

## THE FEARFUL AND THE FRUSTRATED

*Donald Trump's nationalist coalition takes shape—for now.*

BY EVAN OSNOS

On July 23rd, Donald Trump's red-white-and-navy-blue Boeing 757 touched down in Laredo, Texas, where the temperature was climbing to a hundred and four degrees. In 1976, the *Times* introduced Trump, then a little-known builder, to readers as a "publicity shy" wunderkind who "looks ever so much like Robert Redford," and quoted an admiring observation from the architect Der Scutt: "That Donald, he could sell sand to the Arabs." Over the years, Trump honed a performer's ear for the needs of his audience. He starred in "The Apprentice" for fourteen seasons, cultivating a lordly persona and a squint that combined Clint Eastwood on the high plains and Derek Zoolander on the runway. Once he emerged as the early front-runner for the Republican Presidential nomination, this summer, his airport comings and goings posed a delicate staging issue: a rogue wind off the tarmac could render his comb-over fully erect in front of the campaign paparazzi. So, in Laredo, Trump debuted a protective innovation: a baseball hat adorned with a campaign slogan that he recycled from Ronald Reagan's 1980 run for the White House—"Make America Great Again!" The headwear, which had the rigid façade and the braided rope of a cruise-ship giveaway, added an expeditionary element to the day's outfit, of blazer, pale slacks, golf shoes—well suited for a mission that he was describing as one of great personal risk. "I may never see you again, but we're going to do it," he told Fox News on the eve of the Texas visit.

When Trump announced his candidacy, on June 16th, he vowed to build a two-thousand-mile-long wall to stop Mexico from "sending people that have lots of problems." He said, "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." Three of the statements had no basis in fact—the crime rate

among first-generation immigrants is lower than that for native-born Americans—but Trump takes an expansive view of reality. "I play to people's fantasies," he writes in "The Art of the Deal," his 1987 memoir. "I call it truthful hyperbole. It's an innocent form of exaggeration—and a very effective form of promotion."

Trump's campaign announcement was mocked and condemned—and utterly successful. His favorability among Republicans leaped from sixteen per cent to fifty-seven per cent, a greater spike than that of any other candidate's debut. Immigration became the centerpiece of his campaign. "Donald Trump has changed the entire debate on immigration," Rush Limbaugh told his listeners last month. As the climax of events in Las Vegas and Phoenix, Trump brought onstage Jamiel Shaw, Sr., whose seventeen-year-old son was killed, in 2008, by a man who was in the country illegally. Trump stood by while Shaw told the crowd how his son was shot.

Before departing for Laredo, Trump said, "I've been invited by border patrols, and they want to honor me, actually, thousands and thousands of them, because I'm speaking up." Though Trump said "border patrols," the invitation had in fact come from a local branch of the border-patrol union, and the local, after consulting with headquarters, withdrew the invitation a few hours before Trump arrived, on the ground that it would not endorse political candidates. Descending the airplane stairs, Trump looked thrilled to be arriving amid a controversy; he waded into a crowd of reporters and described the change of plans as the handiwork of unspecified enemies. "They invited me, and then, all of a sudden, they were told, *silencio!* They want silence." Asked why he felt unsafe in Laredo—which has a lower crime rate than New York City or Washington, D.C.—he invoked another "they": "Well,

they say it's a great danger, but I have to do it. I love the country. There's nothing more important than what I'm doing."

Trump was now going to meet with city officials instead of with the union. He disappeared into one of seven S.U.V.s, escorted by a dozen police vehicles—a larger motorcade than Mitt Romney merited as the Republican nominee. He passed shopping malls, churches, and ranch houses with satellite dishes in the front yard. Some drivers waved; others stared. A car had been positioned along the route with a sign across the windshield: "MR. TRUMP, FUCK U."

He reached the World Trade Bridge, a trucking link to Mexico, where he stepped inside an air-conditioned building for a half-hour briefing. He emerged to talk to reporters, and, after pausing to let the cameras set up, resumed his event. He was asked, "You keep saying that there's a danger, but crime along the border is down. What danger are you talking about?"

Trump gave a tight, concerned nod. "There's great danger with the illegals, and we were just discussing that. But we have a tremendous danger along the border, with the illegals coming in."

"Have you seen any evidence here to confirm your fears about Mexico sending its criminals across the border?"

Another grave nod. "Yes, I have, and I've heard it, and I've heard it from a lot of different people."

"What evidence, specifically, have you seen?"

