



through a feminist looking glass:

# U.S. FASCISM

&

# ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Scripps College

Spring 2025

# IF IT LOOKS LIKE A DUCK AND QUACKS LIKE A DUCK...



Many people think fascism is like a duck: you know it when you see it.

Fascism is obviously big parades of evil or brainwashed people with swastikas everywhere.  
Fascism is obviously propaganda posters of a scary dictator.  
Fascism is obviously a drooling, crazed man with a tiny mustache and a red arm band.

Can you define fascism? No, seriously.

What do you think of when you hear the word “fascism”?

Could you identify it before your government busts out the swastikas and tiny mustaches?

Could you identify the duck?

There is no duck.

That is to say: fascism does not have one continuous, physical form.

It’s “protean”, manifesting differently depending on its host environment the way a disease’s symptoms vary depending on the body it infects.

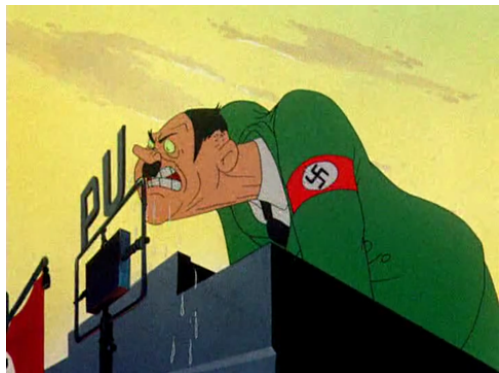
But this is not how it’s treated in daily American politics. The word has been watered down through its overuse in daily political theatrics.

Fascism is little more than a bad word.

Don’t like your political opponent? Call them a fascist and that’ll at least turn some of the public against them. No one likes a fascist.

Until they do.

It’s hard to avoid infection by something you can’t identify.



Think of fascism like a tootsie pop...  
...if it was full of scared, angry razors.

The exterior can be appetizing. A few licks of nationalistic pride and valuing of order, unity, discipline, and power can be tasty.

But the more you eat, the closer you get to the core.

### Palingenetic ultranationalism

Palengenesis = rebirth

Ultrnationalism = nationalism on steroids

Something has gone wrong with your nation, and it must be reborn in the image of its mythesized past. (Even though that romanticized vision of the past was never real or only real for a few people). This mythic power is central to fascism.

### Racism

Fascism relies on assumptions of superiority/inferiority between groups of people based on real or imagined immutable characteristics. This is because ultrnationalism celebrates its nation/culture as being inherently virtuous and great. A nation/culture that is assumed inherently superior also assumes it is deserving of more than those of other nations/cultures, manifesting in racism.

### Patriarchical

### assumptions

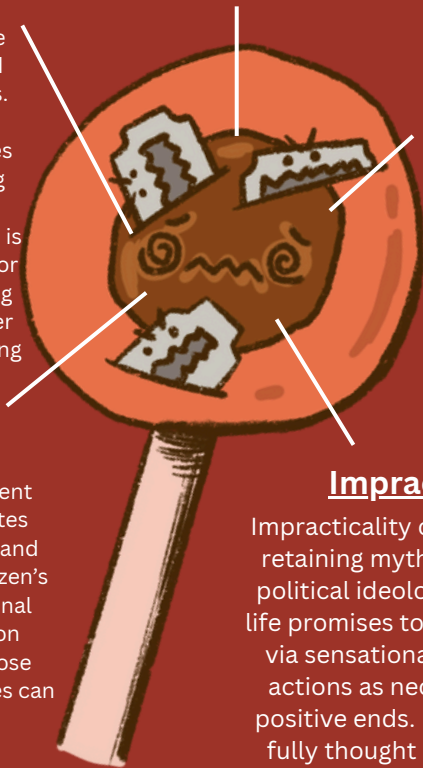
Similar to fascism's inherent racism, racism necessitates subjugation based on sex and gender. Under fascism, citizen's bodies are tools for national rebirth. However, a nation cannot be rebirthed if those with reproductive capacities can say no.

