

# LEFT

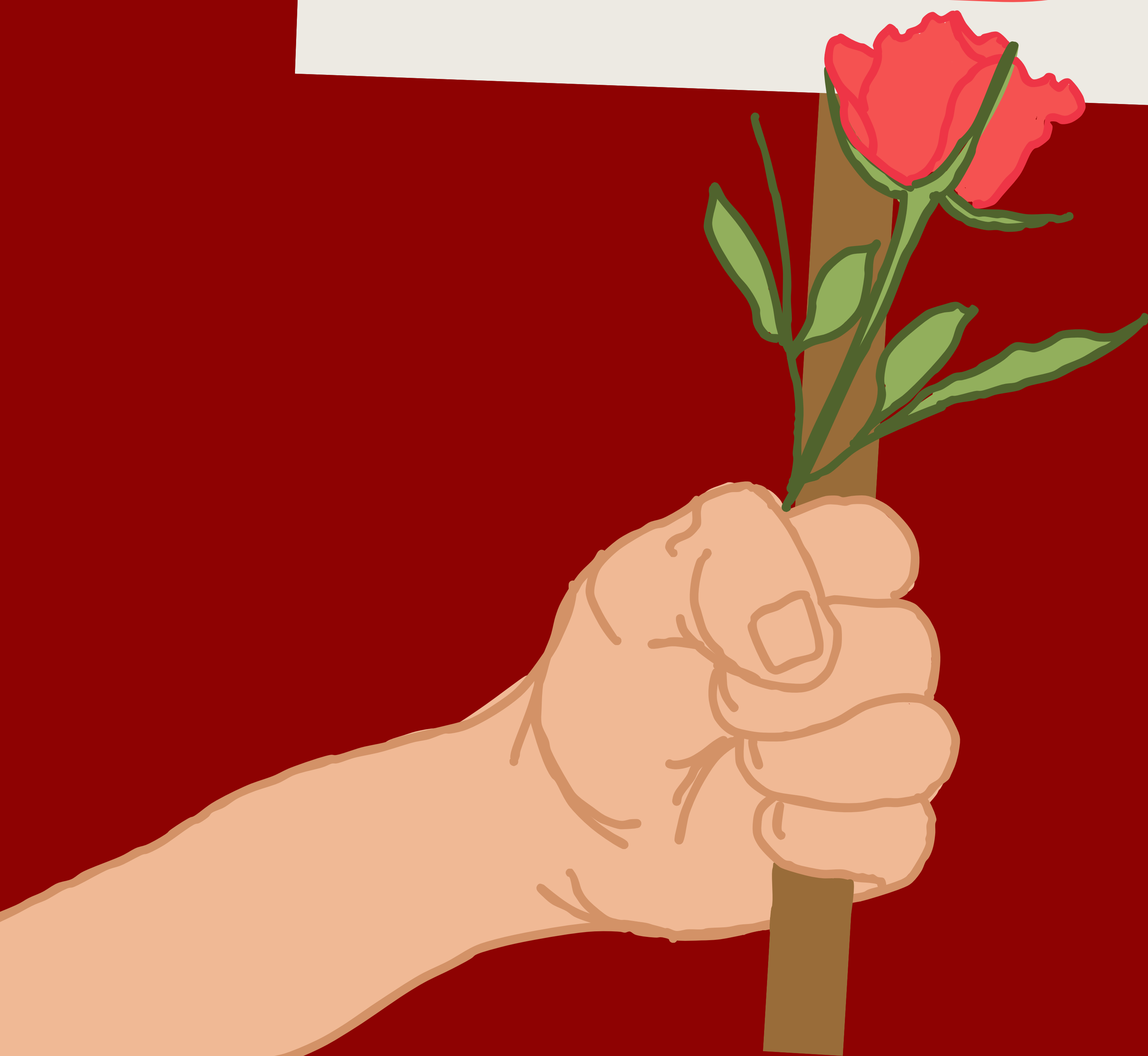
Autumn 2025

## *Magazine*



**TOMORROW  
BELONGS TO**

**US.**



Volume 3, Issue 1



# Editor's Comment



I'd like to welcome you all to my first print edition since becoming Editor in Chief of LEFT Magazine! Being elected in March was truly an honour, and I have loved this role so far.

In this hostile political climate, I wanted to create a magazine that both highlighted challenges and celebrated collective unity, highlighting resilience in the face of adversity.

The consistency of LEFT this year wouldn't be possible without my growing group of insanely talented writers who take time out of their busy lives to write articles about subjects they are passionate about. I cannot thank them enough.

In particular, I would like to thank my good friend Ellie Smith for assisting me in bringing my design, which I scribbled on my phone, to life in a better way than I could have even imagined. I am forever grateful to you.

I cannot wait to see what is to come for LEFT over my last few months as editor, and I am so excited to keep publishing articles that challenge and celebrate our community.

In Solidarity,

*Lola Fallon*

# Chair's Comment



What a privilege it is to write the first Chair Update since our rebrand. This exec really has hit the ground running, and we've proven we're not here to stand idle, but to put our values into practice.

The activity of LEFT Magazine is a testament to the dedication of our Editor-In-Chief. Lola has been working tirelessly alongside other commitments to bring LEFT Magazine to life.

As we get into this term, it's clear to the entire Executive Committee that 2025/26 will be a big year. For many, it's a final chance to make a lasting impact, and for others, it's just the beginning of their journey, and I'm anticipating great things to come.

In a tumultuous is political environment, filled with uncertainty, it's important to stay grounded and clear in focus. That's why Left Soc will continue to put the values of democratic socialism into practice, to create a more equal and just society that benefits the many, not the few. Here's to our collective liberation.

In solidarity,

*Ed Swann*



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# Who Should We Grieve?

## Political Violence and the Politics of Mourning

*Tom Broome*

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The reaction to the murder of Charlie Kirk, undeniably a crime which will subject his family to great grief and harm, has followed the script whenever violence targets controversial figures: politicians and media across the political spectrum expressing that “violence has no place in politics.” A serious examination questions this. Decisions over what counts as violence, which acts matter, and which lives matter occur every day in politics.

Allocation of grief, as Judith Butler highlights, is essential: “Only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear. Thus, grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters.” If anything can be learned from Kirk’s murder, it is the way we relate to and understand violence in society and how the right pushes it forward while maintaining an ironic distance from it — tragically shattered. Particularly troubling is the demand on marginalised groups, whose harm has been normalised and advanced by Turning Point USA and other groups, to treat this act as uniquely terrible.

Some violence is not recognised at all, and its victims made un-grievable. For example, Austerity in Britain was framed as a necessary measure of economic responsibility, concealing the harm of dismantling public services and the everyday violence of poverty — with estimates of its death toll ranging from 190,000 to over 300,000. This systemic violence is “inherent to [the] ‘normal’ state of things [...] invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent.”



Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

Today, violence against immigrants and asylum-seekers is normalised. The rhetoric of its proponents resembles Walter Benjamin’s “law-preserving violence”. Justifying the violence through the defence of the status quo — whether legal borders or mythic ideas of whiteness/Englishness. The violence is not ignored, but its victims are rendered un-grievable.

Their deaths are swept over by ‘debate’ over Israel’s historicity and right to ‘self-defence’, or Hamas, serving to obfuscate Israel’s violence. The discussion of Israeli hostages dramatically contrasts this, often condemning all violence but uniquely grieving them.

What follows from governments and media are trade-offs: how many murdered Palestinians are a suitable price for the hostages or for support to be unpalatable. Despite this, public resistance is criminalised and state disapproval takes the form of limp rhetoric.

**The question of what counts as violence and which lives are grievable is therefore fundamentally political.**

Figures on the right often defend themselves by saying they are simply expressing beliefs, which cannot hurt anyone and is protected as “free speech”. Many reactions to Kirk’s murder presented it as a punishment for such beliefs. But these defences politically obscure the nature of violence from right-wing organisations against vulnerable groups.

Entirely by accident, the BBC were most accurate in describing Kirk as an “activist”. So which cause was Kirk an activist for?

The right operates across levels. State power enacts violence through border regimes, police brutality, arms sales, and laws. Groups like the Proud Boys and ‘lone wolves’ do so through individual acts. Meanwhile, organisations like TPUSA and associated figures perform two crucial indirect functions.

The first is the legitimising violence through racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic rhetoric. The second is cultivating ironic distance, turning the suffering involved into entertainment through the spectacle of debate — and even memes.



Violence against women is hidden through romanticised ‘tradition’ and labelling opponents as overly-emotional. Black Americans are criminalised and concepts of systemic oppression and CRT are mocked. Transgender people are branded as unstable and ridiculed, with harm against them justified by fearmongering transphobia.

When the harm cannot be hidden, centrists often join the right in deploying the “free speech” defence. This distracts from the material violence, and the cries for ‘polite discourse’ plays into their hand. It advances the goal of expanding the circle of invisible and legitimised violence, while restricting who is grievable.

Such ironic distance is only possible through the right’s power and relative impunity, allowing them to maintain the appearance of rationality even as they further ongoing oppression.

A twisted combination of these levels of violence is in the reaction of governments and media to the genocide in Palestine. Many outlets infamously describe the murder of Palestinians in the passive voice, as though their deaths are coincidental with bombs and bullets.

Kirk’s murder is what Žižek labels “subjective violence”, an exceptional act disrupting the status quo. It is portrayed as uniquely terrible, and Kirk himself as uniquely worthy of grief. This created a moral trap: either mourn greatly and publicly, or you are celebrating murder.



