



SOWING THE WIND, REAPING THE WHIRLWIND: IDENTITY POLITICS, IDEOLOGY AND THE CONTAGION OF HATRED

Paul Nathanson



ABSTRACT

Although the mass murder at a Pittsburgh synagogue was quickly overtaken in the news by mid-term elections, early journalistic responses to it suggest that many pundits see some events (such as hostility toward Jews) as evidence of hatred (along with other forms of racism, for instance, and misogyny). But the pundits say little or nothing about the link between those phenomena and others (such as misandry) that are more common among themselves and, presumably, their viewers. This essay is an attempt to classify all forms of hostility between groups—including those that characterize identity politics—as forms of hatred. It does so by proposing a working definition of “hatred,” distinguishing that collective and cultural phenomenon from private and personal phenomena (such as anger). Abstract text...

Keywords: Anger; hatred; misandry; misogyny; identity politics, American Psychological Association;, anti-Semitism

INTRODUCTION

On 27 October 2018, Robert Bowers opened fire inside the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, killing eleven worshippers. This was a horrific event, though by no means the only one of its kind in recent years, and immediately became the topic of yet another “national conversation” about “ancient hatreds.” And yet public response (which diminished quickly due to the mid-term elections) has been misguided due to its narrow scope. Consider the factors most often cited. Hateful speech, I keep hearing, leads to hateful acts such as mass murder. That does happen sometimes, but it does not always happen. In fact, it seldom happens. Otherwise, it would not be news when it does happen. Some additional factor, such as personal psychopathology, is almost always involved. Another factor, even more frightening, is the rise of anonymous ranting in the echo-chambers that have emerged on “social media.” More and more people at both ends of the political continuum are now saying whatever they want to say, even without hiding behind anonymity, and the result is hardly pretty.

This essay is not primarily about the massacre in Pittsburgh, although that event was dramatic enough, and the prevailing explanations for it were simplistic enough, to provoke a written essay in response. A great deal has been written over the centuries about both religious anti-Judaism and racial anti-Semitism, and I see no point in summarizing it here. I refer to this event in Pittsburgh, therefore, mainly to set the tone and to establish the context for a broader discussion of hatred. My underlying goal is to link the particular and obvious with the general and not-so-obvious.

Of particular concern to me here, professionally, is not hatred toward Jews but both hatred in general and hatred toward men in particular. Everyone knows that hatred underlies the targeting of Jews for abuse, or worse, and that doing so is morally unacceptable (except to those who try to disguise anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism).ⁱ Not everyone knows, or cares to admit, that their own hatreds underlie the targeting of some *other* groups for abuse, or worse, is morally unacceptable. This is because not everyone knows, or cares to admit, that hatred is a mentality that knows no boundaries. It takes many forms, depending on what differentiates one historical and cultural context from another, but these forms nonetheless have a common structure. Because I am neither a psychologist nor a sociologist, let alone a neuroscientist, I urge

researchers in those fields and possibly others to test my hypothesis in rigorous studies. Meanwhile, I have divided the very general discussion that follows into several overlapping sections: (1) anti-Semitism; (2) hatred; and (3) misandry.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Most people, at least on CNN,ⁱⁱ blamed Pittsburgh on the “toxic” atmosphere that President Trump has adopted and therefore fostered in public life (even though this problem had been growing long before his election). Pundits on both sides of the political continuum have focused almost exclusively on Trump himself ever since the day of his election, either attacking him or defending him with a ferocity that I, living in another country, find hard to understand—no, not to understand but to accept as the public discourse of a healthy democracy. Is there no better way of responding to communal and national tragedies than trying over and over again to prove that Trump either is or is not a satanic participant? At a deeper level, must every event be interpreted as evidence of a cosmic battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness—which is to say, those of Democrats and those of Republicans? If so, then the nation has already declined beyond recognition.

