CONVERSATION: SOVEREIGNTY AND POPULISM

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(Photograph courtesy of Peter Gilgen.)

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PETER GILGEN

The topic for today's conversation is sovereignty and populism. Each participant will provide an outline of their perspective and how they approach the question of sovereignty and populism in their own work. That will be followed by an open discussion.

LEAH FELDMAN

For six years, I've been working on the Russian right and editing an issue of *boundary 2* with Aamir R. Mufti, *Crisis to Catastrophe: Lineages of the Global New Right*, that places new right movements in conversation across a transnational perspective. Through my work on the emergence of the Russian new right amid the collapse of the Soviet Union, I've found that claims to sovereignty have become a resurgent framework for new right movements—in Russia and across the region, in the Caucasus, and Central Asia—and for reframing post-Soviet postcoloniality in ethnonationalist terms, as a response to the hegemony of a Euro-American liberal elite. Examples of this include the Russian right, Alexander Dugin's Eurasianism, Hungary's neotraditionalism, and other Eurasianist offshoots among new right thinkers in Central Asia and the Caucasus, all organized around a shared resistance to a unipolar vision of a US–European-led global capital and cultural imperialism. Populism is invoked through reimagined forms of ethnonationalism in the region that grew out of the collapse of Soviet multinationalism and internationalism. Issues such as language purity have recently become particularly central to these populist claims. This emergence of populist and new right sovereignty claims following the Soviet collapse also shares parallels with ethnonationalist and white supremacist resurgences in the United States, as they are conceived in response to US multiculturalism, generally, and Obama-era policies specifically.

JASON FRANK

As a democratic theorist, I come at this question, of the relationship between sovereignty and populism, from a historically informed perspective. In political science, there is a familiar literature about democratic backsliding and the way in which democracy is not so much threatened from without, as it is continually menaced from within by populist disfigurations that attend its history. I don't see populism and democracy as inherently antagonistic, as this literature tends to frame it. I see populism as an always-existing possibility within the democratic imaginary. Sometimes, that possibility lurches toward right-wing popular authoritarianism, but it can also lead to radical forces of democratization that push toward more egalitari-

an democratic politics. Most recently, I've become very interested in the role that crowds play in the authoritarian imagination, whereby leaders such as President Órban of Hungary, President Erdogan of Turkey, Bolsonaro, former president of Brazil—the whole ghouls gallery of contemporary right-wing popular authoritarians—are obsessed with a persistent politics of popular mobilization and assembly. Former President Trump has been obsessed with crowds from the moment he descended that escalator at Trump Tower through to the end of his presidency.

R. A. JUDY

My work on popular sovereignty began with the Arab revolution in Tunisia in 2010. My involvement with activists in Tunisia goes back to 1988. I'm interested in "poetic socialities" and "aesthetic socialities," relating to the time and dynamics of the right. For instance, the spontaneous uprising of the people in Tunisia, and across the region, expressed a form of power not adequately understood by the historical conceptualization of popular sovereignty in the West. The dynamic of populism there eschews ethnonationalism. It's much more akin to the notion of *power to the people* that we saw in the 1960s. Arab nationalism, specifically, comes in the wake of the failure of projects of national polity, unraveling in 1991 with the American invasion of Iraq or Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. The dialectical poetry and television, and the movements coming out of Tunisia, Algeria, and Sudan, reflect the fragmentation and abandonment of a notion of a super-ethnic Arab identity. What's the nature of civil society? I try to engage and theorize this thinking, not from the perspective of a political theorist, but in terms of the aesthetics of sociality that are pressing on existing political concepts, suggesting a kind of emergent form of knowledge. As Leah's work reveals, there's a growing dissatisfaction with the concept of the postcolonial, which is part of the defeat of those national projects in the 1980s and 1990s. It's important to know how people are understanding "neoliberalism" in their local situations through new conceptualizations.

JASON STANLEY

I'm a populist. I don't like the elites. I hate fascism. The reason that media outlets such as the *New York Times* use the term "populism" to refer to fascism is because they want to label the solution as the problem. It's to say, *we want the neoliberal status quo.* They want to dump on US Senator Bernie Sanders and US Representative Alexandra Ocasio Cortez, on the people who are giving us the solution, by saying, those left-wing people are just as much of the problem as the right-wing people. The solution to fascism is populism and to give a lot of money to the working class, as many of us have been urging the Biden administration, so they're not as anxious and resentful. This is what I think R. A. meant, in the context of Tunisia and the Global South—that populism is a powerful revolutionary movement. Popular revolutions can end in fascism, socialism, or a variety of things, so there's always a potential problematic side to social movements. Some of the ethnonationalist far-right quasi-fascist movements in India, for example, are embracing this anti-colonialist language. When politicians in India say they're anti-colonialists and anti-imperialists, what they mean is that they hate Muslims, because Islam is supposed to be brought there by colonialism. There's a lot of muddying of the waters right now, so we have to be careful.

