

## Mobilizing Misogyny

Unquestionably, President Donald Trump's demonstrated enthusiasm for catering to the Christian Right on abortion—and obliterating their memory of his pro-choice past—spells trouble for reproductive rights. But that's not the only threat to women under Trump's new order. Trump's campaign distinguished itself from those of other Republican candidates by its attacks on women: regularly insulting women's appearances or behavior and defending physical and sexual harassment and violence against them. Sometimes, Trump's threatening and offensive rhetoric directly targeted his Democratic opponent, Hillary Rodham Clinton, the first woman major party nominee for president, from calling her a "nasty woman" to suggesting there might be a Second Amendment "remedy" in case of her election.<sup>1</sup>

This rhetoric energized members of a secular misogynist Right—such as the men's rights movement and, more recently, the "Alt Right"—that has flourished online since the 1990s. And it found no pushback from a brand of conservative, libertarian "feminism"—another '90s development—that provides a dangerously legitimizing female face for misogynist ideology centered on overt hostility to women and the promulgation of rape culture.

Effectively fighting mobilizations like those emboldened by Trump's election requires accurately understanding their composition—one in which misogyny thrives alongside, and intertwined with, racism.

### **PATRIARCHAL TRADITIONALISM FROM WHITE SUPREMACY TO THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT**

Male supremacism, enshrined in the nation's founding documents, is as fun-

damental to U.S. history as White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) nativism.<sup>2</sup> The same patriarchal stance—combining race, religion, and nativism—fuels conservative Christian ideology on appropriate gender roles. (Transgender women and men and genderqueer individuals also violate these designated roles.) Especially in the last 100 years, as some women have succeeded in pushing back against the sexist world they inherited, social and political movements have emerged to defend traditional gender structures.

Amid Second Wave feminism, the antifeminists Phyllis Schlafly (a Roman Catholic) and Beverly LaHaye (an evangelical) followed in this tradition when they organized a "pro-family" movement to stop the ratification of the 1972 Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Though themselves prominent activists, LaHaye and the late Schlafly promoted submission to husbands and attacked women seeking careers.<sup>3</sup>

Abortion, contraception, and sexuality education all threaten the enforcement of traditional gender roles. After the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion in 1973, conservative evangelicals joined with the existing Catholic "pro-life" movement in the creation of the Christian Right, and abortion became "a vital component of [the Right's] fight to protect the bottom line of traditional family values—the dominance of white, male power and control," as PRA's Jean Hardisty and Pam Chamberlain observed. The anti-abortion movement drew together members of the Religious Right and White supremacists and neonazis, who contributed to the rising violence against clinic providers in the 1990s perpetrated primarily by White men.<sup>4</sup> (The legacy of White supremacy, Hardisty and Chamberlain continue,

can be seen in how "the Right applies race and class criteria that distinguish between the rights of white, middle-class women and low-income women of color." This dynamic led to the 1990s stereotype of the "welfare queen," and welfare reform under Bill Clinton designed to discourage women of color and immigrant women from having "too many" children.<sup>5</sup>)

But attacks on women's reproductive rights have often come wrapped in the guise of chivalry, framed as "moral issues" and "family values" rather than misogyny. To gain wider acceptance, the anti-abortion movement has adopted a framework of "protecting women," vilifying abortion providers as preying on weak women threatened by the physical and mental health consequences of abortion.<sup>6</sup> That effort has made significant legislative progress in recent years, with a slew of state anti-abortion bills in 2011. Despite this official strategy, clinic protesters on the ground expose their misogyny in calling women "murderers" and "whores," and sometimes resorting to physical intimidation.<sup>7</sup>

In 2012, contraception came under increased attack as immoral in the debate over healthcare reform. Anti-abortion groups have long denounced the "morning after pill" as an abortifacient, yet had otherwise tended to avoid pushing an unpopular position against contraception, largely considered a settled issue. When law student Sandra Fluke testified in favor of contraceptive coverage, Rush Limbaugh infamously ranted about her being a "slut" and a "prostitute" who should be required to post sex videos online.<sup>8</sup>

Set on proving that his "pro-choice" days were behind him, during the 2016 campaign Trump denounced Planned Parenthood as an "abortion factory" and

selected hardline reproductive and LG-BTQ rights opponent Indiana governor Mike Pence as his running mate. In his eagerness, Trump unknowingly violated the Christian Right's strategic deployment of a "kinder, gentler" image<sup>9</sup> when he announced that women who obtained an illegal abortion should face "punishment." Although Trump backpedaled to mollify anti-abortion groups

therefore opposes equal pay legislation.<sup>12</sup> In such respects, Christian Right ideology aligns with that of equity feminism and men's rights.