Pictured: Charlie Kirk  
Image Credits: Flickr [Edited]



Image Credits: Wikimedia  
Commons [Edited]

The greatest pressure falls on the people targeted by the right’s “stochastic terrorism” — trans people, women, and racialised people — to perform grief. We cannot accept this as neutral, but as a demand for marginalised people to help make invisible their communities’ suffering, to silence themselves to affirm the exclusive grievability of those in power.

The uncountable people harmed by the right-wing violence machine are reduced to the cost of free speech. Their suffering is erased and in the same turn they are demanded to grieve for this very machine. Any nuance or opposition to this demand is decried as celebration.

## How else can we interpret this demand other than as a violent one?

For years, the right has been itching to escalate its violence, and grievability is an essential tool in its ideological arsenal. We must be vigilant of how the entire right-wing violence machine — from state power, to ideological justification, to individual acts of bigoted violence — might respond. They already construct ‘the left’ as the enemy, as Kirk once did claiming that “Islam is the sword the left is using to slit the throat of America.”

In response to Kirk’s murder, the force of its violence may be further projected at the groups it already targets, and it may drop its ironic distance in favour of open aggression. We can only hope that this will not be the case, we can only plan for what to do if it is.



# What has Festival Season Taught us about Support for Palestine?

*Emily Gibbs*

This summer, the biggest festivals on the music calendar took place. However, they looked a little different this year. This was due to a number of political protests on stage that brought attention to Palestine. Were these protests meaningful? And what has this festival season taught us about support for Palestine?

It is no coincidence that music festivals were the biggest arenas for political discourse this summer. Music has always had a long history of political action, from popular protest music of the 1960s to music created with the intention of charity fundraising.

**Music has the potential to create real change.**

By bringing this energy into live music performances, political messages are able to reach headlines, particularly when organisations try to silence these voices.

Discussions surrounding Palestine have been contentious. Over the summer, the response to Palestine has been silence or strong opposition. Palestine Action, a group which uses direct action to protest Britain's continued involvement in Israel's arms trade, has been increasingly vocal, leading countless demonstrations throughout the country. The group was banned under the Terrorism Act 2000 as it "promotes and encourages terrorism" with its "members demonstrating a willingness to use violence". As it is considered a terrorist organisation, police forces have been granted greater powers for arrest. As a consequence, any demonstrator supporting Palestine Action can face arrest, with several instances involving police aggression. In just one demonstration, 857 people were arrested for supporting Palestine Action.

Glastonbury, arguably the biggest British music festival, sees hundreds of thousands of music-lovers descend on Worthy Farm in Somerset. It is a huge event, widely reported on by broadcasters and news publications. This year boasted The 1975, Neil Young, and Olivia Rodrigo as headliners, alongside many incredible artists. Nevertheless, the focus of Glastonbury ended up being on the controversy surrounding political protests. Irish hip-hop group Kneecap's set was not allowed to be broadcast live due to Liam Óg Ó hAinmádh's charge for a terror offence. There were originally calls, from the likes of Keir Starmer, for them to be completely removed from the lineup. This led to Kneecap chanting "fuck Keir Starmer" on stage. This provoked an investigation by Avon and Somerset Police, but the charges were dropped due to insufficient evidence.



Pictured: Kneecap  
Image Credits: Thompson Current

Another controversy to come out of Glastonbury this year surrounded Bob Vylan. The punk rap duo's set was broadcast live by the BBC, and featured chants of "Free, free Palestine" and "Death, death to the IDF". Their set was pulled from BBC iPlayer and brought about investigations into possible criminal charges. The complaints from the BBC about inciting crime were dropped, but the rules against breaking guidelines relating to harm or offence are still under investigation.



Image Credits: Huete.at  
[Edited]



These situations were not just confined to Glastonbury. Victorious festival, which takes place in Portsmouth, also had its fair share of controversy. The Mary Wallopers set was cut short after they unfurled a Palestinian flag and stated “Free Palestine”. Victorious issued a statement that the set was ended after discriminatory chants, but The Mary Wallopers rejected this claim.

The Last Dinner Party pulled out of the festival in response, stating on Instagram that “[a]s a band we cannot cosign political censorship and will therefore be boycotting the festival today.”. Other acts showed solidarity with Palestine and the censoring of The Mary Wallopers; Vampire Weekend commented on the issue, claiming, “if someone was punished for flying a flag, that is wrong and they deserve an apology”.

**These high-profile cases, while dealing with the controversy, have ironically drawn more attention to the genocide in Gaza. By attempting to silence these voices, they have gained increased traction in the public sphere. It is significant that artists have chosen publicised settings to speak out, using their platforms to provide support.**

This year’s festival season has demonstrated the British public’s attitude towards Palestine. When these protests happened, they were met with riotous support from the crowd. This also reflects a decrease in support for the Labour Party, as the public is unsatisfied with Starmer’s response to the situation in Gaza; indeed, there were many in the crowd who echoed Kneecap’s sentiments against Starmer.

There is a question as to the sincerity of artists making these statements – are they just jumping on the bandwagon and wanting to appear ‘woke’? Indeed, making public statements is a guarantee of making headlines; for instance, I was personally unaware of Kneecap or Bob Vylan until I read the articles that came out about their political messages at Glastonbury.

Music artists are often pressured by fans to make political statements, and a refusal to do so would most likely lead to them getting cancelled. Nevertheless, in the case of Palestine, it is more probable that the artist would face backlash over speaking out, not necessarily from fans who are usually more sympathetic to the cause, but from politicians or news publications. As it is such a controversial topic, it would have potential to harm their career, so those artists who choose to use their platforms to highlight the genocide in Gaza surely have concern for the topic.

It is clear to see that festival season tells us much about the support for Palestine. Although these messages are still subject to silencing tactics and backlash, the positive response from the British public casts an optimistic light on the situation. Music provides an outlet for people to express their thoughts, and festivals provide the stage for these voices to reach large audiences.



Image Credits: Liberty International [Edited]



# Donald Trump's Second Term So Far

## A Blitzkrieg in Neo-Fascism *Ethan Travica*

November 5th, 2024, Donald Trump won his second presidential term after a messy campaign fraught with corruption, bribery, and the funding of the 1%.

Since then, not a day has gone by without a controversy, illegal act, hateful statement and increase in fascist action; Project 2025 is already 48% achieved and Trump openly embraces his allegiance to that fascist roadmap.

Amid the shutdown fight, Trump is no longer distancing himself from Project 2025. In fact, for this article, and indeed for pretty much all of us, there has simply been too much to keep track of, a deliberate act of strategy intended to overwhelm the media and opposition; in flooding the narrative it makes it incredibly difficult to properly handle anything at all when there's so much that has to be addressed.

Compared with other modern presidents, Trump has signed the most executive orders so far in his term. Indeed, his first day saw the most on a President's first day ever and the scope, topic and illegality of these have been staggering in range.

**This use of emergency powers has been nothing less than abusive; not just of the Constitution, but also of Congress, and of the country and people of the USA and the wider world. President Trump has brutally utilised facetious and illegal declarations of emergency in order to justify his political actions, in spite of their often blatant unconstitutionality and immorality.**

A staple of his Second Term, especially so at the beginning, and responsible for its continuing chaos and craziness, Trump's Cabinet is the most chaotic mix of candidates who are competent, many more who are not, and some who seem there just to sow chaos; all of whom are loyal to the President more than anything else, even the Constitution and country.

Among the worst of these are: Pete Hegseth, an alcoholic, domestic and sexual abuser, Fox News host who is now head of the largest military complex in the world; RFK Jr. a man so sceptical of science and vaccines that of course he got appointed to be head of the Department of Health and Human Services; Tulsi Gabbard, someone who has seemed to be in the pockets of so many dictators and authoritarians that even with Trump in charge it still seems shocking she got the job; and perhaps the worst of all, the world's richest man Elon Musk, head of an illegitimate department given sweeping budgetary power in spite of Congress and Constitutional division of power, though not anymore.

A key theme of Trump's Second Term has been money, be that budgetary through DOGE, chaotic tariffs that are constitutionally illegal and internationally incessive and malicious, and most corrupt of all; immense amounts of corruption and bribery.

After all, for this President, it does not matter who or what a person or thing is, if he can, he will exact a price from them, or perhaps even allow them to pre-emptively provide him with some form of bribe, i.e. Apple's Golden Plague, the Private Jet from Qatar, stakes in large computational and manufacturing corporations.



Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]



The most important discussion to be had about Trump's term so far must be that of the rising fascism and authoritarianism that is clearly occurring, and which feels dangerously at risk of irreversibility and fraught with malicious danger.

We have seen this clearly through the actions Trump has taken against immigrants, minority communities, and the rule of law as a whole; the deportation of many without due process, the creation of a concentration camp in the form of Alligator Alcatraz, people, citizens and non-citizens, being sent to foreign torture prisons, and many other things.



Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

We also see this through how Trump has weaponised the Justice Department in order to politically persecute his enemies and get revenge against those who carried out fair rule of law and due process against him. This has become obvious and apparent through how John Bolton, James Comey and Letitia James are all facing clearly politically motivated charges against them, obviously as retribution for the acts that they carried out against Trump in their jobs to carry out and ensure true democracy and the rule of law. And these are only a few of many, many similar cases, on scales both large and small.

