

# Beyond the Hate Frame: When Systemic Violence Masquerades as Hate and Extremism

*Panelists: Ben Lorber, Habiba Farh, Heron Greenesmith  
Moderated by Koki Mendis*

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**Koki Mendis:** All right. Thank you all for joining us today. We are going to be embarking on our second discussion in a series on the Right's steady capture of the center. Today, we'll be going beyond the hate frame with a group of some of PRA's best and brightest. For those of you who are new to PRA, or Political Research Associates, we are a social justice research and strategy center dedicated to blocking the advance of oppressive, anti-democratic movements and to building a just and inclusive democratic society. Over the past four decades, PRA has researched, monitored and publicized the agenda and strategies of the U.S. and global Right, revealing the powerful intersections of Christian nationalism, White nationalism and patriarchy. PRA produces investigative reports, articles, and tools; publishes the peer reviewed magazine, the Public Eye; advises social justice movement organizers; and offers expert commentary for local and national media outlets. Our core issues span reproductive justice, LGBTQ rights, racial and immigrant justice, civil liberties and economic justice.

On the precipice of our new five year strategic plan, we are entering a period of increased investment in growing our organization and achieving our vision. We're excited to dig deep with our partners, contribute more fully in national conversations, and help sustain and grow the Left's social justice movement in this critical moment. We invite you to think about getting involved with PRA. Write for us. Connect your organization to ours. Join us in our work, or consider supporting us in ours. Our webinars are really only one small way to engage. That said, we are deeply grateful to you, our audience, for joining us today. And we are particularly grateful to be joined by three incredible thinkers producing ground breaking analysis for PRA and beyond.

I am excited to introduce PRA senior research analyst [Heron Greensemith](#), and research analysts Habiba Farh and [Ben Lorber](#). Thank you so much, our esteemed panelists, and to you our wonderful audience for joining us today. Consider dropping your name and where you're joining us from in the chat so we can see who all is with us today. We will be distributing a recording of this webinar in the New Year and provide ample opportunities to continue to engage via email. I'm just going to get us started today. We're going to talk about PRA's bread and butter. And so let's get going. One of PRA's major ideological commitments is to grounding our analysis in the systems of oppression that rule our world. In order to strategize the ways in which we must continue to equip our movement to dismantle these systems piece by piece, we have to first understand their breadth and their depth. A significant component of this work requires demystifying the ways in which systemic oppression is coded as culture, as individual failing, as the natural ebbs and flows of the human condition. Habiba you, in collaboration with PRA research director Steven Gardiner, are spearheading the formalization of the organization's core frameworks underpinning this work—one of the organization's core frameworks. We have many. Stay tuned for more. To start us in this discussion, I'd like you to tell us: what is the hate frame? What are some of its earlier iterations? And what does it look like today?

**Habiba Farh:** Yeah. Thank you so much, Koki, for starting us off and thank you for organizing the webinar. I also want to thank my colleagues, Ben and Heron, for joining us and sharing their own insights, and behind the scenes are Olivia and Abigail. So they are also contributing equally.

Yeah. So let's just get started into it. I think we all have an idea of what the hate frame is, but we don't really have a formal name for it just yet, only loose observations from the social and political world that we operate from. And I'm pretty sure the more we talk about it, we're going to realize what the hate frame is, and what it looks like, and how far reaching and embedded this paradigm is in American politics and social life, and how important it is to consider within our own movements.

So simply put, the hate frame is the idea that hate and political violence that emerges from hate in the United States, especially hate crimes, are a result of independent, irrational haters or extremists. And that hate is only a personal feeling and not a product of larger systems and structures. Legislation to counter this type of hate has existed since the end of the Civil War with the Ku Klux Klan Acts, but it was really the Civil Rights Movement and the Civil Rights Act, what really crystallized hate as a legislative and policy category.

But we all know that just because something is illegal or legally...or punitive,

we know that it doesn't mean it will stop. In fact, it's the complete opposite. Political violence, hate, and political polarization have steadily increased. And, to be honest, our only response to this rise has tended to only expand hate crime legislation or just expand law. And what this only does is only exasperate mass incarceration because it empowers law enforcement and expands incarceration processes. And we all know how that tends to harm communities of color, historically marginalized communities: poor people, queer people, and people with disabilities.

What we see since then, since the Civil Rights Movement, is that far-right and conservative movements have become only more organized and their supporters are more emboldened. And social justice organizations and progressive legislators began to treat hate crimes and hate, whatever it is, this nebulous category within our legal system, and our political life, and social life, as the ultimate manifestation of discrimination and not a symptom of an ethno-nationalist, Christian dominated society, or the function of a broader, exploitive system of power. And we know that hate doesn't emerge from a vacuum. And those who hate or commit hate crimes specifically tap into these different histories and systems of oppression to ensure that their hate is targeted and meaningful. You don't do it randomly. You do it specifically. You want that hate to mean something.

Hate is socially constructed, hate is socially constructed, and more importantly, it's state sanctioned. And I think the more we talk, and especially as Ben and Heron and even people in the chat chime in, we're going to realize and see how hate functions as part of a social, political contract and a society drifting away from democracy.

We also know that those who perpetuate hate are not always social outcasts or lone wolves. They're not crazy or irrational. Occasionally they are, unfortunately, people we might consider to be model citizens, or the very maintainers of our institutions. We see how law enforcement, prosecutors, legislators, judges and elected officials perpetuate and do hate or extremism. These people don't exist on the fringes. They're very much at the core, and they're responsible for maintaining oppressive systems.

The hate frame is inextricably linked to another framework, the centrist and extremist framework. And much like the hate frame, I think we have like a nebulous idea of what it is, but we don't give it a name ever. And basically this framework says that all threats to a democratic society or the state are extremists. So...and regardless of their political orientation or what they call themselves. So the January 6th insurrectionists and the Black...and. So the January 6th insurrectionists and the Black Lives Matter movement and the Water Protectors at Standing Rock are all one thing. They're all extremists.

And this flattening and contextualization of what a threat is and what violence is really informs our current political discourse at every level of legislation, politics, and even our social commentary. Immediately when we see acts of violence, especially acts of mass violence, we want to label the perpetrator as an extremist or terrorist. And then we see large groups of haters, hate groups, and we instantly want to call them extremist or terrorist group.

