How do we visualize the contemporary political moment?

How do collage artists speak to rising authoritarianism?

Five contemporary collage artists who came together for a month to make art about contemporary politics. This zine shares their work.



The art speaks to a range of topics from economics, the environment, and militarization to religion, gender, and international relations. We hope this zine will inspire others to draw upon their strength and to use their voice and their creative skills to resist authoritarianism.





Contributors

G.E. Vogt
San Diego, California, USA

SDS
Belmont, Massachusetts, USA

Andrea Lee
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Kayla Collins
Northville, Michigan, USA

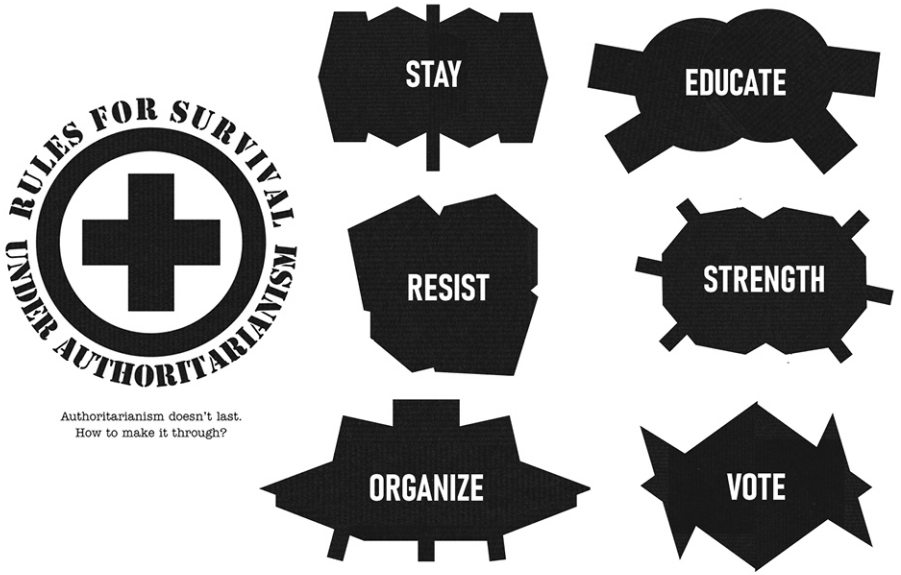
Amanda Shepherd
Phoenix, Arizona, USA

Front cover collage by Kayla Collins. Back cover collage is Fire! *by Andrea Lee.*

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AUTHORITARIAN CHECKLIST

- ☑ Win elections on fear & populist promises
- ☑ Reclaim power for the People from the "elites"
- ☑ Purge highest positions in key government institutions
- ☑ Place cronies in positions of highest power regardless of their competence
- ☑ Brush off any critical press as "fake", "corrupt", "acting against the People"
- ☑ Bluntly lie to the People
- ☑ Ban press from parliament/ congress/White House or selectively limit their access
- ☑ Limit press freedom & quietly take control of mainstream media
- ☑ Label opposition & protesters as "traitors", "elites trying to reclaim power"
- ☑ Limit freedom of assembly
- ☑ Fix highest court to be able to bypass Constitution "for the good of the people"
- ☑ Limit minority & women's rights
- ☑ Ruin the economy to fulfil your populist promises in the short term
- ☑ Alienate international partners and allies, "making your country great again"
- ☑ Quietly fix electoral law under the disguise of making it better
- ☐ Start over, until there's nothing left...



From *Authoritarian Regime Survival Guide*

kolaj INSTITUTE

Midterm Report on the Rise of Authoritarianism

Text and images by five international artists

Front cover collage by Kayla Collins.
Back cover collage is Fire! by Andrea Lee.

Curated by G.E. Vogt
Layout by Ric Kasini Kadour

Published by Kolaj Institute
& Maison Kasini Canada

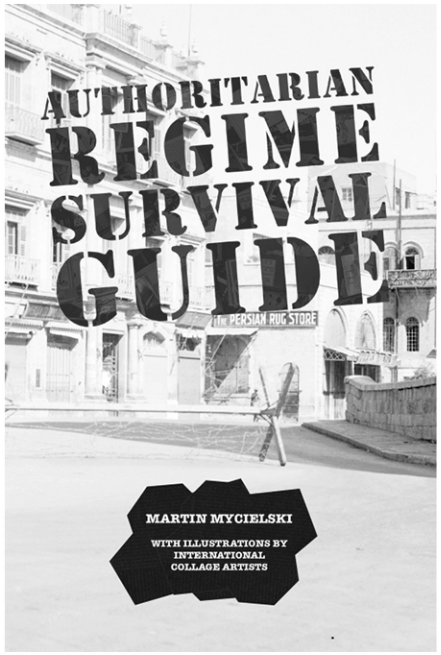
Printed in the United States

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ISBN 978-1-927587-79-9

Legal deposit—Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2026
Legal deposit—Library and Archives Canada, 2026

Kolaj Institute programs, residencies, events, and publications would not be possible without the support of the community. Your donation allows the Kolaj Institute to take root and to create opportunities for artists, curators, and writers working to deepen our understanding of collage, art history, and the role of art in our communities. Together, we are building an organization that can serve the international collage community and document and preserve the legacy of this 21st century art movement. Learn more at www.kolajinstitute.org



SUGGESTED READING

Authoritarian Regime Survival Guide

by Martin Mycielski, illustrated & interpreted by contemporary collage artists

Kolaj Institute, 2025

Authoritarian Regime Survival Guide is a collage. The book combines the text of a Polish human rights activist with the artwork of seven collage artists to create a space in which we can think about the rise of authoritarianism and how to navigate the troubling, difficult times in which we find ourselves. Organized as a series of lists, the book illustrates what to expect under authoritarianism and offers rules for surviving authoritarian regimes and engaging their supporters. The *Authoritarian Regime Survival Guide* is a testament to the role art can play in our communities.

Introduction

"Authoritarians rightfully see art and free expression as a threat to power. As such, they act to control what is presented...The rise of authoritarianism is a campaign for the hearts and minds of the people. Art fundamentally threatens that campaign." from the Introduction to *The Authoritarian Regime Survival Guide.*

In January 2025, Kolaj Institute organized the residency, Politics in Collage 2025: Authoritarian Regime Survival Guide, that brought together collage artists to make artwork that responds to a global rise in authoritarianism. Artists in the residency worked together to illustrate and elucidate *The Authoritarian Regime Survival Guide*, a text written by Martin Mycielski, the Vice-President and Executive Director of the Brussels-based Open Dialogue Foundation. The folio of prints serves as a traveling exhibition. We began the residency on Inauguration Day. By the time we published the book—two hundred days into the administration—we were able to check off each of the items on Mycielski's Authoritarian Checklist (see inside back cover). With the coming Midterm elections we thought it timely to again bring together a group of artists to make artwork about rising authoritarianism.

The residency was led by G.E. Vogt who, since 2021, has led a series of residencies in which artists explored the intersection of politics and collage. Vogt's artwork consistently explores the crippling socioeconomic gap, the various forms of inequality prevalent in the U.S, and the toxicity of our political climate. The residency asked, How do we visualize the contemporary political moment? Their work speaks to a range of topics from economics, the environment, and militarization to religion, gender, and international relations.

