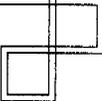


CHAPTER 8

The Shift From Internationalism to Identity Politics: From Our Oppressions to My Oppression

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Prelude

We are from the so-called baby-boom generation. Our parents' generation faced specific challenges, including the global scarcity of the capitalist crisis in the 1920s and 1930s (Great Depression in the United States). Major cataclysms shaped their political and material lives: The Russian Revolution of 1917 shook the ruling classes to the marrow; a year later Germany was bankrupted by the Treaty of Versailles that ended the Great War with more than 30 million dead; the rise of Nazism began in 1919 with the birth of the right-wing German Workers Party, as well as a multitude of right-wing populist movements across Europe and the Americas. And then came the conflagration of World War II. Thus, our parents' generation saw three political adversaries: fascism, communism, and liberalism.¹ Politics was bracketed by three documents: the Communist Manifesto, Mein Kampf, and, in the United States, liberalism and social action.

Our post-World War II situation was quite different. Materially, we were born into a rising economy. The war had ended the capitalist crises of the 1920s and 1930s. The U.S. economy was not damaged by war, and the shift from military production to a

consumer-based economy occurred rapidly. The GI Bill allowed more Americans than ever to attend college or university. Student politics and social movements in the second half of the 20th century were bracketed by two manifestos: The 1960 Sharon Statement that created the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) and the Port Huron Statement that created Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

As we begin the 21st century, what appeared as the victory of liberalism over unfettered capitalism, fascism, and communism increasingly seems to have been an aberration. Rather, we find ourselves seeing the return of 19th-century capitalism. Conservative visions of capital and democracy have asserted themselves against New Deal liberalism and socialism. The collapse of Marxism-Leninism in Russia, Eastern Europe, China, and other expressions in Asia and Africa confirmed to liberals and conservatives that Marxism as a political tool had come to an end. The collapse and, with it, the apparent erasure of a socialist option facilitated the return of unfettered capitalism, fascism, and simultaneously enabled the return of liberalism to its libertarian roots. It underscored the failure, limitations, and/or inability of democracy to permanently manage capital. The victors, neoliberalism and conservatism, advance a new cultural politics now clothed as identity politics.

Introduction

As a nation, we have fallen from the precipice. The authors recognize that the politics reflected in the Port Huron Statement, together with the various protest movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, were not consistent with the trajectory of U.S. capital and democracy. The hope to move liberalism more closely to socialism failed. Instead, we acknowledge the long connection from early 20th-century right-wing populism, the conservative reaction to the New Deal, the consistent endeavor to limit democratic practices, the exposé of both the Republican and Democratic parties as parties of the capitalist elite, the Sharon Statement, and the re-occurrence of nationalism, White supremacy, and identity politics have succeeded. Our fear is that oppositional politics to these and other challenges have been tainted by this conservative and neoliberal success and that the failure of Marxism-Leninism has removed socialism as part of this opposition. We are wary of politics that appear to reduce politics to “my oppression” over “our oppression.”

Our endeavor here is not to examine the success of conservative thought and politics (Scruton, 2015) or the return of libertarian liberalism. Many are engaged in that project. Our concern is to begin a discussion of current campus politics. As capital ravages U.S. higher education, the only response we see occurring comes from students and faculty organizing around identity politics. In an earlier essay, we noted how capital has subverted the openings created in the post-war era, beginning with the GI Bill and the introduction of higher education, initially to working-class White males and then people

of color and women (Margolis & Soldatenko, 2015). But like much of 20th-century liberalism, this too was an irregularity that is already almost dismantled. The rapid decline in state funding for higher education; the increase in tuition and fees; the limit of state and federal financial aid; the rise of student debt, together with the turn to external money; the rise of adjuncts and replacement of tenure lines by contract faculty, campus governance, and role of administration—all these factors demonstrate that higher education marches to market forces. This same mechanism has disrupted the post-war aberration that sought to allow a diversity of folks to explore ideas disconnected from market needs. Today, higher education increasingly becomes a place to get a career, not a place to think or explore; it is a place to kowtow to the not-so-hidden curriculum (Margolis, 2001). In this situation, what has been the response for those in and outside the academy? Many focus on identity politics, as we can see in various articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* or *Inside Higher Education*.

