

ARTICLE

“It can’t happen here”: Trump, authoritarianism and American politics

Daniel Burston

Department of Psychology, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Correspondence

Daniel Burston, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, 214 Rockwell Hall, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA 15282, USA.
Email: burston@duq.edu

Abstract

Donald Trump's election on November 8, 2016, alarmed many people in the United States and around the world. Explanations for his popularity vary widely, but prominent among them is the idea of authoritarianism, or the authoritarian personality. Current discussions of authoritarianism in sociology and political science generally adopt (or adapt) the version as outlined by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford, which first appeared in 1950 in the United States but generally ignore the earlier articulations of “the authoritarian character”, which were psychoanalytic, and stressed the sado-masochistic character traits that presumably prompted people to support fascistic leaders, and which appeared in the 1930s in Germany. This paper reviews the history of the concept of authoritarianism, and the ways in which recent discussions of sado-masochism in the clinical arena have, with rare exceptions, become detached from discussions of authoritarianism in the sociological and political science literature. It ponders the applicability of this concept to the Trump Presidency, and the parallels between the situation in Weimar in the 1930s and the United States today.

KEYWORDS

authoritarianism, Donald Trump, fascism, sado-masochism

1 | IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE

“It can't happen ... *Here*. It can't happen ... *Here*” (Zappa, 1966). I was 15 years old when I heard Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention intoning this phrase – dully, ironically – against a background of cacophonous (and vaguely distressing) noise on one of their early albums. Their real message? To my innocent (still cannabis free) adolescent imagination this bit of surrealist theater, wedged into an equally puzzling and digressive “song”, was really saying: “Hey stupid, it *can* happen here!” Or worse yet, perhaps: “And yes brother, it *will* happen here if we lull ourselves to sleep with phony reassurances like these”.

I did not know this at the time, but Zappa must have known that “It Can't Happen Here” is the name of a semi-satirical novel written by Sinclair Lewis published in 1935, and adapted for the stage by John and Lewis Moffit in

1936. It tells the story of a fictional politician, “Buzz” Windrip, whose campaign slogans eerily presaged those of Donald Trump. In the novel, Windrip wins a presidential election and, once in office, relies on paramilitary organizations to circumvent the law and impose his will on the American people, trashing the constitution and freedom of the press. Windrip’s character was modeled on Hitler, of course, but also on Louisiana Governor Huey Long who was pondering a run for the presidency at the time. Long never ran, thankfully, but meanwhile, the novel (and its name) poked fun at a widespread delusion, born of American exceptionalism, that democracy is perfectly safe in America and that it is only those crazy Europeans – Italians, Germans, Spaniards, etc. – who succumb to the temptations and the threat of fascism. Right? No, no, no. It simply *can’t* happen here.

Of course, Sinclair Lewis (1935) wasn’t the only American novelist to explore the theme of fascism in America. Jack London took a prescient crack at it a decade before fascism was really a “thing”, in *Martin Eden* (1909). Then, long after the fact, Philip Roth revisited this idea in *The Plot Against America* (2004). In the past, their literary efforts probably provoked nervous laughter or mild consternation. But nothing really prepared us for the unnerving spectacle of Donald Trump’s victory. After the election on November 8, 2016, email list-serves that link psychotherapists online – here in the United States, and elsewhere, around the world – were inundated with cries of outrage, perplexity and despair. I belong to three list-serves – one psychoanalytic, one Jungian and one humanistic – and found that the questions and comments posted on these sites immediately before and after the election were strikingly similar. If I may paraphrase some of them, one recurrent theme, of course, was: “What role does the clinician play in times of social and political crisis? How can we best facilitate a psychological understanding of the patient’s (conscious and unconscious) response to events?” A similar, but much more urgent and personal pre-election question was: “How do I address my patients’ (pre)election anxiety and/or depression analytically, when I myself am terrified about the potential outcome?” Or, along similar lines: “How do we address the anxiety of patients who belong to (racial, religious or sexual) minorities that feel menaced by Trump’s rhetoric?” And after the election: “How do I address my patients’ anguish and despair, when I myself am convinced that Trump’s victory is a catastrophe?” Another common theme (across orientations) was: “How can we bring our community’s special (analytic, Jungian or humanistic) gifts and perspectives to bear on the more widespread social malaise that spawned the Trump Presidency?” and, “What, if anything, are our responsibilities as citizens and therapists and how do we disentangle and/or reconcile the two?”