But we tend to forget that terror and extremism are sociopolitical definitions, and they have always been used by the state to demonize progressive movements and expand the surveillance state. The language of extremism and terrorism is really pervasive and loose, and part of the hate frame is that we always fall back into it, especially when we are experiencing different threats or threats that are very increasingly threatening our existence as a peaceful society. I think being aware of it will help us break out of it. And apart from the Trump administration, every presidential administration in the past three decades has passed legislation addressing hate, violence, extremism. But hate still exists. And that's probably because we're trying to find a legal solution to a social and political problem. So we really have to evaluate the efficacy of our approach to violence. Our language becomes law and policy. And real people, almost always those from historically marginalized communities, are the first people to face the brunt of it. And I think the more we talk about it and the more we bring it to light, we're less likely to fall into it.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Habiba; for such nebulous and all encompassing concepts, you pretty succinctly set the groundwork for today's discussion. I'm very impressed with the sheer amount of explanatory material you've got in there. You know, I think you did a fabulous job, really touching on institutional examples, cause, effects. Like truly, truly amazing. We're going to take what you just told us and we're going to apply the understanding of the hate frame across PRA research areas and in conversation with our strategies to counter far-right formations, which is at the core of PRA's mission. So what are some of the examples of ways in which hate and extremism obscure modes of domination and anti-trans, anti LGBTQ, anti-abortion, anti-immigrant, anti-Black, anti-Muslim and antisemitic organizing to name some of the biggest and most active threats to human safety and flourishing. I'd like to open this discussion to our full panel. We're going to spend some time here really hearing from PRA researchers and how hate interacts with the work that they're doing. Who would like to go first here? Heron, I saw an eyebrow, can I call on you? Oh, Ben.

**Ben Lorber:** Oh, okay. Okay, I can go. Hi, everyone. Ben, he/him. I'm a researcher at PRA working on antisemitism and White nationalism. And yeah, really

honored to be here alongside Heron and Habiba, Koki and everyone. And so I'm going to talk about antisemitism and how the hate frame and extremism frame can often muddy our understanding of what is often called in shorthand, the world's oldest hatred. So too often antisemitism, and conspiracy theories more broadly in our society, are seen as like a personal pathology and individual hate that one holds in their heart; a kind of mental illness often. And this is really like a privatized view that distracts us from viewing the ways in which antisemitism, like every other kind of oppression, is systemic and intersectional.

So, you know, antisemitism and conspiracy theories are on the rise right now because decades of neoliberal capitalism, neoliberal racial capitalism, I should say, you know, gaping wealth inequality, the hollowing out of our democratic institutions and our social life have left millions of people struggling and disconnected and atomized and resentful. And they're eager—they're eager for someone or a group to blame, you know, a group at the top who must be pulling the strings and making our world so difficult on so many levels. I mean, antisemitic conspiracies offer a meta explanation of power, right? It's a false narrative that it's the Jews who are this group that's up there pulling the strings, or it's George Soros or it's cultural Marxists, or it's the globalist cabal. And right-wing, authoritarian, exclusionary leaders use these conspiracies to basically build their exclusionary movements, you know, and these conspiracies are intersectional with other kind of oppressions. Right-wing leaders from former President Trump to Tucker Carlson will say that George Soros is behind the Movement for Black Lives or is behind non-White immigration or is behind growing movements for LGBTQ acceptance and rights.

These conspiracies are part of the ideological architecture that helps keep detention camps at the US-Mexico border. That helps to build these, these movements, you know, behind the attacks on trans lives, the attacks on bodily autonomy, the attacks on non-White immigrants. By convincing millions of people that movements for change are, you know, the shadowy front of a sinister other, and that to defend their families and their nation, they have to support these exclusionary movements. Antisemitism is part of this broader infrastructure of oppression, and it's part and parcel of the rise of authoritarian nationalism in our own era. And if we see it this way from a structural lens, it allows us to fight antisemitism alongside other forms of repression and build powerful coalitions between Jews and other marginalized groups. But by contrast, if we see it as hate, it's depoliticized, right? It becomes a problem that's individuals and the feelings they may or may not have in their own hearts rather than a system.

You know, when Congressman Matt Gaetz said that George Soros is behind the migrant caravan that is threatening the U.S—he said this in October

2018. And one week later, a White nationalist opened fire at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The anniversary is coming up in a few weeks. Tree of Life synagogue. When Matt Gaetz deployed that George Soros conspiracy, it's secondary whether or not he held some hatred of Jews in his own heart. That's almost beside the point, because he was deploying antisemitism as part of a larger, anti-democratic, exclusionary political movement. Right. So when we see antisemitism as only a hate, we don't see that larger movement. All we see is, well is Matt Gaetz antisemitic? Yes or no? When we see antisemitism as a hate, it's seen as this irrational, eternal, mystified, you know, nebulous thing that's impossible to defeat. And we see that narrative a lot.

And one more thing is that it's very similar to see antisemitism as a kind of extremism. If we see it as an extremism that mainstream groups like the Anti-Defamation League, many liberal commentators, as well as many Right Wingers, will then say, well, it's an equal threat, as Habiba was saying, on both sides of the political spectrum. There are left wing extremists and there are right-wing extremists. And antisemitism is the same kind of threat on both sides. And of course, this feeds directly in to some of the harmful terrorism framing that Habiba was talking about that's weaponized to further Islamophobia, to further the surveillance state. It's weaponized against the Left, because the reality is that the most violent, virulent and structural antisemitism is fueling right-wing authoritarian nationalist movements in the U.S., even as we, of course, have to combat antisemitism wherever it rears its head, including in our own movements. And so when we see it as extremism, it makes antisemitism seem exceptional. It makes it seem like a radical hatred that only people on the fringes of our society hold in their hearts, rather than seeing it as part of the air that we all breathe and as a form of oppression that we are all, you know, liable to reproduce like any other kind of oppression. So I'll stop there and I'll pass it off to Heron.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Ben. It was a really expansive look at sort of the way that hate and antisemitism interact. I really appreciate it. I'd like to come back to you after Heron, to talk about the way that antisemitism is used in suppressing criticisms of the Israeli state's oppression of Palestine, if you wouldn't mind touching on that. Heron, off to you.

