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## Childcide in the Age of Fascist Theocracies



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

In the aftermath of over five hundred shootings during the July 4th weekend, reports indicate that “a Texas-based company has developed vending machines that sell bullets and installed them at a handful of grocery stores in Texas, Oklahoma, and Alabama, with plans for expansion into other states.”<sup>1</sup> Violence has become an organizing and governing principle in America, revealing a form of social and political psychosis driven by greedy manufacturers of death, the military-industrial-academic complex, fascist politics, and the emergence of a society that uses violence as a source of identity, pleasure, and collective hatred. When morality collapses, the social contract dies, and liberal ideology exhausts itself. With the growing concentration of power and massive inequality in wealth, historical amnesia and

willful ignorance, poisonous conditions proliferate for a society marked by both bare life and a form of institutionalized domestic terrorism.

The mainstream media reports nightly on bloodletting violence in the United States that takes place in schools, supermarkets, on the streets, and almost everywhere else. In addition, there is an additional focus on the storms, tornadoes, fires, displacements, and deaths due to climate change-this is a form of slow violence that has about the same status as a traffic report. Celebrity news stenographers endlessly repeat such violence, lacking a hint of serious analysis or commentary. As such, violence in different forms is both normalized and used to fill the empty space of the news spectacle. Needless to say, it is reported but rarely analyzed in relation to the deeper systemic forces creating it. The mainstream media's indifference to the horror of such violence and the conditions producing it, along with its consequences, are not limited to the United States. The conditions producing systemic violence in the U.S. extend beyond national boundaries and result in horrendous consequences abroad, yet they are rarely mentioned or critically analyzed in relation to the violence at home.

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For instance, as reported by *Democracy Now*, a “250-pound GBU-39 guided bomb, manufactured by Boeing and supplied by the United States,” exploded outside a school in Gaza this week while some boys were playing soccer, killing three of them.<sup>2</sup> Al Jazeera broadcasted a video showing dead bodies, body parts, blood flooding the area, and legs and arms flying in the air. This violence originates from weapons of death made in the United States and supplied to a right-wing regime that embraces violence as the only mode of communication with those it considers enemies. Barbarism is now covered up with the

distorting veil of complicity and moral irresponsibility. Ignorance is now manufactured, corrupting politics and legitimating violence at home and abroad.

Mass violence at home merges with brutal violence abroad in a union defined by settler colonialism, neoliberal barbarism, white nationalism, and the erosion of social responsibility as a cornerstone of governance. These forms of violence are linked through the values of various theocratic fascist ideologies, where racial purity and militarized nationalism sustain the brutalism of settler colonialism, maintained by death-machines produced and legitimized by the military-industrial-academic complex. This violence also manifests as a form of childcide—the destruction of both the spirit and bodies of children and young people.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, the slow violence of childcide is evident in the censorship and repression of free speech being waged by right-wing politicians, neoliberal educators, and a reactionary donor class of billionaires, aimed at stifling the imagination of young people. Another form of childcide is occurring in Gaza, involving the overt violence that kills and maims young people, denies them lifesaving medical treatment, and forces them to lose limbs. With the potential upcoming election of Trump, these forms of childcide in both the U.S. and Gaza are likely to intensify.

Under Trumpism, plans for a full-scale fascist mode of governance have emerged and are treated as simply a political doctrine of a legitimate political party. This is evident in Project 2025 (a blueprint for a fascist theocracy), a Vichy-like mainstream press, the growth of civic illiteracy, and the paralyzing scourge of a culture of immediacy, all of which bury any room for informed judgment and resistance to the rise of the punishing state and the blood flowing at home and abroad.

We live in an age when violence has become normalized, the spirit of the Confederacy informs the Republican Party, and the terrifying language of the Third Reich emerges in Trump's call for a "unified Reich" and the promise of a dictatorship. With the blessing of a corrupt and authoritarian Supreme Court, a President Trump would have absolute immunity to assassinate his "enemies." With the breakdown of the relationship between law and justice, he could conduct mass deportations and build massive detention camps for immigrants and others considered disposable. As "Marxists" and "communists" are purged from their jobs, arrested, tortured, and jailed, schoolchildren would begin each morning reading from the Bible and memorizing the Ten Commandments. Banned books would be burned in public squares and broadcast on all government media. Meanwhile, institutions of higher education would eliminate the scourge of critical thinking, history would be whitewashed, and

education would be defined by the sordid principles of white Christian nationalist ideology. This is more than a dystopian fantasy.