### Drive towards authoritarianism

Fascism is inherently anti-liberal in that it rejects all aspects of liberalism including: democracy, pluralism, individualism, separation of powers, etc. Fascism is utopian in that it envisions a homogenous national society, but ridding a nation of heterogeneity necessitates the eventual creation of a highly centralized state to restrict daily life, manufacture consensus via propaganda and indoctrination, and repress and terrorize perceived enemies within and outside of the state; aka authoritarianism

### Impracticality of end goals

Impracticality of fascist end goals is vital to retaining mythic power. It is a reactionary political ideology that relies on larger than life promises to keep its supporters engaged via sensationalism and to justify extreme actions as necessary to achieve extreme positive ends. Fascist campaigns are never fully thought out as feasible, sustainable models for society.



**Nutrition Facts**

Serving Size:

	%Daily Value*
	%
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\*Percent Daily Value May Vary

**Nutrition Facts**

Serving Size:

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\*Percent Daily Value May Vary

**Nutrition Facts**

Serving Size:

	%Daily Value*
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There isn't just one fascism tootsie pop.

**Fascism comes in many flavors and nutrition levels.**

We can identify fascism through its layers.

Exterior: fascism appeals through rhetoric and national pride. portrays a face that is tough, nationalistic, order-loving—projecting unity, discipline, and power. Frequently rise to power through promises of restoration, economic growth, national pride and performative compliance with liberal values (such as democracy and individualism). How this exterior specifically manifests depends on the place, time, and political context

Interior: the exterior masks the core of brutal authoritarianism and suppression. how many licks to get to the center of a tootsie pop? and how many licks to get a fascist regime to reveal itself of its true nature of repression, violence, censorship?





# What fascism looked like in the past

While there have been many fascist movements, there have been only two instances where fascism has taken state-wide power: Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.\*



Founded as a political movement by Benito Mussolini in post-WWI Italy, fascism was adopted and taken to its logical extremes by Adolf Hitler.

In both cases, the nation was facing severe societal unrest as a result of post-war economic collapse, the devastation and existentialism of a war on an unprecedented scale.

In both cases, the liberal government was seemingly powerless, unwilling, or otherwise ineffective in alleviating everyday citizens dire circumstances.

In both cases, fascism took hold completely legally and over the course of at least a decade.



It is important to clarify that fascism never takes hold overnight. Nor does it happen without the knowledge and consent of the citizens with political power.



Auschwitz did not pop up overnight and without the German and Italian citizenry's knowledge. The Nazi genocide against millions of Jewish, Romani, Polish, disabled, queer, and otherwise 'non-Aryan' people was gradual. Hitler made it clear well before he was elected as Chancellor that he intended to 'cleanse' Germany of those "dirtying the blood of the once great 'Aryan' nation." Once he was elected, the state persecution of target groups started with imprisonment of political opponents with the establishment of Dacau. Restrictions on academic writings that were "un-German", which primarily meant texts by Jewish and other non-German authors, feminist texts, and queer texts, were put in place and public book burnings were held throughout Germany.

\*This just means that an explicitly fascist political organization only took state-wide power twice. There have many instances where a political organization that did not explicitly adhere to fascism as a political ideology took state-wide power and created a fascist state. ie: Imperial Japan, Francoist Spain, etc.



All the while, legislature was being put in place layer by layer to criminalize Jewish people and other groups blamed for the ‘decline’ of German state. Jewish people were prevented from engaging in public education, then banned from journalism. The German state designated them as first secondary citizens, separate from the rest of the German citizenry, until eventually they were stripped of citizenship altogether.

Romani people were declared a “plague” and the German authorities raided Romani and Sinti communities to arrest and detain them.

Disabled, neurodivergent, Romani, and Black people were forcibly sterilized to “prevent hereditary diseases” within the German population.

Year by year, detainment camps (which would soon become death camps) were established. Jewish, Romani, and other groups declared threats to the German state were arrested and placed in these camps or confined to ghettos which would be used to expedite forced deportation to the death camps.

Legislature was put in place to target queer or anyone suspected on being queer as they were perceived as threats to the genetics of future Germans. Additionally, German gay and lesbian people were viewed as not only as threats, but burdens on German society as they were unlikely to have biological children, and thus not contribute to the growth of the “Aryan” population.

