

Statement for the Record by Dr. Lee Bebout
Professor of English
Arizona State University

“Weaponizing Victimhood in U.S. Political Culture and the January 6, 2021, Insurrection”

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Introduction

As a means of introduction, I am a professor at Arizona State University where I research and teach about of race in American culture. I have authored two scholarly books along with numerous peer-reviewed articles on race, language, and American culture. A major thread in my scholarship has been the endurance and mainstreaming of white supremacy in American culture. My statement today will examine what I have previously described in my research as “weaponized victimhood.”¹

Weaponized victimhood is a social phenomenon where people foster an identity based on the false perception that they are being treated unfairly and use their perceptions of grievance to rationalize policies and violence against those who they believe have wronged them. This dynamic can be found in everyday and extreme aspects of U.S. political culture. For example, politicians and news media have decried an invasion at the US-Mexico border and that immigrants are “stealing” American jobs. In this rhetoric, American citizens are the victims who are under attack from immigrants. In extreme and tragic cases, the language of victimhood is often found in the manifestos of domestic terrorists and mass shooters motivated by race and gender. For example, *The Turner Diaries*, an influential white supremacist novel, depicts a future wherein white people are persecuted by the U.S. government and people of color; this victimization is used to justify an insurgent race war. This novel and its politics of victimhood have been responsible for the radicalization of many people, including Timothy McVeigh who was responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing which killed 168 people. Another example of how victimhood may be weaponized to rationalize violence may be found in the 2019 case of the man who murdered 20 people and injured two dozen others in an El Paso, Texas, Walmart, claiming that he did so because of the “Hispanic invasion of Texas.” Understanding weaponized victimhood is critical for

recognizing that supposedly “lone wolf” actors and extremist behaviors are deeply entwined with broader political and ideological efforts.

Since the beginning of his 2016 campaign, Donald J. Trump and his allies have tapped into a common sense of victimhood. As a concept, weaponized victimhood is critical for understanding what united everyday Americans with anti-government, white supremacist extremists to overtake the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.² However, weaponized victimhood did not emerge with the political ascendancy of Donald Trump and it did not end with his presidency. Although understanding how feelings of victimhood can be weaponized helps explain the January 6th insurrection, it is also crucial to understanding this dynamic so that we can stop future moments of political violence before they occur.

In the following pages, I will explore the historical and cultural origins of this victimhood discourse and examine how it exists at various points across the political spectrum. Using examples from white supremacy, men’s rights antifeminism, and Christian nationalism, I will show how this rhetorical practice promotes extremist ideologies and is used to rationalize political harassment and violence. From there, I will illustrate how Donald Trump and his political allies deployed this rhetorical strategy to mobilize voters through cultivating a shared sense of grievance. Finally, I will highlight the dangers that this practice ushers in and offer a set of recommendations for how our nation should address this practice before it is too late.

Historical Roots of Weaponized Victimhood and Its Limited Relationship to Economics

Prior to its formal inception and for nearly its first 200 years as a country, the United States was a stratified society, particularly along the lines of race and gender.³ Even as its founding documents embraced universal rights, the nation withheld what we would today consider foundational rights of citizenship, and sometimes citizenship itself, from women and people of color. Whether by law or by societal practice, these inequalities appeared in a variety of ways. Examples include how much one would be paid, the right to move freely in society, the ability to receive service in a public establishment, the quality of education one might receive, and where one could live, the right to serve on or be judged by a jury of one’s peers, and the list goes on. Writing in the 1930s about life after the Civil War and during Reconstruction, eminent sociologist and historian W.E.B. DuBois noted that white workers received public and psychological wages for their whiteness beyond their economic wages.⁴ That is, white workers held a social standing above their Black, Latina/o, and Asian American countrymen that may not have always led directly to higher income but offered a host of social advantages.

This model of public and psychological wages (i.e. social advantages) goes beyond the dynamic of race. Throughout much of American history, men have also received public and psychological wages. This can be seen through access to the right to vote, own land, to freely open a bank account, to enter the workforce, to be treated as a rational voice in the public square, and so on.

