"Orange is the new white: Trump's 'Brand' of whiteness, its transformation of the brown body, and its effect on immigration policy and socioracial ideology in the United States"

by James Myers III

Trump's "Brand" of Whiteness

The first aspect of importance of what is posed as Trump's "brand" of whiteness is that it is not a new phenomenon originating organically. Rather, it is a continued variant of the socioracial ideology of whiteness which has been predominant within institutions, both public and private, and communities, temporally and spatially, throughout the United States (Roediger 2002; Foley 2002; Lipsitz 2002). Although this variant shares characteristics with particular forms of whiteness that have preceded it, and which exist concurrently, such as white, fringe conservatives' vehement opposition to Mexican, Central American, and Middle Eastern/Muslim[1] immigrants (i.e., brown bodies) (Cha-Jua 2010; Oliviero 2011; Nevins 2010, 118-154), the significant shift in these areas has been the implementation of these ideological tenets as not only the official federal position, but specifically, and especially, that of the president's.

Complementary to this federal institutionalization of anti-brownness[2], there is also a crystallization of the boundaries of whiteness. In contrast, other forms of whiteness have utilized integration and inclusion of non-white persons to maintain, and gain, sociopolitical and economic power in order to readapt to material conditions in a fluid nature, discretely marking and unmarking criteria of inclusion as needed (Sasson-Levy 2013; Reed 2013). Instead, the current paradigm is centered around a defense of this power, focusing on the exclusion of brown bodies. As can be

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1   The use of "Middle Eastern/Muslim" throughout this paper is used in an effort to provide an efficient reference term for a large swath of persons. Although extremely diverse, it is cumbersome to be specific. Moreover, among the proponents of this brand of whiteness, these persons are constantly subjectified as such, and are thus analyzed here in this way.

2   "Brownness" here works to present the behavioral, phenotypical, and worldview-based characteristics which are associated and attributed to brown bodies, in this case particularly those related to Middle Eastern/Muslim brown bodies. It serves as the counterpart to that which is understood as "whiteness."

seen within Trump's cabinet[3] and supporters[4], as well as rhetoric and policies targeting brown persons, there is little attempt towards non-white inclusion, benevolent, Machiavellian, or otherwise. Alternatively, there is a fundamental passive understanding, and tacit acceptance, thatTrump's "America" is at most a white one, and at least one that offers no quarter for those who are brown. In further contrast to this fluid, habitus-based whiteness (Sasson-Levy 2013, 28-30, 36-37), the ossification of these boundaries of whiteness (which define Trump's conceptualization of what is "American," a point that will be elaborated upon below) occurs through the oppositionality of oneself to that which is "brown" (i.e., foreign, relating to either Middle Eastern/Muslim or Mexican/Central American persons) (Fusté 2010, 814). The ultimate result of this rigidification of socioracial categorization is a worldview which enacts a more blatant process of separation, especially between white and non-white (in this case, brown) communities, both inside and outside of the United States.

Where within this "brand" of whiteness, categorical brownness becomes more restrictive and rigid, the opposite appears to be true for categorical whiteness in that it now works to be expanded to that which is simply "American." As stated above concerning Trump's implicit conceptualization of "America," the composition of which is predominantly white, this concept, with a prominent demographic backing, also lends itself to define that which is "American." Thus, essentially, there is a cessation of any further ethnic self-identification and a direct, assumptive prescription of that which is white, especially persons, with the state (Sasson-Levy 2013, 46; Heyman 2008). Therefore, although most omit the identifier "white," the intentional adoption of this particular descriptor, asserting oneself as a "white American," exhibits, at the very least, a tacit recognition of the privileged status of a white person in the United States, and their desire to be treated with such regard (Sasson-Levy 2013, 36, 44). Furthermore, as Josiah Heyman argues, this anti-brown, anti-immigrant, defensive whiteness seeks to preserve a sociocultural and economic whiteness-based conceptualization of "America," idealized during the 1950s (Heyman 2008, 314); a utopia which continues to be sought after, as exhibited by Trump's promise to "Make America Great Again" (Trump 2017, "Inaugural Address"). Moreover, along with

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3   Trump's cabinet is the most white and male dominant cabinet since the presidency of Ronald Reagan (Lee 2017).