While few of us expected Trump to actually win the presidency, the comments and questions that followed in the wake of his election were all quite predictable; precisely the questions you would expect psychotherapists to ask themselves and their colleagues at times like these. And one other question that troubled therapists and patients alike is “What explains Trump’s unquestionable appeal to so many?”

There is no single, simple answer to this question. Among the many factors cited by pollsters, pundits, and public intellectuals is the abject failure of neo-liberal policies and the continuing fallout from globalization, the Democratic party’s abandonment of the working class, the gradual decline of the middle class, the revolt of rural and small town America against the big cities (and their elites), the failure of the American educational system, the culture of celebrity, and the fear of the dwindling white majority that power is slipping away from them. Last but not least, there are lamentations from many quarters that we live in a “post-factual age”, where a flagrant disregard for truth, and a collective craving for sensational entertainment, conspiracy theories, and “spin” have completely supplanted serious political discourse (see, for example, Postman, 2000; Hedges, 2009; Singer, 2016).

2 | AUTHORITARIANISM

There is a measure of truth in all of these arguments. However, another factor that contributed mightily to Trump’s popularity, according to some social scientists, is authoritarianism, or as it is still called, in some quarters, “the authoritarian personality”. Writing in *Politico*, Matthew MacWilliams (2016, January 17) said:

Authoritarianism is not a new, untested concept in the American electorate. Since the rise of Nazi Germany, it has been one of the most widely studied ideas in social science. While its causes are still debated, the

political behavior of authoritarians is not. Authoritarians obey. They rally to and follow strong leaders. And they respond aggressively to outsiders, especially when they feel threatened. From pledging to “make America great again” by building a wall on the border to promising to close mosques and ban Muslims from visiting the United States, Trump is playing directly to authoritarian inclinations.

And in *The Atlantic* magazine, Dan McAdams (2016) wrote:

During and after World War II, psychologists conceived of the authoritarian personality as a pattern of attitudes and values revolving around adherence to society’s traditional norms, submission to authorities who personify or reinforce those norms, and antipathy – to the point of hatred and aggression – toward those who either challenge in-group norms or lie outside their orbit. Among white Americans, high scores on measures of authoritarianism today tend to be associated with prejudice against a wide range of “out-groups”, including homosexuals, African Americans, immigrants, and Muslims. Authoritarianism is also associated with suspiciousness of the humanities and the arts, and with cognitive rigidity, militaristic sentiments, and Christian fundamentalism.

Although McAdams cites unspecified psychologists working “during and after WWII”, in truth, research on authoritarianism began in the late 1920s among a group of left-leaning psychoanalysts and social scientists in Germany. They were trying to fathom the psychological roots of Hitler’s appeal and the seemingly inexorable rise of fascism which destroyed what little was left of Weimar, prompting them to flee to the United States in 1933 (and subsequently). The literature they produced is fascinating, but seldom heeded by clinicians nowadays.

3 | SADO-MASOCHISM

The oldest among them was Wilhelm Reich, a gifted training analyst at the Berlin institute who authored an influential text entitled *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (Reich, 1933/1976). Like many of his contemporaries, including many non-analysts, Reich was struck by the quasi-religious character of the Nazi movement. He interpreted the religious and mystical dimensions of Nazi propaganda and ritual – which were steeped in neo-pagan and occult symbolism – as expressions of pronounced sado-masochistic tendencies in the collective psyche. Why?

When it is used to describe a sexual phenomenon, the word “sado-masochism” denotes a kind of emotional numbness, or an inability to experience full sexual arousal and release without first inflicting pain on others, or having pain inflicted on oneself. But this narrow definition of sado-masochism was abandoned, or more accurately, expanded by Freud and his followers early on (Freud, 1966). Following the famous forensic pathologist, Richard von Krafft-Ebing (Krafft-Ebing, 1903), Freud noted that sadism and masochism seldom appear in pure form, and that sadistic and masochistic tendencies are always found together in the same person. As a result, a person who prefers the sadistic role, as a rule, still harbors masochistic tendencies, because a great deal of the pleasure derived from sadism derives from a process of unconscious identification with their victim. Conversely the masochist identifies with the sadist and derives pleasure from this in the midst of his pain. (This also explains why sado-masochists often exchange roles).