In this essay, we wish to express our unease with identity politics as the primary response to the dismantling of the liberal experiment in higher education. We acknowledge the limitations of this experiment, just as we recognize the limits of social liberalism as expressed in the New Deal. However, the spirit of Port Huron that hoped that these initial reforms would lead to greater transformations has been replaced by the success of conservative politics that brings these experiments to a close. Let us be clear. Our assessment of the current use of identity politics is not based on liberal or conservative views that imagine a time when the United States had proper values, culture, and personal behavior that disregarded White supremacy and the logic of capital. We reject these criticisms of identity politics because they demonstrate a willful amnesia regarding U.S. class, gender, and race relations since 1607 and erase the U.S. history of White identity politics as well as ignore the success of the conservative reaction to civil rights movements. We argue that to understand the potential limitations of a progressive use of identity politics it is important to recognize how activists of color in the past challenged White supremacy by reclaiming identity politics from White nationalism through a complex blending of internationalism and nationalism (Miah, 2010). This critical re-working of identity politics must be understood in light of the potential transformative practices that began with the civil rights movements in the post-war period and the developing protest against the draft, together with the intellectual tools that Western Marxism gave us.² Unfortunately, much current use of identity politics erases its socialist underpinnings and fosters a liberal anti-racism (Johnson, 2017). “Ethnic nationalism, in today’s context, by default helps advance the conservative viewpoint in the Black community” (Miah, 2010).

Liberal Critique of Identity Politics

Mark Lilla (2017a) has taken the banner of liberalism to challenge identity politics. In various places, he argues that diversity, multiculturalism, and the celebration of differences are the causes of many of today's problems in the academy. Identity politics resulted from a narcissist culture that centers everything in one's self-defined group. He further inverts the virulent return of White nationalism to people of color's use of identity politics with its "culture of complaint" (Lilla, 2017a). Beginning in the Reagan era, he stresses, the New Left fostered identity politics. "[B]y the 1980s it [identity politics] had given way to a pseudo-politics of self-regard and increasingly narrow and exclusionary self-definition that is now cultivated in our colleges and universities" (Lilla, 2017a). Rather, he calls for a "post-identity liberalism" that would appeal to "Americans as Americans" (Lilla, 2016) to care for the country and its citizens with an imagined common future.

We would like to take a few moments to highlight Lilla's (2017b) argument as presented in his recent manifesto *The Once and Future Liberal*. Let us begin with some points that we share with Lilla: the rightward drift of U.S. public opinion thanks in part to the influence of the right-wing media complex; the crisis of U.S. liberalism; the demise of the New Deal vision of a "collective enterprise to guard one another against risk, hardship, and the denial of fundamental rights"; and the rise of the conservative agenda that highlights "a more individualistic America where families and small communities and business" have come to believe that they will "flourish once freed from the shackles of the state" (Lilla, 2017b, p. 8). We further recognize with Lilla that identity politics is not new to the United States or the U.S. conservative movement and share his concern that some progressives took conservative identity politics to replace a liberalism that was concerned with large classes of people.

Lilla noted that the election of Reagan marked a point when the public seemed to no longer care about the public good.³ "A new outlook on life had been gaining ground in the United States, one in which the needs and desires of individuals were given near-absolute priority over those of society" (Lilla, 2017b, p. 26). He argued that in the 1970s U.S. liberalism made a series of missteps that played into the hands of conservatives, thus allowing a belief system of personal choice, individual rights, and self-definition tied to a hyper-individualistic bourgeois society to come to dominate. We do not agree with this last point. Rather, we find that the political elites (Democratic and Republican) accept many of the same assumptions that consigned New Deal liberals to fend for themselves as both parties adopted the language of "smaller government," "reform welfare," "market-driven," and a litany of beliefs that have been expressed by every administration since Nixon. At the same time, these elites now look at higher education as one of the entities needing reform—to be made smaller and docile—as well as to be subject to market forces.