#### EQUITY FEMINISM AND MEN'S RIGHTS

In 1991, "Women for Judge Thomas" formed to defend conservative Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas against Anita Hill's sexual harassment allegations. The following year this group institutionalized itself as the Independent Women's Forum (IWF), under the premise that, as co-founder Anita Blair declared, feminism should have "declared victory and gone home" by 1978.<sup>13</sup> The idea that, at least in the U.S., women have achieved equality underlies the secular libertarian philosophy of "equity feminism" (also "individualist feminism").<sup>14</sup> In 2009, IWF's then-president Michelle Bernard explained, "we have a philosophical belief that women are not victims... we believe that free markets are really the great equalizer, and will allow women to become truly equal with men in areas where we still may be unequal."<sup>15</sup> This ideology diverges from patriarchal traditionalism in applauding successful career women (and holding varied views on abortion), replacing it with a sexism that blames women's continuing under-

developing a male victimhood ideology to complement equity feminism's rejection of female victims. In 1988, Warren Farrell, who had once been involved with feminist organizing of men's consciousness group, published the book *Why Men Are the Way They Are*, "depicting a world where women—particularly female executives—wield vast influence. Even those women who are less successful have 'enormous sexual leverage over men.'"<sup>19</sup>

When men think about women's gains, Caryl Rivers and Rosalind C. Barnett write in *The New Soft War on Women: How the Myth of Female Ascendance Is Hurting Women, Men—and Our Economy*, "There's a tendency to circle the wagons, to exaggerate how far women have come and how far men have fallen."<sup>20</sup> Alarm over women's advancement emerges repeatedly in U.S. history: as Danielle Paquette points out in the *Washington Post*, 30 years prior to Farrell's book, Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. worried over the trickle of wives into the 1950s workforce: "Women seem an expanding, aggressive force, seizing new domains like a conquering army, while men, more and more on the defensive, are hardly able to hold their own and gratefully accept assignments from their new rulers."<sup>21</sup>

Farrell, dubbed the "father of the men's rights movement," followed up in 1993 with *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men Are the Disposable Sex*, where he suggested that American (White) men were the new "nigger," threatened by women's ability to cry sexual harassment and "date rape." According to sociologist Michael Kimmel, this became the movement's "bible," awakening men to their status as victims of women's ascendancy.<sup>22</sup> Like White supremacist movements, men's rights ideology warns White men that they are losing their place in society. Where equity feminism thrives among elite women with access to major communications platforms, the men's rights movement is a decentralized "netroots" movement that draws men who feel less privileged, especially those with employment troubles and failures in romantic relationships.

Claiming rampant false accusations



Jack Donovan has advocated a system of patriarchy based on "tribal" comradeship among male warriors. (photo: Zachary O. Ray via Wiki Commons).

that claim to protect women, his original statement was characteristic of the anti-woman vitriol of his campaign and may have appealed to the existing hatred demonstrated by clinic protesters.<sup>10</sup>

The Christian Right's attack on women isn't limited to reproductive issues. Schlafly frequently argued that women make false accusations of sexual assault and domestic violence—her grounds for opposing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and suggesting that there exists a "war on men."<sup>11</sup> Concerned Women for America (CWA), a major Christian Right group founded by Beverly LaHaye, claims that the "wage gap" results from women's own choices and

representation in positions of influence on personal choices and intrinsic differences, and to protect this worldview, frequently dismisses contradictory evidence.<sup>16</sup>

By offering a provocative dissident women's voice, presenting "the other side," equity feminists can forego the grassroots organizing of Schlafly and LaHaye<sup>17</sup> while benefiting from extensive media dissemination of its ideas. As former IWF Executive Director Barbara Ledeen put it, "You can't have white guys saying you don't need affirmative action."<sup>18</sup>

