

## Introduction

### How Will the 2024 U.S. Presidential Elections Affect Diversity Issues Transnationally?

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When the U.S. sneezes, the world  
catches a cold.  
– Khanyisile Phillips<sup>1</sup>

South African activist Khanyisile Phillips uses these words to describe the effects of U.S. American politics on the rest of the world. Similarly, Ingrid, a friend's daughter in Sweden, posed the urgent question to her parents in 2016 of how could they not be voting in the U.S. American elections when so much was at stake, for Sweden included? It is in the spirit of Khanyisile Phillips's insight and Ingrid's question that we write this Introduction and send the accompanying book out into the world.

Whether we like it or not, the U.S. elections affect all of us. The United States' political climate and rhetoric act as bell weathers for political discourse elsewhere, particularly at this moment regarding right-wing hostility towards immigrants, anti-feminism, and anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiments. A victory for Trump is regarded as a victory for all right-wing national populist movements and fuels aligned developments elsewhere. Trumpism has become a template for autocratic populist candidates around the world. The political symbolism of the U.S. presidency extends far beyond the scope of what any one president can actually do, given Constitutional term limits, even if the United States has

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<sup>1</sup> Khanyisile Phillips, Interview with Khanyisile Phillips, quoted in Mariel Reiss's contribution in this volume, "U.S. Presidential Elections and their Impact on LGBTQIA+ Communities and Activism across the African Continent."

experienced several attempts to extend presidential power since the beginning of the twentieth century. It seems that such a moment could be upon us. Concerns arise about how a right-wing expansion of U.S. presidential power will harm diversity efforts around the world.

On a recent cover featuring an image of a statue of Caesar, the *Economist* asked: “Is America Dictator-Proof?”<sup>2</sup> Similar questions have become more pressing after the Supreme Court ruling in *Trump v. United States* (2024) granted former president Donald Trump immunity from prosecution for “official acts” with respect to his efforts to subvert the 2020 election.<sup>3</sup> The expansion of the Republican candidate’s potential influence, for which this ruling allows, has raised fears of an imperial presidency if Donald Trump is elected to a second term. These fears are not ungrounded. Trump has publicly threatened to be a dictator from day one and has repeatedly announced that he will seek revenge on his adversaries.<sup>4</sup>

As American Studies scholars based in Germany, the comparison of ethno-nationalistic movements to fascism can appear historically problematic. Part of Germany’s self-reflexive debate about how to adequately address traumatic events from its recent history is to firmly hold in mind the uniqueness of the crimes against humanity committed during the National Socialist period. Germany’s *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) stands next to frequent, sometimes too facile comparisons between the rise of fascism in the 1930s in Europe and the apparent increase in a desire for authoritarian control among voters in the United States. For instance, Henk de Berg’s *Trump and Hitler* (2024) explicates parallels that many see between the two political leaders, identifying both as “political performance artists.”<sup>5</sup> For many, current right-wing populist political rhetoric and mobilizations in the United States

2 The Economist, “Is America Dictator-Proof?” May 16, 2024, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2024/05/16/is-america-dictator-proof>.

3 John Kruzel and Andrew Chung, “US Supreme Court rules Trump has broad immunity from prosecution,” Reuters, July 2, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/us-supreme-court-due-rule-trumps-immunity-bid-blockbuster-case-2024-07-01/>.

4 Chris Michael and agencies, “Trump says he will be a dictator only on ‘day one’ if elected president,” The Guardian, December 6, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/dec/06/donald-trump-sean-hannity-dictator-day-one-response-iowa-town-hall>.

5 Henk de Berg, *Trump and Hitler: A Comparative Study in Lying* (Springer Link, 2024), x, 215, 223.

evoke an uneasy sense of history repeating itself. Yet it is imperative to remember that the political realities of the 1930s and 2024 differ.

In this book, we wish to strike a balance between the genuine sense of acute alarm about current political developments that in some ways resemble aspects of 1930s Italian and German fascisms, while also wishing to be cognizant that events in the United States have their own history and context. Facets of the history that have led to the new prominence of far-right positions include the cultural wars after the 1970s, the discontentment that was caused by economic changes such as deindustrialization, finance deregulation, globalization, and the accompanying precarization of formally secure industry jobs. These economic changes led to the scapegoating of affirmative action programs, feminism, and migration, all of which were posited as blame objects for men's no longer being able to earn a family wage. Further, the Republican Party's huge shift to the right and its recent affinity for authoritarianism have to be understood as responses to Barack Obama's election in 2008 and the Civil Rights Movement before it. The rise of the Tea Party soon after Obama's election and the formation of the Birther movement constituted pushbacks against a Black man having become 'the most powerful man in the world' and the figurehead of the United States.

Efforts to subvert greater diversity in politics are then not new to 2024. Yet to arrive at this conclusion, it is important to define what diversity means.

## Defining Diversity

Diversity is "going to become a hot-button issue this year."

— Lauren Aratani<sup>6</sup>

The concept of diversity in itself is controversial, and its meanings have become highly politicized. The editors of this book understand *doing diversity* as active resistance to forms of discrimination and subordination based on identity characteristics and categories related to class, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, religious affiliation, immigration and citizenship status, and

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6 Lauren Aratani, "Diversity policies face 'full-out attack' in 2024, leading HR boss warns," The Guardian, December 16, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/dec/16/diversity-dei-us-companies-backlash>. .

ability. Promoting diversity involves reducing inequality between persons and increasing previously underrepresented groups' political and economic power.

Progressive critics cite promoting diversity as a platform for depoliticized mainstreaming. When institutions and businesses perform 'diversity washing,' they project a façade of supporting racial and gender inclusion through token hirings or liberal campaigns, such as the prominent display of Pride flags during LGBTQIA+ events. Social conservatives, by contrast, criticize diversity programs as the faulty consequences of identity politics, and present D.E.I. (diversity, equality, and integration) policies as vehicles for reverse discrimination. Concepts such as reverse and anti-white racism depart from an ahistorical standpoint that "racism is a meta-concept that is the same no matter the social context or intended purpose."<sup>7</sup> They can only be posited if historical realities such as slavery, Jim Crow, the new Jim Crow of mass incarceration, and long lineages of systematic discrimination are ignored. Despite the logical fallacies intrinsic to terms like anti-Whiteness, such concepts are nonetheless deployed to support victimization discourse and to frame cultural debates for political advantage.<sup>8</sup> One of the ways Vice-President Kamala Harris has been discredited since she became the presidential nominee for the Democratic Party has been to suggest that she was a 'diversity hire,' in other words, that she is not qualified to be president and only received the nomination due to her gender and ethnicity.<sup>9</sup>

In the United States, diversity issues such as racial justice, immigration, reproductive, and LGBTQIA+ rights will be hugely affected by the outcome of the 2024 elections. During his presidency, Trump defunded federal D.E.I. training programs and the teaching of systemic racism. At the time of writing, Texas, Alabama, Iowa, and Utah Republican legislators have passed bills banning D.E.I. programs at publicly funded schools and universities and prohibiting discussions of concepts such as white supremacy, implicit bias, and intersectionality. These bills resemble the 2022 "Stop Woke Act" and are aligned with the rise of so-called parental rights and efforts by parents to limit what subjects their children can be introduced to in schools and public

7 Amy E. Ansell, *Race and Ethnicity: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2013), 137.

8 Amy E. Ansell, "Introduction," in *Unraveling the Right: The New Conservatism in American Thought and Politics*, ed. Amy E. Ansell (London: Routledge, 1998), 7.

