

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

HENRY GIROUX

25.05.2025

## *Tears of Blood: Eugenics, Disposability, and the War on Children*



Photo by M ZHA

Violence, soaked in blood and stripped of shame, has become the defining language of governance in the age of Trump and the global resurgence of authoritarianism. Across the globe, democracy is in retreat, and with it, the very notion of moral and social responsibility. In its place, we find a brutal political grammar scripted by modern-day barbarians, disciples of greed, corruption, racial purity, ultra-nationalism, and permanent war. Compassion is mocked as weakness. The social state is vilified and hollowed out, derided in the language of a deranged anti-communism. And policies that produce mass suffering, engineered by the powerful and shielded by the myths of meritocracy and social Darwinism, are deemed not only acceptable, but inevitable.

Among the MAGA elite, democracy is no longer a cherished ideal but a target of scorn and contempt. Echoing Hungary's Viktor Orbán, democracy is now replaced with illiberal democracy, with its call to eliminate racial mixing and unleash a torrent of repression against

free speech, universities, the press, and organized dissent. In this case, fascist politics and strategies have become the new governing norm. Embracing the playbook of ruthless dictators such as Putin and Orbán, Trump expands presidential power, wages war on the rule of law and dismantles democratic institutions, especially those that nurture critical thought, all the while feigning uncertainty about whether the Constitution even applies to him.

Trump's financial backers and ideological allies, like Peter Thiel, openly endorse authoritarianism, with Thiel bluntly declaring that freedom and democracy are no longer compatible. Trump's sycophantic enablers Elon Musk and Steve Bannon pay hollow tribute to democracy by offering their followers Nazi salutes. As Judith Butler astutely observes, too many in positions of power, politicians, powerful lawyers, academic administrators, and the financial elite, surrender to fear, greed, or corruption, allowing cowardice to silence their conscience. In doing so, they "proclaim the inevitable end of democracy at the hands of authoritarianism, effectively giving up the struggle in advance." Without any sense of irony, Thiel, Musk, Bannon and others proclaim themselves to be champions of freedom, but the only freedom endorsed by this group is for white Christian nationalist and rich billionaires—a notion of freedom rooted in racialized authoritarian impulses. These are authoritarians drunk on power in the service of violence and domination. What they despise is any embrace or articulation of power as both a moral force and force for radical democratic change.

We are not adrift in a moment of historical ambiguity, nor suspended in a mere transition between epochs, as some would have us believe. The notion of uncertainty has been shattered by an era fueled by the passionate mobilization of fascism. This intoxicating force has seduced millions with its lies and emotionally charged racism, redirecting their economic anxieties into a maelstrom of hate and the false swindle of fulfillment. Fascism from below does not merge with fascism from above, it thrives in the abyss of misplaced rage. The once-clouded vision of what America has become is now as clear as day. The ghosts of the past have returned, cloaked in bloodlust, armed with a language of dehumanization. They are driven by the vision of a new unified Reich, one populated by totalitarian subjects unburdened by truth, morality, critical thought, or democratic agency. The long descent from liberal democracy into the abyss of neoliberalism, more brutally, gangster capitalism, with its worship of markets, cruelty, and survival of the fittest, has reached its terminal point. An unholy alliance with fascism now stands at the helm, enshrining racial cleansing, lawless power, and the erasure of dissent as governing principles.

### **Hard vs. Soft Eugenics in the Age of Updated Fascism**

To understand the devastating impact of the current political and social climate on marginalized communities, it is essential to distinguish between two forms of eugenics that have shaped the modern era: hard eugenics and soft eugenics. Hard eugenics, with its violent, lawless application, is historically linked to overt violence, policies of sterilization, genocide, and forced elimination of those deemed “undesirable.” The brutal methods that defined this version of eugenics still echo in history, reminding us of the violence that can be enacted in the name of racial purity and nationalistic ideals.

