89th Congress contends that the president's 1965 decision to delay the introduction of Bill H.R. 77 (a repeal on the Taft-Hartley Act's Section 14b right-to-work statute) provided the bill's anti-labor opponents, notably the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the National Right to Work Committee (NRWC), and the Chamber of Commerce, with ample time to mobilize grassroots opposition to the legislation.²⁹² Furthermore, the decision to sideline H.R. 77 signaled its low-priority status to the Republican opposition.

²⁸⁸ Dan T. Carter. *Politics of Rage*. 348.

²⁸⁹ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 68.

²⁹⁰ Todd C. Shaw, "We Refused to Lay Down Our Spears." In *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, edited by Ollie Johnson and Karin Stanford. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002). 176-179.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁹² Travis M. Johnston, "A Crowded Agenda: Labor Reform and Coalition Politics During the Great Society." *Studies in American Political Development* Vol. 29 (2015). 91, 100.

Both factors culminated into Senate Minority Leader Everett Dickson's historically unprecedented decision to filibuster an industrial relations bill.²⁹³

Second, the adoption of the 1969 McGovern-Fraser Commission opted to wrest nomination control from the old Democratic party machines that predominantly favored White working-class voters.²⁹⁴ The reforms included a 10 percent limit on the number of delegates chosen by state committee leaders, thereby ensuring that the remainder of state delegates would be selected either through participatory conventions (similar to party a caucus, but participation was expanded beyond precinct committeemen and committeewomen) or candidate primaries.²⁹⁵ Additional constraints on state party machines were enacted through Statute B-6, which stipulated two different methods to ensure proportional minority representation within each stage of the delegate selection process: In at-large elections, the state party was expected to "divide delegate votes among presidential candidates in proportion to their [minority] demonstrated strength," or it could "choose delegates from fairly apportioned districts no larger than congressional districts."²⁹⁶ This rule, and Statute A-2, "Discrimination on the basis of age or sex", expanded the representativeness of State Parties to include previously unrepresented groups.²⁹⁷

Outside of party politics, many Northern blue-collar White ethnics anxiously perceived integration efforts and protests as an existential danger to their communities. In the North, the analog for Southern states' rights was the neighborhood. E.J. Dionne's outline of sociological literature covering this subject notes the crucial role that first- and second-generation urban

²⁹³ Ibid., 102.

²⁹⁴ E. J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 48 and Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 80.

²⁹⁵ Nelson W. Polsby. *Consequences of Party Reform*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). 35.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 47-48.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 42.

White neighborhoods performed in the everyday lives of workers. Such neighborhoods provided their residents with a “thick web” of communal and political relationships that “eased the burdens of urban life.” As a consequence, many Northern White workers viewed their neighborhood as an autonomous, orderly community, thus disguising the extent to which these neighborhoods depended on a wide array of outside forces (e.g., local governments, banks, real estate brokers etc.). Both the protests and federal integration efforts were seen as illegitimate encroachments within enclaves typically dominated by a single ethnic group.²⁹⁸ Across his speeches in Northern industrial centers like Milwaukee, Wallace actively pandered to this sense of community by celebrating White ethnics’ European heritage. Before an audience in Serb Hall, Wallace lauded the bravery of the “proud and gallant Poles” that fought in World War II.²⁹⁹ Accordingly, Wallace portrayed these ethnic enclaves as racialized victims of a Federal Government that deferred to protestors and social engineers.

Comprehensively, “law and order”, then, was not just a working-class reaction towards urban crime. Rather, it captured the loss of authority and relative material prosperity that White workers had maintained within the New Deal coalition. Wallace’s invocation of this term insinuated a romanticized return to an old order dominated by organized White labor and governed by laws that had disproportionately benefitted this segment of workers. “Law and order” satisfied this deep sense of displacement that manifested as a visceral reaction against the initiatives of the New Left and the Great Society. Wallace preyed on this deep, profound demand for the old order by grafting a sense of legitimate process onto a multiplicity of White demands.

²⁹⁸ E.J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 92.

²⁹⁹ Joseph E. Lowndes. *From The New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. 86.

Norman C. Miller's recount of Wallace's Milwaukee campaign evidences the flexible application of legal legitimacy to multiple conservative demands:

-“I'm going to, within the law, turn back to you the absolute control of your public school system.”

-“I'm going to ask the Congress to repeal the so-called housing law that would jail you for selling your own property.”

-“We're going to, within the law, search out and remove every Communist in every defense plant in the U.S.”

-“When I write the federal budget, we're not going to put in any money for all these briefcase-toting H-E-W harassers.”³⁰⁰

Thus, law and order came to engender demands beyond the immediate issues of crime and protest. Broadly speaking, its populist dimension derived from the multiple sites of reaction against a New Left that threatened to upset the New Deal status quo.

3.5 Nixon and the “Social Issue”

By September 29, 1968, a Gallup Poll Presidential Trial Heat indicated that Wallace enjoyed a formidable 21 percent of nationwide voter support.³⁰¹ Even though this high watermark in support still put Wallace's share of votes below the threshold needed to carry the largest plurality, the Southern demagogue's presence in U.S. politics threatened the “southern foundation of the future Republican majority Nixon hoped to build.”³⁰² In order to capture the base of disillusioned voters Wallace appealed to, Nixon demonstrably undertook the precarious task of extracting Wallace's populist grievances from the “more tawdry trappings of his

³⁰⁰ Norman C. Miller, “Why Wallace?” *Wall Street Journal*, September 27, 1968. 14.

³⁰¹ George Horace. *The Gallup Poll; public opinion, 1935-1971*. Volume 3. 2162

³⁰² Dan T. Carter, *Politics of Rage*. 369.

message.”³⁰³ The two particular issues of law and order and busing that Wallace had foregrounded were tactfully co-opted into Nixon’s platform.

The *Green v Country School Board of New Kent County, VA* Supreme Court ruling and the HEW’s attempts to step-up efforts to end de-facto schooling segregation drew the issue of school busing into national focus during the 1968 campaign. Wallace’s racially charged attacks on federal integration efforts (not just busing) had expanded his base of support across traditionally liberal constituencies in both the North and South, thus alluding to busing’s potential as a divisive social issue capable of fracturing the New Deal coalition. To construct his new conservative coalition, Nixon needed to carefully embed Wallace’s populist backlash within a broader repertoire of temperate demands in order to avoid alienating a wider national audience. Within party caucuses, Nixon made his intentions explicit. Before an audience of Southern delegates, Nixon rejected busing and argued that the Supreme Court should solely “interpret the law, not make the law.”³⁰⁴ When addressing a national audience during a speech broadcasted on the CBS radio network, Nixon’s stated belief “that it is vitally important that local school boards and local and state government have the primary responsibility and the primary right to dispense funds,”³⁰⁵ revived Goldwater’s rights-based legal rejection of federal power by threatening to undercut the HEW’s control of federal funding to leverage school integration. Of course, all of these tactical appeals paralleled what Nixon’s southern strategist (and former Thurmond aide) Harry Dent would later outline as a platform racially conservative enough to appeal to White

³⁰³ Ibid., 347.

³⁰⁴ Stephen Ambrose. *Nixon Vol. 2: The Triumph of a Politician, 1962-1972*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989). 170.

³⁰⁵ Richard Nixon. “Remarks on the CBS Radio Network: “Education for Excellence, Freedom, and Diversity.” (Speech, Washington, D.C., October 20, 1968). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-cbs-radio-network-education-for-excellence-freedom-and-diversity>

southerners, but not so ostensibly racist as to drive away the “nominally Democrat white middle class vote in the swing states of California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.”³⁰⁶

The revitalization of states’ rights under the guise of anti-busing fell within the purview of Nixon’s broader objective to present himself as a law-and-order-candidate. Approximately a week before his acceptance of the Republican nomination, Nixon signaled his commitment to law and order through “The Crusade Against Crime” memorandum. While the seven-page document exhibited a seemingly banal guarantee to stymie the growth of nationwide crime, Nixon tacitly absorbed Wallace’s populist caricatures of New Left protestors: “We must cease as well the granting of special immunities and moral sanctions to those who deliberately violate the public laws—even when those violations are done in the name of peace or civil rights or anti-poverty or academic freedom.”³⁰⁷ Like Wallace, Nixon erased the differences between protestors and criminals. With his nomination secured, Nixon’s rhetoric continued to emulate Wallace by cleaving the nation into two antagonistic camps between the law abiding “majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans—the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators,” and the federal courts that had “gone too far in weakening the peace forces as against the criminal forces in this country and we must act to restore that balance.”³⁰⁸ Following his 1968 nomination as the GOP’s presidential candidate, Nixon consistently branded himself as a law and order nominee,

³⁰⁶ Dan T. Carter, *Politics of Rage*. 379-380.

³⁰⁷ Richard Nixon. “The Crusade Against Crime.” (Speech, Miami Beach, Florida, July 31, 1968). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-submitted-republican-national-convention-committee-resolutions-the-crusade>

³⁰⁸ Richard Nixon, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida, (August 8, 1968),” in *Richard Nixon: Speeches, Writings, Documents*, ed. Rick Perlstein. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). 145-146 and Richard Nixon, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida.” (Speech, Miami Beach, Florida, August 08, 1968). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-republican-national-convention-miami>

evidenced by a Harris Poll conducted in September putting him seventeen points ahead of Wallace on the issue.³⁰⁹

Ultimately, the careful co-optation of Wallace's conservative stance on social issues and Hubert Humphrey's unpopular reception within his own divided party granted Nixon his first victory in 1968. By late November 4, Gallup Polling indicated a slight Nixon lead of two points over Humphrey (42 to 40 percent) while Wallace's national support exhibited a decisive decline of 6 points relative to the high watermark of support he had enjoyed in September. After the ballots were cast, Nixon achieved a razor thin lead of 43.4 percent of the popular vote to Humphrey's 42.7 percent. In the South, Nixon attained an even smaller lead of 0.4 percent of the popular vote over Wallace.³¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, Wallace had performed well in the Deep South, carrying Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and had only lost both Tennessee and North Carolina by "statistically insignificant margins."³¹¹ Although the results hardly granted Nixon the new majority he wanted, his victory exhibited a relative reversal in national fortune for the GOP following the 1964 Goldwater defeat. Furthermore, Nixon's limited victory presaged an even greater political turnaround for GOP support across working class Americans as suggested by ANES survey data:

³⁰⁹ "A Poll Finds Nixon Holds Lead on Issue of 'Law and Order,'" *The New York Times*, September 13, 1968. 52.

³¹⁰ Robert Mason. *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). 35.

³¹¹ Dan T. Cater, *Politics of Rage*. 369.

Which 1968 Presidential Candidate did the Respondent Vote for by Class Identification (1970)?

	Nixon	Humphrey	Wallace
Working Class	38.7	49.6	11.8
Middle Class	52.1	40.4	7.4
Upper Class	59.1	33.9	7.1

Table 4 - Derived from American National Election Studies (ANES). "1970 Time Series Study." <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1970-time-series-study/>. Respondents' social class was self-reported.

Nixon had carried less support among self-declared working-class respondents than Humphrey, but his performance among this class strata designated an eleven-point gain over Goldwater's poor showing in a 1966 survey:

Which 1964 Presidential Candidate did the Respondent Vote for by Class Identification (1966)?

	Goldwater	Johnson
Working Class	27.6	72.4
Middle Class	39.2	60.8
Upper Class	42.7	57.3

Table 5 - Derived from American National Election Studies (ANES). "1966 Time Series Study." <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1966-time-series-study/>. Respondents' social class was self-reported.

In order to procure a majority of working-class support, the question still remained as to how Nixon would continue to capture Wallace's fleeting base of support in the aftermath of the 1968 election.

The answer to this question was not self-evident by 1969. In their analysis of Nixon's evolving stance on social issues, John Skrentny provides a concise outline of the politically ambiguous epoch the new president encountered following his narrow presidential victory. Both the protests of the New Left and the bipartisan passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (nominally ending housing discrimination) had "muddled" the "meanings of Left and Right."³¹² Consequently, Nixon's success in 1972 would naturally hinge on his ability to forge a novel conservative attitude towards social issues that elided overt racism.³¹³ Two strategies came to guide Nixon's strategic advance towards a new conservative majority.

The first blueprint arose from one of Nixon's strategists, Kevin P. Phillips, who had worked as a special aide to the president's national campaign organizer, John Mitchell. For Phillips, the core of "party supremacy in every electoral cycle from the era of Jefferson to the 1960s" pivoted around the populist exploitation of "ethnic, racial, and regional cleavages," or, by "knowing who hates who."³¹⁴ Phillips later formalized this conception of U.S. political history in his infamous publication, *The Emerging Republican Majority*. In his book, Phillips sought to verify the hypothesis that a "new era of consolidationist Republicanism has begun," after a thirty-six-year cycle of liberal dominance.³¹⁵ The end of the New Deal cycle featured a momentous shift in Northeastern establishmentarian attitudes as the old "Coolidge-Mellon-Hoover politics," of "industrial laissez faire and political Republicanism," became displaced by a "new Establishment," that "thrives on a government vastly more powerful than that deplored by

³¹² John D. Skrentny, "Zigs and Zags: Richard Nixon and the New Politics of Race," in *Winning While Losing*, edited by Kenneth Osgood and Derrick E. White (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 28.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

³¹⁴ Kazin. *Populist Persuasion*. 250.

³¹⁵ Kevin Phillips, "Introduction," in *The Emerging Republican Majority*. 36.

the business titans of the Nineteen-Thirties.”³¹⁶ This new establishment comprised of an ascendant cadre of “silk-stocking” liberals employed as social planners, professors, “culture vendors”, and foundation staffers, all of whom heavily relied on increasing federal largesse.³¹⁷ These new establishment elites, Phillips continued, maintained a reciprocal relationship with Black voters intent on using the Democratic Party as a “vehicle” for social advancement while silk-stocking liberals viewed these constituencies as useful “adjuncts” for further government funding.³¹⁸

Support for this “Establishment” consequently encompassed the ailing urban centers of the Northeast or the electorally shrinking silk-stocking enclaves of Northeastern suburbia. While the Democratic Party could readily rely on the growing influence of Black (and to a lesser extent) Latino voters, Phillips contended that Republicans could capitalize on a new majority that engendered the rapidly expanding conservative constituencies of Sunbelt urban and suburban centers. Within these growing blocs of conservatism, future Republican politicians could count on populist reaction against “the caste, policies and taxation of the mandarins of establishment liberalism,”³¹⁹ which Phillips equated to the “taxing of the many for the benefit of the few,” during an interview with *Human Events*.³²⁰ As for the Deep South, Phillips optimistically projected the transitory character of the American Independent Party, concluding that Wallace’s third party amounted to a “way station” for “conservative Democrats who have been moving –

³¹⁶ Ibid., 84.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 88.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 88-89 and 470

³¹⁹ Ibid., 470.

³²⁰ Kevin Phillips. “The Emerging Republican Majority,”: An Interview with Author Kevin Phillips,” *Human Events*, August 16, 1969. 8.

and should continue to do so – towards the GOP,” due to the Wallace’s dim national prospects outside of the region.³²¹

Race undoubtedly occupied a central role in Phillips’ audacious outline of historical voting patterns. In the Deep South, Phillips contended that poor Whites who had previously “shunned the conservatism of States Rights,” were reversing their positions as the Democratic Party shifted away from an “economic populist stance” towards a “credo of social engineering” aligned with the “Negro socioeconomic revolution.”³²² This constituency, and the growing electoral gravity exerted by a conservative, middle class Sun Belt with a “very small non-white population,”³²³ suggested that the specter of a pro-White anti-federal appeal could live on through a Southern Strategy predicated on a reactionary mission to dispel the “Liberal Establishment’s philosophy of taxation and redistribution (partly to itself), and reverse the encroachment of government in the social life of the nation.”³²⁴

Nixon heeded Phillips’ advice and avoided an overzealous bid for Deep Southerners³²⁵ by taking a latent approach to states’ rights. Nixon tacitly signaled his commitment to states’ rights by dissociating his presidency from the contentious issue of busing. In the wake of the *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* case’s legalization of busing and the HEW’s subsequent efforts to desegregate Austin schools via busing, Nixon “proved adept” at severing his office’s connection with court-ordered enforcement procedures.³²⁶ While the issue of desegregation itself could not be challenged, White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman

³²¹ Phillips. *The Emerging Republican Majority*. 463.

³²² *Ibid.*, 179.

³²³ Kevin Phillips. “‘The Emerging Republican Majority,’: An Interview with Author Kevin Phillips.” 9.

³²⁴ Phillips. *The Emerging Republican Majority*. 472.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 464.

³²⁶ Thomas B. Edsall Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 88.

recorded Nixon's explicit requests that every cabinet officer was "to carry out the law wherever possible without busing," and that Congress cease all funding for busing initiatives.³²⁷ In addition to this, Nixon's White House press secretary, Ron Ziegler, warned that pro-busing government workers would "find themselves involved in other assignments or quite possibly in assignments other than the Federal Government."³²⁸ With Wallace out of the 1972 presidential race, Nixon stepped up his anti-busing rhetoric and fully adorned the former Dixiecrat mantle during his infamous March 17 special message to Congress when he declared his commitment to "to sustain the rights and responsibilities vested by the States in local school boards," and end "the arbitrary federal requirement-whether administrative or judicial-that the community must undertake massive additional busing as a matter of federal law."³²⁹ Busing itself was a historically contingent issue, but Nixon had strategically shifted the conservative appeal from its fringe anti-Civil Rights moorings to a moderated attack on the substantive methods of racial integration.

In addition to Phillips' Southern Strategy, the publication of Scammon and Wattenberg's *The Real Majority*, alluded to the continued significance of "law and order" among urban Northern constituencies. Part of the book's popularity stemmed from its timely appearance during the lead up to the 1970 midterms. Facing the prospects of a thirty-seat loss in the House and the loss of several seats in the Senate for the upcoming 1970 midterms, Nixon anxiously attributed the immediate downturn in poll projections to a Democratic suspension of "their long dalliance with the limousine liberals and anti-American intellectuals," and a return to their old

³²⁷ H.R. Haldeman. *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House*. (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1994). 412.

³²⁸ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 89.

³²⁹ Joseph A. Aistrup. *The Southern Strategy Revisited*. 37. and Richard Nixon, "Special Message to the Congress on Equal Educational Opportunities and School Busing." (Speech, Washington, D.C., March 17, 1972). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-equal-educational-opportunities-and-school-busing>

working-class loyalties.³³⁰ The Nixon administration's worried apprehension of the upcoming midterms provided an immediate impetus to preempt the Democratic party on the popular issues outlined in *The Real Majority*.

The Real Majority had argued that "in addition to the older, still potent economic concerns, Americans are apparently beginning to array themselves politically along the axes of certain social issues as well," such as law and order, White backlash, and youth counterculture.³³¹ A candidate's ability to strategically position themselves on the right side of the "Social Issue" would procure political victories, barring times of intense economic downturn when bread-and-butter issues would supersede social quandaries again.³³² An intelligent response to the social issue required a structural understanding of the American "center ground" or "Middle Voter", which Scammon and Wattenberg defined as the "forty-seven-year-old house wife from the outskirts of Dayton, Ohio, whose husband is a machinist."³³³ In order to reach this majority, the authors urged their audience to respond to this average voter's concerns:

To know that the lady in Dayton is afraid to walk the streets alone at night, to know that she has a mixed view about blacks and civil rights because before moving to the suburbs she lived in a neighborhood that became all black, to know that her brother-in-law is a policeman, to now that she does not have the money to move if her new neighborhood deteriorates, to know that she is deeply distressed that her son is going to a community junior college where LSD was found on the campus...³³⁴

This electoral microcosm, and several other conclusions drawn from polling results, suggested that a continued hardline stance on law and order would elicit support from the center. Although the book was intended for a Democratic audience, special consultant Patrick Buchanan delivered a concise memorandum to Nixon detailing the book's pertinence for future GOP victories in the

³³⁰ Conrad Black. *Richard M. Nixon: A Life in Full*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2007). 693.

³³¹ Richard Scammon and Ben Wattenberg. *The Real Majority*. (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1970). 20.

³³² *Ibid.*, 21-44.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 21, 70.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

1970 and 1972 elections. Nixon agreed with the need to “preempt the Social Issue in order to get the Democrats on the Defensive,”³³⁵ and subsequently instructed the widespread circulation of Buchanan’s memorandum throughout his administration.³³⁶

Nixon continued his stringent commitment to law and order leading into the 1970 midterms. Across several speeches, Nixon lauded his party colleagues’ tough-on-crime platforms. In one notable instance, Nixon explicitly conflated widespread protests with acts of terror: “All over this country today we see a rising tide of terrorism, of crime, and on the campuses of our universities we have seen those who instead of engaging—which is their right—in peaceful dissent, engage in violence...”³³⁷ Nixon would cap most of his addresses before the statehouse by urging “the great silent majority” to repudiate the anti-American “radical minority” by voting in the polls.³³⁸ President Nixon had brandished this populist appeal to the “silent majority” in his earlier televised address to the nation where he derided anti-Vietnam protestors, claiming that “I would be untrue to my oath of office if I allowed the policy of this nation to be dictated by the minority...”³³⁹ Although vague, Nixon later described this “new American majority” as a “generous and self-reliant people, a people of intellect and character,” who took principled stands against federal redistribution and busing “for the right reasons.”³⁴⁰

³³⁵ Richard M. Nixon. *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978). 491.

³³⁶ Robert Mason. *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority*. 84

³³⁷ Richard Nixon, “Remarks in the Ohio State House, Columbus, Ohio,” (speech, Columbus, Ohio, October 19, 1970). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-ohio-state-house-columbus-ohio>

³³⁸ Richard Nixon, “Remarks in St. Petersburg, Florida,” (Speech, St. Petersburg, Florida, October 28, 1970). <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-st-petersburg-florida> - Quoted directly from this particular speech, but this trope recurred throughout most of his statehouse speeches.

³³⁹ Rick Perlstein. *Richard Nixon: Speeches, Writings, Documents*. 187.

³⁴⁰ Richard Nixon, “Radio Address on the Philosophy of Government,” (Speech, Washington, D.C., October 21, 1972). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/radio-address-the-philosophy-government>

By 1970, Nixon's Urban Affairs policy advisors, Daniel Patrick Moynihan (author of the *Negro Family*) and Edward C. Banfield, were fully cognizant of the public's anxious association of Black Power and militant student protests with crime and "urban guerilla warfare".³⁴¹ In-line with his policymakers' suggestions, Nixon signaled his promises for law and order through the passage of the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970 and the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970. This legislation was passed in tandem with massive federal appropriations that expanded the capacities of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) previously established by Johnson's 1968 The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. During the 1971 Attorney General's Conference on Crime Reduction, John N. Mitchell boasted that the administration had expanded the LEAA's budget to \$700 million, "more than 10 times its original budget of three years ago."³⁴² Towards the closing of his first term, Nixon reiterated this continuing commitment to Law and Order during the 1972 State of the Union Address, when he disclosed his administration's intent of proposing another "18 percent increase in our new budget," on top of the 200 percent increase in federal expenditures on crime since his inauguration.³⁴³ Overall, this drive to displace Johnson's War on Poverty with a War on Crime indicated the formal institutionalization of Wallace's White backlash against the New Left. It was no coincidence that the Racketeering Influence and Corrupt Organizations, established by the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970, was tasked with policing both radical organizations,

³⁴¹ Elizabeth Hinton. *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016). 180-182.

³⁴² John N. Mitchell, "The War on Crime: The End of the Beginning." (Speech, Washington, D.C., September 9, 1971). 8.

³⁴³ Richard Nixon, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union." (speech, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1972). <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-to-the-congress-the-state-the-union-0>

such as the Weather Underground or the Black Panthers, and low-income Black neighborhoods.³⁴⁴

In some ways, Nixon's invocation of a "great silent majority" of self-reliant, honest workers had emulated the earlier appeals made within progressive populist movements. Yet, the object of demand, or the universal signifier had shifted. For the populist New Right, government would continue to work on behalf of the people, but it would displace its historically popular mission of equality and fairness with law and order. This demand was leveraged against an elitist and culturally permissive liberal establishment that allegedly favored marginalized groups over "middle America".

3.6 Conclusion

The consequences of Nixon's polarization came to a violent apogee during the 1970 Hard Hat Riot. Just four days after the Kent State shootings, antiwar demonstrators were attacked by a mob of construction and office workers that had come to resent the "impudent snobs of the cultural elite" who symbolized an "erosion of the patriarchy, the rise of moral permissiveness and affirmative action programs meant to integrate their historically white union shops."³⁴⁵ This localized episode of conservative reaction paralleled a broader trend of White workers' abandonment of the Democratic Party. By 1972, Ladd and Hadley's *Transformations of the American Party System* discerned a profound inversion in presidential voting evidenced by the growing conservatism of traditionally liberal White blue-collar constituencies, while "groups at

³⁴⁴ Elizabeth Hinton. *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*. 207.

³⁴⁵ Jefferson Cowle, "The 'Hard Hat Riot' Was a Preview of Today's Political Division," *The New York Times*, May 11, 2020.

the top are now more Democratic than those at the bottom.”³⁴⁶ Unions, which had been a bastion of liberal support during the 1964 campaign, had overwhelmingly cast their votes for Nixon in 1972, demarcating the “first time in the history of the modern trade union movement (since the passage of the Wagner Act, that is) that they gave majority support to the GOP.”³⁴⁷ Through the careful integration of Wallace’s “little man” populist platform, Nixon constructed his own conservative “silent majority” by exploiting the electoral gains of White reaction vested in “law and order”. While these issues of White backlash grafted themselves onto the contingent issues of busing, open-housing, and crime, Nixon had paved the way for future populist appeals premised on an opposition to federally imposed ‘quotas’ combined with a racially charged tough-on-crime stance.

