

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Back before everyone checked out for the holidays, I did an inventory of the progress we've made in four ways to fight fascism (in comments ApacheTrout reminded I should have the courts in there too).

1. The Erica Chenoweth rule, which says that if you can get 3.5% of a population in the streets, it often leads to regime change.
2. Beginning to peel off four people in the Senate or eight or nine people in the House.
3. Rescuing Republicans from a predictable catastrophe like Democrats did in 2008 and 2020.
4. Waiting until 2026, winning at least one house of Congress, and beginning to rein in Trump that way.

I wrote it intending to kick off the new year with a post of things we can do, or do better. Here we are!

But first, let me explain where I'm coming from. Much of what follows builds on my belief that we've been fighting Donald Trump wrong.

Polarization is his superpower. It's how he has gotten out of every single one of his political jams in the past: by turning his own scandal into a polarizing pivot, thereby turning his own failures and crimes into a matter of tribalism. Once he has done that, he invents some new bullshit story (usually stoking grievance), and

getting right wingers to believe it *because* of that polarization.

This is why I'm such an asshole about the way people serve as data mules for Trump's tweets: because those damn things are little polarization machines, which always serve to make him the center of attention around which society is re-polarized.

The way to combat someone whose superpower is polarization is not to exacerbate that polarization. It is to use his own tools – grievance and conspiracism – against him.

Back in May, before the Epstein files had created a full-blown crisis for the Trump Administration, Phil Bump and Mike Rothschild wrote about how conspiracism can undermine someone with power (which I added to here).

Think of how important conspiracism and grievance were to (at least per the Robert Draper profile) Marjorie Taylor Greene's turn against Trump:

- Realizing Trump never returns loyalty
- Discovering Trump was the villain of the Epstein scandal in which she had an unshakeable belief
- Opposing Gaza (probably for horrible Jewish space laser reasons) and crypto currency (for justifiable reasons inflamed by conspiratorial thinking)
- Seeing Trump mock affordability
- After all that (but while she still had her courage), being targeted by Trump mobs

- Packaging that in a morality tale, Christianity, whence she derived moral value

Simplifying and ignoring her potential political ambitions, Trump became the thing everyone suspected was being hidden in the Epstein files, and that led to cognitive dissonance that led MTG to revisit a lot of her other differences with Trump.

So some of my logic, below, is simply to focus on the things that are likely to get Trump supporters or sympathizers to feel betrayed by him including by holding people close to him accountable for shitty things we are pretty sure are going to occur. It includes:

- Treat Epstein as the base layer
- Focus on the Broliarchs and AI
- Emphasize Trump's loser stench
- Visualize Trump's corruption
- Brand Trump as the criminal he is
- Hold Stephen Miller accountable for his failures
- Visualize how Stephen Miller took money for cancer research and veterans care to pay for a goon army snatching grandmothers
- Discredit Key Spokespeople
- Use Trump's claimed opposition to antisemitism against him
- Reclaim disinformation research

One more point about this. This post is not a To Do list for the DNC (though some people on Bluesky will undoubtedly treat it as such). It's a To Do list for myself, most of all, but one that others can borrow if they find it useful. Many of these things are attentional activities that are about repetition and focus as much as congressional oversight or electoral politics.

These are meant to be stories we can tell, regardless of what someone in Congress or some candidate in Iowa does.

Treat Epstein as the base layer

Remember that Marc Caputo column – it was published on December 23 – stating that the Epstein releases could last *a whole 'nother week*? On the day that would mark that week, December 30, Devlin Barrett published a story saying that, "The document review" of what is now believed to be 5.2 million documents "is expected to take until at least Jan. 20, according to a person familiar with the matter." Even if they could finish it by January 20 (they won't), that'll just be the first go-around. DOJ has not done what they need to do to document the redactions, so there'll be demands from Congress for them to do that (with obvious areas – including DOJ names and some deliberative documents specifically included in the law, where they're in violation), they'll need to repeat the entire process over again, Congress will begin to bring more legal pressure, and all the while survivors will be pointing out things they missed.

