

America's Multiracial Right

written by Daniel Martinez HoSang, Joseph E. Lowndes, Eric Maroney | February 7, 2025



Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph E. Lowndes are the authors of *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019). The HoSang and Lowndes co-edited volume of essays, *The Politics of the Multiracial Right*, will be published by NYU Press in 2025. HoSang is a Professor of American Studies and Political Science at Yale University. He serves as a Race and Democracy Fellow at the Roosevelt Institute. Lowndes is a Visiting Distinguished Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Hunter College, CUNY, and is the author of *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. They were interviewed by Eric Maroney, who is an Associate Professor at Connecticut State Community College, a graduate student at the University of Connecticut, and a member of the Tempest Collective.

Eric Maroney: I am looking forward to hearing more about your project, *The Politics of the Multicultural Right* (forthcoming). From what I understand of the book project, it seems to have grown out of your earlier collaboration, *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity*. Can you tell *New Politics* readers a little bit about this new project and what drew you both to the study of the New Right?

Daniel HoSang: As you noted, Joe and I have been collaborating for a while now. Part of what we looked at were earlier emergences of this phenomenon, in the Pacific Northwest in particular, at the role of men of color in militias and in street Trumpist groups. We looked at Patriot Prayer. We also looked at the ascension of a new generation of Black Republicans, and more broadly how the Right was embracing a certain form of multiculturalism as they thought about building new coalitions, especially in the wake of Trump's 2016 election.

I think we were surprised. I largely bought into the idea that as Trump moved the party and his campaigns further to the right, relying on nativist and racist rhetoric, it would have the opposite effect, limiting any possibility for a multicultural coalition of the Right. Obviously, that appeal grows in 2020 and by that time, we recognized that there are lots of different stories about the new inroads to the Right that MAGA and many other parts of the Right are providing. We found that you couldn't just describe this phenomenon through a single story. That's how we got started on this idea of an edited volume by different writers—who had different expertise in the context, history, and cultural dimensions of how these appeals are working at different sites. We wanted to put their work in dialogue to see what it illustrated not just about the multiracial Right, but also about what these defections and movements reveal about politics today, about multiculturalism, about the limits of liberal appeals to identity, about diverse peoples' ability to be mobilized around the Right, et cetera.

Joseph Lowndes: When we set out to write *Producers, Parasites, Patriots*, the impetus in that project was seeing, on the one hand, how in the wake of the Great Recession, white working class and white poor people were starting to be described by conservatives in terms that were usually reserved for people of color: welfare dependent, culturally disorganized, or even genetically incapable in some ways. Simultaneously, we saw the emergence of Black and Latino elites in the

Republican Party and in corporate America as well. We wanted to ask, how do we think about race and class in these seemingly changed conditions. One of the changes that we have arrived at is a new Gilded Age, which is probably not even a useful term at this point because the inequities are so much more radical than they were in the twentieth century. That led us into trying to look at where and how these right-wing appeals were being articulated and what kind of politics were being generated from them.

One of the things we thought about at the time was the degree to which poor whites were dropping to the bottom and no longer being guaranteed the same kinds of New Deal forms of security that had bolstered the white working class and had brought them into the middle class. Everything that the mid-twentieth century had brought in terms of the GI Bill, the Federal Housing Authority, suburbanization, and everything else had been steadily eroded between the opioid crisis and long-time stagnant or declining wages. There were parts of the country where it was clear that white people were suffering. I think we were kind of hopefully thinking that this could be a moment where people would be willing to abandon whiteness as a political category—that in a neoliberal economy, it no longer serves its purpose [in generating a relative privilege].

This was before Trump came along and then the 2016 electoral primaries happened and it looked like a whole lot of white people who had been left out of the political system came roaring back in a kind of rageful, racist populism. It turned out that this was not a static picture of white people alone, but there was also a developing relationship between conservative or right-wing politics and people of color. We witnessed this not only in the Republican Party but also in the militia-right, the street-fighting fascist right, the Evangelical right—a variety of sites. We published *Producers, Patriots, Parasites* in 2019, but this phenomenon of the multicultural right was a growing trend. As Dan said, there is not a single explanation here that would tell us why various Latino communities find themselves on the Right, why Black men might be beginning to move in this direction, or how and why Vietnamese Americans, Filipino Americans, South Asian Americans are beginning to vote conservative. We felt we needed the work of sociologists, historians, political scientists, and ethnic studies scholars to help tell the many stories that are a piece of this broad tectonic shift.