³⁴⁶ Everett Carl Ladd Jr. and Charles D. Hadley. *Transformations of the American Party System*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1975). 234.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

Chapter 4: The Modernization of Conservative Populism Under Reagan and Gingrich

4.1 Introduction

The last chapter emphasized Nixon's use of "law-and-order" to appeal to an idyllic "silent majority" of honest, hardworking taxpayers that took a "principled" stand against protests and racial integration. Like Goldwater, Nixon's commitment to law and order insinuated that White workers were on the "right side" of the law in their opposition to federally enforced efforts to ameliorate both de jure and de facto segregation. However, historian Bruce J. Schulman's outline of the Nixon era notes that "unlike Barry Goldwater before him and Ronald Reagan after him, Nixon never took on big government directly."³⁴⁸ In contrast to Reagan, Nixon's presidency was mired in a mainstream political debate "dominated by activist and not conservative proposals," concerning government's fiscal role in ensuring individual welfare.³⁴⁹ Thus, Nixon opted to curtail social spending by subtly "stripping it of its bases of support and its sources of funds,"³⁵⁰ via the funding schema of "cooperative federalism". This underlying commitment permeated the rationale for all of Nixon's fiscal reforms: "New Federalism" enacted a shift towards no-strings-attached revenue sharing between the Federal Government and the states,³⁵¹ Nixon's housing reforms redirected funds toward simple block-grants which led to bureaucratic infighting over scarce resources, and even his seemingly progressive proposal for a minimum guaranteed income through the Family Assistance Plan bore the underlying objective of dismantling the network of welfare and social workers by transitioning towards direct federal

³⁴⁸ Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*. (New York: The Free Press, 2001). 27.

³⁴⁹ Mason Robert. *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority*. 56.

³⁵⁰ Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies*. 27.

³⁵¹ Conrad Black. *A Life in Full: Richard M. Nixon*. (New York: Public Affairs 2007). 624 and Mason Robert. *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority*. 57. The latter notes that this devolutionary strategy in federal-state funding sought to undercut federal bureaucrat's gatekeeping of federal resources.

cash transfers.³⁵² All of these efforts were wholly consonant with Nixon's disdain for the social planners of the Northeast establishment.

Reagan opted to pursue a coalition of disillusioned White working-class ethnics across the South and North in a similar manner to Nixon, with the core difference being that Reagan tethered this similar electoral strategy to a wholesale retrenchment in federal social spending.³⁵³ Reagan was able to achieve electoral inroads with White working-class voters by connecting his Democratic opposition with the preceding decade of macroeconomic stagflation and rising tax rates. To popularize this reversal, Reagan associated the historically recurrent signifier of "special interests" with increasingly expensive property and Federal taxes. While "special interests" traditionally referred to the anti-democratic influence of lobbyists or monied elites, Reagan reassigned the vague moniker to encompass a conspiratorial alliance between liberal Washington bureaucrats and Black beneficiaries of federal largesse. Yet again, law-and-order would resurface, but instead of focusing on Civil Rights and Vietnam protestors (as Nixon had), Reagan captured White working-class fears of communal degradation by focusing on a racially charged class of drug users and "welfare cheats". By connecting the issues of taxation and redistribution with criminal behavior and federal permissiveness, Reagan postured as the defender of the "invisible man" by promising (and partially succeeding in) paring back federal entitlement programs. Newt Gingrich later codified these tropes in his "Contract with America" in an effort to reach this same constituency of ex-Democrats, thereby breaking the tradition of split ticket voting among working class voters.

³⁵² Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies*. 29, 34.

³⁵³ Scott Spitzer. "Reagan's Silent Majority: Conservative Welfare Politics after Nixon." (Paper presented at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Western political Science Association, Hollywood, California, March 28, 2013). 4.

4.2 Elite Discontent

Conventional accounts of the “tax revolt” typically locate its genesis within the affluent Californian suburbs, where conservative pro-business advocates Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann successfully initiated a national tax revolt among embittered homeowners with the successful passage of Proposition 13.³⁵⁴ While this view is correct, it has a tendency to overlook the broader network of business-friendly activist groups and the genuine, pre-existing growth of grassroots discontent that these networks capitalized on.

The early 1970s saw a renewal of business’s interest in defining the nation’s legislative agenda. Several historical accounts attribute this upsurge in business politicization with the infamous “Powell Memorandum”.³⁵⁵ In 1971, Nixon’s Supreme Court appointee, Lewis Powell, drafted a 5,000-word memorandum detailing his concern with a “broadly based and consistently pursued” attack on the “enterprise system” by a broad coalition of New Leftists (although he reserved special disdain for university students and professors).³⁵⁶ Powell argued that in order to protect the “individual freedom” afforded by a free market system, it was necessary for business leaders to “press vigorously in all political arenas for support of the enterprise system.”³⁵⁷ As a rallying cry for business, the Powell Memorandum had effectively recast business’s intervention in politics as a moral crusade for freedom. Future president and heir of the Coors Brewing Company, Joseph Coors, anxiously received the letter as a call-to-arms, while Wichita oil

³⁵⁴ Lisa McGirr. *Suburban Warriors*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). 237 and 238. And Robert O. Self. *American Babylon*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). 325 and 326. Both arguments center on different suburbs (Orange County and Oakland County).

³⁵⁵ Kate Crehan. *Gramsci’s Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016). 122-123. and Peter Seybold. “Radical Legacies: Antonio Gramsci and Contemporary American Politics.” *Humanity and Society*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2013). 295. and Jane Mayer. *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*. (New York: Doubleday, 2016). 73-74.

³⁵⁶ Lewis F. Powell, Jr., “The Memo.” *Powell Memorandum: Attack On American Free Enterprise System*. (1971). 2-5. <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/powellmemo/1>.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

magnate, Charles Koch, urged fellow business leaders gathered at a Dallas hotel to observe the memo's dire warnings.³⁵⁸

Though conservative business tycoons such as Koch and Coors openly lauded the memo's impact on their own involvement in politics, legal developments also provided an open avenue for greater elite involvement in politics following the *Buckley vs. Valeo* Supreme Court decision of 1976, which held that spending was a form of campaign speech and was protected by the First Amendment.³⁵⁹ Thus, 501(c) organizations' spending was theoretically unrestricted, so long as the "soft money" did not coordinate directly with candidates' campaigns (thereby becoming "hard money").³⁶⁰ As long as a 501(c) organization did not use any "magic words" such as "vote for," "elect," "support," "cast your ballot for," "'X' candidate for Congress," "vote against," "defeat," and "reject," it could enjoy unrestricted spending on what it deemed as social welfare (barring the unsaid rule that the majority of its funds *must* go towards social welfare).³⁶¹

One of the major beneficiaries arising from this legal reversal of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 were business activists Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann. Jarvis's United Organization of Taxpayers (the predecessor organization to the Howard Jarvis Tax Association, HJTA) worked intimately with the Los Angeles Apartment Owners Association (LAAOA), a group comprising of realtors owning an average of 11 apartment units, to press for state-level tax cuts.³⁶² The LAAOA buttressed Jarvis' Prop-13 movement through the provision of office space

³⁵⁸ Jane Mayer. *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*. 77 and 87.

³⁵⁹ Melissa Haussman. "Parties and Elections." In *Understanding American Politics*, edited by Don Abelson, Stephen Brooks and Melissa Haussman. 3rd Edition. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023). 17.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁶¹ Emma Schwartz. "The Rules that Govern 501(c)4s." *PBS*, October 30, 2012.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-rules-that-govern-501c4s/> and "Frequently Asked Questions About 501(c)(4) Groups." *Open Secrets*, Accessed July 13, 2022. <https://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/faq.php>

³⁶² Daniel A. Smith, "Howard Jarvis, Populist Entrepreneur: Reevaluating the Causes of Proposition 13." *Social Science History* Vol. 23, No. 2 (1999). 201.

and by readily marketing his movement to participating realtors' tenants, thus securing the UOT's financial base.³⁶³ Although Jarvis' Prop 13 campaign relied heavily on the vast financial network and office infrastructure of the LAAOA (of which he was also the executive director), the reluctance of larger businesses to slash property taxes allowed Jarvis to strategically add some of California's biggest corporations to his catalog of the people's enemies, which reinforced the faulty perception of UOT's "grassroots" status.³⁶⁴ Of course, the fact that both the UOT and its successor, the HJTA, were both permitted to receive unlimited funds from corporations with the added benefit of not having to disclose their donors further obfuscated the movement's alignment with elitist pro-business forces.³⁶⁵

However, Jarvis and Gann were part and parcel of a broader constellation of pro-business 501(c)'s that were all too ready to translate the grassroots discontent with taxation into codified legislation. Arguably the most nefarious injection of business interests into politics came with the subset of non-profits known as 501(c)(3)'s, which were self-designated charitable organizations that could provide tax deductions for their donors. One of the most notable 501(c)(3)'s founded just three years before *Buckley vs. Valeo* was The Heritage Foundation think tank. While other conservative think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Hudson Institute existed before Heritage, they typically functioned as centers of academic research rather than policy advocates.³⁶⁶ With the financial support of Joseph Coors, New Right activists Edward Feulner and Paul Weyrich created a "charitable" organization geared entirely towards the

³⁶³ Ibid., 202.

³⁶⁴ David Laycock. "Tax Revolts , Direct Democracy and Representation: Populist Politics in the US and Canada." *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2019). 167-168.

³⁶⁵ Jaclyn J. Kettler. "501(c)(4) Organizations." in *Voting and Political Representation in America: Issues and Trends*, edited by Mark P. Jones. Volume 1. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2020). 232-234.

³⁶⁶ James Paul Old. "Heritage Foundation, The." In *Voting and Political Representation in America: Issues and Trends*, edited by Mark P. Jones. Volume 1. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2020). 271-273.

creation of conservative policy proposals.³⁶⁷ The Heritage foundation gained considerable influence during the early Reagan administration., with the organization claiming that over 50 percent of the policy recommendations in its *Mandate for Leadership* were either implemented or initiated within the first year.³⁶⁸

Yet these federal conduits of business power paled in comparison to the state-level deregulatory efforts undertaken by Feulner and Weyrich's other brainchild, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Like the Heritage Foundation, ALEC was created with the intent of providing legislation proposals for right-leaning state lawmakers.³⁶⁹ Weyrich had explicitly modeled ALEC off of effective public-sector unions and liberal lobbying groups (specifically, the National Education Association) that pushed "model legislation" in several states at a time.³⁷⁰ Thus, ALEC filled the gap that existed between national and state-oriented conservative or business groups by providing resources to rightwing statehouse legislators that were relatively outgunned and disorganized in comparison to their liberal counterparts.³⁷¹ In essence, ALEC acted as an intermediary between corporate interests and dues-paying state legislators. ALEC's appeal as a "good investment" for business was further aided by its status as a 501(c)(3) since corporate donors (or "members") could write their donations off of their tax bill.³⁷² Granted, the majority of ALEC's legislative proposals to its dues paying legislators predominantly focused on socially conservative causes rather than business deregulation in the early days of the organization. From 1977 to 1979, one fifth of ALEC's model bills focused on

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 271.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 272.

³⁶⁹ Alexander Hertel-Fernandez. *State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States- and the Nation.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). 28-29.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 30.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 30.

³⁷² Ibid., 34.

English-language laws, abortion, gun rights, and anti-integration measures compared to just 4 percent of model bills designated for business issues (e.g., labor market legislation, energy, environmental policy, transportation, real estate, finance, civil litigation, taxes, telecommunications).³⁷³ However, the organization occupied a distinct niche that other federal level conservative organizations did not fill. It's operation as a think tank geared towards the capture of statehouse legislatures would prove valuable for corporate interests in later years. During the 1993 to 1995 period, nearly half of ALEC's model bills would deal with business regulation, while criminal justice and social issues together would account for just under a quarter of its proposals.³⁷⁴

4.3 Grassroots Discontent

Alongside the development of these business activist groups, there also existed authentic sources of grassroots discontent among average Americans. Recent scholarship has provided a more nuanced understanding of the tax-revolt that problematizes its origins as a patently conservative, upper-class movement. Josh Mound's publication, "Stirrings of Revolt: Regressive Levies, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the 1960s Roots of the 1970s Tax Revolt," associates the beginnings of the tax revolt with a ubiquitous feeling of working- and middle-class disillusionment with the inequitable burden of taxation. In part, the sentiment that taxation disproportionately favored the upper classes and corporations.³⁷⁵ In particular, the subjective assignment of property taxes by assessors often led to variegated assignments for similar

³⁷³ Ibid., 37.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 38.

³⁷⁵ Josh Mound, "Stirrings of Revolt: Regressive Levies, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the 1960s Roots of the 1970s Tax Revolt," *Journal of Policy History*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2020). 108-111.

properties due to a “combination of political favoritism, ineptitude, and the inherent difficulty of determining the value of an unsold good.”³⁷⁶ While relatively lower tax rates were rewarded to commercial landowners that had the resources to bankroll local political campaigns (as was the case New York City’s Mayor John Lindsay) or hire experts to contest assessments, homeowners were forced to shoulder the majority of property taxes.³⁷⁷

These pre-Proposition 13 lower-middle and working-class revolts were prevalent within Northern urban centers. Mound’s historical investigation of the Youngstown tax revolt during the late 1960s ends with a broader proliferation of nationwide school levy defeats,³⁷⁸ yet the Ohio case study deviates from the conservative, upper-middle class moorings of the later tax revolts that preceded the Reagan Revolution. In their 1970 geographical analysis of Youngstown voting behavior, Brunn et al., found that “significant negative correlations emerged between the favorable vote and the factors representing the “stable foreign-born” (a category used to denote Italian, Czech, Hungarian, and Polish urban ethnic groups) (-.401) and the working class (-.434), evidencing general urban working-class aversion towards local levies.³⁷⁹ Meanwhile, their linear regression discerned only one other significant correlation attributed to prosperity (+.275), thus substantiating their hypothesis that higher-income voters typically favored increased levies.³⁸⁰ Mound’s detailed investigation further troubles the racially or fiscally conservative motives of tax rebellion in urban areas like Youngstown. Local survey evidence suggested negligible racial

³⁷⁶ Mound, 110.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 110. and Richard Rothstein “Suppressed Incomes: Section VII” in *The Color of Law*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation 2017). This section provides an explanation of how property tax assessments fell heavily on racial minorities, thereby suppressing their incomes further.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 122.

³⁷⁹ Brunn et al., “The Youngstown School Levies: A Geographical Analysis in Voting Behavior,” *Urban Education*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1970). 44.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 30 and 44.

differences in voting and that only a minority (less than 10 percent) of respondents to Gallup/*Phi Delta Kappa* surveys actually believed that teachers were being paid too much.³⁸¹

Tax revolts during the late 1960s and early 1970s were evidently founded on a progressive rejection of the inequitable burdens of taxation.³⁸² In the example of the Youngstown levy votes, anti-tax sentiment stemmed from the Federal Government's inability to close tax loopholes that unfairly benefitted economic elites while regressive forms of local and state taxation increasingly burdened working families.³⁸³ Local revolts akin to Youngstown resembled a broader tax revolt ethos that had been a province of progressive reformers throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Historian Simon Hall notes that earlier manifestations of the tax revolt "grew directly out of that decade's civil rights and New Left movements."³⁸⁴ Notably, former civil rights activist and welfare rights organizer, George Wiley, founded the Movement for Economic Justice (MEJ) in 1972 to unite Americans making less than \$15,000 a year with middle-class Americans around the common objective of attaining equitable tax distribution by combatting specific issues such as unfair property assessments.³⁸⁵ MEJ played a pivotal role in expanding the nationwide progressive tax movement through its provision of funds and staffing to local tax activist groups.³⁸⁶ One of its beneficiaries, the Massachusetts Fair Share group, successfully organized over "12,000 dues-paying members scattered throughout the state," around "battles

³⁸¹ Mound, "Stirrings of Revolt: Regressive Levies, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the 1960s Roots of the 1970s Tax Revolt." 120 and 125. The study referenced in this paper was taken from J. Kiriazis and S. Hotchkiss, "Community Attitudinal Survey of Youngstown Voters on the School Tax Levies," Youngstown State University Archives and Special Collections, LB 2823.K5, which found that 59 percent of Blacks compared to 53 Percent of Whites said they voted for the levy, indicating "the attitudes of the Caucasians and Negroes were quite similar."

³⁸² Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies*. 207.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 109 and 110.

³⁸⁴ Simon Hall. *American Patriotism, American Protest: Social movements since the sixties*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). 101 – 102.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

against sweetheart tax deals for downtown developers and to collect back taxes from delinquent big businesses like Eastern Airlines and New England Life Insurance.”³⁸⁷

By the late 1970s, tax progressives’ grassroots push for tax redistribution came to be displaced by fiscally conservative groups that sought the wholesale cutback of all taxes. Two major developments during the 1970s catalyzed the anti-tax movement’s profound shift towards the New Right. First, Democrats’ inaction on popular tax issues following the Watergate Scandal provided GOP conservatives with an opportunity to take the driver’s seat on tax reform. Despite Congress’s brief foray into local tax reform following Senator Muskie’s 1972 Senate property tax hearings, the Watergate Scandal decisively circumscribed debates over tax distribution to the margins.³⁸⁸ Although property taxation resides outside of the Federal Government’s legal jurisdiction, Senator Muskie had hoped to strengthen the national government’s position as a conduit for economic redistribution during a time when regressive state and local property taxes were precipitously climbing for working Americans. The ensuing proposals to “close an over-all total of \$14-billion in federal tax loopholes,” that predominantly benefitted wealthy and corporate special interests appealed to the progressive “distributionist” tax activists that believed a federal windfall could be used to ease the pressure of local and state budgetary expenditures (e.g., schools, housing, infrastructure, healthcare).³⁸⁹ Nonetheless, Lee Enfield, a staff member on Muskie’s Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee, would later recall that comprehensive tax reform “never really sort of got off the ground... We started to do it, we geared up to think

³⁸⁷ Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies*. 207.

³⁸⁸ Josh Mound. “Inflated Hopes, Taxing Times: Fiscal Crisis, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the Roots of the Tax Revolt.” (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2015). 818

³⁸⁹ James M. Naughton. “Muskie Proposes Federal Tax Reforms.” *The New York Times*, May 6, 1972. and Josh Mound. “Inflated Hopes, Taxing Times: Fiscal Crisis, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the Roots of the Tax Revolt.” 825-826.

about hearings. And Watergate came along, and it just sort of subsumed everything, the Watergate hearings.”³⁹⁰

While Watergate itself forestalled immediate debate over federal redistribution via tax reform, the subsequent 1974 Democratic midterm sweep won by an incipient cadre of business-friendly “Watergate Babies” effectively undercut any future tax debates in the long term.³⁹¹ In their 1989 analysis of public policy realignment, Edsall notes that this post-1974 “well-to-do liberal-reform wing,” of the Democratic Party comprised of affluent candidates that had remained relatively unscathed from burgeoning tax rates, thus explicating their skewed prioritization of ethics reform over immediate material concerns.³⁹² According to Mound’s historicization of the post-1972 Democratic Party, many intellectuals within the party anxiously sought to move “beyond the New Deal” in the wake of George McGovern’s decisive electoral loss to Nixon.³⁹³ Former staffers from the previously unsuccessful Presidential campaigns of McGovern, Muskie, and McCarthy, created the Democratic Forum in an effort to shepherd the Democratic party away from its New Deal moorings with labor and other interest groups. In 1975, the Forum held the Democratic Issues Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, which comprised of 644 delegates, most of whom were affluent, White, young professionals that denounced what they perceived to be an anachronistic tax-and-spend agenda hostile to business and economic growth.³⁹⁴ Admittedly, the Forum’s solicitation of business interests and its goal to

³⁹⁰ Quoted in Josh Mound. “Inflated Hopes, Taxing Times: Fiscal Crisis, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the Roots of the Tax Revolt.” 818.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 794-848.

³⁹² Thomas B. Edsall, “The Changing Shape of Power: A Realignment in Public Policy.” In *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, edited by Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). 278-279.

³⁹³ Quoted in Josh Mound. *Inflated Hopes, Taxing Times: Fiscal Crisis, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the Roots of the Tax Revolt*. 805.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 805.

move beyond the New Deal by restricting the size and scope of federal programs chafed against progressive holdouts that aptly criticized the business-friendly faction of the post-Watergate Democrats. Progressive critics, such as Michigan Representative John Conyers, who spoke on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Mexican-American labor activist, Henry Santiestevan, contended that moving beyond the New Deal made little sense when many racially marginalized Americans had not yet “reached the New Deal.”³⁹⁵ Aside from these dissenting voices, the class of 1974’s passivity (or outright hostility) on the national need for tax reform fostered the necessary preconditions for a rightward rebellion as economic conditions worsened throughout the 1970s.

The second catalyst for the rightward shift of tax populism stemmed from the unique macroeconomic quandaries that saddled the nation during the 1970s. The defining economic malady of the 1970s was stagflation, which referred to a confounding growth in national inflation alongside rising unemployment and lower productivity rates. While the origins of stagflation are hotly debated,³⁹⁶ the impacts of rapidly rising prices and stagnant wages were an indelible outcome of this novel economic quandary. Americans experienced two bouts of double-digits inflation rates in 1974 (11.1 percent) and 1979 (11.3 percent)³⁹⁷ with the latter instance continuing unabated until the Volcker shock of the late 1970s.³⁹⁸ As consumer prices

³⁹⁵ Quoted in Josh Mound, *Inflated Hopes, Taxing Times: Fiscal Crisis, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the Roots of the Tax Revolt*. 810.

³⁹⁶ Rebeca Jimenez-Rodriguez and Marcelo Sanchez, “Oil-induced stagflation: A comparison across major G7 economies and shock episodes,” *Applied Economics Letters*, Vol. 17 (2010) and Jonathan Levy, *Ages of American Capitalism* (2021) closely associate stagflation with exogenous oil and commodity shocks, while Robert B. Barsky and Lutz Kilian, “Do we really know that Oil Caused the Great Stagflation? A Monetary Alternative,” *NBER Macroeconomics*, Vol. 16 (2002). and Benjamin Hunt, “Oil Price Shock and the U.S. Stagflation of the 1970s: Some Insights from GEM,” *The Energy Journal* Vol. 27, Issue 4 (2006) prioritize the issues of inept domestic decisions, primarily monetary policy.

³⁹⁷ Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, “Consumer Price Index, 1913 -,” Accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/about-us/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator/consumer-price-index-1913->

³⁹⁸ Jonathan Levy, “Chapter 19: Crisis of Industrial Capital,” in *Ages of American Capitalism*.

soared, real median incomes (in 1985 dollars) had diminished over the decade. Whereas median income had increased for all persons from \$14,822 to \$18,865 in the 1960s, median income began to *decrease* from \$18,479 to \$17,457 during the 1970s.³⁹⁹ Thus, stagflation ultimately shattered popular New Deal assumptions that inflationary federal spending would assuage economic downturn.⁴⁰⁰

Stagflation also eroded American incomes through the associated development of “bracket creep”. According to C. Eugene Steuerle’s historical overview of the American state’s finances since World War II, economic growth and the attendant rising levels of inflation had provided a useful federal windfall as individuals were pushed into higher unindexed tax brackets.⁴⁰¹ Such windfalls had been used to finance income-tax cuts and declines in corporate and excise taxes.⁴⁰² Throughout the 1970s, a combination of soaring inflation and lower real income growth severely impacted working families. By 1980, the marginal personal income tax rates on median income families had reached a high watermark of 24 percent, marking a 7 percent increase since 1965.⁴⁰³ Since personal exemptions were also unindexed, rapid inflation bore the consequence of propelling “many low-income families into the tax system,” evidenced by the increase of 60 to 75 percent of taxpaying laborers between 1945 and the early 1980s.⁴⁰⁴ Regressive sources of government revenue such as state-administered property taxes and the payroll tax further burdened Americans. Between 1960 and 1977, property taxes across all levels

³⁹⁹ The Annual Report of the Council of Economic Advisors. *Economic Report of the President*. (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1987). 278 (Table B-29).

⁴⁰⁰ Schulman, *The Seventies*. 132.

⁴⁰¹ Eugene C. Steuerle, “Financing the American state at the turn of the century,” in *Funding the modern American state, 1941-1995*, edited by W. Elliot Brownlee. (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996). 421.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 423.

⁴⁰³ The Annual Report of the Council of Economic Advisors. *Economic Report of the President*. 80.

⁴⁰⁴ W. Elliot Brownlee. *Federal Taxation in America, A Short History*. (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996). 127.

of government had hardly budged (even decreasing from 4.4 to 4.0 between 1970 and 1977), but rapidly inflating prices forced a higher burden onto American homeowners as median home values rapidly rose from \$17,000 in 1970 to \$47,200 in 1980.⁴⁰⁵ In the case of the payroll tax, the rate had actually *increased* from 4.5 to 5.3 across all levels of government.⁴⁰⁶ Meanwhile, flat corporate tax rates meant that individual income-tax revenues “were nearly four times as large as corporate,” by 1980.⁴⁰⁷

4.4 The New Right Appropriates the Tax Narrative

Surging tax bills and Democratic inaction catalyzed the shift towards the infamous tax revolts of the late 1970s. During the lead-up to the Californian referendum on Proposition 13, *New York Times* journalist Adam Clymer reported that the upcoming vote exhibited the “leading edge of a political storm of taxpayer revolt this year,” exemplified by twenty-three state legislatures’ calls for “a constitutional amendment to ban federal deficits.”⁴⁰⁸ Unlike the previous anti-business tax movements that focused on progressive taxation and downward redistribution, Gann and Jarvis’ ballot initiative bore no such pretensions. Only one-third of Proposition 13’s relief was geared towards homeowners, while the remaining two-thirds of tax relief was designated for business.⁴⁰⁹ Despite its business-friendly provisions and the Prop-13 movement’s

⁴⁰⁵ Richard A. Musgrave, “The Tax Revolt,” *Social Science Quarterly* Vol. 59, No. 4 (1979). 700. and Mound, “Stirrings of Revolt: Regressive Levies, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the 1960s Roots of the 1970s Tax Revolt.” 113.

⁴⁰⁶ Richard A. Musgrave, “The Tax Revolt,” 700.

⁴⁰⁷ W. Elliot Brownlee. *Federal Taxation in America, A Short History*. 127.