A week, Marc Caputo reported, as if that were credible!

This will go on for some time. This will go on for a very long time.

Still, while the Epstein scandal has been absolutely instrumental in loosening Trump's grip on things, people are naive in thinking that will be enough. "My friends will get hurt," Trump predicted, but what does it really mean for Trump's power that Les Wexner has been implicated in the Epstein scandal as a co-conspirator? What is the *use* of creating right wing cognitive dissonance about Les Wexner, when Wexner is not the oligarch currently helping Trump destroy the country?

In my opinion, the Epstein scandal is a tool. It undercuts Trump's ability to grab and redirect attention. It can create moments of cognitive dissonance, as it did for MTG. It is a way to turn Trump's conspiracism and populism against him and may make other related narrative lines more salient. And if there's a surprise disclosure – perhaps about Melania's origin story – all the better. But as you keep the focus on Epstein, remember that there needs to be a direction beyond Epstein as well, a direction which incorporates the oligarchs who are still key players in Trump's network of power.

Focus on the Broligarchs and AI

The Broligarchs who've been a key part of Trump's power are one way to do that (and that's before we've really gotten into Steve Bannon and Peter Thiel's ties to Epstein).

Tesla Takedown was one of the most successful campaigns of 2025. At a time when Tesla faced cheaper competitors worldwide, the protests incurred a cost on Musk for his DOGE depredations.

Elon was installed in the White House in significant part by fellow South African "alien invader" David Sacks, who is even more conspiratorial and even more pro-Russian than Musk. Sacks was installed in the White House as

a Special Government Employee (who, Elizabeth Warren suggests, has overstayed his welcome) to force a bunch of policy decisions that suck for America but ensure that Brologarchs won't pay any consequences for their rash business deals. When one or both of crypto and AI crash (this is a really good story on how and why AI will burst), he'll be there to ensure the government bails them out, as he did after playing a role in the failure of Silicon Valley Bank.

And even as Trump sheds support based on his mockery of affordability, even as MTG split with Trump over that and his support for crypto, Sacks is trying to brand Democrats as being more populist than even Zohran Mamdani is.



Fine. You want Democrats to be the party attending to the needs of working people? You've just made the GOP the party of "alien invader" billionaires who got tax cuts as millions lost their health care.

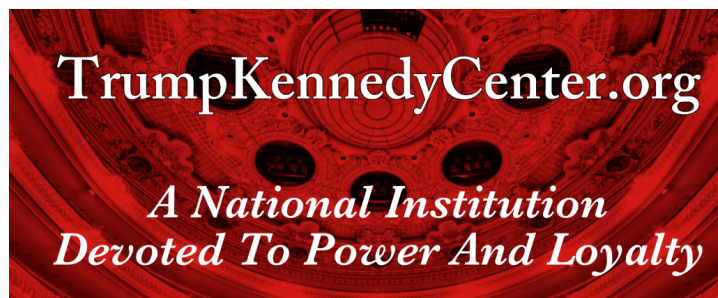
This happened even as AI has become a political liability. It has happened as local groups successfully stave off new data centers. It has happened as more instances of AI-inflamed suicide, murder, and porn – including porn exploiting children – appear. And it happens

before the aforementioned crash.

Sacks and the other Broligarchs are going to do something for which they'll try to dodge accountability. Now is the time to make sure his name comes up as people look for culprits.

