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The Rise and 'Fall' of White Supremacy, the Culture Wars, and the Gleam of Diamond Joe

There's no doubt that 2020's been mind-boggling. I saw Match.com's latest "Satan and 2020" commercial and it somehow accurately summarized my whole impression of the year in 30 seconds. However, while it may be a little cynical, what I oddly appreciate most about this year is that it was a collective experience. I mean, the pandemic was a revelation for the world, and even the world itself pried its eyes on the marvel that was the election.

But for us Americans, in an elegant manifold of dexterous elements, both uncontrollable and from our own ambivalence, we watched American society perform a grand spectacle of transformation, division, abrasion, collision, and sadly but surely, decay glimpsed over the horizon. With that said, the premise of this assignment seemed to be righteously fitting of the current state of reality.

I'd say that race, class, and gender are indeed part of those aforementioned "dexterous elements", but to that extent, they are of course fluctuating and constantly intertwining with one another. And in the wake of a national issue or threat, one could feel rather skeptical to assume that it would be pervaded solely through the guise of one element. For instance, a racial matter is unlikely to ever just be a racial matter. It could also be a personal matter, and maybe even a little bit of a spiritual matter, but almost always, it's a political matter.

That's not the surprising part. I mean, this is America: the melting pot of the world. No matter how distinct and unique one's beliefs may be, it just seems naive to assume that it hasn't

already been taken for public discourse in some variety. But what's interesting isn't when a racial matter becomes a political threat or issue, it is when a political matter becomes the main perpetrator of a racial issue or threat, and often in the exact same manner as it would for class or gender

And more specifically, in our democratic society, I believe it is the self-conscious element of public discourse itself that is so often tied to the contrived nature of politics. But now, the much needed question is why. Why does our democracy never truly sound like the voice of its people? How can politics seemingly be so weaponized against the very elements that it was created to embrace?

The beauty of such a question is that there isn't one simple answer. In actuality, there's countless. It's a perspective, and in its purest form, I think that's what politics truly is, a moral foundation for making our perspective public, and with any luck, sovereign. Very often may we feel indignation, or simply just a sense of bad taste from its conduct. But still, we look to it in hopes of finding affirmation for our values and being, whoever and how many we may be.

But alas, as I think Shakespear wrote some time ago, "*There's the rub*". For it is in this hopeful stare where I fear the humble American runs the risk of becoming potentially mesmerized, if not completely enthralled. Perhaps this is why politics seems so weaponized? More often than not do I question the ability of our nation's political camps to provide prospective that truly reflects the affirmations of the people, rather than that of its own agency

But of course, the task at hand is to understand my affirmations, *my contextualization*, of what current ideologies and grievances the political sphere has available. To be frank, politics has always made me sad, or rather, I always found it to be melancholic, and even a little shallow at times. Especially now, never could I refer to it as a true representation of American idiosyncrasy. But maybe I myself was naive for never assuming there was always a fundamental difference between American society and politics.

The Rise and 'Fall' of White Supremacy

Trump lost the presidential election. Good job, everyone. It was a fine example of large-scale teamwork and now we are promised the marvel of prospering democracy. Palpatine was finally thrown into the core. I mean, he's still zapping lawsuits up the shaft. But, who cares, he's a lame duck now. But sadly, Stormtroopers all over the galaxy will soon look up to see a tiny little bloop in the sky, dramatically taking off their helmets to ask the begging question, "What about the empire?".

On March 27, 2019, congress passed the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act as a combative against the rising surge of white supremacy within the nation, documented by several sanctions such as the Government Accountability Office and of course, the FBI. The first article of section II states "White supremacists and other far right-wing extremists are the most significant domestic terrorism threat facing the United States" (Congress, S. 894)

But just as fascinating, article II of that same section takes a direct quote from Thomas Cullen, District Attorney and Department of Justice Official within the Trump Administration, who himself attested to the significantly growing rates of violence from far right-wing extremist groups throughout the past 25 years, and with rather sluggish response from law enforcement. (United States, Congress, S. 894)



Remember the animosity of the first presidential debate? Remember the awkwardness of Chris Wallace's stammering exchange with President Trump about denouncement of white supremacy? (See Appendix A)

I remember sitting next to my republican roommate as we watched NBC News' Savannah Guthrie get heated with Trump about QAnon (NBCNews.com), or as I like to call it; *the modern McCarthy*. The cascade of mixed emotions that night was honestly immaculate. Like thank the stars I was taking an ethics course at the time so I could fully appreciate the existential cynicism we were emanating.

