



Eliminationists: How Hate Talk Radicalized the American Right

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The Eliminationists describes the malignant influence of right-wing hate talk on the American conservative movement. Tracing much of this vitriol to the dank corners of the para-fascist right, award-winning reporter David Neiwert documents persistent ideas and rhetoric that champion the elimination of opposition groups. As a result of this hateful discourse, Neiwert argues, the broader conservative movement has metastasized into something not truly conservative, but decidedly right-wing and potentially dangerous.

By tapping into the eliminationism latent in the American psyche, the mainstream conservative movement has emboldened groups that have inhabited the fringes of the far right for decades. With the Obama victory, their voices may once again raise the specter of deadly domestic terrorism that characterized the far Right in the 1990s. How well Americans face this challenge will depend on how strongly we repudiate the politics of hate and repair the damage it has wrought.

Eliminationists: How Hate Talk Radicalized the American Right Details

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David Neiwert**

From Reader Review **Eliminationists: How Hate Talk Radicalized the American Right** for online ebook

Helen says

This was an interesting, straightforward book written in 2009 about how right wing extremist talk (such as that of "entertainers" on radio and TV) has gradually seeped into the mainstream GOP, and the future dangers of "eliminationist" talk insofar as such talk many times precedes violence. He identifies the emergence of fascism with the disillusionment of an electorate with the existing political parties. Some say Trump hasn't yet declared himself dictator because of the North Korea issue - he cannot throw the country into potential chaos by declaring himself dictator as long there is a threat of war. His election - running against the mainstream GOP & the Democratic Party -- though, eerily matches the author's description of what it takes for a fascist government -- espousing eliminationist goals -- to gain control of government.

Little did Mr. Neiwert realize - ten years ago - that the virulent right-wing thugs would eventually actually elect a "champion" in Donald J. Trump. Although the book has no particular style, it's often prescient, considering what happened since its publication. It's also very useful in supplying several historic examples of eliminationism in the US, vs. the American Indians, African Americans, and Asian (Chinese and later, Japanese) immigrants.

The quotes:

"...one of the most troubling aspects of modern American politics: the impulse to demonize our political adversaries, and the consequences of that demonization on our discourse and our body politic."

"The eliminationist project is in many ways the signature of fascism...because it proceeds naturally from fascism's embrace of...a Phoenix-like national rebirth, as its core myth."

"I was struck between the similarity between [Daniel Jonah] Goldhagen's description [in his book "Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust"] of the buildup to Nazi power and the rhetoric and behavior of Americans for the 40 or more years preceding the internment toward Asians generally and the Japanese specifically."

"[Eliminationist] ...speech is being bandied about in every cultural bandwidth -- from talk radio, to the local press and in letters to the editor, to blogs and national mainstream media."

"Figures such as Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, Ann Coulter, Lou Dobbs, and Glenn Beck routinely engage in it and fuel the flames with bogus stories -- nonsensical conspiracy theories and outrageously inflammatory misinformation -- derived from fanatical far-right sources."

"...when you have a nationally prominent platform -- you have not only the freedom of the press as your ally but a responsibility to the public as your burden."

"Eliminationism has always been a signature trait of fascism, the manifestation of its embrace of the myth of national rebirth through the fiery destruction of the existing order."

"The conspiracist element often commingled with deeply religious beliefs of an apocalyptic nature..."

"Randy and Vicki Weaver, the protagonists of the notorious 1992 Ruby Ridge standoff, moved to Idaho from Iowa after being radicalized by a combination of apocalyptic fundamentalism and far-right conspiracy theories."

"...dualism, or the division of reality into a "godly" spiritual realm, in which lies the "perfect," and a corrupt material world, which is "profanity, unconsciousness, and death."

"Almost anyone you talked to in rural America was embittered by their hatred of the "gummint" in nearly all its forms, particularly the federal one."

"Limbaugh might claim that he's merely being critical of government, but his rhetoric goes beyond such acceptable (in fact, desirable) robust political speech; it argues for the overthrow and dismantling of the system itself."

"...one of the nation's leading Patriot figures: Richard Mack, then sheriff of Arizona's mostly rural Graham County... usually sprinkled his "constitutional" gun-rights thesis with his theories on church-state separation -- a "myth" -- and "the New World Order conspiracy."