Taking his cue from Freud, Reich (1933/1976) said that our definition of sado-masochism must be expanded beyond overt sexual behavior to include sadistic and masochistic *character traits*, which may or may not take on an overtly sexual form. People with a predominantly sadistic character may not practice kinky sex, but they take great pleasure in dominating and humiliating people, robbing them of their dignity and their powers of autonomous action. They love power and control. Masochists, by contrast, take comfort in submission. They feel anxious unless they are neurotically attached to a more powerful person who tells them what to do. They love power and control too, but typically seek it out in others, rather than trying to seize it for themselves. According to Reich, many of Hitler’s followers fit the masochistic profile. Why? Because to participate in the Nazi movement, they abandoned their conscience and their critical faculties and obeyed their leader, regardless of how heinous and bizarre his ideas and behavior were.

In *Escape From Freedom* (Fromm, 1941), another meditation on the rise of Nazism, a younger analyst, Erich Fromm said that authoritarians carry on this way because they fear freedom and cannot genuinely love other human beings. The most they can manage is a kind of sordid intimacy with others that he called “symbiotic attachment”. Fromm thought that people with a pronounced and open preference for sado-masochistic sex were relatively rare, but that sadistic and masochistic *character traits* were quite prevalent in the general population and, like Reich (1976), he maintained that when they proliferate beyond a certain point, authoritarian and anti-democratic regimes flourish. In such circumstances, people whose sexual habits are relatively normal will support narcissistic leaders whose sanity is often quite precarious and whose fantasies of omnipotence and/or racial superiority beguile the imaginations of their (often powerless) followers.

By a curious coincidence, Jean Paul Sartre put forward some similar ideas in *Being and Nothingness*, which appeared in 1943. Sartre was not probing the roots of fascism, but discussing the nature of “the look”, or in contemporary terminology, of intersubjectivity generally. Sartre (1956) resembled Fromm in not treating sadism and masochism as specifically sexual disorders, but as more encompassing modes of relatedness that may or may not be expressed in sexual form. However, Sartre differed dramatically from Fromm in one respect; he believed that *all* intimate relationships oscillate, in principle, between the tendency to objectify the other (which he termed sadism) or to be objectified by others (which he termed masochism). And by his account, there *are* no alternative modes of relatedness that surpass or transcend these wretched alternatives – which explains Fromm’s antipathy to Sartrean existentialism (Burston & Frie, 2006).

While Fromm and Sartre never met or corresponded, at least to my knowledge, in *The Legacy of Erich Fromm* (1991), I discuss how Fromm came under Reich’s influence in 1927, but gradually broke off relations with him. From 1927 to 1933, Reich was an active member of the Communist Party, which had strong ties to Moscow. Fromm and his associates at the Frankfurt School, as it came to be known, mistrusted Soviet communism profoundly. Moreover, as he left Reich’s sphere of influence, Fromm and his wife Frieda drifted into Georg Groddeck’s circle, along with their friend Karen Horney and Groddeck’s friend and occasional patient, Sandor Ferenczi. As Fromm (and the rest of Groddeck’s friendship circle) drifted away from Freudian orthodoxy, Fromm became increasingly skeptical about Reich’s claim that sado-masochistic character traits derive principally from the patient’s thwarted sexuality. Instead, he came to think of sado-masochism as an alienated mode of relatedness to others that compromises the patient’s ability to function in a healthy and autonomous fashion; one acquired in a failed attempt to overcome one’s “existential aloneness” and fear of freedom. By this account, sado-masochism is not actually a sexual perversion in the first instance. It is a *modus operandi* that becomes sexualized – if at all – only *after* the person has despaired (consciously or otherwise) of achieving intimacy without first objectifying others or being objectified by them.

In any case, while *Escape From Freedom* (Fromm, 1941) remains Fromm’s best known study of authoritarianism, his initial research on pro-fascist sympathies among factory workers in the Weimar Republic actually occurred in 1929, when he was Director for Social Psychological Research at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, a post he held until 1938 when he was replaced by Theodor Adorno who used Fromm’s (still unpublished) work as a pilot study, which informed his (much larger, and better known) study of pro-fascist attitudes among Americans called *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Significantly, Adorno found some striking correlations between what he termed “pseudo-conservative” trends and proto-fascist thinking among Americans, and between these and racism, anti-Semitism, and intense religiosity. And since religiosity was quite prevalent among conservatives and tended to be absent or scarce among left-leaning participants in his study, Adorno and his co-authors concluded that authoritarianism is really a right wing phenomenon.