**Heron Greenesmith:** I have a couple examples, and I was like furiously taking notes when Ben was talking because everything he's saying is brilliant. But I underlined and exclamation marked: hate decontextualizes. And I found that really salient to anti-trans rhetoric and anti-trans activism. I have three examples. I'm going to kind of run through two of them and then flesh out a

third. The first is TERFs. It's fairly kind of obvious to see why talking about TERFs hating trans people wouldn't really help us articulate what exactly it is that—TERF being anti-trans feminists or gender critical feminist rhetoric. These are people who ground their anti-trans rhetoric and activism in feminist principles. So of course, it'd be very easy for someone who grounds their activism and feminist principles to say, 'I don't hate.' So instead of describing what they are doing, you're describing what they're thinking, which is very easy for them to just contradict.

Second example is the Christian Right. We have another kind of obvious object example here with benevolence, right? So the Christian Right approaches LGBT people with—my colleague Asia Korkmaz, who is on the call I believe, recently saw at Pray Vote Stand, kind of this idea of sanctified rejection. Right? The idea that even though you are saying that trans people shouldn't exist and that trans people should be legislated and litigated and run out of public society, you're doing so in a sanctified, holy way, not hateful, but sanctified. So when you use words like hate, again, you're not describing what is happening. You're not describing the context. You're describing internal feelings. You're ascribing internal feelings to someone, to a person, or a movement that they can easily reject.

The third example I like to use is kind of the most salient today. So a Twitter account called Libs of Tik Tok, run by Chaya Raichik, a former real estate developer, has spent the summer and some of the late spring and now the early fall, picking and choosing targets for her to sic an army of anti-trans online folks, and then in real life, militias, paramilitary and neo-Nazi groups to attack drag queen story hours and children's hospitals that provide trans affirming care specifically. So that's the context. She has spent the past six months fomenting terrorism and abuse—not terrorism, fomenting violence against people whom she sees as furthering a transgender ideology, in her words. So when she is told what you're doing is hate, she just says, I'm just sharing videos. Because hate decontextualizes. But instead, when we describe, instead of ascribing to her a motive, we describe the impact of her actions. Then we can say, actually, you know exactly to whom you are communicating with. You know the context of your remarks and how there is a fervor of anti-trans sentiment on the political right at the moment. And you cannot deny—or if you are denying, then you are the most clueless person in the entire world, and we can make that description of you—you cannot deny that you understand the context of your activism. And hate takes away the context, whereas description provides the context and allows us to say: this person's behavior has resulted in multiple families in neonatal or postnatal hospice care not be able to access their child, because Chaya Raichik invoked a bomb threat against Boston Children's Hospital, for

example. So description will always be more helpful. I will end there. Koki, I know you want to ask some questions, but those are the three examples I can think of at the moment.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Heron. I'll definitely want to come back to you before we move on. But I really appreciate the way in which you use the contestation and rejection of hate as a way to continue to obfuscate oppression. And Ben, let's come back to you on this antisemitism point. And then Habiba, I would love to hear from you about CVE, countering violent extremism.

**Ben Lorber:** Yeah, thanks, Koki. And yeah, that was that was brilliant Heron, and there's so much I could build off of that. But yeah, thank you for that. Just to add that one, one major way that when we describe antisemitism as a hate or as a kind of extremism, you know, like I was saying, it feeds into this false and harmful narrative that antisemitism is an equal threat on both extremes and quote unquote, of the political spectrum. And one way that manifests, which I can't believe I left out, you know, from my description earlier, is in efforts to attack the movement for Palestinian rights by slandering it as antisemitic. And of course, it's possible, you know, that criticism of Israel can lapse into antisemitism. We should obviously be vigilant against that by learning about the history of antisemitism, by learning the tropes inherited from Christian Europe, and by making sure that we're avoiding conspiratorial thinking in the way that we describe political phenomena in Israel Palestine.

But the bottom line is, it's not antisemitic to criticize Israel's occupation and apartheid policies, and it's not antisemitic in itself to support the tactics of boycott, divestment or sanctions or to support, you know, movements that promote these. So it's really important. One of the ways that a false narrative can sometimes be embedded in the way that mainstream media and political figures on both sides of the aisle discuss this issue is that the critics of Israel, or especially supporters of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, are motivated by hate or are extremist. And this all kind of flows from decontextualized, as Heron put it, analysis that views antisemitism not as as connected to anti-democratic, authoritarian, exclusionary movements. You know, we at PRA take an international perspective and we see the rise of a far-right ethno-nationalism taking place here in the U.S. and also taking place around the world, you know, from countries like Italy, Spain, regions like Latin America, across Europe and also in Israel- Palestine. And so by seeing antisemitism intersectionally, we can see the ways in which even the Israeli government sometimes when they scapegoat—when former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for example, would scapegoat George Soros in ways that



strongly resemble a classical antisemitism, or would directly ally with far-right movements in Europe and elsewhere. We can really start to take apart this false notion that antisemitism kind of floats above the political spectrum and is this kind of timeless, eternal hatred that can manifest anywhere indiscriminately. And works and movements that criticize Israel, as much as it might look on the right and White nationalist movements, that's simply not true. And we can help to build powerful coalitions to fight antisemitism alongside other forms of oppression by really keeping this intersectional perspective at the forefront.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Ben. I really appreciate you bringing the international perspective into the conversation. And both you and Heron really touch on sort of movement deployment of hate. And I'd love to hear from you, Habiba, on the way that the state deploys hate.

**Habiba Farh:** Yeah. So I think one thing... So hate isn't, like we said, hate isn't only a feeling, an individual feeling or a type of resentment. It has a function, it has a purpose, it's meaningful. And it purposely points to actors instead of systems. And that way we kind of get lost in the jungle. We see people instead of actual, bigger, broader systems. Since coming to PRA, I have been working with the Stop CVE Coalition, but I've been working on CVE work much longer before then. CVE, just for everyone's information stands for Countering Violent Extremism. And it's a soft power approach that the Obama administration introduced to counter violent extremism. I say soft approach because it was very soft compared to the Bush administration's approach to countering extremism and violence. And obviously, much like the Obama administration's approach to countering violent extremism, it was extremely Islamophobic, Arabophobic, it was anti-Black, and it criminalized people experiencing mental health disorders all under the pretext of preventing violent extremism.