As a Jew, I can hardly pretend to see the worst anti-Semitic attack in American history from some entirely neutral perspective. Even though I have never experienced anti-Semitism, at least not directly, my parents did—and not in far-away Europe. Though secular, they gave me a good Jewish education. I went to a day school that covered the entire secular curriculum of public schools in half the day and a Jewish curriculum in the other half. The latter included not only prayers and sacred texts but also Jewish history. And that, in turn, included the *sho-ah* (known in English, incorrectly, as the “holocaust”). Moreover, many children in my class had parents or grandparents who had either survived or not survived in Nazi Europe. Even in those days—this was before Jews began to think carefully about the philosophical and theological implications of that nightmare, to commemorate it ceremonially or even to replace Judaism with a secular religion that focuses on Nazi Germany and Israel—we students were aware of anti-Semitism as one thread in the tapestry of Jewish history and Jewish life (though not by any means the most important one). Some people persecuted us for one reason or another, but that gave us no excuse to return their hatred. Not everyone in my classes internalized that message—

plenty of Jews either promote or condone dangerous ideologies—but that was indeed the message that I received while growing up in the 1950s.

Why anti-Semitism? Why now? I do not see its recrudescence as a unique or isolated problem, although many other Jews do. Every form of hatred has its distinctive history, to be sure, and so does anti-Semitism. It is unique, because everything is unique. It is not, however, uniquely unique. If it were, that would turn hatred toward Jews, and only Jews, into some kind of demonic principle or cosmic force. Fortunately, though, that is not the case. This is why we can study anti-Semitism, including the *sho-ah*, according to the established principles of scholarship in fields such history, economics, sociology and psychology—without resorting to either extreme ethnocentrism or the disturbing and ineffective kind of theology known as “theodicy” (trying to explain and even justify God’s apparent indifference or hostility toward us).

In the rest of this essay, I suggest that the recrudescence of anti-Semitism at this particular time and in this particular place is clearly linked to, among other things, the fact that so many *additional* forms of hatred are coming out of the closet simultaneously. Some of these hatreds are generally acknowledged. Others are not, however, because of confusion over what the word “hatred” means.

HATRED

Many people, probably most people, assume that hatred is an *emotion*. Usually, they mean *anger* due to some personal injury or injustice. We all feel angry, of course, and we all dislike the people who make us angry. Feminists have long justified their hostility toward men as morally justifiable “rage” (as if emotions per se require moral justification). At least three recent feminist publications rely explicitly on precisely this approach.ⁱⁱⁱ But that definition of hatred very inadequate, because it condones *behaviour* that would otherwise be shocking. Of interest here is what happens on the group level, in any case, not the private or personal level. This in itself takes us beyond the usual understanding of emotion. Also of interest here is the matter of degree. If any form of snobbery or resentment, no matter how trivial, is tantamount to hatred, if any “micro-aggression” amounts to hatred, then how could we live together at all, let alone do so in a democracy?

Jules Isaac, a Jewish observer at the Second Vatican Council, wrote that Christian anti-Judaism amounted to the church's enduring and consistent "teaching of contempt" for Jews.^{iv} This led to what I would call the mobilization of resentment against Jews—that is, their persecution. Hatred is what *links* the teaching of contempt, one generation after another, and the politicized mobilization of resentment. Neither religious anti-Judaism nor secular anti-Semitism, in other words, originated in personal hostility or personal feelings of any kind. Both originated in a worldview that people learned explicitly or implicitly in churches, schools and at public events.^v My point here, though, is very simple: Just as anti-Semitism is one form of racism, racism itself is *one form of hatred*.