Aside from the descent to fascism, what has also been apparent as a keystone of this current administration is a remarkable level of incompetence and stupidity. We have seen that in many things, but perhaps most clearly through how the editor of the Atlantic magazine managed to be accidentally added to a Signal group chat about US military operations, a group whose other members included the vice-president and the secretary of defence.

Currently, we can most readily see both the fascistic traits and impulses of the current administration as well as its startling incompetence in the form of the current government shutdown; something which as of writing is the longest ever in US history, and does not seem to have an end visible in the near future, causing massive economic and financial harm to many, and occurring despite a situation where the Republican party controls both Houses of Congress and the Presidency.

Throughout this whole presidency, and most certainly throughout the next 3-plus years, there has been an outpouring of protests and pushback against Trump, and whilst these have not seemingly had much of an effect on the White House itself, the significance of these acts cannot be understated because they make it abundantly clear to all, and especially to those in the political establishment who do have some level of power, just how abhorrent what is happening is.



Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

The future of American politics seems disheartening and concerning, and with more than 3 years left to go, it seems logical to dread those next years and just how far this chaos and tyranny will go, but we must remain hopeful, change is possible and it is coming, and the election of Zohran Mamdani, as well as other clear wins for the left, serve to provide a clear point to rally our hope around.



# Stop the Bots!

*Ellie Smith*

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As you have probably heard in every ‘introduction to the module’ lecture this year, the use of AI is not good (or maybe you haven’t but that is a different issue for a different day). We’ve definitely all been there, in a pinch and chucking a PDF into ChatGPT desperately before your seminar begins because you forgot to do the reading but cannot think of anything worse than spending an hour or two sitting in a windowless room, cluelessly nodding along to whatever’s being said. The problem of AI usage lies more deeply in the fact that artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly more common in almost everyone’s daily lives.

The incredibly high electrical and water demands of AI use, and the detrimental effects this has on the environment, has been relatively well documented. In order to train AI models, data centers require a significant amount of electricity and this is linked to growing carbon dioxide emissions. In addition to this, a considerable amount of water is required as part of these data center’s cooling systems. This creates strain on nearby water supplies, thus disrupting their ecosystems. To put this in perspective, a message in ChatGPT takes an estimated five times the amount of electricity than a regular Google search.

Despite this knowledge, it remains that since it was launched at the end of November 2022, ChatGPT has become the fourth most trafficked website, as well as being listed as the number one productivity app on the Apple App Store (with Gemini, Grok and Dola ranking directly behind it). As of early January 2025, the platform boasted around 300 million weekly active uses and 123.5 million daily active users.

Statistics like these are hardly surprising though, when we consider how AI has slowly but surely snuck into all of our day-to-day applications. Grok on X, Gemini on Google, Co-Pilot on Microsoft, and many more, make it so easy for the users on these platforms to interact with AI without even really thinking about it. It has now become incredibly normalised to not even read emails you receive, and instead to have them summarised for you.

Such easy and unrestricted access to these platforms has led to there being several stories of people forming deep reliance on artificial intelligence at quite a personal level. While there is very little in the way of concrete scientific research on this, there are a wide variety of articles out there, telling the stories of the various people who have found themselves incredibly emotionally dependent on AI chatbots, like ChatGPT.



Image Credits: Pexels [Edited]

The heartbreaking cases of Sewell Setzer III and Adam Raine spring to mind here. Both teenage boys had formed extensive relationships with AI chatbots, and when they confided their suicidal thoughts to their companions they were not offered any help, but rather, were encouraged to go through with the act. Both Setzer’s mother and Raine’s father recently testified in Congress and have brought lawsuits against the AI companies that are to blame for the deaths of their sons.

Since these cases came to light, it has encouraged thinking about how appropriate it is for children and teenagers to have access to AI as they lack the better judgement against the blurring lines between real human interaction and technology.

That said, even supposedly intelligent public figures, like Eton and Oxford educated former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, have spoken about their love for AI chatbots. In an interview with Al Arabiya English, that has now gone viral for yet another case of his peculiar pronunciation, Johnson expressed his appreciation for ChatGPT. He specifically highlighted how, when answering his questions, the platform validates him and offers flattering comments within its response, such as “your question is so clever” and “you have such insight”, that makes him love using it. He even admitted to using ChatGPT to help him write his books.



Now it must be noted that Johnson is far from the only person to use artificial intelligence to help him write something that you'd expect him to be able to easily complete himself. In fact, over 50% of respondents in a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in August 2024 said that they were using AI at least several times a week, with about 27% claiming to use it several times a day. Similarly, it was reported by the Digital Education Council, also in August 2024, that based on responses from over 3,800 students across 16 countries, 86% of students admitted to regularly using AI as part of their studies.

The reliance of so many on AI tools is troubling, especially when it has been suggested by researchers that students' use of AI as a shortcut in their assignments 'hints that offloading work in this way can stifle independent critical thought'.

AI tools are sold to us as a productivity enhancer. By allowing a machine to complete menial tasks, like writing an email or transcribe a recording, we arguably free up time that can be better spent on other, more important tasks.

While this rationale does make perfect sense, it has been clearly evidenced that people's AI useage does not work in this way whatsoever. Rather, psychologists have suggested that as AI use grows more commonplace in everyday life, users of these platforms reduce their engagement in deeper thinking that will, in turn, cause their critical thinking skills to lessen over time.

Professor Dr. Micheal Gerlich has been studying the risks AI poses to our critical thinking. In research published at the start of this year, he surveyed 666 UK based participants, aged 17 and above and coming from 'diverse educational backgrounds', on their AI use and measured their critical thinking skills. Unsurprisingly, Gerlich reported a strong negative correlation between AI usage and critical thinking skills – the higher the participants' use of AI tools, the lower their critical thinking skills.

This has sparked conversations about 'correct' uses of AI, an idea that is only partially convincing. AI tools do have a place in the world, and it would be incredibly hypocritical for me to suggest that we should never use them, but we do need to be wary of promoting this technology without a proper understanding, as users, of the risks it poses.

With the issue of the rise of the far right becoming more pressing by the day, critical thinking skills and independent thought are more important than ever. Throughout history, right-wing movements have greatly benefitted from anti-intellectualism, and we must remain vigilant in order to prevent this from happening moreso than it already is.

Fake news is rampant across the globe, which has ironically worsened with the evolution of generative AI, and the effects of people believing false stories can be detrimental. The best way to combat this is a good sense of critical thinking: to really engage with a source and consider if it is actually real, rather than believing everything you see. We often joke about an older relative that believes everything they see on Facebook, but with so much hateful rhetoric circulating the internet (half of which is based on things that are completely false), this is a real issue.

**Education and understanding is truly a power and a privilege, and it is important for us all to remember this in the fight against the far right.**

Ultimately, it is entirely unrealistic for me to suggest that we all cease our use of AI immediately, but with everything that this article has covered in mind, we can perhaps be more considerate of the effects it will have, both environmentally and cognitively.



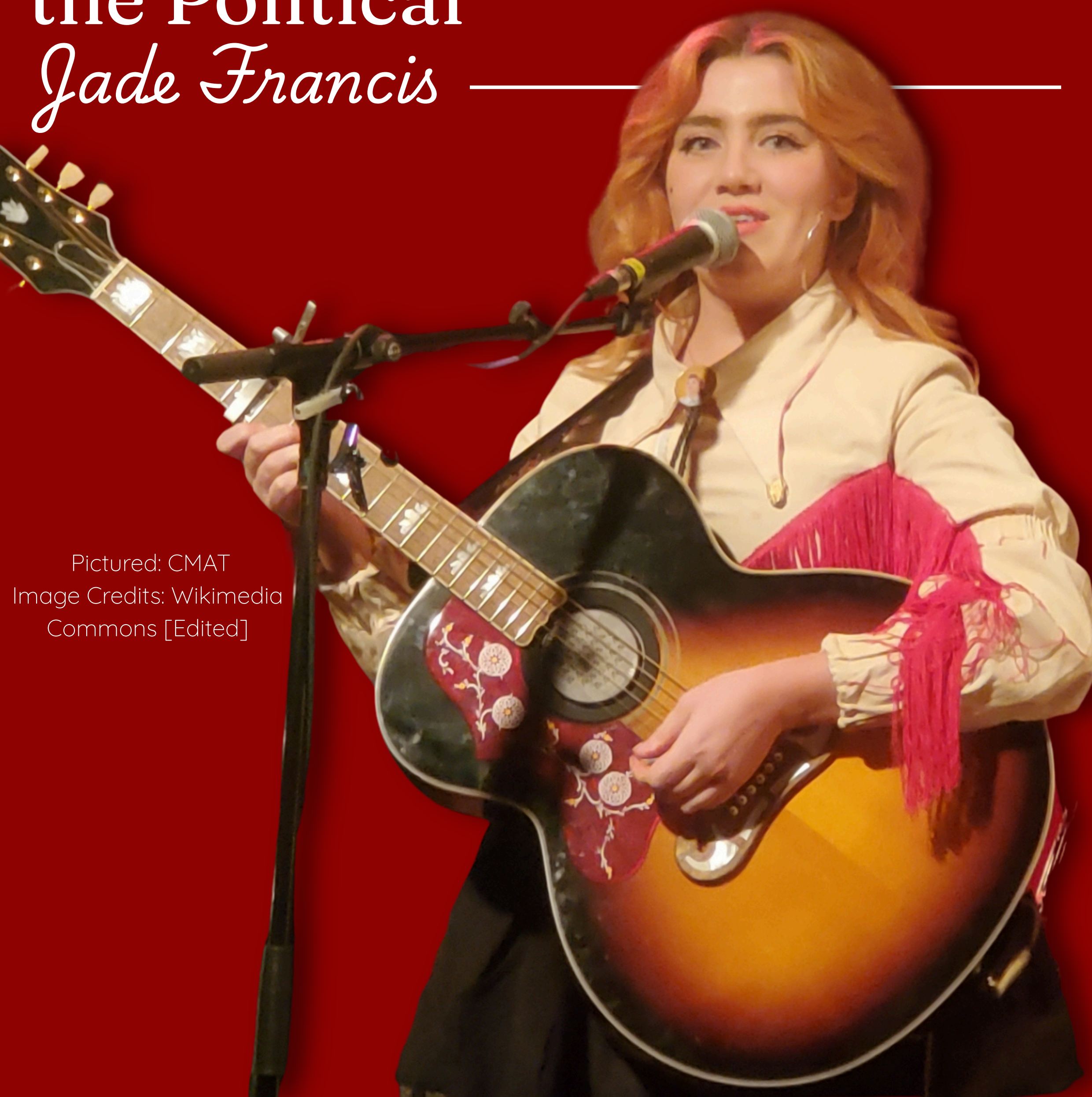
Image Credits: Flickr [Edited]