We can talk about CVE all day here, but CVE basically outsources surveillance technologies and systems to communities who are considered to be vulnerable to radicalizing, to commit violent acts. And basically, it turns schools, religious centers, community centers into surveillance centers to monitor people's behaviors or ideologies all under the pretext that, you know, you can prevent a violent attack before it happens by tracking people. So all it really ended up doing—so it's been over nearly a decade with CVE being on the ground and all it ended up doing was putting these communities in a precrime space. And it subjected them to surveillance, police brutality, heightened scrutiny. And President Trump, when he came into office, he actually wanted to rename the program from Countering Violent Extremism to Countering Violent Islamism. But a couple of nonprofit organizations and legislators

jumped in and asked him to keep the name and to expand it to accommodate growing White supremacist violence. Eventually, while campaigning, President Biden promised to dismantle and end the program. But after the January 6 insurrection, he actually decided to keep it going to help counter White supremacist violence and far right violence, and the growing threat of gun violence, especially within schools, grocery stores, and just in public.

Within the hate frame, centrists, liberals and even some progressives are going to campaign or even tolerate a certain degree of state securitization and state repression to counter violent extremism, to counter hate, all for the sake of protecting democracy. But we don't realize that's to our own detriment, because eventually it'll be used against those very same movements and those people. I think when we're talking about these things, it's very helpful to look at it in a very current moment. So last week I went to a DHS training of what their CVE would look like. They named it CP3, which stands for Center for Prevention Programs and Partnership, where they listed the water protectors at Standing Rock to be environmental violent extremists. And we all know that's super problematic because we know the Buffalo shooter in his manifesto also cited environmental concerns.

When we say it's hate or when we talk about—or when we disconnect people's actions or their feelings from structures and systems, it depoliticizes it, just like Heron and Ben have said. And so obviously, ecofascists and the water protectors are not the same thing, but to the Department of Homeland Security, they're going to treat them the same way. And so the Department of Homeland Security is calling this a whole of society approach to countering violent extremism. So instead of small communities being surveilled and securitized, all of society will now be securitized, surveilled and scrutinized in a moment of heightened political polarization, without any evidence that it'll be effective. But with all the evidence in the world that it's actually going to be used disproportionately on historically marginalized communities. And I think this is something that I'm going to give to Ben and Heron, and even people in the chat and Koki. But I think this is a question we really need to sit with, but can we trust agents of the state or even state systems to bring structural and social change from within? I think that's something we really have to sit with. And I'm interested to hear your thoughts.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Habiba. I look forward to hearing us address that question throughout the conversation and I really appreciate the ways in which you demonstrate how hate gives the state essentially carte blanche to securitize at will, to surveil at will, to name new entities worthy of securitization and surveillance as events occur in the world. It's such a blanket. Again, going back

to this concept of how nebulous hate is, I think you really encapsulated it there. Heron, Ben, would either of you like to continue to sort of apply this framework to what you see in your work?

**Heron Greenesmith:** I didn't address earlier the idea of the false equivalence. Both Habiba and Ben were talking about, you know, when you have someone who hates, then there is an implied equal or greater feeling—sort of feeling on the side of we are ascribing hate as a feeling—and I was thinking of the false equivalence of kind of the rubber glue insults trope from the playground. You know, I'm rubber, you're glue. Everything you say bounces off me and sticks to you. In the context of anti-trans activists, I'm going to use some anti-trans language. Just as a content note. Anti-trans activists calling trans people groomers and pedophiles. So those two terms—which all three (hater, groomer, pedophile) are all ascriptions, you are ascribing an attribute to someone based on what you presume is in their mind at any given point in time—all three are hard to combat because how do you prove a negative? And the only two that seem to be super effective are the ones that the anti-trans folks are using. And they are effective because it is impossible to prove a negative. But, you know. It is far worse to be called, for example, a groomer than to be called a hater. And because the Right does not actually have any evidence of grooming for the people it accuses of grooming, or of pedophilia for the people it accuses of pedophilia, they rely on these ascriptions, these descriptive terms instead of—I'm sorry, these ascriptive, you know, assuming what's in your brain terms, because we can't combat them. And we call them haters and they can simply say, no, I'm not.

We are in a bind when we ascribe, we are in a bind, a rhetorical bind, when we tell people what is in their own brain or tell a third party what is in someone else's brain. It's just a losing game for us. We truly do not know why people act the way they do. Why people promote oppressive systems. We have lots of sociological theories, but that's not why we at PRA are here. We are at PRA to describe how actors and rhetoric and networks leverage, maintain, prop up and utilize oppressive systems in order to gain power. And wealth. And more power through the wealth. That's what we do here. Our job is not to look into someone's brain and say, Oh, X, Y or Z happened when they were small or X, Y, Z happens in their culture or x, y or z happened in their education. That is not for us to say. We are to say, this person posts videos online. The Proud Boys repost their videos. The Proud Boys show up in California at events for children and the Proud Boys hurt children. That's a description, and no one can object to it.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Heron. To echo Carla in the chat, you make that so clear. Your use of narrative analysis is some of my favorite of your work and I think a perfect opportunity to move into our next question. So the language of hate, which we've been talking about different examples of how it manifests in our world, precedes the language of systemic oppression. We're taught to police our own emotions and treatments of others to analyze the relationships between individuals before we're taught to think critically about our world, if we're taught at all, how it's governed and controlled. Is this pervasive tendency to understand power differentials through the hate frame a natural consequence of human understanding, or is it by design? Obviously you can tell I'm setting up a rhetorical question here. And if the latter, who deploys this language? Where do we see its most efficacious use? And so I'd love to hear from all of you on this question.