The mid-to-late twentieth century United States saw a social and political tumult ushered in by civil rights struggles, the women's movement, immigration reform, and an emergent LGBTQ rights movement. Because the longstanding public and psychological wages of whiteness and masculinity were dependent on social inequalities, the gains of marginalized communities was felt as a loss of wages and social standing by those who had historically benefitted from their identities in the United States. The sociologist Michael Kimmel has described this felt loss caused by both real and perceived gains of others as "aggrieved entitlement," the sense that the status and benefits to which one is entitled to has been unfairly taken away.⁵

Notably, the emergence of grievance politics by those who have historically benefitted from their social identities coincides with another shift starting in the late 1970s. The decline in manufacturing jobs through technological advances and globalized trade along with the erosion of union protections and reduction in the social safety net produced another feeling of loss and precarity. As DuBois' public and psychological wages offered a promise that one would not fall to the bottom of the social hierarchy, these economic shifts diminished wide-spread hope for economic stability and mobility. Often termed "economic anxiety," this dynamic has been used by media and pundits to explain populist movements in general and Trumpism in particular.⁶

However, focusing solely on economic anxiety as the explanation for grievance politics and Trumpism is a mistake for two reasons. First, many of Trump's supporters including those who took off from work, flew across the country, stayed in DC hotels, and participated in the January 6th protest and insurrection clearly had the disposable income to do so. Second, these economic shifts have also impacted working-class communities of color and done so disproportionately, yet when economic anxiety is used to explain populism and grievance politics, it is almost exclusively done to explain the actions and choices of white Americans. While economic anxiety may be a factor, it is only useful when it is recognized as compounding the felt loss of public and psychological wages caused by the perceived gains of historically marginalized communities.

Weaponized Victimhood as a Rhetorical Strategy

Claiming and weaponizing victimhood has been a mainstay of political rhetoric in the United States over the last four decades, with roots that go back much longer. The rise of multiculturalism in the 1980s was framed as part of the culture wars wherein canonical aspects of western civilization were being removed from schools. Since the late 1990s, inclusive greetings such as "happy holidays" and recognition of other religious and nonreligious traditions in public institutions have been cast as a "war on Christmas." A growing body of literature and thriving online communities have positioned feminism and the advances toward women's equality as an attack on men. Politicians and pundits have voiced alarm at the nation's changing racial demographics, invoking fears of an ongoing invasion, a great replacement, and a Reconquista. White supremacists have framed this embrace of diversity as a form of "white genocide." Antigovernment activists have claimed persecution and used it to justify violence toward federal officials.

While it may be tempting to consider weaponizing victimhood as a tool of the extremist fringe, it is not. The rhetorical strategy of weaponized victimhood stretches between and connects the political mainstream and extreme. Few U.S. politicians and media figures may call for physical violence, but their rhetoric of victimhood rationalizes and gives legitimacy to those who will engage in violence. Moreover, this discourse is not necessarily partisan, although it is quite ideological. Because this rhetoric is rooted in the perceived loss of social standing, weaponized victimhood may well be effective for those on the political Right in gaining support from those who may often describe themselves as moderate Democrats and independent voters.⁷ As such weaponized victimhood becomes a strategy that may build political coalitions and be used to foster support by moderates for extremist positions.

It is critical to note that weaponized victimhood is qualitatively different from social movements that have fought for equality. Weaponized victimhood is not about working toward a more equitable world. Rather, it often adopts the rhetorical practices of aggrieved communities in order to maintain and regain standing in the social hierarchy.⁸ Moreover, those weaponizing victimhood and susceptible to it are not socially marginalized, or at least not in the way that they imagine themselves to be. Rather, they *feel* the *potential* loss of standing above others as a form of loss and grievance.

The Effects of Weaponized Victimhood

To be clear, despite the sociopolitical changes of the mid-to-late twentieth century, white people, men, and Christians continue to disproportionately occupy positions of social and economic advantage in the United States. However, regardless of the fallacious nature of these victimhood claims, we must treat this rhetorical practice seriously because it can have real impacts on our society. These impacts can be divided into five categories.

Rhetoric—These false assertions of victimhood function to flatten out or invert social hierarchies and make them illegible. This strategy operates through the following logic: those with less social standing are not really oppressed, but if they are, then those with greater social standing are oppressed in equal or greater ways; therefore any emphasis on social transformation should be aimed at decreasing the marginalization of the privileged. While this may appear logically incoherent in the abstract, consider how this logical structure underwrites the claims to victimhood in specific cases. In 2015, conservative media outlets decried the fact that Starbucks' holiday cup was merely red with a green company logo and failed to specifically denote Christmas. Commentators rendered Christians as victims and ignored the fact that other religious and nonreligious identities rarely receive an elevated commercial or social standing in the United States. Here victimization did not signal marginalization, denigration, or oppression, but a loss of assumed status and power. Likewise, when Fox News or Campus Reform frame white students as victims of privilege awareness campaigns, they obscure the very real disadvantages experienced by communities of color, flattening out and then inverting racial power dynamics so that they position whites as oppressed as much as, if not more than, students of color. Exploring this use of victimization exposes how language shapes and limits the contours of human thought. When one

claims the position of victim, they no longer need to consider how others may have legitimate grievances.