On 23 June 2026, a federal judge in Fort Worth, Texas sentenced Daniel "Des" Sanchez Estrada to thirty years in federal prison for moving a box of antifascist zines after a protest outside an ICE detention center in Alvarado, Texas during which a protester wounded Alvarado Police Lt. Thomas Gross. Sanchez Estrada was not at the protest or involved in the protest. The court applied terrorism enhancements that treated him, along with the other defendants as co-conspirators in spite of the jury's acquittals on the shooting-related charges. Visit prairielanddefendants.com to learn about the case.



Just A Moment by SDS

When the act of writing, making art, publishing and distributing materials about the politics of the day becomes criminalized in this manner, when non-violent resistance is categorized and treated as terriosm, we must acknowledge that we have strayed far from the Constitution and waded deep into authoritarian waters. As Amanda Shepherd's collage tells us, "America you in danger, girl."

Collage has a deep history as a political art form. From its roots in the European anti-fascist and Russian revolutionary movements in the early 20th century to its expressions during the U.S. Civil Rights era to its current manifestations in the fight for social justice in South America, collage is used by artists around the world as an impetus for social and political change. We hope this zine will inspire others to draw upon their strength and to use their voice and their creative skills to resist.

—Ric Kasini Kadour

Absolute Loyalty Pledge

Amanda Shepherd

"I pledge my alligance to the flag of the United States of America and to the REPUBLIC for which it stands

ONE NATION.

UNDER GOD.

INDIVISIBLE.

WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL."

Written in 1892 by Francis Bellamy

On Thursday, Sept. 10, 2026 Mr. Trump makes republican convention audience pledge their allegiance to Trump and cheat like hell. Quote from records of RNC Convention.



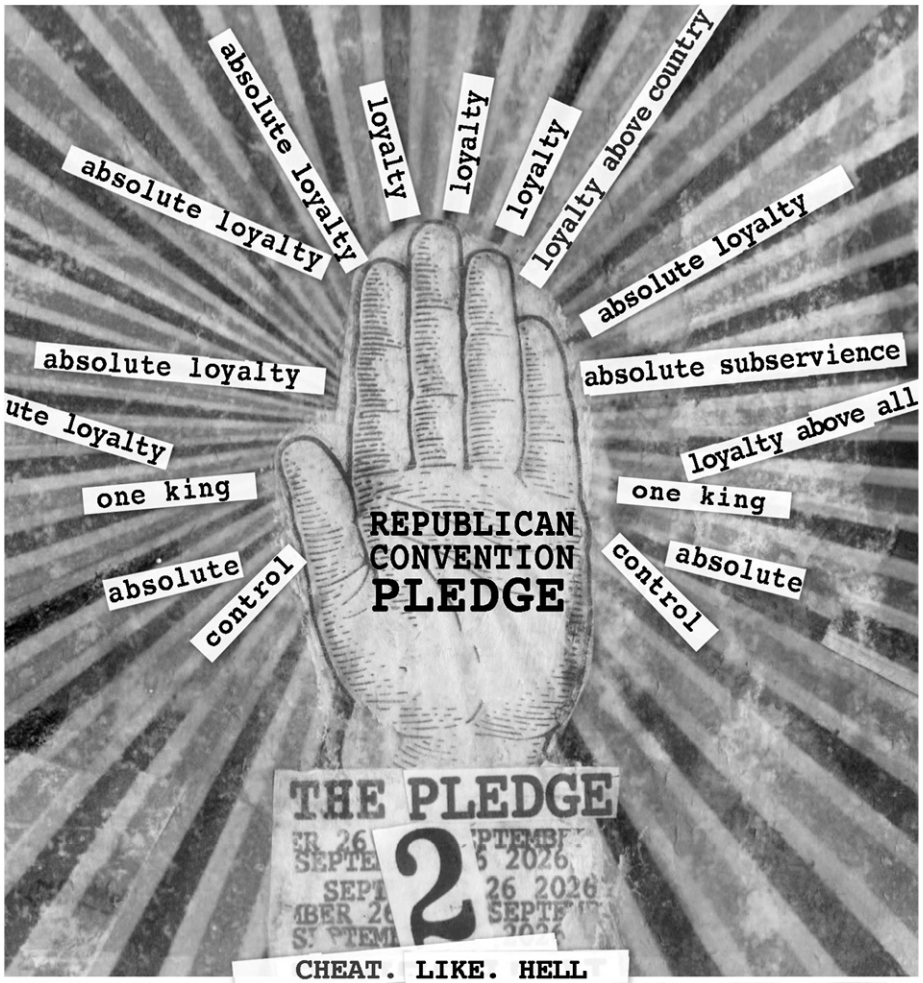
this is us too.

Amanda Shepherd



REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE. WE ARE AMERICANS. WE FOUGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY. WE FOUGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS.
WE WILL SUCCEED. U.S.TOGETHER.

USE THIS THIS POSTER



"I pledge to the greatest president in the history of the United States.
t hat loves us so much he can't even breathe, that I will go out with my
family, my friends. I'll do it any way. I don't care if I'm registered or not.
I'm going to try and cheat like hell like they do. So help me god."

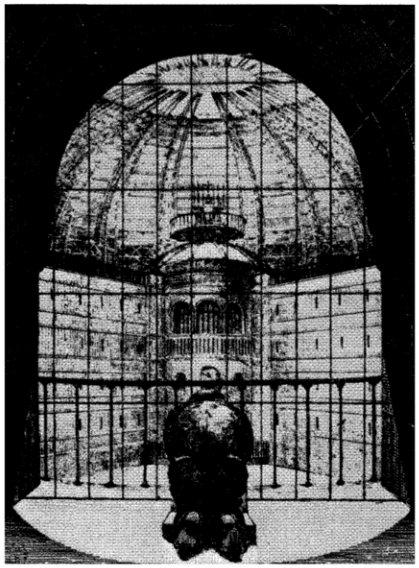
Cheat Pledge | Republican National Convention Sept 2026

Smile You're On Camera

Kayla Collins

The gaze is alert everywhere. The prisoner is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication. This invisibility is a guarantee of order.

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action, that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary. It can reduce the number of those who exercise it, while increasing the number of those on whom it is exercised.