EM: *I appreciate the emphasis that there is not a single story here, that there are different factors that animate this movement, but could you say something more specifically about why and how this broader non-white coalition or audience has been drawn to Trumpism? What does the Left need to understand to effectively counter this movement?*

DH: A couple of factors do give us something of a framework to understand it. The first is there are many more organized inroads and appeals from the Right. Mostly this is organized in a top-down fashion, but these appeals are made to an array of historically progressive constituencies including many communities of color. By contrast, a generation ago very, very few people of color found a home in the Republican Party. Through the 1990s, the GOP was largely satisfied with building a white conservative base. Part of the appeal, as the party who would protect white conservative interests, was actually not making appeals to people of color. Instead, the GOP positioned itself as the party that would protect white interests from people of color.

We talk about this in the introduction to the forthcoming book, this dynamic change slowly beginning in the 2000s when George W. Bush apologizes for the Southern strategy and there is even some talk about moderating the party stances around immigration, in particular, to appeal to voters outside the traditional base. You also see the Libre Institute of the Koch brothers appealing to Latinos through Spanish-language materials. Also in this period, people like Stephen Bannon and Andrew Breitbart are kind of keeping their eyes open for young Black conservatives who could be brought into their work and world. There are also some more localized grassroots efforts. Groups like Turning Point USA are really trying to appeal to a multicultural audience and using the

language of identitarianism and liberal identity politics to do so.

The second element we can consider is just the defections around liberalism itself—defections around the broad limits of a liberal agenda that has failed to address so many dimensions of the current economic crisis. At many of the [conservative] rallies we go to, I would say that's the first thing I noticed. People just feel exhausted by it. They feel that both individually, the candidates, and the Democratic Party itself don't stand for anything. It's not standing for transformation; it's abiding by the status quo. It's also just culturally unappealing to them. They, at least those who have moved over or who are exploring, are finding more energy and possibility in the Right.

JL: At a deeper level, one of the things that Dan and I have long talked about is that American political culture is built on settlerism and Black slavery. Those are racial formations themselves, but they also embed a logic into U.S. politics that is both authoritarian and propertarian. The basis for racial capitalism is capitalism and the basis of settlerism is tied up in the fantasy of autonomy, independence, land ownership, and so on, but those ideas can slip their leash. They can slip their racial origins and become available sets of beliefs, almost religious beliefs, to Americans more broadly. White supremacy is fundamental to everything we see, but in ways that are now deeply threaded into the bedrock of American politics so that you can have expressions of authoritarianism and neoliberal capitalism that can draw in many kinds of people [without abandoning white supremacy].

We don't want to say that race is no longer relevant or that we have arrived at some kind of post-racial experience that is Trumpism, or worse that we can blame the rise of the far right on people of color. However, as Dan was saying, there are appeals that are drawing in a nontraditional base: anti-government appeals, appeals to personal autonomy, to small business ownership, to Evangelical morality, to law and order. All of these things are discourses that have broad organizing capability, and it really just took the Right getting over enough of its basic racism to begin to exploit that in a way. It's not that the far right is no longer racist or that it is no longer filled with white supremacists—because it is—but the riddle is how this stuff exists cheek by jowl with multiracial conservatism? That is what you see. The Right is a mix of these things together. The presence of one does not negate the presence of another. In some ways, there is kind of a weird co-constitution going on.

EM: *To follow up on some of the observations about white supremacy, is there a danger to overemphasizing the presence of a racially or ethnically diverse new Right? I'm thinking about the talking points that circulated immediately after Trump's reelection that Latino men were responsible for his victory. Is there a kind of danger in focusing too much attention on multiracial conservatism as one element of a rightward movement?*

JL: I think that's a really great question and there is probably a lot more to be said than what I can offer here. I think for us, one of the things we found was that no one was talking about this. Political scientists but also scholars in general as well as liberal journalists and pundits have had their fingers stuck deep in their ears when it comes to acknowledging this is a phenomenon. So, we have kind of had to shout it from the rooftops for the last few years just to make it visible, just so that people would stop using the word white nationalist or white supremacist every time they spoke about the far right, or ignoring that fact that all kinds of people can be moved in conservative directions.