Almost everyone knows at least something about the "historic" forms of hatred, the ones that have emerged as right-wing ideologies such as Nazism. Advocates of identity politics use political correctness, among other strategies, to agitate against *those* forms of hatred—notably hatred toward racial minorities, sexual minorities and women—as unacceptable. And those forms of hatred really should be unacceptable. Not everyone knows much about *other* forms of hatred, however, ones that have emerged much more recently as left-wing ideologies. (It is easy, evidently, to forget about the horrors of Communism in other parts of the world.) Very few people in the public square, at any rate, acknowledge this side of the problem. Their lack of awareness is, to put it most charitably, astonishing. How is it possible for so many intelligent and well-meaning people to ignore the hurricane of bigotry and hatred from those who promote left-wing ideologies in ever more extreme and cynical forms? Those who promote identity politics, for example, rely on the questionable belief that people are not primarily individuals at all but representatives of groups, or classes, usually racial or sexual. This is how it works: Some of these groups are inherently good but victimized (which means that they deserve compassion and help); others are inherently evil and oppressive (which means that they deserve nothing but contempt and retribution). This profoundly dualistic mentality on the left, once trivialized and ridiculed as the juvenile ranting of lunatic fringe groups on college campuses, has now gone mainstream. The same mentality on the right, too, has now gone mainstream.

Here, then, is my hypothesis. As my working definition of "hatred," I suggest that it has at least four defining features. (1) It is a *collective* phenomenon, not a personal one. In other words,

hatred is a *culturally propagated worldview* or at least a major part of one, not an expression of feelings. (2) It is an *enduring* phenomenon, not a transient one. (3) It involves *malice*, not merely anger. By “malice,” I mean malevolence, the urge to afflict even at great cost. Hatred motivates one group to make another group suffer, even going out of its way to make that happen physically, psychologically, economically, legally, politically or any other way. With those criteria in mind, I suggest (4) that the ultimate goal of those who promote hatred is *revenge*, not justice (which includes reconciliation).

MISANDRY

Because of my own research and my own personal experience of life, I am particularly worried about identity politics in relation to men and women.^{vi} By far the most successful form of identity politics is also the most influential (but not yet the most numerous) branch of feminism. Once a truly egalitarian movement, which promised to liberate women (and even men) from debilitating gender scripts, feminism has morphed into, or at least fostered, an ideological one. This ideology protects but also infantilizes women by removing from them any sense of *accountability* for what they say or do to men. And that covers a lot of ground in this age of #MeToo and #BelieveWomen, as I have already observed in an earlier article for this journal.^{vii}

The respectable *Washington Post*, for example, published an op-ed piece by Suzanna Danuta Walters: “Why Can’t We Hate Men?” According to her, women not only “can” and do but should hate men.^{viii} She got plenty of flack for indulging in hate speech, sure, but that resulted in no apology from her and no action by the newspaper. The equally respectable *Huffington Post* published not one but two articles by mothers who worry about (but not necessarily for) their own sons in what they consider a relentlessly and implacably misogynistic society. First came Emily McCombs, “I Don’t Know If I Can Raise a Good Man.”^{ix} Then came Jody Allard,^x who defended her similar point of view after many readers had been outraged by “I’m Done Pretending Men are Safe (Even My Sons).”^{xi} She wondered very publicly (without fear of arrest for child abuse) how to love her own sons as they grow inevitably into manhood.

The equally respectable *New York Times* has adopted a more sophisticated way of trivializing or demonizing men by hiring its first “gender editor,” feminist Jessica Bennett. As I

understand her own words,^{xii} Bennett refers by “gender” primarily to the problems that this cultural system creates for *women*, not men. She sees men primarily as the source of misogyny, not as people who have their own problems that require urgent attention—including some that women cause. To the extent that Bennett even mentions men, it is in connection with college courses that aim to cure male students of “toxic masculinity.” The goal of these courses is to make men more like women and therefore less likely to harm women. And if re-education proves therapeutic for boys and men, too, then that is so much the better. More about that in due course.

Bennett’s explicit goal at the *Times* is to ensure that every page, every article, actively promotes public awareness of misogyny (not misandry) in its “intersectional” context. Her implicit goal, however, is to replace androcentrism (a worldview according to which all of history revolves around men) with *gynocentrism* (a worldview according to which all of history revolves around women). This strategy turns the *Times* into a heavily biased and ideologically driven source of propaganda. I suggest that the effect is as negative for men as it is positive for women and their political allies. Unlike some feminists at less sophisticated organizations, Bennett does find it necessary to make a disclaimer. It is, she says, “absolutely possible to maintain neutrality in reporting on gender issues, as well as to have a *point of view* without being perceived as partisan” (whatever that means).