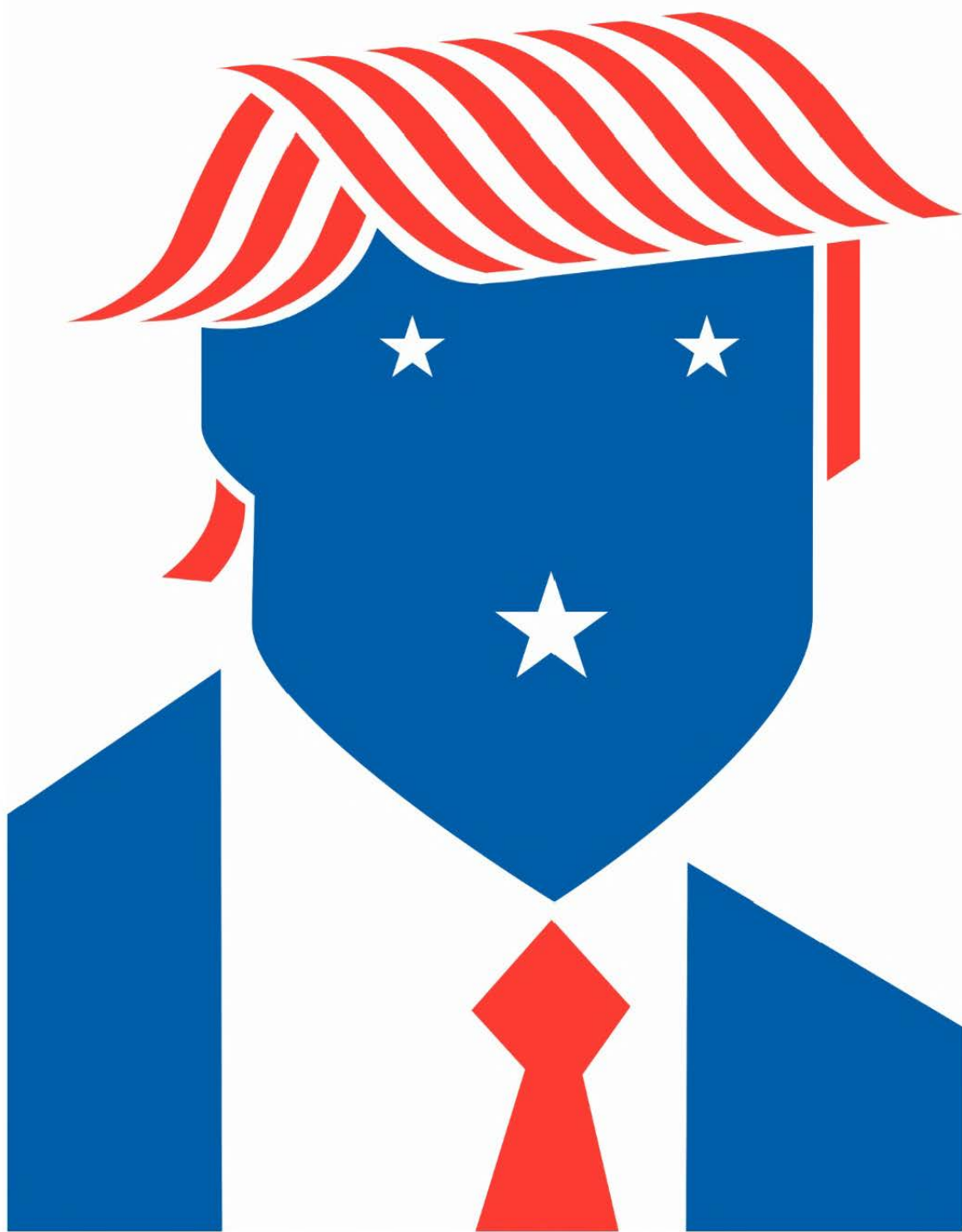
"We'll be showing you the evidence."

"When?"

He let that one pass.

"What do you say to the people on the radio this morning who called you a racist?"

"Well, you know, we just landed, and there were a lot of people at the airport, and they were all waving American flags, and they were all in favor



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of Trump and what I'm doing." He shrugged—an epic, arms-splayed shrug.

"They were chanting against you."

"No, they were chanting for me."

"What would you do with the eleven million undocumented immigrants who are already here?"

"The first thing we have to do is strengthen our borders, and after that we're going to have plenty of time to talk about that." He thanked everyone and retreated to the S.U.V.s.

On the way back to the airport, Trump stopped at the Paseo Real Reception Hall, where his supporters had assembled a small rally; guests were vetted at the door to keep out protesters. I sat beside a Latino family and asked the father what had attracted him to the event. He said that a friend involved in the border patrol had called him and asked him "to take up the spaces." He'd brought five relatives. I asked what he thought of Trump's politics. He paused and said, "I like his hotels." Trump told the group, "I don't think that people understand the danger that you're under and the talent that you have. But I understand it." When he opened the floor to questions, José Diaz-Balart, an anchor for Telemundo and MSNBC, said, "Many feel that what you said, when you said that people that cross

the border are rapists and murderers—"

Trump cut him off: "No, no, no! We're talking about illegal immigration, and everybody understands that. And you know what? That's a typical case of the press with misinterpretation." His supporters jeered at the reporter, and Trump shouted over the jeers: "Telemundo should be ashamed!"

Diaz-Balart said, "Can I finish?"

"No, no. You're finished," Trump said. He did his thank-yous, flashed thumbs-up signs, and headed for his airplane.

What accounts for Donald Trump's political moment? How did a real campaign emerge from a proposition so ludicrous that an episode of "The Simpsons" once used a Trump Presidency as the conceit for a dystopian future? The candidate himself is an unrewarding source of answers. Plumbing Trump's psyche is as productive as asking American Pharoah, the winner of the Triple Crown, why he runs. The point is what happens when he does.

In New Hampshire, where voters pride themselves on being unimpressed, Fred Rice, a Republican state representative, arrived at a Trump rally in the beach town of Hampton on an August evening, and found people waiting patiently in a two-hour line that stretched

a quarter of a mile down the street. "Never seen that at a political event before," he said. Other Republicans offer "canned bullshit," Rice went on. "People have got so terribly annoyed and disenchanted and disenfranchised, really, by candidates who get up there, and all their stump speeches promise everything to everyone." By the night's end, Rice was sold. "I heard echoes of Ronald Reagan," he told me, adding, "If I had to vote today, I would vote for Trump."

To inhabit Trump's landscape for a while, to chase his jet or stay behind with his fans in a half-dozen states, is to encounter a confederacy of the frustrated—less a constituency than a loose alliance of Americans who say they are betrayed by politicians, victimized by a changing world, and enticed by Trump's insurgency. Dave Anderson, a New Hampshire Republican who retired from United Parcel Service, told me, "People say, 'Well, it'd be nice to have another Bush.' No, it wouldn't be nice. We had two. They did their duty. That's fine, but we don't want this Bush following what his brother did. And he's not coming across as very strong at all. He's not saying what Trump is saying. He's not saying what the issues are."