As you may notice, the violent scapegoating and subjugation of certain groups was underscored by an obsession with racial purity and ‘preservation’ of the dominant racial group. Namely, the Nazis believed that German people, specifically those of “Aryan” decent (Aryan was an invented term to describe and imagined superior race), were at risk of extinction due to the presence of “non-Aryan” races within Germany.



# What fascism looks like in the present...



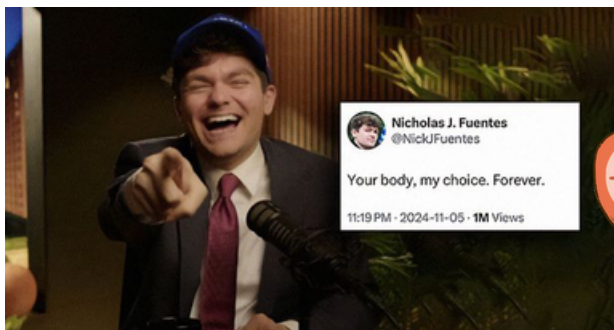
neo-Nazis/Pinstripe Nazis in US; big overlap w white nationalists  
people in power promoting eugenicist rhetoric/ideology


takes on far more respectable face now

dogwhistles, plausible deniability; now its more like active denial of  
reality

pronatalism - who do we support/force to bear children and who do we  
suppress from having offspring?

**The “reactionary tendency” is very much alive. Fascism always  
operates under false and demagogic colors. It especially tries to cover  
up the fact that it is “the open dictatorship of the most reactionary  
section of monopoly capital.” - Gus Hall**



 **Nicholas J. Fuentes**  
@NickJFuentes  
Your body, my choice. Forever.  
11:19 PM · 2024-11-05 · 1M Views



# PUBLIC WARNING

Most Nazis DON'T wear swastikas. Familiarize yourself with these symbols and keep your eyes open:



# KNOW YOUR ENEMY!



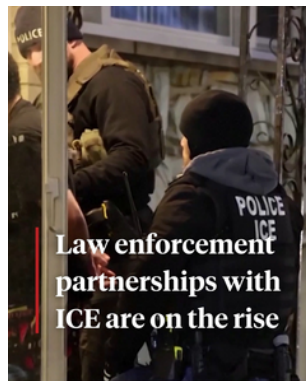


# Trump's policies



including, but not limited to:

- xenophobic and white supremacist policies: illegal deportation of immigrants to CECOT yet welcomes white South Africans - ghettos to isolate Jews and Auschwitz were in Poland, not Germany
- attempts to revoke birthright citizenship - Nuremberg Race Laws
- executive orders targetting primarily Latine and Arab immigrants; framing it as targeting “criminal aliens”
- proclaimed “invasion” from immigrants - same rhetoric as Hitler
- executives orders targeting LGBTQ+ people
- censorship of government sanctioned language
- campaign against “diversity, equity, and inclusion”, ousted the top female and Black leaders in government
- anti-LGBTQ, Anti-Trans Crusade policies - identity documents like passports only issued with M or F sex marker (customer's biological sex at birth), alienation of trans community
- executive order dismantling higher edu. → strips educational equity, attack on disabled, BIPOC, religious freedom dismantled, sex-based discrimination unprotected -- including against LGBTQ students -- etc





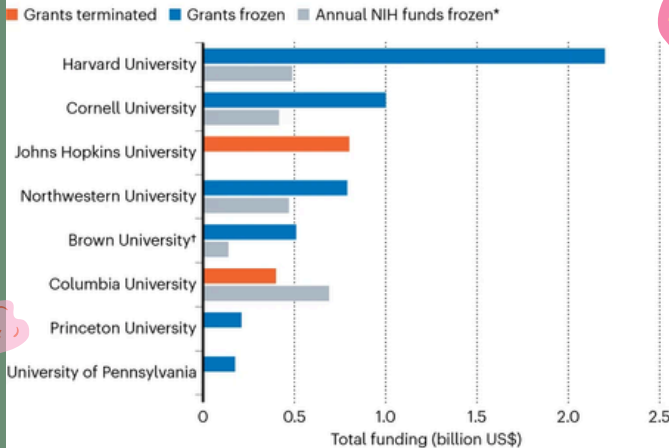


**Fascism, Trump, and the war against higher education. The signs are there:**

- 1. Conservative, market-driven approach of cuts to funding**
- 2. Propaganda and Control - Efforts to promote “patriotic education” and fight “leftist indoctrination”**
- 3. Authoritarianism - Threats to pull funding from**

## SCIENCE STALLED

The administration of President Donald Trump began its campaign against US universities by terminating funding to Columbia University in New York City and Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Since then, administration officials have allegedly frozen US\$4.9 billion in research funds across 6 more institutions. On 17 April, the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) was also directed to stop making any awards to five of the universities.



