

In general, Stanley makes use of the conventionally associated elements of fascism including invocation of a return to a mythical glorious past, vicious propaganda coupled with an assault on intellectualism, belief in hierarchy of races and social Darwinism, victimhood, dangerous stereotyping which pits any of the minority group as a threat to the cultural/ethnic/religious purity of the nation, and an existential danger to law and order and economy of the nation. However, the author includes aspects which have not been much discussed but in his theorization are fundamental to fascism, –the inextricable role of patriarchy, sexual anxiety, anti-cosmopolitanism and dismantling of welfare systems and policies.

The author identifies numerous overlapping tactics that are common to the fascist movements which distinguish the community of ‘us’ to the outsiders ‘them.’ He asserts that the premise of fascist ideology is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of ‘a lie of distorted nation-hood’ that beckons the ‘nation’ towards a mythical and glorious time when it was once religiously/racially/culturally pure. In essence, fascism distorts common understanding of history. The nostalgia that it inculcates is at its core with an appeal to tribalism and parochial nativism. Throughout the book, this mythical past is constructed as a reaction to subvert and destroy, in an eerily Orwellian manner, the liberal democratic ideals. The liberal ideal is used by right-wing ultra-nationalists against the ideal itself, hence the liberal ideal of equality is subverted by presenting the minority group such as immigrants - as lawless criminals trying to destroy the peace, law and order of the ‘nation.’ These feelings of resentment and animosity, he writes, were inculcated in the white population in US against Mexicans and other immigrants, that is why Trump’s idea of ‘build the wall’ and immigration ban on Muslim countries had massive support. The liberal ideal of free speech is used to disseminate conspiracy theories or wildly outlandish lies, when snubbed and dismissed, the fascists weaponize the claim that they are denied of free speech. This is aided by an assault on intellectualism, facts and reality.

Stanley elucidates the danger of anti-intellectualism tactic directed against the universities which reinforces the divisions. The universities, which are known as spaces where ideas are freely discussed, exchanged and deliberated upon, are delegitimized by right-wingers. The educational institutions are criticized as sites of leftist propaganda and labelled as ‘bastions of liberal indoctrination.’ (16: ch. 3) Right-wingers undermine universities and public discourse and cast doubts on the credibility of institutions harboring dissent as being too radical or as “‘Marxist’[s] or ‘feminist’[s] spreading a leftist ideological agenda under the guise of research.” (33: ch. 3) The space for free and rational speech is thus shrunk by this accusing and divisive language. Stanley puts it quite aptly that fascism is about dominant perspective and “[t]he dominant perspective is often misrepresented as the truth, the ‘real history,’ and any attempt to allow a