Unlike Adorno and his co-authors (1950), from the very outset, Fromm found authoritarianism flourishing on the right and the left alike. He lamented the idolatrous, corrosive nationalism of Cold Warriors – “My country, right or wrong”, “Better dead than Red”, etc. – but also called attention to the blinkered mentality of Stalinists. In a memorable passage in *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950), Fromm described a conversation with

an intelligent Stalinist who exhibits a great capacity to make use of his reason in many areas of thought. When we come to discuss Stalinism with him, however, we are suddenly confronted with a closed system of thought ... He will deny certain obvious facts, distort others, or, inasmuch as he agrees with certain facts or statements, he will explain his attitude as logical and consistent. He will at the same time declare that the fascist cult of the leader is one of the most obnoxious features of authoritarianism and claim that the Stalinist cult of the leader is something entirely different, that it is the genuine expression of the people's love for Stalin. When you tell him that is what the Nazis claimed too, he will smile tolerantly about your want of perception or accuse you of being a lackey of capitalism. He will find a thousand and one reasons why Russian nationalism is not nationalism, why authoritarianism is democracy, why slave labor is designed to educate and improve anti-social elements. The arguments which are used to defend or explain the deeds of the Inquisition or those used to explain racial or sexual prejudices are illustrations of the same rationalizing capacity. (p. 56)

Adorno and his associates did not take kindly to Fromm's critique of their work, and seldom cited his contributions in their own publications. And as a result, sociologists and political scientists who adapted Adorno et al.'s concepts and methods, or some version of them, after WWII seldom cited Fromm either. With a few notable exceptions, notably Robert Altemeyer and his associates in Canada (Altemeyer, 1996), very few social scientists who conducted research on "the authoritarian personality" after WWII addressed or even admitted to the presence of authoritarianism on the Left (Burston, 1991; McLaughlin, 2014). And even as research on authoritarianism proceeded apace among sociologists and political scientists, most clinicians did not find the concept of the authoritarianism particularly useful or relevant in their attempts to understand or help their patients.

And so, the question of whether – or to what extent – sado-masochism is a by-product of sexual frustration (Freud, Reich) or of a more encompassing mode of relatedness lay dormant, by and large, until Jessica Benjamin's book *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* (Benjamin, 1988). Benjamin gave the concept of sado-masochism as a mode of relatedness renewed relevance for clinicians but did not address the socio-political dimensions of this concept in any great depth. By contrast, sociologist Lynn Chancer's book, *Sado-Masochism and Everyday Life: The Dynamics of Power and Powerlessness*, applied the concept of sado-masochism as a mode of relatedness in very concrete ways in her illuminating reflections on class, race, gender relations and alienation in the American workplace (Chancer, 1992).

4 | THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE ANALYSIS OF AUTHORITARIAN AND SADOWASOCHISTIC TENDENCIES

So despite many interruptions, and long interludes of silence on this matter, the whole discussion about authoritarianism that was kindled *before* WWII is still relevant and ongoing. It has lain dormant for some time, but has sputtered back to life in recent decades although, for the most part, it now proceeds on two separate tracks. Clinicians addressing sado-masochism as a mode of relatedness tend to shy away addressing political and social issues, or do so mostly in passing, while sociologists and political scientists tend to ignore questions of etiology or treatment, which are largely irrelevant from their point of view. And perhaps that is just as well, since the attempt to re-integrate these discourses may merely produce another round of sectarian squabbling, as it did in the past (Burston, 1991).

Nevertheless, if, as Chancer (1992) and Altemeyer (1996) contended, sado-masochistic and authoritarian tendencies are widespread in the population at large (as Reich and Fromm first claimed) we may be in serious trouble. After all, we just watched as millions of Americans elected a candidate who rose to fame as the host of a "reality TV" show in which he dominated, controlled, and humiliated prospective employees; who promoted "law and order" while quoting Mussolini; a candidate whose policy pronouncements frequently ignored (or negated) the US constitution; who thrives on tabloid style conspiracy theories; who lies and fabricates freely, without inhibition or remorse; whose sexist,

racist and anti-Semitic attitudes are plain to see; who “re-tweets” posts from white supremacist websites, and openly praises dictators like Vladimir Putin. One does not have to be a psychoanalyst or a social scientist to be alarmed by Trump’s thuggish, bullying demeanor, his thinly veiled (and sometimes perfectly transparent) incitements to violence against his critics and opponents, his denigrating remarks about women, his palpable contempt for minorities and disabled people, etc., all of which are heavily tinged with sadism. So indeed is his relentless, compassion-free (but widely admired) obsession with “winners” and “losers”, the powerful and powerless.