Emphasize Trump's loser stench

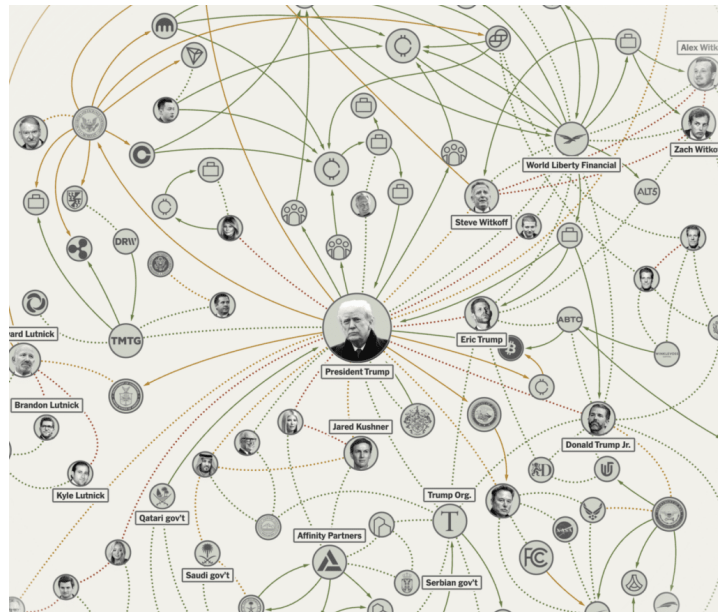
Another thing that will lead people to defect is to realize that Trump is a loser. He has done things – like the takeover of the Kennedy Center – that makes it easy to demonstrate he's a loser in tangible fashion. Better still, every time Trump attaches his name to something, it provides an opportunity to hijack that brand, as comedian Toby Morton auspiciously managed to do by anticipating Trump's most venal instincts and buying the domain.



The same is true of his businesses. Trump and his entire family is getting rich off the presidency 2.0. But his businesses are built as cons, sometimes Ponzi schemes. The idea is to leverage the loyalty of MAGAts to get them to invest in something, run up its value, only to collapse, leaving the most vulnerable screwed. In the past, at least, the cult effect was such that even MAGAts bilked by Trump associates, as with Steve Bannon's Build the Wall graft, were reluctant to turn on the fraudsters; that may change. But at the very least, the volatile nature of Trump's frauds makes it easy to show that as a businessman, he's a loser.

Visualize Trump's corruption

While there has been good reporting on Trump's corruption – see, for example, NYT's nifty visualization from New Year's Eve – there has not been a systematic effort to take on his corruption.



Nevertheless, possibly because of the Epstein scandal, a majority of the country does think Trump is corrupt.

That may actually not be in a bad place to be as we move into 2026. That's because Democrats can make Republican inaction in the face of Trump's corruption a campaign issue (and then, if it leads to a Democratic sweep in midterms, the electoral buy-in will be in place to do a lot of oversight and defunding of Trump's corruption).

Trump's pardons are similar. There's actually a solid stream of reporting on how corrupt they are, without yet any political direction to it. Democrats running against Republican incumbents – especially in the Senate – should state as presumed that it is the job of Senators to respond to the kind of naked corruption Trump is engaged in.

Where activists can magnify the good reporting on both Trump's corruption and his pardons is to

focus on the victims. This is actually showing up in the reporting on both topics. WaPo focused on the victims of Trevor Milton who might have gotten restitution had Trump not pardoned him. LAT similarly focused on the victims fucked over by Trump's pardon of David Gentile.

Rosenberg, a retired wholesale produce distributor living in Nevada, has supported Trump since he entered politics, but the president's decision in November to commute the sentence of former private equity executive David Gentile has left him angry and confused.

"I just feel I've been betrayed," Rosenberg, 68, said. "I don't know why he would do this, unless there was some sort of gain somewhere, or some favor being called in. I am very disappointed. I kind of put him above this kind of thing."

Trump's decision to release Gentile from prison less than two weeks into his seven-year sentence has drawn scrutiny from securities attorneys and a U.S. senator – all of whom say the White House's explanation for the act of clemency is not adding up. It's also drawn the ire of his victims.

"I think it is disgusting," said CarolAnn Tuter, 70, who invested more than \$400,000 with Gentile's company, GPB Capital. Gentile, she added, "basically pulled a Bernie Madoff and swindled people out of their money, and then he gets to go home to his wife and kids."

This superb Bloomberg story on the extent to which the Juan Orlando Hernández pardon unraveled years of work starts with a murder arranged by the network.