**Ben Lorber:** Yeah. This is a really interesting question. And it made me maybe think about how in activist spaces we often talk about the four 'I's' of oppression, right? Oppression can be ideological, meaning the system of ideas that are developed and propagated over time that demonize a specific group and that reify power through ascribing the inferiority to one group usually, and superiority to another group, for example. Oppression can be institutional, right? That's the second I. It can be embedded in our societal institutions from wealth disparities, housing, education, and many other power imbalances that are, you know, really structure the world we live in, and are replicated over time by institutions. Third, it can be interpersonal, right? It can structure the way that we relate to each other. The microaggressions, the ways that we miss the mark in relating to fellow human beings. And fourth, it can be internalized. Ideas of inferiority can be internalized by directly targeted folks themselves in the way they think about themselves in their group; and also internalized by folks of power in the way they think about their own, the superiority of their group.

I think, you know, various interests in our society make it really easy to focus on the interpersonal or the internalized. And that work is important, right? Rooting out personal bigotry that you might hold, being attentive to your interpersonal interactions and the ways that you might be replicating racism or sexism or classism in the way that you treat others on a day to day, face to face basis. Looking at the way that we as individuals internalize these oppressive ideologies, there's a place for that. But it's also very important to not let that be the end horizon of our work for change, but to also really focus on transforming institutions, transforming the concrete structures of our world embedded in wealth disparities, racial disparities in housing, education or wealth, you know,

class and income, every other disparity; and combating ideologies and looking at the ways that those ideologies are reproduced, whether that's through Tucker Carlson on Fox News or through Libs of TikTok on Twitter and Instagram.

And often, you know, I think the state and the liberal center might want us sometimes to make sure that our horizon never moves beyond, as you're saying, Koki, policing our own emotions or the ways that we treat others, to really build powerful movements to challenge these larger systems. And I've been really inspired by authors like Olúfemi Táíwò, who is a philosopher and an activist at Georgetown, I believe, whose new book is called *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics*. And he talks about how since the George Floyd uprising, he's really worried that there's now like a whole cottage industry in the liberal center, which has taken a lot of the outrage from the George Floyd uprising and diverted it into kind of surface level woke initiatives in corporations, or in the nonprofit industrial complex in liberal spaces where the main focus is how we can root out hate that might be in our own heart and our own interactions to show that we as individuals are good people.

And again, that work is important. But often at the state and the liberal center, it wants us to lose that broader horizon of long term structural change and lose our ability to build powerful coalitions. And I also see it in ways that the media just laps up, you know, narratives of former White nationalists who've gone through a transformation to replace the hate in their own heart with love. And again, that work is important, right? You know, moving White nationalists as individuals to change their hearts. There's a place for that, but it's not the whole thing. And if we lose sight of the need to radically transform our structures and institutions and our world, and to really shatter racial capitalism at its root, then we're not going to win. So that's one way I see it manifesting.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Ben. I love that you had some serious calls to action for those of us looking to dismantle these systems. Heron.

**Heron Greenesmith:** Yeah, that made me think a little bit about intersectionality and the trope that the Right is more intersectional than the Left. I'm not sure anyone has heard that, but I've heard it among LGBT activists, mostly White LGBT activists, unsurprisingly, who talk about how the Left is fractured and the Right is very unified. Of course, what they're describing is doctrine, not necessarily something that the Left should be like super excited about. You know, unification and fracture are very relative. I think that's actually powerful to have diversity of voices and diversity of tactics. But it made me think that hate allows—obscures that transphobia is actually weaponized with other forms of oppression, specifically with misogyny and anti-Blackness most

frequently. And to say that someone's only sin is hatred against trans folks is actually completely obscuring the multiple systems that come together to oppress people who live at the marginalization of multiple identities. And looking at—we must look at how anti-Blackness and misogyny intersect with transphobia as structures to see how people's actions are supporting those anti-Black, anti-trans, anti-female-woman-femme systems. Simply looking at different kinds of hate obscures that intersectionality on the Right, which is again just doctrine and saying things like no one should have bodily autonomy. Those things do tend to impact more people. But in case you're worried about the Left being too fractured, don't worry. We have a lot of tactics and a lot of us are doing really good things.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Heron, I think that sort of point that the simplicity of hate can really occlude opportunities for intersectionality is spot on. Habiba would you like to chime in on this question?

**Habiba Farh:** Yeah, sure. I think definitely hate does this by design and obscuring hate is something that enables the system to keep perpetuating. It's a self-perpetuating cycle. And like Heron just said, hate can be intersectional too. But just because it's intersectional does not mean it doesn't have a function or a purpose or a meaning. It usually is to embolden the systems in power, and it usually is because we have social fractures in our social life and our political life that definitely need to be addressed. How these things have to be addressed requires us to have vulnerable conversations about what it means to—what it means to address hate. There is a comment in here about anti-Blackness and queerphobia by other minorities. I think that's a really interesting conversation we really need to have, because within the hate frame, all hate is created equal. We know that's not true. But it is also something very important to address because then White far-right and White supremacist violence continues on if we don't address it. I think, again, these require lots of conversations and it requires us to look at the way our ideas are being formed and the way our allyship and coalitions are also forming. It requires a deeper dive into this, considering the fact that the United States is now more politically divisive than ever.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Habiba. I think we've done a really good job of capturing the full scope of the ways that hate is deployed, the design in doing so, the agents that deploy hate. All three of you have talked already about ways that we can move beyond hate and what it sort of prompts us to do within our movements. I want to move into a very concrete example, and this is, of

course, also an opportunity to talk about PRA's newest and coolest project that we just released yesterday. Each of you are working very much in sort of thinking about ways to move beyond the hate frame. And in particular Ben, you have just published, along with our colleagues Steven Gardiner and Olivia Lawrence-Weilmann, a behemoth project to apply incisive, systemic analysis to the legions—unfortunately, legions—of far-right candidates running for state and federal elections this year. We would love for you to give us an overview of the project, its design, its execution. We'll also follow along with an on screen demonstration, which Olivia, the architect of this map, will be doing from behind the scenes so that we can really see what it looks like to move beyond the hate frame. Olivia, when you're ready, and Ben take it away.