Trump's constant talk of his money, his peering down on the one per cent (not to mention the ninety-nine), has helped him to a surprising degree. "I love the fact that he wouldn't be owing anybody," Nancy Merz, a fifty-two-year-old Hampton Republican, told me. She worked at a furniture company, she said. "But the industry went down the tubes." Her husband, Charlie, used to build household electricity meters at a General Electric plant, until the job moved to Mexico. Now he parks cars at a hospital. Trump, in his speech, promised to stop companies from sending jobs abroad, and the Merzes became Trump Republicans. They are churchgoers, but they don't expect Trump to become one, and they forgive his unpriestly comments about women. "There are so many other things going on in this country that we've got to be concerned about," Nancy said. "I've seen a lot of our friends lose their houses."

Trump's fans project onto him a vast range of imaginings—about toughness, business acumen, honesty—from a continuum that ranges from economic and

libertarian conservatives to the far-right fringe. In partisan terms, his ideas are riven by contradiction—he calls for mass deportations but opposes cuts to Medicare and Social Security; he vows to expand the military but criticizes free trade—and yet that is a reflection of voters' often incoherent sets of convictions. The biggest surprise in Trump's following? He "made an incredible surge among the Tea Party supporters," according to Patrick Murray, who runs polling for Monmouth University. Before Trump announced his candidacy, only twenty per cent of Tea Partiers had a favorable view of him; a month later, that figure had risen to fifty-six per cent. Trump became the top choice among Tea Party voters, supplanting (and opening a large lead over) Senator Ted Cruz, of Texas, and Governor Scott Walker, of Wisconsin, both Tea Party stalwarts. According to a Washington Post/ABC News poll conducted last month, the "broad majority" of Trump's supporters hailed from two groups: voters with no college degree, and voters who say that immigrants weaken America. By mid-August, Trump was even closing in on Hillary Clinton. CNN reported that, when voters were asked to choose between the two, Clinton was leading fifty-one per cent to forty-five.

In Hampton, I dropped by Fast Eddie's Diner for the breakfast rush. "He has my vote," Karen Mayer, a sixty-one-year-old human-resources manager, told me. Already? "Already," she said. Her husband, Bob Hazelton, nodded in agreement. I asked what issue they cared about more than any other. "Illegal immigration, because it's destroying the country," Mayer said. I didn't expect that answer in New Hampshire, I remarked. She replied, "They're everywhere, and they are sucking our economy dry." Hazelton nodded again, and said, "And we're paying for it."

When the Trump storm broke this summer, it touched off smaller tempests that stirred up American politics in ways that were easy to miss from afar. At the time, I happened to be reporting on extremist white-rights groups, and observed at first hand their reactions to his candidacy. Trump was advancing a dire portrait of immigration that partly overlapped with their own.

On June 28th, twelve days after Trump's announcement, the Daily Stormer, America's most popular neo-Nazi news site, endorsed him for President: "Trump is willing to say what most Americans think: it's time to deport these people." The Daily Stormer urged white men to "vote for the first time in our lives for the one man who actually represents our interests."

Ever since the Tea Party's peak, in 2010, and its fade, citizens on the American far right—Patriot militias, border vigilantes, white supremacists—have searched for a standard-bearer, and now they'd found him. In the past, "white nationalists," as they call themselves, had described Trump as a "Jew-lover," but the new tone of his campaign was a revelation. Richard Spencer is a self-described "identitarian" who lives in Whitefish, Montana, and promotes "white racial consciousness." At thirty-six, Spencer is trim and preppy, with degrees from the University of Virginia and the University of Chicago. He is the president and director of the National Policy Institute, a think tank, co-founded by William Regnery, a member of the conservative publishing family, that is "dedicated to the heritage, identity, and future of European people in the United States and around the world." The Southern Poverty Law Center calls Spencer "a suit-and-tie version of the white supremacists of old." Spencer told

me that he had expected the Presidential campaign to be an "amusing freak show," but that Trump was "refreshing." He went on, "Trump, on a gut level, kind of senses that this is about demographics, ultimately. We're moving into a new America." He said, "I don't think Trump is a white nationalist," but he did believe that Trump reflected "an unconscious vision that white people have—that their grandchildren might be a hated minority in their own country. I think that scares us. They probably aren't able to articulate it. I think it's there. I think that, to a great degree, explains the Trump phenomenon. I think he is the one person who can tap into it."

Jared Taylor, the editor of *American Renaissance*, a white-nationalist magazine and Web site based in Oakton, Virginia, told me, in regard to Trump, "I'm sure he would repudiate any association with people like me, but his support comes from people who are more like me than he might like to admit."

From the beginning of the current race, the conservative establishment has been desperate for Trump to be finished. After he disparaged the war record of Senator John McCain, the New York Post gave him a front-page farewell—"DON VOYAGE"—and a *Wall Street Journal* editorial declared him a "catastrophe." But Trump carried on—in part because he had activated segments of the electorate that other candidates



"He moved to Berlin to pursue something creative he would be bad at here."



could not, or would not. On July 20th, three days before his trip to Texas, Ann Coulter, whose most recent book is “¡Adios, America! The Left’s Plan to Turn Our Country Into a Third World Hellhole,” appeared on Sean Hannity’s show and urged fellow-Republicans to see Trump’s summer as a harbinger. “The new litmus test for real conservatives is immigration,” she said. “They used to say the same thing about the pro-life Republicans and the pro-gun Republicans, and, ‘Oh, they’re fringe and they’re tacky, and we’re embarrassed to be associated with them.’ Now every one of them comes along and pretends they’d be Reagan.”