PG How do we want to define "populism," vis-à-vis movements like Occupy Wall Street and Trumpism? How do we avoid false equivalences? We no longer believe in the divine right of kings, and, generally, we would say sovereignty is popular. Jason Stanley made it clear that his version of populism is anti-elite. If you have popular sovereignty, why do elites appear to be so alienated from the people? Where do these elites emerge?

RAJ My development as an activist was associated with the Black Panther Party, which brought Frantz Fanon[1] into the Anglophone world. Fanon's engagement with the Algerian Revolution was through Abane Ramdane, who conceived of societal change as from the people. He believed the forces of modernity unleashed the fundamental poetic powers of the people, which, in the struggle, could articulate a new society. The ALN [National Liberation Army] leadership tried to assassinate him for this position. Fanon's legacy continued, and interestingly, the concept of popular sovereignty was put forward during the English Revolution by barrister Henry Parker, as a label used to legitimate the emergent bourgeoisie's contestation of divine monarchical authority. The people were deployed as a figure but never really had power. After World War II, we see articulations of power coming from the people—what the Tunisian revolutionary Ahmed Jdey referred to in 2011 as *bilā sulṭawiya*, or popular power without authoritarian sovereignty. Part of the issue of definition is reimagining what we understand by "sovereignty" and "popular" and paying attention to what people are actually doing, which may differ from the authorized discourses.

JF The language and concept of popular sovereignty emerges in the context of the English Civil War as a claim by Parliament against the king. *The people* becomes an empty placeholder to authorize the power of another form of elite rule claiming to represent the people. Although the claim of popular rule is initially invoked to justify another group's representative rule, control of that discourse is quickly lost to other competing, more popular claims that emerge. There's something about the discourse of popular sovereignty and its global history that ultimately elicits forms of popular politics that become something recognizable. I think it's important to emphasize that when the term "populism" enters the English language, at the end of the nineteenth century with the populist movement in the United States, it is invoked by a politics so far from an authoritarian, leader-based, right-wing, white supremacist politics—what Jason Stanley refers to today as fascism. This workers' agricultural, egalitarian, left-wing movement, against corporate monopoly and the corrupt institutions of a purportedly representational state, involved incredible efforts at cross-class mobilization. In spite of the deeply, institutionally entrenched legacy of white supremacy in the United States, there were efforts in the South, and there is a Black populism. Those efforts were ultimately crushed by the reimposition of a Jim Crow regime. But I think that popular sovereignty opens up representational dilemmas, not just of who the people are, but about how the people get figured, how their power is enacted, and how the people act and take shape as a collective actor, especially in periods of crisis. That becomes a pivotal question of democratic and radical politics. It's not just a question of ethnonationalist, identitarian politics.

LF I'm coming at this question through issues of aesthetic representation amid transitional social formation. It's not so straightforward to think about the emergence of ethnonationalism in the former Soviet Union as a form of ethnic purity. The story is more complicated. National identity was formulated in tandem with the emergence of Soviet forms of multinationalism, tied to the vision of the multinational empire. One of the biggest issues in considering the question of populism in the context of the Soviet empire remains the continued erasure of forms of racial and ethnic difference in the region. Discourses around national identity, promoted under the Soviet empire, were celebrated as part of the vision of a Marxist-Leninist progressivist evolution toward a Soviet totality, through assimilationist policies and the paradoxical promotion of diversity alongside this erasure of differences. So, the term "populism" is awkward when discussing the Soviet Union, precisely because race and race science emerged through discourses of "Eurasianism" and other models of ethnic diversity promoted by the Soviet empire.

JS Josef Stalin tried to extinguish differences in the old Soviet Union, displacing populations and extinguishing local languages to have every-

one speak Russian. Looking at Tanzania, President Julius Kambarage Nyerere used many of the same tactics but had everyone speak Swahili, which had a different effect from favoring the dominant group's language. I agree with Leah that we're seeing the unintended aftereffects of Russification.