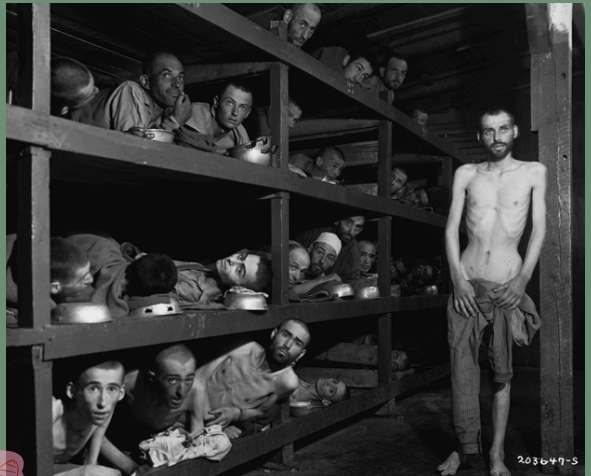
\*Data reflect the amount that each university got from the NIH during the 2024 fiscal year. These amounts probably overlap to some extent with what has already been frozen at these universities. Please note that some amounts represent university systems; for instance, numbers for Cornell University include funds for the main campus in Ithaca, New York, as well as Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City. †Frozen grants have yet to be reported by researchers at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

enature

## Fascism has real-world consequences.

- militant nationalism → hostility + exclusion of “the other”
- suppression of dissent → normalizes repression of free speech and opposition
- dehumanization → war, mass starvation, collapse of civil society

we see in real time how trump's administration flirts with fascism



# What does this mean for Asian American communities?

- we see fascism already encroaching upon our communities today.
- right-wing mobilization by immigrant Chinese residents in the San Gabriel Valley
- national right-wing politics hijacks the political issues of crime and public safety that many immigrants/asian communities values
- “racial triangulation; asian americans are afforded some social/economic advantages relative to other non-white people—even while still facing alienation and racism” - Promise Li



## What do we mean by “Asian American”?

we recognize Asian Americans as those of Asian descent; a coalition of multiethnic groups from the continent of asia

(we also recognize contentions with the label “AAPI” in regards to Pacific Islander groups torn over inappropriate underrepresentation and being subsumed into this so-called “Asian-American & Pacific Islander” group)

# Why are some Asian Americans siding with American fascists?

An identity does not protect anyone from fascism.

Fascism has transcultural resonance, and its effects extend into immigrant communities in the United States, particularly among Asian American (AA) populations.

The interplay between patriarchal cultural inheritances, economic assimilation, and alignment with dominant political structures has fostered an environment where gendered subjugation is constant.

**Discipline, order, and national pride** are all symbols that are praised within diaspora spaces, and this translates into support for U.S. leaders who mirror these values, including Trump and elements of the American religious right.

In many Asian immigrant communities, admiration for “strongman” leadership is not foreign—it is often imported from homeland histories where authoritarian rule was normalized. Layered onto this is the persistence of traditional patriarchal structures within many Asian cultures, which often prioritize **male authority, filial piety, and gendered expectations of obedience**.

Fascism is a political machine that feeds on hierarchy, exclusion, and fear. Historically, once fascists get what they want from marginalized people that side with them for temporary protection, they go next; ie: Margherita Sarfatti, Jewish writer & journalist that was one of Mussolini’s closest sexual partners, authored his biography, once Mussolini sided with Hitler and Hitler established death camps, Sarfatti was sent too. This is not a story of exceptional betrayal—it is the **blueprint of fascist logic: use, discard, eliminate**.