⁴⁰⁸ Adam Clymer, “California Referendum on Taxes; Symptom of a Nationwide Revolt.” *The New York Times*, June 4, 1978. 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Clarence Y.H. Lo. *Small Property Versus Big Government: Social Origins of the Property Tax Revolt*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). 101. and Tom Wicker. “A ‘New Revolution’: In the Nation.” *The New York Times* June 9, 1978. A27.

intimate ties with the Los Angeles Apartment Owners Association, historian Clarence Y. H. Lo's survey of the Proposition 13 coalition notes that middle income Americans gravitated towards Jarvis' anti-establishmentarian rhetoric that angrily implicated greedy state bureaucrats with diminished standards of living. Average homeowners were willing to set aside their political differences with local businesses and landlords if it meant that they could reign in an unaccountable state.⁴¹⁰ Following its decisive passage by 65 percent, *Newsweek* likened the Jarvis-Gann Amendment and similar anti-tax revolts in Ohio and Tennessee to the electoral revolution that occurred during the Great Depression by asserting that "just as the New Deal of the 1930s launched Big Government, the Great Tax Revolt of 1978 may herald a conservative reaction."⁴¹¹

Paul Gann seized upon the national proliferation of tax revolts as an opportunity to recast his local campaign against Sacramento as a broader revolt targeting Washington, DC. Before an audience of Virginians in Fairfax, Gann lamented that "we wish they'd [the Federal Government] start teaching us by example not by words."⁴¹² Republican House members echoed this sentiment when Senator Bob Dole (R-Kansas) demanded that "it is time the Congress take note and realize that the American taxpayer is waking up from his eternal tax nightmare," as he moved to introduce federal budget balancing and tax reduction legislation.⁴¹³ What had originally been a crusade against regressive local property taxes and shrinking incomes moulded into a popular platform that pitted the American people against a domineering federal bureaucracy. Although Proposition 13 originated in the affluent Californian suburbs, national

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 102-105.

⁴¹¹ "The Big Tax Revolt: A Rash of Predictions," *Newsweek*, June 19, 1978. 20.

⁴¹² Lynn Darling, "Tax Revolt Rally: Gann stirs Va. Audiences," *The Washington Post*, June 25, 1978. B1.

⁴¹³ Lou Cannon, "Calif. Tax Revolt Brings a Swift Lid on Spending," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 1978. A1.

polling data indicated a ubiquitous anti-tax reaction that cut across all self-reported social classes:

Federal Skepticism at the National Level by Respondent's Self-Reported Class (ANES 1978)

	Would vote for Proposition 13 or a similar measure	Government is run by a few big interests	Quite a few of the people running government are crooked	Respondent feels like they have no say in what government does	The federal government wastes 'a lot' of taxpayers' money	Disagrees with a 1/3 tax cut if it means spending reductions on military, health and education
Working Class	73.9	73.2	45.5	51.8	80.7	70.3
Middle Class	69.7	73.5	39.9	40.2	76.7	70.4
Upper Class	67.9	65.3	34.2	33.9	76.3	63.9

Table 6 - Data derived from American National Election Studies (ANES) "1978 timeseries studies." <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1978-time-series-study/>. Class was self-reported.

Notably, self-reported working-class respondents had a greater tendency to judge the Federal Government negatively. The tax revolts of the 1970s profoundly shifted the parameters of debate away from progressive reform and towards a popular feeling of government skepticism that became intimately entangled with higher tax bills. Yet polling evidence at this time suggested that delineating popular anti-federal attitudes as a "tax revolt" was a misnomer. Rather, a poll taken by *The Washington Post* indicated that two out of three respondents reported "they would prefer to see taxes kept at present levels if only government could be made to work, rather than have taxes and the level of government services reduced."⁴¹⁴

Evidence collected from the American National Election Studies conducted at the University of Michigan indicates that most respondents across all self-reported social class cohorts disagreed with tax cuts if it meant spending reductions on the military or critical government programs, which further exemplified a popular aversion to federal spending cutbacks. However, Howard Jarvis' charge that "we want to force politicians to cut the fat at the

⁴¹⁴ Barry Sussman, "'Tax Revolt,' Targeted at Poor Service," *The Washington Post*, October 1, 1978. A1.

top and not the muscle at the bottom,”⁴¹⁵ resonated with taxpayers who increasingly felt that their hard-earned money was being funneled directly into the pockets of inept federal bureaucrats. *New York Times* journalist, John Herbers, reflected on this populist aversion towards the recession-proof “Versailles-on-the-Potomac,” which had become a “megapolis of the well-to-do,” populated by Ivy League graduates and “tens of thousands of middle-level civil servants who enjoy the equivalent of faculty tenure and who never do so well in the private sector.”⁴¹⁶ While the majority of Americans economically languished under a continuous spell of stagnant incomes and higher tax burdens, federal civil servants enjoyed a “spendable income per household of almost \$23,000, or 33 percent above the national average.”⁴¹⁷ Ultimately, anti-tax sentiment stemmed from a popular demand to hold this insulated class of federal elites accountable. This widespread perception of a top-heavy government exuded an ostensibly contradictory relationship reported by *Newsweek* where “the American taxpayer seems to want it both ways – lower taxes and ample services.”⁴¹⁸

Upon further inspection, polling evidence illuminated the uglier side of anti-tax populism. Tom Wicker’s coverage of the Prop 13 victory rally held at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles observed that “at first glance, it could have been a crowd celebrating a George Wallace primary victory... a clear edge of bitterness and anger seemed to unite leader and followers in common passion.”⁴¹⁹ To a certain extent, Wicker’s comparison was apt. Many of the same organizers that had worked tirelessly on the Proposition 13 campaign had also participated in anti-busing activist groups. Jarvis himself was a founder of the Taxpayers School Reform

⁴¹⁵ “Jarvis Goes National,” *Newsweek*, October 9, 1978. 47.

⁴¹⁶ John Herbers, “Washington, An Insider’s Game,” *The New York Times*, April 22, 1979. SM9.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, SM9.

⁴¹⁸ “The Big Tax Revolt: A Rash of Predictions,” *Newsweek*, June 19, 1978. 20

⁴¹⁹ Tom Wicker. “A ‘New Revolution’.” *New York Times*. A27.

Committee, which had campaigned extensively for an antibusing ballot initiative in 1977.⁴²⁰ Part of the tax revolt's broader popularity hinged on the assumption that lower tax revenues would stymie busing efforts. In one such case, 81 percent of respondents in a Boston poll believed that bussing led to higher property costs, and of this group, 81 percent were either "outraged" or "very dissatisfied" with this supposed tax-bussing linkage.⁴²¹ Across the country, the upper-middle class supporters of property tax cuts frequently conflated local tax hikes with welfare transfers to urban poor and recent immigrants.⁴²² Although the welfare-property tax connection was false (AFDC was a federal entitlement funded with federal taxes), Wicker's aforementioned survey of the Proposition 13 case study nonetheless found that "69 percent of those who supported Proposition 13 expected to see 'welfare' cut back as a result."⁴²³ Taxation, which had been a tool of class warfare during the New Deal era, was realigning along the axes of racial cleavages. Reagan would mobilize this racially charged anti-tax animus against the Federal Government during his populist campaigns in the 1980s.

4.5 The "Reagan Democrats"

Reagan beat both Carter and Anderson (the waystation for moderate Republicans defecting to the Democratic Party⁴²⁴) with ease. Double-digits inflation, stagnant wages, and the Iran Hostage Crisis undoubtedly condemned Carter's prospects for reelection to defeat. After a decade of economic malaise and a year of humiliation over the hostage crisis in Tehran, Reagan

⁴²⁰ Clarence Y.H. Lo. *Small Property Versus Big Government: Social Origins of the Property Tax Revolt*. 57-58.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 161-163.

⁴²³ Tom Wicker. "A 'New Revolution'." *New York Times*. A27.

⁴²⁴ E.J. Dionne. *Why the Right Went Wrong*. 71-84.

offered to undertake a “national crusade to make America great again.”⁴²⁵ Throughout his speeches, Reagan maintained an optimistic, untrammelled faith in the American people. On his election eve address, he would claim that “I find no national malaise, I find nothing wrong with the American people... more than anything they are sturdy and robust as they have always been.”⁴²⁶ Such optimism was often used in tandem with witty quips to veil what Klingbeil et al., discerned as an “implicit anger underlying his political agenda.”⁴²⁷ The primary objects of Reagan’s ire, were a “government which has utterly refused to live within its means,”⁴²⁸ and a Democratic president that “favors the current crushing tax burden because it fits into his philosophy of government as the dominating force in American economic life.”⁴²⁹

In reality, Carter had earnestly tried to generate enthusiasm for equitable federal tax reform during his administration. Carter had entered office after the passage of the 1976 Tax Reform Act. Castigated as a “travesty of tax reform,” by the *New York Times*, the 1,536-page bill contained 73 discernible “‘special interest’ provisions,” one of which was an egregious “stock ownership provision, written largely to suit the specifications of A.T. and T., that could cost the Treasury \$900 million.”⁴³⁰ Deeming the tax system as a “disgrace to the human race,” Carter had

⁴²⁵ Ronald Reagan. “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit.” (Speech, Detroit, Michigan, July 17, 1980). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-republican-national-convention-detroit>

⁴²⁶ Ronald Reagan. “Election Eve Address ‘A Vision for America.’” (Speech, Washington, D.C., November 3, 1980). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/election-eve-address-vision-for-america>

⁴²⁷ Matthew W. Klingbeil et al., “The Oratory of Ronald Reagan.” In *Republican Orators From Eisenhower to Trump*, edited by Andrew S. Crines and Sophia Hatzisaavidou. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018). 89

⁴²⁸ Ronald Reagan. “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit.” (Speech, Detroit, Michigan, July 17, 1980). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-republican-national-convention-detroit>

⁴²⁹ Ronald Reagan. “Televised Campaign Address: ‘A Vital Economy: Jobs, Growth, and Progress for Americans.’” (Speech, Washington D.C., October 24, 1980). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/televised-campaign-address-vital-economy-jobs-growth-and-progress-for-americans>

⁴³⁰ “A Travesty of Tax Reform,” *The New York Times*, July 26, 1976. 22.

committed his presidency to tax cuts on lower income and middle class families that would be financed with “loophole” closures.⁴³¹ However, his efforts were frustrated when the House Ways and Means Committee rebuked Carter’s 1978 proposals with relatively moderate provisions for increased personal exemptions and earned income tax credits for individual income taxes.⁴³² Yet again, the bulk of cuts were “tilted toward upper income taxpayers.”⁴³³ Specifically, the maximum capital gains rate was reduced from 35 to 28 percent, while an additional repeal of “an election of a 25 percent alternative rate on the first \$50,000 of long-term capital gains,” only benefitted “taxpayers with ordinary tax rates in excess of 50 percent.”⁴³⁴ The efforts towards progressive federal tax reform had failed, and Carter’s failure to achieve comprehensive tax reform exhibited a critical issue that Reagan pressed upon relentlessly during the 1980 election.

By making comprehensive tax-cuts a critical part of his campaign, Reagan had co-opted a popular issue that Carter faltered on. Riding the wave of anti-tax sentiment in his home state of California, Reagan had ceaselessly called for tax cuts and had even gone so far as to endorse the radical cuts proposed by the initial Kemp-Roth tax bill during his preliminary campaigning.⁴³⁵ Even at the crest of an economic recovery, Reagan would replicate his commitment to tax cuts during his 1984 presidential contest with Mondale, who insisted on a comparatively dour Keynesian managerial need to raise taxes in order to close the ballooning deficit caused by the president’s inadequate cuts and massive military outlays.⁴³⁶ Much like Jarvis, Reagan wrested regressive tax cuts away from their patently elitist moorings by emphasizing the need to reign in

⁴³¹ W. Carl Biven. *Jimmy Carter’s Economy*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). 199.

⁴³² John Pierson, “Carter Tax Plan Sidelined as House Unit Will Look at Cutting Capital Gains Rate,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 19, 1978. 3.

⁴³³ W. Carl Biven. *Jimmy Carter’s Economy*. 199.

⁴³⁴ “Highlights of the Tax Law Signed by President Carter,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 1978.

⁴³⁵ Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies*. 216.

⁴³⁶ Joshua H. Freeman. *American Empire*. (New York: Viking, 2012). 381. and Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. 276. Kazin uses the word ‘managerial’ to describe the New Deal tendencies of Mondale and Dukakis.

government waste. At his nomination, Reagan lamented that the Federal Government “has utterly refused to live within its means... High taxes, we are told, are somehow good for us, as if, when government spends our money it isn’t inflationary, but when we spend it, it is.”⁴³⁷ Conversely, tax cutting was a resolution for all economic ailments. As a rhetorician, Reagan was particularly good at deploying populist language to shroud pro-rich tax cuts in New Deal vestments, as was the case with his 1985 Labor Day speech, when he claimed that a new income tax “simplification” plan that would cut rates dramatically for the wealthiest 5 percent of Americans (while raising rates on average families) amounted to an attack on the “special interests” and a “big step toward economic power for people who’ve been denied power for generations.”⁴³⁸

Nonetheless, a significant portion of Reagan’s majorities consisted of the same Rust Belt workers that Nixon had actively courted across both of his campaigns. Following Reagan’s triumphs over Carter and Mondale, political pollster Stanley Greenberg popularized the term “Reagan Democrats” to refer to the traditionally Democratic blue-collar voters of Macomb County, Michigan, that had defected towards the Republicans across both general elections.⁴³⁹ In 1980, Reagan enjoyed a 4 to 8 percent lead in prominent Northern industrial counties over his predecessor, Gerald Ford. This trend continued upwards when Reagan secured a 2 to 10 percent increase in votes across the same region during his contest with Mondale.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ Ronald Reagan. “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit.”

⁴³⁸ Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. 264. and Ronald Reagan. “Remarks at the Santa-Cali-Gon Days Celebration in Independence, Missouri.” (Speech, Independence, Missouri, September 2, 1985). <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-santa-ca-li-gon-days-celebration-independence-missouri>

⁴³⁹ Robert E. Weir, “Reagan Democrats.” In *Class in America: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Robert E. Weir. Volume 1. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007). 682.

⁴⁴⁰ Henry Olsen, “Chapter 6: Reagan’s Death Valley Days” and “Chapter 7: President Reagan” in *The Working Class Republicans*. (New York: Broadside Books, 2017). The counties used as examples in the text were Luzerne (Wilkes-Barre), Lackawanna (Scranton), Lehigh (Bethlehem), Stark (Canton), and Summit (Akron).

Percentage of White Working Class & White Union Vote for Reagan
in 1980 and 1984

	Voted for Reagan (1980)	Voted for Reagan (1984)
Working Class	53.8	60.6
Union Worker	47.1	47.8

Table 7 - Data derived from American National Election Studies (ANES). "1980 Time Series Study." <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1980-time-series-study/> and American National Election Studies. "1984 Time Series Study." <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1984-time-series-study/>. Class and Household Union Status is self-reported.

At the national level, ANES data exhibits a similar trend, whereby Reagan's share of self-reported White workers increased substantially while his share of the White union vote demonstrated a marginal increase of 0.7 percent from 1980 to 1984. The evidence is initially confounding if one considers Reagan's anti-labor track record during his first term in office.

Symbolic gestures of industry protectionism were heavily outweighed by Reagan's comprehensive assault on labor's domestic political power. Although trade union density had steadily declined over a fifteen-year period from 28.3 percent in 1964 to 22.1 percent in 1980, Reagan's first four years in office presided over a relatively drastic 3.9 percent decrease in national unionization rates (18.2 percent).⁴⁴¹ This steep decline paralleled the Reagan administration's uncompromising assault on the bargaining power of labor. In marked contrast to Nixon's decision to negotiate with striking postal workers, Reagan signaled his commitment to union-busting when he fired 11,300 striking members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO).⁴⁴² The firing of skilled, white-collar workers emboldened private-sector employers and fomented the later defeats of nationwide strikes in 1983.⁴⁴³ Furthermore, Reagan's 1981 appointment of John R. Van de Water, a Californian business consultant who

⁴⁴¹ "Trade Union Dataset." *Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)* (Accessed February 20, 2022). <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TUD#>

⁴⁴² Joshua Freeman. *American Empire*. 377.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 378. and David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). 25.

“had been personally involved in 130 employer campaigns to block unions and employers,”⁴⁴⁴ to the chairmanship of the NLRB initiated the quasi-judiciary body’s shift away from labor law protection towards labor regulation at a time when business was being deregulated.⁴⁴⁵

These blows against organized labor’s bargaining power paralleled a downward trend in workers’ living standards coupled with a rapid increase in the fortunes of top-earning individuals. Drew Desilver’s plot of average weekly wage growth against real weekly wage growth for non-management private sector workers since 1964 demonstrates that a mean weekly income of \$232 in 1979 possessed the same inflation-adjusted purchasing power as the \$840 average in 2018 dollars.⁴⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Horowitz and Kochhar’s survey of growing inequality found that the mean family income net a 0.1 percent annual *loss* for families in the lowest quintile, while the top 20 percent and 5 percent of earners enjoyed a 2.1 percent and 3.2 percent increase between 1981 and 1990.⁴⁴⁷ Even Reagan’s decision to cut taxes across all income brackets, which exhibited partial disregard for the recommendations made by his supply-sider advisors to only cut taxes on the wealthy,⁴⁴⁸ hardly resembled a victory for the average taxpayer. The top tax-rate was immediately reduced from 70 percent to 50 percent (and eventually lowered to 28 percent) alongside an incremental estate tax exemption that increased the minimum requirement for filing a return from \$175,000 to \$600,000 by 1987.⁴⁴⁹ Meanwhile,

⁴⁴⁴ Ed Townsend, “Labor, business clash over nominee to head US labor relations board.” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 13, 1981.

⁴⁴⁵ David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 52.

⁴⁴⁶ Drew DeSilver, “For most U.S. workers, real wages have barely budged in decades,” *Pew Research Center*, August 7, 2018. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/07/for-most-us-workers-real-wages-have-barely-budged-for-decades/>

⁴⁴⁷ Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Ruth Igielnik and Rakesh Kochhar, “Most Americans Say There is Too Much Economic Inequality in the U.S., but Fewer than Half Call it a Top Priority.” *Pew Research Center*, January 9, 2020.

⁴⁴⁸ David Farber. *The Rise and Fall of Modern Conservatism*. 196.

⁴⁴⁹ E.J. Dionne. *Why the Right Went Wrong*. 92. and U.S. Congress, House, *Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981*, H.R.4242, 97th Cong., introduced in House July 23, 1981, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/97th-congress/house-bill/4242>.

the meagre 3 percent of the promised 23 percent “across-the-board” tax cut materialized as a bottom rate decline from 14 to 11 percent.⁴⁵⁰

4.6 Redefining the “Special Interests” in Washington

In spite of his attacks on labor, Reagan continued to cultivate a strong base of working-class support by appealing to the culturally conservative anxieties that Wallace and Nixon had previously foregrounded. In some instances, Reagan explicitly reused the racially charged clarion call of “states’ rights” that his conservative predecessors had invoked to impede federally enforced integration efforts. Before an audience in Neshoba County, Mississippi, Reagan’s stated commitment to “states’ rights,” and the attendant restoration of constitutional powers to local communities⁴⁵¹ resembled an unbroken continuity with the earlier race-baiting tactics employed by Goldwater, Wallace, and Nixon. Similar pronouncements were used to deride busing as an issue in “which the Federal Government has injected itself into something that traditionally was believed to belong at the lowest local level,” or affirmative action, which Reagan equated to a federal “quota” system in a 1981 News Conference.⁴⁵² While Reagan’s decisions to stymie desegregation efforts by putting “hundreds” of school desegregation cases on hold or by

⁴⁵⁰ Jonathan Levy. *Ages of American Capitalism*. 610. and W. Elliot Brownlee. *Federal Taxation in America: A Short History*. 150.

⁴⁵¹ Ronald Reagan, “Ronald Reagan’s 1980 Neshoba County Fair Speech.” (Speech, Neshoba, Mississippi, August 3, 1980). The American Presidency Project. Retrieved from <https://neshobademocrat.com/stories/ronald-reagans-1980-neshoba-county-fair-speech,49123>

⁴⁵² Ronald Reagan. “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Working Luncheon with Out-of-Town Editors,” (speech, Washington, D.C., October 16, 1981). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-and-question-and-answer-session-working-luncheon-with-out-of-town-editors> and Ronald Reagan. “The President’s News Conference,” (speech, Washington D.C., January 29, 1981). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-992>

supporting tax breaks for segregated schools⁴⁵³ undoubtedly mirrored Nixon advisor Moynihan's suggested course of "benign neglect" on racial policy,⁴⁵⁴ the tax crisis provided a novel opportunity to graft backlash onto a modernized allegation that would obfuscate the material interests of the dying New Deal coalition.

The specter of George Wallace's presidential campaign would continue to live on, but Wallace's caustic rhetorical attacks on the archetypal "bearded bureaucrat" that favored minorities over hardworking White Americans became vested in a traditional ensemble that had resonated with the American people since the early 20th century. "Special interests" had originally appeared within the Progressive Party's plank on currency in 1912, where it was argued that the control of currency "should be lodged with the Government and should be protected from domination or manipulation by Wall Street or any special interests."⁴⁵⁵ Roosevelt later popularized the intimate connection between Special Interests and corporate influence in Washington by berating the business groups that actively "sought protection from the Government for its own special interests," through the creation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation at the height of the Depression.⁴⁵⁶ Truman affirmed this connection before workers in Ohio and Michigan through his direct attacks on the Republican-controlled 80th Congresses' tax rate reduction, which he labelled as "the rich man's tax bill," that was passed on behalf of

⁴⁵³ Edward G. Carmines. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). 54.

⁴⁵⁴ Dan T. Carter. *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*. 68.

⁴⁵⁵ "Progressive Party Platform of 1912." (Transcript Chicago, Illinois, November 5, 1912). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/progressive-party-platform-1912>.

⁴⁵⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Progressive Government at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, California." (Speech, San Francisco, California, September 23, 1932). The American Presidency. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/campaign-address-progressive-government-the-commonwealth-club-san-francisco-california>

“special interests” (most prominently, the real-estate lobby).⁴⁵⁷ Almost four decades later, Reagan stood before the same constituency and accused special interests of wanting “to spend more money and raise your taxes and regulate your lives.”⁴⁵⁸

According to Michael Kazin, Reagan’s use of the term exhibited his “most striking rhetorical tactic,” since it effectively redefined the “traditional opposition between ‘special interests’ and ‘the people’,” by displacing the “old pejorative about trusts and economic royalists,” with a “group of liberal insiders” that privileged the interests of minorities and activist groups over the will of the majority.⁴⁵⁹ Much like Nixon’s “silent majority,” the “people” Reagan’s 1980 campaign plank on “Equality” actively courted were those “millions of Americans who trace their heritage to the nations of Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe,” that have “for too long seen their values neglected.”⁴⁶⁰ Reagan continuously idolized a White working class value system in his 1980 stock speech titled *The Ethnic American and His Role in American Society*, in which he celebrated “love of family, willingness to work to achieve desirable ends, a sense of community manifested in neighborhoods all across the United States, an unashamed belief in the American dream of material well-being guided by love of god,” that belonged to a victimized “invisible man” who the liberal media and government often overlooked.⁴⁶¹ According to Reagan, liberals consciously overlooked this hardworking

⁴⁵⁷ Harry S. Truman, “Rear Platform and Other Informal Remarks in Michigan and Ohio.” (Speech, Michigan and Ohio, September 6, 1948). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/rear-platform-and-other-informal-remarks-michigan-and-ohio>

⁴⁵⁸ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at a Reagan-Bush Rally in Detroit, Michigan.” (Speech, Detroit, Michigan, November 1, 1984). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-reagan-bush-rally-detroit-michigan>. This speech was given on behalf of GOP Senatorial candidate, Jack Lousma, but nonetheless illustrates Reagan’s assumption that Lousma could beat the incumbent, Carl Levin, on an anti-tax populist platform.

⁴⁵⁹ Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. 262-263.

⁴⁶⁰ “Republican Party Platform of 1980.” (Transcript, Detroit, Michigan, July 15, 1980). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1980>.

⁴⁶¹ Francoise Coste, “Ronald Reagan’s Northern Strategy and a new American Partisan Identity: The Case of the Reagan Democrats.” *Caliban* Vol. 31 (2012). 221-238.

constituency in favor of another, evidenced by his 1984 speech to the “invisible men” of the ailing industrial center of Waterloo: Aren’t these people [Democratic Presidential Candidates] who talk so much about fairness of all Americans the same ones you can’t see unless you belong to a special interest group?”⁴⁶²

Yet Reagan was careful never to align his charge of special interests with any specific group outside of his Democratic contenders. Imprecision was “vital” for creating an empty, catch-all phrase that mobilized the backlash of the voting public against the alleged sectarian claims of racial and sexual minorities, trade unionists, and liberal activist groups.⁴⁶³ However, Reagan’s constant racialization of working-class values combined with his unyielding criticism of “Great Society-type programs,”⁴⁶⁴ that corrupted these virtues resembled a novel application of Wallace’s racially charged anti-federalism. The particular “special interest” programs Reagan targeted were Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and food stamps, two public assistance programs that had been predominantly associated with Black families by late 1970s and early 1980s.

4.7 Racializing “Special Interest” Programs

While White households had suffered from a decade of stagflation, their median income of \$24,773 still significantly surpassed Black Households’ income of \$18,715 by 1979.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² Ronald Reagan. “Remarks at an Iowa Caucus Rally in Waterloo.” (Speech, Waterloo, Iowa, February 20, 1984). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-iowa-caucus-rally-waterloo>

⁴⁶³ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 203 and Michael Kazin. *Populist Persuasion*. 262.