# EURO-COUNTRY

## Blurring the Personal and the Political

### *Jade Francis*



Pictured: CMAT  
Image Credits: Wikimedia  
Commons [Edited]

EURO-COUNTRY, CMAT's third studio album released at the end of August, presents a commitment to merging politics with art. Throughout the album, CMAT connects her personal struggles, including love, hate, grief, boredom and longing, with opposition to neoliberal policies, a commitment to Irish culture, and a critical feminist reflexivity.

The album received attention after its second single, "Take a Sexy Picture of Me", went viral on TikTok in May of this year with its accompanying dance. Its second verse, danced over with matching dance moves, lists several things the singer has done in an effort to appear attractive in the public eye. The trend cuts off before the lyrics "Now tell me what was in it for me?", in which CMAT reflects upon her choices that ultimately did not serve her.

Many of those interacting with the trend had little knowledge of the song's feminist messaging. The rest of the song is an unapologetic challenge to societal expectations for women to always appear young and attractive. The chorus' line 'Make me look 16', eventually counting down throughout the song and ending with 'Make me look... like a baby', is a bold challenge to the pressure for women to appear increasingly youthful.

The song's standout, however, is CMAT's exploration of how this affects her decisions throughout her life to conform to these expectations so people would simply be 'nice' to her. It's a sinister message hidden behind an upbeat, playful song.

The second single proved CMAT's commitment to blurring the lines between the personal and the political. Throughout the album, her experiences of loneliness, grief, love and hate are positioned as connected to the economic and social conditions which shape those experiences for everyone. What CMAT creates here isn't a collection of political songs filled with abstract ideas, but a group of carefully crafted songs which are aware of how politics shapes everyday.

The album's title song, EURO-COUNTRY, is the clear standout of the album. The song's overt political messaging explores the impact of the 2008 financial crisis on the people of Ireland. The introduction of the song, sung in Irish, shows her commitment to sharing how Ireland was failed by the political elite through neoliberal politics.

For some context, the song explores the aftermath of the severe economic crisis in 2008 after a period of rapid economic growth starting from the mid-1990s. This era, known as the Celtic Tiger, experienced massive GDP growth for Ireland due to foreign investment, a booming property market and EU membership.



Image Credits: Flickr  
[Edited]



The crash in Ireland included the collapse of the property market, leaving thousands of unfinished ‘ghost’ estates. Banks failed to properly supervise finances and were involved in risky lending, while the then-Taoiseach Bertie Ahern came under scrutiny as part of the Mahon tribunal after it was revealed he accepted money from property developers while in office, raising concerns about his political accountability during years of unsustainable property expansion.

EURO-COUNTRY explores life during the crash. Its chorus explores the feeling of being robbed of a future promised to her in a time of prosperity, while recognising the devastating effect of the crash on the people of Ireland.

The bridge is particularly explicit, drawing attention to the ‘houses that stay empty even now’ and the ‘das [dads] started killing themselves’ when CMAT was twelve. This description is cried out in anger, blaming politicians for the real effects of their economic policies, which caused such devastation to the working Irish people who felt the brunt of the failures of neoliberal rule.

The song doesn’t remain a static description of political conditions, however. The song places blame on Bertie Ahern for his involvement in the crash, accusing him directly of cutting young Irish people’s futures ‘in half’.

Pictured: Bertie Ahern  
Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]



The bridge ends with a glimpse of optimism, with CMAT stating she knows ‘it can be better if we found it’. The descriptions of the catastrophic effects of Irish capitalism are nothing short of horrifying, but CMAT’s ability to encourage people to channel that anger into protest and to take it to the voting booth makes EURO-COUNTRY a project for change. The song has particularly rung true for young Irish people struggling to get on the property ladder amidst a housing crisis, with young people across Ireland speaking out online using the song.

The success of the album, nominated for a Mercury Prize and becoming CMAT’s most successful project yet, can teach us an important lesson.

Firstly, the value of bringing the personal to the political. CMAT’s success in this project can mainly be attributed to bringing her own personal experiences throughout her life with the political developments shaping the times we live in. In doing so, CMAT avoids the mistake that many artists make of capitalising on individualised experiences without commenting on the economic and social arrangements that shape them to create projects which do nothing to challenge the status quo. Similarly, she does not fall victim to describing such arrangements as abstract ideas but ones which shape every day and define the fabric of personal experience.

In an interview with RTÉ Lyrics FM, she states, ‘I don’t think there’s any point talking about the political stuff unless you’re going to have a lot of heart and soul and personal experience in it.’ The brilliance of this project is down to this very fact. Not only does CMAT make politics personal, but also the personal political.

Political ideas such as opposition to neoliberal policies sometimes seem so far removed from the people they actually affect. Throughout the project, as CMAT creates a stark musical opposition to neoliberal policies, the cultural policing of women’s bodies and political corruption, she connects the experiences of working people to political choices in hopes of opening the eyes of the many.

**If the left wants to be effective at mass mobilising, it ought to take a page out of CMAT’s book.**



# Who is the Labour Party's Real Opposition?

*Tasha Brock*

Over a year into Keir Starmer and the Labour Party's leadership, two things have become increasingly apparent: firstly, dissatisfaction with the current government is high and secondly, the supposed two-party system of democracy that Britain has been governed under for the last century is dead.

Currently, both Labour and the Conservatives are doing shockingly in the polls. Both parties (subject to some change) appear to be polling at below 17% with the labour party performing only marginally better than the conservatives – despite their significant election victory in 2024.

**Currently sitting at 27% of the vote, Reform UK is evidently the Labour party's greatest opposition.**

Nigel Farage and his party, founded upon right-wing populism and a bigoted agenda, have accumulated over 250,000 active members since their founding in 2018, and are thus the second largest political party in Britain. Moreover, Reform UK has received far more in external donations (£4.8 million) than Labour or Conservatives have this year – a force undoubtedly contributing towards their growth.



Pictured: Nigel Farage  
Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

In such an unstable political climate, it is more important than ever that we recognise the frightening, right-wing reality this multi-party system has given way to. Additionally, we need to acknowledge the role the media has played in shaping, projecting and cultivating Labours new opposition and the ways in which Reform threatens the structure and safety of our country.

On the one hand, Reform's success should be read as a clear manifestation of the failures of both the Labour and the Conservatives over the last decade. The cost-of-living crisis, austerity and Brexit has clearly left the British people disillusioned with a two-party system that does not seem to serve them.

On the other hand, the success of Reform and the shift away from the Conservatives as the main threat to Labour is not entirely organic. The BBC and other news outlets have vastly over-represented Reform's rhetoric and have therefore oversaturated the British publics political sphere with the right-wing, xenophobic and hostile ideology the party and its members perpetuate.

In September the Liberal Democrats launched a formal investigation into this very phenomenon, accusing the BBC of purposefully ignoring alternative political parties in favour of platforming Farage. The party's Media spokesman Max Wilkinson has claimed that "The BBC is following Farage around like a lost puppy" and that by over-reporting on the bigoted ideology Reform spreads, the British (allegedly 'impartial') media is catalysing its success.

The Liberal Democrats have additionally claimed that they have been disproportionately under-represented in the BBC's coverage of political matters. Currently, the Reform party only has 5 sitting MPs however, it pales in comparison to the 72 Liberal Democrat MPs actively sitting in the House of Commons.



Pictured: Ed Davey  
Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]



Statistically, it is undeniable that Reform UK is being over-represented on our screens. It has been found that ITV and the BBC have dedicated 23% of their TV bulletins between January and July of 2025 to coverage of Reform UK. Moreover, in nearly 40% of the stories published by the BBC and ITV about Reform, the party was positioned as the "protagonist", thus ignoring other parties that currently have more ministerial power.

Similarly to the Lib Dems, the Green party have also previously called out prominent UK media outlets for over-platforming figures within the Reform party. Carla Denyer has claimed that "The media landscape in the UK doesn't just reflect the news, it shapes it by who [they] invites to TV." Essentially claiming that by platforming the hard right in excess, the media dictates who is popular, what is tolerated and who therefore is voted for.