# Why you, as an Asian American woman or ally to Asian American women, should resist fascism

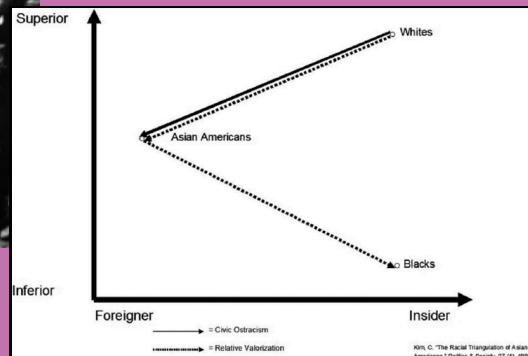
fascism exacerbates issues that already run rampant in Asian American communities:

- fascism promotes violent, hypermasculine sexuality — Asian American women experience domestic and sexual violence from their male partners at disproportionately high rates
- fascism's racism and xenophobia, specifically in the American white-supremacist variant, is explicitly anti-Asian — exacerbation of violence against Asians during COVID by white supremacists, fascists/fascist sympathizers
- reproductive rights and coercion of the gender norms is not unexpected symptoms of fascist governments. women's bodies became tools for nationalist and racial agendas.

fascism exacerbates issues that run rampant in all American communities! The harms described above hurt everyone!

★ !!!Asian Americans=used as a wedge by white supremacy (a key component of fascism regimes)—typically by being framed as “model minorities”!!! ★

It is our responsibility (AA communities + allies) to counteract forced & violent division between our racial groups and others / rework our conceptions of race as a social construct





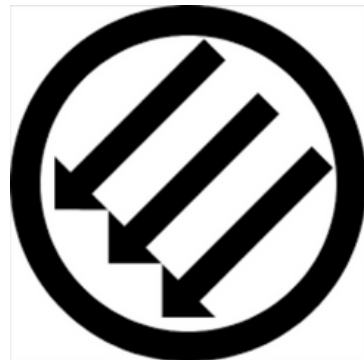
# IF IT LOOKS LIKE A... DUCK?

UNLIKE FASCISM, MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WHAT ANTI-FASCISM IS. UNLIKE FASCISM, REPRESENTATIONS OF IT, DISCOURSE AROUND IT, AND EVEN USE OF THE WORD IS LARGELY ABSENT FROM DAILY LIFE.

IF YOU'RE AN AMERICAN, THIS IS PROBABLY THE SCARY WORD FROM 2020 THAT TRUMP AND OTHER FAR-RIGHT FIGURES LABELED A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.

CLARIFYING POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS/STRAIGHT UP LIES:

- ANTIFA IS SHORT FOR "ANTI-FASCISM"
- IT IS NOT A SINGULAR ORGANIZATION, BUT RATHER A POLITICAL IDEOLOGY THAT PEOPLE ORGANIZE UNDER (LIKE FASCISM!)
- NOT ONE BROAD, CONNECTED MOVEMENT: ANTI-FASCISM IS NOTORIOUSLY DECENTRALIZED AND GRASSROOTS





# The many layers of anti-fascism:

Anti-fascism is not just a reactive political stance—it's a deep, multidimensional commitment to human dignity, justice, and sustainable coexistence

creation of sustainable future

## anti authoritarian

- defense of democracy and participatory governance
- protection of civil liberties
- opposition to surveillance states



## anti racism

- solidarity with migrants, Indigenous people, LGBTQ+ communities, and others historically targeted by authoritarian regimes
- going forward may look like: mutual aid networks, abolitionist movements, and intersectional organizing.

“a rejection of the classical liberal phrase [...] ‘I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it’”

**we owe it to ourselves and each other: tolerance as a moral and political necessity, a commitment to free speech—even for ideas that we find objectionable or offensive.**

# What has it looked like in the past?

Iron Front  
No pasaràn  
the 43 Group



Since the conception of fascism, there has been anti-fascism  
anti-fascism has taken many different forms to combat the many  
different forms of fascism  
tactics have varied greatly across time as fascist tactics have evolved  
anti-fascist movement have often collaborated with communists,  
socialists, anarchists, feminists and civil rights activists  
most effective anti-fascist organizations have had a variety of tactics  
ie: had factions within their organizations such as a section for direct  
action, a section for information gathering on fascist organizing to  
disrupt, a section to organize mutual aid, etc



# What does it look like in the present?

Contemporary anti-fascism is no longer just a resistance to the Nazis. Struggle takes forms against systems of authoritarianism, racism, nationalism, and gendered oppression that are embedded into the workings of state policy and everyday culture. Current day anti-fascism looks like community defense, political education, direct action, cultural resistance, and mutual aid that is tailored to meet the evolving tactics of authoritarian power.