**Ben Lorber:** Thanks, Koki. Yeah. So just yesterday, PRA has released our latest report. It's called '[A Bid for Power: Mapping the electoral far right in the 2022 elections](#).' And in many ways, the 2022 midterm elections are a referendum on the near term viability of American democracy. We're at a time when White nationalists and Christian nationalists, authoritarian, anti-democratic movements are on the rise. And this project aims to use the upcoming midterms as one among many metrics, really, to measure the impact of the far right on U.S. politics and society. And I want to just follow Koki: we had a great team working on this project across all of our departments, and I want to give a special shout out to Olivia Lawrence-Weilmann for her really amazing work designing the super cool map we're going to talk about. Super, super terrifying, but in the ease of its presentation and how user friendly and how useful it is, I think I can safely say that it's really cool.

So what we found in our report is that there are 274 far right candidates across the country who are running in the upcoming 2022 midterms. A full one third of these candidates are incumbents. And I think Olivia is showing right now how you can use, at the top of the screen, you can toggle and show the incumbents. We have 93 far-right candidates who are current incumbents. And you can also use the top of the screen to show that over half of the candidates, 153, have advanced from their primaries to the general election. So, you know, there's there's many ways to use this map, but we're going to look at a couple of the far-right categories. We listed each candidate according to a large amount of different far-right categories they fell under. First we'll look at Christian nationalist/anti-LGBTQ candidates. A full 87 candidates fell under this category. These are folks with ties to Christian nationalist organizations like Project Blitz, often sitting on the board of the main organization that's pushing Project Blitz around the country. And Project Blitz—as our esteemed colleague Fred Clarkson and many others have written about, Fred was the one who originally

discovered it and has really played a leading role in uncovering it—Project Blitz has a national network of Christian Right operatives who are pushing state level legislation to roll back the rights of LGBTQ folks, and enshrine the Christian nationalist vision in our legislative system at the state level.

These are also candidates who sit on the board of anti-trans groups like The Promise to America's Children, which is playing a leading role in advancing the anti-trans legislation around the country. And these are also candidates who are deploying virulent anti-LGBTQ rhetoric or Christian nationalist rhetoric, like saying, for example, that the US is or should be a Christian nation, or that there should be no separation between church and state. So that's one category.

We also have another category of conspiracy theories. We found a full 80 candidates who have ties to Conspiracism. You know, many of these folks are promoting the QAnon conspiracy theory, and/or are promoting the slogans of the conspiracy theory, like 'where we go one, we go all,' right. These are catch words that are used to signal allegiance to QAnon that candidates are deploying to kind of try to tap into the QAnon base. These are also candidates who advance really wild systemic conspiracies about the COVID 19 pandemic. Right. Not only that, you know, this or that vaccine might not work or is not effective. But, you know, the COVID 19 vaccines are part of a global elitist plot to depopulate human society and institute a global reign of domination. That level of systemic conspiracism.

We're also looking at other categories: the candidates who are denying the 2020 elections, leading Stop the Steal rallies, attending the January 6th insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. We're looking at racial and ethnic nationalist candidates who are connected to White nationalist movements like the Groyper Movement or to Islamophobic and anti-immigrant groups. We're looking at candidates who are connected to the Patriot movement or other anti-government movements; who are connected to militias or to constitutional sheriffs. And finally, we're also looking at the over 115 candidates who have broad, far-right connections. You know, folks who have appeared on Steve Bannon's podcast, folks who have appeared on QAnon podcasts. Folks who attended events organized by militia leaders.

So in our map, you can look at the the geographic spread of these candidates. You can look on the right, to our list of of individuals. And you can hover over, as Olivia is doing right now, to really see an in-depth description of the far-right connections of each candidate. Obviously, we have over 270 of these. So we can't talk about all of them. But we'll see familiar names there, like Marjorie Taylor Greene, who really sits at the intersection—as Heron and Habiba described, far-right leaders sit at the intersection of many different kinds of oppression. You know, someone like Marjorie Taylor Greene has promoted



White nationalist, Great Replacement rhetoric, has sold T-shirts saying she's a proud Christian nationalist, has promoted QAnon Conspiracies. She was a key congressional ally in election denial. She's connected to Islamophobes, anti-immigrant groups. So there are familiar names like Marjorie Taylor Greene, and there are many, many candidates who fly under the radar. They're connected to groups like America First S.O.S., a network of secretary of state candidates who are trying to get elected in order to have a direct role in undermining our democratic institutions from within.

And you can look at the the states. You can look at states like Arizona, which is leading the way with 21 at least far-right candidates, followed by Texas, Florida, Michigan. We should say these are only candidates who are running at the state and national level. There are many, many other candidates who are running for local races, like school boards that are beyond our capacity to track, but that's a major terrain of far right organizing.

So just really briefly, I'm going to talk about why the hate frame is inappropriate, like why our project seeks to take a different approach beyond hate or extremism frames. Right. What we're finding is that the line between the Far Right and the MAGA movement is permeable and it's shifting. The embrace of ideas that come from a part of the political spectrum that have long been considered beyond the pale; ideas like the U.S. as a Christian nation or White people are being replaced. These ideas are now enshrined at the heart of the conservative movement. And when we say that there are over 270 far right candidates, we're not setting out to measure the sentiments they hold in their hearts. We're looking at the impacts of social movements on already existing, deeply embedded structures of systemic White supremacy, cis-hetero patriarchy. So we're not saying each of these 274 people is a hate filled extremist.

Because what does it mean to call Marjorie Taylor Greene a quote unquote extremist when she is one of the most popular Republican leaders, one of the highest fundraisers on the right? The ideas that someone like Marjorie Taylor Greene represents are at the heart of the conservative movement, they're rapidly moving mainstream. Even if some of these ideas would not have been articulated by political leaders, even like, you know, five years ago, they're expressions of the deeply rooted structural White supremacy at the heart of the American project. And so it doesn't make sense to call it hate, it doesn't make sense to call it extremism. What but does make sense is to call it a coordinated, far-right political project that we have to meet by building our own powerful movements to defend multiracial democracy and promote a truly just and inclusive society. So I'll stop there, but we've dropped links to the report in the chat. And yeah, we encourage everyone to spread it, share it around and continue your organizing.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Ben. It's a serious resource, but also to quote, I think it's Kay Richardson: that is 274 candidates too many. I also just want to mention, you know, this is Ben's brainchild. Your work in this project has been incredible, along with Steven Gardner, Olivia Lawrence-Weilmann, as you mentioned, designed and developed the map with support from Sam Smith and Julia Cameron, and Abigail Hadfield made sure that everything we present on this map is factually correct and we have evidence for our claims put forward. So this was a huge collaborative effort, and I think one that's really demonstrative of the way that PRA is committed to evidencing why we have to move beyond the hate frame in order to make material change.