9 Joanna Walters, "Kamala Harris switch scrambles Republicans as Trump resorts to insults," *The Guardian*, July 27, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/jul/27/trump-campaign-insults-extremism-kamala-harris>.

libraries. This development has been echoed in local school boards' banning of books relating to racial awareness and non-normative gender identities and sexual orientation.<sup>10</sup>

The contributors to this book understand the 2024 U.S. elections to be a watershed moment for diversity topics in the United States and the world. Diversity issues stand at the heart of the primary and general elections in the United States, with conservatives threatening "to kill" D.E.I. initiatives in government and academia,<sup>11</sup> and others insisting that the inclusion of marginalized groups and viewpoints in the election process constitutes the essence of democracy itself.

Offering a possible blueprint for a second Trump presidency, the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 (2022) outlines prominent conservatives' policy proposals. They include a detailed program for how a conservative administration will expunge diversity issues from public consciousness. This begins with prohibitions about speech, as Heritage Foundation president Kevin D. Roberts writes in the Foreword to the detailed plan:

The next conservative President must make the institutions of American civil society hard targets for woke culture warriors. This starts with deleting the terms sexual orientation and gender identity ("SOGI"), diversity, equity, and inclusion ("DEI"), gender, gender equality, gender equity, gender awareness, gender-sensitive, abortion, reproductive health, reproductive rights, and any other term used to deprive Americans of their First Amendment rights out of every federal rule, agency regulation, contract, grant, regulation, and piece of legislation that exists.<sup>12</sup>

Decrying the supposed dangers of 'woke culture' or 'wokeism' is not new. The term dates back to the 1930s and racial justice movements, and has resurfaced repeatedly, most prominently during the Black Lives Matters movements of

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10 Kasey Meehan et al., "Banned in the USA: The Mounting Pressure to Censure," PEN America, n.d., <https://pen.org/report/book-bans-pressure-to-censor/>.

11 Julian Mark and Taylor Telford, "Conservative anti-DEI activists claim victory in Harvard leader's fall," *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2024/01/05/harvard-claudine-gay-resignation-dei/>.

12 Kevin D. Roberts, "Foreword: A Promise to America," in *Mandate for Leadership. The Conservative Promise*, ed. Paul Dans and Steven Groves (The Heritage Foundation and Project 2025, 2023), [https://static.project2025.org/2025\\_MandateForLeadership\\_FUL L.pdf](https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_FUL_L.pdf), 1–17, 4–5,

the 2010s and 2020s. Activists view wokeism as the acknowledgement of racial and social inequalities, while critics disparage “woke fascism”<sup>13</sup> as a derivative of the cancel culture that supposedly runs rampant on social media.

Project 2025 identifies the censure of words as the way to protect First Amendment rights, a reversal of historical efforts to interpret rights expansively. This effort constitutes part of an attempt to hierarchize existing catalogs of rights in order to privilege some rights as more fundamental than others. Jayne Huckerby and Sarah Knuckey diagnose what they call an “appropriation of rights discourse” during the Trump era that was performed in order to curtail the scope of human rights protections.<sup>14</sup> This occurred through an insistence that rights are in ‘crisis’ and that certain rights such as property and (Christian) religious freedoms are more fundamental than others.<sup>15</sup> We identify the instrumentalization of human rights discourse to restrict civil rights and the expansion of socially permissible forms of hate speech as two components of the current onslaught against diversity.

Efforts to restrict speech relating to diversity, race, gender, and sexual orientation or to prohibit teaching critical race theory on the basis of so-called First Amendment freedom of speech claims have to be viewed in relation to an expansion of the sayable. We mean by this the racist, xenophobic, misogynistic, and fearmongering rhetoric that characterizes Trumpism. Trump has continued to test the boundaries of the sayable since calling Mexican immigrants “rapists” and criminals during the 2015 announcement of his candidacy.<sup>16</sup> Trump’s anti-immigration rhetoric has led not only to an expansion of the sayable but also to an increase in hate crimes against minoritized persons. Violent attacks on Asian Americans during the pandemic were abetted by Trump’s racist references to the “Chinese virus” and “kung flu.”<sup>17</sup> His dehumanizing rhetoric about immigrants also spurred on hate crimes against Hispanic and

13 Alistair Dawber, “Trump rails against tax rises and ‘woke fascism’ in rally for true believers,” *The Times*, October 10, 2021, <https://www.thetimes.com/world/us-world/article/trump-rails-against-tax-rises-and-woke-fascism-in-rally-for-true-believers-jxfvkj69>.

14 Huckerby and Knuckey, “Appropriation and the Rewriting of Rights,” 245.

15 Ibid.

16 Amber Phillips, “‘They’re Rapists.’ President Trump’s Campaign Launch Speech Two Years Later, Annotated,” *The Washington Post*, June 16, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/06/16/theyre-rapists-presidents-trump-campaign-launch-speech-two-years-later-annotated/>.

17 “President Trump calls coronavirus ‘kung flu,’” *BBC*, June 24, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-53173436>.

Latinx Americans.<sup>18</sup> We hold this violently marginalizing rhetoric to be central to the affectively powerful sense of resentment that Trump deploys, as do the many right-wing populists who mimic his articulations.

The 2024 elections will affect much more than the international political order, for instance, the status of NATO and the security of the European Union. The elections will also impact topics relating to diversity and inclusion outside of the United States due to the outreach of U.S. policies and the power of U.S. media instantiations. We witness the mimicry of Trump and MAGA supporters' rhetoric of beleaguered victimization, coupled with anti-immigration, anti-feminist, and anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiments, by candidates for right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands, Hungary, Finland, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden, Germany, and France. When Trump utters "They're not after me, they're after you," the same phrase is used by the German far-right Alternative for Germany politician Björn Höcke shortly thereafter.<sup>19</sup> With its successful deployment of a sense of imperiled rights, Trumpism extends far beyond the historical person of Donald Trump and has a major impact on transnational diversity issues.

## Transnational Perspectives on Diversity

The essays assembled in *Diversity Issues in the U.S.A.* speak to the political and symbolic moment of the 2024 U.S. elections by reflecting on how these elections will resonate in the future, with a focus on how diversity issues within and without the United States will be impacted by the election campaigns and results. In their discussions of racial politics and policies, immigration politics and anti-immigrant rhetoric, planetary justice, and epistemic and physical violence against LGBTQIA+ persons, the authors of this book understand the U.S. presidential elections to have enormous symbolic and political weight for citizens of the world.

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18 Russell Conteras, "Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric Sparks Fears of More Hate Crimes against Latinos," *Axios*, March 7, 2024, [https://www.axios.com/2024/03/07/latinos-immigration-rhetoric-fears-hate-crimes?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsletter\\_axioslatino&stream=science](https://www.axios.com/2024/03/07/latinos-immigration-rhetoric-fears-hate-crimes?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axioslatino&stream=science).

19 @mlewandowsky (2024), "Wenn eine Strategie funktioniert, wird sie kopiert," X, January 18, 2024, <https://x.com/mlewandowsky/status/1747935381390000531>.

The “transnational perspectives” taken in this book can be understood in three different ways. First, in the following chapters, scholars and activists based in Botswana, Cameroon, Germany, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, the Netherlands, South Africa, Uganda, the United States as well as in several Native American nations and tribal communities come to word about how the U.S. elections affect issues important to them. With our contributors, we approach these topics with a bifurcated view that attempts, simultaneously, to see the specificity of U.S. topics and their non-applicability to other contexts, while also appreciating the global influence of U.S. American politics.