Of course, plenty of White guys have spoken out against affirmative action,

of rape and violence is one of the most prevalent men's rights and equity feminist talking points.<sup>23</sup> *Who Stole Feminism?*, a classic among conservative "feminists" published the following year by Christina Hoff Sommers, similarly argues that "gender" or "radical" feminists lie about rates of rape and domestic violence. Speaking on campus sexual assault in 2014, Sommers, a scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, repeated the same themes of "false accusations" and "[i]nflated statistics," declaring, "I believe that the rape culture movement is fueled by exaggerated claims of intimacy and a lot of paranoia about men."<sup>24</sup> A spokesperson for A Voice for Men (AVFM), one of the most prominent men's rights organizations, rejected rape "hysteria...as a scam" and baselessly claimed that sexual assault affects only about two percent of women—far from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's one-in-five statistic.<sup>25</sup>

Although equity feminists reject the existence of structural constraints on women, like Men's Rights Activist (MRA) they suggest that American boys and men suffer at the hands of gender feminists. In 2000, Sommers wrote *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men*, and a flurry of concern over boys' educational achievements in 2013 landed her in major outlets including *The New York Times*, *TIME Magazine*, and *The Atlantic*. Psychologist Helen Smith, one of IWF's "Modern Feminists," suggested in 2012 that "the deck is so stacked against men that they are 'going Galt,'" a reference to Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*, an MRA favorite.<sup>26</sup>

Equity feminism's depiction of women as liars with "victim mentalities" dovetails alarmingly with (and legitimizes) the online manifestation of the men's rights movement, which uses more virulent and hateful rhetoric to convey the same argument.

#### MALE SUPREMACIST HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

Paul Elam has made attempts at a respectable mainstream image, organizing the movement's first in-person conference. But he also has a history

of advocating violence, writing that women who go clubbing are "begging" to be raped, and that "there are a lot of women who get pummeled and pumped because they are stupid (and often arrogant) enough to walk [through] life with the equivalent of a I'M A STUPID, CONNIVING BITCH—PLEASE RAPE ME neon sign glowing above their empty little narcissistic heads."<sup>27</sup>

Another site Elam launched, Registerher.com, allowed men to post personal information for women they claim made false accusations (or otherwise outraged the movement) in order to target them for harassment. In 2011, feminist writer Jessica Valenti fled her house under a barrage of threats after her information



Daryush Valizadeh writes at the PUA site *Return of Kings*.

appeared on this site.

Other strains of online male supremacy include pick-up artists (PUAs), who advocate male sexual entitlement and give sexist advice on seducing women; the Red Pill, a community named for a *Matrix* reference that seeks to awaken men to the "reality" of dominant "feminist culture";<sup>28</sup> Men Going Their Own Way, which advocates cutting ties with women; and Jack Donovan's "gang masculinity," which calls on men to form warrior gangs to escape domestication by women.<sup>29</sup> Deviating from the online movement's predominantly secular nature are Christian masculinists, who, as Dianna Anderson writes at *Rewire*, "have fused manosphere rhetoric with what they see as 'biblical' gender roles to envision a hierarchical, patriarchal ideal world."<sup>30</sup> These varied communi-

ties share adherents, though there is also conflict among their competing perspectives.

The virulent misogyny promoted by male supremacists, often couched as anti-feminism and accompanied by racism and nativism, has serious repercussions that play out on a global stage. In 1989, Marc Lépine killed 14 women at an engineering school in Montreal under the guise of "fighting feminism."<sup>31</sup> In 2009, George Sodini killed three women and then himself at a fitness class in Pennsylvania, leaving behind a website that complained about being rejected by women (and leading PUAs to coin the term "going Sodini").<sup>32</sup> Anders Breivik murdered 77 adults and children in Norway in 2011, leaving behind a manifesto attacking "the radical feminist agenda," Islam, political correctness, and "Cultural Marxism" (see David Neiwart's article in this issue).<sup>33</sup> And in May 2014, Elliot Rodger set out to "slaughter every single spoiled, stuck-up blonde slut" at the "hottest" sorority at the University of California, Santa Barbara, writing, "I don't know why you girls aren't attracted to me, but I will punish you for it."<sup>34</sup> He ultimately killed six people and himself, though he failed to make it inside the sorority.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's *Intelligence Report* editor-in-chief, Mark Potok, wrote, "Men's rights activists did not tell Rodger to kill—but in their writings, it seems like many of them wouldn't mind doing some killing of their own. Rodger said as much in his manifesto, writing that PUAHate 'confirmed many of the theories I had about how wicked and degenerate women really are' and showed him 'how bleak and cruel the world is due to the evilness of women.'"<sup>35</sup>