I collaborated on a paper with Harvard philosopher Susanna Siegel in which we distinguish populism from right-wing authoritarianism, i.e., fascism. Populism involves people against the elites. Neofascism has a tripartite, rather than two-place, structure: 1) the elites, 2) the people, and 3) the anti-people—immigrants, LGBT people, Black people, Muslims, Palestinians, and so on. Early twentieth-century discussions of masses and elites always disaggregate the elites. There's the financial elites and the cultural and intellectual elites. They are very different things. Fascism weaponizes certain of the business elites against the cultural and intellectual elites.

WHEN THE TERM "POPULISM" ENTERS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WITH THE POPULIST MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, IT IS INVOKED BY A POLITICS SO FAR FROM AN AUTHORITARIAN, LEADER-BASED, RIGHT-WING, WHITE SUPREMACIST POLITICS—WHAT JASON STANLEY REFERS TO TODAY AS FASCISM.

JF How is it that "populism" now is so closely associated with the authoritarian identitarian right globally? I wrote a piece in the *Boston Review*[2] stating that populism is not the problem, and that the term tells us more about the people leveling it as an accusation than it does the form of politics it's leveled against. Cambridge scholar Anton Jäger—who's cowritten a recent book on the political theory of populism[3]—made an interesting intervention on this question, of the politics behind this terminology. Popular authoritarianism really emerges most importantly in the work of Cold War liberal historians, especially Richard Hofstadter. Jäger shows how that liberal, Cold War pathologization of populist politics is very much about the Cold War political context. It's taken up by social scientists as a seemingly neutral term for social and political analysis, although it's clearly embedded in anti-popular, anti-left-wing scholarship, conducted by historians whose account of populism, as just a historical effect, has been thoroughly discredited by subsequent generations of historians.

RAJ Everyone here is coming from different angles, in terms of disciplinary perspective and specific local instantiations of the historical question, but there's a throughline in all of these instances we are discussing. We seem to converge on the need to reform polity in a way that requires the reconstitution of the social realm—the productions of people. The need to produce a new kind of intelligence to attend to emerging power is part of what unleashes the so-called revolutionary or democratic capacities of the popular as a figure. Whether the English Civil War, the Revolutions of 1848, or the Russian Revolution of 1917, where Lenin postulates the nation in this primitive mode as one step toward the production of the proletarian dictatorship—these all require a pedagogical project, which loses control almost immediately, and produce a new population that is somehow bound to the state.

PG How can "the people" be defined, or define itself? Usually, it seems to me that "the people" is attached to the nation-state, and the relevant people in political terms is the citizenry. So, citizenship would seem to be an element that already excludes a whole bunch of people living in the same territory, which leads to the question of representation. Globally, representational democracy is the prevalent model. But this mode of representation does not seem to work well in many instances, and so-called populism seems to be a necessary supplement for the remainder that is not represented in representational democracy. What strategy is necessary? If you want to leverage the power of populism in a positive way, what sort of politics would that yield? Is it something akin to representational democracy, or do we nod to someone like Hannah Arendt, reverting to small gatherings and direct contact with grassroots movements, working from the ground up?

JS Are you referring to "grassroots movements" like Moms for Liberty,[4] the White Citizens' Council,[5] or the Ku Klux Klan?

PG That's the problem. Whatever movement you have, it's not only inclusive—it is also exclusive. The problem lies in what that exclusion is and who is excluded. What then is the political mode that would yield results that we could live with?

JS A class-based labor movement.

PG And ideally does that happen within the nation-state, or would you overthrow the nation-state for a transnational labor movement? The Arab Spring, I think, was a good example of something that very quickly was no longer confined to just one nation but spread like wildfire. The Occupy movement was like that to a certain extent. You of course also have right-wing alliances, but it seems to me the more internationalist trend is usually on the left. And I wonder what that spells out for the nation-state and the political, not just viability but also desirability, of operating within the nation-state.

RAJ This is the fundamental, challenging question. I'd like to reemphasize the question of, *how are the people constituted?* Jason Frank referred to the populist movement at the end of the nineteenth century. It's quite interesting that this movement began as an intraracial, worker-based movement, in opposition to the new collaboration between North capital and the old plantocracy. As W. E. B. DuBois shows us nicely in his seminal work *Black Reconstruction*, the failure of this movement and its shift to what it became, which was far right, has everything to do with how the people are constituted. And that becomes a cosmological question.