Five minutes later, González was circling a roundabout when a gray van

braked in front of him. At the same time, a green SUV crowded his rear bumper. A motorcycle carrying two men emerged on his left. A man on the back of the bike fired six shots through the driver-side window. González's head slumped toward his shoulder, and he tilted forward, held upright by the seatbelt. He died instantly.

More than a dozen men streamed out of the two vehicles that had sandwiched his Nissan. They scrambled to collect the spent shell casings on the ground, then scattered other casings across the pavement—decoys to complicate ballistics tracing. They jumped back into their vehicles, circled the roundabout and took the same road Julián had just driven down.

When they approached the Slaughterhouse, the gates opened to let them in, then closed behind them.

Every one of these pardons has a victim – and that's before you get into the people newly victimized by people who've been pardoned by Trump, which NYT covered in November and others are tracking as well.

A New Jersey fraudster who was pardoned by President Trump in 2021 was sentenced to 37 years in prison this month for running a \$44 million Ponzi scheme, one of a growing number of people granted clemency by Mr. Trump only to be charged with new crimes.

The man, Eliyahu Weinstein, was pardoned by Mr. Trump in 2021 and was re-indicted by the U.S. attorney's office in New Jersey three years later. He was accused of swindling investors who thought their money was being used to buy surgical masks, baby formula and first-aid kits bound for Ukraine, and a jury convicted

him in April of several crimes, including conspiracy to commit securities and wire fraud.

[snip]

Some of those pardoned for their role in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol have quickly drawn new attention from law enforcement. The group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington said in June that at least 10 of the more than 1,500 who were pardoned had been rearrested and charged, and the number has only grown since then.

Earlier this month, a man who was pardoned after having participated in the Jan. 6 attack was charged with sex crimes against two children. Another man whose original sentence Mr. Trump commuted in 2021 was recently sentenced to 27 months in prison after convictions on physical and sexual assault, among other crimes.

These stories provide an important way to explain the costs of Trump's corruption.

Brand Trump as the criminal he is

And while we're talking about telling these stories: We must never ever cede the ground of crime to Stephen Miller's attempt to brand immigrants as criminals.

Trump – a felon who freed hundreds of cop assailants on his first day on the job – has an entire infrastructure devoted to trying to spin brown people as criminal. Every time that infrastructure goes into action, including with the effort to brand Somalis in Minnesota as inherently fraudulent when Trump himself is a serial fraudster, we need to repeat, relentlessly, that Trump is a serial criminal

who coddles other criminals.

This is something Gavin Newsom just started doing, with an entire website devoted to cataloging Trump's crime and that of his pardon recipients.

Criminal in Chief: Donald Trump



TRUMP'S BIG, DUMB, CORRUPT PLANE: He received a jumbo jet from Qatar, then signed a highly unusual, **NATO-like** security guarantee with them via executive

34 REASONS: A New York court convicted the President of **34 felony counts** of falsified business records – the first time a former or sitting President has been convicted of criminal charges.

TRUMP PROTECTS PEDOPHILES: Trump cozies up to pedophiles like Epstein, Ghislaine Maxwell, and Trump Faith Advisor **Robert Morris**.

TRUMP'S CRYPTO CORRUPTION: Trump used to call crypto a "scam," then he **cashed in**. The Trump family has **raked in** at least \$800 million dollars in crypto since the start of 2025 alone. He also **pardoned** Binance's co-founder after Binance helped set up

Do not let a conversation about crime go by without focusing on how much of it Trump does.

Crime, in Trump's era, is a rich white man's thing. And while it will take a lot of work to adjust a lot of racist priors, until people start seeing Trump as a criminal it will be far too easy for them to make excuses for him.

Hold Stephen Miller accountable for his failures

I focused on Stephen Miller – and the import of making his failures clear – last week.

The import of shifting how we speak of Miller's considerable power is clear. That's true because he frankly has done huge damage, even to Trump's goals, and well more so to average Americans. He's someone that people, including Republicans, can scapegoat for Trump's failures (and they'll be right). And if we don't make sure that

happens, then he'll scapegoat brown people.