Second, the outside perspectives on U.S. American diversity issues collected here invite us to reflect critically on our positions as non-U.S. based scholars. On the one hand, outside perspectives on U.S. American diversity topics allow for new takes on familiar issues. On the other hand, these perspectives encourage us to reflect on how our settings influence how we view the United States. To give an example, Germany has a long history of treating U.S. American racist and anti-immigration policies in ways that speak more to Germany’s own reluctant recognition of itself as a target migration country<sup>20</sup> and post-migrant society than to U.S. American issues. In German media, the U.S. is often framed in ways that deflect misgivings about rampant anti-Muslim racism in Germany.<sup>21</sup>

Third, transnational perspectives comprise discussions of how U.S. American developments impact diversity topics outside of the U.S. Right-wing ethno-nationalistic, anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, anti-feminist, and anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric in the United States and Europe draw on similar repertoires of scapegoating tropes and narratives. Yet it bears keeping in mind that every diversity topic dealt with in this book has its own setting, involving particular material and political conditions, a local history, and language use. For instance, the positively connoted umbrella acronym “LGBTQIA+,” used

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20 Greta Olson and Janna Wessels, “Imag(in)ing Human Rights: Deindividualizing, Victimizing, and Universalizing Images of Refugees in the United States and Germany,” in *The State of Human Rights: Historical Genealogies, Historical Controversies, and Cultural Imaginaries*, ed. Kerstin Schmidt (Heidelberg: Winter, 2020), 249–64.

21 Georg Kreis, “Überlegungen zum Antiamerikanismus,” in *Antiamerikanismus: Zum europäisch-amerikanischen Verhältnis zwischen Ablehnung und Faszination*, ed. Georg Kreis (Basel: Schwabe, 2007), 9–28; Birte Christ, “Michelle Obama, the Good American and Icon of Global Power Femininity: Gender Politics and National Boundary-Making in German News Coverage,” in *Obama and the Paradigm Shift: Measuring Change*, ed. Birte Christ and Greta Olson, (Heidelberg: Winter, 2012), 169–97.



to denote an inclusivity of interests in North America and Europe, does not necessarily cohere with local and specific notions of belonging in African nations, as Mariel Reiss points out.<sup>22</sup>

Some of the essays assembled here analyze U.S. developments in fine-grained detail, for instance, in a long history of anti-immigration rhetoric and imagery, or in a discussion of Native American election topics. Others, by contrast, observe the spillover of U.S. American anti-diversity politics on other localities. Indeed, the trope of spillover from U.S. American-centered rhetoric is a major topic in this book. In the following, we will walk the reader through the topics brought up by the contributors to this volume in terms of how they relate to diversity. These topics then structure the order of the essays.

## Diversity in Relation to Ethnicity and Racial Politics

One is never too far from elections.  
And when one is close to elections, one  
is never too far from racism.  
– Marzia Milazzo<sup>23</sup>

Marzia Milazzo provides a powerful indictment of the U.S. elections in relation to racial relations. She argues that racism and anti-Blackness are so central to the United States that the outcome of the 2024 elections hardly matters:

While Joe Biden and Donald Trump [were] calling each other “racist” during the 2024 campaign, these mutual accusations obscure the fact that racism is institutionalized in the United States and will remain a structural feature of the U.S. American state no matter who wins the presidential elections.<sup>24</sup>

Milazzo proceeds to diagnose the central role that racism and anti-Blackness play globally by examining current political configurations in Italy, the United States, and South Africa. She notes variations of racism and anti-Blackness,

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22 Sylvia Tamale, *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011).

23 Marzia Milazzo, “Elections and Racial Power,” in this volume.

24 Milazzo, “Elections”; Brakkton Booker, “Biden and Trump campaigns call each other ‘racist’ as they seek to court Black voters,” *Politico*, May 23, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/05/23/biden-trump-racism-television-ads-black-voters-00159745>.

such as the “Afrophobia” that pits Black South African voters against Black immigrants, who are supposedly competing with them for jobs. This trope is used by Black leaders to further their own interests as well as those of the white economic elite. Elections can then be readily won with racism, which is frequently deployed in colorblind terms. By colorblind, Milazzo means a “language that is not explicitly racialized, while it seeks to achieve racist effects;” it is used by politicians to create a sense of cohesion amongst voting groups while pitting them against racialized immigrants or other minorities.<sup>25</sup>

The central role of race that brought Trump to power in the 2016 elections was described at the time as a “whitelash against a changing country.”<sup>26</sup> Trump’s deployment of racially-charged rhetoric was accredited with being one of the main reasons for his appeal amongst white voters. It became a model for ethno-nationalistic politicians around the world.<sup>27</sup> Trump has targeted most minorities, including Muslim Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx individuals, Black Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans.<sup>28</sup> After the police killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, the year 2020 then marked what many hoped would augur in a racial reckoning in the United States. In 2024, we know that that this reckoning never occurred.

Given Trump’s history of race baiting and incursions on civil rights, one might expect that racially minoritized voting groups would overwhelmingly support another Democratic administration. Yet one of the lessons learnt from

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- 25 Milazzo, “Elections”; on colorblind racism as a global phenomenon, see Marzia Milazzo, *Colorblind Tools: Global Technologies of Racial Power* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2022).
  - 26 Josiah Ryan, “‘This was a Whitelash’: Van Jones’ Take on the Election Results,” CNN Politics, November 9, 2016, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/09/politics/van-jones-res-ults-disappointment-cnnv/index.html#:~:text=Acknowledging%20many%20voters%20were%20rebelling,a%20black%20president%20in%20part>.
  - 27 Zack Beauchamp, “Donald Trump’s Victory is Part of a Global White Backlash,” Vox, November 9, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/world/2016/11/9/13572174/president-elect-d-onald-trump-2016-victory-racism-xenophobia>.
  - 28 Bustillo, Ximena, “Native Voters Could Decide Major Elections in 2024,” The Circle, December 5, 2023, <https://thecirclenews.org/news/native-voters-could-decide-major-el-lections-in-2024/>; Grace Panetta, “What the Fight to Expand Access to the Ballot for Native Americans Looks Like Now,” The 19<sup>th</sup> News, November 28, 2023, <https://19thnews.org/2023/11/native-american-voters-political-power-jacqueline-de-leon/>; Pauly Denet-claw, “Where the 2024 Presidential Candidates Stand on Indigenous Issues,” Oklahoma Voice, November 28, 2023, <https://oklahomavoice.com/2023/11/28/where-the-2024-p-residential-candidates-stand-on-indigenous-issues/>.

the Democratic loss of the White House in 2016 is that voter blocs based in demographics have to be regarded with nuance. Such is the premise of Sabine N. Meyer's wide-ranging text on IndigiPolitics in this volume. Adopting this term from Pauly Denetclaw, a Navajo Nation citizen and political correspondent, IndigiPolitics denotes Native American "political interests, concerns, and voting practices."<sup>29</sup> Meyer's text counters a general failure to notice "Native political participation ... by non-Native media and political analysts."<sup>30</sup>

Giving the voices of Native Americans center stage, she quotes statements by individuals from a great variety of tribal communities across the United States. Noting distinctions, for instance, between younger and older voter interests, Meyer traces political and cultural developments for Native Americans since 2016. She emphasizes the power of the Native vote to decide elections particularly in swing states such as Arizona, Montana, Nevada, Wisconsin, and Michigan. As Meyer writes, "in times of political polarization and close elections, Native voters are able to make a difference."<sup>31</sup>

As with the Native populations, other voting groups cannot be regarded monolithically. Often seen as the bedrock of the Democratic Party, Black voters are anticipated to vote anything but monolithically in November 2024. At the moment of writing, seventeen percent of Black voters are likely to vote for Trump;<sup>32</sup> men, especially young men, are disproportionately represented among putative Trump voters, a trend that also holds true for Hispanic men as well.

Dissatisfaction with the status quo number as reasons for this trend as well as Trump's successful touting of the idea that Black unemployment decreased due to his administration's policies between 2017 until 2021.<sup>33</sup> At the same time,

29 Sabine N. Meyer, "IndigiPolitics: Native American Voters and the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election," in this volume.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 David Leonhardt, "Race and Politics," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/21/briefing/race-and-politics.html>; Brandon Drenon and John Sudworth, "Trump Makes Pitch to Black and Latino Voters in New York," *BBC*, May 25, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckddx1lgnr40>; Kiana Cox, "An Early Look at Black Voter's Views on Biden, Trump and Election 2024," *Pew Research Center*, May 20, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2024/05/20/an-early-look-at-black-voters-views-on-biden-trump-and-election-2024/>.