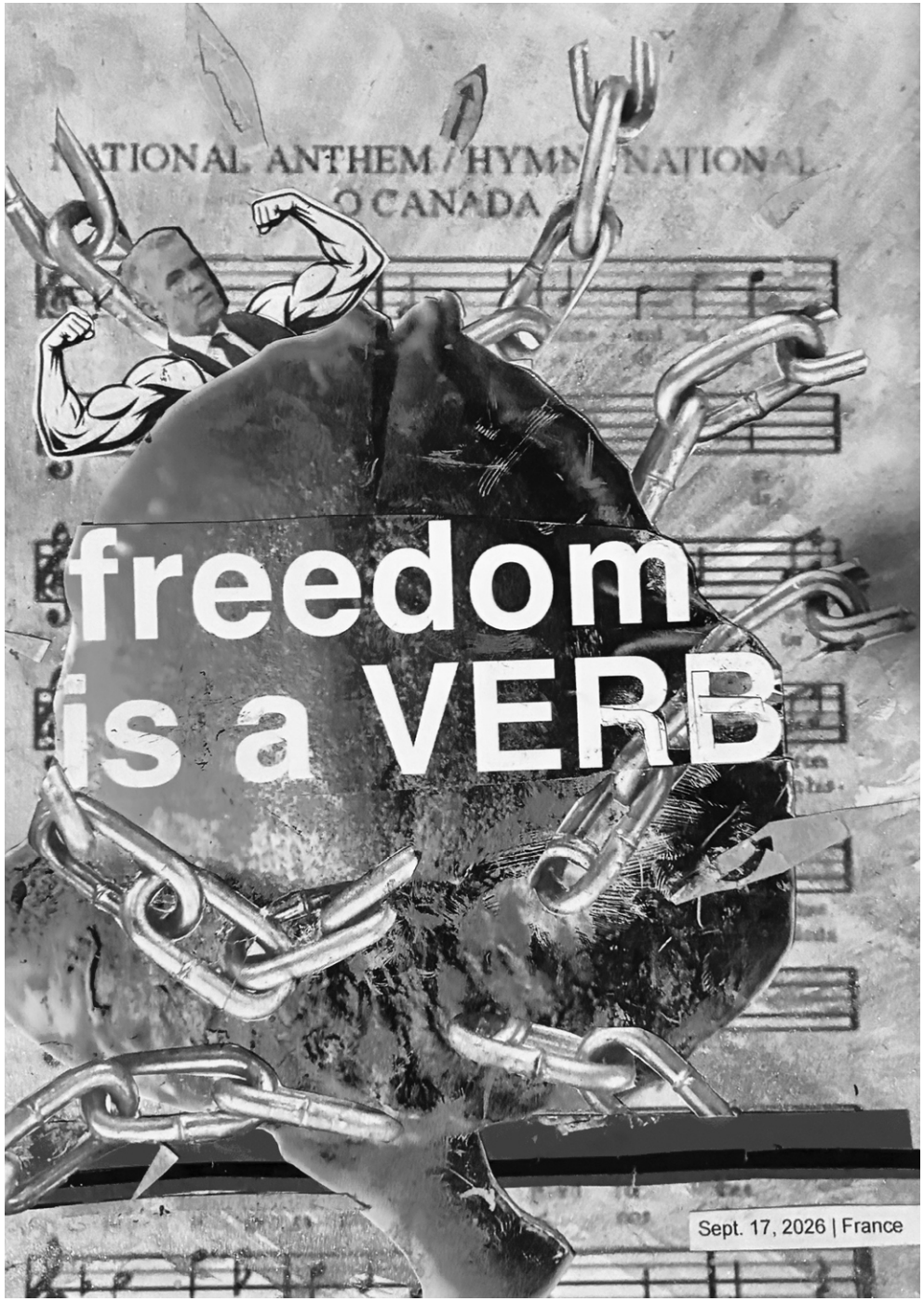


"A prisoner praying in his panopticon prison cell," 1840 illustration by. N Harou-Romain.

In order to be exercised, this power had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible. It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert, and a long, hierarchized network.

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; **he becomes the principle of his own subjection.**

Selections from Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish, 1975



Freedom is a Verb

Andrea Lee

"In the heart of Germany, above Weimar, there is a wooded ridge called Ettersberg. For decades, Goethe walked, thought, and wrote there.

An oak on that ridge came to bear his name, a living monument to the highest ideals of European culture.

As the 20th century turned dark, that same oak became trapped behind the barbed wire of Buchenwald, a silent witness to humanity's deepest moral failure.

Goethe understood that ideals must be fought for, that values do not defend themselves. Indeed, at the end of *Faust*, the old man's last vision is of a free people on free ground.

Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben, der täglich sie erobern muß.

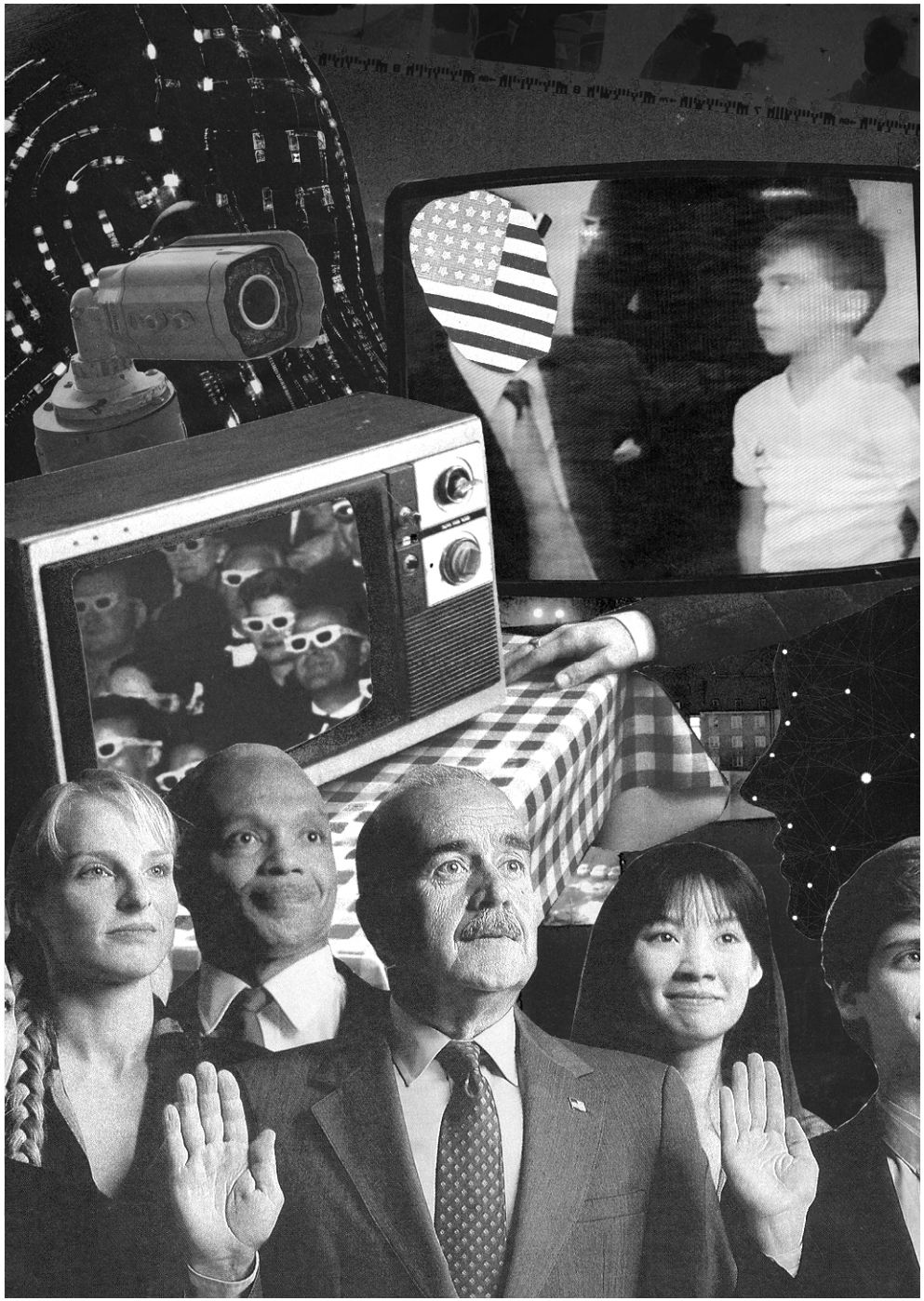
"Freedom and life must be earned every single day."