Rationalization—Weaponized victimhood provides a rationale for struggles one may encounter in life. It does so by stripping away personal accountability and obscuring the work of social hierarchies, instead placing responsibility for one’s struggles onto imaginary others and a world of upside-down social relations. For example, an individual may receive a psychological wage from stating that “a woman or minority took my job” not because it is true but because it relieves the speaker from interrogating their actual social standing and potential shortcomings.⁹ For example, men’s rights activists may claim that women are unfairly privileged in hiring and promotion, given the benefit of the doubt in sexual assault and domestic violence cases, and fail to become committed partners with chivalrous gentlemen. *Campus Reform* and Fox News may assert that white students undergo daily psychological assaults on campus, anti-affirmative action litigants like Allan Bakke and Abigail Fisher may assert that they did not get into their most desired school because of people of color, and white supremacist groups may see diversity programming as an ongoing “white genocide.” Clearly these claims are questionable at best. However, they do not have to be objectively or empirically true. What matters is that they *feel* true. That is, weaponized victimhood allows for the expression of grievance even when there really isn’t one. In these cases, weaponized victimhood pays the psychological wage as a replacement for the perceived loss of public and psychological wages discussed earlier.

Identity—Claims of victimhood are more than expressions that let off steam of perceived grievance. These assertions of victimhood provide a sense of identity and community where those invested in claims of victimhood see themselves as aligned with others in a common cause. As George Lipsitz has suggested in his analysis of 1990s nativism, the identity and psychological wage accrued through this sense of “besieged solidarity” may be just as valuable as any social or political victory.¹⁰

Political Mobilization—Lawsuits and legislation embody the most formal approaches to using victimhood for sociopolitical gain. For example, men’s rights groups have engaged in numerous lawsuits to eliminate what they see as the privileging of women and the victimization of men. In 2002, a group of men’s rights activists including the Scott Booth and one of the earliest men’s rights activists Richard Doyle sued the state of Minnesota to eliminate women’s domestic violence shelters.¹¹ The plaintiffs contended that men were equally likely to be victims of domestic violence and that the state ignored this and discriminated against male abuse victims. The objective was not to secure protection for men but to eliminate services used by women.¹² Although this lawsuit failed, others have been successful. For example, over the last four decades, there have been many lawsuits regarding “ladies’ nights” at bars and nightclubs. These cases argue gender-based price discrimination, and many of the lawsuits have been successful. These lawsuits find a parallel in anti-affirmative action cases wherein plaintiffs like Alan Bakke and Abigail Fisher contend they have been victims of racial discrimination in college admissions. Whether turning on the axis of race or gender, these examples illustrate how positions of relative privilege are recast as victimhood, pushing for the maintenance of racial and gendered hierarchies. Sometimes these

assertions of victimhood find legislative sponsorship. Arizona's 2010 anti-ethnic studies law (HB 2281) was advocated by conservative lawmakers and media personalities who claimed that the field of Mexican American studies taught high school students to hate white people. Whether successful or not, this litigious and legislative weaponization feeds back upon and reinforces a sense of individual and collective identity based on perceived victimization. For example, despite the vast erosion of affirmative action policies in the United States over the past few decades, many white people still feel that they are victims of policies that they believe to still be in existence.

Harassment and Violent Mobilization—This victimhood may also be weaponized through harassment campaigns and other violent means. Here, the Gamergate controversy serves as a well-known example. In 2014 video game developer Zoë Quinn was accused by her former boyfriend of having an inappropriate relationship with a journalist. This post signaled to antifeminist gamers that the attention to Quinn's *Depression Quest* game was due to her gender. Thus began a harassment campaign that targeted Quinn, fellow game developer Brianna Wu, critic Anita Sarkeesian, and other women. Likewise, in recent years numerous ethnic studies and gender studies scholars have been attacked in similar ways. This harassment involves more than online threats and hate mail. As in the case of Gamergate and many of the professors under attack, this mobilized harassment often takes the form of doxing—releasing personal information to the public—death threats, false 911 calls, threatening visits to one's home, and in the case of targeted women, threats of rape. The harassment also seeks a sociopolitical gain, making it so that the target and other like-minded individuals will retreat from the public sphere. Of critical importance, more than just extreme behaviors, these tactics are underwritten by a belief in victimhood. Those doing the harassing do so while claiming that they have somehow been wronged. The most extreme forms of weaponized victimhood occurs when individuals turn to violent rampages as a corrective to their perceived mistreatment. In 2014 a California man murdered six people and wounded 14 others, and his manifesto put particular blame for his “suffering” at the hands of women. In 2015 a man murdered nine Black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina, at the Emanuel African Episcopal Methodist Church, and did so under the rationale that he was responding to the violence of Blacks against whites.