JF For political theorists and others, this is the terrain in which questions of political aesthetics become very important. In my book *The Democratic Sublime*,[6] I write about the poetics of the barricades. The events around 1848 and 1830 offer powerfully aesthetic dimensions to this discourse. It is this kind of constitution of a people, this emergence—how the people act is very much mediated by various forms of aesthetics.

RAJ And to your question, Peter, the question becomes whether it has to become institutionalized.

PG For me, the question preceding that still is, once you've constituted the people, what sort of organizational pattern would there then be? Would it still be a representational type of democracy? If there are anarchist sympathies here, could we think of a type of politics that can do without representation in favor of direct democracy? I grew up in Liechtenstein, neighboring Switzerland. It's powerful to see direct democracy in action there. It works at the local and regional levels but not at the national level. But it seems to lead to considerably less alienation than seen in huge representational democracies today. I always thought of that example when I read Hannah Arendt. There is something there, but I'm not entirely sure whether it's scalable. I like this notion of the political aesthetic very much. What's the possibility and scalability of aesthetic movements?

LF In conceptualizing the people, I think we need to expand our notion of what a political body means. I think some of the most interesting frameworks for mobilization now, both in Central Asia and the Caucasus, have been aesthetic ecological

frameworks. On one hand, environmentalist movements, as in those that emerged in the Baltics in the 1980s, became some of the forerunners in thinking about national independence during the collapse. Environmental and ecological frameworks became the bases for articulations of nationalist sovereignty in the 1980s. But they were also central earlier in the 1970s to Cold War conversations around anti-coloniality, held through fora such as the Afro-Asian Writers' Association and the journal *Lotus*. There's a long genealogy of these ecological aesthetic frameworks that imagine a people as resisting forms of totality. And more expansive and divergent ecological frameworks are now being invoked in queer art collective movements across the Caucasus. For the first time since 1918, despite the realities of continued war, we're seeing the beginnings of discussions around Transcaucasian alliances and the creation of new forms of solidarity in the region—through conversations about queer world-building and aesthetic explorations of what diverse botanical, natural, and environmental conceptions of a people might look like.

PG Let's shift gears. Interrogating urbanism from different angles—aesthetic, political, and, to a certain degree, sociological—is important to the ethos of CriticalProductive. What urban configurations are central to such a politics as we've discussed, or for a sort of populism that does not have the negative connotations outlined at the beginning of our conversation? Considering the role of urban centers, metropolitan areas, and cities, but also the Internet, where does this emerge?

JF The affordances of the city, the infrastructure of the city, the symbolic centrality of the city, the existence of squares as spaces for popular politics and mobilization—these are critical to shaping and guiding revolutions because collective power can be manifested in these spaces. Paris, for example, is a city that is also the symbolic center of the nation. The drama of the revolutions of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries unfolded first in the city center because that's where the levers of power existed. In the United States, the rural–urban divide is a powerful divide politically. Looking at the forces of populism in the United States, the constituencies of white identitarian, right-wing authoritarianism are very rural. Rural districts having deeply asymmetrical representational power because of the way in which representation is allocated by the US Constitution, while the left owns the cities, by and large—that is an important part of the story. I am interested in the politics of popular assembly and popular manifestation, and that is largely a politics that takes place in the urban context.

RAJ I want to focus on the distinction Jason introduced, between the dynamics of popular assembly and this term "populism." It's significant that the events of 1848 begin in the mountains of Sicily but acquire their momentum in the urban leap from Palermo into Rome. This goes into the physics, or phenomenology, of assembly. Those urban spaces provide the space and demographics that bring people together on a day-to-day basis, where the ideology and concepts become articulated in a way that brings about, as I understand it, the riot. I'm currently working on a history of riots and what Zygmunt Bauman describes in *Postmodern Ethics* as "aesthetic sociality" when looking at what was happening with the Bandung and the movements that went on there in the first decade of this century. And the riots are urban. The pandemic in conjunction with the Internet has done something significant there. There can be virtual assembly and distribution of ideas, but their manifestation into a power that can have political influence still requires that urban space. As for the supposed urban–rural spatiopolitical divide in the United States—it's really a fallacy. If you look at the Supplemental 2021 Hate Crime Statistics recently released by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI),[7] we are engaged in a low-grade insurgency, which anybody of color knows because people of color are being killed on a daily basis in urban areas. The manifestation of assemblage is in the city. On May 13, 2023, there was the march by the "Patriot Front" group in Washington, DC—not just on January 6, 2021. This is where President Trump is an interesting kind of catalyst. All of the various local white supremacist movements, which our media curated, acquire physical manifestation of assemblage in cities. The relationship between cities and polity has been influenced somehow by the Internet, and we need to understand better how that's taking place. Why is it that cities that are being emptied can still become something like an agora? If the left owned the agora, that Nazi march would not have taken place in DC.