Groups like the Rose City Antifa is one of the most well-known and long-standing anti-fascist groups in the U.S.

RCA is part of a larger decentralized anti-fascist movement that confronts far-right, white nationalist, and neo-Nazi ideologies. RCA is **non-hierarchical and decentralized**, which is often the case for most anti-fascist groups. Members typically operate **anonymously** due to threats from both far-right actors and law enforcement.

Right-Wing Demonization: "Antifa" more broadly has been frequently misrepresented by conservative media and politicians as a centralized, terrorist-like organization. In reality, antifa is a loosely connected network, not a singular group with a leader or national structure.

Anti-fascism in the streets includes:



- Counter-protests
- Legal and physical defense of spaces from hate groups.
- Copwatching, bystander intervention, and support for communities under surveillance and police violence.

# Anti-Fascism + Feminism

"It's not possible to be Anti-Fascist Without Being Feminist" -Ewa Majewska



## WHY TAKE A FEMINIST APPROACH?

Many notable resistance groups throughout history (Black Panther Party, Leftist/Marxist movements, etc.) have had issues with internalized misogyny and sexism. These groups work upon a traditional, essentialized male hierarchy of brute "strength" and "force". Therefore femininity= weakness (Women often pushed behind the scenes or discredited within these movements)

Feminism has been largely left out of anti-fascist discussions despite the fact that fascists have historically been against feminism(s).

The patriarchy is a pervasive structure that is difficult for many groups to give up.



### The role of women in fascist movements:

- Trad-wife, nuclear family model essentialized to fascist regimes
- violently racist and misogynist narratives: Fascism reduced women to reproduction, women + LGBTQ+ members= "impure", need to be controlled, useless toward regime of palingenetic ultranationalism
- Inherently transphobic: Trans women unable to reproduce, makes conservatives angry to this day

**REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM = ESSENTIAL TO RESISTING FASCISM'S RESURGENCE.**

**ADVOCACY FOR BODILY AUTONOMY. GENDER EQUALITY. AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IS NOT ONLY OPPOSING FASCISM POLITICALLY BUT ALSO CHALLENGING PATRIARCHAL AND STATE CONTROL OVER OUR LIVES.**

# CHECK OUT SOME MORE RESOURCES!

WHAT IS FASCISM? WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE IN THE PAST: WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE  
IN THE PRESENT:

- Griffin, Roger, editor. *Fascism*. Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Stanley, Jason. *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*. Random House, 2018.
- The New F-Word overviews Marxist view of fascism, not generic fascism; video
- MUSSOLINI: How Fascists Win & Lose video
- How US Neo-Nazism Actually Works | Authorized Account | Insider video
- Trump, fascism and a warning from history | Front Burner CBS News video
- How The Holocaust Happened video
- So this is how democracy dies? video
- De Genova, Nicholas., “Everything is Permitted”: Trump, White Supremacy, Fascism *American Anthropologist*. Accessed 6 Mar. 2025

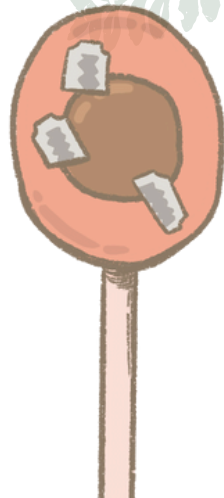
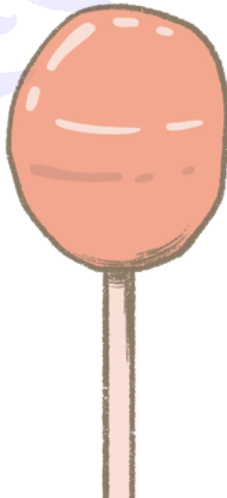
<https://www.americananthropologist.org/online-content/everything-is-permitted-trump-white-supremacy-fascism>