33 Dwayne Oxford, "Why are Black Voters Backing Donald Trump in Record Numbers?", *ALJAZEERA*, March 18, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/18/why-are-black-voters-backing-donald-trump-in-record-numbers>; David J. Dent, "Why Are More

Black voters, like many other traditionally Democratic-voting cohorts, are disgruntled by the Biden administration's unwavering financial and military support of Israel's war in Gaza.<sup>34</sup> Other issues include, as for all voters, higher food prices and housing costs. Black communities suffered disproportionately from the effects of the pandemic and resultant inflation.

One can readily critique Trump's record of race-baiting, covert support of white supremacy, and incitement of violence against Asian Americans, Black and Indigenous communities and People of Color. Yet the Biden administration has failed to win over many minority voters, giving rise to a sense that the administration's attention is turned towards Ukraine and the Middle East and not domestic struggles.<sup>35</sup> Further, Biden's having created a more diverse administration is sometimes decried as Blackwashing rather than a real commitment to greater equity.

Should Trump win the 2024 elections, we anticipate a demographic reckoning that may have similar qualities to the one that occurred in 2016. After those elections, a concerted sense of critical shock was voiced that the majority of white women voters had voted for Trump despite his misogynistic invective, including the then recently disclosed "pussy" remarks, and Trump's track record of vitriol against women who publicly opposed him.<sup>36</sup>

The equation has now changed with the nomination of a Black, South Asian American woman as presidential candidate for the Democratic Party, a change that occurred while we were preparing this book for publication. As we enter the general election period, we note that Trump's frequent personal attacks on

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Black Men Voting Republican?", *Rolling Stone*, December 4, 2022, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/black-men-voting-republican-obama-trump-rmney-1234641210/>.

- 34 Nate Cohn, "Trump Leads in 5 Key States, as Young and Nonwhite Voters Express Discontent with Biden," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/13/us/politics/biden-trump-battleground-poll.html>.
- 35 Maya King and Katie Glueck, "In His Beloved Philadelphia, Biden Faces Wariness from Black Voters," *The New York Times*, May 18, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/18/us/politics/biden-philadelphia-black-voters.html>.
- 36 Sarah Ruiz-Grossman, "Dear Fellow White Women: WE F\*\*ked This Up," *HUFFPOST*, November 9, 2016, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dear-white-women-we-messed-this-up-election2016\\_n\\_582341c9e4b0aac62488970e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dear-white-women-we-messed-this-up-election2016_n_582341c9e4b0aac62488970e); L.V. Anderson, "White Women Sold out the Sisterhood and the World by Voting for Trump," *SLATE*, November 9, 2016, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2016/11/white-women-sold-out-the-sisterhood-and-the-world-by-voting-for-trump.html>.

Harris as a racial imposter because of supposed vacillations in how she has presented her identity face large-scale criticism.<sup>37</sup> Clearly, race and racism remain central to the elections.

## Diversity in Relation to Migration Policies and Anti-Immigration Rhetoric

Following the Eisenhower model, we will carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.

– Donald Trump<sup>38</sup>

These were Donald Trump's words at a rally in September 2023, in which he threatened the forced removal of millions of undocumented immigrants. Just as Trump invoked a historical tradition of connoting Blackness with criminality when he called himself the "President of Law and Order" in 2020 in response to protests after George Floyd's murder, he was now referencing the racist imagery of the Operation Wetback campaign. Trump's speech promised to renew the blatantly racist anti-immigration program from 1954 that forced many legal residents in the States to return to Mexico in order to deter further laborer immigration.

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37 Catherine E. Shoichet, "When Trump attacks Harris' racial identity, these Americans say it's personal," CNN, August 11, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/08/11/us/racial-identity-trump-harris-multiracial-reaction/index.html>; Marianne LeVine and Josh Dawsey, "Trump allies want to hit Harris's record. He keeps talking about her race and gender," The Washington Post, August 1, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/08/01/trump-harris-race-gender-record/>.

38 Donald Trump to a crowd in Ankeny, Iowa in September 2023, see Adriana Gomez Licon, "Trump's Vow to Deport Millions is Undercut by History," PBS News, January 3, 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trumps-vow-to-deport-millions-is-undercut-by-history>.

This type of rhetoric won Trump many votes in 2016 and could do so again in 2024.<sup>39</sup> Trump's "Build the wall"<sup>40</sup> and "anchor babies" phrases encouraged hate speech and resentment along with nativist thinking not only within his constituency. His scapegoating of immigrants for violent crime, national security threats, and economic scarcity, has a historical tradition in U.S. American political rhetoric and has been copied by far-right populists elsewhere. The much repeated trope of a migration 'crisis' fuels right-wing successes at polls. Immigration appears to be the central unifying principle for right-wing parties in France, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States. For example, once moderate Emmanuel Macron has called parties to the left of his "immigrationiste," – as encouraging of uncontrolled immigration. Immigrants are framed as not only the cause of social and economic woes, but also as threats to (white) Frenchness and Americanness.<sup>41</sup>

Biden was voted into power in 2020 with the promise of more humane migration policies than had been the case under the Trump administration's separation of parents from children under Title 42, and the zero-tolerance policy that further criminalized irregular immigration. The Biden presidency was subsequently faced with a surge of immigration on the southern border beginning in 2021. The administration responded with the Senate Border Act of 2024, which, although it adopted many draconian positions, was blocked by Republicans after Trump lobbied against it. Biden's counter move was then to sign an executive order that allows for the border to be shut down entirely.<sup>42</sup> The executive order bespeaks a general change in public sentiment, which has

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39 Giovanni Campani et al., "The Rise of Donald Trump Right-Wing Populism in the United States: Middle American Radicalism and Anti-Immigration Discourse," *Societies* 12, no. 6 (2022): art. 154.

40 The metaphor of the wall is analyzed in the context of transmisogyny by K. Allison Hammer in this volume.

41 Roger Cohen, "The Nation Resurgent, and Borders, Too," *The New York Times*, June 23, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/23/world/europe/the-nation-resurgent-and-borders-too.html>.

42 Gabe Gutierrez et al., "Biden Expected to Take Executive Actions to Protect Undocumented Spouses of U.S. Citizens," *NBC News*, June 10, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/biden-administration-considering-protecting-undocumented-immigrants-ar-rcna156425>.

become more protectionist, more anti-immigration, and more supportive of stricter border regimes.<sup>43</sup>

In this volume, contributors analyze diversity as related to immigration and anti-immigration sentiments in two distinct ways. The essay by Georgiana Banita traces nuances of current anti-immigration rhetoric by looking at the U.S. American past. The text by Maik Paap relates U.S. American anti-immigration narratives to ones in Germany centering on healthcare.

Georgiana Banita's visual and verbal analysis of the history of anti-immigration discourse speaks to Marzia Milazzo's trenchant analysis of racism and anti-Blackness in election contexts. Contrastingly, Banita proposes that "anti-immigrant U.S. election campaign rhetoric is not solely driven by racial animus and xenophobia."<sup>44</sup> In a vast historical study that moves from the mid-nineteenth century to the present and back again, Banita explores what she calls "xenopolarization," the incitement of an already highly polarized electorate to vote by promoting unfounded fears of immigrants as criminals, terrorists, and invaders of the body politic.

Banita reviews various phases of U.S. American anti-immigration rhetoric, including fears of elections being 'stolen' by immigrants that date back to the Know-Nothing-Party, racist rhetoric that was used against Irish and German immigrants during the 1860s, and the criminalization of immigration in itself, which she dates to the early twentieth century. All of these strategies are employed by Trump to create new fears of immigrants as criminal and economically destabilizing. Banita uses the trope of a moral panic to describe the rhetorical creation of threatening immigrants for populist electoral ends.