From the pantheon of great demagogues, Trump has plucked some best practices—William Jennings Bryan’s bombast, Huey Long’s wit, Father Charles Coughlin’s mastery of the airwaves—but historians are at pains to find the perfect analogue, because so much of Trump’s recipe is specific to the present. Celebrities had little place in American politics until the 1920 Presidential election, when Al Jolson and other stars from the fledgling film industry endorsed Warren Harding. Two decades ago, Americans were less focussed on paid-for politicians, so Ross Perot, a self-funded billionaire candidate, did not derive the same benefit as Trump from the perception of independence.

Trump’s signature lines—“The American dream is dead” and “We don’t have victories anymore”—constitute a bitter mantra in tune with a moment when the share of Americans who tell Gallup pollsters that there is “plenty of opportunity” has dropped to an unprecedented fifty-two per cent; when trust in government has reached its lowest level on record, and Americans’ approval of both major parties has sunk, for the first time, below forty per cent. Matthew Heimbach, who is twenty-four, and a prominent white-nationalist activist in Cincinnati, told me that Trump has energized disaffected young men like him. “He is bringing people back out of their slumber,” he said.

Ordinarily, the white-nationalist Web sites mock Republicans as Zionist stooges and corporate puppets who have opened the borders in order to keep wages low. But, on July 9th, VDARE,

## SOME SAY

Some say a host  
of horsemen, a horizon  
of ships under sail  
is most beautiful &  
some say a mountain  
embraced by the clouds &  
some say the badass  
booty-shakin’ shorties  
in the club are most  
beautiful and some say  
the truth is most  
beautiful dutifully singing  
what beauty might  
sound under stars  
of a day. I say  
what they say  
is sometimes  
what I say  
Her legs long  
and bare shining  
on the bed the hair  
the small tuft  
the brown languor  
of a long line

an opinion site founded to “push back the plans of pro-Amnesty/Immigration Surge politicians, ethnic activists and corrupt Big Business,” hailed Trump as “the first figure with the financial, cultural, and economic resources to openly defy elite consensus. If he can mobilize Republicans behind him and make a credible run for the Presidency, he can create a whole new media environment for patriots to openly speak their mind without fear of losing their jobs.” The piece was headlined “WE ARE ALL DONALD TRUMP NOW.”

Trump’s admirers hear in his words multiple appeals. Michael Hill heads the Alabama-based League of the South, a secessionist group that envisions an independent Southern republic with an “Anglo-Celtic” leadership. In 1981, Hill began teaching history at Stillman College, a historically black college in Tuscaloosa. He applied for jobs at other schools, and was turned down, which he attributes to affirmative action. In 1994, he co-founded the League, which put him at odds, he said, with “civil-rights-

age, older black faculty and administrators, looking down their nose at this uppity white boy coming out here, talking about the Confederate flag and all that kind of stuff.” In 1999, he left Stillman. He told me, “If academia is not for me, because of who I am—a white Southern male, Christian, straight, whatever—then I’m going to find something that is. I’m going to fight this battle for my people.” Hill was moved by Trump’s frequent references to Kathryn Steinle, a thirty-two-year-old woman who, on July 1st, was walking with her father on a pier in San Francisco when she was fatally wounded in what police described as a random shooting. When police arrested Juan Francisco Lopez-Sanchez, a repeat felon who had been deported from the United States five times, Trump adopted the story of “that beautiful woman” as “another example of why we must secure our border immediately.” Hill told me, “That struck such a nerve with people, because a lot of this political stuff is abstract, but, as a father, I’ve got a daughter as well, and I could just see myself holding my daughter, and her looking

of sunlit skin I say  
 whatever you say  
 I'm saying is beautiful  
 & whither truth beauty  
 and whither whither  
 in the weather of an old day  
 suckerpunched by a spiral  
 of Arctic air blown  
 into vast florets of ice  
 binding the Great Lakes  
 into a single cracked sheet  
 the airplanes fly  
 unassuming over O they eat  
 and eat the steel mouths  
 and burn what the earth  
 spun eons to form  
 Some say calamity  
 and some catastrophe  
 is beautiful Some say  
 porn Some jolie laide  
 Some say beauty  
 is hanging there at a dank bar  
 with pretty and sublime  
 those sad bitches left behind  
 by the horsemen

—Maureen N. McLane

up at me and saying, 'Help me, Daddy.'" Hill, who condemns immigration and interracial marriage and warns of the influence of "Jewry," said, "I love to see somebody like Donald Trump come along. Not that I believe anything that he says. But he is stirring up chaos in the G.O.P., and for us that is good."

I joined Hill at a League of the South meeting one afternoon in July, at its newly built headquarters, on a couple of verdant acres outside Montgomery, Alabama. It was the League's annual conference, and there were about a hundred men and women; the older men were in courtly suits or jackets, and the younger set favored jeans, with handguns holstered in the waistband. The vendors' tables had books ("The True Selma Story," "Authentic History of the Ku Klux Klan"), stickers ("The Federal Empire Is Killing the American Dream"), and raffle tickets. The prize: a .45-calibre Sig Sauer pistol.

After years of decline, the League has recently acquired a number of younger members, including Brad Griffin, a thirty-four-year-old who writes an in-

fluential blog under the name Hunter Wallace. Short and genial, he wore Top-Siders, khaki shorts, and a polo shirt. As we talked, Griffin's eyes wandered to his two-year-old son, who was roaming nearby. Griffin told me that he embraced white nationalism after reading Patrick Buchanan's "Death of the West," which argued, in Griffin's words, that "all of the European peoples were dying out, their birthrates were low, and you had mass immigration and multiculturalism." Griffin once had high hopes for the Tea Party. "They channelled all that rage into electing an impressive number of Republicans in the South, but then all they did was try to cut rich Republicans' taxes and make life easier for billionaires!" he said. "It was all hijacked, and a classic example of how these right-wing movements emerge, and they're misdirected into supporting the status quo."