⁴⁶⁴ Ronald Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on the American Family.” (Speech, Washington, D.C., December 3, 1983). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/radio-address-the-nation-the-american-family>

⁴⁶⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 125. “Money Income and Poverty Status of Families in the United States: 1979.” (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980). 11. This

Broader economic dislocations further compounded racial inequality. In their historical investigation of racially exclusionary steel union practices, Norell notes the scant dividends that hard-fought battles for affirmative action procured when most of the higher status jobs to which Black workers had just gained access to disappeared in the 1970s.⁴⁶⁶ As a consequence, 30.9 percent of Black households resided below the poverty line, almost twenty percentage points higher than the national average.⁴⁶⁷ Continuing economic hardship for Black working class families paralleled an upward trend in household reliance on both Depression era and Great Society income supplements. By 1979, over 40 percent of AFDC recipients were Black, and 35 percent of Black households received food stamps.⁴⁶⁸

On the other hand, White workers were by no means insulated from the economic dislocations caused by the decline of heavy manufacturing. Throughout the 1970s, a Democratically controlled Federal Government presided over a period of retrenchment in metal and motor vehicle manufacturing, which reached its climax between 1979 and 1980 when as many as 669,000 jobs were shed from these industries alone.⁴⁶⁹ Kenneth D. Durr's historical debate on manufacturing displacement in Baltimore concludes that White workers felt they had "lost twice" due to the "set back" of affirmative action and the additional job losses that occurred

income gap remained fairly consistent at around \$6,000-\$7,000 across all regions, barring "outside central cities", where Black families were closer in economic parity to White families.

⁴⁶⁶ Robert J. Norell, "Caste in Steel: Jim Crow Careers in Birmingham, Alabama." *The Journal of American History* Vol. 73, No. 3 (1986). 690-691.

⁴⁶⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Money Income and Poverty Status of Families in the United States: 1979." 27.

⁴⁶⁸ Martin Gilens. "How the Poor Became Black, The Racialization of American Poverty in the Mass Media." In *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, edited by Sanford F. Schram, Joe Soss, and Richard C. Fording. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003). 105/Figure 4.5. and U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 110, "Characteristics of Households and Person Receiving Noncash Benefits: 1979." (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981). 4.

⁴⁶⁹ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 198.

during the presidential tenure of a party that had traditionally “staked its reputation on providing material growth and economic justice for working people”.⁴⁷⁰

Reagan took advantage of this sentiment of betrayal by rhetorically assailing the liberal bureaucrats in Washington that only seemed concerned with spending White workers’ hard-earned tax dollars on social safety nets that predominantly favored “special interest” groups. Françoise Coste’s analysis of Reagan’s “Northern Strategy” finds that welfare (a subtle moniker for AFDC) “was the perfect political scapegoat” since it could be portrayed as an example of federal intervention on behalf of impoverished Black recipients, which directly undercut White ethnic workers’ idealized expectations that all poor groups had to ascend the social ladder through work.⁴⁷¹ Indeed, Martin Gilen’s analysis of the picture content found in 1,256 poverty stories drawn from three prominent news organizations spanning the time period of 1960 to 1990 found that “in the period between 1967 and 1992, blacks averaged 57 percent of the poor people pictured in these [*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*] three magazines.”⁴⁷² Gilens also found that in addition to being overrepresented as welfare recipients, impoverished Black Americans received relatively negative media attention when compared to impoverished Whites, the latter of which occupied the bulk of poverty-related stories in the early 1960s and the recession period of 1982 to 1983.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ Kenneth D. Durr. *Behind the Backlash*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003). 191.

⁴⁷¹ Françoise Coste. “Ronald Reagan’s Northern Strategy and a new American Partisan Identity: The Case of the Reagan Democrats.”

⁴⁷² Martin Gilens. “How the Poor Became Black, The Racialization of American Poverty in the Mass Media.” In *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, Eds Sanford F. Schram, Joe Soss, and Richard C. Fording. 110.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 118-121.

White Opinions on Federal Spending by Social Class (1982)

	Too Much Money is Spent on Welfare	Too Much Money is Spent on Food Stamps	Too Much Money is Spent on Social Security	Too Much Money is Spent on Halting the Rising Crime Rate
Working Class	57.7	58.7	10.6	7.6
Middle Class	59.1	56.1	15.0	5.8
Upper Class	55.8	68.1	29.2	4.5

White Working Class Opinions on Federal Government (1982)

	Too Much Money is Spent on Welfare	Too Much Money is Spent on Food Stamps	Too Much Money is Spent on Social Security	Too Much Money is Spent on Halting the Rising Crime Rate	There is Too Much Federal Intervention
Northeastern Working Class	54.9	46.5	8.4	4.6	68.8
Northern Central Working Class	55.1	57.1	9.1	6.4	88.8
Southern Working Class	68.6	71.4	13.2	10.8	83.7
Western Working Class	41.8	46.9	9.9	6.1	81.5

Tables 8 and 9 - Data derived from American National Election Studies (ANES). "1982 Time Series Study." <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1982-time-series-study/#:~:text=The%201982%20ANES%20is%20a,drawn%20using%20area%20probability%20sampling.> Class was self-reported.

ANES polling demonstrates that Reagan’s strategy yielded two immediate outcomes. First, tethering racialized social safety nets to a ubiquitously despised, tax-hungry federal bureaucracy generated a cross-class alliance among all White respondents. Second, it channeled White workers’ sense of economic anxiety towards inept federal intervention, and to a lesser extent, towards increasingly racialized New Deal-era safety nets.

However, the majority of Americans did not accept the rigid fiscal calculus of budget balancing if it meant cuts to popular programs. A definitive majority of White workers supported Social Security coverage, of which only 8 percent of recipients were Black.⁴⁷⁴ Furthermore, Reagan’s unpopular proposal to reduce benefits for early retirees resolutely failed when the

⁴⁷⁴ David E. Rosenbaum. “Blacks Would Feel Extra Impact from Cuts Proposed By President.” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1981.

Senate voted the cuts down 96-0 on the premise that “the Congress shall not precipitously and unfairly punish early retirees,” which ossified his resolve to rule out “substantial cuts” in some of the bedrock Great Society programs, namely Social Security and Medicare, throughout the duration of his presidency.⁴⁷⁵ With these cuts ruled out, Reagan was left with discretionary domestic programs that encompassed only 17 percent of the federal budget.⁴⁷⁶

Out of all of Reagan’s discretionary cuts, the president had the most success in reducing social spending programs that benefitted the poor and urban working class, groups which possessed “little clout in the White House or the new Congress.”⁴⁷⁷ Both AFDC and food stamps were cut by 17.4 percent and 14.3 percent.⁴⁷⁸ The president also signed off on a massive one-third cut in the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), thus reducing federal expenditures on vocational job training for the structurally unemployed and uneducated labor market entrants.⁴⁷⁹ Like AFDC and food stamps, cuts to CETA job training programs disproportionately affected struggling nonwhite workers and young labor entrants. By 1980, 48 percent of all new enrollees in Public Service Employment and Training Programs were self-identified members of a minority group.⁴⁸⁰ For the bottom 10 percent of Black Americans, these cuts translated into a debilitating 18-percent cut in family income during the Reagan era.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁵ William E. Leuchtenburg. *The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton*. 601. and Joshua Freeman. *American Empire: The Rise of a Global power, the Democratic Revolution at Home, 1945-2000*. 374. in E.J. Dionne. *Why the Right went Wrong*. 88. Extra emphasis on “substantial” here. Reagan *did* make cuts to these programs that impacted vulnerable groups. The spending cuts Reagan succeeded in passing terminated Social Security disability benefits for 350,000 people, and cuts to Medicare involved a deductible increase from \$204 to \$328 by 1984. See Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1999). (p.578) and Spencer Rich’s “Reagan Budget Means Drastic Cuts in Medicare and Medicaid Programs,” *Washington Post*, August 21, 1981.

⁴⁷⁶ Joshua Freeman. *American Empire*. 375.

⁴⁷⁷ Joshua Freeman. *American Empire*. 375.

⁴⁷⁸ Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction*. 192.

⁴⁷⁹ Seth S. King. “Job Training Bills to Replace CETA Prepared.” *The New York Times*, January 17, 1982. 32.

⁴⁸⁰ Chiasam Ugo Okoye. *The Reagan Administration’s Fiscal Policy and its Impact on the Level of Unemployment Among African Americans*. (PhD Dissertation, Howard University, 1997). 198, Table 5.6.

⁴⁸¹ Dan T. Carter. *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*. 63.

Reagan substantially broadened the terrain upon which racial equity would be opposed. Popular tax-cutting measures were associated with reductions in means-tested programs that were erroneously associated with an alleged “special interest” relationship between the Federal Government and impoverished Black recipients. Furthermore, a growing corpus of neoconservative thought that legitimized lower taxes allowed Reagan to conceal pro-rich tax cuts and reactionary net-cutting in a positive message of opportunity. In particular, Arthur Laffer’s chief disciple, DOW Jones journalist Jude Wanniski, had translated the economist’s “law of diminishing returns” into a simplistic assumption that a lower tax rate “raises output and the tax base” due to a multiplier effect in a macroeconomy “at less than full employment.”⁴⁸² Although Michigan Representatives Jack Kemp and David Stockman’s (the latter would become the director of Reagan’s Office of Management and Budget) earlier proposals for supply-side cuts had met defeat during the 1970s, Wanniski and Laffer’s skewed macroeconomic hypotheses finally came to fruition under Reagan’s administration, when the president justified his Economic Recovery Tax Act’s across-the-board income and corporate tax cuts on the basis that “the stimulant to the economy would be such that the Government might find itself getting additional revenues...”⁴⁸³ Said assumptions cannot be understated. Dionne notes that the novel political oratory of supply-side politicians “gave conservative politicians a way of passing money around,” that had “traditionally been the province of New Dealism.”⁴⁸⁴ According to Reagan, the

⁴⁸² Jude Wanniski, “The Mundell-Laffer Hypothesis,” *The Public Interest* (Spring 1975). 49-50. and Mark Gerson. *The Neoconservative Vision*. 202-204.

⁴⁸³ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks on Signing the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 and the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters.” (speech, Santa Monica, California August 13, 1981). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-signing-the-economic-recovery-tax-act-1981-and-the-omnibus-budget-reconciliation> and Mark Gerson. *The Neoconservative Vision*. 204.

⁴⁸⁴ E.J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 252.

fiscal straitjacket imposed by tax cuts was not hurting racial minorities on the bottom-rungs of the redistributive ladder; it was unleashing the productive capacity of Americans.

4.8 “Law and Order” as the Rationale for Reagan’s Entitlement Cuts

Yet one issue that remained relatively unchanged from the New Right’s populist lexicon was Reagan’s commitment to “law and order”. Like Nixon, Reagan actively courted White workers on a promise to address their perceptions of growing lawlessness within declining urban centers. Before the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Reagan had signaled his commitment to law and order early in his tenure by commending his audience for “manning the thin blue line that holds back a jungle which threatens to reclaim this clearing we call civilization,” thus importing the same racist imagery of the urban “jungle” that he had used to launch his 1966 gubernatorial campaign in California.⁴⁸⁵ While the widespread reaction against protests and urban unrest during the 1960s and early 1970s had undergirded Nixon’s earlier use of the signifier, Reagan shifted public attention towards the issue of drugs and welfare abuse. Nixon had called for a “war on drugs” in the early 1970s, but historian Michelle Alexander contends that these pronouncements were largely rhetorical when compared to the substantive reforms passed under Reagan.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks in New Orleans, Louisiana, at the Annual Meeting of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.” (Speech, Louisiana, September 28, 1981). The American Presidency Project.

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-new-orleans-louisiana-the-annual-meeting-the-international-association-chiefs>, and Ronald Reagan, “Taped Announcement on Candidacy for California Governor.” (Speech, California, January 4, 1966). American Rhetoric.

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreagan/calgov/candidacy.htm>

⁴⁸⁶ Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow*. (New York: The New Press, 2020). 60.

While domestic spending on welfare programs deemed “unpopular” decreased, Reagan’s tenure oversaw increased spending on federal law enforcement programs. Between 1981 and 1991, both the Department of Defense antidrug allocation and DEA antidrug spending skyrocketed from \$33 million to \$1,042 million and \$86 million \$1,026 million respectively.⁴⁸⁷ These increased federal outlays were complemented by the passage of the Military Cooperation with Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies Act and the Military Cooperation Act, both of which intensified military personnel’s cooperation with domestic law enforcement on drug enforcement issues.⁴⁸⁸ However, Reagan’s earlier initiatives paled in comparison to the passage of the 1984 Comprehensive Crime Control Act, a landmark bill that Hinton’s account of the U.S. war on crime argued was “the first significant revision of the federal criminal code since the beginning of the century.”⁴⁸⁹ With his sights set on the 1984 election, Reagan assailed the Democrat-controlled House’s soft-on-crime stance, and urged the American people to “replace those liberal opponents of ours with some good, old-fashioned law-and-order Republicans.”⁴⁹⁰ In reality, crime control legislation had also been popular among Democrats since Johnson, and the bill passed in the Democratic House by a 406-16 vote.⁴⁹¹ While the bill enacted a slew of draconian minimum sentences and pretrial detainment clauses, it was the inclusion of a forfeiture provision that permitted the seizure of up to 90 percent of accused drug dealers’ assets which fomented a

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁸⁸ Elizabeth Hinton. *From The War on Poverty to the War on Crime*. 310-311.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 312.

⁴⁹⁰ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at a New York Republican Party Fundraising Dinner,” (Speech, New York City, New York, March 06, 1984). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-new-york-republican-party-fund-raising-dinner>

⁴⁹¹ Elizabeth Hinton. *From The War on Poverty to the War on Crime*. 310.

massive impetus for increased policing since it provided an ongoing cash stimulus and incentive for state and local governments to join the war on drugs.⁴⁹²

However, Reagan did not limit his law-and-order rhetoric to the issue of drugs. When Reagan spoke of an honest, law-abiding majority of “taxpayers”, he also directly compared this group to an insidious group of “cheats” that abused government services. Julilly Kohler-Hausmann’s survey of the increasing intrusion of the penal system into state welfare restrictions during the 1970s notes that Reagan and other Republican governors (most notably, Nelson Rockefeller) “used welfare fraud to position themselves as ‘tough’” in contests for the GOP Presidential nomination.⁴⁹³ Reagan often postured as an agent who would restore order or “equilibrium to a social system that favored welfare recipients over ‘taxpaying citizens.’”⁴⁹⁴ As stated above, the impetus towards this tough-on-welfare stance drew upon years of negative stereotyping within the news media starting in the latter half of the 1960s. Major news outlets began to predominantly feature pessimistic stories of poor Black AFDC recipients within urban centers rather than poor White rural workers in the Appalachian coal fields following the Civil Rights Movement’s mobilization towards economic parity in the late 1960s.⁴⁹⁵ Thus, Reagan’s 1976 caricature of the “welfare queen” and his later use of “welfare cheats” undoubtedly conjured up racist imagery within the public consciousness. The racist portraits of welfare abusers explicitly linked criminal immorality with AFDC transfers. In his “Radio Address to the Nation on the American Family,” Reagan argued that the “many well-intentioned Great Society-type programs” had directly led to “social and health problems, low school performance,

⁴⁹² Ibid., 313. Figure cited was the gross receipt of all seizures, which increased from \$100 million to over \$1 billion within three years.

⁴⁹³ Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, “Welfare Crises, Penal Solutions, and the Origins of the ‘Welfare Queen’.” *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (2015). 763.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 764.

⁴⁹⁵ Martin Gilens. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999). 114-121.

unemployment, and delinquency.”⁴⁹⁶ Besides the problematic “welfare culture” that Reagan connected to crime in some of his speeches,⁴⁹⁷ the president also took great care to always temper his disdain for these entitlements with a nominally empathetic reference to the “truly needy”. Reagan lamented that “unless we end benefits for those who should not be subsidized by their fellow taxpayers, we won’t have enough resources to meet the requirements of those who must have our help,” during a radio address on economic and fair housing issues.⁴⁹⁸ The prospect that a racialized class of “underserving” welfare cheats were appropriating resources from a vulnerable class of “deserving” recipients (usually used to refer to elderly Americans on fixed income⁴⁹⁹) further criminalized nonwhite recipients of AFDC.

The combination of spending cuts on AFDC, CETA, and food stamps alongside increased federal outlays for law enforcement wrought dire consequences on minority urban neighborhoods. Finding himself without work after the CETA cuts, former Maryland youth-services counselor Jeffrey “Pete” Allen encapsulated the bleak overcast that Reagan-era retrenchment cast on low-income Black neighborhoods when he concluded his anecdote of fruitless job searches and waning unemployment benefits with a rocky encounter with officers

⁴⁹⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on the American Family.” (Speech, Washington, D.C., December 3, 1983). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/radio-address-the-nation-the-american-family>

⁴⁹⁷ Two major speeches made this connection. Ronald Reagan, “Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union.” (Speech, Washington, D.C., February 4, 1986). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-congress-the-state-the-union> and Ronald Reagan, “Message to the Congress on America’s Agenda for the Future.” (Speech, Washington, D.C., February 6, 1986). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/message-the-congress-americas-agenda-for-the-future>

⁴⁹⁸ Ronald Reagan. “Radio Address to the Nation on Economic and Fair Housing Issues.” (Speech, Maryland, July 9, 1983). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/radio-address-the-nation-economic-and-fair-housing-issues>

⁴⁹⁹ There are many examples of this throughout Reagan’s speech, but the connection was explicitly made in Ronald Reagan. “Proclamation 5468 – Older Americans Month, 1986.” (Proclamation, Washington, D.C., April 23, 1986). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-5468-older-americans-month-1986>

demanding that he “clear the sidewalk” and return to his home.⁵⁰⁰ With only 2 percent of the American public viewing “drugs as the most important issue facing the nation,” in 1982, Reagan’s calls for law and order against drug-related crimes had “little to do with public concern about drugs and much to do with public concern about race.”⁵⁰¹ Furthermore, the administration’s decision to stiffen penalties for the possession of crack, rather than methamphetamine, the latter of which was primarily abused by low income Whites, signaled yet another instance of racially discretionary law and order.⁵⁰² All of these developments accelerated the pre-existing trend of climbing Black and Hispanic incarceration rates. Between 1979 and 1991, the percentage of adult Black males incarcerated in state or federal prison grew from 8.9 percent to 12 percent, while the percentage of adult Hispanic males almost doubled from 2.6 percent to 4.9 percent.⁵⁰³ Comprehensively, the federal activism of the New Deal would continue to be replaced with the federal militarization urged by the populist New Right.

By the end of his presidency, Reagan had succeeded in two endeavors. Reagan’s tenure oversaw a profound shift in populist rhetoric concerning taxation, whereby its old status as a “weapon of class warfare- a way ordinary Americans could limit the power and influence of the nation’s wealthiest citizens,” became displaced by the presumption that taxation was a “matter of tyranny or freedom.”⁵⁰⁴ In the case of White Rust Belt workers living in and around dying industrial centers, Reagan actively furnished the narrative that an indifferent group of liberal Washington insiders had marginalized the “invisible man” in favor of a Black underclass of

⁵⁰⁰ Juan S. Lublin, “Feeling the Ax: Demise of CETA Jobs Affects Urban Services – And Changes Lives.” *The New York Times*, May 12, 1982.

⁵⁰¹ Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow*. 62-63.

⁵⁰² Elizabeth Hinton. *From The War on Poverty to the War on Crime*. 309.

⁵⁰³ Thomas P. Bonczar, “Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001.” *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report* (August 2003). 5 (Table 5).

⁵⁰⁴ Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies*. 240.

displaced workers which he derided as “special interests”. In addition to the unfounded suggestion that poor Black recipients of AFDC somehow wielded considerable political power, Reagan also connected criminal immorality of drug use and welfare abuse to social entitlement transfers that became spuriously portrayed as Black-dominated programs within the White public conscious.

4.9 Gingrich and the End of the “Two-Tiered” System

The combination of higher military spending, inadequate cuts to domestic expenditures, and decreased revenues from the 1981 tax cuts led to a chronic budget deficit, much to the chagrin of his hardline supply-side budget director, David A. Stockman.⁵⁰⁵ Consequently, Reagan agreed to slight tax adjustments in 1982, and then accepted a wholesale reform package in 1986 that raised the capital gains tax from 20 to 28 percent and dumped corporate loopholes.⁵⁰⁶ However, Bush’s parallel attempts to quietly renege on his “no new taxes” pledge by lowering deductions on upper-income taxpayers and increasing levies on gasoline, alcohol, expensive cars, boats, jewelry, and furs, were blocked when the aforementioned reforms met bipartisan defeat in the House by a 254-179 vote.⁵⁰⁷ Although the tax package was rebuked by a majority of House Democrats that viewed some of the changes as too regressive, it was the intraparty opposition, fomented by newly appointed Minority Whip, Newt Gingrich, that proved to be “fateful for the GOP and fatal for Bush’s reelection.”⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁵ David A. Stockman. *The Great Deformation: The Corruption of Capitalism in America*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2013). 55-60.

⁵⁰⁶ E.J. Dionne. *Why the Right Went Wrong*. 92. and Joshua Freeman. *American Empire*. 379.

⁵⁰⁷ E.J. Dionne. *Why the Right Went Wrong*. 101.

⁵⁰⁸ Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led us to Forget What Made America Prosper*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016). 261.

This instance of tax reform blockage resembled a smaller piece of Gingrich's long running strategy to popularize partisan obstructionism in the House. During a close congressional race for northwestern Georgia in 1978, Gingrich had captivated an audience of College Republicans at an Atlanta Airport Holiday Inn with a no-prisoners vision of House politics that would later characterize his career: "You're fighting a war. It is a war for power... What's the primary purpose of a political leader?... To build a majority."⁵⁰⁹ To put these principles into practice, the ambitious representative organized the Conservative Opportunity Society (COS) in 1983, which furnished a congressional satellite group of conservative activists bent on forcing ideological choices between liberal welfarism and conservative alternatives.⁵¹⁰ In addition to ideological confrontation with the Democratic Party, the COS also urged internal party discipline that eschewed the supposed accommodationist posture of the Republican Old Guard.⁵¹¹ As such, the COS actively sought to procure congressional majorities through an explicit program of uncooperative polarization. Consequently, Bush had committed a cardinal sin when he negotiated a budget deal with the Democratic House stipulating a \$134 billion increase in taxes over five years, which Gingrich termed as "the fiscal equivalent of Yalta."⁵¹²

As the chief architect of this vision of radical politics, Gingrich took it upon himself to prove its efficacy by waging a scorched-earth war in the House. The Georgia Congressman continuously flouted norms of Congressional decorum by demonizing his opposition, so much so that his PAC issued a tape to Gingrich's Republican colleagues entitled *Language: A Key*

⁵⁰⁹ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. (New York: Crown, 2018). 81.

⁵¹⁰ Sam Rosenfeld. *The Polarizers: Postwar Architects of Our Partisan Era*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2018). 269.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 269-270.

⁵¹² Donald T. Critchlow, "When Republicans Become Revolutionaries: Conservatives in Congress." In *The American Congress: The Building of Democracy*, Edited by Julian E. Zelizer. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004). 719.

Instrument of Control which explained how to speak in “contrasts” like Gingrich.⁵¹³ Gingrich’s tactics proved to be devastating. In their time series survey of congressional incivility, Dodd and Schraufnagel associate Gingrich’s “no-holds-barred” indictments during the Wright Speakership with the upward trend in interparty polarization and legislative gridlock.⁵¹⁴ In a similar vein, Mann and Ornstein’s outline of the Gingrich years notes that one of the Congressman’s novel tactics included the manipulative use of fixed-camera C-SPAN coverage during evening hours to deliver combative speeches that criticized the patriotism of his Democratic counterparts before a usually empty, in-person audience.⁵¹⁵ These speeches, and Speaker Thomas O’Neill’s decision to confront Gingrich openly after the Democratic speaker ordered C-SPAN coverage of the audience during the special order speeches, firmly placed the firebrand Congressman within the media limelight.⁵¹⁶ Thereafter, Gingrich successfully forced the resignation of Speaker O’Neill’s successor, Jim Wright, when he pressed trumped up ethics charges against the bulk sale of Wright’s book, *Reflections of a Public Man*. Politicized ethics investigations had happened before Gingrich, but academics have cited this particular episode as a clear catalyst for further partisan “weaponization” of Watergate-era Congressional oversight reforms.⁵¹⁷

Thus, for a polarizing figure like Gingrich, Bill Clinton’s 1992 victory ironically presented an opportunity to realize longstanding designs on a Republican dominated House. In part, this was because Gingrich could manipulate his own party’s disillusionment with being out

⁵¹³ Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia*. 260.

⁵¹⁴ Lawrence C. Dodd and Scot Schraufnagel, “Taking Incivility Seriously: Analyzing Breaches of Decorum in the US Congress.” In *Politics to the Extreme: American Political Institutions in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Scott A. Frisch and Sean Q. Kelly. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). 79.

⁵¹⁵ Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein. *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks*. (New York: Basic Books, 2013). 35.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵¹⁷ David C. W. Parker and Matthew Dull, “The Weaponization of Congressional Oversight: The Politics of the Watchful Eye, 1947 – 2010.” In *Politics to the Extreme: American Political Institutions in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Scott A. Frisch and Sean Q. Kelly. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). 63. and Julian E. Zelizer, “Chapter 8: Mindless Cannibalism.” In *Burning Down the House*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2020).

of power in both Congress *and* the White House.⁵¹⁸ On the other hand, Gingrich could associate the toxicity and alleged unaccountability of Washington politics with his Democratic opposition.⁵¹⁹ Similar to Reagan, Gingrich would capitalize on the broader sentiment of alienation that many working Americans felt from Washington politics. By importing popular anti-federal skepticism to the congressional level, Gingrich would challenge the resilient pattern of “two-tiered” voting that Ladd and Hadley had identified in as early as 1975, whereby White working-class voters would accede to the “neopopulist” social issue platforms of Republican presidential candidates while simultaneously continuing to vote for Democratic Congressional Representatives that offered liberal positions on bread-and-butter issues.⁵²⁰

Gingrich’s assault on the institution of split-ticket voting came after yet another decade of economic stagnation for workers. Although the traditional blue collar manufacturing jobs of the North and Northwest had dried up, Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers’ 2000 publication on changing voting patterns in *America’s Forgotten Majority* identified a new working class of low-level white-collar service-sector workers that had come to occupy America’s swing voter terrain.⁵²¹ Comprising almost three quarters of the total U.S. workforce at the time of this publication, this growing class of White low-level service workers, along with the residual bloc of conventional blue collar laborers, possessed less than a bachelor’s degree education and had “not fared well over the last quarter-century.”⁵²² Those White male workers that had found themselves on the “wrong” side of what Teixeira and Rogers termed the “Great Divide” had sustained a wage *decrease* of 15 percent between 1979 and 1998 while their college-educated counterpart

⁵¹⁸ Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein. *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks*. 39.

