

Let's talk about

F*SCISM

The F-Word

Issue 003

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The Characteristics of Fascism

(As described in "How Fascism Works" by Jason Stanley)

"The most telling symptom of fascist politics is division"
-Jason Stanley

1. The Mythic Past:

Fascism clings to a glorified past. Not the actual past, but a cherry-picked one. Patriarchy reigns supreme and nostalgia is weaponized.

Current Events: "Make America Great Again"

2. Propaganda:

Propaganda is deployed to conceal the fascists true goals. Corruption refers to purity as opposed to law. Institutions that could otherwise check their power are attacked.

Current Events: Trump's claims about "fake news"

3. Anti-Intellectual:

Fascism undermines the credibility of institutions that voice dissent. Schools serve only to introduce students to the dominant culture and its mythic past. Once the experts are dealt with? The fascist can recreate reality.

Current Events: Schools banning books while politicians label teachers "groomers" and "Marxists".

4. Unreality:

Reasoned debate is replaced with fear and anger. Truth is replaced with power. Conspiracy theories reign supreme because they destabilize our shared reality and cause mistrust and paranoia. People stop trusting what they see and hear with their own eyes and ears and start trusting their imaginations more.

Current Events: Denial of the election turned fact-checkers into enemies.

5. Hierarchy:

Fascism claims that nature itself demands hierarchy, and those who benefit from said hierarchy adopt a myth of their own superiority. They become motivated by fear of losing their status or of equal representation by hated minority groups.

Current Events: "Affirmative action is racism against white people"

10. Arbeit Macht Frei:

"Work shall make you free." Fascism has a way of making its lies a reality by creating the conditions that will allow for the "othering" of minority groups. At the heart of it lies the hardworking/ lazy dichotomy. The ideal of hard work is weaponized, unions are crushed, and class struggle is minimized. Life is a competition for power and your worth is your work.

Current Events: Welfare is cut, prisons expand, and poverty (specifically in black communities) is framed as "laziness"

"Normalization of fascist ideology, by definition, would make charges of fascism seem like an overreaction."
-Jason Stanley

6. Victimhood:

Increased representation for minorities and the rectification of inequalities brings pain to those who benefitted from the inequities. Fascism exploits that pain to create a victimization mindset and a sense of group identity.

Current Events: Christians, men, and conservatives are supposedly oppressed by inclusion.

7. Law and Order:

There's "us", who are lawful by nature. Sure we make mistakes, but we're human. Then there's "them", who are unlawful by nature. They are criminals, rapists, degenerates. Fascists use this language to change attitudes and shape policies.

Current Events: Immigrants being framed as criminals and rapists.

8. Sexual Anxiety:

Fascists will sexualize the threat in order to promote fear. Blacks and immigrants become rapists. Trans girls and homosexuals become predators. It's a way of attacking freedoms without doing so explicitly.

Current Events: Trans women are framed as predators to justify exclusion and erasure.

9. Sodom and Gomorrah:

The diversity of cities is a threat to fascism so they demonize urban populations. They're lazy parasites who steal from honest working rural communities. Fascism upholds rural values such as hard-work and seeks to gain sympathy from populations outside of major cities.

Current Events: Cities like San Francisco and New York are routinely demonized as lawless wastelands.