We just thought it was so stupid, all of it. But more than that, we were embarrassed. Embarrassed by not only how far from grace our beloved union had fallen, but also by what other countries thought. A couple weeks after the primary debate, I remember reading an NPR piece by Matthew Schwartz titled, "*Is This American-Style Civilization?: World Reacts To Presidential Debate*". In it, Schwartz provided a methodic discussion of TV anchors all over from the UK to Israel, condemning the election, and altogether American life, with condescending acuity.

In many capacities, more than embarrassed, it made me scared. I don't want my country to look like the pitiful school goof, just waiting to get his lunch money looted from susceptible bullies. And I *really* don't want to think about what would happen when said bullies realize that they aren't going to get that money without a fight, albeit one that is allegedly in their favor.

Perhaps some aspect of this is why I feel so uneasy about Biden's new presidency. There's just a very unusual dynamic permeating throughout that administration that makes me truly question its sustainability. Alas, we shall come to this later. Instead, I simply want to caution that any serious legitimization of this unusual dynamic, this *pitiful school goof*, within our new administration would no doubt come to be a fatal omen for foreign diplomacy.

Just one day after the first presidential debate, the Global Times, an English-translated tabloid under the coordination of the Chinese Communist Party, released an article called “Chaotic Trump-Biden debate shows 'recession of US influence, national power’”.

The second paragraph of the article is a report by “Chinese analysts”, which claims that the “keywords shown on most U.S. and other countries' mainstream media outlets, as well as comments on social media outlets, about the debate include: embarrassment, disgrace, awful, mess and chaos.”(Global Times).

How does one actually begin to contextualize such a dramatic and immersive turn of events? Well, like I said before, there's several different approaches to come from. If I was thinking purely politically, maybe I'd be inclined to think that such scrutiny is only in lieu of some sort of long-waiting penance finally sought on the United State's slippery history of foreign diplomacy.

But if I was thinking consequentially, perhaps I'd say that, begrudgingly, and even with trepidation, everything kind of makes sense. Like, imagine the awe in my face when I saw breaking news about white supremacy when I had just submitted a class essay about its structural prevalence a week prior. The point being is that crucial discussions of race, class, religion and gender have been well established now, but unfortunately only seem to become relevant in the wake of political revolutions like the election. I mean, it's either that or the bigwigs of Academia have better fortune-telling ability than the Simpsons, which is highly unlikely.

However, if my notion were to be correct, then wouldn't that mean crucial discussions of race, class, and gender could just as equally be considered handy tools for politicians and political camps seeking notoriety? Well, this is most likely true for the Trump administration at least. And right now, there is no handier tool for such a nefarious ambition than the deployment of the “Us vs. Them” mentality (See Appendix A).

According to NPR, it's called the “Man Card” (Khalid), but that should just contribute to the overall egregious abuse and effect it has for civil bearings. It's affirmation and perspective in

its absolute worst form: fanservice. It's false comfort knowing that if you're one of us, a Trump supporter, then you are part of the family: a natural whit- winner. But... if you are "them", *not one of us*, then my friend, what you are is fucked. Inferior, marginalized? Maybe, but fucked seems just perfect, because it's the predestined proof that you were never really worthy of the family, *our family*.

Of course, in a very blatant sense, this is what privilege looks, and more definitely, what the perpetration of classism looks. In her article, "Classism: Why Should We Care?", Rose Garrity argues that it is the ability to participate within a mythology "that each individual bears personal responsibility for his or her economic position, and that there are no systems and laws in place that help maintain strict class division in our country" (160).

Jeez, imagine having to deal with four years of that. But seriously, my question still remains, what's going to happen to the empire, and furthermore, will it strike back, eventually? I tend to think so. The DeathStar was destroyed and all Palpatine can do now is tweet, but still, where does all that clone-like, preprogrammed animosity go? Where are all those violent disruptions of race, gender, and class that even allowed the empire to first bear life? I think they'll still be there, rampaging across the country like silent fires. So what more fitting name is there for such a dreadful and anticlimactic period than the notorious Clon- I mean, Culture Wars!



**CULTURE
WARS**

The Culture Wars

“The Culture Wars” shouldn’t really be a new term to anyone in retrospect, it’s self-implicative: a *war between cultures!* And even more, I feel as though it is something that has always been on the backburner of American media.

One of my favorite shows is currently the Amazon Prime release, “The Boys”. And besides the fact that the show is based on amazing dystopian, superhero thematics, what made it truly iconic was that it was a clear political reference to the facistic behavior consistently permeated through sanctions of the Trump Administration, and especially through the not-so-subtle guise of white supremacy (See Appendix B).