Elliot Rodger's story has parallels with that of White supremacist terrorist Dylann Roof, convicted in 2016 of murdering nine Black congregants at a Charleston church.<sup>36</sup> Though the media typically portrays such acts of right-wing violence as perpetrated by mentally disturbed individuals<sup>37</sup>—so-called "Lone Wolves"—as PRA contributor Naomi Braine writes, "a decision to act alone does not mean acting outside of social movement frameworks, phi-

losophies, and networks.”<sup>38</sup> Both young men encountered inaccurate and hateful rhetoric online that inflamed existing dissatisfactions by depicting them as victims.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Lone Wolf violence emerges from a right-wing context “systematically erased” by media misrepresentation of these as isolated and irrational actors.

Some members of the male supremacist online movement hailed Rodger as a hero on PUAHate.com messaging boards or Facebook fan pages.<sup>40</sup> Others distanced themselves while defending their own misogynist content, much as the Council of Conservative Citizens, the White nationalist group Roof cited in his manifesto, claimed to condemn Roof’s violence while blaming society for ignoring White people’s “legitimate grievances.”<sup>41</sup> Daryush Valizadeh (“Roosh V”), a professional PUA and founder of the site *Return of Kings*, argued, “Until you give men like Rodger a way to have sex, either by encouraging them to learn game, seek out a Thai wife, or engage in legalized prostitution...it’s inevitable for another massacre to occur.”<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, equity feminists stepped up to whitewash a clearly misogynist attack. IWF senior editor Charlotte Hays wrote that calling Rodger’s violence a “product of sexism” was a “bizarre response” by feminists.<sup>43</sup>

## VIDEO GAMES, MISOGYNY, AND THE ALT RIGHT

Video games might not seem like a vital social justice battleground. However, as sociologist and gaming critic Katherine Cross has pointed out, the virulence of online White male reactions to increasing gender and racial diversity in game players and creators, and to critiques of the industry’s sexism, indicates a problem with dismissing this as a trivial issue.<sup>44</sup> Only a few months after Rodger’s fatal 2014 attack, an incident dubbed “Gamergate,” ostensibly about gaming industry ethics and media corruption, resulted in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) looking into the barrage of violent rape and death threats against women who criticized video games’ sexist portrayals of women and lack of diversity.<sup>45</sup> Anita Sarkeesian, one of the primary targets, canceled

a talk at Utah State University after the school received a threat to repeat Marc Lépine’s massacre and demonstrate “what feminist lies and poison have done to the men of America.”<sup>46</sup> While circles of progressive female journalists took the movement behind Gamergate seriously, their voices were largely ignored by the mainstream media.<sup>47</sup>

Through Gamergate, vocal misogynist personalities such as Mike Cernovich, associated with the pick-up artist community, and Milo Yiannopoulos, a *Briertbart* writer, expanded their online following, to be leveraged in future attacks on feminism and women. Yiannopoulos had over 300,000 Twitter followers at the time the social media platform finally banned him for offensive content in 2016; at the time of this writing he has more than 1.9 million Facebook likes and 568,000 subscribers on YouTube, in addition to his platform at *Briertbart*, where he has bragged about writing headlines such as “Would You Rather Your Child Had Feminism or Cancer?”<sup>48</sup> In “An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right,” Yiannopoulos and co-author Allum Bokhari write, “The so-called online ‘manosphere,’ the nemeses of left-wing feminism, quickly became one of the alt-right’s most distinctive constituencies.”

*The New Yorker’s* Andrew Marantz writes that Cernovich “developed a theory of white-male identity politics: men were oppressed by feminism, and political correctness prevented the discussion of obvious truths, such as the criminal proclivities of certain ethnic groups.”<sup>49</sup> In 2016, in tweets that received more than 100 million views, Cernovich focused on supporting “unapologetically masculine” Trump and attacking Hillary Clinton with conspiracy theories regarding her failing health and emails.