"[Mack's] ...claims that church-state separation is a myth resonated nicely with the theocratic right-wing crowd..."

"...the neo-Confederate movement. This band of Southern revivalists unabashedly argues for modern-day secession by the former Confederate States."

"...the militias' issues -- gun control, tearing down the United Nations, fighting "globalism"..."

"[Former MSNBC commentator Michael] Savage is particularly gifted at presenting overly racist appeals in soft wrapping, so that his listeners know what he means, even if he can't be pinned down for it later."

"The most significant part of the [Free Republic] Web site's reach though, is the kind of following it has created."

"...readers [of right-wing sites] are treated to a steady diet of bilious posts about Muslims and liberals, and the results are predictable: the site's comments threads are rife with expressions of hate toward Arabs and other Muslims, as well as threats and general bile directed at "treasonous" Democrats."

"The other major organ that transmits right-wing memes is the Moonie-owned newspaper, the Washington Times..."

"...for the past decade and more, and particularly since 2005, the mainstream conservative movement has become a more and more comfortable home to a variety of right-wing xenophobes, who formerly were relegated to the Right's outer fringes."

"Sociologists Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins describe the Patriot movement and its millenarian relatives as "exemplary dualist movements": those that appeal to people with an extreme black-and-white, dualist worldview."

"As Anthony and Robbins note, susceptibility to authoritarianism increases during periods of social chaos such as we have had since the 9/11 terrorist attacks."

"...in America, the chief meeting ground for right-wing dualism and the authoritarian personalities is attracts is well-known: fundamentalist Christianity."

"Most disturbing about the Bush administration, however, was not merely its devout corporatism but the way it used religion in the service of the corporatist agenda."

"Fundamentalist Christianity is among the most clear-cut expressions of a Manichean dualism in American society."

"Karen E. Hoppes, a graduate student at Western Oregon State College, wrote extensively about [the 1930s crypto-fascist mystical "philosopher" William Dudley] Pelley in the 1980s: "The Christian fascist does not distinguish between the application of the terms anti-Christ, Jew and Communist."

"[Hoppes:]...the link with Christianity provided a unifying element for the membership in American fascist organizations."

"The uniquely American Christo-fascism was always limited in its reach, but not entirely short-lived, even though Pelley eventually was convicted (on dubious grounds) of sedition in 1942."

"Annually, right-wing extremists within our borders are responsible for a sizable number of crimes."

"[In 2000]...the Bush campaign made unmistakable appeals to neo-Confederates in the South Carolina primary, underscored by his speaking appearance at the ultra-conservative Bob Jones University, a school that had long resisted desegregation."

"Conservatism, in its original state, is not a dogmatic philosophy but rather a style of thought, an approach to politics and life in general."

"The traits 20th century fascism and 21st century conservatism share include an obsession with action for action's sake; the exaltation of instinct over intellect, and of tradition over progress; the insistence by both that they represent the "true" national identity; and the violent rejection and desire to eliminate both foreign enemies and internal ones, the latter being those deemed toxic to the national body politic."

"...the Southern Strategy initially deployed by Richard Nixon in 1968 and 1972. Its long-term effect was to transform the GOP from the party of Lincoln to the party of Strom Thurmond, from a bastion of progressivity on race to the home of neo-Confederates who argue for modern secession and return to white supremacy."

"Fascism was explicitly antidemocratic, anti liberal, and corporatist, and it endorsed violence as a chief means to its ends."

"Fascism arose...at first mostly in rural areas; then it spread to the cities, and if we look at those origins, it becomes clear that similar forms already exist in America."

"The first attempts to study fascism were largely conducted from a Marxist point of view, which predictably explained it primarily as a reaction against the "communist revolution."

"Many of these early studies, not surprisingly, reduced fascism to an aggressive form of capitalism."

"[Stanley] Payne's work...focused on the 'fascist negations': anti liberalism, anticommunism, and anti-conservatism (though with the understanding that fascist groups were willing to undertake temporary alliances with groups from any other sector, most commonly with the Right)."

"[Roger] Griffin [in his 1991 book "The Nature of Fascism"] ...essentially managed to boil fascism down to a basic core he calls "palingenetic ultra nationalist populism." (Palingenesis is the concept of mythic rebirth from the ashes, embodied by the phoenix.)