Returning to the subject of race and Whiteness, Banita highlights that Trumpist rhetoric is successful because it imaginatively creates a lost, all-white (and all cis, we would add) world of yesteryear that never actually existed. As she writes:

Reactionary white U.S. Americans ... respond enthusiastically to ... demographic dystopia. This fiction encapsulates the ongoing national struggle to reconcile ideals of equality with the realities of racial and ethnic diversity. In this elaborate fantasy, immigrants illegally manipulate the electoral

43 Monmouth Poll Reports, "Majority Now Support Building a Border Wall," Monmouth University, February 26, 2024, [https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll\\_us\\_022624/](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_022624/).

44 Georgiana Banita, "Demographic Dystopias: Criminalizing Immigration in U.S. Election Campaigns," in this volume.

process to their advantage, attack democratic processes, go on crime sprees, and take jobs from U.S. Americans.<sup>45</sup>

Maik Paap's contribution to this volume considers a particularly prominent trope in anti-immigration sentiments in the U.S. and Germany, namely the rhetoric of healthcare exploitation. Adopting a human rights perspective, Paap's analysis traces policies and political actions taken to protect taxpaying citizens from the imagined threat of irregular immigrants. In doing so, Germany and the United States create a double bind for people seeking refuge by making access to the healthcare system increasingly difficult and scapegoating immigrants for the system's shortcomings. Importantly, Paap's essay highlights a pattern that can be seen in much of the particularly anti-trans and anti-immigration rhetoric that has marked 2024, and which K. Allison Hammer describes as "making an enemy" in this volume. Quoting Paap: "Restrictive healthcare policies targeting immigrants in both the United States and Germany serve as tools of governance that reinforce national identity and control immigration flows under the guise of economic and social protection."<sup>46</sup>

## Diversity in Relation to Structural and Ideological Barriers

But the Dobbs decision is just the beginning. Conservatives in the states and in Washington, including in the next conservative Administration, should push as hard as possible to protect the unborn in every jurisdiction in America. In particular, the next conservative President should work with Congress to enact the most robust protections for the unborn that Congress will support while deploying existing federal powers to protect innocent life and vigorously complying with statutory bans on the federal funding of abortion.

— Kevin D. Roberts<sup>47</sup>

We quote the already mentioned Project 2025 Agenda. This blueprint for the next conservative president aims to further constrict reproductive rights and

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45 Ibid.

46 Maik Paap, "Healthcare as Governance Technique: Anti-Immigration Politics Expressed in Access to Health," in this volume.

47 Roberts, "Foreword," 6.



access to healthcare and could also limit access to contraception. After successfully nominating three highly conservative Supreme Court Justices who then overruled the right to abortion, Trump has attempted to rebrand ensuing abortion bans as assertions of state rights. Although Trump has recently soft peddled his stance on a federal ban on abortion, his supporters “can reasonably assume that he’ll say whatever he thinks he needs to now, and then come through for them if he wins in November.”<sup>48</sup>

The Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (2022), which overruled *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and fifty years of abortion rights in the United States, led to an unexpectedly large number of gains for the Democratic Party in 2022, when many voters pushed back against abortion bans, for instance, in Kansas. Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris acts as a powerful advocate for reproductive rights, just as she made reproductive choice a central issue during the midterm election campaigns. The threat of a further criminalization of abortion and restrictions on reproductive healthcare relates to anti-trans bills and legislative initiatives as central issues in the gender politics of the 2024 elections.<sup>49</sup>

We view abortion bans and legally condoned constrictions on women’s bodies as connected to the current explosion of anti-trans and anti-non-binary legislations.<sup>50</sup> In both cases, groups of people are allotted a status of legal personhood that differs significantly from that of the cis-man norm. This status allows for greater legal controls over these persons’ embodiment and more interference in their bodily autonomy. Quoting then California

48 Margaret Talbot, “Comment: Abortion and the Election,” *The New Yorker*, May 27, 2024, [https://www.discountmags.com/magazine/the-new-yorker-may-27-2024-digital/in-this-issue/79439?srsId=AfmBOoq-e2\\_Hkd4K1zgnsPJNbwadBRe2C-4HLLelRxZitBV1B\\_IPclW9](https://www.discountmags.com/magazine/the-new-yorker-may-27-2024-digital/in-this-issue/79439?srsId=AfmBOoq-e2_Hkd4K1zgnsPJNbwadBRe2C-4HLLelRxZitBV1B_IPclW9).

49 Mary Ziegler, “Democrats Are Missing Out on a Big Opportunity on Abortion Rights,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/15/opinion/abortion-harris-trump.html>.

50 On this point, see Greta Olson and Elisabeth Lechner, “#Feminist – Naming Controversies and Celebrating Points of Connection and Joy in Current Feminisms,” *The European Journal of English Studies* 26, no. 2 (2022): 292–321; Greta Olson and Laura Borchert, “Narrative Authority, Affective Unreliability, and Transing Law,” in *Research Handbook in Law and Literature*, ed. Daniela Gandorfer, Cecilia Gebruers, and Peter Goodrich (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2022), 378–400; Greta Olson, “Futures of Feminist Law and Literature — An Afterword,” in *Feminist Perspectives on Law and Literature*, ed. Hanna Luise Kroll, Laura Schmitz-Justen, Laura Wittmann, and Laura Zander (De Gruyter, forthcoming).

Senator Kamala Harris on this point, when she critically questioned Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh during his confirmation hearings in 2018, she asked: “Can you think of any laws that give the government the power to make decisions about the male body?”<sup>51</sup>

In this volume Birte Christ makes an argument for why we need to regard traditional binary gender politics as central to the current election. She suggests that Trump has successfully framed the elections as a contest of traditional masculinity and physical dominance in which President Biden would inevitably have had to lose. Her work confirms previous assessments of how Trump plays into his supporters’ “nostalgic longing for a lost masculinity,” in which the supposed “feminization” of the United States is countered.<sup>52</sup> As this book went to press, Christ redirected her argument to note that Kamala Harris cannot of course win in a contest of masculinity, hegemonic or not, but rather that she – with the voters who support her – must change the rules of Trump’s game of invoking a rhetoric of aggrieved masculinity.

One aspect of what we define as *transnational Trumpism* is the steady testing of the sayable and doable at the expense of democratic institutions and non-violent speech. In these pages, Sara Polak analyzes this limit testing and limit crossing as a particularly perfidious form of political play that Trump has mastered and which involves a unique form of worldmaking. Trump’s policy-through-Tweet practices while still president or his positing of alternative facts, which are then reiterated when fact-checked, constitute highly successful strategies for bringing an alternative political world into existence through inviting others to participate in it. Quoting Polak: “Belonging to Trump’s world is about bluffing your way along in the game and then deciding with others collectively that this is the real world, that is, the world that matters.”<sup>53</sup>

Trump’s play appears attractive to those who wish to play with him, because his games fulfill prelapsarian longings for a world that was based on excluding unwanted others and protecting racial privilege. As Polak writes, “*playing* on social media reinstates the much older U.S. American institution of the

51 Monica Hesse, “Kamala Harris said 19 words in 2018 that taught us all we need to know,” The Washington Post, July 22, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/power/2024/07/22/kamala-harris-brett-kavanaugh/>.

52 Greta Olson, “Love and Hate Online – Affect Politics in the Era of Trump,” in *Violence and Trolling on Social Media: History, Affect, and Effects of Online Vitriol*, ed. Sara Polak and Daniel Trotter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP), 156–70, 169.

53 Sara Polak, “Donald Trump and Truth Social: Media Platforms Making Exclusionary Worlds,” in this volume.

whites-only country club.”<sup>54</sup> Trump’s use of his social media platform Truth-Social demonstrates how the former president avoids legal repercussions from his often defaming and libelous posts by deleting them before they become actionable.