⁵¹⁹ Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia*. 261.

⁵²⁰ Everett Carl Ladd, Jr. and Charles D. Hadley. *Transformations of the American Party System: Political Coalitions from the New Deal to the 1970s*. 259-267.

⁵²¹ Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers. *America’s Forgotten Majority*. 15.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 15.

“enjoyed a gain of 9 percent.”⁵²³ As labor markets tightened and global competition came to differentially favor four-year degree holders, this constituency of “forgotten” voters increasingly adopted a cynical attitude of “pragmatic conservatism”. Pragmatically conservative workers agreed with economic redistribution in principle, but came to reject activist government, especially Democratic activism, which had procured scant economic growth for this stratum while eschewing core values of reward for work and law and order.⁵²⁴

Clinton had actively sought the support of this disillusioned group of voters through an appeal that directed federal skepticism towards the burgeoning inequalities of the system:

I was raised to believe the American Dream was built on rewarding hard work. But we have seen the folks of Washington turn the American ethic on its head... We have got to go beyond brain-dead politics in Washington and give our people the kind of government they deserve, a government that works for them.⁵²⁵

In order to make government work for the people, Clinton intended to represent Teixeira and Rogers’ forgotten majority by expanding upon “Old Democrat” social insurance programs through the inclusion of campaign planks on “universal access to quality, affordable health care,” or “national apprenticeship-style,” job-training programs that would build competitive skills in the new economy.⁵²⁶ In response, the Gingrich-led Republicans opted to act like a disciplined parliamentary minority, and obstructed Clinton’s legislative proposals at every opportunity.⁵²⁷ In one notable instance, Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole used Clinton’s modest popular vote as

⁵²³ Ibid., 55.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 57, 61-65.

⁵²⁵ Bill Clinton, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in New York.” (Speech, New York City, New York, July 16, 1992). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-a-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-democratic-national-convention-new-york>

⁵²⁶ “1992 Democratic Party Platform.”(Transcript, New York City, New York, July 13, 1992). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/1992-democratic-party-platform> and Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers. *America’s Forgotten Majority*. 126-127.

⁵²⁷ Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein. *It’s Even Worse Than it Looks*. 39.

a justification to filibuster the president's \$16 billion job legislation.⁵²⁸ Due to this obstructionism, Clinton's record by the 1994 midterm hardly departed from what Teixeira and Rogers described as a "very conventional strategy promoting business confidence," which, when combined with an unwavering commitment to NAFTA (signed during George H. W. Bush's presidency), ultimately rendered Democratic seats vulnerable at the midterms.⁵²⁹

With Clinton's ambitious platform frustrated, Gingrich seized on the opportunity to co-opt the representation of America's forgotten voters. Following the Republican recess in 1993, Gingrich drafted a ten-point legislative program called the "Contract with America" to direct an unusually nationalized midterm platform for typically district-oriented House campaigns.⁵³⁰ Gingrich's "Contract" demarcated a radical shift away from the 1992 Buchanan-influenced "culture wars" platform since it substantially reduced the prevalence of family values and religious moralism from one fifth to a meager six percent of the official Republican platform.⁵³¹ This shift towards a reform-dominated manifesto resembled an explicit attempt to draw the 1992 third party Ross Perot constituency (comprising almost 19 percent of the popular vote) into the Republican fold, two thirds of which fit the "forgotten majority" mould provided by Ruy and Teixeira.⁵³² Barring the pro-choice and anti-NAFTA stances, which presented two core issues that the GOP could not co-opt from Perot's campaign, the Contract generally reflected the reform-

⁵²⁸ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. 82.

⁵²⁹ Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers. *America's Forgotten Majority*. 82.

⁵³⁰ Sam Rosenfeld. *The Polarizers*. 270-271.

⁵³¹ Ronald B. Rappaport and Walter J. Stone, *Three's a Crowd: The Dynamic of Third Parties, Ross Perot, and Republican Resurgence*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008). 152.

⁵³² Ronald B. Rappaport and Walter J. Stone, *Three's a Crowd: The Dynamic of Third Parties, Ross Perot, and Republican Resurgence*. 158-160. and Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers. *America's Forgotten Majority*. 74.

spirited “Checklist for All Federal Candidates” present at the end of Perot’s book, *United We Stand*.⁵³³

Budget balancing, welfare reform and crime occupied the top three items within the Contract, which was wholly geared towards the popular demand of holding the Federal Government accountable. The latter two items continued to recycle Reagan-era assumptions about welfare and crime. Two weeks before the 1994 election, the widespread popularity of Charles Murray’s pseudo-statistical analysis, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, revived the spurious argument that Great Society social spending programs, which came to disproportionately favor racial minorities, had encouraged apathetic and criminal behavior.⁵³⁴ Almost three decades of negative Black overrepresentation in media stories concerning poverty had also cultivated racially charged assumptions surrounding certain social entitlements such as AFDC and SNAP. A 1994 CBS/*New York Times* poll conducted in December 1994 found that respondents who trusted the skewed assumption that most welfare recipients are Black overwhelmingly believed that such recipients had no desire to work and had a “lack of effort on their own part.”⁵³⁵ These underlying assumptions paralleled the reasoning behind Gingrich’s inclusion of “The Personal Responsibility Act” which called for comprehensive AFDC cuts in an effort to dissuade illegitimacy and unemployment.⁵³⁶ In place of these social safety nets, the Contract maintained the same supply-sider logic that tax cuts slated towards the wealthy would pick up the macroeconomic slack. While Reagan and his presidential

⁵³³ Ronald B. Rappaport and Walter J. Stone, *Three’s a Crowd: The Dynamic of Third Parties, Ross Perot, and Republican Resurgence*. 151 and Ross Perot. *United We Stand*. (New York: Hyperion, 1992). 117-118.

⁵³⁴ Dan T. Cater. *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*. 111-113.

⁵³⁵ Martin Gilens. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. 140.

⁵³⁶ Newt Gingrich and Richard K. Armev. *Contract with America: The Bold Plan by Rep. Newt Gingrich, Rep. Dick Armev and the House Republicans to Change the Nation*. Edited by Ed Gillespie and Bob Schellhas. (New York: Times Books, 1994). 17.

successor maintained progressive (albeit, dishonest) pretensions towards tax cuts, political scientists Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson contend that “after the Gingrich revolt, Republicans focused increasingly on tax cuts for the highest income groups.”⁵³⁷ Indeed, *Washington Post* writer Eric Pianin noted that as much as 52 percent of the tax benefits proposed in the Contract (and subsequently passed) would accrue to those with incomes at \$100,000 or greater.⁵³⁸ Of course, many Americans of the “forgotten majority” agreed to the net-cutting and tax cuts on the premise that if the government could not be counted on to work for them, “why not at least reduce its size and quit wasting tax money?”⁵³⁹ As for the “Taking Back Our Streets Act,” the provisions to cut social spending “to fund prison construction and additional law enforcement,”⁵⁴⁰ bore a marked continuity with Reagan’s racially charged decision to replace social workers with police officers.

By courting the “forgotten majority,” Gingrich ultimately succeeded in breaking the 40-year, two-house Democratic domination of Congress. 1994 polling found that the Democratic Party suffered massive losses across voting blocs it formally represented: A 10 percentage loss of voters with less than a high school education, an 11 percent drop among high school graduates, and a 12 percent drop among workers with “some college.”⁵⁴¹ Broken down further, Democrats suffered their most debilitating loss of 20 percentage points among White men with just a high school degree.⁵⁴² In the short term, Gingrich’s promises to punish an elitist, out-of-touch Democratic Congress that overlooked its working class constituencies had yielded formidable

⁵³⁷ Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia*. 243.

⁵³⁸ Eric Pianin, “Tax Cut Bill Passed by House, 246-188.” *The Washington Post*, April 6, 1995. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1995/04/06/tax-cut-bill-passed-by-house-246-188/fb4b4ded-75f6-4511-a1c0-c6c540c3d5ff/>

⁵³⁹ Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers. *America’s Forgotten Majority*. 83.

⁵⁴⁰ Newt Gingrich and Richard K. Armey. *Contract with America*. 9.

⁵⁴¹ Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers. *America’s Forgotten Majority*. 83.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 85.

results. In the long term, his strategy inaugurated an epochal shift in party identification among White voters without college education. In the Pew Research Center's 2018 survey of demographic voting trends, Republicans enjoyed an eleven-point gain (47 to 58 percent) between 1994 and 2017 among White voters with a high school education or less.⁵⁴³

The climb in “forgotten majority” support exhibited the continuing disaffection with federal inaction within a globally competitive, post-industrial service economy. Of course, the polarized climate that Gingrich actively fostered during his Congressional tenure ultimately exacerbated this issue. Although multiple academics locate the roots of contemporary partisan polarization in the 1970s,⁵⁴⁴ recent research has isolated the direct impact of Gingrich-influenced partisanship. Using a multivariate regression model to predict Republican senators' polarization scores, Sean Theriault and David Rohde find that Republican Senators that had entered the House after Gingrich's first election (1978) and who thereafter joined the Senate in the 99th Congress (1984-85) were 56 percent “more conservative” than the non-House Republicans who first entered the Senate before Gingrich's election.⁵⁴⁵ Gingrich's boast that “we will cooperate with anyone, and we'll compromise with no one,”⁵⁴⁶ following the 1994 victory captured the ramifications of a polarized congress: The forthcoming passage of legislation would be a zero-sum game. This congressional atmosphere of polarized gridlock paralleled a critical loss in voter faith, with as many as 60 percent of Americans disapproving of Congress by the middle of 1994,

⁵⁴³ “Trends in party affiliation among demographic groups.” *Pew Research Center*, March 20, 2018.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/>

⁵⁴⁴ Sean Theriault, “Party Polarization in the US Congress: Member Replacement and Adaptation.” *Party Politics* Vol. 12, No. 4 (2006). 483-503. and Christopher Hare and Keith T. Poole, “Polarization of Contemporary American Politics.” *Polity* Volume 46, No. 3 (2014). 411-429. Drew DeSilver, “The polarized Congress of today has its roots in the 1970s,” *Pew Research Center*, June 12, 2014. <https://www.bunghistory.org/resources/610>

⁵⁴⁵ Sean M. Theriault and David W. Rohde, “The Gingrich Senators and Party Polarization in the U.S. Senate.” *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 73, No. 4 (2011). 1014, 1017, 1023.

⁵⁴⁶ Kenneth J. Cooper. “Gingrich: Cooperation, Yes. Compromise, No.” *The Washington Post* (November 12, 1994). A2.

which resembled a 20 percent increase from the average disapproval rating in 1970s.⁵⁴⁷

Obstructionism played directly into the hands of post-Gingrich Republicans. If the Federal Government could not be trusted to work, then voters most affected by lethargic policymaking would readily default to the anti-Washington party.

4.10 Conclusion: The Party of the People?

Both Gingrich and Reagan had effectively transmogrified parts of the anti-federal populism that George Wallace and Richard Nixon had used to cultivate support among working class voters in the 1960s. By linking the tax crisis to Great Society programs in which racial minorities were overrepresented, the new class of supply-side populists broadened the terrain upon which racial conservatism would manifest. Reagan's reuse of the historically poignant charge of "special interests" to refer to Washington's alleged favoritism of Black welfare recipients continued to build upon the pre-existing distrust in federal activism that his populist predecessors had furnished. Gingrich recycled similar anti-Washington tropes in an effort to capitalize upon White "forgotten majority" voters' disillusionment with the poor economic gains procured by the "tax-and-spend" Democratic Congress. Since his ascendancy to the House in the late 1970s, Gingrich's obstructionist strategy manufactured popular distrust in the Democratically controlled House's capacity to pass legislation, thus concluding their *longue durée* of congressional control in 1994. His counterproposal for reform materialized as a dogmatic "Contract with America," which continued to urge for regressive supply-side tax cuts combined with discretionary social spending reductions that would target an economically

⁵⁴⁷ Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia*. 261.

displaced Black underclass. The 104th United States Congress would ultimately realize its goals of regressive entitlement reform with the 1996 passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, which ended AFDC and created its block-grant and time-limited-receipt alternative, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).⁵⁴⁸ In both the Reagan and Gingrich cases, the promise of domestic activism became displaced with a reactionary appeal to law and order.

The most damaging consequence of the New Right's populism was that it ultimately papered over the fact that the GOP was still first and foremost the party of corporate interests. Hacker and Pierson note that the rapidly expanding finance, insurance, and real estate sectors (FIRE) came to lean "heavily Republican" throughout the 1980s due to their natural affinity with Reagan's push to deregulate Wall Street.⁵⁴⁹ While Reagan's move to deregulate FIRE made him a convenient political bedfellow with Wall Street, the next notable step towards private financial interests came during the congressional tenure of Gingrich's ideological successor, House Majority Leader Tom Delay. Delay actively fostered the GOP's connection with elite financial interests through the K Street Project, an initiative designed to staff lobbying firms with Republican operatives and establish an unsaid *quid-pro-quo* arrangement that rewarded pro-GOP business lobbyists with legislation based on their loyalty.⁵⁵⁰ However, the old special interests of the Roosevelt era were either downplayed or wholly replaced with a new conception of special interests that pitted the "working people" against a racialized group of "tax soaks" or "takers" that benefitted from Washington largesse.

⁵⁴⁸ Martin Gilens. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. 21-22.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 283-284.

⁵⁵⁰ Lawrence Lessig. *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress- and a Plan to Stop It*. (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2011). 236-237 and Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. 83.

Chapter 5: Co-Opting the Narrative: Globalization and Financial Fallout

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the New Right's persistent engagement with popular sentiments of racially charged anti-federal paranoia following the mass economic panic of the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008. The discussion considers how contemporary far-right populist appeals in the U.S. continue to instigate the Manichean division pioneered by Goldwater, Nixon, Reagan, and Gingrich. Said division promotes a similar narrative: That a "silent majority" of White, male workers and producers (constituting *the people*) had been neglected by an elite group of Washington insiders who principally favored a racialized group of "tax soaks". As exhibited in the preceding chapter, Reagan and Gingrich mobilized the economic anxieties of this idealized community of hardworking, self-sufficient White workers against a progressive federal tax structure that became intimately associated with key social programs in which Black citizens were overrepresented. Despite the fact that the majority of welfare recipients were White, the imagined racial demarcation between the forgotten majority of "makers" and the Black minority of "takers" generated a cross-class alliance of White citizens opposed towards federal activism.

In recent years, both the Tea Party and its nativist successor, Donald Trump, have relentlessly fanned the flames of popular skepticism towards Washington. Following the financial fallout of the GFC and the U.S. election of its first Black president, Barack Obama, the Tea Party arose as a nominal alternative to establishment politics. The Tea Party curtailed public discussion over corporate greed and financial malfeasance by focusing their attacks on the "socialist" state that President Obama was allegedly building in the aftermath of the global

economic crisis. While part of the Tea Party's call for federal retrenchment stemmed from the popular animus towards bank bailouts, this assault on "socialism" also entailed an ongoing fight against the traditional enemies of the New Right, namely, the Federal Government and its racially profiled beneficiaries. However, the Tea Party expanded on this pre-existing narrative by actively brokering the misconception that the growing population of undocumented Latino immigrants fell into this group of federal recipients. It was the condemnation of so-called "illegals" that constituted the cornerstone of Trump's crass populist campaign against NAFTA and the Establishment. In a harrowing revival of the past, Trump decried the loss of law and order, and repeatedly castigated the pro-immigration special interests in Washington. Trump, a multi-millionaire real estate mogul and entertainer, had become the champion of America's "silent majority."

5.2 Global Capital and the Great Financial Crisis

While a nuanced explanation of the 2008 Financial Crisis resides outside of the scope of this debate, it is nonetheless crucial to locate its occurrence within the growing domestic-global finance nexus that grew during the preceding two decades. On the domestic side, Brooksley Born's (previous Chair of the Commodities Trading Futures Commission i.e., the CFTC) overview of the Greenspan years provides a concise outline of the financial crisis's key causes. According to Brooksley, Fed Chair Alan Greenspan's unyielding dedication to the assumption that financial markets would "police themselves" and the massive influx of \$2.7 billion from Wallstreet political action committees undercut the Federal Government's ability to regulate

mortgage lending standards.⁵⁵¹ These decisive sources of influence led to a slew of bipartisan policy initiatives that benefitted Wall Street over Main Street. During the Republican controlled 106th Congress, the 1999 enactment of Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, which fully repealed the 1933 Glass-Steagall's separation of commercial and investment banking, and the later passage of the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000 (pushed for by Greenspan), which comprehensively eliminated the CFTC's ability to regulate mortgage-backed derivatives, set the stage for the impending financial firestorm.⁵⁵² President Clinton's Republican successor, George Bush, further hampered the Securities and Exchanges Commission's (SEC) delegated task of supervising big-institution trading with his appointment of Roel C. Campos, who removed debt limits on five of the largest banks in the U.S.⁵⁵³ Loosened regulations paralleled an unprecedented \$33 trillion increase in debt held by the financial sector between 1978 and 2007 with leverage ratios reaching "as high as 40 to 1" among the five major investment banks on the eve of the crash.⁵⁵⁴

Domestic deregulation facilitated a speculative global network of "hot money". Dick Nanto's 2008 Congressional Report assigned the genesis of these "hot money" networks to the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis, where major exporters such as Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea were forced to devalue their currency and service short-term foreign debt with IMF

⁵⁵¹ Brooksley Born, "Foreword: Deregulation: A Major Cause of the Financial Crisis." *Harvard Law and Policy Review* Vol. 5, No. 2 (2011). 232.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 237 and 241.

⁵⁵³ Stephen Labaton, "Agency's '04 Rule Let Banks Pile Up New Debt," *The New York Times*, October 2, 2008. <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/03/business/03sec.html>.

⁵⁵⁴ *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report: Final Report of the National Commission on the Causes of the Financial and Economic Crisis in the United States*. Official government edition. (Washington, District of Columbia: Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011). xvii and xix. <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GPO-FCIC-INDEX>

loans.⁵⁵⁵ Thereafter, major exporters sought to circumvent the threat of having insufficient foreign reserves by using their trade deficits with the U.S. to accumulate dollars, pounds, euros, and yen. By 2008, foreign currency reserves of U.S. dollars had reached \$4 trillion, with most of this money cycling back into the U.S. economy as cheap capital.⁵⁵⁶ The presence of “inexpensive capital” incentivized Americans to use available cheap credit to “make riskier investments than in the past.”⁵⁵⁷ Following the crash of the dot-com bubble in 2000, these foreign reserves naturally flowed towards higher yield mortgage-backed assets.⁵⁵⁸ Between 2000 and 2006, foreign investment in housing had grown from just under \$400 billion to almost \$800 billion, accounting for the majority of residential investment.⁵⁵⁹ John Judis’ account of populism following the GFC notes that “with the high-tech boom exhausted, and manufacturing still generally plagued by overcapacity,” the flow of global capital towards the housing market both directly and indirectly fueled rising levels of consumer debt.⁵⁶⁰ From 2001 to 2007, national mortgage debt per household rose more than 63 percent.⁵⁶¹

The removal of domestic controls and the inward flow of hot money propped up a financial house of cards. As major financial institutions piled up housing assets, they became incredibly overleveraged. According to the FCIC’s 2011 investigation into the crash, theory dictated that “securitization, over-the-counter derivatives and many byways of the shadow

⁵⁵⁵ Dick K. Nanto et al., *The U.S. Financial Crisis: The Global Dimension with Implications for U.S. Policy*. Congressional Research Service (CRS) Reports and Issue Briefs. (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service (CRS) Reports and Issue Briefs, 2008). 6.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁵⁵⁷ *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report*. 420.

⁵⁵⁸ Dick Nanto et al., *The U.S. Financial Crisis: The Global Dimension with Implications for U.S. Policy*. 7-8.

⁵⁵⁹ Jeffrey R. Schafer, “The Foreign Capital Flow and Domestic Drivers of US Financial Crisis and Its Spread Globally,” in *The 2008 Global Financial Crisis in Retrospect: Causes of the Crisis and National Regulatory Responses*, edited by Robert Z. Aliber and Gylfi Zoega. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). 116.

⁵⁶⁰ John Judis. “Neoliberalism and Its Enemies: Perot, Buchanan, and the Tea Party, and Occupy Wall Street.” in *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed America and European Politics*. (New York: Columbia Global Reports, 2016).

⁵⁶¹ *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report*. xx.

banking system were developed to distribute risk efficiently among investors,” but reality showed that “much of the risk from mortgage-backed securities had actually been taken by a small group of systematically important companies,” that bore outsized exposure to super-senior and triple-A rated collateral debt obligations (CDO).⁵⁶² Of course, theory also suggested that the aforementioned triple-A tranches would be safe investments, but the rating agencies that assigned these ratings were far from impartial. An SEC investigation of security rating agencies leading up to the 2008 crisis identified the “Issuer Pays” Conflict as a serious lapse in analyst objectivity: “The conflict of interest inherent in this model is that rating agencies have an interest in generating business from the firms that seek the rating, which could conflict with providing the ratings of integrity.”⁵⁶³ This “jockeying” for market share occurred within a broader backdrop of ideological optimism that Wall Street had conquered risk through the development of novel instruments that offered greater reward relative to risk (what legal scholar Claire A. Hill called drinking the “Kool-Aid”).⁵⁶⁴

As early as 2006, the FCIC reported that demand for housing had subsided.⁵⁶⁵ This downturn in the seller’s market paralleled a decrease in real estate values, meaning that high-risk home purchases could not be resold with ease. Consequently, the 2007 national delinquency rate of 2.5 percent shook investor confidence, and the sales of mortgage backed CDO securities plummeted from \$90 billion in the first quarter of 2007 to \$5 billion in the fourth quarter.⁵⁶⁶ The national delinquency rate would continue its upward trend until its 2009 peak of 9.7 percent.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶² Ibid., 213.

⁵⁶³ SEC. *Summary Report of Issues Identified in the Commission Staff’s Examinations of Select Credit Rating Agencies*. (Washington D.C.: United States Securities and Exchange Commission, 2008). 23.

⁵⁶⁴ Claire A. Hill. “Why did Rating Agencies Do Such a Bad Job Rating Subprime Securities?” *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* Vol. 71, No. 3. (2011). 597-598.

⁵⁶⁵ *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission Report*. 214.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 213-215.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 215-216.

According to former President Obama, the ensuing panic culminated into Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, Henry Paulson's, hastily drafted three-page Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) consisting of "boilerplate language authorizing the Treasury to use the \$700 billion emergency fund to buy troubled assets or more generally take steps it deemed necessary to contain the crisis."⁵⁶⁸ Issued funds were used to purchase illiquid assets on banks' balance sheets in an effort to restore their solvency. After the initial proposal was blocked, TARP was ultimately authorized with the passage of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (EESA) of 2008, which bore two notable stipulations: First, the \$700 billion pool of funds would be disbursed incrementally, starting with a \$250 billion installment on October 3, 2008, and second, Treasury money issued through the Capital Purchase Program (CPP) would be used to purchase senior preferred stock in participating institutions at "fixed" prices (known as warrants).⁵⁶⁹ In addition to these terms, Section 111 of the EESA also imposed "Executive Compensation Limitations" which limited risk-generating incentives, and Section 302, which limited the tax deductibility of executive compensation to \$500,000 for senior officers at participating institutions.⁵⁷⁰ Many financial institutions found these restrictions as "onerous", and by 2010, 78 percent of the \$245 billion allocated through the CPP had been returned by banks trying to escape the funding "regime" of TARP.⁵⁷¹ In order to address the negative ramifications of TARP's suggestion that some "systemically significant institutions" (code word for "too-big-to-fail") warranted special treatment, the Democratically controlled Congress passed Dodd-Frank in 2010, thereby granting the Federal Government authority to audit liquidity requirements in big banks and liquidate their

⁵⁶⁸ Barack Obama. *A Promised Land*. (New York: Crown, 2020). Chap. 22.

⁵⁶⁹ Adelaide D. Lefebvre. *Government Bailout: Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP)*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers 2010). 19-31.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁷¹ Lisa Lamkin Broome, "The Dodd-Frank Act: TARP Bailout Backlash and Too big to Fail." *North Carolina Banking Institute*, Vol. 15 (2011). 72.

assets in the case of bankruptcy.⁵⁷² Furthermore, Dodd-Frank attempted to restore some semblance of fair play to the market through the establishment of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), lauded by President Obama as a “powerful advocate in their [American families] corner.”⁵⁷³

Despite these regulations, the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis hurt the credibility of federal lawmakers who had pursued a reckless bipartisan path of financial deregulation for the past decade. While TARP and Dodd-Frank were passed with the intent of restoring equality to the private market, many Americans nonetheless felt left behind or cheated during a crisis that left the economic elites unscathed from a crash they had instigated. In their analysis of insider trading during the GFC, Akin et al., used cross-sectional regressions at the bank level to test their hypothesis that politically connected financial “insiders” had benefitted from the TARP bailouts. While their discussion concludes that politically-connected insiders did not purchase more shares than “unconnected banks”, they *do* discern that politically connected banks and individuals within these banks that bought shares prior to TARP’s announcement received abnormal stock returns.⁵⁷⁴ Kochhar and Cillufo’s 2017 survey of wealth inequality since the Great Recession further suggests that the upper class remained insulated during the crisis with evidence exhibiting that upper-income families with a median income of \$740,100 in 2007 had sustained a relatively smaller decrease in wealth (down to \$659,300 in 2013) only to rebound to a higher pre-crisis median income of \$810,800 in 2016.⁵⁷⁵ In contrast, both middle and lower income cohorts

⁵⁷² Ibid., 77.