In that show, my favorite quote was spoken by StormFront, a century old,

Neo-Nazi, sociopathic superhero, whose name is coincidentally a reference to the internet’s oldest white supremacist website that was recently shut down in 2017 (Reeves). With ample alacrity, she said to 11 year old, docile Ryan, “We are in a war for our culture!” (Knupper).

I mean, StormFront was a genderswapped, millennial depiction of Adolf Hitler, and one who just so happened to be a social media moogle in the exact same affinity as Trump. But no matter how you look at it, every ounce of her character was devoted to the effective normalization of facism in a modern society. And so, with the successful portrayal of her role as a destructive villain, shouldn’t we as an audience be free to compare and contextualize such implications along with the success of our even more nefarious president?



Participants of the Culture Wars

In her Ebook, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas*, Irene Taviss Thomson documents a methodic analysis of over 400 articles that were published between 1980 and 2000, all emphasizing on pervading issues relating to latent concepts of the Culture War, albeit, “nuanced and riddled with internal disagreement” (Thomson 2). But what I found to be especially compelling about the analysis was Thomson’s contextualization of the culture wars within a parameter of intrinsic cultural patterns.

And according to Thomson, “These patterns are a matter not of stable values but rather of a series of dilemmas that are revisited as new issues or situations invoke them” (38). It goes without saying that class, gender, and race would be categorized within these series of revisited dilemmas, and furthermore, I would make a daring claim that the Trump administration could itself be considered the perfect catalyst for invoking such dilemmas.

In the year 2020 alone, I believe a very prominent amount of social activism from matters of class, gender, and race have drastically risen in several distinct capacities, especially and most notably in defiance to the mystified notions of Americanism that are realized under the Trump Administration.

Black Lives Matter

It would be nearly impossible to discuss the issues actively facing the political realm without acknowledging the unprecedented influence heralded by BLM (See Appendix B)

Origins of culture wars first arose in the late 1960’s when oppositions to dogmatic beliefs were first perceived as “counterculture” (12). According to Thomson, this was a transitional state for the people, especially the marginalized,



because it finally allowed for the normalization of a “heightened awareness of culture itself and those who seek to shape it” (12).

Personally, I believe it is this righteous desire for cultural awareness that best defines the influence Black Lives Matter currently possesses in today’s environment, especially in wake of the now victorious election. But to that extent, I’d also argue that such a growth of influence was, at least by conventional means, inevitable.

Again, looking at it consequently, were we just to assume that on the day flocks of Africans were first abducted and thrown into slavery, things would just systematically continue to work like that forever? So many times do I wonder just at what point did the American forefathers begrudgingly consent to the fact that if they allowed those flocks of Africans to live within the confines of America, that at one point or another, they’d become more than just commodities?

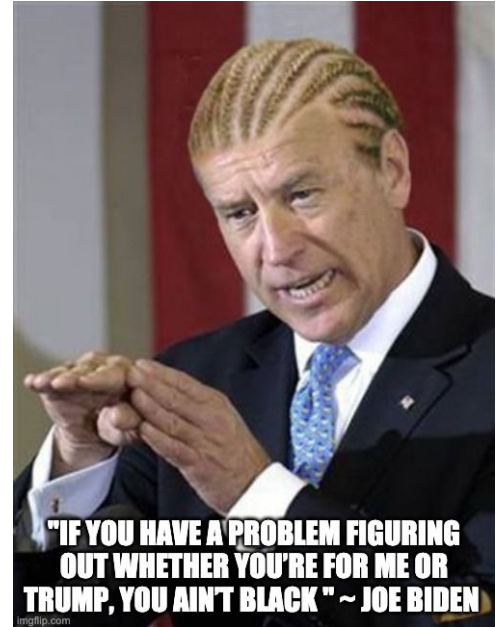
And for the newly enslaved, I ask, was such a yearn for a sense of cultural awareness even possible or imaginable, or rather, was it just tragically subverted by daunting influences similar to that of double-consciousness? For as W.E.B. Du Bois wrote, “The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, --a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world” (Belle 289).

The Glean of Diamond Joe

Needless to say, the Biden Administration can hardly be compared to the Trump Administration and its overt exploit of social matters as a means to satisfy political agency. That being said, I nonetheless have concerns about the Biden Administration that make me feel dubious about future American politics. The most prominent being one that I mentioned

previously in this paper: Biden and Kamala really do just radiate unsettling vibes sometimes.