Griffin had recently told his readers that his opinion of Donald Trump was "soaring." He sees Trump's surge as a "hostile takeover of the Republican Party. He's blowing up their stage-managed dog-and-pony show." Griffin is repelled

by big-money politics, so I asked why he spoke highly of Trump. "He's a billionaire, but all of these other little candidates are owned by their own little billionaires." He mentioned Sheldon Adelson and the Koch brothers. "So I think Trump is independent."

The longer I stayed, the more I sensed that my fellow-attendees occupied a parallel universe in which white Americans face imminent demise, the South is preparing to depart the United States, and Donald Trump is going to be President. When Hill took the stage, he told his compatriots that the recent lowering of the Confederate flag was just the beginning. Soon, he warned, adopting the unspecified "they," they will come for the "monuments, battlefields, parks, cemeteries, street names, even the dead themselves." The crowd was on its feet, cheering him on. "This, my friends, is cultural genocide," he said, adding, "Often, as history has shown, cultural genocide is merely a prelude to physical genocide." I ducked out to catch a flight to Des Moines: Trump was speaking the next day in Iowa.

The "Make America Great Again Rally and Family Picnic" in Oskaloosa (population: 11,463) opened at eleven, but by ten there was already a crowd of thirteen hundred people—almost twice the capacity of the auditorium. The buffet was serving free pulled-pork sandwiches, and Trump's warmup act, Tana Goertz (runner-up, "The Apprentice," Season 3), told the crowd, "Please go eat! Mr. Trump can't take all this food home on the plane!"

It must be stated clearly that (to the delight of the far-right extremists I spoke with) a great many Republicans are mortified by Trump—horrified by his campaign of fear, embarrassed that others in the Party are not, and desperate to move on. But Trump's strategy has its logic. Gary Johnson, who as a Republican served two terms as the governor of New Mexico, before becoming the 2012 Libertarian Party Presidential candidate, told me that anyone who runs for office discovers that some portion of the electorate is available to be enraged and manipulated, if a candidate is willing to do it. "I ran across this constantly," he said. "This eight per cent out there that bangs their fist on the table and

says, "The biggest problem we're facing is immigration!" And I'm going, 'No! No! This is not the case!'" Johnson cited a poll that at that point put Trump's support among Republicans at eighteen per cent, and told me, "I don't think there's an eighteen-per-cent element of this country that is just outright racist. But there is a segment out there that is, and he has definitely appealed to that." Most people, in Johnson's view, are animated by other parts of Trump's pitch—"that he's going to get in and make the tough deals, and nobody's going to screw with him, because he'll drop bombs." That coalition—the fearful and the frustrated—is powerful. "That's how you begin to get to eighteen per cent," Johnson said.

As people turned up in Oslo, I encountered some of the fearful. A construction worker named Ron James, wearing a T-shirt that said "Every-Juan Illegal Go Home," told me that the "invasion of illegals" is eroding American culture: "We're getting flushed down the toilet." But the vast majority of the room, as best I could tell, was more like Stephanie DeVolder, an elegant fifty-something, with blond hair and bright-green eyes, who had worked as a sales rep for Dice, a job-search site. She was glad that Trump had "brought up the horrific treatment of the veterans," and that "he is a foremost believer in the military," and she admired his work on television. "I bought the videos of 'The Apprentice,' and watched the whole thing," she said. "He is a phenomenal judge of character, and he actually does have a heart. He is absolutely amazing." His fame had guided her to his political views, and, in time, she had concluded that he was "absolutely right about border security."

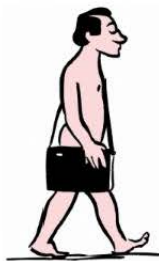
Emerging from the wings, in a navy suit, a white shirt, and a pink tie, Trump paused midway across the stage to spread his arms in a gesture of astonished, grateful embrace. For years, Trump has been compared to P. T. Barnum, but the comparison doesn't capture his range; on the campaign trail, he is less the carnival barker than the full cast—the lion, the fire-eater, the clown with the seltzer—all trussed into a single-breasted Brioni suit. Music from the "Karate Kid"

soundtrack blared—"You're the best around! Nothing's gonna ever keep you down!"—and, for a moment, Trump looked genuinely startled by the ardor of the stargazers in the crowd. At the lectern, he said, "It's a terrific place, Iowa." Then he monologued for an hour, off the cuff, on Hillary Clinton's private e-mail server ("What she did is very criminal"); Scott Walker ("Finally, I can attack!"); the Veterans Administration ("the most corrupt group of people in all of Washington").

As always, he created a powerful set piece about Mexican criminals who are allowed to "roam around, shooting people and killing people," as he put it. He described this as a hidden scourge: "Such a big problem, and nobody wants to talk about it." He reminded the crowd of his trip to Laredo: "I told the pilots, I said, 'Fly a little bit away from the border, please. Fly a little bit inland.' It's a whole scary thing." He said that when he returned to New York his wife had greeted him in tears. "You made it safely from the border!" she cried. As always, he spoke of Kathryn Steinle's murder—"Kate, beautiful Kate"—and of the death of Jamiel Shaw's son, "shot by an animal, an animal that shouldn't have been in this country." He urged Iowans to be afraid, even if they didn't see the threat. "When you're afraid to walk into your own country, it's pretty bad," he said. "Hard to believe. You don't have that problem in Iowa, in all fairness. But it's pretty rough out there."