4   Andrew McGill. "The Trump Bloc." The Atlantic, September 14, 2016, accessed on March 15, 2017. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/dissecting-donald-trumps-support/499739/. Alec Tyson. "Behind Trump's victory: Divisions by race, gender, education." Pew Research Center, November 9, 2016, accessed on March 15, 2017. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory- divisions-by-race-gender-education/.

the 1950s, as Heyman offers, this period of "greatness" also references the overtly white supremacist, genocidal Jacksonian America (Trump, "Remarks on the 250th Anniversary of the Birth of Andrew Jackson in Nashville, Tennessee"; Turner 2008), and the neoliberal golden age of President Ronald Reagan.

The emergence of such a worldview, both historically and contemporarily, is primarily driven by a modification of material conditions (Reed 2008, 50). At the forefront of this material shift are the changing demographics of the United States, with a significant rise of brown (e.g., Latinx[5][6] and Middle Eastern/Muslim American and immigrant) communities[7] being the most critical. Changing demographics threaten particular groups' (e.g. poor and middle-class white Americans)[8] access to resources in general, but especially within the context of a widening inequality gap[9], wherein there is continually more for holders of capital to protect, with those being increasingly economically disenfranchised fighting harder than ever to keep the little that they have. A product of this has been the construction of the brown body as a scapegoat for the cause of this inequality (Trump 2017, "Joint Address to Congress"). Used by both the political and economic elite as a diversion, this

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5   The use of "Latinx" throughout this paper works to replace Latino in attempt to eliminate the inherent binary gendering of Latina/o.

6   In addition, although Latinx typically refers to those who originate, or are descendent of those from Latin America, for sake of space and readability this term primarily serves as a place holder for Mexican and Central American, due to these groups' predominance in the United States.

7   Arab American Institute Foundation. "Demographics." Washington, D.C., 2014.

     Jens Manuel Krogstad. "Key facts about how the U.S. Hispanic population is changing." Pew Research Center, September 8, 2016, accessed on March 15, 2017. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/08/keyfacts-about-how-the-u-s-hispanic-population-is-changing/.

     Pew Research Center. "Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism." Washington, D.C., 2011.

     Renee Stepler. "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States." Pew Research Center, April, 2016, accessed on March 15, 2017. http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/04/19/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-unitedstates-key-charts/#hispanic-pop.

8   Jed Kolko. "Trump Was Stronger Where The Economy Is Weaker." FiveThirtyEight, November 10, 2016, accessed on March 15, 2017. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-was-stronger-where-the-economy-isweaker/.

     Alec MacGillis and Propublica. "The Original Underclass." The Atlantic, September 2016, accessed on March 15, 2017. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/09/the-original- underclass/492731/.

     Eduardo Porter. "Where Were Trump's Votes? Where the Jobs Weren't." The New York Times, December 13, 2016, accessed on March 15, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/business/economy/jobs-economy-voters.html.

     Nate Silver. "Education, Not Income, Predicted Who Would Vote For Trump." FiveThirtyEight, November 22, 2016, accessed on March 15, 2017. http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/education-not-income-predicted-whowould-vote-for-trump/.

9   Estelle Sommeiller, Mark Price, and Ellis Wazeter. "Income inequality in the U.S. by state, metropolitan area, and county." Washington D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2016.

     Institute for Policy Studies. Data and Chart Pack. Washington D.C., 2016.

scapegoat narrative is widespread among the continually disenfranchised white persons as a mechanism to unify, along socioracial lines, against the perceived threat to their livelihood that becomes personified within the brown-bodied immigrant (Arnold & Romanova 2013, 89). At the same time, this unity is not only marked by socioracial distinctions, but also sociocultural ones - in effect working to preserve whiteness-based ways of being (Heyman 2008, 314), as well as access to geographic space and economic resources. At last, this particularly anti-brown, pro-white unity is the result of the abovementioned crystallization of socioracial categories (Sasson-Levy 2013, 32), ultimately leading to the primary mode of distinction, and criteria for exclusion, being based on phenotypical expression (e.g., brown skin).

The Production of a National Threat

So far, it has been established that Trump's "brand" of whiteness is a distinct variant of both historical and contemporary forms of whiteness, as well as the particularities which make it so, fundamentally; however, there are still major distinctions which have substantial implications. The first of these is the formal integration of Middle Eastern/Muslim persons as a threat to national immigration, and as an object of suspicious citizenship. As indicated by the vast majority of immigrants coming into the United States being of Mexican and Central American origin[10], this bloc of people, including native-born Latinx (and indigenous Americans (Daly 2014; Miller 2014) (due to their shared phenotypical and cultural associations with these immigrants), has been primarily targeted for suspicion of illegitimate presence in the country, and has therefore become a threat to idealized conceptualizations of the national body (Heyman 2008). Coopting this role within Trump's whiteness are Middle Eastern/Muslim immigrants, as well their American-born counterparts.