LF I agree with R.A. that the Internet and social media have changed the way in which mobilization is taking place—especially in the art world. There's an emergence of a lot of art collectives for the first time since the 1990s. Social media has provided spaces for conversation outside of the broken infrastructure that resulted after the Soviet collapse and the closing of the Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, which was the primary funder of art in the region. There are not a lot of physical art spaces in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and those that do exist today are funded by oligarchs. So, the Internet and social media have provided a space for networking among artists' collectives and for exhibition space that wasn't possible for the last twenty to thirty years. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a lot of reappropriation of former Soviet buildings for that purpose. Tbilisi has become a hub in the Caucasus. The same goes for Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and Almaty, Kazakhstan. I do think the urban spaces are also clouded by this history of Soviet industrial development serving as a colonial measure. Cities were scenes for this spectacular display of Soviet power. They have a particularly ambivalent history in the Soviet period, but there are these new transnational conversations among activists and artist circles across the region that are being formulated both online and in urban centers now.

IT'S SIGNIFICANT THAT THE EVENTS OF 1848 BEGIN IN THE MOUNTAINS OF SICILY BUT ACQUIRE THEIR MOMENTUM IN THE URBAN LEAP FROM PALERMO INTO ROME.

JF Hong Kong provides an interesting example for this question of urban popular politics and the role of social media and new technologies, not in displacing that politics but in shaping it in different ways. Take the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in 2014, which resonated, for example, with the movement of the squares, Occupy, the Indignados Movement, and so on. They were occupying parts of the city, using umbrellas to shield protesters from the rubber bullets of police. It was very much about occupying a space and drawing a line of antagonism between that pro-democracy movement and the armed police forces of the state. If you compare that to the enormous anti-extradition bill protests in Hong Kong in 2019—there, they were no longer occupying space in that way because of the brutality and overwhelming power of the police and military forces. But they were using social media to—and I love this phrase—"become like water," or to allow movements of protests to emerge in one part of the city, communicate through social media, depart and reappear in another part of the city, and prevent the state military apparatus from organizing a simple line of attack. That was a politics of popular assembly and insurgent politics, but it was using these technologies to facilitate a different way in which this appearance of popular power is made possible in urban spaces.

RAJ It's part of the emergence of aesthetic sociality. There's an intentional manipulation of space. There's a movement. But those are manifestations of a collectivity that we do not yet have adequate language to describe.

PG It's striking how prominent aesthetics have been in our conversation. Art, specifically—not just aesthetic phenomena as such—has been a central part of our articulations. Why? Is it because of the so-called utopian potential of art? I'm thinking of a particular art collective in Germany—the *Zentrum für Politische Schönheit* (Center for Political Beauty)—that pleads for political beauty and whose ac-

tions border on political activism while claiming the status of art. Thinking back to Leah's points about former Soviet republics and the importance of art for these new politics, I see something intriguing emerging.

RAJ Art is a practice. As Leah's remarks pointed out, there's been a long arc. Movements like this were occurring not just in the 1980s but in the 1970s and 1960s. When I say it's a practice, I mean it's a dynamic movement, in which the forms of expression articulate, in the moments of expression, particular assemblies. And those assemblies don't have to have an origin or a place. That's one of the reasons why the Internet is so dynamic and why the interface between the Internet and urban spaces is so interesting. You can have the flash mob movement, for example. Darren Walker, of the Ford Foundation, has really led the way, in conversation with George Soros, to recalibrate how philanthropy works, toward what he's called "social transformation." His last book, *From Generosity to Justice*, on changing the nature of philanthropy in general, places art at the forefront of the perpetuation of any democratic possibility. He's gotten the A. W. Mellon Foundation, Soros's Open Society Foundations, and other such major foundations to back this and to shift their investments more and more into the arts. Art is a practice in the most mundane sense, like I practice my guitar—cycling through forms repeatedly, and in each moment an assemblage occurs. It doesn't have to be an enduring assemblage, which is why it challenges the political. It doesn't follow the narrative trajectory of a spontaneous assemblage that articulates itself into a historical moment that then becomes a pilot.

