‘We have arrived at an historical inflection point few believed would be possible in countries such as the United States, which has long claimed the bragging rights as the world’s greatest democracy. The ascendency of the despotic Donald Trump and his administration that excels at grooming the public for an embrace of fascism has sent chills throughout what is left of the civilized world. The Rise of the Far-Right, Education and Violence is a book that offers both a deeply layered and granular understanding of the feral shift to an excremental far-right politics and what it means for the future of the human race while providing important insights into ways to defeat this transnational purge of our humanity.’

—Peter McLaren, Distinguished Professor in Critical Studies, Chapman University and author of Pedagogy of Insurrection

‘In this collection of essays, Peters and Besley examine the global return of national populism, placing it within the broader context of its historical and philosophical origins, and exploring its serious implications for education.’

—Fazal Rizvi, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne

‘In their new book, Michael Peters and Tina Besley address the multifaceted contemporary crises of liberal democracy. So-called “neo”-liberalism has created fertile ground for the germination of a panoply of anti-liberalisms, variously classified as ethnonationalist, racist, sexist, and homophobic. Sometimes these symptoms of social malaise are tied together under the umbrella word “fascist”—in a reminder of the worst of the twentieth century’s anti-liberal horrors. The important question Peters and Besley address in this book is the relationship between these anti-liberalisms and social inequality. The symptoms of fascism may well be proxies for a deep seated disease that goes to the heart of liberalism itself.’

—Mary Kalantzis, Professor, Department of Education, Policy, Organization and Leadership, University of Illinois, USA

‘The indefatigable and ever-creative Michael Peters, with Tina Besley has done it again. Critical times require critical theory that works the dialectic of facts and norms, systems and cultures, traditions and innovations, the global and the local, the big picture and the forensic detail. This book has the best qualities of critical thinking in spades and as such demands the best of us as critical readers and citizens in response.’

—Trevor Hogan, Co-ordinating Editor of Thesis Eleven: Critical Theory and Historical Sociology, Australia
In the last decade the far-right, associated with white nationalism, identitarian politics, and nativist ideologies, has established itself as a major political force in the West, making substantial electoral gains across Europe, the USA, and Latin America, and coalescing with the populist movements of Trump, Brexit, and Boris Johnson’s 2019 election in the UK. This political shift represents a major new political force in the West that has rolled back the liberal internationalism that developed after WWI and shaped world institutions, globalization, and neoliberalism. It has also impacted upon the democracies of the West. Its historical origins date from the rise of fascism in Italy, Germany, and Austria from the 1920s. In broad philosophical terms, the movement can be conceived as a reaction against the rationalism and individualism of liberal democratic societies, and a political revolt based on the philosophies of Nietzsche, Darwin, and Bergson that purportedly embraced irrationalism, subjectivism, and vitalism. This edited collection of essays by Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley, taken from the journal *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, provides a philosophical discussion of the rise of the far-right and uses it as a canvas to understand the return of fascism, white supremacism, acts of terrorism, and related events, including the refugee crisis, the rise of authoritarian populism, the crisis of international education, and Trump’s ‘end of globalism’.

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The EPAT Editor’s Choice series comprises innovative and influential articles drawn from the *Educational Philosophy and Theory* journal archives, spanning 50 volumes, from 1969. Each volume in the series represents a selection of important articles that respond to and focus on a particular theme, celebrating and emphasizing the heritage and history of the work, as well as the cutting edge contemporary contributions available. The series creates a rich vertical collection across five decades of seminal scholarship, contextualizing and elevating specific themes, scholars and their work. The EPAT Editor-in-Chief, Michael A. Peters, introduces each volume, the theme, and the work selected.

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**The Far-Right, Education and Violence**  
An Educational Philosophy and Theory Reader Volume IX  
*Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley*

The Far-Right, Education and Violence

An Educational Philosophy and Theory Reader Volume IX

Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley
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This edited collection of essays by Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley has been collected from the journal *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Together the essays provide a philosophical discussion of the rise of the far-right and uses it as a canvas to understand the return of fascism, white supremacism, acts of terrorism, and related events, including the refugee crisis, the rise of authoritarian populism, the crisis of international education, and Trump’s ‘end of globalism’.

Permissions have been granted for the following articles from *Educational Philosophy and Theory*:


Chapter 6, Terrorism, trauma, tolerance: Bearing witness to white supremacist attack on Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52:2, 109–119, DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2019.1602891


Chapter 10, Trump’s nationalism, ‘the end of globalism’, and ‘the age of patriotism’: ‘the future does not belong to globalists. The future belongs to patriots’, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2019.1678447