Beginning with the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts of the 1970s, which has been exacerbated by the United States' ardent support of Israel and is continually worsening through the prolonged "War on Terror," the Middle Eastern/Muslim person in the United States has become an overly racialized, inherently foreign subject who is tied to both terrorism and anti-white efforts (Fusté 2010, 812-814; Arnold & Romanova 2013, 90). Expanding this ascriptive role from possible terrorist

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10   Since 1960, besides European immigrants, the population of (im)migrants in the United States has been largely from Latin America (specifically Central America and México) (MPI Data Hub 2015).

to immigratory threat carries with it the characterization of Middle Eastern/Muslim persons as posing a particular threat to whiteness-based sociocultural and economic livelihoods (Arnold & Romanova, 2013, 90) as well as physical ones. Correspondingly, this characterization as a terroristic immigrant is compounded within contextual narratives of war and conflict with these persons in foreign theaters (e.g., Syria) (Fusté 2010, 812). The ultimate result of this process of constructing Middle Eastern/ Muslim persons as an immigratory threat is the elimination of any distinction between Middle Eastern/Muslim persons and those who are Mexican, Central American, and Latinx American. The elimination of this distinction yields a singular brown body that is both the target of suspicion and violence. An example of this, highlighting specifically how the Middle Eastern/Muslim brown body becomes an immigratory threat, is Trump's "Muslim Ban," or "Executive Order on Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," which bars legal entry into the country to persons from seven Muslim-majority nations, asserting the presupposition that radical terrorists are more than a fringe group (Trump 2017g).

The second distinction which carries significant weight within this "brand" of whiteness is that of its tendency to utilize, resonate, and reciprocate sentiments of blatant dehumanization toward, specifically, brown-bodied persons. Noticing the socioracially divisive aspect of Trump's rhetoric and proposed policies, as well as the mimicked behavior of other Republican candidates, during the 2016 presidential election, Nour Kteily and Emile Bruneau attempted to gauge the sociopsychology of meta-dehumanization[11] and meta-prejudice[12] experienced by Latinx-Americans and Arabs/Muslims[13] in the United States caused by the actions and rhetoric of Donald Trump, as well as the dehumanization and prejudice which was held by white Americans (who also tended to support Trump) toward Mexican immigrants and Arabs/Muslims (2017). The critical importance in identifying dehumanization as a distinctive factor within Trump's whiteness is found within its nature to create hostility toward the targeted group, leading to both structural and physical violence (Kteily & Bruneau 2017, 87, 93; Theodore 2011). To examine these sentiments, Kteily & Bruneau asked participants to place their own socioracial group, as well as Mexican

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11   "Meta-dehumanization" is defined by Kteily & Bruneau as being the feeling of being (blatantly) dehumanized (2017, 88).

12   "Meta-prejudice" is defined by Kteily & Bruneau as being the feeling of being disliked (2017, 88).

13   The deviation from "Middle Eastern/Muslim" to "Arab/Muslim" is only due to the specific use of "Arab/ Muslim" by Kteily & Bruneau. "Arab/Muslim" was not borrowed for this paper for the reason that it does not include Iran/Iranians, and other non-Arab persons from the Middle East.

immigrants and Arabs/Muslims, on the Ascent of Man evolutionary scale, to rate characteristic associations with each group, as well as their passive and active support for the rhetoric and policies of Donald Trump (2017, 87-88, 93). It should be further noted that the ascription of (socio) racially-based characteristics that are oppositionally defined by whiteness is derivative of historical overt racism (Turner 2008, 214).

The critical aspect of this work is that it attempts to quantify the expressed dehumanization of Mexican immigrants, Latinx Americans, and Arab/Muslim persons by Donald Trump, both through flippant remarks about, and sober policies against, these groups (Kteily & Bruneau 2017, 87-88, 92-93). On the level of rhetoric, two of Trump's first speeches offer a cross-section of the dialectical, internal-external forces which are facing the nation, two of which are socioracial in nature - the representative violent criminals of Latinx gang members and radical Middle Eastern/Muslim terrorists (Trump 2017, "Inaugural Address", "Address to Congress"). In addition, these sentiments are materialized through the primary executive orders on "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States" and the executive order on "Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States," which creates a specialized office to manage the effects of the violent crimes committed by immigrants, which according to Trump, are heavily underreported (Trump 2017e, g, "Address to Congress").