Our strongest difference with Lilla is his read of identity politics. While we agree with his conclusion that “Identity is not for the future of the left. It is not a force hostile to neoliberalism. Identity is Reaganism for lefties” (Lilla, 2017b, p. 95), we do not agree with how he arrived at this conclusion. Liberals, he argues, “lost themselves in the thickets of identity politics and developed a resentful, disuniting rhetoric” (Lilla, 2017b, p. 59). He blames a “political romanticism” born from the anti-war movement and the various activities that he ties to the New Left—a period when movement politics replaced institutional politics (Lilla, 2017b) and shifted away from our shared identity as citizens. “Identity liberalism banished the word *we* to outer reaches of respectable political discourse” (Lilla, 2017b, p. 119). Lilla is most outraged with the retreat of the New Left into the universities. The retreating New Left turned the universities into a pseudo-political theatre for tenured radicals, culture wars, and political correctness (Lilla, 2017b). These professors turned political activity into meaning for the self (Lilla, 2017b). For Lilla, professors undermined “the universal democratic *we* on which solidarity can be built, duty instilled, and action inspired” (Lilla, 2017b, p. 137). They cultivated students to obsess with their personal identities (Lilla, 2017b). Furthermore, trends from French thought underscored radical individualism (Lilla, 2017b).

For us, this critique of identity politics misses the point. Not until we break down the consistent attack on social New Deal liberalism and all expressions of socialism can we understand how campus identity politics came to be. While we agree that current identity politics will not challenge neoliberalism and capital, we need to understand where identity politics came from and why it finds expression in higher education.

Capital, Race, and Inequality

In light of the victory of Trump, much soul searching has unfolded over the development of politics in the United States, in particular how the U.S.’s original sin of racism still condemns the nation. Yet the relationship to capital often gets second billing to race and gender. Even when scholars look at intersectionality, the attempt to balance multiplicities of identities can suggest that class is a mere descriptive demographic category. Therefore, we wish to avoid “a de-classed, over-specialized form of intersectionality that displays no interest in building class unity or an ability to work with ordinary people” (Imperium Ad Infinitum, n.d.), but instead call attention to our differences *in the context of class struggle*: “anti-capitalist politics, rooted in situated class experiences” (Johnson, 2017, p. 2). To do so we must assert strongly the class nature of U.S. social and political structure and learn to navigate identity politics authentically (Jones, 2010).

In tracing the history of the insult “limousine liberal,” Fraser (2017) narrated the strategy to hollow-out New Deal and great society liberalism and replace it with a faux blending of business elites and blue-collar populism with Christian overtones. “The coalition envisioned by Nixon and Reagan conjoined two fundamentalisms. One invoked

the ideology of the free market, the other scripture. Yet both had to cohabit a political home that reserved its main councils of strategic planning for the country's corporate elite" (Fraser, 2017, p. 198). The limousine liberal label was initially directed to the rich and well born who had "betrayed" their birthright by pushing social reform. Even though the term itself did not yet exist, the anxiety originated early in the 20th century and grew rapidly into a hostility toward the rise of a rationalizing bureaucracy to protect capital in the 1930s. Today, many more groups are covered by this slight:

What has given the metaphor of the limousine liberal its stamina has been its ability to collect together a disparate array of discontents, anxieties, and sentiments aroused by the advent of modern corporate and finance capitalism, cosmopolitan living, consumer culture, and the growth of a supervisory state that helps keep the whole mechanism running. (Fraser, 2017, p. 45)

From the start, the attack on limousine liberals was linked to culture and race. From the Palmer raids with their Red Scare hysteria, to the Scopes Trial, together with the rise of the Klan to the writings of Henry Ford, limousine liberal represented White racialized persons and their "support" of finance capital was unjust, undemocratic, and inequitable, as well as iniquitous, depraved, dissolute, and godless (Fraser, 2017).⁴ With New Deal policies and the modern government bureaucracy, these critics linked liberals to Jews and Bolsheviks in their quest for world domination. By the 1930s, many saw the New Deal as selling out to big business. While others sought the end of capital, one particular group of populists, including Huey Long, Father Coughlin, Francis Townsend, and Gerald L.K. Smith, saw themselves not as "anti-capitalist, but rather as searching for ways to save the system of private enterprise from the profiteers who were looting it" (Fraser, 2017, p. 71).⁵ For these critics, the swindlers were a cabal of Jews, bankers, and Bolsheviks; later, adherents added corporate and government bureaucrats, intellectuals, and politicians. Often, their attack on communism was a condemnation of the centralized, bureaucratic, statist orientation of the New Deal (Fraser, 2017).