Staying in sort of the 'concrete evidence strategies for moving beyond' lane, I'd like to shift to you Heron. I wouldn't be doing communications work at PRA if I weren't deeply interested in narrative power and strategic narrative shifts. You have done some of the most compelling work in this vein in your time at PRA, prefiguring the recent increase of horrific, coordinated and sustained attacks on the rights, well-being and dignity of trans people in the U.S.. Can you talk us through your work in this area, in particular, how you counter the obscuring narrative frameworks of TERFs (trans exclusionary radical feminists), parental rights and detransitioning. What does moving beyond this language look like in practice and in partnership with those in our social justice movement ecosphere?

**Heron Greensmith:** Thank you. As Ben was talking, I was thinking the map is absolutey incredible. Please spend as much time—if you hover over the plus signs, it'll pop up a full description of the candidate and have quotes and citations. It's really amazing.

As Ben was talking, I was thinking about relativity and context and how saying someone is hateful requires a mutual understanding of what is considered extreme. And that target keeps moving, especially as we are in a global shift towards authoritarianism, and the Overton Window is shifting towards the right in some geographic areas. Using a relative term that requires mutual understanding of context, like 'hate,' will often obscure communication between two people who want to say that something is propping up an oppressive system or somehow enacting violence against a specific group of people.

In some contexts, something may seem hateful, and in other contexts it is not hateful. Just another reason why description is far more helpful than ascription. As far as the narrative changing work. I've been working on this training for feminist and women's groups to help them build confidence in recognizing and disrupting specifically anti-trans feminist rhetoric and then

kind of more broadly, anti-trans rhetoric in general. And in the four years I've been doing that training, I went from talking with small groups who just maybe have some legacy donors or some legacy board members who have been espousing anti-trans, mild, anti-trans rhetoric, to—I trained a group of national anti-violence programs across the country, some of whom are on the call here, who reported, to a person, that their programs have been receiving secret recordings; their staff have been harassed online and in public; they have been reported to state and local boards for grooming and for pedophilia. The harassment of trans serving and trans led organizations is increasing exponentially, and that the increase seems to also been speeding up, which means exponential, right? This one is exponential or is this logarithmic?

**Koki Mendis:** Exponential.

**Heron Greenesmith:** Right? I got it right. Is the logarithmic one this one? This is just algebraic, right? Never mind. I'm looking to the chat to see if anyone's helping. So in that—we've talked here about how mindset is not super important when we are analyzing, but Ben did—I think it was Ben—talked about how our internal mindset in interrogating our own replication of systems is actually quite important for doing this work, and quite important for being an anti-racist, and quite important for being someone who supports trans justice. You do need to interrogate what systems you're perpetuating. And so in the training, we start from a frame of abundance versus scarcity: with the understanding that people who are conservative necessarily understand that there is a scarceness, a scarcity of resources to create the conditions of wealth and health and safety and well-being for people; and people who are progressive believe that those resources exist now to create those conditions on Earth right now, and we're just hoarding them among specific people.

So if we speak from a space of abundance, we are less likely to replicate systems that rely on a scarcity mindset to perpetuate themselves. So when we speak from abundance, we can speak from personal abundance, we can speak from organizational abundance, from network abundance, from wealth abundance. Versus speaking from a space of scarcity where you may be incentivized to draw lines between people who deserve access to the conditions created by those resources and people who don't deserve access to the conditions created by those scarce resources. I can take a step further. I'd like to stop there and I want to make sure we have time for questions and everything. That's been super successful in helping folks interrogate whether or not they are replicating systems. And we don't talk about hate because it doesn't matter. Many of us, we talked in the chat, many of us have internalized

systems of oppression within us. Many of us White people are anti-Black. We have been taught to be anti-Black. In order to disrupt that anti-Blackness, we need to do the interrogation within ourselves. The same thing is true for transphobia. The same thing is true for all systems of oppression because they are relying on us to perpetuate them.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Heron. I think that's a very clear example of what moving beyond very restrictive language, reductive language looks like in practice and how it expands beyond—sort of also the the hate frame at which we're we're talking mostly about today. This hate frame, as I mentioned, is one of our core frameworks. And surfacing and disseminating PRA's core frameworks has been identified as a major commitment for our work moving forward. And it is at this level of design and intent a newer kind of project for the organization. To understand what this work will look like, Habiba can you talk us through what the Beyond the Hate Frame project aims to do and what our audience should keep an eye out for?

**Habiba Farh:** Yeah. So this is a baby project finally coming into the world and like all projects, it's going to take time and it's going to take a lot of input from movement partners and allies for it to finally take off the ground. But at the moment, PRA is refining the language and the contours of this framework so movement partners and allies have the same language and frameworks to operate from. I think that transition from it being a set of observations we all know about into a solid category with a word and terminology—once we have that down, it becomes a little bit easier to operate the world we're navigating for. Or you know, be a little bit more goal oriented.