In contrast, soft eugenics operates through more covert, systemic means. It does not require physical violence or open lawlessness but instead utilizes policies embedded in the legal and economic structures of society. Soft eugenics is the weaponization of policy and law to create conditions of exclusion and suffering, targeting vulnerable populations with austerity measures, limited access to education and healthcare, and the stripping away of rights. In many ways, it is the quieter, more insidious form of state violence, one that does not physically eliminate the “undesirable” but ensures their long-term marginalization and, in some cases, their slow destruction.

This distinction is crucial as we turn to the policies of the Trump administration, where both hard and soft forms of eugenics converge to shape a new machinery of governance, one that normalizes disposability and entrenches racial hierarchies. These are not abstract doctrines; they are enacted through the daily erosion of healthcare, the criminalization of dissent, and the abandonment of the most vulnerable. Nowhere is this logic more visible than in the war on children, where youth of color are sacrificed to the brutal arithmetic of austerity, privatization, and neoliberal neglect.

Yet this eugenicist project does not end with children. It deepens and expands through immigration policy, where the same cruel calculus is used to preserve a white supremacist vision of the nation. Here, belonging is not only regulated by law, it is reengineered by ideology. Immigrants of color are cast as contaminants, while white refugees are welcomed as preservers of a racial ideal. In this context, eugenics reappears not as pseudoscience, but as policy, a political weapon wielded to reshape the nation’s genetic future under the guise of national security and demographic control.

While cruelty has deep roots in the history of the United States, it has now become inextricably linked to an ever-accelerating culture of dehumanization and violence. This culture both fuels the rise of fascist politics and menaces individuals through the weaponization of fear, alongside policies of extreme deprivation and immiseration. These

forces strip individuals and entire communities of their power, rendering them not only powerless but also depoliticized.

What sets this moment apart from the past is the language that sustains it, a language that reproduces racial, social, and financial hierarchies steeped in the toxic discourse of social Darwinism. It aligns with the neoliberal creed of “survival of the fittest,” where personal responsibility is heralded as the sole determinant of success, if not, indeed, of existence itself. Moreover, the cruelty embedded in this rhetoric, as exemplified in the GOP’s budget bill, does more than line the pockets of the wealthy with enormous tax breaks. It exacts a savage toll on the poor, with benefit cuts so severe that they will cost lives. Paul Krugman rightly refers to this assault on social benefits as an “attack of the sadistic zombies,” but his description only scratches the surface. What we are witnessing, especially with the draconian cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, is a form of sadism endemic to gangster capitalism. How can one be indifferent to eliminating health insurance for millions of poor people or defunding nursing homes? This is a sadism that draws its power from the same well as the death and misery imposed by the SS in the concentration camps, and the indifference of those who tossed dissenting students from planes during the Pinochet regime. This is cruelty without limits. This is the cruelty of monsters, turbocharged by a neoliberal resurgence of the “survival of the fittest” ethos, a cruelty that echoes the worst of human history. It is what I once called zombie politics in the age of casino capitalism, where human lives are nothing more than disposable commodities in the ruthless, unforgiving colonial game of empire.

This era of unchecked cruelty marks the resurgence of Eugenics. Hard Eugenics in its most violent versions has an extensive history in the United States and is linked to the forced sterilization of Black women, and forms of immoral medical practices and experiments applied to slaves, and later in the century to Black men. One particularly horrendous example of medical apartheid took place in what is known as the Tuskegee Study, in which 600 Black men with syphilis were left untreated to order to see how the disease progressed.

Soft Eugenics has resurfaced in the United States, becoming a central motif for both the Trump administration and far-right ideologues, fueled by the resurgence of white nationalism. This ideology, rooted in the belief of racial superiority, demands that white power and control be safeguarded at any cost by the ruling elite and relies on policies of deprivation to shorten or weed out those who do not measure up to what constitutes a white nationalist ethos and mode of superiority.