Journalists are by no means the only people, of course, to institutionalize misandry. I have already written elsewhere in this journal about the effects of #MeToo on both the university and the courts of law.^{xiii} Late in 2018, the American Psychological Association published its very first guidelines for the treatment of male patients (having published several years earlier its guidelines for the treatment of female patients.)^{xiv} As I (like many others, including professional members of the association) explained in a letter to the APA, **its** guidelines tell therapists in both overtly and covertly political language that “traditional masculinity” is tantamount to a psychological disorder, that “masculinity ideology” is the cause of much harm not only to male patients but also—and possibly more significantly—to women and sexual or other minorities. The correct therapy, the best cure, is therefore to make boys and men as much as possible like girls and women. In effect, that means converting them to feminism (even though the same

organization long ago abandoned conversion therapy for gay people). This is possible, according to the guidelines, because gender (in this case, masculinity) has nothing at all to do with sex (in this case maleness); the problem is not “testosterone poisoning,” therefore, but an oppressive cultural system that creates boys and men who endanger women and other minorities. It creates damaged boys and men, too, because of collateral damage. This last point is surely true, because the version of masculinity that the APA considers “traditional” is an extreme one, but I doubt that this is what motivated the production of these either these guidelines or the ones for treating female patients.^{xv}

A pervasive and often overt explanation for the problems of women, in circles that include everyone from journalists and authors to academics and therapists, is some version of the conspiracy theory of history. I am thinking of at least three explicit or implicit beliefs that recur repeatedly in statements from advocates of identity politics, including feminists. (1) Men created and maintain society either to suit themselves or to oppress women—or both. (2) Men are “privileged” by definition and therefore cannot possibly have any serious problems. This entails two corollaries: (a) that women cannot possibly harm men and therefore (b) that society has no need to care about men, (3) Men knowingly or unknowingly support a “rape culture.” This, in turn, entails two corollaries: (a) that men are collectively guilty for evil and (b) that men therefore deserve collective punishment for it. If all those claims were true, then it would make sense—intellectually though not morally—to hate men and actively promote hatred toward men. Those claims are not true; they are theories that rest on no empirically verifiable or falsifiable evidence. Nonetheless, word is out that it is wrong for men to hate women but also, even in mainstream circles, that it is okay for women to hate men. And if hatred is okay for women, of course, then it is okay for many other groups—every other group, in fact, except men (especially those who happen to be white, straight, “cis,” “binary” and so on).

Misandry—my computer’s dictionary fails to recognize that word, although it does recognize “misogyny”—is not ephemeral. On the contrary, it has grown exponentially over the last decade and especially over the last year.^{xvi} Misandry is not always subtle. On the contrary, it can be just as coarse and vulgar as misogyny—even in academic circles.^{xvii} Misandry is not confined to college campuses. On the contrary, it is pervasive in both popular culture and elite

culture.^{xviii} Misandry, moreover, is not trivial. On the contrary, it has provoked massive legal changes and is poised to overthrow basic legal and moral principles such as the presumption of innocence and the need for due process.^{xix} Nonetheless, misandry still passes under the radar of most journalists and public intellectuals, let alone of the public at large. Unlike misogyny, it is not carefully monitored by a vast array of governmental and institutional bureaucracies (which is why some men's groups have resorted to doing so on their own websites). And yet, anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear can find countless blatant examples of misandry in daily life.