Similarly to Reform, the Green Party has overtaken the Labour party and the Conservatives in the polls. Zack Polanski has publicly said he aims to "replace" the Labour party and that the Greens are "giving Britain hope again". Whilst this has received some airtime, it is unfortunately not nearly as exhaustive as the number of headlines that allude to Reform and its success in opinion polls.

Whilst the BBC has under-reported this unforeseen overtaking of the Labour party, right wing media outlets have already begun the public smear campaign of Zack Polanski. The Sun assures its readers that Polanski will form a coalition with Jeremy Corbyn and other members of the "hard left", splitting the left-wing vote and offering a "big boost to Reform".



Pictured: Zack Polanski  
Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

The far right and similarly affiliated 'centrist' media have also lent an unorthodox amount of time and focus to 'scandals' of Polanski's political past. Multiple headlines have been dedicated to 'investigations' into controversies such as the hypnotherapy breast-enlargement scandal. However, little is ever done to address Farage's aggressively problematic past, including but certainly not limited to: publicly idolising white nationalist Enoch Powell and claiming that being in London makes you feel like a "foreigner in your own country".

As a result of such support, generative media attention and a high number of active members, the Reform party has been using their unreasonably large platform to allude to the possibility of an early election. This ought not to happen and is yet another example of Reform weaponizing their power to spread misinformation, hate and uncertainty. However, if the Labour party and Kier Starmer are committed to staying in power, they should take this as a sign that they need to create meaningful and useful change in the country.

Ultimately, it is clear who Labour's real opposition is. The days of Labour vs Conservative elections appear to be dead with Labour MPs defecting to the Greens and prominent Conservatives defecting to Reform. In such unprecedented and unpredictable times, it is more important than ever to fight right wing extremism wherever and whenever possible and to remain vigilant in the face of media bias and weaponised impartiality.



Pictured: Keir Starmer  
Image Credits: Flickr [Edited]

Pictured: Kemi Badenoch  
Image Credits: Flickr [Edited]



# Why Politicians do not Belong on Reality TV

*Lola Fallon*

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In recent years, (usually right-wing) politicians have been swapping Westminster for reality TV in desperate attempts to redeem their public image.

Michael Fabricant, the former MP for Lichfield (better known for his distinctive hairstyle than his political views) is the latest politician to do so, as he appeared on the most recent series of Celebrity Big Brother.

He follows in the footsteps of figures like Edwina Currie and Ann Widdicombe, as well as the more recent examples of Matt Hancock and Nigel Farage, who caused major controversy with their appearances on I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here! in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

While he wasn't involved in any major party scandals, he got in trouble multiple times for social media behaviour. This included Islamophobia allegations after a tweet depicting Sadiq Khan in a sexual act with a pig (which I thought was usually reserved for Conservative politicians), a post he later claimed was an accident.

Since losing his seat in 2024, Fabricant's relevance has dwindled further. His appearances on GB News (which has a monthly reach of nearly 3500 viewers) has not increased his image, while his posts on X receive limited engagement.

But a quick search of his voting record reminds the public of his controversial positions from when he was in office, which should not be platformed by the mainstream media. It reveals that he voted for the Iraq War and cuts to welfare spending, while opposing fire safety measures after the Grenfell Tower fire, as well as action on climate change, showing that he is severely out of touch.

Unfortunately, however, these positions are ones that we associate with the Conservative Party, and that is all Michael Fabricant was – just another (now unemployed) Tory.

His attempt to reinvent himself in the public eye by acting the fool and bringing his teddy bear 'Lindsay' (named after House of Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle) along, possibly to make him appear more endearing, did not work, as he was ultimately nominated by 7 of his housemates, and was the first to be evicted from the Big Brother House.

While his stunt failed to make him a fan favourite, recent appearances from more prominent Tory MPs who were involved in shocking scandals have been successful in redeeming themselves, utilising reality TV to further their careers.

In recent years, I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here! saw Nigel Farage and Matt Hancock enter the jungle with millions watching, sanitising, and humanising them in the eyes of the public as they took part in Bushtucker trials, far removed from the political controversies that define their careers.

Both of their controversies are widely reported. Hancock was the Health Secretary during the pandemic, where he was involved in multiple scandals, and broke his own governments rules by having an affair with his aide, Gina Coladangelo, which was exposed in 2021, subsequently leading to his resignation.

As he was a sitting MP at the time, his appearance on the show sparked outrage from The Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group called Hancock's appearance on the show 'sickening', and even called for ITV to remove him from the show.

Pictured: Micheal Fabricant  
Image Credits: Flickr [Edited]





Not even his own party agreed with this publicity stunt, as he was suspended by the Conservatives, with the chief Tory whip at the time declaring that the act was ‘serious enough’ to be punished.

Ultimately though, his plan worked: he finished third, suggesting a degree of redemption in the eyes of the public. Since then, has been grilled by the Covid-19 enquiry for his mishandling of the pandemic – but has largely been able to fade into the background.

However, in the case of Nigel Farage, his appearance in the jungle bolstered his popularity and has contributed to Reform UK’s recent successes.

Farage is a polarising figure, best known for playing a key role in the disaster that was Brexit, as well as displaying an unapologetically racist stance, demonising migrants at any opportunity. His racism is longstanding and includes agreeing with the ideas in Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood Speech’ in 2008 and said that Muslims wanted to form a ‘fifth column and kill us’ during the 2015 General Election campaign.

However, over the years, he has presented himself as a relatable figure (which he isn’t as he attended the very expensive Dulwich College) and has used the media to his advantage.

His personalised Cameo videos went viral when he joined the app in 2021, which quickly transformed into memes which were shared by many, boosting his notoriety among younger generations. As a result, he became more of an internet sensation than a political figure, as people recognised him for saying ‘up the RA’, instead of his usual hateful rhetoric.

But his appearance on I’m A Celebrity Get Me Out of Here in 2023 ultimately made him appear relatable, as his politics were mainly overlooked by his campmates, who affectionately referred to him as ‘Nige’, making him sound like a harmless, normal guy, rather than a controversial personality.

His plan to appear down-to-earth in the mainstream media obviously worked, as he had the support of many British voters, eventually placing third in the programme, where he received 25.78% of the vote.

Since then, he became the leader of Reform UK in June 2024, where he was elected as the MP for Clacton. His leadership has bolstered support for the party, boasting about membership numbers, stating that ‘The youngest political party in British politics has just overtaken the oldest political party in the world. Reform UK are now the real opposition.

Recent wins in local elections also highlight how popular this party has become, as Reform won 677 seats, taking control of 10 councils, where they have ‘radical plans’.

This success can partially be attributed to the fact that many of his voters believe that Farage is ‘normal’, down-to-earth and more relatable compared to other politicians, showing that his reality show appearance reinforced this sanitised image of him, which he has in turn weaponised for political points.

However, while I have used right-wing politicians as examples to argue against politicians appearing on reality shows, this in no way means I would endorse figures like Jeremy Corbyn or Zarah Sultana participating in Bushtucker trials or nominating celebrities for eviction.

**Politicians are not celebrities. They are elected by the people to represent the people, voting on decisions that will shape public policy, which, in turn, affects the lives of millions around the country.**

Their role is to listen to their constituents, not seek fame in the public eye, and by prioritising media attention over their elected duties, they directly break the trust placed in them by the people they serve.

Ultimately, reality TV has unfortunately become a convenient platform for politicians to reinvent themselves after major scandals. Hancock has been able to fade into the background despite having so much blood on his hands, and Farage’s grip on the nation has strengthened, leading the UK down a dark path. The likes of Farage, Hancock and Fabricant are not the first and will certainly not be the last.



Pictured: Matt Hancock  
Image Credits: Flickr [Edited]

Pictured: Nigel Farage  
Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]



# Sportswashing and Softpower

## How the Middle East is Redefining Global Sport

*Aaron Levy*

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Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

On the 20th November 2022, Qatar faced Ecuador at the Al Bayt Stadium in the opening match of the World Cup. This was the first time the tournament kicked off in the Middle East, and it was more than just three weeks of football, but rather a combination of economic diversification, political influence, and image-building.

Qatar spent an eye-watering \$220 billion on the tournament (approximately equivalent to the entire country's GDP!) in the hopes of drawing attention away from its clear human rights abuses. For example, there are laws that criminalise sex outside of marriage, leading to rape victims being prosecuted, and a Qatari ambassador for the World Cup described homosexuality as "damage in the mind."

Alongside the laws that curb personal freedoms, Qatar (as for so many more Middle Eastern countries) isn't a footballing nation, meaning it lacks the critical infrastructure needed to host the World Cup. This led to more than a million migrant workers being deployed to construct the stadiums and infrastructure, many of whom had their passports taken away and were stuck in modern-day slavery. The conditions aren't much better, as 6500 died working on the tournament's preparation.

Despite this, Middle Eastern investment doesn't necessarily need to be within their own borders, as proven by Emirati Sheikh Mansour (the vice president of the UAE) buying major shares in Manchester City. Should a nation that's described as a 'black hole' for human rights (with reports of political activists being tortured) really be in control of one of our largest football clubs?

Foreign ownership in our football clubs is bad for fans too, as many owners prioritise profit over sporting success. This detachment erodes the sense of community and tradition that football has always represented – as for many supporters, their club is part of their identity, not a marketing tool for a foreign government.

But why do Middle Eastern governments invest so heavily? Global image is the main reason - investing in high-profile UK clubs helps governments project an image of global engagement and openness (the latter being rather ironic considering what I've already mentioned above).