The deeply entrenched notion of white supremacy is historically intertwined with the insidious logic of soft eugenics, a concept that underpins policies often rooted in

dehumanization and social Darwinism. This dangerous ideology is embodied in the rhetoric of figures like Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who, as Secretary of Health and Human Services, has promoted the idea that resistance to diseases such as measles is part of a natural survival process. In this worldview, the vulnerable are left to fend for themselves, with no support or protection. This view is a central organizing idea behind many of Trump's policies. Kennedy's stance reflects a brutal neoliberal survival-of-the-fittest mentality, suggesting that instead of shielding the most vulnerable with vaccines, they should simply be allowed to "adapt" or "fight" the disease, thus stripping away any sense of compassion or responsibility for those most in need of protection. This rhetoric is not just a policy stance, it is a chilling reflection of a larger, dehumanizing vision that discards the weak in favor of a false and cruel meritocracy.

This same ideology also reflects Kennedy's view of autistic children whom he stigmatizes as a drain on the social state when he states that "These are children who will never pay taxes, they will never hold a job, they will never play baseball or write a poem, they will never go on a date. Many of them will never go to the bathroom unaided." Jakob Simmank, quoting, Volker Roelcke, Professor of Medical History at the University of Giessen, rightly states, "This is social Darwinism." Roelcke further explains that statements like "You will never pay taxes" reflect what he describes as "a dog-whistle rhetoric that is typically social Darwinist." This reflects the soft eugenics view that those unable to survive without medical intervention should be abandoned to their fate. Kennedy is not alone in this belief, as other figures in the Trump administration similarly blame the weak for their suffering, insisting that health is a personal responsibility, one that should not be managed by the government.

### **Immigration as Eugenics: Engineering the Nation's Genetic Future**

A version of eugenics thinking also fuels the Trump administration's a hard line on immigration, tied to the preservation of a white supremacist vision of America's genetic makeup. Beres is worth quoting at length on this issue. He writes.

The increasing frenzy around immigration seems fueled by the desire to shape the population's genetic makeup. Elon Musk's cuts to foreign aid are already leading to increased child mortality and HIV and malaria cases in Africa (the Trump administration's other main policy engagement with Africa has been offering white South Africans refugee status). At the heart of all these policies is soft eugenics thinking – the idea that if you take away life-saving healthcare and services from the vulnerable, then you can let nature take its course and only the strong will survive.

As gangster capitalism hovers on the brink of a legitimization crisis, it turns to the dark power of soft eugenics, weaponizing it to scapegoat racialized communities in order “to justify its imperialist projects,” dismantle the welfare state, and provide a veneer of legitimacy for its most virulent policies. This is not merely political theater; it is a deliberate strategy rooted in a toxic language of cruelty and state-sanctioned violence. White nationalist and supremacist figures, like Stephen Miller, have pushed this rhetoric to the forefront, exemplified by his claim at a Trump rally that “America is for Americans and Americans only.” In this dangerous narrative, immigrants are vilified as vermin and criminals, due process is stripped from international students protesting genocide, and critics are demonized as communists or leftist thugs. In this climate, the horrors of the past are not forgotten, they are resurrected, now cloaked in dehumanizing language and unimaginable violence that powers a modern-day death machine, propelling the darkest chapters of history into the present.

How else can we explain Trump’s incendiary claim that migrants are criminals who have invaded the country and are poisoning the blood of Americans? This rhetoric is not just inflammatory; it embodies a white supremacist worldview that is deeply entrenched in the United States and fueled by the delusions of empire. It is a worldview increasingly wedded to the rising tide of fascism, which draws heavily from the toxic premises of eugenics to legitimize a new order of racial and class hierarchies. These hierarchies are accompanied, as always, by a potent mix of historical erasure, dehumanization, and censorship, tools used to cement the power of those at the top while silencing dissent from those below.