## Diversity in Relation to Planetary Justice and Democracy

[W]henver the economic elite feels threatened by revolutionary mobilizations – and climate mitigation demands a revolution –, they relinquish their political power to authoritarian leaders in order to safeguard their profits and property.

– Esther Edelmann and Frans-Willem Korsten<sup>55</sup>

As the quote above by Esther Edelmann and Frans-Willem Korsten points out, a central strategy in anti-diversity politics is to disguise economic issues with contentious debates about cultural values. The current backlash against social justice issues such as addressing police violence against Black life has also been accompanied by a violent backlash against environmental programs. Conservatives frame environmental protections as costly, hurtful to working- and middle-class people as well as to farmers, and therefore as elitist.

The Trump and Biden administrations could hardly have differed more on environmental issues, and the outcome of the 2024 elections will impact biodiversity in a very literal way. The diversity of life forms on earth will be diminished by the United States if Donald Trump wins another term as president. A United States that does not acknowledge global warming and abandons environmental controls that were instituted in the 1970s, expanded under President Obama, and renewed again after Biden gained the White House, represents a threat to the world.<sup>56</sup>

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54 Ibid.

55 Esther Edelmann and Frans-Willem Korsten, “A Politics of Shredding: The Far-Right’s Ecocide Spectacle and the Battle against Fake Knowledge,” in this volume.

56 Benjamin Plackett writes on this point: “On specific policy issues, the two US presidential candidates differ widely on the environment, with Trump arguing for weaker environmental regulations and Biden pushing renewable energy. Climate change is one of the most divisive topics in the United States; 93% of Democrats agree with the scientific consensus that human activity is warming the world’s climate, compared with just 55% of Republicans, according to a poll carried out by researchers at the University

The major reversal of environmental protections that occurred between 2017 and 2021 will be advanced by a second Trump administration to include the further dismantling of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Environmental Justice and Civil Rights office, and a second withdrawal from the Paris Accord. As discussed above, a part of the Trumpist strategy is to create new truths and frameworks of the sayable and the knowable. This occurs through disseminating misinformation and encouraging distrust of traditional sources of unbiased information such as traditional media, universities, and science. One way to counteract this, as Esther Edelmann and Frans-Willem Korsten note, is to identify climate change denialism as a tool for obliterating reputable sources of knowledge.

To illustrate the current and, in the future intensified, environmental destruction of the planet and its biodiversity, the authors explore the trope of shredding. After Trump's election in 2016, a Trumpian publically shredded a copy of the Paris Climate Accord to signify the nullification of previously agreed upon measures to combat climate change. Subsequent instances of shredding, including posting memes of shredding, demonstrate how Trumpist politics utilizes a rhetoric of protecting supposedly endangered national food supplies and 'good' American farmers to further the interests of the fossil fuel and mass agricultural industries.

Most strikingly, the authors present the poor material conditions of working farmers in the U.S.A. and in the Netherlands, their reliance on subsidies, and dependence on government control. Yet the successful framing of theories about environmental destruction as fictions created by a global elite has led to farming protests in the United States and the Netherlands. In these protests, the so-called "peasant wisdom" of groups such as the "Farmers Citizen Movement" (*Boeren Burger Beweging*) is presented as combating elitism and foreign interests. With Edelmann and Korsten, we wish to highlight how the actual economic interests of the group that is protesting for more authoritarian control – in this case farmers in the U.S. and the Netherlands – are harmed, even while their protests are deployed by those who will profit from their actions.

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of Maryland in College Park" (n.p.). Benjamin Plackett, "What the Science of Elections Can Reveal in this Super-Election Year," *Nature*, June 10, 2024, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-01712-2>.

## Diversity in Relation to LGBTQIA+ Rights and Advocacy

Drag storytelling events are fundamentally about democracy itself and the practice and possibility of imagining and creating more diverse and inclusive political communities with (our) children and future generations.

– Christine M. Klappeer<sup>57</sup>

We begin this section with a quote by Christine M. Klappeer that highlights a central theme of this volume. Diversity is democratic, whereas anti-diversity efforts mask attempts to restrict democracy through fearmongering. Nominally, the anti-diversity topic at hand appears to be a protest against drag story hours because they supposedly hurt innocent children. On a deeper level, however, the named issue – banning drag storytelling events, for instance – disguises an attempt to restrict democratic movements and articulations.

An estimated 20% of Gen Z voters identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, inter, trans or non-binary, and this cohort along with older LGBTQIA+ voters played an important role in Joe Biden's winning in many battleground states in 2020. Yet particularly anti-trans invective has become a prominent feature in populist right-wing politics, especially in the United States. Six hundred and twenty anti-trans bills are now making their ways through legislatures and U.S. American courts.<sup>58</sup>

A perplexing aspect of the past decade is what is often called the visibility trap. Since trans rights were termed the new civil rights by *Time Magazine* in 2014, an increase in popular media representations of trans and non-binary people should ideally have raised awareness of cis-heteronormativity. Yet increased visibility and legal advancements for trans and non-binary people in Germany,<sup>59</sup> for instance, have been followed by increased anti-trans hate speech and legislative initiatives. The mismatch between “media’s ‘out and

57 Christine M. Klappeer, “Entangled Drag/Trans Panics: A Reflection on the Intersections of Anti-Gender U.S. Politics and Recent Attacks on Drag Storytelling in Germany and Austria,” in this volume.

58 Trans Legislation Tracker, “2024 Anti-Trans Bills Tracker,” Trans Legislation, n.d., <https://translegislation.com/>.

59 In April 2024, the restrictive and problematically named Transsexuals Law (*Transsexualengesetz*) was struck down. The earlier law had required two “experts” to attest to the irrevocability of a person's desired change in gender, whereas changing one's gender identity legally is now based on self-identification. See Human Rights Watch, “Germany: Landmark Vote for Trans Rights Law. Creates Gender Recognition Procedure,

proud' mentality" and "increased violence against queer – particularly trans – bodies" has had a paradoxical effect.<sup>60</sup> As Laura Borchert and Melanie Kreitler observe, "the increasing visibility we witness on-screen maintains and legitimizes existing, cis-heteronormative socio-cultural orders that are then reflected in legal developments."<sup>61</sup>

Taking up this theme in their essay in this volume, K. Allison Hammer quotes an interview with Trump on Fox News in which Trump notes that his diatribe against "men" playing on women's sports teams always gets the greatest amount of applause from his supporters.<sup>62</sup> Anti-trans sport bans employ a rhetoric of needing to protect supposedly helpless girls from the machinations of trans youth. These bills suggest that cis girls need to be defended against sexual predation in locker rooms and gender-based unfairness on the playing field.<sup>63</sup> They set up a binary of helpless femininity against transness. In a further iteration of this binary, the trans person has been repeatedly framed by Trump as in opposition to the military.

Hammer demonstrates how an enemy is created out of the transfeminine individual, who is constructed as a nefarious "enemy within," who is also associated with invasive immigration. Hammer grounds the success of Trump's rhetoric of hate in Christian nationalism and its absolutist belief in a strict gender binary in which women can be only mothers and helpmates, and men need to be 'contained' in their appropriately channeled sexuality to lead their biological families. This Christian nationalism conceives of "the American social body as straight, White, Christian, native born (English-speaking), and patriarchal."<sup>64</sup>

Christine M. Klapeer's text also demonstrates the transnational reach of far-right and anti-LGBTIQIA+ initiatives, which are based in and financed by Christian nationalist organizations in the United States. Her work on protests

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Upholds Nondiscrimination," April 12, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/12/germany-landmark-vote-trans-rights-law>.