Why are people blind to something that they can easily observe in everyday life? Why does it not even occur to them that hatred might be even bigger, deeper and more dangerous than they had imagined it to be? I do not argue that many people actually refuse to see forms of hatred in which they themselves might knowingly or unknowingly participate. That would be a cynical argument, and I deplore cynicism. I argue only that the familiar is often invisible. Misandry has become pervasive enough and therefore familiar enough to be *hidden in plain sight*, which is precisely what feminists have always said about misogyny. (It was only "false consciousness," an idea borrowed directly from Marxism) that made the needs and problems of women invisible. The solution to that problem, "consciousness raising," did not succeed overnight. It has taken decades, so far, and no end is in sight due partly to the increasingly radical scope of feminist claims about men's evil.) So, appearances can be deceptive. Look for misandry in countless forms of banal popular entertainment, ordinary ads and commercials, respectable talk shows and news shows, mainstream public debates over high-profile scandals and legal cases. Look for it also, however, in the course outlines of law schools or departments of "gender studies" and the titles of papers that academics present at conferences. Look for it even in the seemingly therapeutic work of psychologists. Under the aegis of postmodernism, a distinctly *non-egalitarian* form of feminism has become the prevailing ideology of every department of the humanities and social sciences. And graduates have spread it to every level of society and region of the country. All of this has happened while our complacent defenders of liberal democracy were asleep at the wheel.

Some people would argue that only right-wing hatred has contaminated public life to the extent of provoking mass murder. Does that leave left-wing hatred off the hook? More

specifically, does it let ideological feminism off the hook? The answer to these questions is not self-evident but should be. The answer is no. Murder, especially mass murder is indeed the worst possible scenario, and left-wingers in our time and place seldom resort to either murder or mass murder (although they certainly did on a colossal scale in Communist countries). In any case, those feminists who hate men—more and more of them, as I say, now proclaim it proudly on their websites, their social-media pages, or in print—seldom feel any *need* to get their hands dirty by actually killing anyone. They are not poor and uneducated. They are not socially or geographically marginalized. Rather, they are privileged—yes, privileged—members of the very sophisticated and powerful elite. To achieve their goals, they need only make allegations against men and mobilize enough resentment against men in general to pass laws that privilege women (not explicitly but implicitly),^{xx} because legislators depend on public opinion to get votes. By doing so, they have solved many problems for women but at the cost of creating new ones for both men in particular (including their own sons) and society in general (including women).

To put it briefly though bluntly, ideological feminists have undermined the collective identity of all men through what I call “*identity harassment*,”^{xxi} a tsunami of shame that has led directly or indirectly not only to more than a few men dropping out of school but also to more than a few men dropping out of society by killing others or even dropping out of life itself by killing themselves (although the collective identity of men had been a growing problem for centuries and did not emerge suddenly due to the current conflict with women).^{xxii} Nothing makes this more obvious than the American Psychology Association’s new guidelines for treating male patients. In addition, those feminists (along with allies who promote identity politics)) have used the #MeToo movement’s profoundly cynical ideology to eviscerate the intellectual, moral and legal foundations of society.^{xxiii} The problem that I have identified is not only a therapeutic one for men. It is a moral one of profound importance to everyone.

CONCLUSION

I return now to my initial questions. How can anyone *not notice* that hatred is coming out of closets *everywhere* on the political and social continuum? How can so many “public intellectuals” gloss over the speed at which campus hatreds have metastasized and gone mainstream? It is not merely a question of whom to blame for this dismal state of affairs. Almost everyone is to blame

in one way or another: turning aside from it, explaining it away, offering perfunctory excuses for it, overtly condoning it or even demanding it. We will never discourage hatred effectively, I suggest, without recognizing at least four things.

First, hatred is, as I say, a *culturally propagated and often institutionalized worldview*, not a transient emotion. It is not anger toward anyone or any group for personal harm, although it can look deceptively like spontaneous anger.^{xxiv}

Second, hatred *cannot easily be contained or confined to one form*. Once this or that form of hatred attains public respectability, as misandry clearly has despite perfunctory denials, it lends intentional or unintentional support to all the others. That's because all forms of hatred, no matter how contradictory on the surface, feed on each other. All reveal a common mentality, for instance, adopt ideological rhetoric and rely, on double standards. What all have in common is not the identity of an oppressor class (although the cynicism and opportunism of identity politics allows coalitions of victim classes against what they consider a common oppressor class) but a pattern of thinking that conflates not only anger with hatred but also justice with revenge. Hatred allows people to marinate in their own self-righteous collective identity and simultaneously undermine the collective identities of their enemies or alleged enemies.