Sportswashing isn't a recent concept. Hitler used it to promote his Nazi Germany on a mass scale during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, even when Jewish athletes were excluded and even persecuted. Today, critics argue that Middle Eastern involvement in global sport follows a similar (yet more modern) strategy – using sports to distract people from severe human rights abuses.

Despite all the negatives, Middle Eastern involvement in sport can have some positives as investment can lead to infrastructure that can be utilised by the community, encouraging wider engagement and youth development.

The economic importance also cannot be understated. The Middle East is heavily reliant on oil; however, this is a finite resource that is quickly running out. By investing in global sport, Middle Eastern countries can hopefully diversify their economy before the oil runs out.

**Global sport is being used for more than the love of the game. How can we, as sports fans, ensure that the values of sport are not lost in the pursuit of power?**



# One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest

## 50 Years On *Edden El-Hashahar*

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest posits that there are four different types of people – rule-makers, rule-enforcers, rule-obeyers, and rule-breakers. It dares us to be the last kind.

November 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the film's release. 50 years on, its themes of conformity, power and the human spirit remain just as compelling.

Miloš Forman's adaptation of Ken Kesey's 1962 novel of the same name charts the quiet tyranny of Nurse Ratched (Louise Fletcher) over the patients of a psychiatric ward. When Randle McMurphy (Jack Nicholson) enters the ward to avoid the alternative of a work farm, his laughter is the first challenge to Ratched's icy regime. McMurphy's magnetic charm and irrepressible humour, vividly brought to life by Nicholson, electrifies the sterile, regimented ward.

Forman's experience of oppressive authority in Czechoslovakia lies behind his masterful depiction of the subtle cruelty and psychological control of institutions. He explained 'The Communist Party was my Nurse Ratched'.

Early into his stay, McMurphy makes a bet to the other patients that he will escape by lifting a giant sink off its base and launching it at a locked window. Unsurprisingly, the sink is too heavy but McMurphy's defiance is not lost.

One patient watching carefully is Chief Bromden (Will Sampson), who presents as deaf and mute. Though Kelsey's novel centres the Chief's perspective, the film sadly loses a thoughtful comparison of Native American oppression, but his introversion still hints at the individuals who become lost within rigid institutionalism.

Beyond the sink incident, McMurphy's presence gradually reshapes the ward. He encourages the patients to assert themselves in small ways: to play basketball, participate in card games, and even take a memorable fishing trip.

But McMurphy's crème de la crème act of rebellion has to be his throwing a wild Christmas party in the ward, in which the once docile patients come alive to drink and dance.

When Nurse Ratched returns to find young patient Billy Bibbit (Brad Dourif) in bed with Candy (Marya Small), a prostitute McMurphy snuck in, the fallout is devastating.

Perhaps one of the few disappointments is the portrayal of women; the only women portrayed positively are McMurphy's two prostitute friends. The others work for the ward. While Rose (Louisa Moritz) and Candy are laid-back and unbothered by the patients' supposed insanity, they are hardly the picture of liberation.

**Nonetheless, the film's excellence has rightly been hugely celebrated. It is the second of just three films to win all five major Academy Awards (Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Actress, Director, and Screenplay). Louise Fletcher is particularly unforgettable. Her portrayal of the nurse coming undone is deliciously satisfying, but simultaneously hugely unnerving, as her counterattacks are sharp and cruel.**

Once Ratched can take no more, she medically strips McMurphy of his willpower by having him lobotomised. Chief Bromden's will, however, is no stronger than ever. Using great strength to remove the sink McMurphy once attempted to, he smashes a window.

Running into the misty horizon, he is the one that flew over the cuckoo's nest.





# The Life of a Capitaylist

## A Swiftie Reflects

*Tyler Wang*

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Taylor Swift is no stranger to criticism. At the time Reputation was released, in 2017, people even began to speculate that her career was over for good. From ‘Mean’ to ‘Shake It Off’, she’s never shied away from calling out “the haters” and rising above whatever gets thrown at her.

However, there’s something different about her new album, The Life of a Showgirl (TLOAS): the criticism isn’t just coming from the haters, but from the fans themselves. As a longtime Swiftie myself (as evidenced by my copious posters, CDs and t-shirts), I have never witnessed this level of disappointment expressed in her by fellow fans — until now. Even just speaking for myself, when I first listened to the full album, all that I could think was: “this is it?”

Many have ridiculed what they felt was lazy lyricism and mid musicality, using TLOAS as ‘evidence’ that Taylor really was an overrated, mediocre singer all this time. If you were to ask me (noting I’m biased), I’d give it around a 6/10; however, this is not an album review. Much can be said about the album itself — but what really went wrong was its release.

When I first heard the announcement of Taylor’s 12th album, my genuine reaction was: seriously? Not only had it been less than a year since the Eras Tour ended, but she’d already released The Tortured Poets Department — a double album, mind you — in 2024. I wasn’t particularly excited, but I still looked forward to hearing whatever her latest creation was.



Image Credits: RawPixel [Edited]

As soon as I heard she had released limited CD variants of the album, I — like many fans — rushed to get my hands on one (It’s Frightening, if you’re wondering). Each had different album covers, jewellery and prints — but of course, they all included the exact same songs. This marketing tactic isn’t new or exclusive to Taylor, but I didn’t expect that she’d go on to release a total of 40 variants (as of now): CDs, vinyls, cassettes and digital downloads.

Swifties have a reputation for defending Taylor in the wake of any scandal she finds herself cloaked in; I don’t find this to be entirely accurate. Every highly liked comment I saw on @taylornation’s posts announcing new variants came from disappointed fans, exasperated that they couldn’t bring themselves to defend her anymore. Many Swifties felt betrayed by this icon they thought they knew all too well, that she saw them as endless cash cows.

International fans were also let down by the lack of availability outside the US. Whenever a new product dropped, the UK and EU stores would sell out almost as quickly as tickets for the Eras Tour did and never get restocked. Meanwhile, the same items were still up for sale on the American website for much longer, almost implying a sense of fan favouritism.

There was a sense that something was missing from this album, that it didn’t feel like her — this Taylor was unrecognisable from the one we’ve grown to know and love. Some blame her fiancé for being unremarkable writing inspiration — unlike certain ex-lovers — but this gives too much credit to a song’s subject rather than its creator. Others pointed out the absence of Jack Antonoff, her longtime collaborator who’s worked on every T.S. album since 1989.



Pictured: Jack Antonoff

Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]



Parasocial relationships with celebrities exist in numerous fandoms, however the one many Swifties share with Taylor seems especially intense (yes, this is a self-report). It can be easy to dismiss her as “yet just another billionaire” — but for many Swifties, this is the woman whose music we grew up with. Being a Swiftie can become part of someone’s identity much like any other hobby or interest, we need go no further than our very own campus to see how friendships (and even love) can blossom from our shared appreciation for her music.

**Why would Taylor do something so controversial if she swears she doesn’t love the drama? At the end of the day, we need to remember that Taylor Allison Swift herself is just one human being. ‘Taylor Swift’ is not only a person, or even a brand: she is an entire industry.**

In ‘Father Figure’, (Track #4), Taylor clearly acknowledges this when she sings “this empire belongs to me”. She isn’t a one-woman army: she has entire teams behind her every (public) move. It’s unclear how much say she actually had over her marketing team in many of these poor decisions, such as the (now private) notorious AI-generated promotional videos.



Pictured: Taylor Swift  
Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]



Pictured: Billie Eilish  
Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

We can look to Billie Eilish, for instance, as a singer who uses her platform and influence for good, such as by actively addressing the environmental impacts of her world tours. Taylor could take inspiration from Billie here: if any singer can afford to offer sustainable, ethically made and affordable merch, it’s Taylor. As potentially the most famous singer of our time, Taylor could do so much more at so little cost to her — so it stings seeing her not even try.

Where do we go from here? It’s hard to say, especially when Taylor herself seems to try to shake off negative reactions to the new album as people being “haters” or misunderstanding her creatively, ignoring genuine, good-faith criticism. Nevertheless, if anyone is to hold her accountable and encourage her to do better, it won’t be her critics — it will be us, her fans.

However, none of this should absolve her from responsibility — even if she isn’t the sole mastermind behind these decisions, she undoubtedly still has a say in what goes on behind the scenes. As the very face of the brand, it’s hard to imagine that at least most of the creative processes wouldn’t need the green light from her before they make it out into the world. With her enormous status and influence, Taylor could and should actively choose to deviate from harmful business practices and set an example for others in the music industry.



# The Decline of the Left-Wing in Europe and America

## and Solutions to their Problems

*Alex Gold*

Introduction is a somewhat inadequate term for the presentation of a complex political issue – especially when the subject is as intangible as ‘The Decline of the Left-wing in Europe and America’. However, based on the title of the article, I suppose what you’re looking for is reassurance that I am of a similar political persuasion to my readership. I am a leftie through and through. I am your typical leftie, who argues endlessly with other lefties about how the world should be, and never does anything about it!

So you may question why I am so keen to tell you how awful the state of global left-wing politics is today, when I claim to be such a practiced leftie. But here’s the thing – if there’s one thing lefties love doing, it’s complaining about why no-one else seems to want to be a leftie. They are baffled by the flimsiness of the Nouveau Front Populaire, they stare blankly at the wreckage of the Democratic Party, and they are quick to pick apart the actions of a Labour government for whom they strived fifteen years to vote into power.