Over the years, Trump has rejected the suggestion that he is a "belligerent, loudmouthed racist," as Paul Krugman, the *Times* columnist, put it recently. "I have a great relationship with the blacks," Trump said on the radio, in 2011.

Trump has always weaved in and out of racially charged controversies. In 2000, he secretly ran ads opposing a Catskills casino backed by the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, because it would rival his businesses in Atlantic City. Beneath a picture of drug paraphernalia, the ad asked, "Are these the new neighbors we want?" Tribal leaders denounced the message as "racist and inflammatory," and Trump



and his associates were fined by New York State for concealing the true source of the ads. In March, 2011, Trump, who was considering a Presidential run, resurrected the crackpot theory that Barack Obama is not an American citizen, declaring, "I want him to show his birth certificate." (It had already been publicly available for more than three years.) Trump's declaration gave the issue new prominence. At the time, Trump's on-again, off-again political adviser, the former Nixon aide Roger Stone, said that the decision to become a birther was "a brilliant base-building move."

Trump's phantasmagorical visions of marauding immigrants are part of a genre in which immigration and race are intermingled. In recent years, hoaxes and theories that were once confined to the margins have been laundered through mainstream media outlets. In 2013, Fox News repeatedly broadcast warnings about the "knockout game," based on a self-published book by the white nationalist Colin Flaherty, which described black men randomly attacking white pedestrians. In a study published in the journal *Race & Class*, Mike King, a sociologist at SUNY-Oneonta, searched for a single actual case of the knockout game and found none. The news reports were largely patched together from unrelated viral videos of street violence. Bureau of Justice statistics show, King wrote, a "marked decrease in random assaults, including black assaults on white strangers."

When Trump started emphasizing the mortal threat posed by undocumented immigration, America's white nationalists rejoiced. "Why are whites supposed to be happy about being reduced to a minority?" Jared Taylor, of *American Renaissance*, asked me. "It's clear why Hispanics celebrate diversity: More of us! More Spanish! More cucaracha!"

Taylor, who calls himself a "racial dissident," was slim and decorous in gray trousers and a button-down when we met. For years, he and others have sensed an opportunity on the horizon to expand their ranks. When Obama was elected in 2008, Stormfront, the leading white-supremacist Web forum, crashed from heavy traffic. The Klan, weakened by lawsuits and infighting, barely exists anymore, but the Internet



draws in young racists like Dylann Roof, who is accused of the June 17th massacre of nine people at a church in Charleston. The attack inspired a broad effort to remove the Confederate flag—from the state capitol and from the shelves of Amazon and of Walmart and a host of other retail stores. Defenders of the flag were galvanized, and they organized more than a hundred rallies around the South, interpreting the moment, months after racial unrest in Ferguson and Baltimore, as a sign of a backlash against political correctness and multiculturalism. Trump's language landed just as American hate groups were more energized than at any time in years. Griffin, the blogger for the League of the South, told me that the removal of the flag had crystallized "fears that people have about what happens when we become a minority. What happens when we have no control over things? You're seeing it play out right now."

Over sandwiches in the dining room of Taylor's brick Colonial, with views of a spacious back yard, a half-hour from downtown Washington, D.C., five of his readers and friends shared their views on race and politics, on the condition that I not use their full names. They were white men, in white-collar jobs, and each had a story of radicalization: Chris, who wore a pink oxford shirt and a tie, and introduced himself as an employee of "Conservatism, Inc.," the Republican establishment, said that he had graduated from a public high school where there were frequent shootings, but he felt he was supposed to "ignore the fact that we were not safe on a day-to-day basis because of all of these blacks and the other immigrants in our schools."

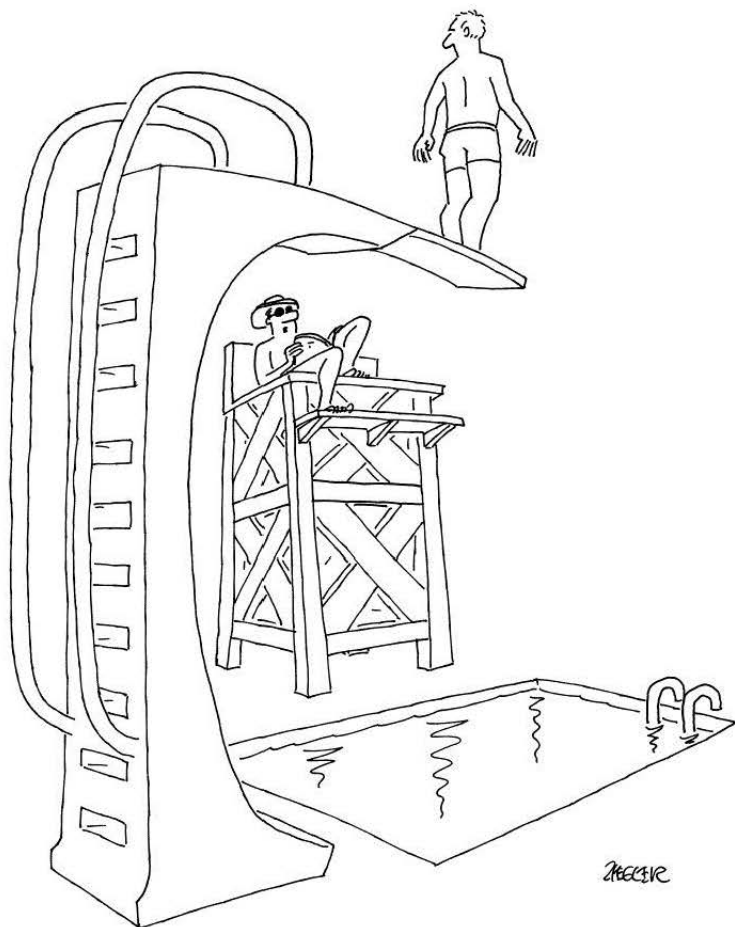
Jason, a muscle-bound commercial-real-estate broker in a polo shirt, said, "I've had personnel—in strict, frightened confidence—just tell me, 'Hey, look, we're just hiring minorities, so don't appeal, don't come back.'" This sense of "persecution," as he called it, is widely held. In a study published in 2011, Michael Norton, a professor at Harvard Business School, and Samuel Sommers, a professor of psychology at Tufts, found that more than half of white Americans believe that whites have replaced blacks as "the primary