"[Griffin:] "Fascism rejects liberal ideas such as freedom and individual rights, and often presses for the destruction of elections, legislatures, and other elements of democracy."

"The fascist core that emerges is [as Griffin writes] "its only permanent feature: the war against the decadence of society and the struggle for national rebirth."

"...fascism historically has arisen in the context of democracies in a state of decay..."

"...although [mainstream GOP figures'] nationalistic and populist tendencies are well-known, both are mitigated to a great extent by their general refusal to partake of the conspiracy theories, Antisemitism, and other forms of irrational, fringe thinking common to right-wing populists."

"Fascism, according to some who have studied it, is a kind of "political religion" -- that is, it coalesces around a "sacralization of politics" that acts as a substitute faith for its followers."

"[As Robert O. Paxton wrote in his 2005 study "The Anatomy of Fascism:"] Fascism can appear wherever democracy is sufficiency implanted to have aroused disillusion."

"Fascism is not a single, readily identifiable principle but rather a political pathology, best understood (as in psychology) as a constellation of traits."

"...[Paxton] ... describes the centrality of emotion -- and not any intellectual forebears -- as forming the basic structure on which the fascist argument rests, because fascism is built not on ideas but, as he puts it, on "subterranean passions and emotions."

"...democratic institutions are seen as presenting obstacles to the effective defense of the nation..."

"...figures like Patrick Buchanan, Bill O'Reilly, and Lou Dobbs warn against the Latino and third-world "avalanche" that they fear will overwhelm "white culture" in America."

"..."national unity"...can only be achieved by a complete subsuming of American politics by the conservative movement, the creation of essentially a one-party state."

"...right-wing rhetoric...is...innately violent, and moreover permissive about the use of violence..."

"...beneath the conservative mask lies a deeply radical, mostly reactionary, agenda."

"Paxton emphasizes that fascism is almost exclusively a result of the failure of democracy, and for this reason, only appears in formerly democratic states."

"The Klan was about much more than mere racism. It wished to enforce -- through violence, threats, and

intimidation -- what it called "traditional values" and 100 percent Americanism."

"[David Chalmers, in his book "Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan" writes:] ..."anti-Catholicism"...more than anything else ...made the Klan."

"Philip Dray, in his book about the history of the lynching era, "At the Hinds of Persons Unknown"...[writes:] "As the organization served as a kind of enforcement group for godly values many clergymen became Klan members or boosters. Jesus Christ himself, it was said, would have been a Klansman."

"For a while the Klan was immensely popular, bolstered particularly by D.W. Griffith's film "Birth of a Nation," which was an homage to the Klan..."

"...on August 18, 1940, several hundred robed Klansmen gathered near Andover, Maryland, on the grounds of the German-American bud's Camp Nordlund with a contingent of uniformed Bundsmen, at which one of the Bund officials proclaimed: "The principles of the Bund and the principles of the Klan are the same." As it happened, the Bund at the time was being funded and operated by Hitler's Nazi party."

"In the early 1950s, the Brown v. Board of Education ruling ordering the desegregation of Southern schools actually produced a second revival of the Klan..."

"In the ensuing years, [the Klan] ...has remained the implacable enemy of civil rights not merely for blacks but for any minority, including gays and lesbians."

"As Paxton observes, "The ascendant liberalism of FDR effectively squeezed the life out of the nascent fascist elements in the U.S.," in no small part because Roosevelt effectively shared power with the Right, which thus had no incentive to form a coalition with fascists."

"...[rural America]...is where the Patriots built their popular base."

"[The 1995] Oklahoma City [bombing] was the signature event of a wave of right-wing terrorism that struck America in the 1990s, derived wholly from an ideological stew of venomous hate that has since been seeping into mainstream conservatism."

"The Patriot movement that inspired Tim McVeigh and his cohorts, as well as the other would-be right-wing terrorists who followed him, derives almost directly from overtly fascist elements in American politics."

"The militia movement was only one strategy of the broad coalition of right-wing extremists who call themselves the "Patriot" movement, which also included an array of tax protesters, "constitutionalists," antiabortion extremists, anti-environmentalists, various conspiracy theorists, and the movement's core of religious white nationalists."