Every day. Not once in 1945, or 1956, or 1989. Every day, including this one."

—Excerpt from Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's speech given on 17 September 2026 to the European Parliament

Freedom is not simply something we have. It is something we must continually exercise, defend and sometimes fight to reclaim. Amid growing concerns about authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic freedoms, the work imagines Canada flexing its muscles in defence of freedom and doing so in an effort to inspire other nations to follow suit. Freedom requires participation. It is neither a default, nor a spectator sport.

—Andrea Lee



Frauleins Freak
SDS

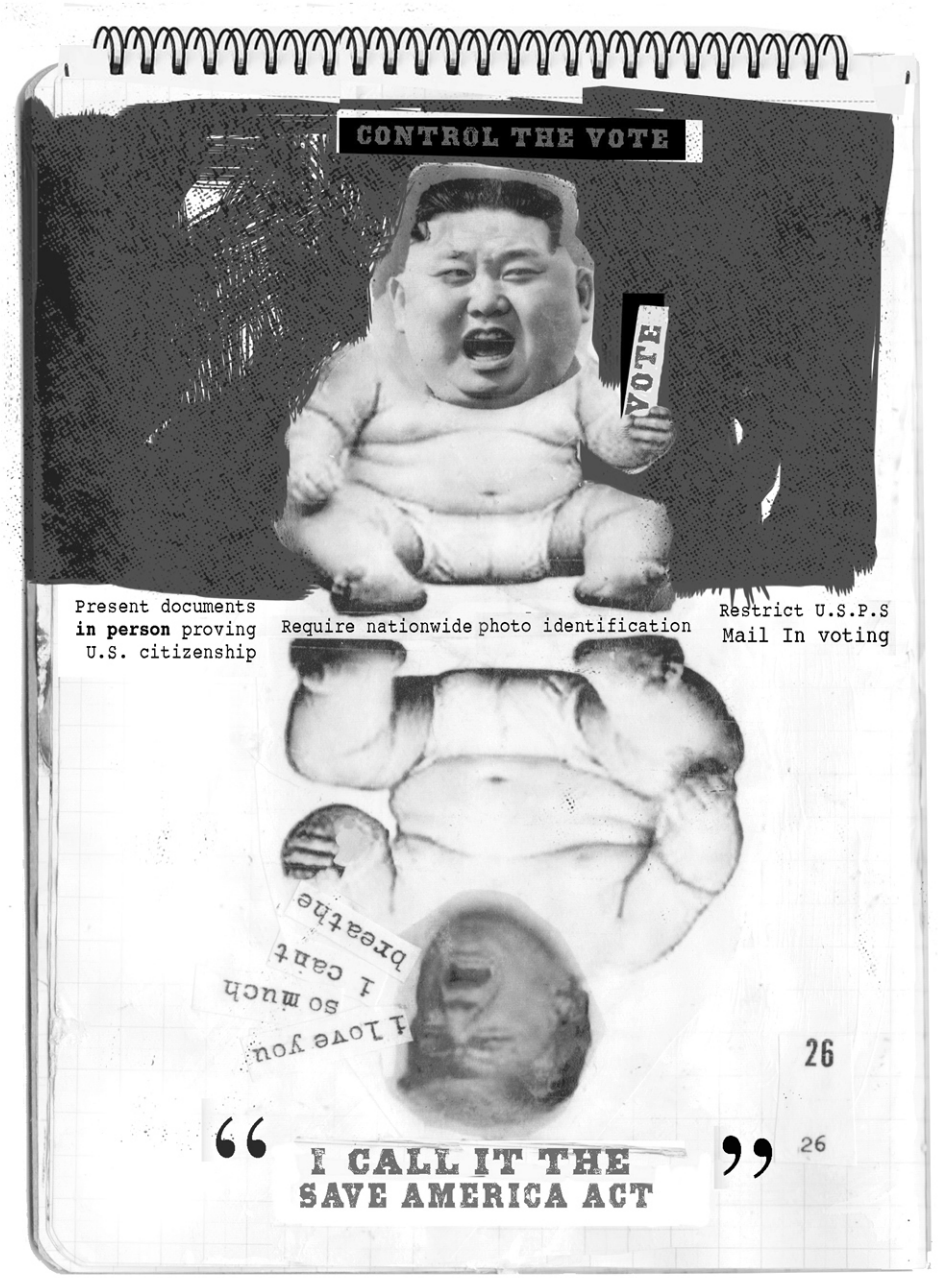
DER SPIEGEL
DER SPIEGEL
DER SPIEGEL
DER SPIEGEL

SUGGESTED READING

The Fawning Girls Surrounding Adolf Hitler
by Frank Thadeusz

DER SPIEGEL, 30 September 2026

"Despite his rather dowdy appearance, Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler triggered fits of ecstasy through his very presence. Why? What made the Führer so attractive? And how did he take advantage of it?"