During WWII and after, U.S. capital assumed its dominant role while tolerating the role of the welfare state and the national security state in the nation's political economy (Fraser, 2017). The increased growth of government consociated the fears of the New Deal opponents, including southern Democrats, a maturing faction of new capitalists, and a growing faction in the Republican Party that feared the leviathan state with its regulatory apparatus and the growing welfare state (now with the addition of the GI Bill) (Fraser, 2017). Even with the discourse of the limousine liberal, conservatives still did not have the rhetoric and political base to challenge New Deal liberalism. At best, these opponents contested U.S. proponents of big government and social reform by linking them to agents of the Soviet Union and communism, as reflected in the language of Joseph McCarthy.⁶ So long as the Republican Party retained a wing that partook of the liberal establishment (e.g., Henry Cabot Lodge, George Romney, Nelson Rockefeller,

and even President Eisenhower), the coalescing of all these independent forces that opposed big government and social reform could not occur. Goldwater and his supporters, such as the John Birch Society, would begin this cleansing by linking liberalism to race and culture, as the 1964 Republican convention demonstrated. Identity politics lifted its head again as White nationalism.

Conservatives read the Civil Rights Movement, the passage of the Civil Rights Act, and the War on Poverty as the imposition of New Deal liberalism on the individual. Race and soon gender became the cultural battleground.⁷ By 1968, with the quagmire in Vietnam, anti-war demonstrations, urban riots, counterculture, and the descent into a half-century of economic crisis and stagnation (Brenner, 2006), conservatives transformed economic populism into cultural populism, and racial animosities exploded against liberalism (Fraser, 2017). One of the first to carry this banner nationally was George Wallace, an anti-elitist, populist, racist, chauvinist, and tribune of the politics of revenge and resentment (Fraser, 2017). In his presidential campaign, conservatives and segregationists would fashion a common political identity and logic (Fraser, 2017). Working-class and lower-middle-class White ethnics felt that their social contract with New Deal liberalism was ending. In turn, liberals implemented policies to address race but were unable or unwilling to address questions of class:

White racism pure and simple was to blame for what was happening to black America. This was of course both self-evident and an evasion. It was a way of spreading the blame to avoid the blame that those occupying the commanding heights of the economy and political power might otherwise suffer. (Fraser, 2017, p. 151)

Frank (2016) added that the Democratic Party moved away from worker organizations, thus allowing the arrival of new-school democrats who were largely uninterested in traditional issues of economic inequality. “Neglecting workers was the opening that allowed Republicans to reach out to blue-collar voters with their arsenal of culture-war fantasies” (Frank, 2016, p. 47).

Under Reagan, the various movements against New Deal and great society liberalism came together. While Nixon and other Republicans still functioned within the framework of postwar liberalism (Fraser, 2017), Goldwater began the transformation of the Republican Party. At the same time, “Agnew, Nixon, and others crafted an artful redressing of social grievances by cultural means” (Fraser, 2017, p. 168). With Reagan, a religious coloring was added; government was depicted as secular and humanist, and sometimes as a demonic ravenous beast.⁸ The centralized, bureaucratic, statist orientation of government was portrayed as dictating intimate matters—the raising of children, relations of men and women, racial hierarchy, and God (Fraser, 2017). Christian populism and Christian capitalism came together as Evangelicals came to see the free market, supply-side economics, and property ownership as expressions of faith. Liberals and

their support of the New Deal administrative, regulatory, welfare state were portrayed as elitist, decadent, and anti-Christian. Liberalism's association with the social gospel only underscored that this was also a religious war. Conservatives portrayed the free market and unfettered capitalism as the most Christian; they applauded "the gathering in of wealth by the rich in the interests of the general prosperity and viewing that money as a divine gift, a blessing" (Fraser, 2017, pp. 214–215). Thus, the economic sphere enlarged, eventually encompassing the entirety of social life, including personal and social identity (Wrenn, 2014, p. 506).

The Democratic Party unfortunately followed the same capitalist road. Thus, Frank (2016) remarks that the party turned away from basic economic concerns to cultural issues. He comments that the party's "move to center" erased the accomplishments of New Deal liberals (Frank, 2015, p. 65). The "new" Democrats, led by Bill Clinton, embraced free-market policies, fiscal discipline, global competition, flexible labor markets, transparent capital markets, deregulated business, and limited government interference in the market (Frank, 2016). These pro-business policies saw workers' productivity increase dramatically as wages declined. Frank places many sins at the Democrats' feet: policies on trade, crime, welfare, austerity, deregulations, bailouts, attempts at privatization, and surveillance. "It wasn't Reagan alone who did it. What distinguishes the political order we live under now is consensus on certain economic questions, and what made that consensus happen was the capitulation of the Democrats" (Frank, 2016, p. 106). Both Democrats and Republicans separated race and gender from class, thus ending social reforms.