"The Minutemen have similarly spouted both Patriot-style New World Order conspiracy theories and their own special brand of xenophobic conspiracism -- notably, the claim that Latino immigrants are part of a grand "reconquista" plot by Mexico to reclaim the southwestern United States."

"The mutability of truth is what has made confronting the conservative movement feel so maze-like, because factuality in its hands is like clay; you never know what bizarre arguments they're going to come up with next."

"...this "created" reality more often than not has only a passing resemblance to factual reality..."

"Even at the micropolitical level, during debate, the famous conservative carefulness, politeness, and reserve has vanished."

"[As Paxton explains]...fascism is not dependent on any written truths, but is "true" only "insofar as it helps fulfill the destiny of a chosen race or people or blood."

"...fascist leaders exulted in the fact that they had no rational policy program."

"To the fascist leader, diplomacy is a parlor game of the weak; what counts is the raw will of the man of action."

"If enough of the natural barriers that keep fascism at bay in a democratic society break down, then the half-formed hologram of fascism takes on substance and becomes the real thing."

"Some white supremacists welcomed Obama's ascendancy because they saw it as likely to fulfill their fantasies of unleashing an open race war in America."

"...hate groups and other extremists, including neo-Nazis, have been making actual inroads into the ranks of the military."

"We run the risk of re-creating the conditions that arose in Germany and Italy after World War I: the presence of scores of angry, disaffected, and psychologically damaged war veterans poised to organize into a political force aimed at "re-birthing" the nation and its heritage."

"In a 1992 piece for "Discover," Jared Diamond estimated that at the time of Columbus's arrival, the native population of North America was some 20 million. Within a century or two, it had declined by 95 percent."

"...the massacre of the Pequots in Mystic, Connecticut, in 1637...included the immolation of scores of women and children."

"When George Washington waged war on the Iroquois in 1779, it was nothing less than a war of extermination..."

"The entire program of Indian relocation ...was fraught with bad faith throughout."

"...the wave of murderous bigotry...swept away ...the Indians...bigotry fueled by the prevailing view of Indians that equated them with the beasts [the whites] ...encountered in this wilderness."

"Treaty after treaty turned out to be mere ruses for outright land theft."

"[In California] Women and children [of the Yana tribe] were slain as ruthlessly as men."

"And always these spasms of eliminationist violence were preceded by eliminationist rhetoric."

"The mounting misery of the scattered remnants of tribes produced among them a last, dying spate of messianic movements promising some hope of redemption for their people and their heritage."

"[In Oklahoma in the 1920s:] The scheme, which became known as the "Osage Reign of Terror," typically involved white men marrying women who held the [land] rights then having them killed and their murders officially covered up."

"[Theodora] Kroeber notes [in her book "Ishi: In Two Worlds"] that [even]...Robert A. Anderson, who led the extermination of the Yana observed retrospectively in his memoirs the following: "As in almost every similar instance in American History, the first act of injustice, the first spilling of blood, must be laid at the white man's door."

"At the turn of the century, the Indians were no longer a threat to white Americans, and so the eliminationist rhetoric was gradually replaced with romantic "noble savage" mythology, which made them seem distant and harmless, as they had become."

"...the violent eradication of the native population...occurred under the pretense of waging war, which itself was merely a pretext for taking land."

"If the status of black slaves largely protected them from racial violence before the Civil War, the abolition of slavery left them remarkably vulnerable to such assaults after the South's defeat."

"Francis Butler Simkins's 1927 study of the South Carolina Klan pointed out that the Klan's campaign was "against the Negro as a citizen -- one attempting to be a voter and at times, the social equal of other men..."

"Sexual paranoia -- rooted in long-held Christian European notions about sexuality that associated it with sinfulness, with the "muck" of nature and the wilderness -- was central to the lynching phenomenon."

"White supremacy was not only commonplace, it was, in fact, the dominant worldview in the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries."

"...in the South...blacks became a convenient scapegoat for the poverty that lingered in the decades following the Civil War."

Ellen says

Very good, though the first few chapters seemed repetitive. I would've liked it a bit more had Neiwert covered the history first and then moved into the modern-day stuff. Neiwert's also seems quite compassionate and not ready to lay the blame on any large group of people for the behaviors of a few. The book is thoroughly researched and has an extensive list of endnotes.