I remember when I found out how Joe Biden got accused of voter intimidation through memes on YouTube, which itself was proof that his remarks were ridiculous enough to be deemed profitable by content creators (See Appendix C). Being the lead rival, the ‘Symbol of Hope’ if you will, to the tyranny that is the Trump administration, I just can’t help but imagine the audacity and/or raw ignorance needed to say something so contradictory.



As Paris Dennard put it in his USA Today opinion piece, *Joe Biden questions my blackness one moment, defends racist 1994 crime bill the next*, “No 77-year-old white man from Delaware has the right, authority or rationale to question my blackness or the blackness of millions of Americans exercising our God-given right to be free” (Dennard).

As the name implied, Dennard then went on to scrutinize Biden’s discussion of the controversial 1994 crime bill, featured in the following segment of his interview with radio show, “The Breakfast Club”, to which Dennard adds, “Biden literally tried to convince black America that our communities weren’t destroyed, black families weren’t ripped apart, and black wealth was not stifled for generations because of a bill he designed.” (Dennard).

Now would be an excellent time to note that Paris Dennard himself is an interesting figure to discuss. Being both a Black writer and avid Trump supporter, I should admit that I find his disposition to be slightly perplexing, and happen to take the tone by which he condemns Biden with an abnormally large grain of salt. Nonetheless, several of his discussion points were considerably substantial and seemingly found solidarity with other prominent figures within the black community.

This includes backlash from BET co-founder, Bob Johnson, who directly replied to the interview, “This proves unequivocally that the Democratic nominee believes that black people owe him their vote without question; even though we as black people know it is exactly the opposite. He should spend the rest of his campaign apologizing to every black person he meets,” (Dennard).



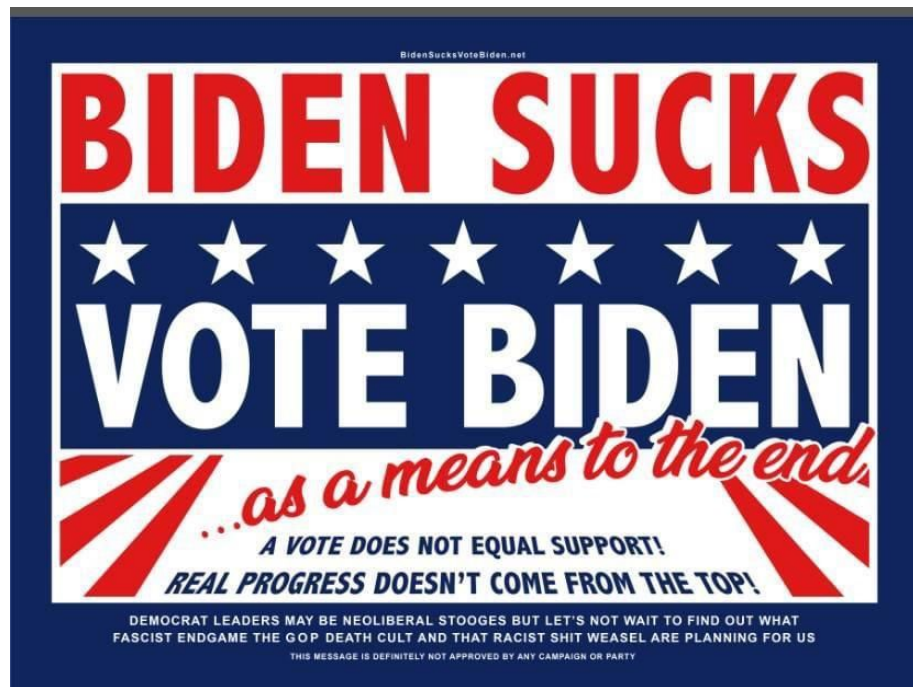
In a statement released to CNN directly following Breakfast Club’s interview with Biden, Charlamagne the God, host of the Breakfast Club, said himself, “He really was one of the people on the front lines when it came to the war on drugs, and mass incarceration. If he wants to be president, he needs to fix that,” (Bradner).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that briefly following the interview, Biden himself gave a public apology. “I should not have been so cavalier. I’ve never, never, ever taken the African American community for granted,” said Biden. He continued with an additional call to the advocacy group, USBlackChambers (See Appendix C), to which he added “I shouldn’t have been so cavalier. ... No one should have to vote for any party based on their race, their religion, their background.” (Wu).