We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of Katie Peace, our editor and the staff at Taylor and Francis.
Far-right extremism has extended its tentacles into all corners of the planet, perpetrating acts of violent extremism and racist attacks. There has been an increase in both hate groups and reported hate crimes in most Western-style democracies. These violent acts have been associated with white supremacy, its global spread and novel social media network consolidation. The far-right embraces a range of different ideologies, including racism, xenophobia, white nationalism, and anti-democratic practices, together with new forms of authoritarianism and populism. In the last decade the far-right, associated with white nationalistic identitarian politics, has established itself as a major political force in the West, making substantial electoral gains across Europe, the US, and Latin America. The global movement has coalesced with the populist movements of Trump and Boris Johnson’s Brexit election in the UK. This political shift represents a major new political force in the West that has rolled back the liberal internationalism that developed after WWI and shaped world institutions, globalization, and neoliberalism. It has greatly impacted upon the democracies of the West. With a strong online presence, the far-right have engaged in hate speech, rallies, and protests against various religious and ethnic minorities, compromising civil rights and paradoxically appealing to free speech and freedom of movement and association, the very hallmarks of democracy. The hate agenda has been extended to a wide range of social groups including LGBTQ and women. Sometimes the attacks have accompanied political rallies; sometimes they have involved lone terrorists like Dylan Roof who, acting in the name of White Christian fundamentalism, in 2015 killed nine African American church members at Emanuel AME Church, Charleston, S. Carolina.1

This situation has led to the serious problem of ‘far-right extremism in the classroom’:

With a strong online presence, youngsters nowadays are much more likely to come across explicit or implicit far-right extremist content. Far-right extremism (FRE) is often overlooked when it comes to strategies for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). For schools it is indispensable
to pay attention to the phenomenon, because just a few students with hate speech, polarising messages and/or extremist political views can ruin the climate in a school.2

The RAN EDU,3 a European Commission (EC) ‘Radicalisation Awareness Network’ aimed at youth, expressed its concern for a safe environment at school and in the classroom:

‘the RAN EDU Working Group calls for a long-term, structural and evidence-based programme on dealing with FRE [Far-Right Extremism] to be made available for schools, in order to make a real impact’ (bold in original).

The EC group also calls for the establishment of ‘Schools as labs for democracy’. Education as the broad means for socialization of democratic values, their historical defence, and ideological justification requires a fundamental rethink in an age riven by the unequal health effects of COVID-19 and US police brutality that sparked the mass US and global anti-racism Black Lives Matter protests following the strangulation death of George Floyd. The world watched in horror the video from 25 May 2020 where unarmed Floyd had a white police officer in Minneapolis kneel on his neck for almost 9 minutes, ignoring his pleas: ‘please, please, please, I can’t breathe’ and ‘mama’ until he died. It is hardly new that figures show police disproportionately searching and using force against people from black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities. The protests that followed Floyd’s death galvanized crowds, who demonstrated solidarity in spite of COVID-19 fears of transmission, have reverberated around the world, indicating that the struggle for equal civil rights is a powerful historical force for racial justice in America that has inspired a broad coalition of people after figures showing police disproportionately searching and using force against people from black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities. It brought out opposing far-right and white supremacist demonstrations too, many wanting conflict and confrontation. Trump’s reaction was multiple. He declared that Antifa (a left-wing anti-fascist, communist, and anarchist group of activists who state they are prepared to use violence against the alt-right4) was behind the violence and looting associated with the otherwise peaceful protests, so he wanted to ban it as a domestic terrorist organization but is legally prevented from doing so. He decided to bring in the military to peaceful protests in Washington DC and on 1 June 2020 (in violation of First and Fourth Amendments) to use tear gas, pepper spray capsules, rubber bullets, and flash bombs to clear the Lafayette Square so the President could walk to a photo opportunity at St. John’s Episcopal Church, playing to his electoral base.

‘He did not pray,’ said Mariann E. Budde, the Episcopal bishop of Washington. ‘He did not mention George Floyd, he did not mention the agony of people who have been subjected to this kind of horrific expression of racism and white supremacy for hundreds of years.’5
His visit ‘outraged’ Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, who oversees the church. ‘Consider the context,’ Budde told Craig Melvin on the TODAY show on Monday. ‘After making a highly charged, emotional speech to the nation where he threatened military force, his officials cleared peaceful protests with tear gas and horses and walked on to the courtyard of St. John’s Church and held up a Bible as if it were a prop or an extension of his military and authoritarian position, and stood in front of our building as if it were a backdrop for his agenda.’

She added that she was ‘deeply disappointed’ that Trump did not enter the church to pray or ‘offer condolences to those who were grieving’.6

Alongside these now global protests, questions raised have not only been about racism, white supremacy, and slavery in the US, but also about Britain’s mercantile involvement and wealth that was derived from the transatlantic slave trade and the monuments to leaders of imperial Britain. Much information that had been ignored, ‘buried’, or covered up is now being revealed and challenged with statues like that of Edward Colston being toppled in Bristol, and calls for statues of avowed racists like that of Rhodes at Oxford, and even Churchill, to be removed. Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, London, all became wealthy from the slave trade. But now the National Archives, T 70 series, Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa and Successors, which contains the names of thousands of individuals who travelled on board the Royal African Company (1693–1743) ships to and from Africa, as well as the names of those who lived and died at the numerous company forts, is digitized and searchable.7

Despite abolishing the slave trade in 1807, the Slavery Abolition Act saw Britain only outlaw slavery in 1834. In such a big disruption of trade, the British government paid 20 million pounds (estimated to be over $21 billion today) compensation to the slave traders (loss of business) and slave owners (loss of ‘property’), but not to the enslaved, taking out a loan which was only paid off in 2015.