Following Trump’s election, mainstream and progressive media outlets worried that using the movement’s chosen name, the Alt Right, helped euphemize and normalize old-fashioned bigotry. As *Think Progress’* editors wrote, “[Alt Right Leader Richard] Spencer and his ilk are essentially standard-issue white supremacists who discovered a clever way to make themselves appear more innocuous—even a little

hip”; their publication, they declared, wouldn’t do “racists’ public relations work for them.”<sup>50</sup>

But nowhere in this statement from a major progressive news outlet exists a single reference to sexism or misogyny—a glaring omission given its significance to the Alt Right’s mobilization to defeat the first woman to receive a major party nomination for president.<sup>51</sup> Some respected outlets and organizations, including the *Associated Press* and SPLC, described the movement’s misogyny, but their recommended definitions referenced White nationalism, neglecting to acknowledge male supremacy as a core component.<sup>52</sup> While some Alt Right leaders, such as former *Briertbart News* executive (now Trump administration chief strategist) Stephen Bannon, hail from more racist corners of the umbrella movement, others, like Yiannopoulos and Cernovich, rose to prominence primarily on their misogynist rhetoric.

These omissions aren’t surprising. In a 2008 study, “The Absence of a Gender Justice Framework in Social Justice Organizing,” activist and consultant Linda Burnham wrote, “All too many organizers and activists affirm a commitment to women’s human rights or gender justice while having no clear idea of sexism as a systemic phenomenon with tangled historical, social, economic and cultural roots and multiple manifestations.” In her interviews of activists, Burnham found “the subordination of sexism as a legitimate concern among ‘competing isms’”; antipathy to the feminist movement (which is perceived as White); a feeling that “there’s already a level of equity and there’s no need to struggle over it anymore”; and a lack of tools for structural analysis.<sup>53</sup> (Groups with a better intersectional approach, Burnham footnoted, included reproductive justice organizations like SisterSong.<sup>54</sup>)

Matthew N. Lyons, co-author of *Right-Wing Populism in America*, further argues that this heightened misogyny distinguishes the Alt Right from other White supremacist and neonazi mobilizations, which have practiced a “quasi-feminism” that viewed women as holding distinct but complementary gender roles important to the movement. Especially since the 1980s, Lyons writes,

neonazi groups have increasingly lauded White women as “race warriors.”<sup>55</sup>

Some early Alt Right writers did encourage their compatriots to do more to attract women and root out sexual harassment.<sup>56</sup> Now even that has disappeared. Today the movement is better characterized by dismissive ideology like that of White male supremacist Matt Forney, who asserts in a 2012 “anti-feminist classic” post on *Alternative Right* that women are “herd creatures” who are “unimportant” to the men who will make history. “Attempting to convince such flighty creatures to join the alt-right with logical arguments is like begging escaped inmates to please pretty please come back to the insane asylum.”<sup>57</sup> Forney also argues that, “Every feminist, deep down, wants nothing more than a rapist’s baby in her belly.”<sup>58</sup> Lyons writes:

Alt-rightists tell us that it’s natural for men to rule over women and that women want and need this, that “giving women freedom [was] one of mankind’s greatest mistakes,” that women should “never be allowed to make foreign policy [because] their vindictiveness knows no bounds,” that feminism is defined by mental illness and has turned women into “caricatures of irrationality and hysteria.”<sup>59</sup>

Richard Spencer, the now-infamous White nationalist leader credited with coining the term “Alt Right,” promotes male supremacist rhetoric that includes yet goes beyond traditional arguments for women belonging in the home. Along with his position on women’s “vindictiveness” (quoted by Lyons above), Spencer defended Trump against sexual assault accusations with the argument, “At some part of every woman’s soul, they want to be taken by a strong man.”<sup>60</sup>

Cas Mudde, a Dutch political scientist who studies right-wing movements, describes the Alt Right’s assertion of women’s inferiority as “a sexist interpretation of xenophobia. It’s the same view they have of immigrants and minorities, that they’re threatening their way of life. A life where men are dominant. A life where they have privilege in virtually every domain.”<sup>61</sup>

Vox writer Aja Romano argues that misogyny is not only a significant part

of the Alt Right, it’s the “gateway drug” for the recruitment of disaffected White men into racist communities. David Futrelle, a journalist who watches the men’s rights and other online misogynist movements, told *Vox* that it’s “close to impossible to overstate the role of Gamergate in the process of [alt-right] radicalization...Gamergate was based on the same sense of aggrieved entitlement that drives the alt-right—and many Trump voters.” Within this narrative, Futrelle said, they saw their harassment of women as defending “an imperiled culture,” moving into other online enclaves populated by neonazis and White supremacists that recruited them for “fighting against ‘white genocide.’”<sup>62</sup>