Favorite quote:

"In the South, whites chose to deal with blacks by oppressing them; in much of the rest of the country, white communities simply eliminated their presence altogether. And by making the South the nation's racial scapegoat, it allowed those communities to smugly pretend that they had no such strife to face, and thus were not part of the problem. As a consequence, there has never been an adequate accounting of the long-term effects of the wide-spread exclusion of African-Americans, and resulting demographic segregation, enforced by whites nationally. And thus the unsettled legacy of racism, in the South and elsewhere, continues to be a wound in the national psyche that refuses to heal." (175)

Brian says

The Eliminationists is an important examination of the state of American political discourse and right-wing ideologies in this country in the early 21st century. Neiwert does an admirable job of examining the history of what he calls eliminationism in America (see Ch. 8) and using that history to explain how we've gotten to where we are today.

I think this book does two main services:

1. It provides readers with a clear understanding of the nature of both eliminationism and one of its specific manifestations: fascism (see Ch. 6). This is incredibly important after the term "fascism" has been used and abused by both the Left and the Right for decades. Neiwert's deconstruction of the nonsensical, factually incorrect assertion that fascism is somehow a "left-wing" movement is especially apt.
2. It illustrates that eliminationism has existed, both overtly and under the surface, since well before the founding of the United States. As such, creeping extremism and the seeds of fascism can indeed threaten any democracy or republic, including America, unless its citizens remain vigilant and fight back with reason, respect, and firm resolve. The author does this without hysterically claiming that the American Right has already entered a fully realized fascist condition.

In spite of the value of this book, I think it is missing some essential elements that perhaps a second edition could address. First, many of the facts and examples are repetitive and don't add value to the overall text; this is likely a result of poor editing. Second, I think the subject matter of the individual chapters could be tied together better; currently, there are sections of the book that strike me as being a hodge-podge of important information that is lacking in coherence. Third, Neiwert needs to better define the terms he bandies about; a simple glossary at the end of the book could solve this problem.

For more context of many of the events and history that Neiwert mentions in *The Eliminationists*, I recommend three books: *A Force upon the Plain: The American Militia Movement and the Politics of Hate* by Kenneth Stern; *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and the Radical Right* by Daniel Levitas; and *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. For an in-depth look at the personal, human consequences of extremism and the mainstreaming of campaigns of hatred, see Neiwert's excellent *Death on the Fourth of July*.

Brent Uzzell says

David's purpose for the book seems to be: 1) hold up a mirror to our political discourse and make the case that violent rhetoric can provoke violent action 2) remind us of our historical propensity for utilizing violence to eliminate the unwanted and 3) respond to the increasing use of "Nazi" and "Fascism" epithets by directly addressing Jonah Goldberg's book "Liberal Fascism".

David draws heavily on the academic work of Robert O. Paxton (Columbia), Roger Griffin (Oxford Brookes University) and James Alfred Aho (Idaho State). Here's how he builds his case:

Chapter 1: Explores how language and ideology which used to be confined to the political fringes has become mainstream.

Chapter 2: Explains how this migration from fringe to mainstream happens.

Chapter 3: Discusses the principal personalities responsible for mainstreaming extremist rhetoric in media, religion, and via the internet.

Chapter 4: Discusses the comingling of the radical right with mainstream and the growth of black/white, us vs. them thinking.

Chapter 5: Argues that the conservative movement has morphed into extremism.

Chapter 6: Follows the taxonomy of Fascism as described by Robert Paxton (see *The Five Stages of Fascism*) to describe how Fascism is understood by academics and directly challenging the book by Jonah Goldberg that Fascism is a political movement of the extreme left.

Chapter 7: Builds on Chapter 6 to explore how the rhetoric of today's right lends itself toward Fascist ideation and growing militarization.

Chapter 8: Discusses the history of the elimination of people deemed "enemy" in US history. Here he covers the history Native Americans, African Americans, Chinese and Japanese. Regrettably he doesn't discuss the expulsion of Mexican Americans from the Southwest following Texas independence and the forced deportation of Mexican Americans during the Great Depression of the 1930's, an episode of which few are aware.

Chapter 9: Discusses the current uses of "eliminationist rhetoric" by the political right.