60 Melanie Kreitler and Laura Borchert, "Representing, Repressing and Pushing Back: Queer and Trans (In)Visibilities in Media, Law and Culture," *Queer Studies in Media & Popular Culture* 7, no. 3 (2022): 147–164, 148.

61 Ibid., 149.

62 K. Allison Hammer, "How to Make an Enemy: Transmisogyny and the 2024 Presidential Election," in this volume, quoting an interview of Donald Trump on The Will Cain Show.

63 Olson and Borchert, "Narrative Authority, Affective Unreliability, and Transing Law," 391.

64 Hammer, "How to Make an Enemy."

against drag storytelling hours in Austria and Germany uncovers transnational organizational structures between far-right U.S. American agitators in Europe and the United States, as well as overlaps in rhetoric, including most prominently moral panics surrounding drag storytelling as the apotheosis of so-called gender indoctrination. Like Hammer, Klapeer shows that the demonization of trans topics, and, by extension, drag storytelling hours, in supposed defenses of 'the family' mask larger efforts to impose authoritarian structures and undermine democratic institutions.

The last text in this volume examines issues that Hammer and Klapeer discuss, yet now in relation to African geopolitical areas. Mariel Reiss's polyphonic essay highlights the effects of the U.S. elections on marginalized communities in Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa that include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer persons. She invites co-collaborators Kevin Besong (Cameroon), Adrian Jjuuko (Uganda), Āryā Jeipea Karijo, (Kenya), Nozizwe Ntesang (Botswana), Belinda Qaqamba Makinana and Khanyisile Phillips (South Africa), Omar van Reenen (Namibia), Ayodele Sogunro (Nigeria), and Monica Tabengwa (Botswana and South Africa) to speak to their specific contexts. Reiss then organizes interview statements around issues such as neocolonialist anti-LGBTQIA+ efforts that are often funded by U.S. American evangelical groups, thus underlining a point that Hammer and Klapeer make as well. Issues include how changes in administrations affect local activist efforts, such as the imposition of the Gag Rule on abortion information after Trump came into power. Reiss and her collaborators examine "norm contestations" relating to how "U.S. based and U.S. funded anti-LGBTIQ+ movements ... currently manifest themselves in norm discourses, legislation initiatives, policies, and development cooperation in African national and regional contexts."<sup>65</sup>

Speaking directly to one another despite the geographical distance between the geopolitical areas they examine, Hammer's, Klapeer's, and Reiss's essays all attest to the global spillover of U.S. American anti-feminist and anti-LGBTQIA+ preoccupations. For example, in Reiss's essay, Āryā Jeipea Karijo describes how the draft legislation, the so-called Family Protection Bill in Kenya not only mimics anti-trans bills in the United States but also exports topics specific to the U.S. American bathroom bills that make little sense in Kenya.

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65 Reiss, "U.S. Presidential Elections."

The current vilification of trans persons and persons read as trans recurs to anti-homosexual prejudices of an earlier era, and extends to other non-gender conforming persons as well. K. Allison Hammer's, Christine M. Klappeer's and Mariel Reiss's texts demonstrate how anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and programs as well as legal and policy initiatives that limit reproductive rights are exported from Christian nationalist circles in the United States and are then localized in distinct ways, depending on where the rhetoric or policy initiative lands.

## Barriers to Achieving Diversity

One may question whether it is really that essential that a woman be elected U.S. President, especially at a moment in U.S. politics when democratic foundations as such are at stake. However, one may argue that it is precisely at these moments that we need to focus on exclusions that political systems create and how they contribute to democracy becoming more exclusive, if not dismantled entirely.

– Birte Christ<sup>66</sup>

Although Birte Christ's topic in this volume is electability bias and gender, we quote her here at the beginning of this section to highlight a larger pattern that many of the contributions point out. The exclusions of certain groups or the vilification of certain persons – immigrants or drag storytellers or trans women – stand in for a far larger attack on democratic institutions. Maik Paap diagnoses this pattern when healthcare is presented as a scarce commodity that citizens will be deprived of by immigrants, and as a security issue. Marzia Milazzo's powerful *j'accuse* demonstrates how economic precarity is regularly used to control populations and incite forms of racism, anti-Blackness, and Afro-phobia. And Christine M. Klappeer diagnoses the same pattern as "Attacks on Drag Performances as Global Assaults on Democracy."<sup>67</sup>

With the contributing authors, we note the following political and rhetorical strategies that are employed to impede diversity initiatives and to roll back existing progressive positions, all of which are anti-democratic. One is what Gayle Rubin identified as a bait-and-switch operation, by which "disputes

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66 Birte Christ, "All About Electability: Women, Power, and the Presidential Elections," in this volume.

67 Klappeer, "Entangled Trans/Drag Panics."



over sexual behaviour [or immigration, we would add] become the vehicles for displacing social anxieties, and discharging their attendant emotional intensity.”<sup>68</sup> The affectively-laden stand in figure or issue does regulatory work for something entirely unrelated to it. This can be ‘the innocent child’ in need of protection as Hammer, Klapeer, and Belinda Qaqamba<sup>69</sup> all point out in their analyses of anti-trans and anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and policies.

The bait-and-switch strategy can also be found in anti-trans and anti-queer efforts that find funding and logistical support in the United States through Christian nationalists.<sup>70</sup> As Kevin Besong describes the situation in Cameroon, homosexuality is connoted with being UnAfrican, even if the financial backing for anti-LGBTQIA+ efforts comes from the United States. This pattern demonstrates how nimbly anti-diversity discourse operates in various settings. Christine M. Klapeer notes a pattern of likeness in protests against drag storytelling in Austria and Germany. Again, the funding and the logistical basis stems from the United States. The explicit intention of these efforts is to protect children from so-called early sexualization.

## Making Enemies

The legacy of the first Trump presidency is the endless manufacture of an enemy.

– K. Allison Hammer<sup>71</sup>

K. Allison Hammer’s powerful thesis in this book is that trans women and trans feminine individuals have become the identified enemies of the Christian Right. Old-school homophobic fears of bodily violation are re-directed

68 Gayle S. Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *Deviations*, ed. Gayle S. Rubin (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011 [1984]), 143.

69 Quoted in Reiss, “U.S. Presidential Elections.”

70 With Annika Brockschmidt, we prefer this term to Evangelicals. See *Die Brandstifter: Wie Extremisten die Republikanische Partei übernahmen* (Leipzig: Rowohlt, 2024). For a discussion in English, see Andrew L. Seidel, “‘We Remember a United States That Fought the Nazis’: A German Scholar of Fascism Weighs in on Christian Nationalism in the U.S.,” Religion Dispatches, November 22, 2021, <https://religiondispatches.org/a-german-scholar-of-fascism-weighs-in-on-christian-nationalism-in-the-united-states/>.

71 Hammer, “How to Make an Enemy.”

at trans women and transfeminine persons when transness is equated with invasive tropes of migration. The inviolable male body is at stake, as is the body politic. Hammer's central thesis about making transfemininity the enemy has been further validated since Governor Tim Walz was selected by Kamala Harris to be her running mate as Democratic candidate for the vice presidency in the general elections. Walz was immediately attacked by Trump for his previous advocacy of trans healthcare. Playing to his base, Trump announced on Fox News that Walz is "very heavy into transgender. Anything transgender he thinks is great."<sup>72</sup> The assumption is that this statement will be enough to discredit Walz altogether.

Making an enemy is an omnipresent trope in the 2024 elections, and as the essays here reveal, the two most vilified enemies in the election campaigns are immigrants and transfeminine persons. Often the negative imagery used to depict these 'enemies' is overlapping. So-called elites and whatever other figure is represented as opposing whiteness follow closely behind immigrants and transfeminine persons as similarly assailed figures.