In tracing the impacts of weaponized victimhood, it is critical to note these effects feed off and reinforce each other. Moreover, this mapping suggests how discrete historical incidents and seemingly extremist acts are underwritten by beliefs that are terrifyingly mainstream. Seeing oneself as a victim is a crucial thread that weaves these ideologies, identities, and historical moments together.

Weaponizing Victimhood and Trump's Road to January 6th

Encouraging a sense of victimhood has been a consistent rhetorical strategy throughout Donald's Trump's political career. Indeed, his articulations of grievance have spanned a wide range of social issues and identities.

- In June 2015, when he announced his presidential campaign, Trump described Mexican immigrants as responsible for drugs and rape in the United States. Doing so rendered Americans as innocent victims to a supposed Mexican criminality.
- Leading up to and after the 2016 election, Trump claimed that voter fraud was very common. In one social media post, he stated that he “won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally.” In claiming this, Trump rationalized and diminished the closeness of the 2016 election and reinforced a collective identity based on victimhood among his supporters.
- In August 2017, Trump claimed on social media that he was “Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments.” In this framing, those who desire the removal of Jim Crow-era Confederate statues are working to destroy American history and culture. Notably this invocation of victimhood was shortly after white supremacists gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia, to protest the removal of Jim Crow-era Confederate statues. They too positioned themselves as potential victims by chanting “Jews will not replace us!”
- In 2018, during the Brett Kavanaugh nomination and Christine Blasey Ford’s accusation of sexual assault, Trump lamented that gender dynamics had changed: “It is a very scary time for young men in America, where you can be guilty of something you may not be guilty of.” In Trump’s reasoning, men must be afraid that they will be falsely accused of sexual assault and women in these cases are out to hurt men.
- In 2019, Trump contended that people were freely able to say “Merry Christmas” again, arguing that Christianity had previously being removed from public life and positioning Christians as victims of secularists and those who would like to recognize multiple faith traditions.
- Even after his presidency, Trump has cultivated a sense of grievance among his followers. In January 2021, Trump state that white people were discriminated against in regards to COVID vaccination and treatment: “If you’re white, you go right to the back of the line.” In this moment, Trump reframed efforts to ensure that all communities had access to vaccines and treatment by targeting low-income communities and communities of color as an effort to hurt white people. In Trump’s logic, white people were the victims of public health policies that sought to reduce COVID rates across all communities.

Though just a few examples of Trump deploying a rhetoric of victimhood, there are many, many more. What these examples illustrate is a commitment on Trump’s part to repeatedly promote a sense of victimhood within his supporters across a range of social issues. Moreover, in asserting victimhood, Trump fostered a besieged solidarity, as if saying the world is against you but I will say the unpopular things that need to be said, and I will fight for you. These rhetorical deployments of victimhood ultimately led to mobilizing his supporters on behalf of another assertion of victimhood: the claim that his opponents stole the 2020 election.

Leading up to the 2020 election, conservative media and activists increasingly used “Stop the Steal” as a way of framing the election as under threat of being rigged. Notably, “Stop the Steal” was also used in the run-up to the 2016 election.¹³ In 2020, however, Trump lost and this loss

activated a perception amongst many of his supporters that the election had been stolen. In the following weeks, Trump, his legal team, and his allies attempted to control the narrative and fostered a sense of victimhood by embracing conspiracy theories and using them as the grounds for lawsuits attempting to overturn the election.

Throughout this time, Trump and his allies encouraged supporters to attend the “Stop the Steal” rally on January 6, 2021, which was held down the street from the U.S. Capitol Building where Vice President Mike Pence was overseeing with the electoral vote count. On the morning of January 6, 2021, Trump and his allies again drew upon a rhetoric of victimhood and weaponized it. The President’s personal attorney Rudy Giuliani stated

Who hides evidence? Criminals hide evidence. Not honest people. So over the next ten days, we get to see the machines that are crooked, the ballots that are fraudulent. And if we’re wrong, we will be made fools of. And if we’re right, a lot of them will go to jail. [crowd cheers loudly] So let’s have trial by combat.