#### **2016 ELECTION: WHERE HAS THIS MISOGYNY LED US?**

In 2006, IWF Managing Director Carrie L. Lukas wrote, “In the past, victims of rape were made to feel that the crime was their fault. Many women around the world still suffer this bias. Today in the United States, the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction. A man accused of rape often is convicted in the court of public opinion without evidence.”<sup>63</sup> Yet in Trump’s campaign, that was far from the case. Multiple accusations of sexual assault and harassment against the Republican candidate were ignored throughout the campaign; when audio recordings exposing him admitting to sexual assault finally brought widespread attention to his treatment of women, he defended his comments as “locker-room talk.” And those comments did not ultimately cost him the election.

While IWF and equity feminism, like other libertarian ideologies, tend toward the conservative side of the political spectrum, there is more diversity there than among women in anti-feminist movements and the Christian Right. This allows the ideological tent to include Democrats like Christina Hoff Sommers, independents like former IWF president Michelle Bernard, and Republican women who might criticize aspects of their party’s gender dynamics. After applauding Sarah Palin for breaking free of sexist attempts to control her image as the 2008 Republican vice presidential nominee, in 2009, Bernard

spoke of bright prospects ahead for Hillary Clinton: “She is incredibly smart, brilliant, an excellent campaigner, and I think her time will come.”<sup>64</sup>

However, misogynist and anti-feminist Rightist ideologies have taken a toll beyond leaders’ control. Though during the primaries IWF gave favorable attention to Carly Fiorina, the only female Republican candidate, a poll showed Trump leading the Republican pack among female voters. Historian Catherine Rymph explained that the exodus of feminism and women’s rights advocacy from the GOP means that, among those left, “voters, including women, who don’t like Democratic feminism or so-called ‘political correctness’ in general may very well find refreshing Trump’s delight in using language about women that many find offensive.”<sup>65</sup> When then-*Fox News* anchor Megyn Kelly criticized Trump’s misogyny while moderating a 2015 primary debate, Trump responded, to audience cheers, that “the big problem this country has is being politically correct”—code for resistance to misogyny, racism, xenophobia, and homophobia. Trump went on to call Kelly a “bimbo” and imply she was menstruating. After Trump’s continued attacks on Twitter rallied online misogynists to further harassment, Kelly received death threats.<sup>66</sup>

For some equity feminists, it’s gone too far. IWF senior editor Charlotte Hays argues that Trump’s history of misogynist statements goes beyond “bucking political correctness.” In March 2016, Hays worried, “If Trump is the nominee, the [Leftist claims of a] ‘war on women’ will be back with a vengeance. And this time there will be a degree of fairness in the charge.”<sup>67</sup> Sommers referred to Trump as an example of “amoral masculinity” that “preys on women.”<sup>68</sup> She joined conservative female media pundits in calling for Trump to fire his original campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, after *Brietbart News* reporter Michelle Fields charged him with physically assaulting her.<sup>69</sup> Trump denied Lewandowski’s culpability, only firing him three months later after apparently unrelated problems.<sup>70</sup> And when former *Fox News* anchor Gretchen Carlson filed suit against CEO Roger Ailes for sexual harassment—which Kelly also reported

experiencing—Trump asserted that Carlson’s accusations against his informal advisor were “Totally unfounded.”<sup>71</sup>

Fields resigned from *Brietbart*, which former executive and Trump senior strategist Stephen Bannon proudly called “the platform for the alt-right,”<sup>72</sup> over the outlet’s inadequate response.<sup>73</sup> Commenting on the successive Alt Right online harassment of Fields, Kelly said, “This woman hasn’t done anything wrong, anything, other than find herself on the wrong end of these folks, for whom she used to work.”<sup>74</sup>

Some equity feminists, like Sommers, may have expected their own elite conservative colleagues to be taken seriously, not realizing that the damage done in disparaging other women would find its way back to them. In response to Sommers’ criticism of Trump, Mike Cernovich disdainfully pointed out that she had previously “mocked women who played the damsel in distress.”<sup>75</sup>