Third, *accountability for promoting hatred encompasses those who ignore it and those who find excuses for it*. After all, those who promote hatred do so in the name of their groups, not merely in their own names. Those who wield hatred—including those who do so in sophisticated, subtle and indirect ways—know very well that they are using a powerful weapon against entire groups of people. And many do not care—not until their targets rebel, as they inevitably do.

Fourth, I suggest that hatred is *inherently evil*, probably the one and only thing that is inherently evil. Some circumstances (such as self-defence) can make it justifiable to kill, but no circumstances can make it right to hate. Unlike anger, which is a natural and universal part of everyone's emotional life, hatred is never good.^{xxv} It is never even a necessary evil, the evil means to some good end.

My goal in writing this essay is obviously to make a moral point. My training is in comparative religion, after all, which includes comparative ethics. But I see no reason why scientists and social scientists, male and female, should ignore the moral context in which we all humans live. We live now at what could be a tipping point in relations between the sexes and therefore a turning point in history. Misogyny is both evil and foolish. So is misandry. Those who sow the wind—all of those who promote or condone hatred, no matter what their group identity might be—shall reap the whirlwind.

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- i I do not equate criticism of Israeli policies with anti-Semitism. Anti-Zionism, however, refers to *singling out* the Jewish state for criticism and thus creating a double standard that often amounts to anti-Semitism.
- ii I do not get Fox News, which would almost certainly have taken a different approach to this story, so my only all-day American news service comes from CNN.
- iii See, for example, Rebecca Traister, *Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger* (New York: Simon And Schuster, 2018); Soraya Chemaly, *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger* (New York: Atria Books, 2018); and Brittney Cooper, *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018).
- iv Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1964).
- v On a recent trip to France, I visited the cathedral at Chartres with its beautiful stained-glass windows. On two of those windows, near the ground so that everyone could see them easily, I noticed classic anti-Jewish tropes: the synagogue blinded by a serpent (with a devil dancing cheerfully nearby) and a Jewish money-lender with his bag of coins. These windows were among those that a tour guide identified as “pedagogical” ones.
- vi I am a gay man, too, but my concern here is not hatred toward gay people. That continues to be a social problem. Unlike hatred toward men, however, it is not condoned or encouraged by those on the left who promote identity politics, which is why it remains beyond the scope of this essay.
- vii Paul Nathanson, “If Not Now, When? Acknowledging Sexual Harassment and Identity Harassment,” *New Male Studies* 6.2 (2017): 1-56.
- viii Suzanna Danuta Walters, “Why Can't We Hate Men?” *Washington Post*, 8 June 2018; https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-cant-we-hate-men/2018/06/08/f1a3a8e0-6451-1e8-a69c-b944de66d9e7_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9cbe7ef8776.
- ix Emily McCombs, “I Don't Know If I Can Raise a Good Man,” *Huffington Post*, 5 February 2018; https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/i-dont-know-if-i-can-raise-a-good-man_us_5a09c7cae4b0bc648a0cae52.
- x Jody Allard, “Why I Write about My Kids,” *Huffington Post*, 21 July 2018; https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-i-write-about-my-kids_b_596e9b75e4b0376db8b65c10.