That means that living taxpayers in the UK, including descendants of enslaved people, paid billions of pounds to slave traders to stop them from trading in human lives, and to slave owners for the loss of their ‘property’. Yes. The British government, using public money, paid slave owners but not those who were enslaved.

The backs and souls of enslaved people built Britain—the backs of those who toiled in cotton fields and plantations in British colonies, and the souls of those who did not survive the journey.

Between 1640 and 1807 some 3.1 million enslaved people were transported from Africa. According to the government’s own national archive figures, 2.7 million arrived; the rest died en route.8
Racism and white supremacy are at the heart of slavery, just as they are for the far-right. The movement ‘Why Is My Curriculum White?’ has been gathering pace since being founded in 2015 by National Union of Students at University College London. It challenges the focus and assumptions on ‘white’ history, people, arts, and humanities in the curriculum, and also the lack of diversity and institutional and systemic racism in education and academia, with associated movements, ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ and ‘Decolonise Education’, also asking ‘why isn’t my professor black?’ Of course, Britain’s imperialist colonial past impacted far and wide, such that racist abuses in former colonies (such as Australia and New Zealand) are being brought to the fore following these global protests.

Can the far-right, historically and ideologically connected to both fascism and Nazi ideology in Italy, Germany, and Austria since the 1920s, in broad philosophical terms, be conceived as a reaction against the perceived rationalism and individualism of liberal democratic societies, and a political revolt based on the philosophies that embrace irrationalism, subjectivism, and vitalism? The far-right has reappeared and grown enormously since 2013 with a number of extremist and terrorist groups that have a strong presence on social media, spawning sites that recruit a new generation of young people, mostly male, who have been increasingly associated with racist acts of violence against African-Americans in the US and other ethnic groups around the world. It is an emergent threat that has been directed at migrants and refugees in Europe and America, after and as a consequence of ongoing wars and conflicts in the Middle East, creating a historically large number of displaced peoples who have sought a haven in the West.

Far-right extremist groups have become adept at recruitment and coordination through and especially among disaffected young people who have suffered unemployment and austerity. According to research by the Counter Extremism Project, ‘far-right groups across Europe are successfully integrating themselves into the political mainstream by shunning street violence and adopting the same recruitment techniques used by jihadis’. This tactic and focussing on topical issues shifts them into the political mainstream, so they are able to broaden their public appeal, increasing the reach of their ideas and potential radicalizing; ‘the real worrying issue is that, with the power of social media, these claims create an ecosystem where people looking for legitimate mainstream movements access extremist culture.’ Far-right groups will use secret codes that often have hidden, violent meanings (e.g. use of numbers—14, 18, 28, 88, 318, and many more) and are seen in tattoos, graffiti, email addresses, etc. The lockdown of governments and states and the abrupt halt to all forms of economic activity caused by COVID-19 has caused social dislocation, isolation, alienation, and depression, leading to widespread unemployment that has fuelled social and government discontent. These are the conditions ripe for the growth of the far-right and extremist movements that ride on the back of peaceful protests in the US, aided and abetted by Trump’s rhetoric. Two recent far-right groups described by BBC are Boogaloo and Proud Boys. The Boogaloo far-right movement is a violent organization that boasts hundreds of thousands of members who are
prepared to travel to incite civil unrest and exploit peaceful and legitimate public protest.

Followers have a variety of views and levels of seriousness towards the movement, but most could be described as extreme libertarians and sign up to two fundamental beliefs: A desire for an armed overthrow of the government, and an unwavering commitment to gun ownership. Boogaloo Bois were overwhelmingly opposed to coronavirus lockdowns, which they saw as an alarming sign of tyranny.\textsuperscript{14}

The combination and overlay of COVID-19, Black civil rights, austerity, and massive youth unemployment is a dangerous recipe for ongoing civil unrest, social alienation, and far-right violence, with the prospect of militarizing the police and the rise of the authoritarian state that threatens the state of social democracy. In these times public education needs to take concerted action in defence of life, liberty, and civil rights that comprise social democracy. It is vital to the health of the body politic and the very survival of democracy and the democratic form of life that the political virus of the far-right and authoritarianism is eliminated. One of the best forms of inoculation and defence of social democracy is public education and education based on informed public discourse and debate. Here there is a strong conceptual and historical basis for the link between philosophy and education and for a philosophically informed approach to democracy and the history of civil rights. The forms of education going forward must address multiple issues, but for there to be social justice, they must address inequalities and racism; they must study our histories and work together to create a positive and inclusive world.

Notes
4 https://www.wbur.org/hercandnow/2020/06/11/what-is-antifa-trump-protests
   https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-60261-5_14
11 The Southern Poverty Law Center (https://www.splcenter.org/) and the Anti-Defamation League (https://www.adl.org/who-we-are) have tracked the recent increase in extremist activity, and the Network Contagion Research Institute has tracked the growth of hate crimes across social media sites (https://ncri.io/about/).
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