Beyond the bait-and-switch is the already mentioned particularly effective form of play that Trump has mastered and which Sara Polak scrutinizes. Polak demonstrates how Trump speaks, posts, and acts in ways that according to previous behavioral norms are entirely unacceptable, yet then insists that he did not mean what he said or did. This pattern aligns with strategies of the Alt Right and the New Right to articulate racist, anti-Semitic, or misogynistic sentiments and memes and then to state that these enunciations were meant ironically and to insist that those who detect hate speech in them lack a sense of humor.<sup>73</sup>

A final anti-diversity strategy that this book identifies is the attempt to reverse legal protections of vulnerable groups by using human and civil rights discourse. Attempts to prohibit diversity topics being discussed or taught in

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72 Fenit Nirappil and McKenzie Beard, "A Look at Walz's Record on Gender-Affirming Care as Republicans Attack," *The Washington Post*, August 8, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/08/08/look-walzs-record-gender-affirming-care-republicans-attack/>.

73 Andrew Anglin, "A Normie's Guide to the Alt-Right," *The Daily Stormer*, August 31, 2016. The original is no longer online, likely due to multiple domain seizures for *The Daily Stormer*, but a snapshot of it survived thanks to the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, at <https://web.archive.org/web/20170821172825/https://dstormer6em3i4km.ion.link/a-normies-guide-to-the-alt-right/>.

schools on the basis of the supremacy of parental rights, or to argue for abortion bans as assertions of state rights, or to delete words such as “sexual orientation,” “gender identity” and “diversity” from active usage because they supposedly impinge on the First Amendment freedom of speech all demonstrate a similar pattern. Rights discourse is utilized to reverse the historical expansion of protections for those who have been positively affected by pro-diversity initiatives. Such appropriations of civil and human rights discourses and attempts to re-write catalogs of rights in the service of anti-diversity efforts have to be noted, diagnosed, and actively countered.<sup>74</sup>

## Paths Forward and the Benefits of Transnational Perspectives

The successful deployment of strategies of scapegoating, bait-and-switching, and using victimization, and rights discourses, as well as the widespread influence of U.S.-based initiatives, whether in anti-immigration policies, anti-trans initiatives, or abortion and contraception restrictions, highlight the necessity of understanding the 2024 elections and their potential impact from transnational perspectives. The perspectives assembled here help to identify ways to counter anti-diversity efforts resonating from out of the United States that are amplified during the elections.

Contributors to this volume articulate the need to decenter the United States from their own efforts to increase diversity and to pursue progressive political aims. Quoting Mariel Reiss’s text, activists see the need for “creating stronger transnational alliances across the [African] continent,” given the United States quixotic responses to LGBTIQIA+ and other human rights issues.<sup>75</sup> This involves an active de-centering of U.S. politics and political rhetoric. As Omar van Reenen straightforwardly states: “Africans should not be expected to push back against the American export of homophobia.”<sup>76</sup> This sentiment could be echoed by Europeans working to increase diversity projects as well.

Identifying the narratives, tropes, and spectacles with which enemies are created and stand-in issues are deployed constitutes another way to actively re-

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74 Jayne Huckerby and Sarah Knuckey, “Appropriation and the Rewriting of Rights,” *I-CON* 21, no. 1 (2023): 243–265, 243.

75 Reiss, “U.S. Presidential Elections.”

76 Ibid.

sist anti-diversity practices and discourse. The essays assembled here demonstrate how voter support is garnered through racist, anti-Black and anti-immigrant discourse, how economic patterns are masked as lifestyle issues, and how control is exercised through the narrative of healthcare scarcity. Naming these issues, combatting misinformation, and addressing the ways in which political affects are mobilized remain central tasks.

Whether the 2024 U.S. elections are viewed as moments of reification, reform, or resistance depends on one's standpoint. Sabine N. Meyer's essay makes clear that voting has been embraced by many Native Americans as a form of active resistance, captured in the phrase "casting a ballot."<sup>77</sup> For Marzia Milazzo, elections often amount to exercises in empty semblances of reform in which politicians are "[c]ommitted to their own reproduction while delivering promises of social change."<sup>78</sup> At any rate, the general agreement on the extent to which U.S. American trends affect other geopolitical contexts galvanizes people working on progressive issues everywhere, particularly in light of the possibility of a second Trump presidency.

When we began work on this book in 2023, it appeared certain that Donald Trump and Joseph Biden would be the Republican and Democratic candidates for presidency. As the general elections came nearer, a palpable dread became widespread that Trump was very likely to win, bringing permanent damage to U.S. American democratic institutions, and further damage to diversity efforts in the United States and elsewhere. This dread dissipated somewhat in late July and August 2024 when Vice-President Kamala Harris became the Democratic presidential nominee. Tim Walz responded to Harris's request that he be on the ticket with the following public sentiment: "Thank you, Madam Vice-President, for the trust you put in me but, maybe more so, thank you for bringing back the joy."<sup>79</sup> Harris and Walz's presenting themselves as "joyful warriors" represents a vivid contrast to the MAGA Republicans who cast themselves as God's Warriors, when they attempted an insurrection on 6 January 2021. We note the current moment of Kamala-Euphoria with a renewed sense of history

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77 Meyer, "IndigiPolitics."

78 Milazzo, "Elections."

79 Lauren Gambino, "Democrats' joy is unconfined as Harris and Walz take upbeat message on tour," *The Observer*, August 11, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/aug/11/kamala-harris-tim-walz-campaign-joy-election>.

repeating itself, recalling the Obama-Euphoria of 2007 and 2008 and its rapid decline during Obama's first term in office.<sup>80</sup>

We end this Introduction by advocating for what K. Allison Hammer has termed “unruly alliances” between unlike persons and groups that do not rely on the tropes of familial or erotic relationships. As Hammer writes, unruly alliances “[transcend] the limits of identitarian thinking” and offer “a vision for a politics of solidarity that can scale up to address gender and raced oppressions as well as ecological and economic issues.”<sup>81</sup> In a later text, Hammer expands on this idea:

Unruly alliances may form in a variety of locations – on a factory floor, an urban neighborhood, a field hospital, or an isolated geographical location; they be temporary, utilitarian, and with or without pathos. Only mass mobilization across identity categories will affect change.<sup>82</sup>

This volume and its authors want to open a space for unruly alliances. The texts assembled here speak to each other not just in that all the authors address the moment of the 2024 presidential elections and ask how they will impact the future. The alliances formed between the authors and texts are at times unlikely. Elements of Georgiana Banita's poignant analysis of Trumpian election rhetoric reappear in Esther Edelmann and Frans-Willem Korsten's discussion of the spectacularization of anti-ecological politics, and in Maik Paap's dissection of exclusionary anti-immigration narratives in the U.S. and Germany. We also find unruly alliances in the way that Sabine N. Meyer and Mariel Reiss counter the institutional gaze by organizing their contributions around the voices of citizens of Native Nations and activists from a variety of African nations.

For many people in the United States and abroad, the 2024 presidential elections mark a “time of possibility and of the unknown, which is also the time of unruly alliance.”<sup>83</sup> Readers of this book will find other alliances between

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80 Greta Olson, “What Has the Obama Presidency Changed?” in *Obama and the Paradigm Shift: Measuring Change*, ed. Birte Christ and Greta Olson (Heidelberg: Winter), 11–33.

81 K. Allison Hammer, *Masculinity in Transition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2023), 3.

82 K. Allison Hammer, “Exuberant Embodiment: A Trans Utopia for an Unbearable Present,” *Utopian Studies: The Journal of the Society for Utopian Studies* 35, no. 3 (Winter 2024): forthcoming.

83 Hammer, *Masculinity*, 45.

texts than those we have mentioned here. The unruly alliances forged here invite further intersectional transnational analyses of U.S. politics. We leave this Introduction with the hope of making many more unruly alliances in the future – spontaneous and temporary, yet also stabilizing relationships between unlikely people and groups – in a spillover beyond the pages of this book to a more gloriously diverse future.