Are all of Trump’s followers authoritarian or sadistic? No, of course not. Many of them are basically decent people whose longstanding anger and disappointment at the economic injustices they have suffered prompts them to lash out at elites and policies they feel have failed them and their families over the last several decades – Trump’s “forgotten Americans”, including (but not limited to) the white working and middle classes. With that said, it is also undeniably true that many of Trump’s most ardent and devoted fans and supporters really *are* vicious racists, like his chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, former CEO of Breitbart News, and David Duke of the Ku Klux Klan which, along with many other racist groups, exulted in Trump’s victory. Others are merely low-intensity authoritarians whose anger and feelings of powerlessness prompt them to admire strong men and “winners”, and to rally to his support, initially, but who will be deeply disillusioned with Trump after a brief period in office.

Unfortunately for us, a somewhat similar coalition of forces preceded the Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933. While historical parallels like these are necessarily inexact, they can and should be heeded. Writing in *The Huffington Post* this past July, Pamela Cooper-White (2016), a psychoanalyst and professor at Union Theological Seminary noted that:

At the end of World War I, the Germans and their allies were punished by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. They had lost over 3 million soldiers during the war, and at the end of the war the people were ... literally starving, and further ravaged by Spanish flu that swept the continent in 1918. There was a profound, global economic depression. The imperial aggressors – especially the ordinary people who were neither politicians nor military leaders, but simply ground up by the consequences of war – found it easy to view themselves as victims, and Hitler’s rhetoric of nationalism and making Germany a great imperial power filled a vacuum that felt irresistible. People blamed the more liberal democratic government – the Weimar Republic – along with Jews, Socialists and Communists, for collaborating with the Allied Powers and betraying the German cause. Whipped up by Hitler’s charismatic racial rhetoric, people’s previously more private anti-Semitic words and deeds found permission to be released as hate speech and overt violence. Hitler’s bizarre blend of pseudo-Christianity and Volkscultur (with Wagnerian opera as its grand art form) invoked a shared cultural narcissism on a massive scale ...

Consider the parallels today. During the Vietnam War and subsequent wars ..., Americans have sent millions of young family members overseas. While not rising nearly to the numbers lost during the two world wars, poor and working class families (especially since the end of the draft) have sent their loved ones and received back a disproportionate number of flag-draped coffins, and wounded warriors. Countless families cope with the invisible wounds of PTSD and “moral injury” (that is, young men and women who saw atrocities and were commanded to commit them, pitting their sense of honor and duty against their own deepest moral values). We have lived economically through a “great recession” and job loss, and the widening gap between rich and poor ... Many around the globe consider us, like the empires of the 20th century, to be the modern imperial aggressors – yet conservative political rhetoric ... frames us as the innocent victims hated by the forces of evil in the Middle East ... So in America today, many who view themselves as ordinary people ... feel ground up by global political, economic, and military trends far beyond their personal control. It is easy for middle Americans to view themselves as victims, and Donald Trump’s rhetoric of nationalism and “making America great again” is filling a vacuum that feels irresistible. Trump’s ... followers blame the liberal democratic government, Wall Street (which invokes the specter of anti-Semitism against Jewish financiers), and immigrants, for taking away their jobs and

destroying the comfortable white middle-class America, the myth of apple pie and picket fences and Yankee Doodle Dandy they thought they could rely on.