Frank claims that the 2008 economic crisis offered Democrats the opportunity to rebuild social liberalism and return the party to its original base—workers and their organizations. Instead, Democrats offered New Deal rhetoric but no change in practice. Thus, Barack Obama's team did not press an equality-minded economic program (Frank, 2016). There was more protection for bankers than the unemployed and those hurt by the Great Recession. For Frank, the party of the people disappeared. This allowed Republicans to return to their faux position of dealing with people's economic frustration and parading as protectors of blue-collar workers while fostering fake populism, demagoguery, racial bigotry, and nativism.

Fraser (2017) and Frank (2016) argue that the ideology of a free market and limited government has come to be the present orthodoxy. Furthermore, this turn has brought us back to a capitalism that fosters individualism and the rejection of social responsibilities. (Neoliberalism is not new; it "embodies the ideological shift in the purpose of the state from one that has a responsibility to insure full employment and protect its citizens against the exigencies of the market to one that has a responsibility to insure individual responsibility and protection of the market itself" (Wrenn, 2014, p. 506).) The anomalies of the mid-20th century have been expunged. The culture wars and identity politics heated up social, economic, and political realities. The turn to identities and membership in particular collectives obliterated larger mutual groups, in particular those related to

social class. Union membership is a good proxy for measuring class consciousness; it has declined from 20% in 1983 to about 12% today. (The composition of labor unions has also changed from blue-collar workers to white-collar workers.) “In the private sector, five industries accounted for 81 percent of union members in 2015. Of these industries, private education and health services had the largest number of union members at 1.9 million; this includes a large number of union members who work in private hospitals, like nurses, and private school employees” (Dunn & Walker, 2016, p. 5). At the same time, organized labor failed to invest in both cross-sectoral and intercommunity organizing, “organizing the working class as a class *for itself*” (Johnson, 2017, p. 11). Conservatives and liberals understood that class and its internal intersections did not support their belief in the invisible hand of a free market and the supposed benevolence of global free-flowing capital.

Higher Education and Identity Politics

As we argued, we do not agree with Lilla (2016) that the “political romanticism” of the period of the New Left and the anti-war protests gave us the current campus identity politics. He too easily buys into the notion, so much propagated by conservatives and liberals, that New Left activists retreated to the university to teach their views on culture and political correctness. These “tenured radicals,” conservatives argue, taught a generation of students that politics was about the self and, in the process, broke the concept of “we” as citizens. Rather, we propose that an understanding of capital and class will produce the development of a politics where identity can play a role. It is *possible* to imagine a capitalism free from racism and sexism and that is LGBTQ friendly—even while recognizing how capitalism and capitalists have been enormously successful in using bigotry to keep workers from organizing. Class is different; by its own logic, capitalism must produce a ruling class and a proletariat.

The 1963 Port Huron Statement set the tone for the 1960s and 70s by linking the contradictions with capital and the U.S. history of racial injustice and economic manipulation:

We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit. . . . As we grew, however, our comfort was penetrated by events too troubling to dismiss. First, the permeating and victimizing fact of human degradation, symbolized by the Southern struggle against racial bigotry, compelled most of us from silence to activism. Second, the enclosing fact of the Cold War, symbolized by the presence of the Bomb, brought awareness that we ourselves, and our friends, and millions of abstract “others” we knew more directly because of our common peril, might die at any time. We might deliberately ignore, or avoid, or fail to feel all other human problems, but

not these two, for these were too immediate and crushing in their impact, too challenging in the demand that we as individuals take the responsibility for encounter and resolution. . . . While two-thirds of mankind suffers under nourishment, our own upper classes revel amidst superfluous abundance. . . . America rests in national stalemate, its goals ambiguous and tradition-bound instead of informed and clear, its democratic system apathetic and manipulated rather than "of, by, and for the people." . . . But today, for us, not even the liberal and socialist preachments of the past seem adequate to the forms of the present. Consider the old slogans: Capitalism Cannot Reform Itself, United Front Against Fascism, General Strike, All Out on May Day. Or, more recently, No Cooperation with Commies and Fellow Travelers, Ideologies Are Exhausted, Bipartisanship. . . . In the last few years, thousands of American students demonstrated that they at least felt the urgency of the times. They moved actively and directly against racial injustices, the threat of war, violations of individual rights of conscience, and, less frequently, against economic manipulation. (Sixties Project, 1993, para 1-5)