Chapter 10: Concludes the book by arguing that a virulent and violent type of Fascism can "happen here" and pleads for the return of civility to political discourse. Drawing on Martin Buber and James Aho he warns of the ways we demonize political opponents and calls on all of us to adopt Buber's I-Thou relationship in dealing with one another as human beings as opposed to objectified "others".

Recommendation: Chapters 6-8 seemed to me to be the heart of the book and are well worth the read. I especially appreciated the discussion of what Fascism truly is and share David's concern with the increasing violence of our political discourse. Violent speech can and does legitimize violent acts in the mind of many. Undoubtedly the historical discussion of Chapter 7 will be news to many and is worth the price of the book all by itself.

Another really great read which could have contributed meaningfully to David's case, particularly in the first 4 chapters, "Argument Culture" by linguist Deborah Tannen. Lastly, for a thorough discussion of the history of the various ethnicities (David's Ch. 8) see this excellent work; "A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America" by historian Ronald Takaki (UC Berkeley).

Pat says

After the heated and crazy health care town halls of this past summer, I wanted to read books that would help me put the insanity in a context I could understand. This book helped do just that. Like "Idiot America" (ISBN 978-0-7679-2614-0), this book provides some historical and cultural context for the right-wing backlash that has followed eight years of a horribly failed GOP presidency and the election of America's first Black president.

I found the book easy to read and very engaging (but I suppose I'm a political science geek).

Peter Mcloughlin says

The trends described in this 2008 book have magnified and spread to a sizable chunk of the body politic. This book is on the money its diagnosis of where we are and where we are likely going. It is a good book examining the rise of a proto-fascist and para-fascist growth in militia movements and the eliminationist rhetoric and deeds on the hard right. Also how this has captured conservatism and the Republican party. It might have been harder to spot in 2008 but today its conclusions are unmistakably obvious. The only problem with the book is that is a bit repetitive and has a lot of unnecessary filler.

Dan O'connell says

Neiwert grew up in Idaho, knew John Birchers, and covered the Christian Identity and Patriot Movement in the 80s/90s. He looks at the state of the far right in 2008, and how Limbaugh and Hannity and Beck have convinced many on the right that the US polity has been poisoned by Liberals, and that they need to be eliminated from society. He wrote this before the Tea Bag movement sprung up, but he shows the underlying ideas and emotional reactions that led to this movement. Also nicely covers eliminationism in US history - the anti Chinese hysteria in California in the 1890s, the Northern suburbs that effectively kept out any blacks from living there (the main reason Northern black communities 50 years ago were all in cities, and many other historical links to the current right movement.

Rita says

There were at least three different concepts in this book which definitely enlightened me and gave me food for thought. The most important was the theme of the book which is the way in which traditional conservatives have become radicalized, sometimes unconsciously, by the hate spewed and supported systematically by groups that most of us would consider splinter groups. This is all too obvious when one thinks about it.

Another concept was the historical trace of groups in this country which have become targets to be eliminated, yes, forcibly, over the course of this country's history. I realized how I had been exposed to such ideas in my youth although my exposure had not been extreme.

The most difficult concept to really understand is one which I thought I understood already - that of facism. I realized that most of my understandings were based upon generalized thoughts of Nazism and not really upon facism at all. I am still trying to internalize the real meaning of facism and how it builds and affects one.

Jim says

Are you perplexed by the seemingly sudden rise of angry right wingers advocating the death of liberals? Do you wonder how much influence Rush Limbaugh has in the country? Are you puzzled by people should take Ann Coulter seriously? Then read David Neiwert's book, and have it all spelled out for you in great detail. Neiwert looks at the rise of eliminationism in the US, how it spread from the far right to mainstream punditry, and what can be done to resist its influence. An amazing and informative read.

Louise says

Neiwart has a good thesis, but it's as though his editor said, "this is not enough... add more pages".

Neiwart begins with observations from his childhood in Idaho and his early career covering the right wing militia groups for which Idaho has been known. He was in a unique position to get a close up view of the fringe elements of the far right. He watched this more closely than most of us who wonder how it got so extreme that one day we noticed a Fox News pundit suggesting that candidate Obama should be assassinated.