But I’m not going to be that person today. In this article, you will indeed find a rather bleak summation of the state of major left-wing parties in Britain, France and America. But you will also find solutions to the problems faced by these parties, which prove that there is hope, if only they listened to me! But why on earth would they listen to me?

The Labour Party under Sir Keir Starmer is just over a year in to its first spell in power since 2010, and already he is facing both external and internal criticism from the fellow lefties who previously considered themselves to be his allies. But how can I claim that the British left-wing is in decline, when the working majority of Starmer’s Labour in the Commons in an estimated 161 seats.

Ultimately, he is letting people down. During the election of last year, he encouraged the public to ‘Vote for Change’ and ‘Change’ quite simply hasn’t happened. He promised to lift the country out of its post-COVID economic stagnation, but lefties and righties alike are losing patience with him already. Tension over his stance on the conflict in Gaza, Winter Fuel payments, and the resignation of Angela Rayner have led a disillusioned electorate to seek populist alternatives like Nigel Farage’s Reform UK.

What can be done? Left-wing parties have turned on each other. The Greens don’t have a large enough following, Your Party is fledgling at best, and the LibDems have never really belonged to the Left at all. So, where can we find solutions to all these problems?

There is still time. The left-wing still has a minimum of four years of political power to turn things around. They may be 2-0 down after the first fifteen minutes, but there is still a lot of politics left to be played!

A coalition? Perhaps not. You will see in due course that our neighbours from across the Channel have tried it – and it is a disaster. But there is some merit in the idea of an informal electoral pact<sup>8</sup> between like-minded left-wing parties (i.e. standing one leftie candidate in each constituency to avoid splitting the vote in favour of the Tories or Reform).

Does Starmer need to become more transparent? Yes, absolutely! If Farage and the right are gaining support through their rhetoric on immigration, Starmer and the left need to talk about it too. Discussing immigration openly and honestly shows the public that the Left acknowledges everyday issues, as well as allowing the government to form their own narrative on the matter.

**Like it or not, the Left need to become more personable, transparent and pragmatic. The British public needs to be reminded that a Left-leaning government is ‘their only hope’.**

Image Credits: Igor Cvetković [Edited]





Where to start with French politics? We've all seen Président Macron blowing through prime ministers like he would a box of Celebrations<sup>TM</sup>, and it is always amusing to poke fun at our neighbours from across The Channel. However, behind all the punch-and-judy politics<sup>11</sup>, lies a seriously concerning state of political uncertainty – especially if you are a leftie, or un gauchiste<sup>12</sup> if you prefer!

The political situation in France can be defined by two simple issues. The first is the Nouveau Front Populaire<sup>13</sup>. The headline is that it doesn't work. It was doomed to fail, and is a pertinent example of the futility of left-wing coalitions. Comprising the five most popular left-wing parties in France, the NFP was formed in order to block a certain victory for Le Pen <sup>14</sup>, yet their inability to agree on a suitable presidential candidate has succeeded in providing the exact opposite effect!

The second issue is Le Pen herself, and the increasing popularity of her party the Rassemblement National<sup>16</sup>. In a rise to prominence eerily reminiscent of you-know-who in America, Le Pen's party received 41% of the vote in the 2022 présidentielles<sup>16</sup>. So despite being banned from public office for five years on charges of embezzlement<sup>17</sup>, the attention her party is gaining from the subsequent appeal hearings, is conveniently aided by Macron repeatedly shooting himself in the foot – by refusing to call Presidential elections.

The bleak reality is that Le Pen is the most likely candidate for Présidente de la République<sup>18</sup>, in the absence of a respectable candidate from the left, and the rapidly waning support for the current President (Where have I seen this before?). Her appeal hearings will only ever result in her acquittal, and we all know how the story goes from there!

And so La Gauche cries: 'Sacre bleu, Whatever can we do?'. Find a foil to Le Pen – a left-wing populist (who is not Jean-Luc Mélenchon<sup>19</sup>) and who can speak to the disillusioned French electorate in the same way that Le Pen and Bardella<sup>20</sup> are able. Stop squabbling amongst yourselves like children in a playground and prenez un grip! Because as the image below illustrates, we don't have long to prevent the image you see at the top of the page coming to fruition!

I'm going to approach American politics rationally and calmly – because I'm fed up of wondering HOW ON EARTH...??? (you know what I mean!)

So let's leave He Who Shall Not Be Named aside this time, and consider the failings of the Democratic party in recent years:

The Biden Administration was representative of everything that is wrong with the Democratic party. They mishandled the withdrawal from Afghanistan, they weren't transparent about their plans on funding for Ukraine, and they couldn't stimulate economic growth after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kamala suffered by mere association – though the fact that her popular vote in the 2024 election reached 70 million compared to His 73 million<sup>22</sup>, is a clear indication that America is as divided as it has ever been – and that its politics remains a true flip of the political coin!

The bottom line is that (much like in France), the Democrats need to fight right-wing populism with left-wing populism. That means a candidate from outside the political establishment, who can offer the 'Yes We Can<sup>23</sup>' attitude that was so successful under Obama. It would be futile for me to proffer a specific name, but when one looks at the Democratic party in 2025, all that can be seen are hypocritical career politicians. (Are we sure he is a leftie?)

Conclusion is a fallacy and a rare occurrence in politics. And to be honest, I am frustrated after writing this article. I am frustrated that Starmer's Labour aren't living up to the expectations of the millions who voted for him. I am frustrated that La Gauche is doing all but nothing to stop the rise of Marine Le Pen. I am frustrated that the shrivelled carcass of the Democratic party is being crushed under the heavy boot of Republicanism.

But THERE IS HOPE, and I apologise if I haven't made that apparent throughout this article. What can be done about it right now, this second? As is the case with most leftie discourse, nothing at all. This is a long-term vision of how Europe and America could and should be.

Above all, I sincerely hope that this vision resonates not only with fellow lefties, but with people around the world who care for others and for their own future...



# To Make an Honest British Past

*Jacob Pollard*

The History of Britain is one marked by a myriad of ideological hangovers, little are more insidious in the social consciousness than our colonial past. The presence of colonialism is one many of us have felt is a force that tries to make the British identity seem superior, whilst degrading many Brits who don't fit its racialised mould. If you visit nearly any historical sight in the UK, you will rightfully be placed face to face with the bloody truth which marks much of the material culture, artifacts and accounts related to Britain's influence throughout the rest of the world.

In a post-colonial era much work has been put into the process of decolonising the academic side of history. More work is being continued to ensure not only the presence of marginalised voices in the academic space but in providing accurate accounts of British history to ensure accountability. Within the social sphere however this wave of post colonial thought has been a lot more reserved.

Whilst many are aware of the colonial exploitation that has filled many of our museums and lined the pockets of our institutions, the process of coming to terms with that has been a greater struggle. With so much of our nation's 'modern' history tied up in imperialistic residue from exhibitions, to figures and landmarks it begs the question why these truths are some vehemently fought against.



Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

History is often a part of how national identity is formed. With the rise of far-right talking points, there is a threat that this post-colonial mission will be held back in a wave of racism and guilt led denial of the past.

These are dangerous times, and whilst museum exhibits may not be what people think as a pressing front of the ongoing political battle against fascism, events like Trump's attacks on institutions like the Smithsonian and news outlets like GB platforming guests that argue pro-colonial talking points about the so called 'improvements' empires brought showcase this wave of regression. It's these debates in a time of political turmoil in this country around national pride that it seems we must keep our past honest.



Image Credits: Flickr [Edited]

Multiple British historical sites have made the effort to not just present public exhibitions dealing with British involvement in the Slave Trade and general imperialism, but to be honest about the amount of their collections that were curated through colonial export. Whilst these efforts come as a good sign for the pursuit for historical transparency, there are still exhibitions and archival material which come from colonial plundering, or present a time of imperialist glorification. The jokes around the British Museum only holding stolen items and that those who pay to visit are simply paying to see what should be in their home nations is one which veils a very real issue.