A key nationalist moment came 2 years before the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) strike in the Bay Area when, in 1966, Stokely Carmichael asked Whites to leave the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), cementing a new Black nationalism. Black identity politics had also been a core belief of the Nation of Islam dating back to the 1930s. During the Third World Strikes at San Francisco State (SFS) and University of California, Berkeley (UCB), activists sought a precarious balance between nationalism (what we call identity politics) and political alliances with other minority and White campus activists. Using a Marxian analysis, they articulated this internationalist nationalism as third-world liberation politics. Politically, SFS and UCB strikes offered an internationalism that could sustain nationalism, without surrendering to its divisive qualities, with an anti-imperialist critique based on a Marxist understanding of capital. The Third World Strikes offered an alternative political orientation to the growing identity politics in the African American and Chicano movements as well as the growth of a dogmatic Marxism, primarily a theoretical Maoism, among campus activists. This alternative campus political practice, unfortunately, was never fully articulated and quickly succumbed to nationalism, a limited Marxism, conservatism, and neoliberalism.⁹

Third-world liberation politics used nationalism to build political coalitions among disenfranchised communities to achieve a socialist United States. It endeavored to corral the disruptive tendencies in nationalism to "go it alone" and Marxism's initial "reduction" of all questions of identity to class. The protests at SFS and UCB afford examples of different ethnic and racial people working together to push their educational, social, and political agendas. Their political choices represented a temporary moment

of political and social alliances among groups that later would define their political, social, and educational concerns from their particular racial, ethnic, national interest, identities, and/or political position. Furthermore, third-world liberation criticism of U.S. foreign policies, based on a Marxist critique, helped to sustain alliances with other groups (Brown, 2003; Elbaum, 2002). As noted in an editorial in Merritt College's *Rasca Tripas* (1970a), interethnic unity had to supersede nationalist separatism:

Will the "Chicano" Movement move on and succeed in becoming a solid and potent revolutionary front to be reckoned with by those reactionary, imperialist forces which now control the world, or will it falter and drown in a quagmire of self-defeating regionalism, nationalism, and narrow-mindedness?

While the editorial provisionally accepted that nationalism could serve as an organizing tool, Chicanos(as) had to be wary of expanding nationalism to ridiculous degrees of regionalism and exclusion (*Rasca Tripas*, 1970b).

The tension between internationalism and nationalism was not an easy balance to sustain. "Nationalism was a point of conflict within the TWLF. Most activists were committed to a desire to improve the conditions for their people. But there was a growing suspicion that some may look out for their own at the expense of other groups" (Umamoto, 85). While nationalism had been evident during the strike, it had been molded to the larger struggle. Professor Solomon from SFS argued that by the end of the strike some African American and Mexican American student leaders had come to a new conclusion after witnessing the support they received from White radical students and faculty.

Yet, at the same time that third-world activists sought to build a more just society, conservatives, building on Goldwater's vision and the election of Reagan as governor of California, returned to their goal of taking apart New Deal liberalism and stopping the rise of a socialist alternative. Many of these ideas were represented in the Sharon Statement, adopted on September 11, 1960, by a group of 100 young conservatives who convened at the home of William F. Buckley:

In this time of moral and political crises, it is the responsibility of the youth of America to affirm certain eternal truths. We, as young conservatives, believe: That foremost among the transcendent values is the individual's use of his God-given free will, whence derives his right to be free from the restrictions of arbitrary force; That liberty is indivisible, and that political freedom cannot long exist without economic freedom; That the purpose of government is to protect those freedoms through the preservation of internal order, the provision of national defense, and the administration of justice; That when government ventures beyond these rightful functions, it accumulates power, which tends to diminish order and liberty. . . . That

the forces of international Communism are, at present, the greatest single threat to these liberties; That the United States should stress victory over, rather than coexistence with, this menace. . . . (New Guard Staff, 2016)

Again we see the call for the defense of the free market, individualism, and small government—a call to acknowledge the “eternal truth” that individuals make the choices that determine their lives, untied to history or society. This suggested that all government interventions had to cease; even policies initiated by Republican administrations, such as affirmative action, had to stop (Sanneh, 2017). Unstated was the acceptance of White supremacy and imperialism (Hahn, 2017).