This ideology is not confined to the fringes but is woven into the fabric of domestic policy, particularly in its treatment of Black people. Updated by the dangerous rhetoric of white replacement theory and a crude neoliberal view of survival of the fittest, it targets the very foundations of racial justice. The war on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is a stark example of this, an ideological assault aimed at erasing Black history and dismantling policies designed to prevent racial discrimination against people of color. The evidence is undeniable: the banning of books about the history of racism, the targeting of the Smithsonian for its “race-centered ideology,” and the defunding of what are labeled “anti-American” ideologies, all of these are part of a broader campaign to suppress the voices and histories of marginalized communities, particularly people of color, from public and federal spaces.

### **The Language of Eugenicist and the Politics of Erasure**

The death of history, memory, and the politics of remembering is part of a long established fascist policy of weakening the power of historical consciousness as a source of insight and



truth. Journalist David Corn is right in stating that authoritarians cannot tolerate dissent, free thought, and modes of inquiry that make power accountable. In this context, it is not surprising that Trump wants to erase “dark veins of American history, racism, sexism, genocide, and other nasty business, that have been crucial components of the national story.” He adds that Trump has appointed himself as “the ultimate arbiter of history, with the right to police thought.” In his white washed version of history, there is “no dirty laundry, no references to the mass murder of Indigenous people, the suppression of workers, Jim Crow, the incarceration of Japanese Americans, the mistreatment of Chinese laborers, ugly interventions in Latin America and elsewhere, and so on. Only the glories of the United States shall be acknowledged, that is, worshipped.”

On a global level, this eugenicist language takes a more punishing and violent form. It is often used to justify the politics of social abandonment, terminal exclusion, and genocidal violence. One tactic it uses is to label specific groups as subhuman. For example, in analyzing how prominent Israelis use language to dehumanize Palestinians and promote a policy of ethnic cleansing, Yumna Fatima writes: \_

Announcing a ‘complete siege’ of Gaza two days after Hamas’ attack on Israel, the latter’s defence minister, Yoav Gallant, was straightforward about his view of Palestinians. ‘There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel, everything will be closed. We are fighting against human animals and will act accordingly.’ Even this is a throwback to earlier comparisons. In a speech to the Knesset in 1983, then IDF chief of staff Raphael Eitan declared: ‘When we have settled the land, all the Arabs will be able to do about it will be to scurry around like drugged cockroaches in a bottle.’ When stereotypes of hate, rooted in fear, are taught to society, dehumanization is no surprise. It is no surprise when right-wing Israelis at the annual Jerusalem flag march shout: ‘A good Arab is a dead Arab.’

The rhetoric of dehumanization, as explored in Fatima’s analysis, is not an isolated occurrence but part of a broader, disturbing global pattern, where the logic of soft eugenics is weaponized to justify violence and marginalization. This language of dehumanization, employed by Israeli officials to strip Palestinians of their humanity, mirrors the tactics used by the Trump administration, particularly in its characterization of immigrants of color as rapists and criminals. This kind of rhetoric not only incites genocidal violence but also legitimizes policies that dismantle protection for vulnerable populations, both domestically and internationally.

The violence of such language is enacted in executive orders stripping Temporary Protected Status from thousands of Venezuelans, Haitians, and Afghans. At the same time, international

students, largely people of color, are being abducted and jailed for their political views, a stark example of the administration's deliberate attack of marginalized communities. Deportations, the suspension of due process, and the unchecked use of police terrorism are disproportionately aimed at people of color, revealing a deeply entrenched racial bias in the enforcement of state power. As the Trump administration strips away the rights of immigrants, it engages in a chilling process of disposability, sending those deemed expendable to gulag-like prisons under the control of dictators, embodying a malignant lawlessness that underscores the growing brutality of state power.

How else to explain the cruel deportations and the suspension of rights for thousands of immigrants of color in the United States, while simultaneously offering refugee status to white South Afrikaner farmers? Trump's defense of this policy rest on the claim that "some Afrikaners are victims of 'mass killings' and suffer from violence and discrimination by vengeful Black South Africans." This is a complete lie, and there is no evidence to support this ludicrous claim of "white genocide," one that is endorsed by Elon Musk, among others. On the contrary, this claim is a delusional fiction of white victimization that lies at the heart of the authoritarian mindset. This blatantly duplicitous policy is not just a policy decision, it is an overt expression of white supremacy, where the lives of Black and brown people are treated as disposable, while white lives are protected and prioritized. The racism embedded in these policies speaks volumes: it is not merely a political stance but an unapologetic embrace of racial hierarchy, one that starkly contrasts the disposability of people of color with the privileged sanctuary of white refugees.