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- xi Jody Allard, "I'm Done Pretending Men Are Safe (Even My Sons), *Role Reboot*, 6 July 2018; <http://www.rolereboot.org/culture-and-politics/details/2017-07-im-done-pretending-men-safe-even-sons/#.WV44ZRVy67Y.facebook>
- xii "Jessica Bennett, Our New Gender Editor, Answers Your Questions," *New York Times*, 13 December 2017; <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/13/reader-center/jessica-bennett-our-new-gender-editor-answers-your-questions.html>.
- xiii Naathanson, op. cit. Paul Nathanson, "If Not Now, When? Acknowledging Sexual Harassment and Identity Harassment," *New Male Studies* 6.2 (2017): 1-56.
- xiv Fredric Rabinowitz and others (Boys and Men Guidelines Group), *APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men*, Washington, D.C., American Psychological Association, 2018; <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/psychological-practice-boys-men-guidelines.pdf>.
- xv Paul Nathanson, *Post Millennial*
- xvi Emily Yoffe, "Does Anyone Still Take Both Sexual Assault and Due Process Seriously? In the Aftermath of the Kavanaugh Debacle, I Will Remain Pessimistic, on the Sunset Side of the Mountain," *Atlantic*, 13 October 2018.
- xvii Amber Athey, "Georgetown Professor: 'Castrate White Men's Corpses and Feed Them to Swine,'" *Daily Caller*, 1 October 2018; <https://dailycaller.com/2018/10/01/georgetown-christine-fair-white-men-swine/>. The reference is to Christine Fair, who teaches political science. According to *Wikipedia* (3 November 2018), Fair has had several conflicts, both personal and professional, which led her to use rhetoric that would never be tolerated from someone attacking women. "In the midst of the [Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court nomination hearings](#) in September 2018, Fair, referring to [Republican](#) members of the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#), tweeted that they were 'entitled white men justifying a serial rapists' arrogated entitlement' and that they 'deserve miserable deaths while [feminists](#) laugh as they take their last gasps.' She made additional comments expressing support for post-mortem [castration](#) and corpse desecration of the senators. At least one student expressed the fear that Fair's comments would cause students who hold opposing views to feel threatened." In other words, Fair was indulging in "micro-aggressions" and the university was not providing her targets with "trigger warnings" or "safe spaces." The university responded by saying that Fair's comments did not violate its policies."
- xviii Katherine Young and I have documented this phenomenon very carefully and thoroughly in a series of books: *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University press, 2006); *Sanctifying Misandry: Goddess Ideology and the Fall of Men* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); and *Replacing Misandry: A Revolutionary History of Men* (Montreal: McGill-University Press, 2015).
- xix Wendy McElroy, "This Campaign against Sexual Violence Strongly Favors Female Victims, Strips Men of Due Process," *Daily Caller*, 7 June 2018.
- xx No policy or law (except the one that compels young men to register for military conscription) refers directly to either men or women; nowadays, they rely exclusively on gender-neutral language. But the *implications* of policies and legislation, and how the state enforces them, are

often anything but gender neutral. Consider how the courts have interpreted laws that govern family law by routinely awarding custody to mothers) and those that govern sexual harassment by denying due process to the accused (almost always men). Consider how universities have interpreted Title IX, following government “guidelines,” by dismantling due process and even suspending the presumption of innocence for those accused (almost always men). Consider how police officers have responded to reports of domestic violence by automatically arresting one party (always the man) despite clear evidence to the contrary. Consider how social-service agencies have used the “Duluth model” to “re-educate” those who have been convicted of domestic violence (almost always men).

xxi Nathanson, *op. cit.* My point in this article about the fallout from #MeToo is that *identity harassment*, the relentless teaching of contempt for men and resulting mobilization of resentment against men, per se, is just as destructive for men as sexual harassment is for women (although sexual harassment is a problem not only for women). These are two distinct forms of harassment, but society acknowledges only one of them. Everyone knows that sexual harassment is immoral and criminal; hardly anyone has even heard of identity harassment due to the pervasive double standard of gynocentrism (which, in the public square, has by now replaced the double standard of androcentrism). Even though the ability to establish a healthy collective identity is difficult enough for boys and men due to the widespread belief that *equality and sameness* are synonymous—that men and women are almost identical “social constructs,” which means that men, as such, can contribute nothing of value to society—this overlay of misandry makes it more likely than ever that boys and men will instead accept an *unhealthy* collective identity.