Save Act Dictator Playbook

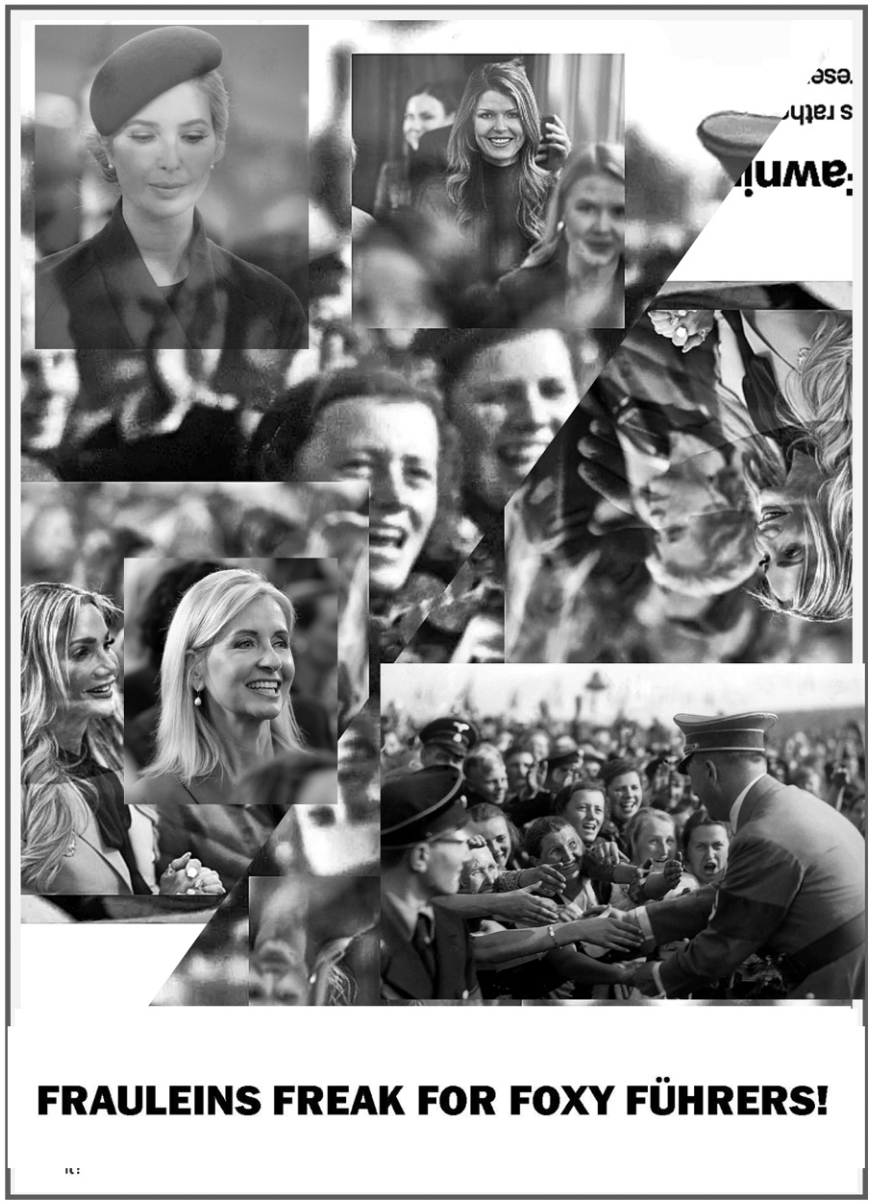
Amanda Shepherd

- The Trump administration is trying to impose restrictions on mail-in voting and voter registration through executive action. So far, federal courts have blocked these efforts.
- 22 federal courts have rejected Trump's efforts to obtain sensitive data in unredacted state voting rolls.
- The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the SAVE America Act, legislation that would require proof of U.S. citizenship at voter registration and a specific government photo ID at the ballot box for federal elections.

What is the status of voter suppression efforts at the federal level?

- An estimated 21 million voters don't have ready access —or in millions of cases, access at all—to the type of documents the Save America Act would require to vote.
- House leaders are attempting to force the Senate to pass the legislation—or elements of it—in broader budget bills.
- Voters who would suffer disproportionately negative effects are rural, lower-income, older and people with disabilities, as well as married women whose legal names differ from their birth certificate name and younger voters who may not yet have passports, driver's licenses, or government-issued IDs.

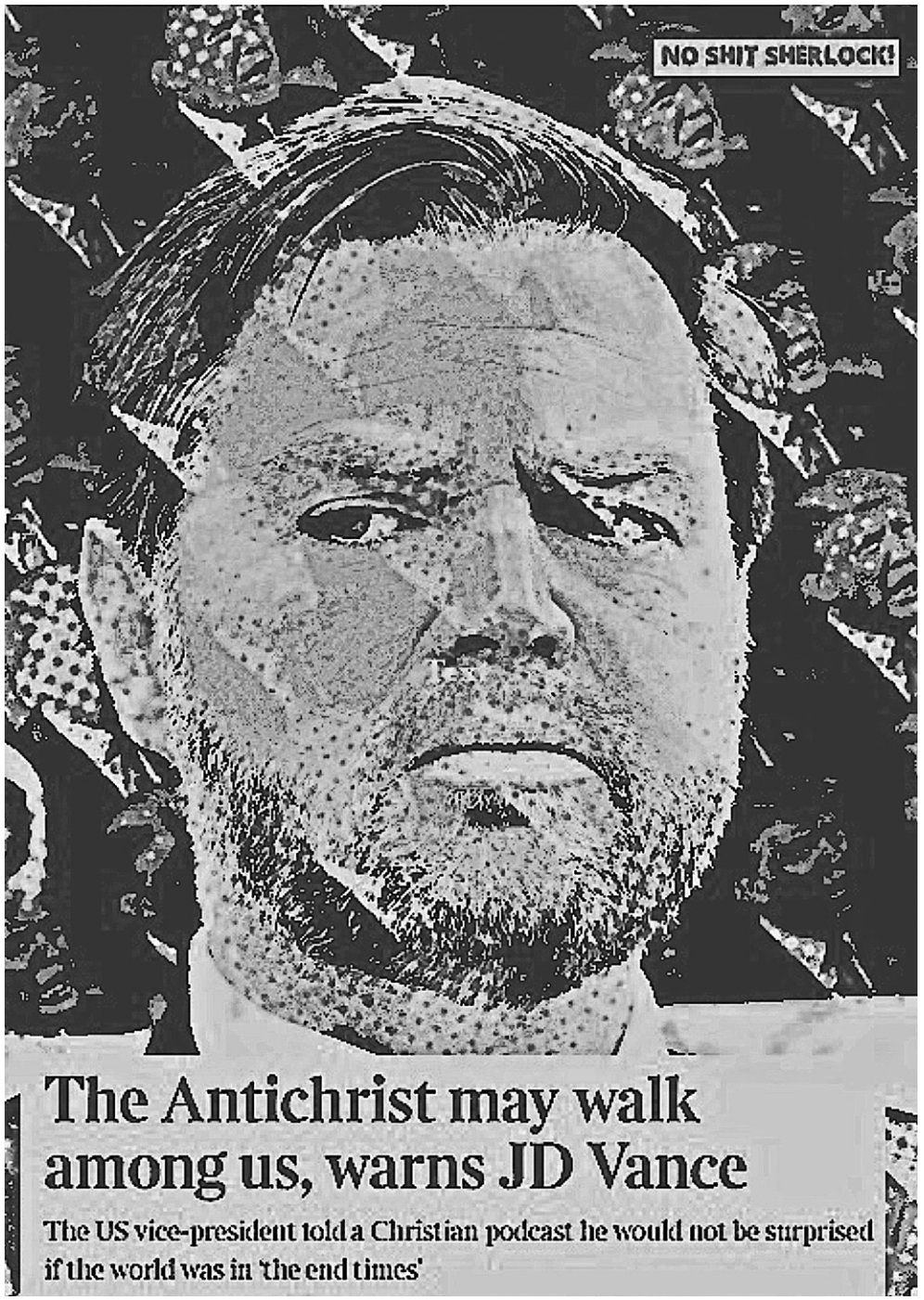
from *FACT SHEET: Voter Suppression and the 2026 Midterms* by Karen Dolan
28 August 2026, Institute for Policy Studies

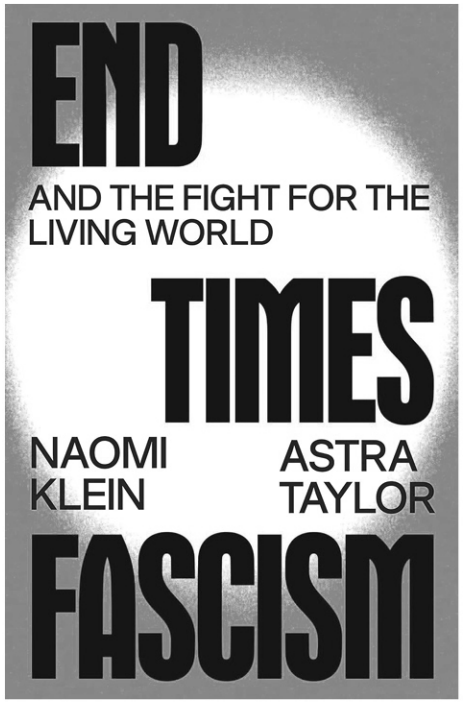


we don't hear the truth

Amanda Shepherd

lies.