The real effect of this rhetoric and policy based degradation is twofold, both in that Latinx Americans and Middle Eastern/Muslim Americans experience a direct sense of dehumanization and exclusion by the President of the United States, and the resonation of these sentiments, through policy and rhetoric endorsement among supporters of Trump (Kteily & Bruneau 2017, 95-96, 99-100). As can be seen within the particular aspects of both Trump's speech and executive orders, there is a significant level of dehumanization which is being imparted directly by Trump himself, but there also appears to be a mirroring among his supporters (Kteily & Bruneau 2017, 87). Although Kteily & Bruneau are clear that matched sentiments of dehumanization and prejudice among Trump supporters with that of Trump's policies and rhetoric are merely correlationally associated, it is still at least partially true that the utilization of this "brand" of whiteness resonated enough with his bloc of voters, so much so that other Republican candidates adopted the same approach in an attempt to win over undecided voters (2017, 87, 100, 102), and that which ultimately elected him president.

Additionally, besides simply being a factor of electoral support, the resonated sentiments of dehumanization and prejudice amongst Trump supporters offers a much more implicative result. Beyond dormant prejudice and candidate preference, Kteily & Bruneau's study exhibits that along with these sentiments came a prominent willingness to actively support legislation which would manifest, materially, particular goals of their socioracial ideology (2017, 90-93), such as Trump's executive orders on limiting legal entrance of persons from Muslim majority countries, the increase of border protection beyond the construction of a wall, and the targeting of crime related to immigrants (Trump 2017b-e, g).

However, what should be highlighted here is not simply the fact that a president is moreor-less openly promoting blatantly dehumanizing and prejudicial ideations to those who support him (and in effect to the nation and world), but that these actions are having a tremendous effect on the people they are targeting, with the expression of these sentiments fully received and felt (Kteily & Bruneau 2017, 95-96, 99-100). The reality of this is more than mere hurt feelings; it is that there is now tangible hostility toward these groups, which has the serious possibility of becoming aggressively violent (Kteily & Bruneau 2017, 93; Arnold & Romanova 2013, 80; Southern Poverty Law Center 2017, 67-68). Beyond this rather exceptional realm of interpersonal and intergroup violence (the avoidance of which effectively excuses those who hold these sentiments but do not necessarily act on them), there is yet the more common, remorseless, but less perceptible, ignorance of the structural factors that are inherent within the laws which exclude and exploit these targeted persons (Turner 2008, 199; Sasson-Levy 2013, 42). Now that it is clear that both Trump and his supporters are actively, and at best passively, aiding in the dehumanization of Latinx and Middle Eastern/Muslim Americans and immigrants, it must be then understood what they are becoming if they are not then human (or worthy of the recognition of their humanity or human rights).

"And some, I assume, are good people": The Transformation of the Brown Body

Previous sections have established that Latinx, Central American, and Mexican Americans and immigrants, indigenous Americans, and Middle Eastern/Muslim Americans and immigrants have been lumped together into a singular subject, primarily through phenotypical and cultural associations. The above exploration

then leaves the following to establish and detail just how this conglomerate is subjectified under Trump's "brand" of whiteness. To synopsize this subjectivity is to explain that these groups are stripped of their sociocultural distinctions and contextual existences in order to reconceptualize and produce them as an anti-panacean, quasi-unified "brown body" which is, at its core, a threat to national security, a subversion of idealized notions of citizenship, and a physical threat to the national body. It should also be noted that these particular threats are borrowed from historical and concurrent modes of anti-immigrant whiteness. Although focusing on threats to national security, threatening social and economic aspects of the brown body are also prevalent in the overall perceptive risk factors associated with these persons within Trump's whiteness. The transformation of this quasi-unified brown body as an "enemy of the state," however, does not materialize without cause. It develops out of various, interconnected processes which act as the nexus between these two individual groups of brown bodies.

One of the most defining of these processes is the of creation of the brown body as an agent of violence and terrorism. In focusing on the Middle Eastern/Muslim portion of this quasiunified brown body, it can be seen that, especially following the attacks of September 11, 2001, there has been a particular association of these peoples with terroristic activity, ultimately leading to a federal strong-border initiative which was focused on deterring entrance of terrorists (Sasson-Levy 2013, 41; Fusté 2010, 814-815; Alimahomed 2011; U.S. Border Patrol 2015). Along with this absurd recasting of the Latinx brown body as a potential terrorist (Fusté 2010, 815), it has, more importantly, become the unfortunate, and unwarranted, target of heavily and rampantly enforced terrorist-focused border and immigration policy. It is then as violent criminals (or more specifically as "rapists" and "murderers," according to President Trump) (The Washington Post 2015; Arnold & Romanova 2013, 93) that Latinx, Mexican, and Central American persons become terrorists within this terrorism-based, strong-border paradigm. Thus, particularly through the increase of Border Patrol agents and the proposition of a border wall (Trump 2017c), and the known tendency of Trump supporters to actively support such initiatives (Kteily & Bruneau 2017, 90-91), one can see a continued, and even expanded, front against the brown body as a terrorist and violent criminal, an "enemy of the state," within Trump's "brand" of whiteness.