Unfortunately, White nationalism contaminated third-world politics. (For the sake of simplicity, we have used nationalism as a singular noun.) However, it is important to keep in mind that Chicano(a) activists used a variety of nationalisms (Garcia, 1994, pp. 248–262). Identity politics spread among the various ethnic/racial groups. Haney López (2003) notes that Chicano(a) activists in Southern California distinguished themselves from African Americans, often playing on traditional animosities and the wider society’s view of race. He quotes Oscar Acosta from 1971: “The black man came here as a slave. He is not of this land. . . . [H]e has nothing but the white society to identify with. We have a history. We have culture. We had a land. . . . For me, my native ancestry is crucial” (López, 2003, p. 211). Zeta Acosta complained that in rallies with the Black Panthers he was typically left out until the end and given only 5 minutes to speak. And more importantly at the end of the rally, “we get no offers of any real unity or working together” (Stavans, 1996, p. 10). Armando Rendon’s (1971) *Chicano Manifesto* expresses this same issue when he notes that Blacks sought equality on Anglo terms and only recently turned to a Black identity and cultural separateness. In contrast, the Chicano *movimiento* has always sought equality and respect for their way of life, culture, and language (Rendon, 1971, p. 4). As a result of nationalism, a growing friction grew between Chicanos(as) and African Americans on the Berkeley campus, especially over the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). William Sherill, the director of EOP and an African American, stated that Chicano(a) protest resulted “from the Chicano desire to ‘do their own thing’ and assert their independence from the blacks in the EOP office” (Wood & Aquino, 1969). The Chicano(a) turn to identity politics was evident at many events and in statements (López, 2003; Macias, 1969; MECHA, 1969).

An interesting example of the nationalist turn is a piece in *La Causa* from 1971. The author noted that many believe that since Chicanos(as) share the same oppressor, they must consider each other brothers. But, in reality, these groups are ignorant of who Chicanos(as) are and simply want to use us. Therefore, we cannot work with Anglos or Blacks. “The fact is, that a Chicano who is a Nationalist is, by that very fact a Revolutionary, for Chicano Nationalism and Gabacho Nationalism are in direct contradiction to each other” (*La Causa*, 1971). The author pushed his point further. He denounced Black nationalists because, he claimed, they have not developed an autonomous direction.

Only Chicano nationalism is authentic. “Chicano Nationalism, is the only Nationalism in the U.S. that is authentically Revolutionary” (*La Causa*, 1971, pp. 6–7).

Third-world liberation politics fell victim to a nationalism that sought separation from Anglos and other people of color.¹⁰ Relations with other groups were determined by a group’s self-interest. At the same time, third-world politics translated into a U.S. variant of Maoism. Thus, campus politics among students of color reflected the demise of an internationalist third-world politics and the rise of separatist nationalism, sectarian Marxism, or liberal identity politics. While there were temporary alliances among students of color, these were mere shadows of events at San Francisco State University and the University of California at Berkeley. The two strikes marked the nadir and demise of interethnic unity on most college campuses, followed by the rise of a nasty nationalism, a narrow Marxism, and a victorious liberalism.

Conclusion

For Kagarlitsky (2000), the left radicalism of the 1960s was quickly taken over and exploited by the market.¹¹ He contends that the collapse of liberalism, social democracy, and the disappearance of the revolutionary Left ensured the success of a respectable bourgeois radicalism: the new Democratic Party. Moreover, identity politics became possible thanks to the ideological decay of socialism; as a result, it became the only alternative to neoliberalism. Kagarlitsky (2000) underscores that capitalism reproduces identities. Solidarity and mutual aid challenges the system; identity politics strengthens existing situations. Therefore, Kagarlitsky underlines that the politics of emancipation must aim beyond bounds of identity and the impulse to replace class politics with identity politics. Doyle (2017) adds that “contemporary identity politics is hostile to any form of dissent” since it is based on faith and not reason.¹² Much like the third-world strikes, both authors call for intergroup and interethnic solidarity—a unity that comes from joint struggle (Kagarlitsky, 2000). “Identity politics in its current form is a divisive, self-destructive phenomenon, and we should not allow the left to continue to be dominated by reactionary zealots” (Doyle, 2017).