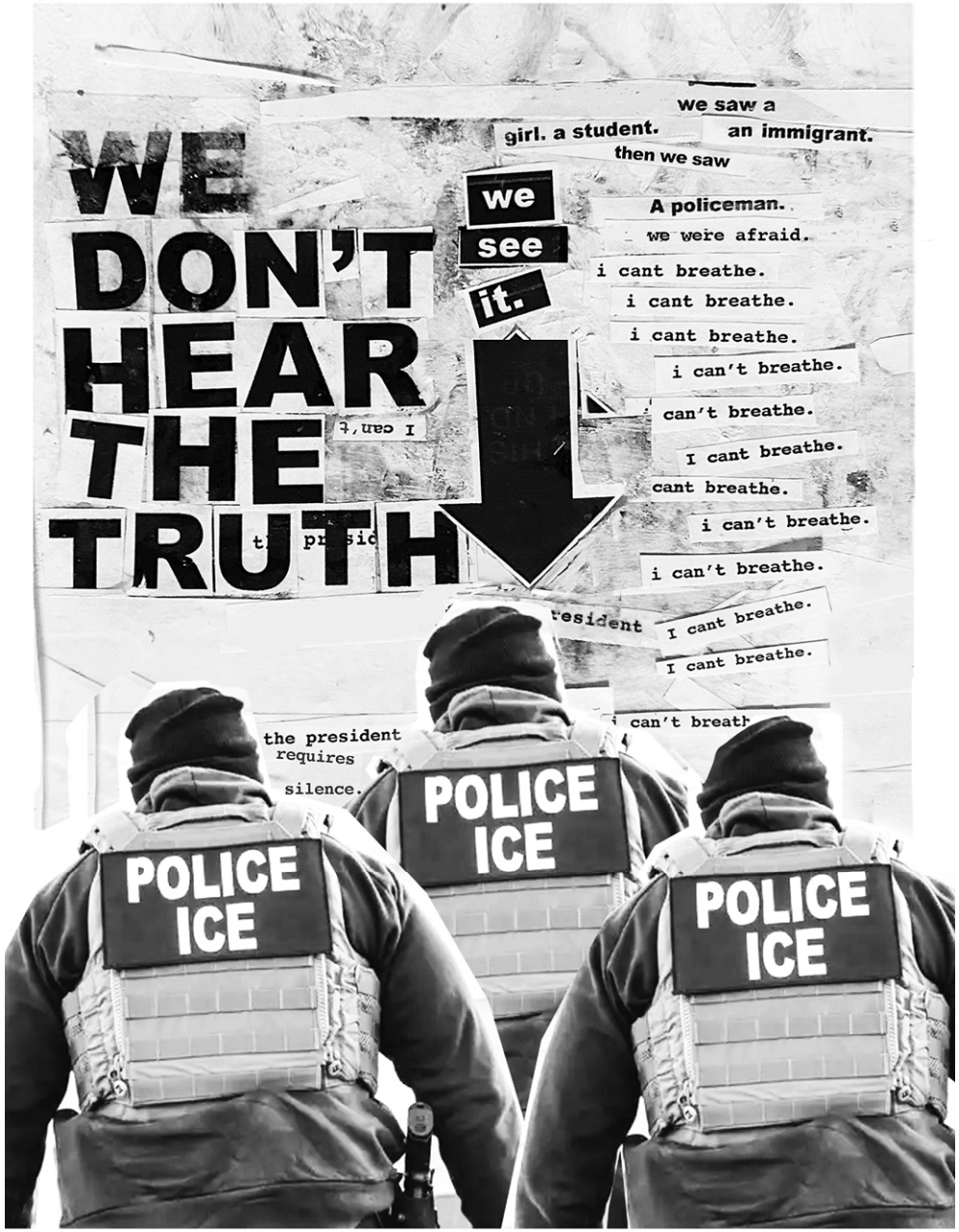




SUGGESTED READING

End Times Fascism: And the Fight for the Living World
by Naomi Klein & Astra Taylor

A new, apocalyptic alliance of religious fundamentalists, billionaire Silicon Valley tech kings and ethno-nationalists are united in their belief that a cataclysm is coming, and they welcome a future of shocks, scarcity and collapse, convinced they'll be among the saved on the other side. If we're to meet this critical moment, we must fight for the living world. A story not of end times—but of better times.



Object/Subject

Kayla Collins

"When woman's infinite bondage is broken, when she shall live for and through herself, man - hitherto detestable - having let her go free. She, too, will be poet."
-Arthur Rimbaud, I87I