If you want something a little bit more solid and something in your hand, keep your eye out on a 101. PRA does 101s on things that have to do with the Far Right, with theories. And so you can have a good overview, an understanding of what the hate frame is. It's going to be a really great educational tool for movement partners, activists, journalists and people who just want to know what the hate frame is and what moving beyond it looks like. We're also doing a thing where we respond to institutions and organizations that are invested in perpetuating the hate frame. Like all frameworks, there are thought leaders and people who are intellectually, politically, socially and economically invested in this framework. And we want to show how our frameworks are better addressing the current social and political moment. This is going to be through op-eds, through reports, through our own individual works with—at least for me, with the Stop CVE Coalition, you can see their work and contact me and talk more about it. I can see some of my colleagues from that coalition

over on the call, too. But Heron and Ben and Ethan and Fred are my other research colleagues who are also working on dismantling the hate frame in their own work. And it would be interesting to see where that takes us in the future. But once we give this framework a body and contours and a language, I'm sure we're able to make our own theoretical and political interventions for a better world.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Habiba. There's a lot to look forward to and I really appreciate you sort of talking us through what the outputs are going to look like and the different ways in which PRA is really looking to move beyond the hate frame, not just internally, but in conversation with a lot of the folks who perpetuate it, as you said, and materially benefit from it. I'm going to close our conversation before—we can talk about a couple of questions if we have some good ones. But before we close, I'd like to take a minute to hear from each of you. Where have you seen compelling or successful examples or wins in demystifying systemic oppression, either in your work, PRA's work, or led by others in the most incredible movement that we operate within? What examples demonstrate that we can and will make waves in changing how people understand the world in which they live, struggle, survive and flourish?

**Ben Lorber:** Yeah. I just want to take a minute to shout out the work of a few people that I've seen on this call, actually, especially Sophie Ellman-Golan, Leo Ferguson at Jews for Racial and Economic Justice in New York. I think in the last, let's say, six or seven years, we've really seen like new, vibrant and powerful efforts by Jews in progressive movements and progressive Jewish organizations like JFREJ in New York to advance really radical new understandings of antisemitism that seek to provoke these narrative shifts in a lot of ways that we describe. Right. Seeing antisemitism as intersectionally connected to other kinds of oppression, seeing the role that antisemitism and its conspiracies play in upholding racial capitalism. Seeing ways in which antisemitism is at the core of White nationalism.

And this is also, of course, work that PRA does in partnership with groups like JFREJ and Bend The Arc and others. But, you know, it's really Jewish leaders on the ground who have really led the way in putting some of this visionary analysis out in the world and working with movement partners to increase all of our understanding of antisemitism, which it includes ways that we on the Left and progressive movements sometimes lapse into antisemitism and miss the mark, and ways that we can learn how not to replicate it in the ways that we speak to each other, in the ways that we speak about systems of oppression in the world.

And especially—just since JFREJ is on the call they're on my heart and mind right now—just been really inspired by the ways that on the ground, JFREJ and allies are pioneering new work to interrupt and combat antisemitism when antisemitic attacks occur, by forming powerful coalitions with other marginalized groups and showing up for each other when we are attacked. Leading the way and doing bystander or upstander trainings to really find ways to build community alternatives to responding to attacks that don't rely on calling the police; that don't rely on the surveillance state; that don't rely on armed security at synagogues or other institutions. But that look like different communities showing up and forging safety through solidarity, and providing security and de-escalation tactics at our places of worship and our community centers. And we saw JFREJ mobilizing on the ground during the early days of the COVID crisis, when AAPI communities were being targeted with special brutality; and seeing that in an ongoing way in different groups, really showing up for each other on the ground and building safety through solidarity and imagining what different ways of understanding antisemitism and all forms of oppression can look like. And seeing them intersectionally and fighting them intersectionally and building a stronger movement together.

**Koki Mendis:** Wonderful. Thank you, Ben. Shout to JFREJ, so glad you all are in the audience today. And Ben, you also just responded to one of the questions that have come up on StopAsianHate, you know, really thinking about how solidarity is a way to sidestep hate narratives to build power and address systems. Heron, Habiba, examples that come to mind when we think about demystifying systemic oppression?

**Heron Greenesmith:** I can go quickly. And Brandon, I'm going to be answering your question as well. Brandon asks, given how in the U.S. the media ecosystem is dominated by a handful of conglomerates, where do you see the best opportunities to shift narratives? I'm going to answer that question laterally and talk a little bit about... as anti-trans activism has been increasing in the past two years, I've had the opportunity to talk to a lot of journalists about it, and talking with journalists and providing narrative shift framing is something that PRA prioritizes and specializes in. And it's been very gratifying to be able to provide journalists with better language than the language around anti-trans feminists and the Christian Right, which is always framed as strange bedfellows. In fact, I have been guilty of framing that partnership that way in the past.

But now, as I have better colleagues who can help me rhetorically talk about what we do better, I'm able to help journalists reframe it to: the Christian Right is solidifying the same systems that it has solidified for the past couple hundred

years in this country—couple hundred more across the world—and is, as it always does, platforming specific people who will reify its own ideas, because there will always be members of minority groups who are willing to throw their own minority group members under busses. And the Christian Right and other factions of the Right will always capitalize on those voices to give their advocacy the veneer of a broader base of support than it does have. So I've been really grateful to work with the journalists that I have in some mainstream publications to shift the narrative around partnerships between different factions of the Right who are coordinating together to attack justice for trans people.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Heron, for that great response. Habiba, go ahead. I saw you come off mute.

**Habiba Farh:** Oh, yeah. Just very quickly, I'm very proud of the work that the Stop CVE coalition does. It requires that coalition to work up and respond to the White House and the Department of Homeland Security. It also requires political education, so our own community members of why CVE is not it. It's very rewarding. And like Heron said, it's very gratifying to do this work. But also because while you're doing this work, you end up finding colleagues and allies. And when you know you're not alone in the experience or in the fight against systemic racism or oppression, you become empowered. And so I think that's one of the best, most gratifying parts of doing this coalition work.

**Koki Mendis:** Amazing, Habiba. I think that's a perfect note to end on. Thank you, Heron, Habiba and Ben for a fabulous conversation. I think we have really thoroughly answered the question: what is the hate frame and how do we move beyond it, in this first iteration. I know we have lots more to look forward to. I want to thank you all in the audience for staying with us past 5pm East Coast time today for this conversation and joining us. Again, I invite you to get involved with PRA. Write for us. Connect your organization to ours. Join us in our work or consider supporting us in ours. If you want to donate, you can go to [politicalresearch.org](http://politicalresearch.org) and help fund the mission to overturn the hate frame and create something much more productive and powerful in its place. So again, thank you, Ben Habiba and Heron.