We hope that current campus identity politics returns to politics that are grounded in class struggle. Capital uses race, gender, sexualities, and other identities to split the labor force and reduce its effectiveness in struggle. This is not to state that these identities are epiphenomenal, but to suggest that their existence has meaning inter-sectionally (Wald, 2018). To understand class, the Left has come to understand the modalities (such as race and gender) that people live. There is no return to the Marxist-Leninist paradigm of privileging class above all factors. But this intimates that our political work is more complex, since we need to build on relationships as we engage in class struggle. Currently, conservatives and neoliberals allow race to trump class; we must be careful to protect our use of identity from such constructions. “Sustained political work is held

together by shared historical interests, especially those that connect to our daily lives and felt needs, not sentimental ‘ties of blood’” (Johnson, 2017, p. 15).

Notes

- 1 This is not the place to examine the differences among these political ideologies and practices. Rather, we acknowledge that we are very loose with our use of these terms and ignore internal differentiations.
- 2 The “anti-war” movement was actually an anti-draft movement. The all-volunteer military obliterated the movement. The U.S. empire could now proceed to fight constant wars without discernable protests.
- 3 This is the U.S. version of Thatcherism when Thatcher said in 1987: “[T]here’s no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families” (*The Guardian*, 2013). Neoliberal identity then is isolating, disconnected from community, and leaves the individual alienated in both the Marxist and psychological definitions.
- 4 Recent books by Linda Gordon (2017) and Felix Harcourt (2017) note the development of White identity politics through the growth of the Ku Klux Klan.
- 5 Interestingly, “Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few” (2016) is the title of a recent book by Robert Reich, who fancies himself a leader of the resistance movement against the Trump Administration.
- 6 Today, many are mesmerized by what passes as news and opinion in the right-wing media, such as Fox News. Yet the genesis of this media parallels the attack on the administrative, regulatory, welfare state, as well as U.S. internationalism, the original America First movement. Broadcaster Clarence Manion and publishers Henry Regnery and William Rusher transformed conservative media into the epicenter of a right-wing movement, converting audiences into activists and activists into voters (Hemmer, 2016). In the process, “[c]onservative media activists advanced an alternative way of knowing the world, one that attacked the legitimacy of objectivity and substituted for it ideological integrity” (Hemmer, 2016, p. xiii).
- 7 Democracts were in fact ahead of Republicans in their view of Black exceptionalism. Thus, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, along with other liberals, viewed Black poverty as due to institutional racism and the alleged pathology of Blacks—the infamous culture of poverty (Johnson, 2017). As Johnson (2017) notes, this cultural explanation marked the rejection “of the class-centered politics that defined both the labor militancy of the interwar period and the political orientation of the postwar civil rights movement” (p. 6).
- 8 Goldwater was prescient in forecasting our current state of affairs in 1993: “Mark my word, if and when these *preachers* get control of the [Republican] party, and they’re sure trying to do so, it’s going to be a terrible damn problem. Frankly, these people frighten me. Politics and governing demand compromise. But these Christians believe they are acting in the name of God, so they can’t and won’t. . . .”
- 9 It is easy to fall into nostalgia for third-world politics with its implied ethnic exceptionalism as expressed by Black and Chicano(a) activists. We recognize that our reading of the SFS and UCB strikes is utopic. Our intent is merely to suggest possibilities.
- 10 There were exceptions and momentary alliances among students. The best example on the UC Berkeley campus took place during the Cambodia incursion and the Kent State killings. At Berkeley, Chicanos(as) stopped their Cinco de Mayo celebration to join others

in protesting the deaths and the war. A very different response occurred on the UCLA campus when MECHA protestors denounced protests about Kent State and Cambodia as interfering with their use of Cinco de Mayo to demand greater support for Mexican American students. At the Berkeley protest, Chicano activists, still guided by third-world politics, linked up with other students who were concerned with the Cambodia incursion and the deaths at Kent State, while the UCLA Chicanos felt that their struggle should not be constrained by other political movements.

11 The university is one such market. We note that the establishment of ethnic studies departments played into liberal nationalism as African American, Chicano, Native American, Asian Pacific Island, gender, and other programs were created as separate entities.

12 Note the online essay by Frances Lee.

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