On the other hand, the appreciation for Hillary Clinton’s political merits seems to have disappeared under IWF’s new leadership, which got on board with Trump after his nomination. Trump hired IWF board member Kellyanne Conway to replace Lewandowski as his new campaign manager, which followed the organization’s efforts to peddle palatable sexism under a female face. IWF’s campaign affiliate, Independent Women’s Voice (I WV), supported Trump’s campaign, with CEO Heather Higgins coming around to offer her full-throated support in the general election.<sup>76</sup>

The men’s rights movement lacked these internal divisions over Trump’s outright misogyny. Early in the primary season, members of online male supremacist communities touted Trump as an example of an “alpha” male given how “he insults and dominates women, preys on their insecurities and refuses to ever apologize for it.”<sup>77</sup> And as though he was directly channeling men’s rights talking points, at a campaign rally in May 2016 Trump declared, “All of the men, we’re petrified to speak to women anymore. ... You know what? The women get it better than we do, folks. They get it better than we do. If [Hillary Clinton] didn’t play [the woman] card, she has nothing.”<sup>78</sup>

While Trump’s rhetoric reflects MRA vitriol, it is the long fight against feminism by groups embraced in the mainstream, like equity feminists and Republican women, that legitimized the candidacy—and election—of an overt misogynist who has bragged about sexual assault.

#### DEFENDING GENDER JUSTICE POST-ELECTION

Trump’s rhetoric shares more in common with equity feminist and men’s rights ideologies than with “family values” framing—and with the reality of Christian Right misogyny, such as the vitriol of clinic protestors and the anti-feminism of the late Phyllis Schlafly, a staunch Trump supporter.

It will be important to track the growing connections between these secular and religious movements, bridged by an underlying misogyny, racism, and nativism, especially as individuals aligned with the Alt Right, like Bannon, and equity feminism, like Conway, gain influence. The seeds are already there. The libertarian Koch brothers, infamous major donors to libertarian and conservative causes, fund both IWF and CWA. Alt Right figures like blogger Matt Forney oppose reproductive rights, writing that pro-choice women have “evil” in their souls and that “Girls who kill their own children despise life itself and will do their best to destroy yours.”<sup>79</sup> Pickup artist communities advise members to seek submissive wives who can easily be controlled, and oppose abortion and contraception as a means of weighing them down with children.<sup>80</sup> And, extending “father’s rights” arguments within the men’s rights movement, a Missouri lawmaker proposed in 2014 a bill requiring paternal consent to an abortion.<sup>81</sup>

The influence of ideology on the broader population, outside of active movement participants, bears particular importance with a president who uses his platform to broadcast virulent misogyny, racism, nativism, and Islamophobia.<sup>82</sup> In tracking reported bias-related incidents since Election Day, the Southern Poverty Law Center found that perpetrators were most likely to explicitly reference Trump in anti-woman attacks—82 percent of the 45 reported

incidents, more than double the next-highest rate.<sup>83</sup> In multiple incidents of harassment of women, assailants from middle school boys to groups of adult men parroted Trump’s boast that he can “Grab [women] by the pussy.”<sup>84</sup>

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL) originally claimed it was a “stretch” to “characterize [Trump’s comment] as sexual assault” (later backpedalling under questioning during his confirmation hearing for U.S. attorney general).<sup>85</sup> Before Trump was even sworn in as president, his administration’s threat to reproductive rights, protections addressing violence against women and campus rape, and other women’s equality programs had already been made alarmingly clear.<sup>86</sup> Under the Trump-Pence administration, threats will come from the Christian Right, conservative secular and libertarian groups, empowered White supremacist figures, and, of course, a President who’s shown his comfort with overt displays of racism, nativism, and misogyny. This disturbing combination may now jeopardize a wider expanse of policies reducing structural oppression that had seemed settled.

But the fact of this combined threat may also bring more dissenters into a more holistic response. Loretta Ross, a longtime reproductive justice and women’s human rights leader, is optimistic about the power vested in intersectional feminist organizing. “Now with the Women’s March on Washington using the ‘Women’s Rights Are Human Rights’ call for mobilizations in 616 simultaneous marches worldwide,” she wrote at *Rewire*, “I believe feminists in the United States have finally caught up to the rest of the global women’s movement. I feel like celebrating our inevitable progress toward victory for equality, dignity, and justice, despite the reasons we are marching in the first place: to unite to challenge the immoral and probably illegitimate presidency of Donald Trump.”<sup>87</sup> ☪

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