### **The War on Children and the Politics of Eugenics**

In the United States, the descent into fascism is no longer hidden in the margins. The neo-fascist project now occupies the center of political life. Fantasies of unchecked power, the normalization of lawlessness, the criminalization of protest, and the violent expulsion of those deemed disposable have become policy. The punishing state expands while the institutions meant to uphold justice, equality, and truth are under siege. At the core of this radical transition lies a culture of social abandonment and immense cruelty that renders the unthinkable not only imaginable but routine. At the core of this cruelty is a resurgent eugenicist ideology that peddles the notion that mixed races represent the scourge of democracy and must be eliminated. Nowhere is this death of morality and militarized thinking more visible, or more horrifying, than in the escalating war on children, both at home and abroad, and the silence that shadows their suffering.



We are witnessing a war on youth, on poor, Black, and brown youth in the United States, and on the children of Gaza, waged through the brutal calculus of a resurrected social Darwinism. In this merciless worldview, poverty is a moral failing, vulnerability is a crime, and survival is a privilege reserved for the strong and the favored. This is the eugenicist logic that once fueled the death camps of Nazi Germany, now resurfacing in the quiet violence of policy and the loud indifference of empire. In the United States, it takes the form of the Trump administration's ruthless cuts to social programs, the gutting of education and healthcare, and the militarization of everyday life under a punishing state.

Abroad, the war on youth manifests in the language that describes the children of Gaza as collateral damage, their lives deemed disposable in the machinery of permanent war. Under the iron rule of neoliberal cruelty, these young lives are sacrificed to a political economy that trades in suffering and views compassion as weakness. Yet perhaps most chilling is the silence that greets this war on children, a silence that does more than betray the innocence of its victims; it signals a dangerous complicity, revealing how the machinery of fascism is not simply returning but is already operating in plain sight, both at home and abroad.

This war on children is not waged solely through bombs and bullets, nor only in the glare of political spectacle; it is executed through the slow violence of policy, the calculated cruelty of abandoned futures, and the erasure of suffering behind bureaucratic language and economic rationalizations. It operates through what can only be called the politics of disposability, where entire generations are written off as collateral damage in the ruthless pursuit of profit, power, and ideological purity. In this machinery of abandonment, policies become weapons, and silence becomes the accomplice that allows such violence to proceed unchecked. To grasp the full scope of this war, we must examine the specific policies and cultural forces that render the suffering of children invisible, normalizing their pain as the inevitable price of a social order sinking ever deeper into the shadows of authoritarianism. The pain and suffering of children in both Gaza and the United States inform each other by connecting a culture of disposability and extermination that no longer view children as a resource or their care as a measure of democracy itself. This is a shared crisis that makes clear what the horror of fascism looks like when state violence is waged against children. In the age of neoliberal fascism, with Trump as its corrupt enabler, violence is no longer banal, it is sustained by the interrelated systemic erosion of truth, moral judgment, and civic courage. Cruelty is no longer disguised as progress, it is now celebrated as Walter Benjamin once noted, as a document of barbarism.