⁵⁷³ Barack Obama.”Chapter 22.” *A Promised Land*.

⁵⁷⁴ Ozlem Akin et al., “Political Connections and informed trading: Evidence from TARP.” *Financial Management* Vol. 50, No. 3 (2021). 638.

⁵⁷⁵ Rakesh Kochhar and Anthony Cillufo. “How Wealth inequality has changed in the U.S. since the Great Recession, by Race, ethnicity and income.” *Pew Research Center*, November 1, 2017. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/01/how-wealth-inequality-has-changed-in-the-u-s-since-the-great-recession-by-race-ethnicity-and-income/>

suffered 39 and 48 percent decreases in their median incomes, and never fully rebounded after the crisis. Most notably, the median income gap between lower-income Whites and their Black and Hispanic counterparts decreased, with the former suffering a 49 percent loss while the latter groups saw a decrease of 3 and 5 percent.⁵⁷⁶ Additional Pew Polling in 2010 found that as much as 55 percent of the workforce had “experienced some work-related hardship,” with respondents possessing a high school degree or some college reporting higher rates of job displacement than college grads.⁵⁷⁷

Amid the bailouts and rising inequality, the GOP found its chance to deploy populist allegations against the Democratic Congress that found itself tasked with staving off a wholesale economic collapse. Even before the Tea Party and Rick Santelli’s infamous rant (“who wants to pay for their neighbor’s mortgage?”) on CNBC, Republican Senator Jim Bunning had assailed Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke’s decision to bailout Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as excessive government intervention akin to “socialism”.⁵⁷⁸ Zizek’s contemplation of the 2007 crisis notes that Bunning’s rejection of “socialist” bailouts on the premise that the Fed would be spreading Wall Street’s pain to average taxpayers was analogous to the terms used in “class warfare” due to its “Wall Street versus Main Street” narrative.⁵⁷⁹ However, this narrative couched itself in the assumption “that (true, authentic) capitalism and the free market economy are a popular, working-class affair,” while bailouts and government intervention were instruments of elite control.⁵⁸⁰ With public trust in the Federal Government’s ability “to do what is right just about

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., It should be noted that lower-income Whites’ median wages still far outstripped Black and Hispanic median incomes by a factor of 4.6 and 2.9, respectively.

⁵⁷⁷ “How the Great Recession Has Changed Life in America,” *Pew Research Center*, June 30, 2010.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2010/06/30/how-the-great-recession-has-changed-life-in-america/>

⁵⁷⁸ Edward Harrison. “Senator Bunning Blasts Bernanke at Senate Hearing.” *Credit Writedowns*, July 15, 2008.

<https://creditwritedowns.com/2008/07/senator-bunning-blasts-bernanke-at.html>

⁵⁷⁹ Slavoj Zizek. *First as Tragedy, Then As Farce*. (London: Verso, 2009). 11.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 15.

always/most of the time,” plummeting to an all-time low of 15 percent during the crisis,⁵⁸¹ Bunning’s charges nonetheless resonated with a widespread sentiment of betrayal.

5.3 The Elite Revolution

On February 19th, 2009 CNBC commentator, Rick Santelli, lambasted the Obama Administration’s Homeowners Affordability and Stability Plan (HASP), and demanded that the initiative be subject to a referendum before people are forced to pay “the losers’ mortgages.”⁵⁸² Unlike TARP, however, the HASP resembled a relatively minor bailout of \$75 billion, all of which was allocated towards a low-interest loan program reserved for “owner-occupied homes” that needed to refinance their at-risk homes.⁵⁸³ Of course, Santelli had glossed over the fact that this smaller bailout would go towards average Americans, and from his position at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, called for a tea party rebellion. Both Santelli’s “rant heard round the world”, and the comprehensive disillusionment with sluggish economic growth following the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, culminated into a nationwide protest undertaken by 773 taxpayer “tea parties”.⁵⁸⁴ Contrary to the media’s initial emphasis on the movement’s visible grassroots, these “tea parties” enjoyed the support of a sizeable network of elitist political entrepreneurs that saw the new wave of town hall protests as another opportunity

⁵⁸¹ “Americans’ View of Government: Low Trust, but Some Positive Performance Ratings.” *Pew Research Center*, September 14, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/09/14/americans-views-of-government-low-trust-but-some-positive-performance-ratings/>

⁵⁸² Michael Barone, “National Review: The Power of Rick Santelli’s Rant.” *National Public Radio*, June 11, 2010.

⁵⁸³ “Homeowner Affordability and Stability Plan Fact Sheet” U.S. Department of the Treasury (February 18, 2009). <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/20092181117388144>

⁵⁸⁴ By the Editors, “Tax Revolts: Some Succeed, Most don’t.” *The New York Times*, April 15, 2009.

to translate their fringe ideologies into ballots. Most notably, the Tea Party gained the entirety of its initial political momentum from the vast financial network established by the Koch seminars.

As former affiliates of the radical anti-Communist John Birch Society (of which their father, Fred Koch, was a founding member), David and Charles Koch entered the fringe libertarian movement during the 1970s with the explicit goal of destroying “the prevalent statist paradigm.”⁵⁸⁵ According to Jane Mayer’s historical account of Koch dark money, the brothers’ spectacular failure in the 1980 presidential race forced them to realize “that their brand of politics didn’t sell at the ballot box,” and thereafter, the billionaires opted to carry out their libertarian shadow revolution by bankrolling a network of think tanks, PACs, and politicians.⁵⁸⁶ Since the 1990s and the “Gingrich Revolution”, the Kochs’ stepped up their contributions to a Republican Party dogmatically committed to tax cuts and federal retrenchment.

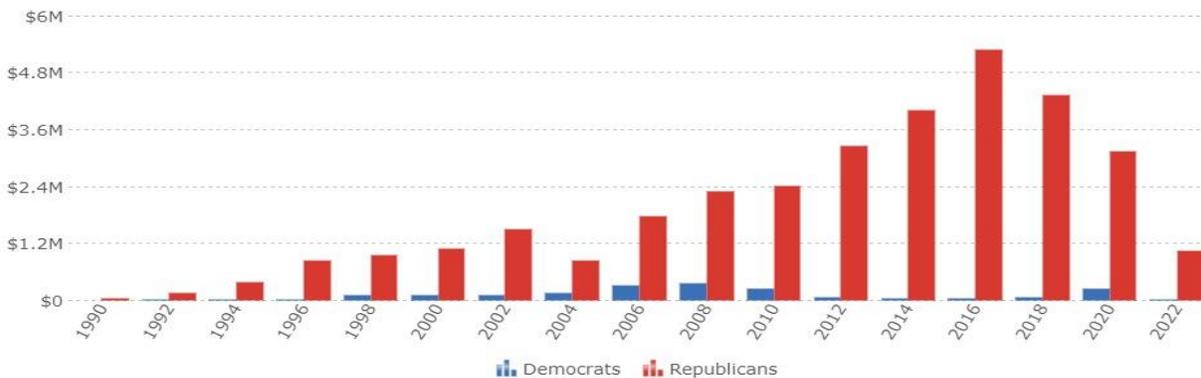


Figure 2 – Koch Industries Contributions - Graph Borrowed from “Koch Industries,” Open Secrets, accessed May 14, 2022. <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/koch-industries/summary?toprecipcycle=2020andcontribcycle=2020andlobcycle=2020andoutspendcycle=2020andid=d000000186andtopnumcycle=A>

⁵⁸⁵ Jane Mayer. *Dark Money*. 38, 54.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

Figure 2 exhibits financial contributions originating from Koch Industries. In total, these contributions amount to \$72 million, most of which was soft money.⁵⁸⁷ However, Koch Industries' annual contributions pale in comparison to the amounts disbursed by the Koch Brothers' super PAC, Americans for Prosperity (AFP). Theda Skocpol's investigation of the AFP's impact on the 2010 election cycle finds that the AFP's budget soared from \$9.2 billion in 2007 to \$27.1 billion in 2009.⁵⁸⁸

The anti-statist crusade that had started with Santelli's "loser" bashing became a direct beneficiary of Koch largesse. For David and Charles Koch, the Tea Party presented a novel opportunity to popularize their extreme brand of libertarian politics. Both the AFP and other like-minded libertarian groups, such as Richard Arney's FreedomWorks, spearheaded the initial tax protests by co-sponsoring Tea Party rallies, coordinating the mid-2009 "town hall" protests, broadening statewide contact lists, and bankrolling television ads that attacked Obama's proposals for healthcare reform.⁵⁸⁹ This initial infusion of corporate funds into the Tea Party's 2009 and 2010 publicity campaigns gave *New Yorker* journalist Whitney Johnson the impression that "it's just big politics hiding behind a grassroots movement."⁵⁹⁰ In a similar vein, Anthony Dimaggio's observational study of Chicago Tea Party rallies finds that the striking "uniformity

⁵⁸⁷ "Koch Industries." *Open Secrets* accessed March 14, 2022. <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/koch-industries/summary?toprecipcycle=2020andcontribcycle=2020andlobcycle=2020andoutspendcycle=2020andid=d00000186andtopnumcycle=A>

⁵⁸⁸ Theda Skocpol. "The Elite and Popular Roots of Contemporary Republican Extremism." In *Upending American Politics*, edited by Caroline Tervo and Theda Skocpol. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). 10.

⁵⁸⁹ Anthony Dimaggio. *The Rise of the Tea Party: Political Discontent and Corporate Media in the Age of Obama*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011). 52. and Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 105.

⁵⁹⁰ Whitney Johnson. "Riding with the Tea Party." *The New Yorker*, November 1, 2010. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/riding-with-the-tea-party>

of rhetoric” celebrating free-market themes, Constitutionalism, and the Founding Fathers betrayed the movement’s attempts to project a decentralized, bottom-up appearance.⁵⁹¹

The concurrent development of ALEC further consolidated the efficacy of the Tea Party. Although Chapter 4 had mentioned that most of ALEC’s “model bills” had focused on conservative social issues, by the late 1990s the organization switched the entirety of its focus to business (de)regulation at the statehouse level.⁵⁹² Hertel-Fernandez’s historicization of the organization attributes this shift to two major events that occurred during the 1980s. In the mid-1980s, ALEC’s cooperation with James Coyne’s American Tort Reform Association had brought Weyrich’s fledgling organization into contact with a larger network of corporate donors eager to see their money translated into legislation at the state level.⁵⁹³ Many businesses and private insurers wanted state governments to introduce tighter caps on tort claims in order to lower general liability premiums. In an effort to provide a unified front against the consumer advocacy groups and trial lawyers that sought tighter regulations rather than tort caps, ALEC drafted a compendium of model tort bills to lobby on behalf of its corporate stakeholders in multiple states. Ultimately, ALEC’s efforts were decisive: 23 states would introduce caps for tort suits, 34 would limit or ban tort suit punitive damages, and 38 states would introduce a ceiling for which a defendant could be held liable in a tort case.⁵⁹⁴ ALEC’s success with tort reform served as a model for its later legislative battles.

The second major event that aided ALEC’s wholesale shift towards business policy advocacy came from the internal organizational changes made by former Reagan era Department

⁵⁹¹ Anthony Dimaggio. *The Rise of the Tea Party: Political Discontent and Corporate Media in the Age of Obama*. 51-52.

⁵⁹² Alexander Hertel-Fernandez. *State Capture*. 38.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

of Education Staffer, Sam Brunelli. As appointed head of ALEC, Brunelli imported the “task force” model of policy advocacy.⁵⁹⁵ The delegation of policy advocacy to a decentralized structure of task forces would prove to be a crucial boon to the organization’s funding in the latter half of the 1990s and early 21st century. Since ALEC’s task forces were self-funded and relegated in scope to a specific policy field, each task force was incentivized to “identify hot topics” that would draw in deep-pocketed corporate donors.⁵⁹⁶ Naturally, donors that contributed more could expect to have more of their legislative concerns conveyed to the dues paying legislators.⁵⁹⁷ The task forces also serve as forum for business-legislator relations where model legislation can be drafted up (though corporations hold the ultimate veto power).⁵⁹⁸ Furthermore, the division between different task forces could draw in a diverse array of corporations with dissenting goals. For instance, tech giants Facebook and Google’s membership in the organization did not compromise their records as environmentally friendly companies since both corporations could claim that they were only working through the conduits of the telecommunications task force, not the energy or natural resources task forces (both dominated by Koch oil interests).⁵⁹⁹

Comprehensively, ALEC’s designation as “the most dangerously effective organization”⁶⁰⁰ by a conservative magazine during the 1980s was an understatement. Investigative journalism has yielded dire insights concerning the organization’s effectiveness as a pro-business front. By 2011, Lisa Graves special report on ALEC’s funding and spending

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 38-39.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁹⁸ “ALEC’s Pay-to-Play Politics.” ALEC Attacks, Accessed July 14, 2022. <https://www.alecattacks.org/alecs-pay-to-play-politics>

⁵⁹⁹ Alexander Hertel-Fernandez. *State Capture*. 44.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 36.

found that “almost 98% of ALEC’s cash is from sources other than legislative dues, such as corporations, trade associations, and corporate foundations.”⁶⁰¹ Over the three years preceding the publication of Graves’ article, ALEC had raised a staggering \$21.6 million from corporations, and only \$250,000 from the dues paid by state legislators.⁶⁰² Much of this corporate money is funneled towards financial gifts called “scholarships” that subsidize state legislators’ attendance to extravagant ALEC conventions hosted at luxurious venues where model legislation can be disseminated.⁶⁰³ The model bills that arise from these annual summits and task force negotiations are consistently geared towards business deregulation and tax cuts for the wealthy.

By the time the Tea Party arrived, ALEC and its corporate “members” were ready to translate anti-government discontent into legislation. Two notable politicians, governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin, and Governor John Kasich of Ohio, both of which are ALEC alumni,⁶⁰⁴ rode the Tea Party wave to victory during the 2010 midterms. Once in office, both Walker and Kasich undertook extensive efforts to curb collective bargaining rights for public employee unions, despite the fact that such measures were incredibly unpopular.⁶⁰⁵ Evidently, Scott Walker took his role as a model legislator very seriously by introducing and aiding the passage of a Capital Gains Tax Elimination Act, a Super-Majority Act (requiring a super-majority to raise taxes in the statehouse legislature) and a Resolution in Opposition to Mandatory Unitary

⁶⁰¹ Lisa Graves. “A CMD Special Report on ALEC’s Funding and Spending.” *The Center for Media and Democracy’s PRWatch*, July 13, 2011. <https://www.prwatch.org/news/2011/07/10887/cmd-special-report-alecs-funding-and-spending>

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ “Taxes and Budgets.” ALEC Exposed, accessed July 14, 2022.

https://www.alecexposed.org/wiki/Taxes_and_Budgets and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez. *State Capture*. 29.

⁶⁰⁵ Joe Strupp. “Ohio Journalists on the Real John Kasich: Anti-Union, Anti-Choice, Anti-Marriage Equality.” *MediaMattersfor America*, July 23, 2015.

Combined Reporting Act that allowed companies to hide profits by filtering income through subsidiaries in states that have no income tax.⁶⁰⁶ Of course, Kasich and Walker were just two highly visible instances of ALEC influence. It is more than likely that the tendrils of ALEC’s task forces reach into every statehouse across the country. By 2017, ALEC had reported a staggering record budget of \$10.3 million to the IRS, \$8.7 million of which came from corporate members, which dwarfs the figures that Lisa Graves had unearthed earlier.⁶⁰⁷

While elitist advocacy groups undoubtedly equipped the movement with its initial political momentum, Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson’s comprehensive field study of Tea Party meetings across Virginia, Arizona, and New England conclude that the relationship between these advocacy groups and the grassroots foot soldiers resembles one of “mutual convenience, with little shared knowledge or joint investment.”⁶⁰⁸ This debate accepts Skocpol and Williamson’s conclusions, but locates it within a broader historical conception of reactionary common sense.

5.4 The Rearticulation of Common Sense

In 2010, CBS took a national survey of 1,580 adults, 881 of which were self-identified Tea Party supporters. While CBS writer, Brian Montpoli, provided an interpretation of the polling evidence that generally echoed the astroturf charges other journalists brandished against the movement, the recent Trump phenomena compels this debate to revisit the poll’s conclusions. For instance, Montpoli’s claim that Tea Party respondents have a “higher-than-

⁶⁰⁶ “Taxes and Budgets.” ALEC Exposed, Accessed July 14, 2022.

⁶⁰⁷ “ALEC’s Pay-to-Play Politics.” ALEC Attacks, accessed July 14, 2022.

⁶⁰⁸ Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williams. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. 112.

average household income, with 56 percent making more than \$50,000 per year,” and that “37 percent are college graduates, compared to 25 percent of Americans overall,” suggests that the average Tea Party supporter was more affluent than their non-Tea Party counterparts.⁶⁰⁹ To a certain extent, Montpoli’s oft-cited claim is true, but it overlooks some of the nuances presented by the survey results.

Although it’s valid that more Tea Party respondents received a household income of \$50,000 to \$74,999 (25 percent) than average respondents reported (18 percent),⁶¹⁰ it is invalid to suggest that said income is relatively affluent since this figure still resided well-below the median middle-income mark of \$131,900 reported for White families in 2013.⁶¹¹ Lundskow’s analysis of the Tea Party constituency further substantiates the working and lower-middle class roots of popular dissent through the finding that Tea Partiers under 60 years of age are “typically independent trade sub-contractors (e.g. electrician, plumber, carpenter) or non-union wage workers,” with earning potentials of \$65,000 in “good times”. These core constituencies were directly impacted by the contraction of the construction industry following the GFC due to the downturn in construction.⁶¹² The additional claim that Tea Partiers were “better educated than most Americans,”⁶¹³ also warrants reevaluation. While the survey indicates an 8-point lead of “college grad” Tea Partiers over the rest of the voting populace, Tea Party respondents also

⁶⁰⁹ Brian Montpoli, “Tea Party Supporters: Who they are and What they Believe.” *CBS News*, December 14, 2012. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tea-party-supporters-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>

⁶¹⁰ *The New York Times/CBS News*. “National Survey of Tea Party Supporters.” *The New York Times*, April 5-12, 2010. 41.

⁶¹¹ Rakesh Kochar and Anthony Cilluffo, “How wealth inequality has changed the U.S. since the Great Recession, by race, ethnicity, and income.” *Pew Research Center*, November 1, 2017. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/01/how-wealth-inequality-has-changed-in-the-u-s-since-the-great-recession-by-race-ethnicity-and-income/>

⁶¹² George Lundskow. “Authoritarianism and Destructiveness in the Tea Party Movement.” *Critical Sociology* Vol. 38, No. 4 (2012). 533.

⁶¹³ Brian Montpoli, “Tea Party Supporters: Who they are and What they Believe.” <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tea-party-supporters-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>

occupied a 5-point lead in the “some college” category.⁶¹⁴ Admittedly, the CBS poll found that 26 percent of Tea Party respondents possessed a high school degree compared to 35 percent of non-Tea Party respondents,⁶¹⁵ but this statistic is significant given the Tea Party’s elitist roots. In their sample size of 1,005 White American respondents, Justin Gest’s linear regression models found a *negative* correlation between education and Tea Party support (-0.085, -0.124 for individual regression) across respondents that reported feeling deprived of political power.⁶¹⁶ Gest’s models also trouble the patently “older” political mould cast by Montpoli through the finding that there was a *negative* correlation (-0.011, p-value less than 0.05) between age and predicted Tea Party support in his sample as well.⁶¹⁷ Thus, Gest recognizes the “comfortably middle class” demographic identified by Skocpol and Williamson,⁶¹⁸ but identifies an additional constituency of “younger white working class men,” that are “more likely to pursue acts of rebellion,” while the aforementioned wealthier, educated, and older Tea Partiers typically “opt for peaceful means of protest.”⁶¹⁹

Perhaps the best way to envision the material demographic profile of the grassroots Tea Party constituency is one that straddles the divide between what Nils C. Kumkar delineates as an “aspiring working class, who perceived their status ascendancy as being primarily blocked by unjust regulation,”⁶²⁰ and a group, identified by Lauren Langman’s theorization of Tea Party

⁶¹⁴ *The New York Times/CBS News*. “National Survey of Tea Party Supporters.” *The New York Times*, April 5-12, 2010. 41.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶¹⁶ Justin Gest. *The New Minority: White Working-Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). 208, 212, 217.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁶¹⁸ Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism*. 23. and Justin Gest. *The New Minority: White Working-Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*. 187.

⁶¹⁹ Justin Gest. *The New Minority: White Working-Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*. 17.

“Peaceful Protest” in this work refers to a respondent’s willingness to vote or participate in non-violent movements.

⁶²⁰ Nils C. Kumkar. *The Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street, and the Great Recession*. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018). 71.

support, defined as lower middle-class supporters that anxiously guard their socioeconomic status lest they fall to the “level of the subaltern.”⁶²¹ One of the core sources of this economic anxiety stemmed from the financial fallout of the GFC. Gest’s regression models had identified a strong relationship of (positive) correlation of 0.466 between homeownership and Tea Party support based on respondents that had self-reported a feeling of economic deprivation.⁶²² Using ANES survey data, Willis Patenaude’s similar investigation of predictors for rightwing populist support in the U.S. discerns the strongest positive correlation between self-reported economic anxiety and Tea Party support.⁶²³ Both studies strongly corroborate with the findings of the widely cited CBS/New York Times Poll, which found that a greater number of self-identified Tea Party supporters (55 percent to 50 percent of “average respondents”) admitted to having endured economic difficulty due to the recession.⁶²⁴

For years, American workers had hedged their retirement nest eggs on the appreciating values of their homes. With the collapse of the housing bubble, home equity plummeted. A 2010 Pew Research Center survey of homeowners found that the largest plurality (48 percent) of respondents reported losing value on their homes.⁶²⁵ Loss of home value was particularly acute among the “sand states” of California, Arizona, Nevada, and Florida, which had seen the index value of home prices skyrocket to just over 250 (201 as the nationwide average) in 2006.⁶²⁶ By

⁶²¹ Lauren Langman, “Cycles of Contention: The Rise and Fall of the Tea Party.” *Critical Sociology* Vol. 38, No. 4 (2011). 487 and 491.

⁶²² Justin Gest. *The New Minority: White Working-Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*. 212.

⁶²³ Willis Patenaude. “Modern American Populism: Analyzing the Economic Behind the ‘Silent Majority,’ the Tea Party and Trumpism.” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (2019). 822.

⁶²⁴ *The New York Times/CBS News*. “National Survey of Tea Party Supporters.” *The New York Times*, April 5-12, 2010. 37.

⁶²⁵ “How the Great Recession has Changed Life in America: VIII: The Recession Hit the Home.” *Pew Research Center*, June 30, 2010. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2010/06/30/how-the-great-recession-has-changed-life-in-america/>

⁶²⁶ *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report*. 87.

2010, this same region bore the brunt of the highest delinquency rate of 13.6 percent, which dwarfed the national average of 8.7 percent.⁶²⁷ In consequence, the Center for Social Inclusion's 2010 Report on voter reactions to Tea Party messages within these same states found that both foreclosure rates and racial composition were likely determinants of Tea Partier victories during the 2010 midterms. Of the 40 congressional districts with the "worst or largest increase in foreclosures," the 10 districts that Tea Party candidates won in had a White population greater than 60 percent.⁶²⁸

Among the majority of Tea Partiers, the growing sense of economic anxiety validated their resentment towards an ineffectual Federal Government. When asked who was to blame for the recession, more Tea Party respondents blamed Congress than non-Tea Party respondents (28 to 10 percent). The aforementioned figure also represented the largest plurality, beating out the Tea Partiers that accused the Obama Administration for sluggish recovery during the recession (10 percent).⁶²⁹ Likewise, Gallup Polling found the greatest opinion gaps between Tea Party supporters and "neutral" respondents on issues pertaining to the operation of Federal Government. Tea Partiers hosted far more concern for burgeoning deficits and the size and power of the Federal Government, exhibited by the 17 percent and 19 percent leads these respondents had over neutral survey participants on the aforementioned issues.⁶³⁰ Although

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 216.

⁶²⁸ "Race Reaction: Voter Responses to Tea Party Messages in Economically Stressed Communities." Center for Social Inclusion (2010). <https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/publication/race-reaction-voter-responses-to-tea-party-messages-in-economically-stressed-communities/>. 3.

⁶²⁹ *The New York Times/CBS News*. "National Survey of Tea Party Supporters." *The New York Times*, April 5-12, 2010. 12.

⁶³⁰ Jeffrey M. Jones. "Debt, Gov't. Power Among Tea Party Supporters' Top Concerns." *Gallup*, July 5, 2010. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/141119/debt-gov-power-among-tea-party-supporters-top-concerns.aspx>

smaller, the opinion gap between Tea Party supporters and self-identified Republicans held at 6 percent across both of these issues as well.⁶³¹

The Federal Government's bipartisan consensus centered on financial deregulation had materialized into an economic downturn not seen since the 1930s. Santelli's "loser" speech sparked the ire of Tea Partiers that perceived the ensuing bailouts and stimulus packages as large giveaways to the financially cavalier, while the average worker was forced to muddle through hardship. In essence, there was a very real and substantiated feeling that the Federal Government did not work for the people. Like the tax revolts of the 1970s, the grassroots voters wanted to hold their government accountable.