There is also a kind of condescension that non-white conservatism could only be the result of either cynicism or false consciousness. That evacuates the question of agency for people of color, and so we wanted to say, look, there is a lot more going on here. The phenomenon has to be looked at in a more complex way rather than through a self-serving notion that people ought to be progressives. However, I do sometimes worry about overplaying it. There was some liberal press that came out

right after the election sort of suggesting that Latino men are the ones to blame for the whole thing, or that Black men are to blame for the whole thing, and of course, that's complete nonsense. It's a much broader Right phenomenon that we are talking about. These groups may be part of that phenomenon, but they didn't lead it; they are not the cause of it. I think there is that danger of overemphasis, but it's also why you have to talk about these things as trend lines within a broader movement.

The other thing that I would say is that you have to think about these things intersectionally. You have to consider how these things interact with gender and sexuality. Some of these inroads to the Right come through other phenomena, through incel discourses or other kinds of misogyny, reproductive, or anti-trans politics. We want to mark the ways that those spaces are potentially multicultural as well.

DH: I would just say that it's less about emphasis and more about what is the interpretation. There are these liberal interpretations that downplay the ongoing nativism and racism within the far right. It's a false idea that if there are people of color on the Right then these spaces have shifted and become open and welcoming. We never make claims like that. We also reject the flip side of that argument, which is that people of color inevitably find their political home within liberalism or the idea that evidenced by their transphobia or nativism, they were kind of secret conservatives all along and that they just needed to discover it—that's not right either.

The other thing is not to make claims that there have been broad shifts in politics, that people no longer care about racism, no longer care about those forms of domination—I don't think that's right either. But I will say this, there was a question in the *Times/Sienna* poll (10/13/24) asking Latinos when Trump is talking about immigration, do you think he is talking about you? A majority said, no, he's not. That's a significant finding. Does that mean that people are suddenly identifying with nativism in a different way—I don't think so, but amid this kind of regime of vulnerability and terror that migrants all over are facing, it's not surprising that people are worried about identifying with those who are going to come under the maw of this terror machine. The effect of that is to encourage more people to say, well, one strategy to get away from that violence and humiliation is, perhaps, to see if I can cast my lot there [among the Right]. That is very different from saying that people no longer want to be part of what we might call a multiracial, socially democratic movement that helps meet their needs. From my perspective, none of that has changed. The surprising part, though, is that people are wondering, given the Democrat's failure to deliver that for them, is there some possibility in these new [Right] formations.

JL: I think that last part is really important. Just to underscore what Dan is saying, we are in a very open political moment right now, where the institutions of liberal democracy are no longer capable of managing the multiple crises we are experiencing (if they ever were). Across the board people sense that and that means we are also in a moment where peoples' political identifications are shifting and there are many possibilities. We are not saying that this is an inevitable telos or a march towards the Right or the far right; still, the openness of the moment means that people are open to different kinds of political identifications and different kinds of appeals.

That is another reason to make this intervention now so that we have our eyes open to the fact that there are different kinds of political possibilities out there. We have to be unstuck, and we have to recognize that there is political creativity on the Right to shift these things, so that we can respond.

EM: *Following up on Dan's example about the Times/Sienna poll and the context you just provided, Joe, it strikes me that these appeals and identifications may resonate very differently in material rather than ideological registers. What I mean by this is that identifying with the Right may not have the same kind of seductiveness for Latinos if Trump, as is expected, unleashes ICE in the northern*

cities and begins rounding people up. A person's political identification is not going to exempt them from racial profiling.

DH: Just on that point, I think there is a lot of discussion of the hope, some of it well-placed, that when the most violent and far-reaching overreach occurs, it will sober people up to conclude that's not what they wanted. That seems absolutely plausible if the worst forms of deportation occur—for example, kids being ripped from their parents. On the other hand, I do think the Right has been steadily building on this division between the kind of worthy, innocent, good subject—good Black subject, good immigrant subject, good Latino subject—who should be exempted from it. I think the question is, how effective will that be in actually pulling people in? When Mayor Eric Adams said I am down with doing more deportations, he said he is doing it in the name of protecting immigrants. To Joe's point, this is an active project that is in formation. People like Bannon think there are enough people who can be drawn into this way of thinking.

Paola Ramos's book, *The Defectors*, on Latinos makes the point that this is a group that's shifting. It's changed. Most Latinos now have spent more time in the United States. A majority consume English-language media. We have to keep open the possibility that their incorporation into the Right's project may be successful. We have to be critical of the idea that Latinos will experience a "proper" shift back or snap back to critiques of nativist violence automatically. That also has to be won.