Note how he labels the opposition as “criminals” who have stolen the election and thus victimized Trump and his supporters. The crowd cheered wildly when Giuliani suggested that Trump’s opposition would go to jail. Moreover, he suggested a “trial by combat,” although this may seem like an innocuous turn of a phrase, given the way rallygoers were primed to consider themselves and Trump as righteous victims at the hands of a criminal conspiracy, “trial by combat” is typical of the language one uses when one wants to weaponize victimhood and incite violence.

Trump also took the stage to mobilize voters through a sense of grievance. On the morning of January 6, 2021, Trump stated that

All of us here today do not want to see our election victory stolen by emboldened radical-left Democrats, which is what they’re doing, and stolen by the fake news media. That’s what they’ve done and what they’re doing. We will never give up. We will never concede. It doesn’t happen. You don’t concede when there’s theft involved. Our country has had enough. We will not take it anymore, and that’s what this is all about [Trump gestures to cheering crowd]. And to use a term that all of you people really came up with, we will stop the steal.... We have come to demand that Congress do the right thing and only count the electors who have been lawfully slated... I know that everyone here will soon be marching over to the Capitol building to peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard. Today we will see whether Republicans will stand strong for integrity of our elections, but whether or not they stand strong for our country... Our country has been under siege for a long time.

In his speech, Trump contends that he and the crowd are victims. Their supposedly rightful victory had been stolen from them. Moreover, he stokes feelings of grievance when he asserts that the nation has been under attack for a long time. Trump calls upon his supporters to march on the Capitol and even suggests that he will accompany them. In doing so, Trump frames the crowd as victims of a political conspiracy who must stand up for themselves, for their country, and for him. This is the essence of weaponizing victimhood: make someone feel as if they have been wronged and use that feeling to mobilize people and rationalize forms of violence.

The societal effects of weaponized victimhood explored earlier illustrate how the events of January 6, 2021, were neither spontaneous nor unexpected. When one believes that they have been wronged, that an opposing group is actively and purposefully harming them, then it is only logical to defend oneself and one's group and fight back. That is, by repeatedly telling his supporters that the election had been stolen and their votes not counted, Trump made fighting back the logical outcome. Through videos of the day's events, it is evident that the supporters who stormed the Capitol believed that they were doing the right thing, believing themselves patriots and defending the nation. Videos of the day also show protestors and insurrectionists feeling a sense of community with one another, a community that was told and believed that the election was stolen and that they must intervene.

Of course, Trump lied. Like with his other weaponizations of victimhood, his claims were less grounded in a sociological reality and more aimed at stoking the emotion of grievance among his supporters and mobilizing them to act on his behalf. The concept of weaponized victimhood and its roots in the loss of public and psychological wages expose a growing dynamic in the United States wherein people fail to see others as fellow citizens and humans but rather as aggressors and enemies who must be defeated. Weaponized victimhood did not begin with Donald Trump, and its political use did not end on January 6, 2021.

Dangers

Breakdown in Public Dialogue—The political use of victimhood causes a breakdown in public dialogue. The rhetoric of victimhood transforms the relationship between people. No longer is the opposition made up of fellow citizens of constituted through a shared humanity. Rather, through weaponizing victimhood, the opposition becomes the enemy, the “them” who initiated an attack on “us.” This transformation hinders the ability to speak of shared values and common goals, disrupting the foundation of democracy. Weaponizing victimhood may mobilize enough voters to get someone elected, but it will do so at the expense of destroying the ability to engage the opposition as fellow citizens and humans, a necessity for democratic deliberation.

Radicalization—Because weaponized victimhood exists from the mainstream to the extremist communities, the rhetoric of victimhood enables radicalization. That is, when those media figures and politicians embrace a discourse of victimhood, they simultaneously give legitimacy to extremist arguments. For example, if one hears a leading politician assert that America is under attack from immigrants, the enemy is trying to destroy American history, or the opposition has stolen the election, then supporters of the politician who are invested in a sense of grievance may be more susceptible to the messaging of “white genocide,” white supremacists may feel emboldened to march on a public university chanting “Jews will not replace us,” and followers of a major political party may see a violent insurrection as “legitimate political discourse.”