### **The Policies of Disposability and the Global Assault on Childhood As a Shared Crisis**

The war on children is hidden in plain sight, embedded in the fabric of both domestic and foreign policy, where suffering is legislated and innocence is bartered away for political gain. In the United States, it begins with the systematic dismantling of the social safety net. Under the Trump administration and its MAGA's teenage tech-soldiers, billions have been slashed from federal programs essential to poor and marginalized families, Medicaid, housing assistance, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), leaving countless children vulnerable to hunger, homelessness, and chronic illness. Eloise Goldsmith claims cuts to Medicaid alone "will kill people." Proposed cuts to Head Start, which serves nearly 800,000 low-income children, have already led to program closures and service reductions, though the administration claims to have backed away from the cuts. If enacted, these policies could strip healthcare coverage from over 500,000 children and deny food assistance to more than 2 million others. These are not bureaucratic oversights or unfortunate side effects, they are deliberate policy choices that treat poor children as expendable in the ruthless arithmetic of neoliberal austerity. How else to explain the Trump administration halting research "to help babies with heart defects," especially since as Tyler Kingkade notes "one in 100 babies in the U.S. are born with heart defects, and about a quarter of them need surgery or other procedures in their first year to survive....[moreover] worldwide, it's estimated that 240,000 babies die within their first 28 days due to congenital birth defects." These are not policy failures; they are deliberate acts of violence, calculated decisions rooted in the cold arithmetic of a neoliberal death drive, where the lives of poor, Black, and brown children are weighed against tax cuts for the ultra-wealthy and found expendable. Trump's healthcare policies further reveal the depths of this disposability. Cuts to the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and mental health services have left millions of children without access to basic care, even as rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide among youth, especially marginalized youth, continue to rise. The punishing state does not merely neglect these children; it polices, disciplines, and abandons them, making their suffering a permanent condition of life under the rule of capital.

Education, once imagined as a vehicle for emancipation, has also been weaponized in this war. Public schools are increasingly defunded, turned into sites of surveillance and punishment rather than learning and hope. The school-to-prison pipeline tightens its grip, with Black and brown children disproportionately criminalized through zero-tolerance policies and police presence in schools. As I mentioned earlier, right-wing assaults on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, the banning of books, and the erasure of critical

histories from curricula rob young people of the intellectual tools needed to understand and resist their own oppression.

It is worth re-emphasizing that abroad, the war on children reaches one of its most brutal expressions in Gaza, where the language of “collateral damage” has become a grotesque alibi for the mass slaughter of the innocent. This logic of abandonment reaches its most violent form in Gaza, where the destruction is not only material but existential, young bodies mutilated, children purposely shot – targeted by IDF soldiers, tortured, and subject endless bombings and forced starvation

Under Trump, U.S. foreign policy abandoned even the pretense of humanitarian concern, cutting all funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which had provided vital health, education, and food services to Palestinian children. Meanwhile, U.S. backed Israeli military operations have unleashed a campaign of scholasticide, the systematic destruction of schools and universities, that has reduced the future of Gaza’s children to rubble. More than 200 schools have been deliberately targeted, displacing over 625,000 students and annihilating any semblance of educational continuity. As of early 2024, over 13,000 children have been killed, making up nearly 44 percent of all fatalities in the conflict, while the United Nations has warned that 14,000 babies could die within 48 hours without urgent medical and nutritional aid.

Here, the brutal logic of eugenics and empire converge. Children are not merely casualties of war, they are obstacles to be erased, victims of ethnic cleansing, their capacity to remember, imagine, or resist intentionally destroyed. Defined as burdens, drains on resources, or symbols of disposable populations unworthy of the white nationalist ideal of citizenship, they are deemed unworthy of compassion, justice, or freedom. This is not just warfare. It is the politics of displacement and ethnic cleansing, a deliberate construction of racial and class hierarchies. This is a blueprint for extermination and the systematic eradication of poor children of color, carried out with chilling precision and justified through a culture of manufactured ignorance, historical erasure, censorship, and silence.

The excessive brutality and violence of Trump’s war on children has drawn criticism even from the billionaire financial elite. Bill Gates, writing in the *Financial Times*, accused Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, of “killing the world’s poorest children” by shutting down the US Agency for International Development. Gates claimed that “the abrupt cuts left life-saving food and medicine to expire in warehouses.” He noted that such cuts could trigger the resurgence of diseases such as measles, HIV, and polio. Gates specifically condemned Musk’s decision to cancel grants for a hospital in Gaza Province, Mozambique, that prevents

the transmission of HIV from mothers to their babies, spurred by the unfounded belief that US funds were supporting Hamas in Gaza. “I’d love for him to go in and meet the children who have now been infected with HIV because he cut that money,” Gates said. This is cruelty without remorse, signaling not just the death of moral conscience and social responsibility, but the birth of a politics that resurrects the horrors of a genocidal past.