- WOMEN IN THE THIRD REICH
- Women In Nazi Propaganda
- Nazi policies towards women
- POLITICIZING PRONATALISM: EXPLORING THE NAZI IDEOLOGY OF WOMEN THROUGH THE LENS OF VISUAL PROPAGANDA, 1933-1939
- De Grand, Alexander. “Women under Italian Fascism.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1976, pp. 947–68. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2638244>. Accessed 1 May 2025.
- PREWAR NAZI GERMANY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE HOLOCAUST



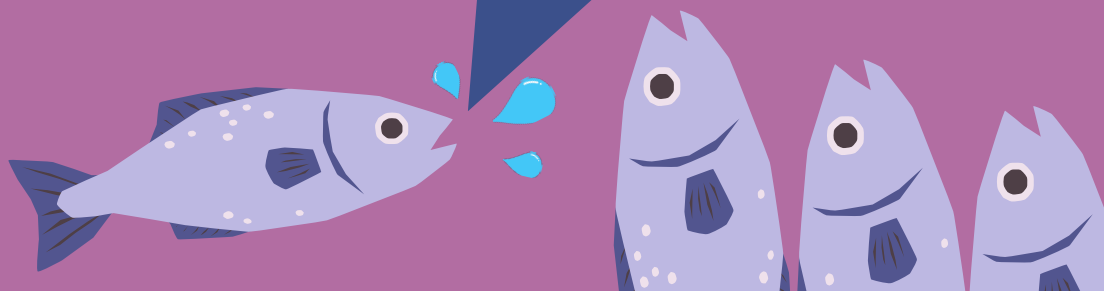
## Trump policies:

- Understanding Executive Orders and What They Mean for the LGBTQ+ Community
- Overview of President Trump's Executive Actions Impacting LGBTQ+ Health
- Trump Anti-LGBTQ+ Executive Order Litigation Tracker
- These Words Are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration
- 'Mind-boggling': US CDC orders gender-related terms cut from scientific papers
- Here are all the ways people are disappearing from government websites
- 'Alien Enemies' or Innocent Men? Inside Trump's Rushed Effort to Deport 238 Migrants
- U.S. sent 238 migrants to Salvadoran mega-prison; documents indicate most have no apparent criminal records
- original executive order text: PROTECTING AMERICAN COMMUNITIES FROM CRIMINAL ALIENS
- original executive order text: PROTECTING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AGAINST INVASION



## What does this mean for Asian American Communities?

- North Carolina Asian Americans Together (NCAAT).  
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NCAAT, 8 March 2022,  
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- Park, Jerry Z. “Second-Generation Asian American Pan-Ethnic Identity: Pluralized Meanings of a Racial Label.”  
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<https://doi.org/10.1080/00447471.2023.2167934>. Accessed 20 Feb. 2025.





## Anti-Fascisms + feminism

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  - **Bray, Mark. Antifa. Melville House, 29 Aug. 2017.**
  - **Gibson, Scott H. "Fighting Fascism in the USA: Lessons from History." People's World, 3 March 2025, <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/fighting-fascism-in-the-usa-lessons-from-history/>.**
  - **Gleason, Abbie L. "Anti-Fascism and Literature." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature, Oxford University Press, 29 October 2021, <https://oxfordre.com/literature/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-881>.**
  - **Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. Fighting Against War and Fascism Digital Archive. New York University, <https://dlib.nyu.edu/fawf/>.**
  - **Bray, Mark. "Everyday Anti-Fascism in the Era of Trump." ROAR Magazine, [roarmag.org/magazine/everyday-anti-fascism-trump/](http://roarmag.org/magazine/everyday-anti-fascism-trump/).**
  - **<https://irgac.org/autoren/andrea-dip>. "'It's Not Possible to Be Anti-Fascist without Being Feminist.'" IRGAC, 29 Nov. 2023, [irgac.org/articles/it-s-not-possible-to-be-anti-fascist-without-being-feminist/](https://irgac.org/articles/it-s-not-possible-to-be-anti-fascist-without-being-feminist/). Accessed 7 Mar. 2025.**
  - **[The Philosophy of Antifa | Philosophy Tube](#)**
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