Again, are Somali day care workers or billionaires systematically defrauding average people the problem? One easy way to drown out Miller's case that it's the former is to make it clear how much he personally has harmed average Americans.

Visualize how Stephen Miller took money for cancer research and veterans care to pay for a goon army snatching grandmothers

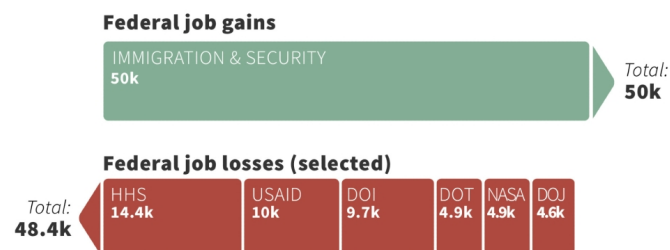
Relatedly, particularly as the huge injection of funding Republicans approved last year starts landing at DHS, it will become increasingly necessary to tie the goon squads in the streets to the loss of benefits elsewhere.

We need to make it clear that this is a direct trade. 50,000 ICE goons in, 300,000 other government employees out, including people who cure cancer, help learning disabled kids get through school, protect our National Parks, ensure your Social Security comes on time, and care for veterans.

Christopher Ingraham did a handy graphic to show the trade-off.

Shifting priorities

New federal hires in immigration and security offset purges elsewhere



Source: Reuters, Partnership for Public Service. Job loss data through Oct. 23, 2025

Note: Reuters reporters 50,000 new hires "largely in national security positions reflecting the administration's policy focus," with the "bulk" of those hires at Immigration & Customs Enforcement.

Christopher Ingraham

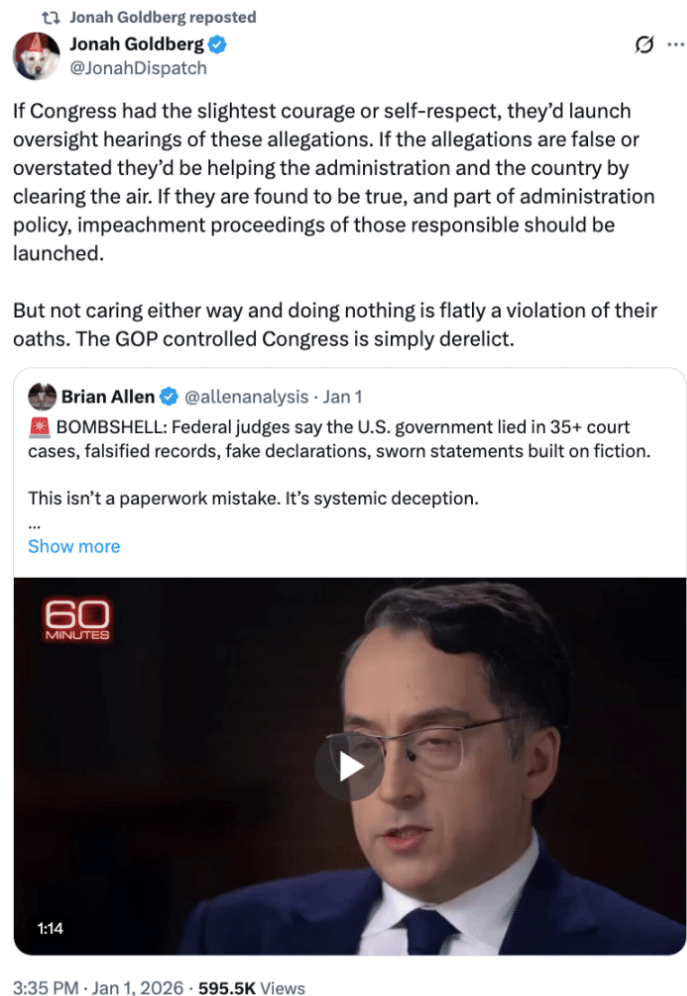
Stephen Miller's dragnet is unpopular in the abstract and wildly unpopular in the lived sense, even – if meekly – among local Republican leaders.