EM: *Is it possible to describe an anatomy of the multicultural conservative movement or coalition? What is its electoral footprint, its presence in the militia movement, its presence in fascistic street politics, and its presence in the cultural arena? What is the glue that holds this grouping together? And what of the role of women and queer people? How do they fit into this project? Are they part of the glue that holds this grouping together or are they sometimes invited in?*

DH: I don't think it's a singular coalition. My sense from, for example, going to events like Turning Point USA conferences or Trump rallies is, it's not just that there are many inroads, there are many politics and narratives and points of connection that are bringing people into the room. This also speaks to the contradictions in the project because, as we know, there are elements of capital that will lose out significantly if mass deportations take place.

What I have been struck by, in these conservative spaces, is that the Right is willing to tolerate a certain amount of variance and contradiction as they are starting to pull in these defectors and figure out where it goes. I don't think that they are clear about which element will win the day. People across race are clearly drawn to the energy of the Right, the kind of insurgent profile and feel that ring-wing spaces have been able to produce, but where it goes seems still very much up in the air.

It's clear to me that, especially anti-trans politics, is connected to a critique of liberal authority, but there has also been an incorporation of figures like Peter Thiel and other queer men and women. In Paola Ramos's book she talks about the founder of Gays Against Groomers, a Latino South Florida guy. My point is that attraction to, and incorporation into, the Right is less about these fixed blocks of people that are for or against. It's been quite amazing to see what political scientists have often called linked fate—that if there is a perceived attack on some member of your group that you identify with—that dynamic is not altogether gone but also it is clearly not working in the same ways that we imagined it before.

JL: I think this question of glue really matters. I keep trying to think of historical parallels—not just right-wing parallels but other kinds of realigning moments in U.S. politics. Fascist movements always have this kind of slapdash heterogeneous quality to them. By contrast, if you look at the New

Deal coalition in 1932, there you have a strong, in some ways authoritarian, president who comes in with both Houses and the backing of the social movements on the ground. There was an organized union movement that was demanding collective bargaining, that was deeply organized in the auto industry and elsewhere. There were progressive liberals, national planners—various forces that were interested in changing American institutions to really embed a new relationship between the federal government and the states or between the executive branch and the other branches, but you still had functionally robust institutions.

In contrast, now we are experiencing this realignment among crumbling institutions, discredited institutions, a Supreme Court that has no popular legitimacy, a Congress that has been broken for many decades now, an executive branch that swings back and forth between whatever executive orders each president can put in there. Under these conditions things are much different and we are trying to make sense of what that means, but I think authoritarian nationalism is a kind of glue that holds the Right together. The Republican Party is now a Trumpist party. From trunk to tail, the whole thing is a MAGA party. In some ways you don't need the fascist street movements or the militia movements as you did once, because this has all been absorbed into the party.

I do think this idea of nationalism, especially the anti-immigrant rhetoric, is key to a multiracial possibility. The Western civilization stuff that the Proud Boys and others were talking about—upholding the values of the West rhetoric—anybody can be a part of that, right? That can be a multiracial thing. That was the Proud Boys' line. Also, evangelical politics have grown massively in the past couple of years—the Evangelical right and Christian nationalism. Turning Point USA started out as a libertarian organization and then slowly became a far-right and increasingly Christian nationalist grouping. A certain kind of Christian civilizational politics and, above all, authoritarian politics can pull a multiracial formation together. As Dan talked about before, in a brutalized neoliberal society, you can either be the one doling out the cruelty or the recipient of that cruelty. It is almost as simple as that; in some ways, this is what these politics come down to.

This connects the gender part of it to the capitalist part of it to the authoritarian part of it—this idea that you have winners and losers, conquerors and conquered. That is an appeal that can be seen running all the way through the Trump campaign ... through all the far-right social movements that are connected, and it's what connects the oligarchic billionaire class to Trumpism. Democratic elites and media elites are not just bending the knee, they are happily coming over to the Trump side because that is where their interests are.

DH: I think the bending of the knee and Democratic deference is revealing another argument that we, and others, have made, which is that much of this right-wing energy is not antagonistic to the dominant strains of market-based liberalism. Instead, they are kind of the fullest expression of it. That is both materially true, as when people point out that Trump is building on Obama's and Biden's deportation orders, to even the fact that the MAGA coalition itself now comes from a wide range of sectors, political thinking, etc.