5.5 The Elite-Grassroots Link and the Re-emergence of the "Silent Majority"

Yet, unlike the elitist vanguards of the movement, average Tea Partiers hosted an ambivalent relationship with government programs. In their publication on grassroots Tea Party belief, Skocpol and Williamson challenge what they view as the "lazy conflation of elite and popular strands on Tea Partyism," that permeated many of the initial investigations of the movement. While the everyday foot soldiers of the movement ostensibly bore some of the attitudes that their oligarchic counterparts solicited, namely, the abstract convictions towards the free market and individual responsibility, both Skocpol and Williamson discerned ambivalence over specific social programs when interview participants were prodded further. For instance,

⁶³¹ Ibid.,

many grassroots respondents indicated their support for mainstay Federal programs like Social Security and Medicaid.⁶³²

When the average Tea Partier *did* support cuts, they bore a marked similarity with the conservative populist tropes that had been mobilized in the past. Skocpol and Williamson continued, “more telling still, almost all Tea Partiers favor generous social benefits for Americans who ‘earn’ them.”⁶³³ Like their populist antecedents, average Tea Party supporters exhibited racially charged disdain for government transfers or ‘giveaways’ that were perceived to predominantly benefit nonwhite workers. Even Santelli’s critique of HASP, which was credited with touching off the Tea Party movement, bore underlying racially charged assumptions. Obama’s initiative to bailout average at-risk homeowners with HASP principally benefitted the 21 percent of homeowners that the Pew Research Center identified as “underwater” (owing more on their mortgage or other home loans than they could sell their house for), with Hispanic and Black homeowners “more likely than whites to be in this circumstance.”⁶³⁴ Richard Rothstein’s historical account of discriminatory housing law found that by 2006, African American mortgage recipients had “subprime loans at three times the rate of white borrowers.”⁶³⁵ From the outset, deep-seated racism undergirded the anti-government animus shared among many Tea Partiers who did not want to see the “losers” gain an unfair advantage. A 2010 multi-state survey administered by the WISER institute found that self-identified “true believers” of the Tea Party movement were far more likely to agree with the statement that “we have gone too far in pushing

⁶³² Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. 55, 54, 56.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶³⁴ “VIII: The Recession Hite the Home.” *Pew Research Center*, June 30, 2010.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2010/06/30/viii-the-recession-hits-the-home/>

⁶³⁵ Richard Rothstein. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How our Government Segregated America*. 110-112.

equal rights in this country,” when compared to “middle of the road respondents” (60 percent to 37 percent).⁶³⁶ In addition to this, Tea Party respondents were highly likely to report that “Blacks would be as well off as Whites if they just tried harder,” (77 percent) or that “immigrants take jobs from Americans,” (56 percent).⁶³⁷

Although DiMaggio’s aforementioned investigation of the Chicago Tea Party’s rallies links the movement’s fusion of racism with a pro-market ethos to the historic roots of the libertarian movement, their argument assumes a rigid overlap of values between the grassroots and the astro turf elements of the party.⁶³⁸ In contrast, Arlie Hochschild’s fieldwork with Louisiana Tea Party supporters uses the method of the “deep story” to provide a “*subjective prism* through which the party on the other side sees the world.” Hochschild deploys the metaphor of the “long line heading up a hill,” to reflexively capture emotionally resonant conceptions of the American Dream. Said metaphor pivots around a feeling of resentment towards “line cutters”, namely women, sexual minorities, racial minorities, immigrants, and even environmentally protected animals, that “cut the line” with the help of federal intervention. Thus, the “theater of conflict” emphatically shifted away from class-based antagonisms, and toward the “local welfare office and the mailbox where undeserved disability checks and SNAP stamps arrive.”⁶³⁹

⁶³⁶ Christopher Parker. “Attitude on Limits to Liberty, Equality, and Pres. Obama Traits by Tea Party Approval.” University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race and Sexuality, March 2010. [https://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/Tea%20Party%20Chart%20\[pdf\]-1.pdf](https://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/Tea%20Party%20Chart%20[pdf]-1.pdf)

⁶³⁷ Christopher S. Parker. “2010 Multi-State Survey of Race and Politics.” University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race and Sexuality, March 2010. <https://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/racepolitics.html>.

⁶³⁸ Anthony DiMaggio. *The Rise of the Tea Party*. 43.

⁶³⁹ Arlie Hochschild. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. (New York: New Press, 2016). 135-149.

Prominent Tea Party politicians and news pundits mobilized their constituencies around these feelings of resentment. As co-chairman of the conservative non-profit that publicized the initial Tea Party protests, Dick Arney came to occupy a central position in this radical branch of the GOP. Arney's 2010 publication of *Give us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto* leveraged the same vague, commonsense signifier of "special interests" that Reagan had used to carry White working-class ethnics:

Today's Democrats have effectively silenced the fiscal conservatives in their fiscal caucus with a Far-Left agenda of tax-and-spend policies that are anathema to a commonsense middle built around government restraint. Today's Democratic party is not much more than a coalition of special interests that want something from government. They want a program, an earmark, a regulation, favored treatment, or if possible, a handout.⁶⁴⁰

The idea that liberal "insiders" were tilting the playing field against the White "silent majority" figured prominently into Arney's call-to-arms. Against this antagonist of the people, Arney and his far-right counterparts established consonance between the top-down objectives of hardline libertarian elites and supposed White working-class ethics. As another central figure in the Tea Party movement, Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin made this diametric between the "makers" and "takers" by contending that "the Federal Government today is going further than just leveling the playing field for Americans who want to work hard and compete to get ahead. Government is now picking winners and losers."⁶⁴¹

⁶⁴⁰ Richard Arney and Matt Kibbe. *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto*. (New York: William Morrow, 2010). 129.

⁶⁴¹ Sarah Palin. *America by Heart: Reflections on Family, Faith, and Flag*. (New York: Harper, 2010). 84.

5.6 The Racial Undertones of “Libertarianism”

However, these ostensible commitments to a “fair” free market always bore racial undercurrents. At the forefront of these claims, was the suggestion that the first Black president was a supposed fifth column. These accusations ranged from relatively tame charges made by Arney that accused the Obama administration of trying to “remake us to look more like European social democracies,”⁶⁴² to outright racist allegations, continuously leveraged by Donald Trump and Sarah Palin, alleging that the president was not a natural born citizen.⁶⁴³ While these arguments often parodied constitutional law through errant interpretations of its survival as a timeless “rulebook”, it was clear that the accusations brought against the president were steeped in the New Right’s normalization of racial conspiracies. For far-right pundits and opinion leaders, President Obama was a perfect microcosm of the subversive liberal ideology from whom they were allegedly protecting White working Americans from. In the words of Arlie Hochschild, working class Tea Partiers responded positively to the “deep story” notion that Obama was another “line cutter” that enjoyed a system tilted towards racial minorities.⁶⁴⁴ President Obama was not just a member of the liberal intelligentsia, he was a *product* of it. Rightwing media pundits seized this narrative and ran with it. A 2010 multi-state content analysis of conservative media outlets sorted 8 percent of the total content found on Tea Party websites into “personal attacks on Obama,” and a staggering 23 percent of total content into “conspiracy/socialism/government bad for country” categories, while these same categories only

⁶⁴² Richard Arney and Matt Kibbe. *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto*. 170.

⁶⁴³ Glenn Kessler, “More ‘birther’ nonsense from Donald Trump and Sarah Palin.” *The Washington Post*, April 12, 2011.

⁶⁴⁴ Arlie Hochschild. *Strangers in Their Own Land*. 137.

captured 5 percent and 2 percent on the mainstream conservative news outlet, *National Review Online*.⁶⁴⁵

In addition to the racist birther myths, the old conspiratorial alliance of racialized minorities and liberal politicians took on a burgeoning neo-nativist tone. Here, the Tea Party's rigid stance against immigration along the Mexico-U.S. border made a radical departure from the Bush Administration's previous attempts to court the growing Latino vote through an appeal to "compassionate conservatism" that embraced all god-fearing, family-oriented, and hardworking nationalities.⁶⁴⁶ In contrast to Bush's attempts to rebrand the GOP, the Tea Party's regression towards anti-immigration xenophobia capitalized on a recent increase in U.S. nativism which resided within a longer historical continuum of border-anxiety since World War II. Since the passage of the Bracero Program in 1942, the U.S. had relied on an inflow of inexpensive Latino laborers into exploitative agricultural occupations.⁶⁴⁷ While the "privileged" status allocated to Mexican braceros had been subject to violent deportations on the premise that these laborers depressed citizen's wages, as was the case with Operation Wetback, the program's eventual termination in 1964 gave way to a new policy consensus centered on further restrictions on Mexican-American immigration.⁶⁴⁸ Notably, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act established an annual visa quota for *all* Latin American countries, thus forcing Mexicans to compete with other nationalities for a limited number of visas, and the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which extended the budget and legal jurisdiction of the immigration

⁶⁴⁵ Christopher S. Parker and Christopher C. Towler. "Tea Party Preliminary Content Analysis." University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race and Sexuality, March 2010. https://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/tp_content_analysis.htm

⁶⁴⁶ E. J. Dionne. *Why the Right Went Wrong*. 219, 225.

⁶⁴⁷ Kevin R. Johnson and Bernard Trujillo. *Immigration Law and the U.S.-Mexico Border: ¿Sí Se Puede?* (University of Arizona press 2011). 35-38.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

enforcement.⁶⁴⁹ Ultimately, the domestic hardships imposed on Mexican industry by NAFTA and U.S. businesses' dependency on a pool of cheap labor circumvented the efficacy of immigrant restrictions.⁶⁵⁰ The draconian anti-immigrant measures of the 1990s and early 2000s hardly stymied the flow of migrant labor, and between 2009 and 2010, there was an upsurge in guestworker H-visa migration from Mexico “not seen since the height of the Bracero Program in the late 1950s,” while the number of undocumented immigrants levelled off at 11 million (around 80 percent of which were from Mexico or Central America).⁶⁵¹

Again, far-right populists would couple their charges against domestic social spending with a promise to restore the hypothetical “good old times” through “law and order.” Across the 1,079 articles drawn from 31 official Tea Party websites, WISER found that 6 percent of the content dealt with immigration, which dwarfed the 1 percent of immigrant content reported on the *National Review Online*.⁶⁵² Charges levelled against immigrants often glossed over or omitted any meaningful discussions on exploitative labor practices, and instead opted to draw up a conspiratorial alliance between federal decisionmakers and criminalized immigrants. For instance, conservative legal theorist and Tea Partier, Elizabeth Price Foley, assailed the Federal Government’s “look-the-other-way attitude” over the issue of undocumented migrants illegally purchasing Social Security Numbers and stealing identities to obtain work.⁶⁵³ Yet this fallacious argument overlooks the fact that undocumented immigrants inadvertently “subsidize” Social

⁶⁴⁹ Emma Aguila et al., “Chapter 3” in *United States and Mexico: Ties That Bind, Issues that Divide*. (Santa Monica: RAND, 2012).

⁶⁵⁰ Joshua Freeman. *American Empire*. 430-431.

⁶⁵¹ Douglas S. Massey. *Immigration and the Great Recession*. (Stanford: Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality 2012). 5-6.

⁶⁵² Christopher S. Parker and Christopher C. Towler. “Tea Party Preliminary Content Analysis.” https://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/tp_content_analysis.htm

⁶⁵³ Elizabeth Price Foley. *The Tea Party, Three Principles*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). 159 and 160.

Security and Medicare since most of these migrant laborers pay taxes on services they will most likely never receive.⁶⁵⁴ In a similar vein, Rand Paul alluded to this alliance between the “national security state” and undocumented workers through a rhetorical question: “Why has the Federal Government not better addressed our porous borders and illegal immigration problem with the same level of focus it now devotes to policing American citizens who choose to travel?”⁶⁵⁵ The question of course, did not criticize the existence of the security state itself, but rather, who it *should* police.

If the government could not be trusted to work for the “real” people, then at the very least, the free market could act as an “unwavering ally of the good citizens waiting in line for the American Dream.”⁶⁵⁶ Although their convictions did not overlap entirely, the grassroots Tea Party and the elite Tea Party could draw a mutual battle line between their movement of “producers” and the liberal “parasites” or “takers”. The 2010 Midterms yielded formidable results for the popular, anti-federal conspiracy outgrowth of the GOP. While the CBS/New York Times Poll had found that “more than one in three (36 percent) [of Tea Partiers] hails from the South, far more than any region,”⁶⁵⁷ the results of the 2010 Midterms exhibited a broader,

⁶⁵⁴ Eduardo Porter, “Illegal Immigrants are Bolstering Social Security with Billions.” *The New York Times*, April 5, 2005. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/illegal-immigrants-are-bolstering-social-security-with-billions.html>

⁶⁵⁵ Rand Paul and Jack Hunter. *The Tea Party Goes to Washington*. (New York: Center Street, 2011). 127.

⁶⁵⁶ Arlie Hochschild. *Strangers in Their Own Land*. 150.

⁶⁵⁷ Brian Montpoli, “Tea Party Supporters: Who they are and What they Believe.”

national constituency. The Tea Party and its endorsed candidates had picked up Congressional seats across the country, ranging from the Rust Belt States to Deep South States.

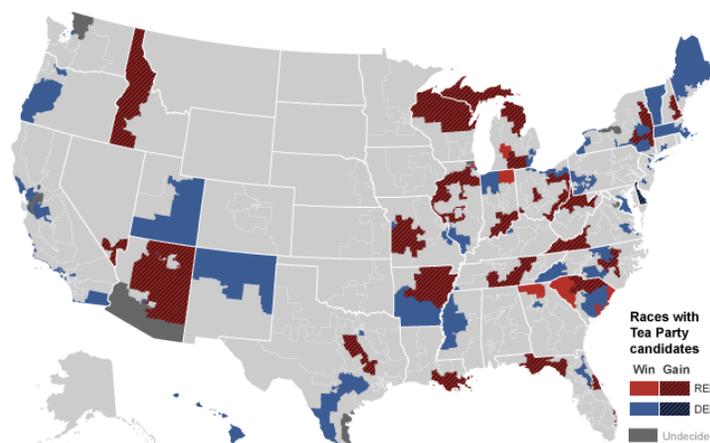


Figure 3 - "How the Tea Party Fared." *The New York Times*. November 4, 2010.
http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/11/04/us/politics/tea-party-results.html?_r=0

Almost every Congressional district that Tea Party candidates had won exhibited a gain over Republican performance in the last midterms. However, Tea Partiers proved to be far more competitive in Senate races. By November 2010, self-identified Tea Party candidates for the House had won only 39 of the 129 seats they contested, while 5 out of 8 contested Senate seats flipped to the Tea Party.⁶⁵⁸ A new cadre of conservative Senatorial firebrands, including notable figureheads such as Marco Rubio (R-FL), Rand Paul (R-TN), and Pat Toomey (R-PA) would bare the mantle of America's "forgotten majority". These new Senate seats would prove to be a decisive force behind future Congressional logjams throughout President Obama's administration. Building on their prior research, Sean Theriault contends that Tea Party Senators had joined ranks with incumbent Gingrich Senators to polarize Congressional voting further.

⁶⁵⁸ "How the Tea Party Fared." *The New York Times*, November 4, 2010.
http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/11/04/us/politics/tea-party-results.html?_r=0

Representing only 26 percent of the Senate, these two groups of Senators accounted for 37 percent of the polarization and caused over 30 percent of the obstructionist roll-call votes.⁶⁵⁹

5.7 The Tea Party as a Weather Balloon for ‘Trumpism’

By 2016, it seemed as though the Tea Party’s initial momentum as a popular movement had petered out. The anti-establishment victors of the 2010 Midterms found themselves in the awkward position of having to participate in the Washington politics they derided to secure their seats. By 2016, historian Geoffrey Kabaservice reasoned that a quarter of the GOP class of 2010 retired because “many of these legislators genuinely hated being in government – and so, unsurprisingly, were lousy at governing.”⁶⁶⁰ Indeed, the Brookings Institution projected that the only other comparable levels of House retirement among Republicans were found during the similar “1994 Revolution” which saw non-retirement departures reach 30 percent by 2000.⁶⁶¹ In other cases, some Tea Partiers lost their initial outsider clout as they became “sellouts” to the system. Marion Douzou’s analysis of Tea Partiers’ attempts to “purify” the Republican Party of its “Potomac fever” found that both activists and libertarian think tanks sought to constantly hold Tea Party incumbents accountable to an agenda that “tended to push conservative elected officials toward a harsher and harsher brand of conservatism.”⁶⁶² For example, Senator Pat

⁶⁵⁹ Sean M. Theriault. “The Gingrich Senators, the Tea Party Senators, and Their Effect on the U.S. Senate.” In *Politics to the Extreme, American Political Institutions in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Scott A. Frisch and Sean Q. Kelly. 32-38.

⁶⁶⁰ Geoffrey Kabaservice, “The forever grievance.” *The Washington Post*, December 4, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/12/04/tea-party-trumpism-conservatives-populism/>

⁶⁶¹ Molly E. Reynolds, “Why are junior members retiring from Congress?” *Brookings Institution*, February 17, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2016/02/17/why-are-junior-members-retiring-from-congress/>

⁶⁶² Marion Douzou. “The Tea Party Movement in Pennsylvania: A New Brand of Populism?” in *The Faces of Contemporary Populism in Western Europe and the US*, edited by K. Tournier-Sol and M. Gayte. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). 211-214.

Toomey's legislative concessions on gun control caused his "Heritage Action scorecard" to decrease from its 87 percent high in 2010 to 59 percent by 2017.⁶⁶³ Ironically, Tea Partiers that resolutely fought the establishment also caused support for their movement to diminish. A 2013 Pew Research Center survey found that the percentage of respondents reporting an "unfavorable" view of the Tea Party had grown from 25 percent to 43 percent throughout the debt ceiling and government shutdown crises, in which Tea Partiers had played an integral role in forcing.⁶⁶⁴

Nonetheless, the Tea Party had left its indelible mark on U.S. politics. In the short term, the Tea Party effectively "changed the rules of the game," by leveraging their zero-sum refusal to increase the federal debt ceiling, thereby forcing the Obama Administration and Congressional Democrats to compromise with the Budget Control Act of 2011.⁶⁶⁵ In the long term, the Tea Party decisively shifted the GOP to the right, symbolized by their successful replacement of House Speaker John Boehner, who had a voting record that "placed him far to Gingrich's right" in the post-1994 Congress, with Paul Ryan, a dogmatic libertarian that had run on Mitt Romney's 2012 ticket to carry the GOP's far-right factions (who, not so long after, was also branded as an establishmentarian).⁶⁶⁶ An additional breakdown in political discourse had occurred in tandem with these institutional developments. Richard D. Elliot's 2017 analysis of political speeches delivered during the interim period between the Tea Party and Trump found

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 214.

⁶⁶⁴ "Tea Party's Image Turns More Negative." *Pew Research Center*, October 16, 2013. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2013/10/16/tea-party-image-turns-more-negative/> and Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia*. 265.

⁶⁶⁵ Jack M. Balkin, "The Not-So-Happy Anniversary of the Debt-Ceiling Crisis." *The Atlantic*, July 31, 2012. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/07/the-not-so-happy-anniversary-of-the-debt-ceiling-crisis/260458/>

⁶⁶⁶ Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia*. 241 and 267.

that instances of speech coded as conspiratorial or politically “harmful” became commonplace in U.S. politics following 2010:

Rhetorical Styles	McCain 2008	Sarah Palin	Post-2010 Tea Party	Romney 2012	Trump 2016	Increases from McCain to Trump
Fear-Inducing	22	22	32	21	66	+44
Political Myths	20	34	40	28	97	+77
Racial Appeals	0	4	11	9	22	+22
Conspiratorial Accusations	0	1	5	1	14	+14
Personal Insults	13	30	39	14	71	+58
Total	55	127	127	74	270	+215

Table 10 - Harmful Discourse Instances Chat borrowed from Richard D. Elliott, “It’s Just a Jump to the Right: The Tea Party’s Influence on Conservative Discourse.” *European Journal of American Studies* Vol. 12, No. 2 (2017).

The vitriolic breach of traditional political decorum demonstrably laid the foundations for the 2016 and 2020 Trump campaigns.

5.8 An Unlikely Champion of the People

In many ways, Trump’s persona was a holdover of a bygone era of anti-federal optimism. Not only did his promise to make America great again directly copy the 1980 Reagan campaign’s slogan (“Let’s make American great again.”), but his bravado as a self-made billionaire with a penchant for shrewd deal-making drew from a cultural epoch described by historian Bruce Schulman, where “the entrepreneur became a national hero, and suspicion of business, a mistrust of unregulated corporations that had anchored American politics since the 1890s, all but vanished from American political discourse.”⁶⁶⁷ Nonetheless, Trump’s appeal to the voters disillusioned with politics-as-usual brandished assumptions and symbolism that

⁶⁶⁷ Bruce J Schulman. *The Seventies*. 249.

predated the Reagan presidency. Kevin Phillip's earlier outline of the diametric opposition between the White silent majority and the federal politicians that favored minority groups over this vital center would form the cornerstone of Trump's anti-federal appeal.

Rather than circumvent the post-truth narrative of the Washington "sell-outs" and their racialized beneficiaries, modern innovations tended to aid and radicalize this message further. The ongoing normalization of polarized discourse that Gingrich Republicans and their Tea Party inheritors had used to discredit a liberal Washington readily complemented Trump's characteristic "tactics of the arena, which borrowed its conventions of melodrama from reality television."⁶⁶⁸ This rhetorical shift was additionally exacerbated by a novel rise in the popularity of media platforms. Ross Perot's earlier third-party campaign against the establishment had valorized an idyllic return to "direct democracy" through "electronic town halls" that would bypass the corrupt influence of ailing democratic institutions, namely, "the political parties, the Establishment media, the Congress," which stood between the governor and the governed.⁶⁶⁹ Thus, the utopian vision of using the internet to establish a direct connection with the electorate had existed before Trump, but his endeavor to engage in a project of "technological disruption"⁶⁷⁰ via Twitter and online misinformation campaigns brought this project to its logical, albeit perverse, extreme. In some instances, media researchers have demonstrated that online platforms measurably furnish political polarity and misinformation as users aggregate together within like-minded ideological silos.⁶⁷¹ Within this novel arena of heightened

⁶⁶⁸ Jill Lepore, "America, Disrupted" in *These Truths: A History of the United States*. Section II specifically.

⁶⁶⁹ Charles Krauthammer. "Ross Perot and the Call-in Presidency." *Time Magazine* Vol. 4, Issue 2 (July 13, 1992). 84.

⁶⁷⁰ Jill Lepore, "America, Disrupted" in *These Truths: A History of the United States*. Part III.

⁶⁷¹ Many studies confirm this, but the extent to which platform algorithms perform a role is still hotly debated or unclear. For instance, Stiene Prate et al., "What's Not to Like? Facebook Page Likes Reveal Limited Polarization in Lifestyle Preferences," *Political Communication* Vol. 39, No. 3 (2021), identifies measurable polarization on political issues, and Alessandro Bessi et al., "Users Polarization on Facebook and YouTube." *PLoS ONE* Vol. 11,

polarization, the far-right demagogue who had actively pushed the racist Birther Conspiracy could find credible traction at a national level.

Trump's stunning ascendance, captured by *ABC News* reporter Meghan Keneally, which started with his crass promise to build a wall on the Southern U.S. border with Mexico, then continued with a bullish primary campaign of ad hominem attacks on his "establishment" contenders, and ended with his surprising victory as a "political novice against the experienced stateswoman,"⁶⁷² was undoubtedly a product of modern contingencies and historical continuity. Modern, insofar as it thrived within a political sphere where name-calling and misinformation had become normalized, and historical, insofar as his platform drew on a pre-existing lexicon of signifiers to build support among the same White working-class constituencies that his populist forebearers had pursued. Indeed, Trump expanded upon the initial inroads that the Tea Party had made within White working- and lower middle- class constituencies across the nation. Although he lost the popular vote, Trump secured a 306 to 232 vote victory in the electoral college due to the "razor-thin" margin of 107,000 votes that he received across the key Rust Belt states of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.⁶⁷³ In spite of his 2020 defeat against Joe Biden, Trump both retained and successfully "found 10.1 million additional supporters," across his traditional constituencies of rural and White, blue collar voters in addition to an expanding Latino/a base.⁶⁷⁴

Issue 8 (2016) discerns measurable polarization that occurs due to "conflicting narratives" which can lead to self-sorting irrespective of algorithms. Using community detection algorithms, Ana Lucia Smidt et al., "Polarization of the vaccination debate on Facebook." *Vaccine* Vol. 36, Issue 14 (2018) centers on the proliferation of misinformation within these silos using the recent case study of vaccine hesitancy.

⁶⁷² Meghan Keneally, "Donald Trump Captures Presidency in Historic and Stunning Upset of Hillary Clinton." *ABC News*, November 9, 2016. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/donald-trump-president-elect-clinton-concedes-historic-contest/story?id=43369466>

⁶⁷³ Tim Meko, Denise Lu, Lazaro Gamio, "How Trump won the presidency with razor-thin margins in swing states" *The Washington Post*, November 11, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/2016-election/swing-state-margins/>.