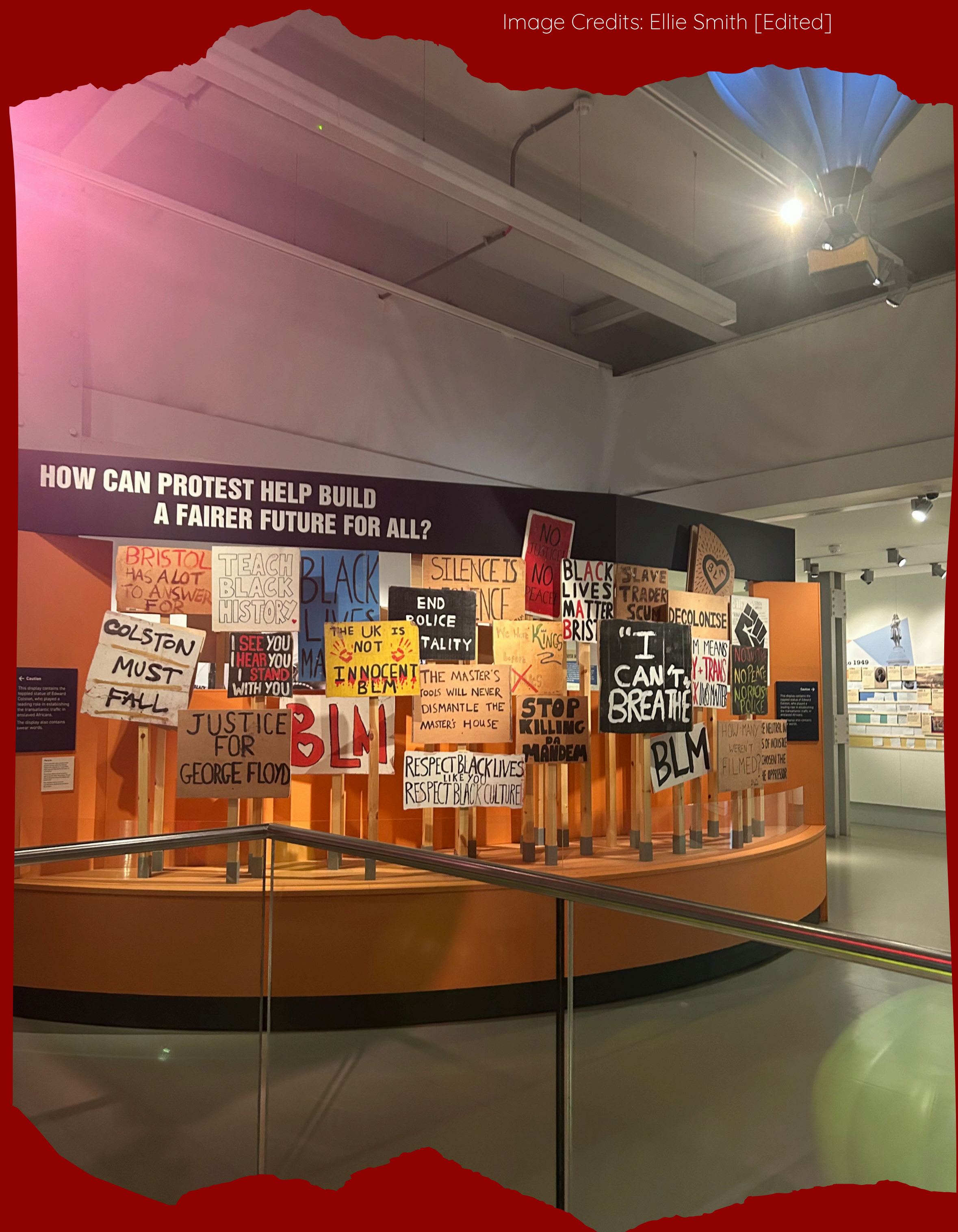
These jokes reveal a wider dissonance in public conversation around Britain's colonial past. They point to a broader refusal to engage seriously with this history, a refusal that often leads to dismissive questions such as 'Why does it matter where the historical exhibitions are?'. This mentality targets those who argue that cultural exhibits should be returned to the communities to whom they actually belong.

For us on the left, recognising the importance of this debate is essential. The curation and accumulation of other cultures has long played a large part in the systematic oppression of others, not in just the past, but with nations we have relationships with in the present. Colonialism is a double edge sword when it comes to its mental effect whilst much of the focus, rightly so, of the conversation on histories placement in the imperial project the oppression of others through continuing to withhold their material culture also forms the psyche of the society that the coloniser resides in.

The M-Shed Museum in Bristol became host to the torn down statue of Edward Colston after it was torn down in 2020. In a move which, to me, showed more honesty and integrity than most British historic institutions, the M-shed displays the now graffitied statue in a glass coffin in their exhibition of Bristol's involvement in the slave trade. When I saw it, I was moved to see a man that represented so much harm, not glorified, but exposed so that people could see him surrounded by messages both from those who live in the city, and those still living with the consequences of the history he helped shape.



Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]



The M Shed exhibition offers a blueprint for how we might move forward: by presenting these colonial figures as they truly were, and by showing how their actions remain tangible in the present.

The refusal to hold an open, honest conversation about Britain's colonial legacy, one free from distortions and bad-faith talking points, puts us at real risk of repeating the very injustices we should be learning from. However, in order to have these dialogues, our public channels of history (Museums, T.V and education) must be decolonised and showcase an active effort to point out the wrong doings of our nation's history.

Despite what some critics claim, exploring Britain's past does not make us unpatriotic, but instead allows us, and future generations to build a country on solid, truthful foundations, instead of hollow pillars of an imperial era.

If we fail to continue this necessary work in museums, debates and education, exploitation will continue. These imperial dog whistles will sound out louder. It is up to all of us to showcase that these truths won't be buried by the far right.



# There's no 'Pride' in Pinkwashing

## How LGBTQ+ Rights are Exploited to Distract from an Institution's True Colours

*Grace Smart*

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Picture this, it's the first of June, you're attending your first pride parade in your local city. Celebration and joy is in the atmosphere, and coming past you on an ostentatiously large float is Amazon, with employees from around the country gathering for a celebration of queer identity, which, for one of the richest companies in the world, is a major milestone for LGBTQ+ support. What you are not aware of, however, is that just 2 years ago Amazon contributed \$273,900 to 46 lawmakers and governors who sponsored or signed anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

This was then followed by the founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, along with other tech executives, attending Trump's inauguration in January of this year. He showed clear support for an administration that since coming into power has continuously pedalled abhorrent anti LGBTQ+ rhetoric. Particularly targeting the trans community, most recently, through attempting to ban 'X' gender markers on passports. Yet, Amazon has historically attended Pride events, even establishing its own employee affinity group for LGBTQ+ people known as 'Glamazon', demonstrating that beneath surface of acceptance that Amazon purports, their commitment to LGBTQ+ rights is deeply disingenuous.

This strategy is known as 'Pinkwashing' which describes the practice of using LGBTQ+ rights to present an organisation or nation as progressive and inclusive, in order to distract from, or legitimise, other harmful policies and practices. Another company guilty of this is Disney, being exposed in 2022 for making donations to sponsors of the "Don't Say Gay" bill, which prohibits any instruction in schools about sexual orientation or gender identity between kindergarten and third grade, and was ultimately passed by Florida's House of Representatives.

**It is in these circumstances that actions do truly speak louder than words, as no amount of merchandise displaying pride flags, with statements such as 'Love is Love' can compensate for the genuine attack on LGBTQ+ identities that companies like Disney and Amazon are actively facilitating.**

Furthermore, it is not only corporations that exploit the campaign for LGBTQ+ rights, arguably, it is the use of pinkwashing by nations themselves that have an extremely significant impact on the current geopolitical landscape, most notably, playing a vital role in the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

The term 'pinkwashing' itself was coined in 2010 by the group 'Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism' (QUIT), and therefore has inherent ties to the Palestinian Liberation movement. With its goal being to highlight the use of pinkwashing by the Israeli government as a means to invalidate Palestinian statehood which is what allows them to progress their colonial and genocidal agenda.



Image Credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]



Through pinkwashing, Israel places itself in contradistinction to the state of Palestine, depicting Palestinian identity as ‘exclusively and violently homophobic’, with Sa’ed Atshan, the author of *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique* stating that they “exploit global support for LGBTQ+ Rights to further an Israeli ultranationalist political agenda and legitimise the oppression of Palestinians”.

Israel has historically been more progressive than its geographical neighbours when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights, with policies such as barring discrimination based on sexual orientation, and recognising foreign same-sex marriage (despite it not being legal within Israel itself) and allowing for same-sex couples to adopt children.



Image Credits: Montecruz Foto [Edited]

Nevertheless, queer rights are still limited in Israel, and furthermore, it is once again a shroud to assist Israel in legitimising their colonial and genocidal mission, with Netanyahu exemplifying Israel’s attitude to LGBTQ+ rights perfectly during his speech to the United States Congress, stating that those holding signs saying “gays for Gaza” may as well refer to themselves as “chickens for KFC”. Netanyahu therefore suggests it is somehow paradoxical for one to be queer and also support Palestinian liberation, delegitimising the identity of both queer Palestinians and queer supporters of the pro-Palestine movement in order to garner support for their state.

This rhetoric that is espoused by the Israeli state also attempts to change the foundations that the queer liberation movement was built on, these foundations being that no marginalised group can ever truly be free until every marginalised community is free.

Therefore, it is inherent within the LGBTQ+ rights movement to collectively support those who are fighting for the same liberties and freedoms we have historically fought for as a community. Anything less than that betrays the individuals and groups that sacrificed so much of their life to deliver these freedoms.



Image Credits: Montecruz Foto [Edited]

Additionally, in its most sinister and manipulative form of pinkwashing, the Israeli government took to social media, posting an image of an IDF soldier stood in front of buildings that had been susceptible to Israeli airstrikes, holding up a pride flag, with the caption “The first ever Pride flag raised in Gaza,”.

It is the absolute depravity of this act that once again illustrates how pinkwashing can be utilised to attempt to justify some of the most horrific acts that humanity has ever had the misfortune of being subject to. For the Israeli government to use queer Palestinian identity as a tool of war, I find absolutely deplorable, ultimately demonstrating that to them, queer rights are no more than a pawn in their sadistic game, in which they only win if the Palestinian identity itself ceases to exist.

Ultimately, it is imperative that as a community, we do not allow pinkwashing to manipulate our perception of a company’s or nation’s values. As is exemplified through the actions of corporations such as Amazon and nations such as Israel, they continue utilise pinkwashing as a tactic to further their authoritative and nationalistic agenda. Therefore, through campaigning against pinkwashing, and actively calling it out when we recognise institutions doing it, we are participating in the liberation of various marginalised groups, fighting against the forces of homophobia, colonialism, nationalism and ethnic cleansing and ultimately rallying against the actors that seek to oppress us in society.



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