victims of discrimination" today, even though, as Norton and Sommers write, "by nearly any metric—from employment to police treatment, loan rates to education—statistics continue to indicate drastically poorer outcomes for Black than White Americans."

The men around the table, unlike previous generations of white nationalists, were inspired not by nostalgia for slavery but by their dread of a time when non-Hispanic whites will no longer be the largest demographic group in America. They uniformly predicted a violent future. Erick, who wore a Captain America T-shirt and unwittingly invoked one of Trump's signature phrases, told me, "The American dream is dead, and the American nightmare is just beginning. I believe it's that way. I think that whites don't know the terror that's upon us."

All the men wanted to roll back anti-discrimination laws in order to restore restrictive covenants and allow them to carve out all-white enclaves. Henry, a twenty-six-year-old with cropped blond hair, said, "We all see some hope in Donald Trump, because it's conceivable that he could benefit the country in a way that we feel would be helpful."

In early August, the Republican candidates convened in Cleveland for their first debate. I watched it on television with Matthew Heimbach, the young white nationalist in Cincinnati, and some of his friends. Heimbach, whom anti-racist activists call "the Little Fuhrer," for his tirades against "rampant multiculturalism," founded the Traditionalist Youth Network, a far-right group that caters to high-school and



*"Of course it's not safe. That's why I'm here."*



college students and pushes for the separation of blacks and whites. Stocky and bearded, Heimbach is ambitious. He graduated, in 2013, from Towson University, in Maryland, where he attracted controversy for forming a “white student union.” He has met with European Fascists, including members of the Golden Dawn, in Greece.

Heimbach rents part of a house on a placid side street and works as a landscaper. He and his wife recently had their first child, a boy named Nicholas. When I asked Heimbach how he got involved with Fascist politics, he laughed. “I was not raised like this,” he said. “I was raised to be a normal small-town Republican.” The son of teachers in Poolesville, Maryland, an hour from Washington, he, like Brad Griffin, credited Buchanan’s book “Death of the West” for seeding his conception of a desolate future. “Even if you play the game, even if you do everything right, then the future, when it comes to your income, when it comes to benefits, when it comes to everything, we are going to be the first generation in American history to be living worse than our parents.” He went on, “My own parents tell me, ‘Well, you should just shut up, you should go get a normal job, and get a two-car garage, and then you’ll be happy.’”

On the economics, Heimbach’s narrative is not wrong. During a half-century of change in the American labor market—the rise of technology and trade, the decline of manual labor—nobody has been hit harder than low-skilled, poorly educated men. Between 1979 and 2013, pay for men without a college degree fell by twenty-one per cent in real terms; for women with similar credentials, pay rose by three per cent, thanks partly to job opportunities in health care and education. Like many ultraconservatives, Heimbach had largely given up on the Republican Party. He said, “We need to get the white community to actually start speaking for the white community, instead of letting a bunch of Republicans that hate us anyway, and don’t speak for our values, be the unofficial spokespeople.”

During the debate, Mike Huckabee was asked how he might attract enough support from independents and Democrats to get elected, and Heimbach shouted at the TV, “You

don’t need to! All you need to do is get the Republican base to get out and vote.”

On a couch across from the television, Tony Hovater, who used to be a drummer in a band and now works as a welder, said that, from what he has heard from Trump, he suspects that Trump shares his fears about immigration but can’t say so openly. Hovater told me, “I think he’s, like, dog-whistling,” adding, “He’s saying we should probably favor more European immigration, or maybe more of just a meritocracy sort of system, but he’s not coming out and saying it, because people will literally stamp him: ‘Oh, you just hate Mexicans.’” Hovater hopes that Trump will find a way to be more forthright: “Why not just say it?”

For his part, Hovater hopes to get into politics. This fall, he’s running for City Council in New Carlisle, Ohio, representing what he and Heimbach have named the Traditional Workers Party. He is taking inspiration from Trump’s populist success. “Just like we’re seeing with Trump, if the people honestly feel like you’re fighting for them, they’ll rally behind you,” he said. He knows that his views are “extreme,” but Trump’s success tells him that people support tone over substance. “People will be, like, ‘Well, I’ll take the fighter, even though I might disagree with him on some things,’” he said.

As the debate wound down, Trump, in his final statement, recited his mantra of despair. “Our country is in serious trouble. We don’t win anymore,” he said. “We can’t do anything right.” Matthew Parrott, a Web developer who was sipping coffee from a cup adorned with a swastika, said, “He was sassy without being comical. He struck exactly the tone he needed to give the people supporting him exactly what they want more of.” He went on, “The political system hasn’t been providing an outlet for social-conservative populism. You had this Ron Paul revolution, and all the stuff about cutting taxes, small government, and that’s just not the electrifying issue that they were expecting it to be. Simple folks, they want the border secure. They want what Donald Trump is mirroring at them. I think he’s an intelligent businessman who

identified what the people want to hear. He’s made a living finding these sorts of opportunities.”