It is therefore as an "enemy of the state," constructed through perceived

threats of terrorism and violent crime, that the brown body becomes a direct danger to the national body. The primary factor which creates such a danger is the perceived threat that these persons have to national order and security, a point which was reiterated exhaustively throughout Trump's Attorney General appointee Jeff Sessions' announcement of a "new era" of (criminal) immigration policy (Heyman 2008, 324; Sessions 2017). Furthermore, threats of national security within this paradigm are not limited to the physical (despite its predominance), but includes also the socioeconomic. As detailed above, Trump's whiteness, with its promise to "Make America Great Again," works to revive a sociocultural, socioeconomic, and, ultimately, socioracial whiteness-based utopia. Referred to as "Americanness" by Heyman, the same fundamental utopian ideal exists within Trump's "brand" of whiteness, including, especially, the notion that as there is an increase in brown bodies, there is also an increased risk to national prosperity - a point which has been heavily stressed within this "brand" of whiteness (2008, 323; Sessions 2017; Trump 2017, "Joint Address to Congress"). So it is in this way that the brown body then becomes not only a threat to the physicality of the national body but also to its reproductive ability by means of a usurpation of economic resources and a compromising of the material capacity of (white) citizens to produce and maintain families.

Effectively, the notions of terrorism and violent crime associated with the brown body, and its conceptualization as a security threat to the national socioeconomic and physical bodies, are abstract and stereotypical fears which reinforce individual prejudices. However, within Trump's "brand" of whiteness, these ideational fears are materialized through both formal policy commitment by the President and his cabinet and a dramatically increased (threat of) surveillance of brown bodies (Trump 2017c-e, g). Under this surveillance, not only do brown bodies become objects of suspicion within the purely social realm, thus policing this whiteness through social marginalization, but they also become formal targets of this institutionalized socioracial ideological agenda (Fusté 2010, 818). It is this conceptualized threat of the brown body, as well as purely socioeconomic threat-based variants of it, that have prompted, and continue do so at a tremendous rate, extensive physical and technological surveillance of brown bodies throughout border regions (Heyman 2008). As mentioned above, this surveillance is primarily motivated by anti-terrorist efforts (U.S. Border Patrol 2015), but as the recent past

(post-9/11) shows, Latinx-American and immigrant communities are predominantly affected, the primary justification of this being their perceived heightened levels of violence - what President Trump has called "American Carnage" (Heyman 2008 310, 319; Trump 2017, "Inaugural Address"). Therefore, in this way, further expansion of the border surveillance apparatus sustains a Foucauldian panopticon constructed around threats of (Middle Eastern-based) terrorism at the border that extends far into the interior, and which rarely limits itself to actual threats of terrorism but rather maintains a focus on the quasi-unified brown body as a whole. Likewise, as Philip Kretsedemas has suggested, the implementation of local law enforcement and civil servants within federal agencies' efforts against immigration (through primarily racial profiling), such as those recently enacted (Trump 2017b, d-f), have the potential to realize exclusionary socioracial ideological goals by way of an escalated, unified, and "streamlined" immigration enforcement effort and capacity for detainment and deportation (Kretsedemas 2008, 568; Sessions 2017).

At last, it is critical to partially understand the incitement of these processes to transform the brown body as being caused by economic and demographic material changes throughout the United States, driven extensively by settlement of these migrants within communities which have been predominantly white (Donato, Stainback, and Bankston 2010; Hirschman & Massey 2010). As Adolph Reed poses, and as the socioeconomic breakdown of Trump's white base indicates, reactions to maintaining the material status quo enact socioracial sentiments of distinction and exclusion (2008, 49-50). By recognizing this material explanation, previously discussed notions of the brown body threatening prosperity and national security are better understood. Moreover, this explanation is a possible causative one, working among others to transform the brown body into an object of threat and violence, a conceptualization which appears to be informing the current executive position on immigration policy.