LF Looking back along the arc of anti-colonial thought, you have the centrality of poetry, of rhythm, of the sensuous dimensions of art that are so precisely generative and powerful in terms of imagining different types of political assembly. On the other hand, you have the way in which art enters the commodity market. In the Caucasus in Central Asia after 1989, art is in conflict with its own commodification. While art is a generative space for imagining political assembly, it's also tasked with the immediacy of confronting its own commodification in the marketplace. Its commodification—through curation and theorization and the ways in which that universalizes or confines it and renders it packageable—creates a market for it in museums and private collections. Art is always simultaneously in conflict with and a force within the circulation of global capital.

RAJ We see this with rap music, where there's this interesting dialectic dance. It becomes monetized, and it becomes an investment. At the same time, that investment enables the incorporation of anarchic practice. So, there's this constant back-and-forth. The very structure of the market that distributes it is also distributing certain anarchic capacities. There's a discourse around art from the people who are doing it who are aware of this. So, you have concrete things like the journal *Liquid Blackness*, and there's a whole proliferation of discourses among artists around the world.

PG The deployment of art is not necessarily representational of an already existing community, but it has this utopian aspect such that it becomes a catalyst, and a community is built around the practice. I like this notion, rather than, say, an aesthetics only in the service of a representation.

JF Art, in the context that we're talking about here, is a practice. It is also a medium through which an emergent sense of collectivity that does not preexist can come into being. This gets to your point, Peter. It's not necessarily a collectivity finding expression through art but rather the people in this incipient state. I'm thinking back to Gezi and Gezi Park. So much great work has been written on how a different conception of politically empowered peoplehood emerged through the Gezi experience, and the different kinds of cultural production and artwork that defined that experience against the other available, official forms of political identity and collective empowerment—against the Islamism of Erdogan, Kemalist nationalism, Turkish identitarianism. There's a different way of thinking of collectivity, and it was fully mediated by the artistic experiments that also accompanied that movement. Art and aesthetics play a very pivotal political role in these moments of incipience or popular emergence.

RAJ I would say that it's articulated not through but with. There's a spontaneity of the articulation of collectivity with the practice. That besideness, that belonging-togetherness is what's distinctive about what I believe we're all talking about and seeing in different parts of the world.

PG Jason Frank—I like what you said regarding expression. It reminded me of German philosopher Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in which he famously says that fascism, of course, gives the masses their expression, but certainly not their rights.[8] And in the final sentences of the same essay, he seems to refer to that same type of expression as the "aestheticization of politics."[9] He seems to say that the countermeasure to fascism will be the politicization of art. It's important to note the difference between the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art. The politicization of art is not making a big show of Nuremberg in order to give the masses expression. Instead, it has exactly this character of practice that R. A. spoke of and that strikes me as a very convincing model, as I, myself, am working on aesthetics and art. I believe that the role of art that we've been discussing would be something like this. I want to thank you all. This was an excellent discussion.

1 Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) was an influential Afro-Caribbean Marxist scholar, who specialized in psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and social and political philosophy.

2 Jason Frank, "Populism Isn't The Problem," *Boston Review*, August 15, 2018, https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/jason-frank-populism-not-the-problem/.

3 Anton Jäger and Arthur Borriello, *The Populist Moment: The Left After the Great Recession*, (London: Verso, 2023).

4 Moms for Liberty is a conservative, US education-focused political nonprofit organization. It is known for its vocal advocacy against the discussion or mention of gender identity, sexuality, critical race theory, race, ethnicity, and discrimination in school curriculums and in schools broadly, with a focus on restricting literature via banning book titles.

5 The White Citizens' Council was formed in the 1950s in opposition to the US Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board* decision, which abolished racial segregation in schools. It consisted of various local white supremacist and segregationist groups across the United States and primarily in the US South. *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 US 483 (1954).

6 Jason Frank. *The Democratic Sublime: On Aesthetics and Popular Assembly* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

7 The FBI released the following statistic: "A percent distribution of victims by bias type shows that 64.5 percent of victims were targeted because of the offenders' race/ethnicity/ancestry bias," *Supplemental Hate Crime Statistics, 2021* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2023), 4.

8 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Belknap Press, 2008), 19–55, at 41: "Fascism [...] sees its salvation in granting expression to the masses – but on no account granting them rights."

9 Benjamin et al., 42: "*Such is the aestheticizing of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism replies by politicizing art*" (Benjamin's emphasis).