Political Violence—The breakdown in public dialogue and further radicalization will contribute to more political violence. In the past, the United States has largely been fortunate that violence from political radicalization has been sporadic, although that is likely of little comfort to the

victims of the violence and their families. The events of January 6, 2021, indicate an existential threat to the nation. Unlike previous moments of political violence like shootings in South Carolina, Texas, and California mentioned above, all motivated by a sense of victimhood, the January 6th insurrection targeted a foundational component of our government (i.e. the legislative branch) and our elected officials. Next time, and there may very well be a next time if we do not address the underlying conditions, the political violence may not end so quickly.

Recommendations

Politicians and media figures should stop weaponizing victimhood as a means of mobilizing voters and gaining audiences, and the political parties should stop using victimhood as a strategy for fundraising. And when violence inevitable results from weaponizing victimhood, it should be publicly admonished and those who incited violence through weaponizing victimhood be barred from holding office.

Congress needs to increase funding for the study of radicalization and extremism. While we must continue to monitor individuals and organizations, we must also focus attention to the rhetorical strategies and foundational concepts that spread these ideologies.

Congress should increase funding for education in the humanities and social sciences. This would include media literacy, rhetoric and composition, history, philosophy, sociology, political science, and other fields. For over 70 years, the U.S. has emphasized STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education to bolster economic and national security competitiveness. In doing so, the U.S. has reduced its emphasis on the skills and content needed to foster a productive citizenry in this democracy. While the vast majority of public education funding comes from the states, Congress can develop targeted funding initiatives and place an emphasis on civic education, the foundation of which is the humanities and social sciences. Moreover, educational initiatives focusing on the humanities and social sciences should also include programming for adults who are no longer a part of the educational system.

Congress should provide greater funding for publicly owned news media. The current news landscape is dominated by corporate media, and they rely on ratings to increase revenue. Harmful rhetoric like weaponized victimhood increases audience emotional responses and drives ratings. Today Americans have few readily available news sources that are not also invested in political conflict because it drives ratings.

Because many Americans are getting their understanding of the world from online sources, Congress should regulate the algorithms tech companies use to recommend videos, social media posts, and create online communities. These algorithms are focused on fostering greater online attention, but they are not attuned to provide users with factual, nuanced, and reliable information. Simply put, social media algorithms like those used by Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others help spread disinformation, stoke social conflict, and in the process they can radicalize users.

¹ Lee Bebout, “Weaponizing Victimhood Discourses of Oppression and the Maintenance of Supremacy on the Right” in *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 64-83.

² There is little use in differentiating between “white nationalism” and “white supremacy.” In many cases over the last few years, those embracing unabashed white supremacy have sought to rehabilitate their image by positioning themselves as merely “white nationalists.”

³ Indeed, there is still a stratified society in many ways. However, today law and formal policy do not explicitly maintain these inequities.

⁴ W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Free Press, [1935] 1998), 700.

⁵ Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. (New York: Nation Books, 2013), xiv.

⁶ Mark Fabian, Robert Breunig, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, “Bowling with Trump: Economic Anxiety, Racial Identification, and Well in the 2016 Presidential Election” Brookings Institution May 13, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/bowling-with-trump/> Accessed April 2, 2022; Emma Green, “It Was Cultural Anxiety That Drove White, Working-Class Voters to Trump” in *The Atlantic*. May 9, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/05/white-working-class-trump-cultural-anxiety/525771/> Accessed April 2, 2022.

⁷ In *Dog Whistle Politics*, Ian Haney López explores how Republican and Democratic party politicians have fostered a sense of grievance by adopting stereotypes about communities of color. Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁸ Hannah Noel describes this adoption and adaptation of the rhetorical strategies of communities of color as a dynamic of “deflective whiteness.” Hannah Noel, *Deflective Whiteness: Coopting Black and Latinx Identity Politics* (Columbus, The Ohio State University Press, Forthcoming 2022).

⁹ For examples of and analyses of these racial scripts, see Bonilla-Silva’s *Racism without Racists*. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Colorblind-Racism and Racial Inequality in Contemporary America, Third Edition* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 75-102.

¹⁰ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics, Revised and Expanded Edition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 50.

¹¹ Booth v. Hvass.

¹² Molly Dragiewicz, *Equality with a Vengeance: Men’s Rights Groups, Battered Women, and Antifeminist Backlash* (Hanover: Northeastern University Press, 2011), 3, 28.

¹³ Michael Edison Hayden, “Far Right Resurrects Roger Stone’s #StopTheSteal D Vote Count” The Southern Poverty Law Center” November 6, 2020. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/11/06/far-right-resurrects-roger-stones-stopthesteal-during-vote-count> Accessed April 2, 2022.