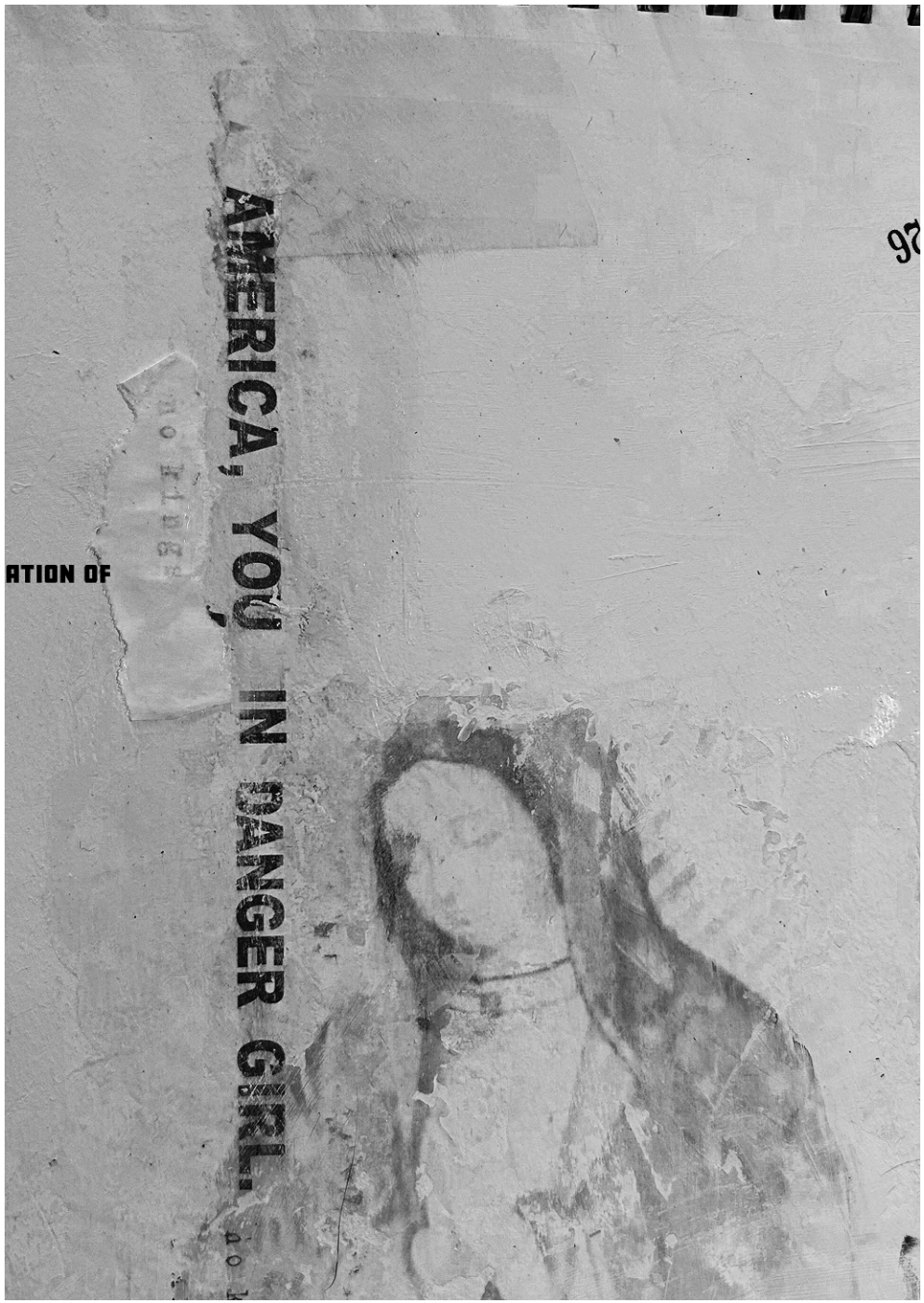
* * *

The subjugated woman, as Other, is America's fetish object.
Rigid gender itself becomes fetishized
as the only true and natural world-orienting device.

This fetish relies on the simultaneous
recognition and disavowal of such absurdity.
It is highly constructed, depersonalized, detached,
and yet treated as complete, autonomous, pure, essential.
The fascist fetishist both worships and fears the object.
Worshiped as the nation's maternal comforter,
feared in her ability to expose these
imagined boundaries and performative myths.
She must therefore be controlled,
often through psychic displacement,
many times through direct violence.

The phantom woman, as this sacred fetish object,
becomes the symbolic battleground for fascists.
Once materialized, realized, and contextualized,
she becomes just another enemy that requires neutralization.

We must remember what this means:
If we are seen as such a potent threat,
it means we wield potentiality.
Within each woman is the immense power
to radically dismantle their security.

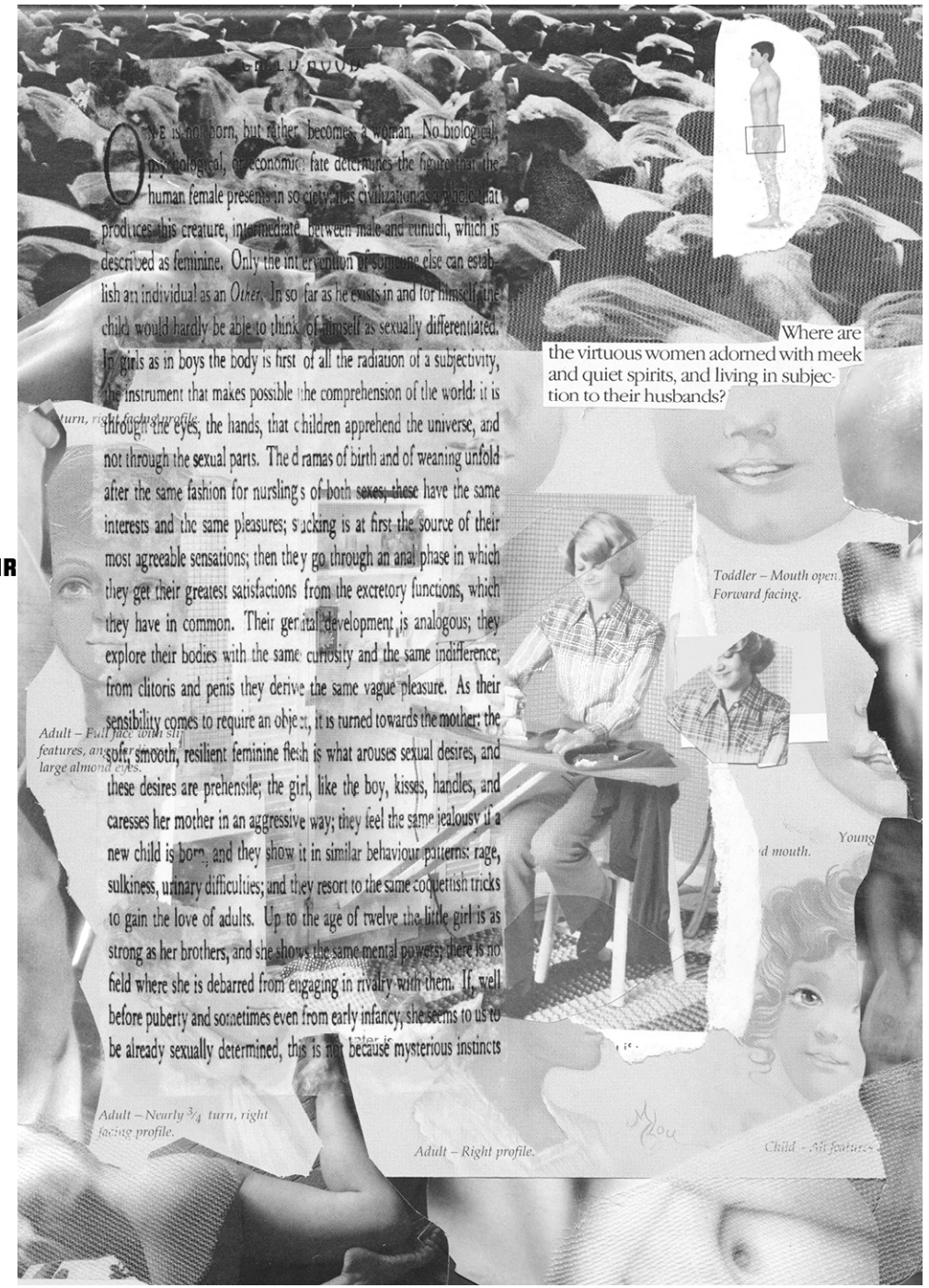


america you in danger. girl.

Amanda Shepherd

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE PROTECTS US ALL OF US. THE SEPAR
CHURCH AND STATE PROTECTS ALL OF US. ALL OF US. EVERYONE.

ALL OF US. EVEN HER



The Price To Pay

G E Vogt

“Despite their ostensible strength, authoritarian regimes are often more fragile than they appear. This vulnerability stems from a series of internal and external factors, from elite dissatisfaction and public unrest to international pressures and economic instability. While autocratic leaders might wield considerable power, that power is predicated on a delicate equilibrium of loyalty and fear, both within the inner circle and among the general populace. Once that balance is disrupted, the illusion of invincibility starts to crumble, revealing the regime’s inherent fragility.” —Karel J. Leyva

SUGGESTED READING

The Hidden Fragility of Authoritarian Regimes by Karel J. Leyva

Politics and Rights Review, 24 June 2025

“Unpacking the complexities of authoritarian regimes reveals inherent vulnerabilities, shaped by both internal power dynamics and external influences, that challenge the illusion of their invincibility.”