But it still retains support of a big chunk of the population, probably because Trump officials routinely blame their own failures to address American problems on migrants, when as often as not, Trump's response to immigration is the source of the problem.

America can't have nice things, like cures for cancer and welcoming public schools, because Republicans in Congress took the money used to pay for those things and gave it to Stephen Miller to use to invade America's neighborhoods.

Discredit **Key** **Spokespeople**

Right wingers like Jonah Goldberg and David French have expressed alarm by an old promo for a 60 Minutes piece (the piece itself was from October) that an influencer reposted yesterday, describing dozens of times when the government lied in court filings.



Judges have caught Trump's DOJ in several major lies since then. In Chicago, Judge Sara Ellis wrote a 233-page opinion documenting the many lies DHS has told about their Chicago invasion.

And in December, judges in both Kilmar Abrego's case caught the government obfuscating. In the criminal case, on December 30, Judge Waverly Crenshaw unsealed a December 3 opinion describing how Nashville's US Attorney lied about how centrally involved Todd Blanche's office was in demanding Abrego face trial.

The central question after Abrego established a prima facie case of vindictiveness is what information in the government's control sheds light on its new decision to prosecute Abrego, after removing him from the United States without criminal charges. These documents show that McGuire did not act alone and to the extent McGuire had

input on the decision to prosecute, he shared it with Singh and others. (Doc. No. 178-1). Specifically, the government's documents may contradict its prior representations that the decision to prosecute was made locally and that there were no outside influences. For example, Singh contacted McGuire on April 27, 2025, to discuss Abrego's case. (See Doc. No. 229 at Abrego-Garcia000001). On April 30, 2025, Singh asked McGuire what the potential charges against Abrego would be, whether the charging document would reference Abrego's alleged MS-13 affiliation, and asked for a phone call before any charges were filed. (Id. at Abrego-Garcia000007-000008). In a separate email on April 30, 2025, Singh made clear that Abrego's criminal prosecution was a "top priority" for the Deputy Attorney General's office (Blanche). (Id. at Abrego-Garcia000037). He then told McGuire to "sketch out a draft complaint for the 1324 charge [making it unlawful to bring in and harbor certain aliens]." (Id.). On May 15th, McGuire emailed his staff that "DAG (Blanche) and PDAG would like Garcia charged sooner rather than later." (Id. at Abrego-Garcia000060).

And as I've already noted, Judge Paula Xinis cataloged the many deliberately ignorant declarations DOJ filed about whether DHS had deportation plans for Abrego when she ruled that he must be released.

Respondents showcased Cantú's ignorance about the content of his Declaration pertaining to Costa Rica. As the pointed questions of Respondents' counsel made clear, Cantú's lack of knowledge was planned and purposeful.

Counsel: So paragraph 4, final sentence [of the Cantú Declaration], do you see

where it says the word—the words
“certain understandings”?

Cantú: I found it. Yes, I do. I see it.

Counsel: What are the certain
understandings referenced in the last
sentence?

Cantú: I don't know . . .

Counsel: What are the “contingencies”
referenced in the last sentence?

Cantú: I do not know . . .

Counsel: What are the “interim
developments” referenced in paragraph 5?

Cantú: I don't know.

ECF No. 107 at 26:8–27:12 (counsel for
Respondents, Jonathan Guynn (“Guynn”),
questioning Cantú). See also id. at
53:8–9 (Guynn, at sidebar with Court,
stating “I’ll just say I told you this
was exactly what was going to happen,”
regarding the witness’ ignorance on
Costa Rica as a viable country of
removal).

Ultimately, Respondents’ calculated
effort to take Costa Rica “off the
table” backfired. Within 24 hours, Costa
Rica, through Minister Zamora Cordero,
communicated to multiple news sources
that its offer to grant Abrego Garcia
residence and refugee status is, and
always has been, firm, unwavering, and
unconditional.