Final Remarks

Like I said, I have some dubious reservations about the character and virtue of the Biden Administration that I believe can be empathized by many within the country, especially by Young America and apparently by both republican and democrat perspectives. But nevertheless, I strongly consider him the preferred choice of the election simply on the grounds that he is not Donald Trump.

It's difficult to actually contextualize the dichotomy between the leadership of Biden and Trump, rather, what is really difficult is trying to subjectively describe the relationship that both have within our culture. But truth be told, I think this is a daunting reality that has slipped past the curtains of mainstream consciousness for quite some time now. I think of it almost like a veil of



cynicism, or perhaps nihilism? Well, it's definitely satire at least. Say what you will about Barack Obama, but the etiquette alone that man exhibited was, and still is, enough to make our two most recent presidents look like walking, talking cartoon characters.

But if I were to take a moment to refrain from my somewhat hypercritical contextualization of Joe Biden, I'd conclude by saying I can see how Biden would be typified as a conventional "smartass", ironic in the heaviest pretense considering his age. And furthermore, I believe this alone could surely jeopardize the credibility of Biden's new presidential role, especially in regards to his ability to address the dilemmas and revelations constantly perpetrating elements of class, gender, and race.

Alas, for it is this fragile credibility by which I caution the Biden administration must protect and preserve in the most drastic sense. And to go with that, I'd further warn that any deviance from this perception as well as unknowing resemblance to President Trump's despised rhetoric could altogether result in a fatal consequence for the sustainability of Biden's administration.

In other words, Trump did a lot of damage, and matters of race, gender, and class are all now left with a grand array of dilemmas. With that said, I believe “Biden’s Plan”, as his website calls it, is a promising facet of American politics because, as of right now, it boldly acknowledges these matters seemingly in a way that directly defies the cultural ambivalence cast over from our most recent presidency.

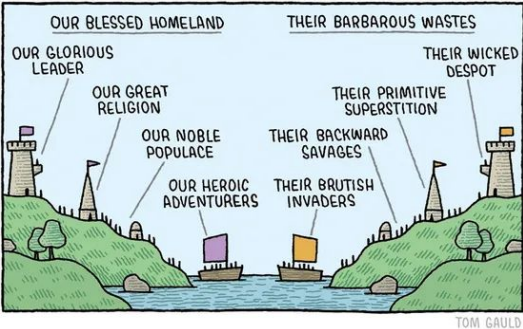
And so, if Biden’s administration has any hopes of reversing said damage, it is crucial that they appear to the world as shrewd operators of democracy, and are absolutely incumbent towards the prevalence of a culture that is both unequivocally fair and just in all matters of class, race, and gender.

Appendix A: The Rise and 'Fall' of White Supremacy



Ballotpedia, https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_debates,_2020

The first presidential debate took place in Cleveland, Ohio, on September 29, 2020. Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland Clinic co-hosted the event. Fox News' Chris Wallace moderated.



Economic and Social Research Council, <https://esrc.ukri.org/about-us/50-years-of-esrc/50-achievements/social-identity-us-and-them/#:~:text=The%20theory%20suggests%20that%20the.group%20or%20out%2Dgroup>

Proposed in 1979 by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, Social Identity Theory is a process of social categorization by which “we decide which social group people belong to: 'us' or 'them' (the in-group or out-group). This is followed by social identification where we adopt the identity of a group and adjust our behaviour accordingly; and social comparison where we compare our groups with others.”

Appendix B: The Culture Wars



Amazon, <https://www.amazon.com/The-Boys-Season-1/dp/B07QNJCXZK>

The story follows the concept of superheros abusing their powers for self-gain as opposed to becoming benefits to society. The Boys adequately capture undertones of domination, commodification, and elitism to the point where the show can be seen as a deliberate reflection of current political conditions. More notable contextualization of white supremacy becomes apparent in season 2 as the show gradually develops a facist-themed plotline.



Black Lives Matter, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes

Appendix C: The Gleam of Diamond Joe



You Tube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMPnbcluJbQ>

Created by “Upside Down Creative Media, the video is one of hundreds that promotes the hashtag #YouAintBlack. The song is surprisingly well produced and offers a prominent illustration of the tense exchange between Biden and the Breakfast Club



USBlackchambers, <https://usblackchambers.org/usbcs-mission/>

Their mission: The U.S. Black Chambers, Inc. (USBC) provides committed, visionary leadership and advocacy in the realization of economic empowerment. Through the creation of resources and initiatives, we support African American Chambers of Commerce and business organizations in their work of developing and growing Black enterprises.

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