The thesis is that conservative media's talk and news shows give a mass audience for the ideas once only circulated in circles of extreme, and sometimes criminal, elements of the right. Mainstream conservatives, who see the denigration of liberals either to their liking or advantage, either tacitly accept or amplify the message. Today's rhetoric directed against liberals and Democrats is dehumanizing and sometimes signals the acceptability of violence. Now it's common to hear prominent Democrats, liberals and even the President of the US called traitors and terrorists and hear veiled threats under the guise of news.

Neiwart suggests that mainstreaming these incendiary messages leads to violence such as that against abortion providers, liberal churches and the US government (Oklahoma City being one example).

The discussion of the eliminationist streak in American history and fascism in general is where the narrative breaks down. Neiwart shows how eliminationism and hate talk have been in the country since its founding. His arguments on the treatment of Native Americans, former slaves and immigrants are supported by long quotes. The examples he gives, some of which are interesting (such as the description of "sundown towns") are so fragmented in selection that they detract from the important material.

I would like to see this re-done with less text devoted to history and the long quotes on fascism summarized. I'd like to see some research incorporated. For instance, John Dean's book *Conservatives Without Conscience* informs a lot of this. The points made there and the research behind it are highly relevant.

Nancy says

Neiwart sells himself short in the titling of this book, which is so much more than a treatise on the hate machine. He delves deeply into history, philosophy, and psychology while maintaining a readability that makes it difficult to put the book down.

The author's comprehensive overview of fascism is especially relevant in these times, when the term is so overused as to become meaningless. A full two chapters are devoted to dispelling the myth that we are fully in the grip of a fascist regime - thus far. Yes, we are on that path, but Neiwart makes it clear that it is not an inevitable end; we CAN stop our descent.

My copy, purchased new, is now dog-eared, underlined, highlighted - and will maintain a permanent spot in my library. Kudos to David A. Neiwart for his excellent research, his ability to present complex, nuanced concepts in a very readable format, and his optimism.

Paul says

This book was published in 2009 prior to the rise of Facebook and Trump and already feels outdated. Yet, its basic premises remain convincing. It's too bad that few people paid attention to this phenomena and that hate promotion has gotten worse in less than a decade.

Bill Kerwin says

This is a vigilant examination of how embryonic fascist language--what Neiwert terms para-fascism--is endemic not only on the fringes of the right wing, but also permeates the language of the establishment conservative media (Fox, Limbaugh, Malkin, Coulter, etc.). Neiwert is particular good at recognizing and displaying the sort of eliminationist language once characteristic of Rwandan radio--utterances describing the opposition (in this case liberals) as subhuman vermin and viruses that cannot be reasoned with, but which instead must simply be destroyed.

The book does have its flaws: a colorless style, a viewpoint devoid of irony, and a fifty-page "brief" history of eliminationism that only briefly touches para-fascist rhetoric--Neiwert's strong suit--and instead consists primarily of still yet another wearying catalog of WASP crimes.

Still, all in all, this is a valuable book, worth a perusal, if not a close reading.

Kelly says

Almost a decade after it was written, I decided to finally pick this one up and give it a go. The main focus of the book is vital, interesting, and desperately in need of thoughtful analysis: the historical roots of "eliminationism" in American political rhetoric. Mr. Neiwert falls short of his promise.

The meat-and-potatoes of this topic should be—or at least I *expected* it to be—focused on media, argument, rhetoric, and the like. Instead, Mr. Neiwert decides to talk about the most prominent human-rights abuses of American history. This is unsatisfying and weak. There are great histories of slavery, the Indian Wars, and the like—read those instead. He also spends an inordinate amount of time on fascism as a political ideology—an exercise that is as misguided as it is facile.

Almost a year on, and a year into the Trump administration, it's certainly interesting to check back in with some "current events" from days-gone-by. Some of the observations are prescient, but mostly they're just dated. The beauty of history is that it's smarter than prophecy and the quality of "current events" analysis is directly proportional to the author's grasp of history. This author is a pretty good journalist, but he's not a particularly good historian.

Finally, this book was essentially an amalgamation of blog entries. That admission (delivered in the acknowledgements) explains a lot.

Phil says

A somewhat repetitive review of the corrosive influence of hate speech on the denizens of the right wing in America. Basically it traces the source of the principle of Eliminationism back to the early settlers in America as well as to early 20th century Fascism. It's an interesting point and it is made well, it's just made over and over and over again.