Quiet Summit

Andrea Lee

September 24–25, 2026 - Trump–Xi summit in Washington, D.C. The two leaders met amid tensions over trade, security and Taiwan's future.

When two volatile and deeply self-interested leaders sit down to negotiate, what exactly is on the table? Is it the promises they have made before, which they may or may not keep? Is it the best interests of all, or themselves? Trade agreements, military alliances, territories, the futures of millions of people are at stake, yet the people who would be most impacted are not at the table to speak and hear for themselves.

Taiwan's future was once again a subject of discussion between the United States and China, while Taiwan itself was absent from the negotiations. One of the dangers of authoritarianism is the concentration of decisions in the hands of a few, while those who must live with the consequences have little say.

—Andrea Lee



This Wasteland Was Made for You and Me

Kayla Collins





Money Deafens

Kayla Collins

Authoritarianism relies on the support of wealthy elites to fund and protect their status. Financial power is used to silence opposition and suppress freedom of speech.

NOT SO FUN FACTS!

In 2010, a landmark ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* ruled to allow corporations to spend an **unlimited** amount of money promoting candidates and political parties. This also allowed super PACS the ability to accept unlimited contributions from donors to promote certain candidates.

More than half of congress members are millionaires. And they are only required to work less than half the days in a year!

As of 2026, the bottom 50% of households have 2.3% of the U.S. wealth and the top 1% holds 32.5% of the wealth. The top 10% controls more than two-thirds of the country's net worth.

Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance since WWII. They've been given more than $305 billion (adjusted for inflation).

plu·toc·ra·cy /pluːˈtɒkɹəsi/ (noun)

a society that is ruled or controlled by people of great wealth or income; can be considered an oligarchy (ruled by the few) where the ruling few are wealthy.

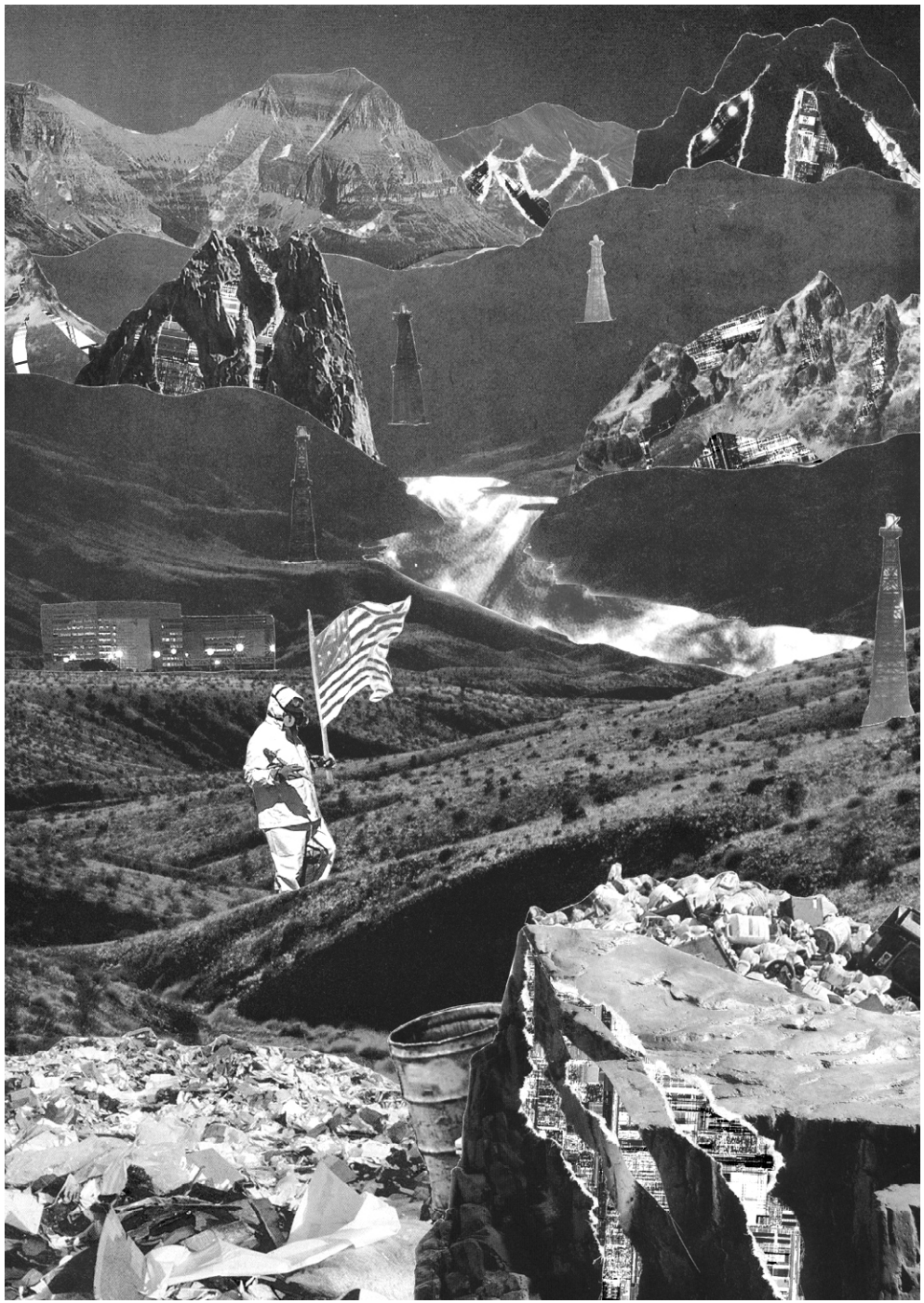
USAGE "If only the wealthy can afford to run for public office, are we more a plutocracy than a democracy?"

One of the richest and most influential lobbying groups today is the **American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)**. AIPAC and the United Democracy Project spend millions of dollars to support pro-Israel candidates and military assistance to Israel.

Since 2023, more than 74,000 Palestinians have been killed, at least 21,000 of them children, with thousands still under the rubble. 1 in every 13 people in Gaza are wounded, and at least a quarter of them have significant life-altering injuries.

Resources:

USCPR.ORG/TOOLKIT
BDSMOVEMENT.NET
TRACKAIPAC.COM



Greetings from Washington

Andrea Lee

Figure	Reuters finding
4,500	National Guard soldiers deployed in Washington, D.C.
3,200	Police officers in the city
1.3%	Criminal cases in D.C. Superior Court mentioning National Guard involvement
$1.4 billion	Projected deployment cost through 2029

One National Guard member for every 154 Washington, DC, residents. That's a lot of military presence. To what end? What does such dense deployment accomplish, and what message is it sending? There is a difference between genuinely protecting people and making a show of force. How do ordinary citizens know the difference and when that line has been crossed?

Authoritarian leaders love to normalize military presence. What used to seem excessive and wrong quickly becomes part of the scenery. If you lived in Washington, DC, how long would it be before you became desensitized?

—Andrea Lee