⁶⁷⁴ Ford Fessenden, Lazaro Gamio and Rich Harris. "Even in Defeat, Trump Found New Voters Across the U.S.," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/16/us/politics/election-turnout.html>

This outcome further troubled the country’s typical urban-rural divide if one also considers that “the 11 largest metropolitan areas in the United States gave Trump more total votes than all of rural America combined.”⁶⁷⁵ Across both elections, Trump had garnered the majority of his votes from White, non-college educated voters in 2016 (63 percent) and 2020 (65 percent).⁶⁷⁶

Many workers readily gravitated towards Trump due to his rejection of NAFTA. For Trump, NAFTA-bashing was a useful tool to prop himself up as an anti-establishment candidate, since it directly associated the traditional party of labor, the Democratic Party, with a multilateral trade agreement that had been unpopular with organized labor. The narrative was quite simple, but incredibly resonant with workers that had been dealt a painful blow with the off-shoring of manufacturing jobs: “Remember, it was Bill Clinton who signed NAFTA, one of the worst economic deals ever made by our country – or, frankly, any other country... I am not going to let companies move to other countries, firing their employees along the way, without consequences.”⁶⁷⁷ Furthermore, it allowed Trump to attack proponents of free trade within his own party. For instance, Trump consistently berated Ohio Governor John Kasich’s prior support for NAFTA and his forthcoming support for the Transpacific Partnership during a three-day Twitter rant.⁶⁷⁸ Across all of these charges, the main villain of Trump’s narrative was Mexico. His speeches across the country heralded Mexico’s industrial growth as the “eighth wonder of

⁶⁷⁵ Andrew Van Dam, “Trump wasn’t just a rural phenomenon. Most of his supporters come from cities and suburbs,” *The Washington Post* November 18, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/11/18/rural-city-trump-voters/>

⁶⁷⁶ “For Most Trump Voters, ‘Very Warm’ Feelings for Him Endured.” *Pew Research Center*, August 9, 2018. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/08/09/for-most-trump-voters-very-warm-feelings-for-him-endured/> and “Behind Biden’s 2020 Victory.” *Pew Research Center*, June 30, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/06/30/behind-bidens-2020-victory/>

⁶⁷⁷ Donald Trump. “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.” (Speech, Cleveland, Ohio, July 21, 2016). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-republican-national-convention-cleveland>

⁶⁷⁸ Donald Trump. “Tweets of March 12, 2016.” (March 12, 2016). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/tweets-march-12-2016>

the world”⁶⁷⁹ which conveniently papered over the fact that NAFTA only continued to hold down and even reduce wages for Mexican automotive laborers, while “modernization and rationalization of Mexican industry has cost two million formal-sector jobs,” as the country’s hundreds of state enterprises became privatized.⁶⁸⁰

The modern challenges of rising income inequality following the GFC and the rapid outsourcing of industrial jobs produced a new political topography of demands, yet Trump cast these sources of disillusionment within a political mould that had continually resurfaced since the 1960s. Washington politics were captive to a web of special interests that threatened an honest, hardworking majority of White workers. Again, the anti-democratic straightjacket imposed by “the lobbyists, by the donors, and by the special interests,” that worked in tandem with a “morally corrupt” elite class of Washington politicians became the bedrock of Trump’s populist appeal.⁶⁸¹ And just as Reagan and Nixon had folded racially marginalized, non-elite actors within this group of special interests, Trump took his cue from the rising anti-immigration animus that the Tea Party had cultivated six years before him. Ironically, the first victims of this charge were not his Democratic rivals, but the same politicians that had brandished similar racially charged anti-Washington attacks several years earlier. According to a statement released by the Trump campaign during the GOP primaries, Tea Party Senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, had “led the charge for even higher immigration rates,” after which he reassured the voters that “limiting job competition would reopen pathways to middle-class stability and shrink

⁶⁷⁹ Donald Trump. “Remarks at Erie Insurance Arena in Erie, Pennsylvania.” (Speech, Erie, Pennsylvania, August 12, 2016). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-erie-insurance-arena-erie-pennsylvania>

⁶⁸⁰ Kim Moody. *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy*. (London: Verso, 1997) 133.

⁶⁸¹ Donald Trump. “Remarks Announcing Candidacy for President in New York City.” (Speech, New York City, New York, June 16, 2015). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-candidacy-for-president-new-york-city>

welfare rolls... When I am president we will listen to the people- not the special interests.”⁶⁸² Of course, after Trump had branded his intraparty rivals as “special interest” candidates beholden to pro-immigration partisans, it did not take long before he established this same explicit connection to Democratic presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton:

Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, wants to give Obamacare to illegal immigrants and wants a total government takeover of healthcare. Her plan gives Social Security and Medicare to illegal immigrants, by making them citizens – bankrupting these programs for Americans. She doesn’t understand how Democracy works. Public servants are just that – they’re there to serve you. But the only people Hillary Clinton has ever served are the special interests.⁶⁸³

What made these accusations especially vitriolic, was the extent to which they employed misinformation to discredit federally funded safety nets. In the past, Reagan or Nixon would exaggerate the size and scope of welfare programs, but Trump took this thread of argument to its extreme by forging outright lies. Before a crowd in Arizona, Trump cited a statistic taken from the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) which estimated “that 62 percent of households headed by illegal immigrants use some form of non-cash welfare programs like food stamps or housing assistance. Tremendous costs, by the way, to our country.”⁶⁸⁴ However, the study which Trump referred to, bore spurious conclusions. Although the infamous 2015 study corroborated with Trump’s 62 percent figure, the data itself is skewed since it based its measurement off the heads of households, not the composition of households.⁶⁸⁵ This methodological shortcoming led to

⁶⁸² Donald Trump. “Statement by Donald J. Trump on New Census Data Showing Record Immigration Growth.” (Speech, Washington, D.C., March 7, 2016). <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-donald-j-trump-new-census-data-showing-record-immigration-growth>

⁶⁸³ Donald Trump. “Remarks at a Rally at Sun Center Studios in Chester Township, Pennsylvania.” (Speech, Chester Township, Pennsylvania, September 22, 2016). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-rally-sun-center-studios-chester-township-pennsylvania>

⁶⁸⁴ Donald Trump. “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.” (Speech, Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, 2016). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-immigration-the-phoenix-convention-center-phoenix-arizona>

⁶⁸⁵ Steven A. Camarota. “Welfare use by Legal and Illegal Immigrant Households.” Center for Immigration Studies, September 9, 2015. <https://cis.org/Report/Welfare-Use-Legal-and-Illegal-Immigrant-Households>

two crucial oversights: First, the study did not control for socioeconomic status, which lent itself to a problematic comparison between predominantly lower-income undocumented-headed households and typically higher-income “native” or citizen-headed households, which led to fallacious conclusions due to the fact that these programs are means-tested and targeted for lower-income cohorts.⁶⁸⁶ When socioeconomic status is considered, immigrants consume 27 percent fewer benefits relative to natives within a similar income and age bracket.⁶⁸⁷ Second, welfare reforms enacted in 1996 comprehensively restricted undocumented immigrants from using federal benefits, barring amnesty cases.⁶⁸⁸ Consequently, even though mixed-status families (including citizen and non-citizen members) may be eligible for household-level benefits, such as SNAP, their benefits are calculated based on eligible recipients within said household, meaning that per-capita SNAP receipts are lower for ineligible households than they are for citizen households.⁶⁸⁹ Nonetheless, it became an article of faith among Trump and his supporters that undocumented immigrants were sapping the resources of a means-tested system meant for citizens.

In an effort to recreate the same coalition of disenchanted White workers that had brought previous far-right populists to power, Trump drew directly from the Nixonian playbook. Just ten

⁶⁸⁶ Swathi Shanmugasundaram. “Center for Immigration Studies debunked.” Southern Poverty Law Center, October 02, 2017. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/10/02/center-immigration-studies-debunked>. This study responds directly to the 2015 article published by Camarota that Trump cited frequently.

⁶⁸⁷ Alex Nowrasteh and Robert Orr. “Immigration and the Welfare State: Immigrant and Native Use Rates and Benefit Levels for Means-Tested Welfare and Entitlement Program.” Immigration Research and Policy Brief No. 6, May 10, 2018. <https://www.cato.org/immigration-research-policy-brief/immigration-welfare-state-immigrant-native-use-rates-benefit> <https://www.cato.org/immigration-research-policy-brief/immigration-welfare-state-immigrant-native-use-rates-benefit>

⁶⁸⁸ Tanya Broder, Gabrielle Lessard, and Avidah Moussavian. “Overview of Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs.” National Immigration Law Center, June 2022. <https://www.nilc.org/issues/economic-support/overview-immeligfedprograms/>

⁶⁸⁹ Leighton Ku and Brian Bruen. “Poor Immigrants Use Public Benefits at a Lower Rate than Poor Native-Born Citizens.” Economic Development bulletin No. 17, March 4, 2013. <https://www.cato.org/publications/economic-development-bulletin/poor-immigrants-use-public-benefits-lower-rate-poor>

days before the 2016 presidential election, Trump began his speech at the Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona, with a celebratory claim that “the silent majority is back,” before launching into a fiery denunciation of an establishment that has “betrayed the American worker and family,” through foreign wars, open borders, and free trade.⁶⁹⁰ Amid all of the sources of modern humiliation and economic loss suffered by this “forgotten majority”, Trump offered a return to law and order. Nominally, Trump’s demands for law and order arose from the far-right’s new obsession with the Southern border. Yet, the request for border security via law and order came to transcend its particular usage, and became a reactionary demand for an era of U.S. politics that existed before racial and sexual minorities demanded greater democratic rights, before women worked outside of the home, and before privileged liberal elites siphoned hard-earned tax dollars into the pockets of lazy welfare recipients. For Trump’s silent majority, law and order suggested a return to White working-class prosperity.

Thus, law and order travelled seamlessly between multiple demands and issues addressed by the Trump Campaign. In some instances, as was the case in his remarks at a Virginia Beach rally, Trump would rouse border anxiety by claiming that “brutal drug cartels are spreading their reach into Virginia and Maryland... We must maintain law and order at the highest level, or we will cease to have a country.”⁶⁹¹ In other cases, Trump established the connection between law and order and its broader network of demands. After a lengthy dossier of statistics dealing with the U.S. trade deficit and a tenuously honest recount of how the Democratic party sold-out workers in Detroit, Trump concluded before a receptive audience in Detroit that “we will also

⁶⁹⁰ Donald Trump, “Remarks at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona” (Speech, Phoenix, Arizona, October 29, 2016). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-phoenix-convention-center-phoenix-arizona>

⁶⁹¹ Donald Trump. “Remarks in Virginia Beach, Virginia.” (Speech, Virginia Beach, Virginia, July 11, 2016). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-virginia-beach-virginia-0>

give our police and law enforcement the funds and support they need to restore law and order to this country. Without security, there can be no prosperity. We must have law and order.”⁶⁹²

Just as law and order had spanned a myriad of demands that Wallace’s fiery campaign had hoped to capture, it likewise formed the unyielding center point of Trump’s dynamic national appeal. Ahead of the 2018 midterms, Trump would issue the same (or similar) stock statement after addressing a regionally contingent demand, ranging from tariff disagreements among dairy farmers in Mosinee, Wisconsin, to immigration anxiety in Columbia, Missouri, to the loss of car manufacturing in Murphresboro, Illinois, with the claim that “this will be the election of the caravans, the Kavanaughs, law and order, tax cuts, and you know what else? It’s going to be the election of common sense, because most of it’s common sense.”⁶⁹³ Trump continued to tout his divisive commitment to the “rule of law” by arguing that “it is the foundation of our prosperity, our freedom, and our very way of life,” during the mass outpouring of civil unrest and demonstrations that seized the nation following the murder of George Floyd.⁶⁹⁴ And again, Trump campaign materials would present “Biden’s weakness on the issue of law and order” that had “empowered violent rioters and anarchists,” as a stark contrast with

⁶⁹² Donald Trump. “Remarks to the Detroit Economic Club.” (Speech, Detroit, Michigan, August 8, 2016). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-detroit-economic-club-1>

⁶⁹³ This quote is drawn directly from Donald Trump. “Remarks at a ‘Make American Great Again’ Rally in Murphresboro, Illinois.” (Speech, Murphresboro, Illinois, October 27, 2018). The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-murphresboro-illinois> Other cited speeches used a similar, if not same pronouncement. The other specific speeches alluded to here are: Donald Trump. “Remarks at a ‘Make America Great Again’ Rally in Columbia, Missouri” (Speech, Columbia, Missouri, November 01, 2018). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-columbia-missouri> and Donald Trump. “Remarks at a ‘Make America Great Again’ Rally in Mosinee, Wisconsin.” (Speech, Mosinee, Wisconsin, October 24, 2018). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-mosinee-wisconsin>

⁶⁹⁴ Donald Trump. “Remarks on the Nationwide Demonstrations and Civil Unrest Following the Death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota.” (Speech Washington, D.C., June 1, 2020). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-nationwide-demonstrations-and-civil-unrest-following-the-death-george-floyd>

the incumbent that “consistently stood firm in defending our police officers and the American way of life.”⁶⁹⁵

5.9 Conclusion: The Innate Danger of Trump’s Politics

At its core, law and order was a misnomer. Even in Nixon’s time, the calls for law and order only mobilized more division and violence between protestors and workers. In a similar vein, Trump made no distinction between demonstrators, rioters, and antifa (a derogatory catch-all for leftist protestors). While Trump’s criminalization of all protest harkened back to Nixon’s charge that “today we see a rising tide of terrorism, of crime, and on the campuses of our universities we have seen those who instead of engaging—which is their right—in peaceful dissent, engage in violence,”⁶⁹⁶ years of anti-federal paranoia had directly implicated Washington with the breakdown in order and stability. In the months leading up to President Biden’s certification in Congress, Trump had actively fanned the flames of voter fraud conspiracies. During the insurrection, Trump remarked that “we had an election that was stolen from us... but you have to go home now. We have to have peace. We have to have law and order,” during a videotaped address.⁶⁹⁷ Of course, after continuously using law and order to stir up reactionary agitators, his calls for peace were counterintuitive, and the ensuing January 6th Capitol Riots continued unabated for the entire day. Although a publicized group of right-wing extremist groups

⁶⁹⁵ “Campaign Press Release – Trump Campaign Launches New Ad on Joe Biden’s Submission to the Left-Wing Mob.” Online transcript provided by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley (October 01, 2020), The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/345658>

⁶⁹⁶ Richard Nixon, “Remarks in the Ohio State House, Columbus, Ohio.” (Speech, Columbus, Ohio, October 19, 1970). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-ohio-state-house-columbus-ohio>

⁶⁹⁷ Donald Trump. “Videotaped Remarks During the Insurrection at the United States Capitol.” (Speech, Washington, D.C., January 6, 2021). The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/videotaped-remarks-during-the-insurrection-the-united-states-capitol>

undoubtedly spearheaded the insurrection, *The Atlantic* found that these radicals only accounted for one in ten of protestors, while the vast majority (about ninety percent) of protestors were unaffiliated with these groups.⁶⁹⁸ This larger, variegated crowd of dissenters exhibited a broader loss of faith in democratic institutions, indicated by a Pew poll which found that three-quarters of Trump voters believed the election was stolen, while no more than a third of Trump voters across all surveyed age cohorts, education subgroups, and ideological leanings reported a correct view of the election.⁶⁹⁹

This loss of faith in the system was inextricably tied to a longer history of racially charged hatred towards Washington. In their recollection of the January 6th riot, *The New York Times* described the mob as a “constellation of hard-core Trump supporters: A largely white crowd, many of them armed with bats, shields and chemical spray; some carried Confederate flags and wore costumes of fur and horns inspired by QAnon; they were mostly men but were women too.”⁷⁰⁰ This “silent majority” of “law abiding” citizens that Trump had called upon were neither silent, nor law abiding. But it was clear they demanded specific laws, and a particular order; an imagined hierarchy that had previously privileged a group of self-reliant, god-fearing, and family-loving White workers, an affective hierarchy that Kevin Phillips had identified as a popular bastion against a tax-and-spend, elite liberal establishment. The widening gap of inequality and loss of status required a strongman that would restore the hypothetical “good times”.

⁶⁹⁸ Robert A. Pape and Keven Ruby. “The Capitol Rioters Aren’t Like Other Extremists.” *The Atlantic*, February 2, 2021. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/02/the-capitol-rioters-arent-like-other-extremists/617895/>

⁶⁹⁹ “Biden Begins presidency with Positive Ratings; Trump Departs with Lowest-Ever Job Mark: Voter’s Reflections on the 2020 Election.” *Pew Research Center*, January 15, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/01/15/voters-reflections-on-the-2020-election/>

⁷⁰⁰ Sabrina Tavernise and Matthew Rosenberg. “These Are the Rioters Who Stormed the Nation’s Capital.” *The New York Times*, January 7, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/us/rioters-capitol.html>

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis broaches the apparent paradox of White working-class support for the billionaire real-estate demagogue, Donald Trump. Specifically, it historicizes a few indeterminate phrases that appeared throughout his speeches and campaign platforms: An ongoing attack on a nebulous group of “special interests,” an attendant demand for a return to “law and order,” and a consistent reference to a group of voters that he defined as the “silent majority”. To conceptually grasp the historical lineage and evolution of these phrases, the argument uses Ernesto Laclau’s theorization of populism as a “political logic” because it permits the flexibility needed to comprehend the shifting axes of populist discourse during the latter half of the 20th century. The beginning of this discussion had noted that “special interests” had been a denigratory label for financial and corporate elites within the progressive populist lexicons of the early 20th century, while “law and order” had come to denote the peaceful and lawful federal endeavor to desegregate Southern schools during the 1950s. Although allusion to the “silent majority” did not come into extensive use until Nixon’s presidency, similar references to an undefined group of common folk voters (e.g., “forgotten man” or “silent Americans”) had originally been the province of progressive reformers. Yet these referents came to be associated with reactionary populists starting with the second Red Scare.

Laclau’s conception of the “floating signifier” as a hegemonic articulation of “the people” and their antagonists, which interrupts or displaces part of the original symbolic order (an “order” premised on its own people-versus-antagonists dyad) accounts for this historical shift.⁷⁰¹ While the Old Right had struggled to cultivate a popular base of support within a country

⁷⁰¹ Ernesto Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. 131.

dominated by the New Deal ethos of fair government, the anti-Communist crusades of Senator Joseph McCarthy briefly overcame conservatism's elitism by recycling the jargon used by progressive populists. Indeed, Michael Kazin's historicization of U.S. populist movements observed that

There *was* a close resemblance between the *rhetoric* of Populist campaigners and that of conservative anti-Communists. Both appealed to the will and interests of a self-reliant, productive majority whose spiritual beliefs, patriotic ideals, and communities were judged to be under attack at the hands of the modernizing elite...⁷⁰²

Though the virulent conspiratorialism of the anti-Communist cause became discredited, the "paranoid style" of anti-federal U.S. populism continued to live on under the New Right.

For Hofstadter, the "paranoid style" of U.S. politics had existed since the early days of the republic, when prominent Massachusetts minister Jedidiah Morse charged that the country was the target of an anti-Christian, Jacobinical plot.⁷⁰³ Yet, the New Right (what Hofstadter delineated as "pseudo-conservatism") deviated from these early movements insofar as it relied on a mentality of dispossession; America had been "taken away from them and their kind" and the New Right was "determined to try to repossess it and to prevent the final destructive act of subversion."⁷⁰⁴ Hofstadter's "pseudo-conservatives" resolutely believed that the country was dominated by an elite cadre of immoral intellectuals and communist subversives.⁷⁰⁵ This fabricated fear that the country had been wrested away from loyal Americans gained increasing prominence following the hard-fought victories of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s.

⁷⁰² Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion*. 192 and Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. 134.

⁷⁰³ Hofstadter. *The Paranoid Style of American Politics*. 13.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 23, 58-61.

As demonstrators fought to include racially marginalized citizens within a New Deal status quo that had predominantly benefitted White, male workers, conservatives embarked on a prolonged strategy of populist backlash to capture working-class defections from the Democratic Party. In consequence, the victories realized by Civil Rights protestors were used to augur a new “paranoid style” of politics premised on the assumption that a liberal Federal Government was overlooking the needs of its traditional White constituencies in favor of an “undeserving” underclass of citizens. The crass (and often false) notion that a racialized class of “undeserving” poor became inseparably wedded to an elite cadre of liberal bureaucrats and politicians served as the bedrock common-sense appeal for several major reactionary campaigns since the 1960s.

Goldwater had originally spearheaded the efforts to link the intellectual domain of fusionist conservatism with a popular Southern base when he used anti-federal constitutionalism to veil a racist rejection of desegregation. Ironically, the phrase “law and order”, which had been regularly used only three years earlier to ease school desegregation in the South, came to signify a pseudo-principled rejection of Civil Rights during the Goldwater campaign. Goldwater performed a rhetorical sleight of hand (that bore substantive consequences) by arguing that pro-segregationists blocking schoolhouse doors were law abiding citizens while the Federal Government consisted of elitist social engineers that had transgressed the legal boundaries of the states. Although he lost the presidential race, Goldwater’s appeal to the Southern segregationist “forgotten American” paved the way for Nixon’s later campaign on behalf of the “silent majority”. Nixon’s drive to construct a new Republican majority heavily hinged on his ability to draw White Southern populists into an alliance with Northern blue-collar ethnics disenchanted with the protests. To achieve this feat, Nixon co-opted and moderated the racially charged rhetoric of George Wallace’s third-party campaign. Though he maintained Wallace’s explicit

association of liberal elites' immoral permissiveness with a criminalized class of protestors, Nixon *did* dilute Wallace's segregationist stance by emphasizing a Republican commitment to ending de facto desegregation efforts, thus making racially charged Southern anti-statism amenable to a broader audience. Akin to Goldwater's law-and-order campaign, Nixon continuously suggested that his law-abiding "silent majority" took principled stands against protestors and racial equity.

The 1960s had redefined the contours of American populism. The enemies of the "silent majority" comprised of a group of liberal social engineers that had mobilized the resources of the Federal Government to give "unfair" advantages to historically excluded citizens. Both Reagan and Gingrich built on these foundations by erroneously linking certain entitlement programs, such as AFDC and SNAP, to a group of unnamed "special interests". According to Reagan, the causes for the economic malaise of the 1970s were simple: the Federal Government had eschewed national prosperity in favor of a skewed political calculus that involved the transfer of workers' hard-earned tax dollars towards entitlement programs popularly associated with a criminalized class of Black welfare "cheats". In response, Reagan continued the Nixonian law-and-order impetus towards replacing social workers with law enforcement officers. The criminalized "welfare cheat" appeared in similar form with Gingrich's exaggerated claims that organized crime was taking advantage of SNAP or that parents were beating their children for scoring high on psychology tests, thereby failing to qualify for disability checks.⁷⁰⁶ Undoubtedly, the idea that the "special interest" relationship between an economically deprived class of Americans and an apathetic cadre of liberal elites had spawned criminal delinquency was

⁷⁰⁶ Lars-Erik Nelson. "Where the Real Fraud is." *The Washington Post*, March 26, 1995. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1995/03/26/where-the-real-fraud-is/345c3c5b-bb0e-4d79-8f5e-55bf9b45467f/>

spurious. Nonetheless, Reagan and Gingrich nurtured this simple conspiracy in order to provide a popular rationale for federal retrenchment.

Thus, by the 21st century, the (racist) taxpayers versus tax-soaks narrative had been a well-trodden path established by reactionary populists intent on voicing former New Deal Democrats' disillusionment with equity. When the Tea Party and its ideological inheritor, Donald Trump, claimed that more law and order was needed to stop illegal immigrants from stealing jobs and welfare money, they were merely adapting the reactionary playbook to the modern circumstances of globalism. The core of this appeal relies on the presumption that a "silent majority" of workers needs protection from what William F. Buckley had denounced as the "university crowd"⁷⁰⁷ of immoral and disconnected governing elites that privilege racial minorities over Whites.

Barring a few exceptions, the arsenal of populist language had been firmly embedded within the progressive domain of social reform for the first half of the 20th century. As the language of the Populist Party and the New Deal coalition came to be displaced by a "paranoid style" of politics premised on the failure of liberalism to protect White workers, popular invocations of "special interests", "law and order", or "the forgotten American" took on reactionary demands. For Laclau, the emphatic shift of these signifiers' content amounted to the displacement of one populist frontier (the dyad between corporate elites and workers) with a rival frontier.⁷⁰⁸ This rival frontier relied on a devious mix of conspiratorial politics that suggested an anti-democratic alliance between liberal elites in the Democratic Party and their racialized non-elite adjuncts. With this new enemy of the people identified, the monied elites and

⁷⁰⁷ Quoted in E. J. Dionne. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. 64.

⁷⁰⁸ Ernesto Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. 131.

real estate moguls that had been denounced by Roosevelt could palpably unite with a “silent majority” of White workers against a common foe: the liberal welfare state.

Throughout this thesis, it has been my intent to historicize the “Reagan Democrat” phenomenon that seems to appear as a recurring “upset” in the annals of recent U.S. history. While this debate fails to provide an exhaustive list of reasons as to why White working-class voters supported Trump in large numbers during the 2016 and 2020 elections, it *does* hope to challenge the fixity of current populist articulations. By denaturalizing the New Right’s current monopoly on populist language, it becomes possible to rethink the “logic of difference” that Laclau argued was endemic to democracy.⁷⁰⁹ As stated in the introduction, this logic of difference need not take an essentialist form, thus rendering the possibility for an alternative conception of “the people” and their antagonists possible. Although it resides outside of the scope of this manuscript to provide a realistic “blueprint” for an alternative construction of the *vox populi*, some authors and progressive politicians have elucidated promising avenues for progressive populism. For instance, Elizabeth Warren’s push for a two-cent wealth tax on every dollar made over \$50 million, fundamentally cleaves the U.S. electorate into a populist camp of average Americans that would immediately benefit from budget windfalls (which would go towards popular services, such as K-12 education) versus a small redoubt of conservative billionaires.⁷¹⁰ Likewise, Stacey Abrams’ Fair Fight Action PAC, which was originally founded as a response to her contenders’ use of voter suppression in Georgia’s 2018 gubernatorial race, has increased the scope of its activities from free and fair elections to the expansion of Medicaid

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁷¹⁰ “Ultra-Millionaire (2 Cent) Tax,” Warren, accessed June 7, 2022, <https://2020.elizabethwarren.com/toolkit/umt>. and Elizabeth Warren. “Two: A Teacher,” in *Persist*. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2021).

and the elimination of medical debt.⁷¹¹ Abram’s focus on medical debt undoubtedly reflects a broader popular concern among all Americans (regardless of party identification) with “making health care more affordable” (72 percent polled by the Pew Research Center).⁷¹² Such movements express alternative responses to popular issues, and provide hope that populist movements can be geared towards the creation of fair government during the 21st century.

⁷¹¹ Alan Blinder and Richard Fausset. “Stacey Abrams Ends Fight for Georgia Governor With Harsh Words for Her Rival.” *The New York Times*, November 16, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/16/us/elections/georgia-governor-race-kemp-abrams.html> and “Medicaid Expansion,” Fair Fight, accessed June 7, 2022, <https://fairfight.com/medicaidexpansion/>

⁷¹² Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Ruther Igielnik and Rakesh Kochhar. “Most Americans Say There is Too Much Economic Inequality in the U.S. but Fewer Than Half Call It a Top Priority.” *Pew Research Center*, January 9, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/01/09/most-americans-say-there-is-too-much-economic-inequality-in-the-u-s-but-fewer-than-half-call-it-a-top-priority/>

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<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/1982-time-series-study/#:~:text=The%201982%20ANES%20is%20a,drawn%20using%20area%20probability%20sampling.>
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