Massive violence against children now crosses borders and its blood filled death machines operate through the weaponization of policies designed to produce starvation, health emergencies, and mass immiseration. The war on children is not confined to distant battlefields; it reverberates within our own borders, produced through policies that erode the foundations of child welfare. The parallels between the plight of children in Gaza and those in the United States are stark and unsettling. Whether at home or abroad, the logic is the same: to crush the possibility of agency and dignity by stripping young people of the resources, rights, and dreams that nourish hope and dissent. And the silence that surrounds these atrocities is perhaps the most damning indictment of all. It signals not only moral collapse but complicity. It reveals what the turn toward fascism looks like, not just in policy, but in the deadening of conscience.

These domestic policy decisions, much like the external conflicts, disproportionately impact children from marginalized communities, effectively rendering them invisible and expendable. The erosion of safety nets and educational opportunities mirrors the physical destruction witnessed in war-torn regions, underscoring a systemic disregard for the well-being of the most vulnerable.

The convergence of these crises reveals a disturbing global trend: the commodification and disposability of children in the face of political agendas and economic austerity. It is imperative to recognize and challenge these policies, both foreign and domestic, that perpetuate cycles of suffering and deny children their fundamental rights to safety, health, and education.

### **The Culture of Silence and Neoliberal Cruelty: Making the Unthinkable Normal**

If policy provides the machinery for this war on children, culture supplies its moral anesthetic. In a society gripped by the ruthless logic of neoliberalism, compassion is cast as weakness, and market values invade every corner of public life. Children are no longer seen as bearers of hope or the promise of a more just future; they are recast as financial burdens, security risks, or, in the cold calculus of empire, collateral damage. This cultural landscape thrives on historical amnesia, erasing the lessons of past atrocities even as it repeats them in real time.

The neoliberal order commodifies empathy, reducing care and concern to hollow performances in the marketplace of virtue. Philanthropy replaces justice, and isolated acts of charity stand in for systemic change, allowing structural violence to continue unchallenged. The suffering of children becomes a spectacle consumed in passing, briefly mourned and quickly forgotten in a media environment obsessed with scandal, celebrity, and the endless distractions of manufactured crises.

This is not merely a culture of forgetting but a culture of moral paralysis, where people are trained to look away, to normalize the unbearable, and to accept cruelty as the price of personal comfort and national security. As the children of Gaza are slaughtered and poor children in America wither and die under the weight of poverty, hunger, and despair, the silence surrounding their suffering becomes a form of complicity. It is a dangerous silence, one that not only betrays the most vulnerable but also clears the path for the resurgence of fascism, dressed not always in jackboots and uniforms but in business suits, political slogans, and the technocratic language of efficiency and order.

In such a world, the question is no longer whether fascism is on the horizon but whether it has already arrived, wearing the face of indifference and operating behind the closed doors of legislative chambers, corporate boardrooms, and media empires. Breaking this silence is not simply an ethical imperative, it is an act of political resistance against a future where the machinery of abandonment becomes permanent and irreversible.

### **Conclusion: Breaking the Silence, Defending the Future**

The war on children, whether waged through bombs in Gaza or budget cuts in America's poorest neighborhoods, is the most damning indictment of our political and moral failures. It exposes a social order that has turned its back on the most vulnerable, trading away the futures of young people for the hollow promises of profit, power, and nationalist pride. But this war does more than produce suffering, it signals the rise of a political project that views democracy as an obstacle, historical memory as a threat, and the lives of marginalized children as expendable. The United States is no longer poised on the edge of fascism—we have crossed the threshold into a dark chapter that betrays not only the anguished cries of the dead who once endured its terrors, but also the fading promise that our children would be spared such unspeakable cruelty.