It’s a problem that, after huge scoldings like
these, right wing critics of Trump don’t
understand how much Trump’s people lie – not
least because the Supreme Court still credits
the most outlandish claims Trump makes, even
after they’ve been thoroughly debunked by lower
court judges.

Many of these lies are coming from the same


people: Stephen Miller, Todd Blanche's office, DHS spox Tricia McLaughlin, and Greg Bovino.

It is remarkable that so many of these people have been caught lying to courts (or publicly, about people before courts). But it needs to become common knowledge for everyone, so every time Tricia says something, they start from the assumption she's lying, because she almost always is.

There comes a time when the credibility of systematic liars not named Trump collapse entirely such that every utterance they make discredits the claims they try to sell. Tricia McLaughlin, at least, is close those levels of propaganda, and Stephen Miller is not far behind.

Use Trump's claimed opposition to antisemitism against him

Within days of his inauguration last year, Trump signed an EO – adding to one he signed in 2019 – claiming to oppose antisemitism. There has been some discussion about the bad faith of this EO and a DOJ lawyer implementing it, Michael Velchik, once wrote a paper from Hitler's perspective. While it is explicitly targeted at universities (and has been a key tool to attempt to takeover universities), it nevertheless claimed to oppose antisemitism everywhere.



It shall be the policy of the United States to combat anti-Semitism vigorously, using all available and appropriate legal tools, to prosecute, remove, or otherwise hold to account the perpetrators of unlawful anti-Semitic harassment and violence.

This is the kind of statement of principle that can form the basis of political pressure –

particularly as the MAGA movement splinters around the overt antisemitism of people like Nick Fuentes and Candace Owen, and as political opportunists like Ted Cruz attempt to exploit that splinter.

We're going to have to fight this battle in any case. As part of the revocation of everything Eric Adams did after he was indicted for bribery yesterday, Zohran Mamdani revoked an EO that gave Israel preferential treatment, which Israel is using to stoke division; yet Mamdani preserved the office Adams opened to combat antisemitism.

We need to call out the dripping antisemitism of Trump's team, from top (at least JD Vance, who refuses to disavow Fuentes) to bottom.

There are two key Trump aides who should be targeted. Most notably, Paul Ingrassia, who had to withdraw his nomination to be Special Counsel after Politico exposed texts in which he confessed to a Nazi streak been installed at GSA instead. In addition, Kingsley Wilson became DOD spokesperson in spite of Neo-Nazi comments. NPR has done good work unpacking these ties.

Reclaim disinformation research

Republicans plan on exporting fascism via US tech platforms.

That's not new. I've been talking about Elon's plans to use Xitter as a machine for fascism for some time.

But since then, Trump's minions worked it into the National Security Strategy.

And, in the wake of the EU's sanctions against Elon Musk for – basically – lying about why I have a blue check, Marco Rubio stripped the visas of five people, including US Green Card holder Imran Ahmed, a long time adversary of Elon's.

But there are several developments that suggest it is time to renew efforts to defend disinformation research, not least the White House's absurd effort to attack real journalism, what is sure to be a snowballing failure on Bari Weiss' part to make propaganda popular, and the meltdown the head of DOJ's Civil Rights division, Harmeet Dhillon, had over the holidays about right wing "misinformation" targeting Pam Bondi.



Harmeet K. Dhillon ✓
@HarmeetKDhillon



"Conservative" influencers, if you think you are "keeping the pressure on" or "winning" by spreading bullshit attacks on [@realDonaldTrump](#)'s hand-picked cabinet, you are NOT. You are earning money to spread misinformation. You are hoes. Learn an honest profession!

1:09 AM · Dec 29, 2025 · 211.1K Views

The right wingers are doing what they themselves established is unlawful. And that presents both political and legal opportunities to demonize their propaganda.

Which in turn cycles back to the increasing problem of AI propaganda, including Grok's flagrant willingness to nudify children in recent days.

Some people write short resolutions. I guess I write 4,000-word To Do lists. Join me in my efforts!