xxii In *Replacing Misandry*, Young and I argue that collective identity for men, per se, has been increasingly problematic since the Neolithic, approximately twelve thousand years ago, which saw the rise of horticulture and then of agriculture. These technological and cultural revolutions, followed by more recent ones that occur with increasing frequency, have undermined the male body as a symbol of the contributions that men can make to society. Without going into the history of changing perceptions of the male body and therefore of masculinity in its various forms, I will summarize here our basic point about where we are now. To have a healthy collective identity, either personally or collectively, people must be able to make *at least one contribution that is (a) distinctive, (b) necessary and (c) publicly valued*. It is increasingly difficult for men to do so, because there is almost nothing left that they can do, specifically *as men*. Women can and do provide resources for themselves and their families, can and do protect themselves and their families—with help from the state, in both cases, if necessary. For men to do those things, therefore, confers at best a nostalgic or even vestigial form of collective identity. Those ancient foundations for masculinity are anachronistic, therefore, and ineffective. Only one remains, tenuously, as a source of collective masculine identity. But even fatherhood is no longer equated by everyone with masculinity, let alone maleness. Single motherhood, whether by choice of default, is very common today and becoming more common. So are families headed by either two mothers or two fathers—the implication being that motherhood and fatherhood are virtually synonymous except for gestation and lactation. Moreover, we have lived through three or four decades of moral panics that demonize fathers as molesters and abusers. The belief that fathers are either unnecessary luxuries or likely liabilities within family life has had a profound impact on custody legislation.

My point here is that there are two very lamentable scenarios that follow from what is truly a crisis of identity for men. One scenario involves *dropping out* of a society with no room for them as men. Far more often than girls and young women, boys and young men drop out of school, thus becoming unemployable and unmarriageable—and marginalized. Far more often than women, moreover, men drop out of society through drugs or out of life itself through suicide. The other scenario involves *turning against* a society with no room for them as men. If we cannot have a healthy identity, they might say or think, we will take a negative one; even that is better than no identity at all. These boys and young men resort to crime at best and to mass murder or terrorism at worst (which correlate statistically with fatherlessness). Feminists did not invent any of these problems, but they have exacerbated them, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, by their pervasive attack on *everything* about men from rape and sexual harassment to “manspreading” and “mansplaining.”

- xxiii By the “intellectual” foundation of society, I refer to the blatant subjectivism of “engaged scholarship” (now, even among those who campaign for “alternative” epistemologies in the sciences) and of “engaged journalism” (among both professionals and tweeters). By the “moral foundation,” I refer to the rejection of what was once called the Golden Rule in either its positive form (Do unto others ...) or its negative form (Do not do unto others ...). The result has been a conflation of justice with revenge. By the “legal foundation,” I refer to the increasing acceptance of vigilantism, notably in connection with the #MeToo and #BelieveWomen. This is about willingness to bypass the law by disregarding the need for due process and the presumption of innocence in both courts of law and courts of public opinion.
- xxiv The Nazis wanted Kristallnacht to look like a spontaneous pogrom. Actually, they orchestrated it very carefully.
- xxv Hatred is probably the only thing that is inherently evil, just as compassion is probably the only thing that is inherently good. No one argues that killing can ever be “good,” but most societies have always acknowledged that killing is sometimes acceptable (in self-defense) or even necessary (in wartime). Nothing, however, excuses hatred.

Author profile



Paul Nathanson has a BA (art history), a BTh (Christian theology), an MLS (library service), an MA (religious studies) and a PhD (religious studies). Of particular interest to him is the surprisingly blurry relation between religion and secularity: how religion underlies seemingly secular phenomena such as popular movies and political ideologies. With Katherine Young, he is writing a series on the problem of masculine identity in an age of identity politics and sexual polarization. Four volumes are already in print: *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture*; *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men*; *Sanctifying Misandry: Goddess Ideology and the Fall of Man*; and *Replacing Misandry: A Revolutionary History of the Male Body*.

Contact details: wordwatcher@videotron.ca