The current attacks on journalists, student protesters, higher education, public education, and oppositional media are not merely echoes of a horrifying past; they represent an emerging tsunami of state and organized violence. This violence is occurring not only in the U.S. but also in Hungary, Turkey, Russia, Israel, India, and other far-right societies. What the U.S. and Israel, in particular, model for other authoritarian regimes is a worldview that has become increasingly dominant. As the Israeli journalist Chaim Levinson points out in *Haaretz*, it is a worldview where “violence as a solution [melds] racial supremacy, thuggery, and ignorance.” The rise of global fascism merges violence and ultra-nationalism, waging war against any vestige of democracy. Its goal is to aggressively destroy those institutions, groups, and individuals who make thinking dangerous and action necessary and courageous. The barbarians are gleefully waiting in the shadows while a culture of mass ignorance, endless spectacles, and commodification continues to blind the public to the horrors that are about to emerge in 2025. Historical and social amnesia are at the heart of the machinery of death both at home and abroad. Memories of the horrors of genocide against Native Americans, Indigenous people, Blacks, no longer define moral responsibility and a mass politics of resistance. The consequences are truly frightening. At home, students find themselves on campuses that have been turned into police precincts. Abroad, the horror of colonial dispossession and death goes unchallenged by many of the alleged democracies of the world. These two registers of domination and the threat of genocidal terror inform each other. Nowhere is this criminogenic behavior more obvious today than in the failed response, indifference, and outright complicity regarding the slaughter taking place in Gaza. The horrors of fascism are most evident in the ways authoritarian societies turn on their children, and nowhere is this more obvious than in Gaza. The respected journal, *The Lancet*, has reported that the current death toll may be closer to 200,000, considering both “indirect” and direct killings. Many of the dead and maimed are children, resulting in an entire generation being wiped out. Every university in Gaza has been destroyed, along with 80 percent of the schools. Museums have been destroyed and, in some cases, looted by the IDF. Hospitals have been destroyed by the 2000-pound bombs provided by the Biden administration. The killing of innocent Palestinians is made possible by the Biden administration, which supplies Israel with the weapons it uses in its genocidal war. This complicity and murderous assistance occur in a moral void, regardless of how many innocent children and women are killed by such weapons. Under the Biden administration, organized violence cancels out any

notion of justice, compassion, and desire for peace. This is evident given that, as of July 10, 2024, the Biden administration has decided to “resume shipping 500lb bombs to Israel.” The Biden administration has blood on its hands.

The elimination of the Palestinian people is accompanied by the destruction of Palestinian heritage, history, memories, and an entire generation. James Baldwin once said, “The children are always ours, every single one of them, all over the globe; and I am beginning to suspect that whoever is incapable of recognizing this may be incapable of morality.” Baldwin was only partly right. Immorality has become a badge of global power. The idea and promise of a strong democracy that has lost itself in the militarized machineries of death and the resurgence of a dangerous authoritarianism and poisonous colonialism. What is happening in Gaza is a preview of the fascist virus that is spreading across the globe.

Any viable resistance must begin by making this fascist threat visible. Trump and his followers signal a deep political crisis both at home and abroad. The first strategy for resistance in the current moment must prioritize preventing the potential victory of a fascist white Christian nationalist state in 2025. This is about more than defending the rule of law, it is about mobilizing those passions necessary to fight repression and breathe civic courage into a sense of collective agency. The fight for justice can only begin by recognizing the state of injustice that now rules America. The stakes for democracy, the lives of those considered other, and the planet itself are too high to ignore. A multi-racial, multi-class movement must set aside its differences, dampen its tendency to political purity, and unite to mobilize a public capable of stopping Trump and eliminating the conditions of neoliberal fascism that created him. As I have said before, under the present circumstances and at this time in history, resistance is no longer an option; it is a necessity.

### Notes

1. Edward Carver, “‘Thought It Was a Joke’: Bullets Now For Sale in Vending Machines in 3 GOP-Led States,” *Common Dreams* (July 10, 2024).
2. Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan, “In Gaza, Playing ‘the Beautiful Game,’ Amidst Slaughter,” *Democracy Now* (July 11, 2024).
3. Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian uses a similar term, “unchildling,” to describe this violence against young people. See, Neve Gordon and Penny Green, “Israel’s Universities: The Crackdown” *The New York Review of Books* [June 5, 2024].
4. Chaim Levinson, “It’s No Wonder the Israeli Right Thinks the Left Wants to Kill Netanyahu,” *Haaretz* (July 11, 2024) Online:

*Henry A. Giroux currently holds the McMaster University Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department and is the Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar in Critical Pedagogy. His most recent books include: The Terror of the Unforeseen (Los Angeles Review of books, 2019), On Critical Pedagogy, 2nd edition (Bloomsbury, 2020); Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy: Education in a Time of Crisis (Bloomsbury 2021); Pedagogy of Resistance: Against Manufactured Ignorance (Bloomsbury 2022) and Insurrections: Education in the Age of Counter-Revolutionary Politics (Bloomsbury, 2023), and coauthored with Anthony DiMaggio, Fascism on Trial: Education and the Possibility of Democracy (Bloomsbury, 2025). Giroux is also a member of Truthout's board of directors.*

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