To remain silent in the face of this is to become complicit in the machinery of fascism as it grinds its way through both history and the present. Breaking that silence requires more than bearing witness; it demands that we name these atrocities for what they are, refuse the false

comforts of neutrality, and fight relentlessly for a future in which every child, regardless of race, nation, or class, is granted not just the right to live—but the right to flourish.

Jeffrey St. Clair has rightly argued that silence kills and becomes all the more unthinkable in the face of the mass slaughter of women and children in Gaza. “The problem with writing about Gaza,” he writes, “is that words can’t explain what’s happening in Gaza. Neither can images, even the most gut-wrenching and heartbreaking. Because what needs to be explained is the inexplicable. What needs to be explicated is the silence in the face of horror.” Such silence hollows out language itself, draining words of their power when they fail to name atrocity, when children are starved to death by Israel, when food becomes a weapon, and drones shatter bodies while spreading an endless climate of terror. This silence is not neutral; it is dehumanizing. It is complicity, complicity not only with the death of children in Gaza, but with those in the United States and across the globe who perish for lack of food, medicine, and the most essential care.

In the age of fascism, war crimes are normalized, state terror becomes a mode of governance, and the walking dead cheer the return of old slogans soaked in blood and driven by a lust for annihilation. St. Clair’s plea to break the silence that smothers conscience is more than a moral demand, it is a warning that suggests that what is happening in Gaza as Colombian President Gustavo Petro warned back in December 2023 is a “rehearsal of the future.” And that future is closer than we think given that fascism has already found fertile ground in the United States.

America is no longer approaching fascism, we are living inside its architecture, each brick laid in silence, complicity, and fear. We have turned away from the cries of the dead who once bore witness to its horrors, and from the fragile promise that our children would never see its return. That promise cannot be located in obscene levels of inequality, in the hatred of the Other, in the narcotic haze of consumerism, or in the cheap, seductive violence of scapegoating. As James Baldwin warned, *nothing can be changed until it is faced*. And as Hannah Arendt taught, the danger lies not only in monstrous acts but in the slow, quiet erosion of thought, memory, and moral imagination. To remember is to resist. It requires staying awake in a world that urges sleep, refusing to look away, to be “wakeful” as Edward Said might say while daring to imagine the pain inflicted on children. It means allowing empathy to deepen into outrage, and letting that outrage ignite action. To name this moment is not a choice but a moral obligation. And to fight for the living, for their dignity, their future, their right to simply exist, is the only promise worth making, and the only one worth keeping.

Now is the time to break the silence, to speak with moral clarity, and to organize with the fierce urgency that justice demands. We must reclaim the institutions that once carried the promise of a radical democracy, reimagined beyond the grip of capitalism and grounded in solidarity, care, and the public good. We must shield and fight for those deemed disposable, revive the power of civic literacy, and summon the courage to confront the machinery of cruelty and state-sanctioned terror. This is not merely a political task; it is a moral imperative. Fascism cancels the future, but history is watching and future does not have to imitate the present. And the fate of countless children, at home and across the globe, hangs in the balance of what we choose to do now.

Henry A. Giroux currently holds the McMaster University Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department and is the Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar in Critical Pedagogy. His most recent books include: *The Terror of the Unforeseen* (Los Angeles Review of books, 2019), *On Critical Pedagogy*, 2nd edition (Bloomsbury, 2020); *Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy: Education in a Time of Crisis* (Bloomsbury 2021); *Pedagogy of Resistance: Against Manufactured Ignorance* (Bloomsbury 2022) and *Insurrections: Education in the Age of Counter-Revolutionary Politics* (Bloomsbury, 2023), and coauthored with Anthony DiMaggio, *Fascism on Trial: Education and the Possibility of Democracy* (Bloomsbury, 2025). Giroux is also a member of Truthout's board of directors.

MAY 23, 2025