This positions us against the idea that this is a force from outside that is attacking the heartbeat of liberalism, but instead it's coming from within it in many ways and is the natural culmination of the failures of liberalism.

EM: *Is there a class character to the multicultural Right? I am thinking about two essays in the volume: "Hip-Hop Republicans: Understanding the Politics of Hip-Hop and Conservatism" and "'She's the Sister You Never Had': Conservative Online Women's Magazines and the Politics of Race." Do these essays suggest a generalizable shared (middle) class ideology or are the figures at the center of these projects motivated by individual grift?*

DH: On the class thing, you can have critiques of the failures of the current neoliberal disaster and precarity, which is not just about what's in your bank account or your paycheck but also some sense of deep pessimism and feeling of emptiness about the future, and people can experience that up and down the class hierarchies. Wage workers can experience the grind of it working in a nursing home, but also even professionals trying to make it on a salary in a city can experience it as well. It's less about what is promised to a sector of the workforce and more about where the Right has been able to make those inroads. The grift, in my observations, is everywhere. It's most focused on the core Trump base. Again, at these Turning Point events, there are infomercials every twenty-five minutes, and everyone is hawking something. It's true on all of their platforms, and it's true for the influencers of color that they are bringing in, so it's not either or.

EM: *This isn't just a book project for the two of you. In early fall, you hosted a symposium on the multicultural right in New Haven, CT, but this was not a traditional academic summit. You invited local organizers and community members to take part. Can you talk about the symposium, particularly the final day, which put academic scholars in conversation with community practitioners? What was the intent in structuring the symposium this way, and what can other scholar-activists learn from this structure?*

DH: These political questions can't be answered by scholars and researchers alone, in fact dominant frameworks haven't allowed them to engage and take these questions seriously, but I think organizers on the ground see it. Organizers have to be responsive to changes that allow them to see differently. I am also struck with how the students Joe and I work with are much more flexible in their thinking. They are much more alert to this, and they get it. This is a phenomenon that requires lots of people from lots of different points of entry to be in conversation together—people who are not tied to strict frameworks of explanation about what is or isn't happening here.

I recently did a workshop with colleagues in SEIU 1199, the healthcare workers union. We started out by asking who is seeing this rightward movement within their organizing spaces. One organizer shared that she has a beautifully fierce homecare worker that accompanies her on one-on-one meetings to talk up the union. This worker has been talking up the union, but also talking about why they are voting for Trump. Others report even immigrants' rights organizations and leaders considering a Trump vote. How that gets explained and understood is not going to come from social scientists.

The why of it—what are people thinking, feeling, experiencing—that has to be done in the field in places where people are talking to real people. The “what is to be done” question that we were exploring on the last day of the symposium, produced a kind of consensus around the failures and limitations of a politics of representation that isn't speaking to people's needs anymore. It's certainly not a choice for an anti-identitarian colorblind universalism, but the prevailing forms of anti-racist liberal politics that has ascended over the last twenty years are very much at the heart of these defections, ambivalences, et cetera. The gap between language and people's material experiences of the world is part of what the Right has focused on.

JL: We are in a historic moment of failure of the liberal institutions, a moment of radical economic shifts and a polycrisis. Liberal anti-racism, it turns out, wasn't even anti-racist, but, in any case, it was not adequate to the task. It was never adequate to the task. Responding through DEI models, which are only designed to help people of color at an elite representative level, is not going to do it. The liberal version of emancipation was never up to the task and in conditions of intensifying pressure, this is what has created the conditions for new kinds of fascist power.

DH: I do think that there is an opportunity here, as well, to the extent that this is forcing a rupture with sets of strategies and political aspirations that were never going to build something much more

durable and solid. It has exposed something that the Left and liberals have needed to reckon with, and in that sense, I certainly won't call it a good thing, but it's made clear that what we have to do now is not simply redouble on old theories about identities or that there is a singular class politics that can unite people. What this phenomenon is revealing is just how dynamic and shifting this moment is. All moments of shift provide new kinds of openings, so that's partly to your question about creating spaces where people can share and try to figure out what's happening, versus coming and saying we have this set of phenomena, how do we make it fit into a framework that we know to be true. We have ideas and hunches, but we don't have a singular way to say this is what the emergence of a multicultural Right reveals about the true structure of social formations.