Trump emerged from the debate on a wrathful tear. When Megyn Kelly, the Fox News host, asked him to explain why he called some women “fat pigs, dogs, slobs, and disgusting animals,” Trump replied, “What I say is what I say.” In an interview the next day, he said that Kelly had “blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever.” In the attendant uproar, Trump played dumb, declaring that only a “deviant” would think he was referring to menstruation, when he was thinking only of her nose.

The Republican commentariat celebrated what finally seemed to be Trump’s immolation. A couple of days after the debate, Stephanie DeVolder, in Iowa, e-mailed me to say that Trump had lost her. “I am not offended by his comments (as much as I am embarrassed for him and his family).” She had soured on his “bullying,” and his “total disregard for manners.”

The polls did not follow suit, though. Trump not only remained the front-runner—ahead of Bush and Cruz and the neurosurgeon Ben Carson, depending on the poll—but broadened his lead. (Two weeks after the debate, DeVolder changed her mind on Trump again. “I forgave him, as his message/platform continues to resonate above all else,” she wrote to me.)

On August 16th, with the media in full summer frenzy, Trump made his first detailed proposal, a six-page immigration plan that outlined an unprecedented crackdown. Presented as the remedy for a victimized nation—“We will not be taken advantage of anymore”—Trump’s plan called for the government to deport large segments of the undocumented population, seize money that these immigrants attempt to send home, and, contravening the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, deny citizenship to their U.S.-born children.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform, a Washington-based organization that seeks to reduce immigration (it is classified as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center), hailed Trump’s plan as the “American Workers’ Bill of Rights.” Mark Meckler, the co-founder of the Tea Party

Patriots, described it as a new standard “that all the other candidates will now have to meet,” and Scott Walker immediately echoed Trump’s call for building a wall and ending birthright citizenship. Other Republicans recoiled, convinced that Trump’s nativist turn would taint the Party’s image as ruinously as Mitt Romney’s “self-deportation” comments in his race against Barack Obama. At the time, Trump himself disapproved of Romney’s approach, saying, in November, 2012, “He had a crazy policy of ‘self-deportation,’ which was maniacal. It sounded as bad as it was, and he lost all of the Latino vote. He lost the Asian vote. He lost everybody who is inspired to come into this country.” Trump now faced the risk that his new stance could eventually undo him.

On Tuesday of last week, Jorge Ramos, the most influential Latino news anchor, told his audience on the Fusion network, “Right now Donald Trump is, no question, the loudest voice of intolerance, hatred, and division in the United States.”

Before dawn on Wednesday, two brothers from South Boston allegedly attacked a homeless Hispanic man, breaking his nose and urinating on his face. The police said that, after the men were arrested, one of them, Scott Leader, justified the assault by saying, “Donald Trump was right—all these illegals need to be deported.” (Both men pleaded not guilty.) When Trump was asked at a press conference about the case, and about threats of other violence, he replied, “I think that would be a shame, but I haven’t heard about that. I will say that people that are following me are very passionate. They love this country, and they want this country to be great again, and they are very passionate, I will say that.” (Two days later, Trump, under fire, tweeted, “Boston incident is terrible. . . . I would never condone violence.”)

When Trump leaped to the head of the Republican field, he delivered the appearance of legitimacy to a moral vision once confined to the fevered fringe, elevating fantasies from the message boards and campgrounds to the center stage of American life. In doing so, he pulled America into a current that is coursing through other Western democracies—Britain, France, Spain, Greece,



*“You’ll come here, but you won’t go to Brooklyn?”*

Scandinavia—where xenophobic, nationalist parties have emerged since the 2008 economic crisis to besiege middle-ground politicians. In country after country, voters beset by inequality and scarcity have reached past the sober promises of the center-left and the center-right to the spectre of a transcendent solution, no matter how cruel. “The more complicated the problem, the simpler the demands become,” Samuel Popkin, a political scientist at the University of California in San Diego, told me. “When people get frustrated and irritated, they want to cut the Gordian knot.”

Trump has succeeded in unleashing an old gene in American politics—the crude tribalism that Richard Hofstadter named “the paranoid style”—and, over the summer, it replicated like a runaway mutation. Whenever Americans have confronted the reshuffling of status and influence—the Great Migration, the end of Jim Crow, the end of a white majority—we succumb to the anti-democratic politics of absolutism, of a “conflict between absolute good and absolute evil,” in which, Hofstadter wrote, “the quality needed is not a willingness to compromise but the will to fight things out to a finish. Nothing but complete victory will do.” Trump was born to the part. “I’ll do nearly anything within legal

bounds to win,” he wrote, in “The Art of the Deal.” “Sometimes, part of making a deal is denigrating your competition.” Trump, who long ago mastered the behavioral nudges that could herd the public into his casinos and onto his golf courses, looked so playful when he gave out Lindsey Graham’s cell-phone number that it was easy to miss just how malicious a gesture it truly was. It expressed the knowledge that, with a single utterance, he could subject an enemy to that most savage weapon of all: us.

Trump’s candidacy has already left a durable mark, expanding the discourse of hate such that, in the midst of his feuds and provocations, we barely even registered that Senator Ted Cruz had called the sitting President “the world’s leading financier of radical Islamic terrorism,” or that Senator Marco Rubio had redoubled his opposition to abortion in cases of rape, incest, or a mortal threat to the mother. Trump has bequeathed a concoction of celebrity, wealth, and alienation that is more potent than any we’ve seen before. If, as the Republican establishment hopes, the stargazers eventually defect, Trump will be left with the hardest core—the portion of the electorate that is drifting deeper into unreality, with no reconciliation in sight. ♦