Does this mean that a fascist takeover of the United States government takeover is inevitable? No, but let's face it, that is an objective possibility and one that we must reckon with immediately if we hope to avert it in the not-too-distant future. Meanwhile, as we ponder strategies to address this dreadful prospect, we would be wise to distinguish between the terms "authoritarian" and "fascistic". Many people use these terms interchangeably, but in fact there are some important differences between the two. Put simply, all fascists are authoritarians, but not all authoritarians are fascists. Authoritarianism (of various kinds) predates the rise of the modern nation state by several millennia (at least), and will likely survive its passing – assuming that there are still any of us left alive after the looming mass extinction that Trump and his supporters steadfastly deny is creeping up on us now. To really fit the fascist profile, the person or movement in question must be authoritarian *and* must subscribe to a passionate nationalism that embraces irrationalism, violence and the otherization and scapegoating of minorities. Historian Robert O. Paxton listed the following criteria of a genuinely fascist movement (Paxton, 2004). A fascist leader and his followers emphasize:

- a sense of overwhelming crisis
- a belief in the primacy of the group as against the individual
- a dread of this group's decline due to liberal, individualistic, or alien influences
- a desire for closer integration of this group
- a need for authority by "natural leaders"
- a belief in such leaders' instincts over abstract reasoning
- an infatuation with violence.

Paxton (2004) then went on to note that fascism is a way of defining a nation in divisive, exclusionary terms, as a fixed, racially derived entity, so that, for example, German Jews, who had been crucial participants in the making of modern, cosmopolitan German culture, suddenly became aliens, outsiders, the Other. He also pointed out, quite rightly, that fascist nationalism is really a sham. Fascists are not really patriots. They do not love their country, much less humankind, as they frequently pretend. The collective phantasy systems they spawn and subscribe too are the products of a malignant group narcissism which privileges their favored racial or ethnic group, devaluing (and/or demonizing) all others; a vivid and disturbing form of what Erik Erikson called "pseudo-speciation" (Burston, 2007). Calling this sort of thing patriotism is an insult to the intelligence of any thinking person. Indeed, the "ultra" in "ultra-nationalist" almost gives the game away, because indirectly, it calls attention to the element of neurotic overcompensation which disguises the absence of real patriotism, which does not clamor for charismatic leaders who govern by "instinct" or give voice to the most violent and reprehensible elements embedded in the collective unconscious (Singer, 2016). And we must never forget that fascists are opportunistic; they privilege, indeed venerate, their own narrow reference group but are perfectly prepared to forge coalitions with kindred and/or "inferior" outgroups for the sake of expediency or temporary political advantage (for example, the Hitler/Stalin pact).

So, even nowadays, *some* people with mild to moderate authoritarian tendencies are not fascists because they do not subscribe to the popular narratives of collective victimization and/or superiority that drive fascistic movements. Why? Individuals like these have a strong sense of personal identity rooted in their faith, their profession or vocation (for example, a cardinal, an orchestra conductor, a CEO of a multinational corporation). But with that said, it is also undoubtedly true that the more prevalent authoritarian traits and tendencies are in the population at large, the more likely it is to embrace fascistic movements, especially in times of (real or perceived) crisis.

So, despite these important differences, the history and dynamics of authoritarianism and fascism are inextricably linked. And regardless of the specific etiology of sado-masochistic character traits, from a clinical point of view there is no doubt that an incipiently fascistic regime like Trump's will usher in a new era of sexual repression, facilitated by

policies and laws that cause the costs of contraception to sky-rocket, that undermine women's rights to abortion and appropriate reproductive health care, and trample on the rights of sexual minorities. If left unchecked, the new administration will probably bring about a massive cultural regression, and a substantive loss of whatever collective gains were made, politically, since the 1960s.

How do we address these looming nightmares? As clinicians, we can help patients who are members of racial or sexual minorities to address their own fears and uncertainties, and assure them of our solidarity and support. As teachers, we can address these issues in the classroom, and defend the precious academic freedom and press freedoms that may soon be snatched away from us, if we dare. (And if we don't ...?). As ordinary citizens, our best bet is to support the progressive wing of the Democratic party, and acknowledge the historic failures, mistakes, and betrayals it is guilty of, which have cost it so much of its traditional working and middle class base. And those of you living outside the United States? Well, if you have a moment, please pray for us. Even if you don't believe in God. Our backs are against the wall, and we're going to need all the help we can get to turn this disastrous situation around.

Please, please ... wish us luck.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Daniel Burston is an Associate Professor of Psychology and former Chair of the Psychology Department at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh. He authored numerous books and articles on the history of the behavioral sciences. His latest book, *A Forgotten Freudian: The Passion of Karl Stern*, was published by Karnac last year.

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