

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND YOUNG MEN

BOYS AND THE CULTURE THAT CORRODES THEM

KEY EXPERTS + SOURCES CONSULTED

Our study that follows was sourced and validated from a preponderance of evidence, and included, in addition to pulling together over 100 articles, books and published studies, interviews with top experts from a variety of fields all working with or around young men and/or on the issue of political violence in the United States. The top experts we interviewed included:

Brian Boland

Co-Founder at [Delta Fund](#), Former Facebook

Dr. Robert Pape

[University of Chicago](#)

Eric Ward, EVP

[Race Forward](#)

Dr. Brian Strahine

Founder of [Men's Sacred Liberation](#)

Alex Berrios

Co-Founder of [Mi Vecino](#)

Steve Baskin

Director of [Camp Champions](#)

Philip Agnew

Founder of [Black Men Build](#)

Sarah Johnson

Founder of [The Akin](#)

Aidan Louisell

Student

Dr. Nick Carmody

[JD, MS Psych Psychotherapist](#)

Mike German

Former FBI and Current Fellow @
[the Brennan Institute](#)

Patrick Riccards

Executive Director of [Life After Hate](#)

John Della Volpe

[Institute of Politics at Harvard](#)

Tom Bonier

[ED the TARA Group](#)

Simon Rosenberg

[Democratic Strategist](#),

Founder of New Democrat Network
and the New Policy Institute

Michael Premo

[Fimmaker](#), Homegrown

For a full list of the sources we leveraged to do this work, click here for a [Link to the Appendix](#)

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOUNG MEN + BOYS?

This is the question we were asked to investigate. It is one that many people are asking as incidents and threats of political violence rise in America and around the world. Frankly, it's the wrong question.

Boys are having trouble in our culture, sure, but it's our culture, not our boys, that's the problem.

“Boys’ problems, at the very root, are not related to their biology or psychology but to a culture that refuses to see boys (and men, girls, and women) as more than a set of gender and, in the case of boys of color, racial stereotypes. Given the nature of these stereotypes, the very social and emotional skills that are necessary for boys to thrive are not fostered.”

— *Niobe Way, Deep Secrets: Boys’ Friendships and the Crisis of Connection, p.38*





THE CLIMATE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE IS
LIKE **A POTENTIAL WILDFIRE — DRY
KINDLING AND A STORM ON THE
HORIZON.**

“It’s a wildfire model. The way we know we’re in wildfire season is because we can measure the size of the dry wood combustible material. But that really is only a piece of the puzzle. The part that you can’t really predict are the triggers, which are these spontaneous acts.

Political violence is something that can happen more quickly than people might really realize. Because the matches or the triggers or the lightning strikes, those things can touch ‘em off more quickly, just like in a wildfire. And then it’s boom: ‘Oh my goodness, if only I had known it was going to get so big.’”

—Dr. Robert Pape, University of Chicago

“I don't think that men feel seen right now. I think that the vilification of a lot of them have really turned them off and they have been vilified in a lot of ways and rightly so most of the time. But I feel like there's not very many male platforms, journalistic or even cultural platforms that genuinely speak to men for them to feel seen and understood. Hey, it's hard. We know this is tough or all these things are kind of going wrong. We get it. And I feel like there was the wave of feminist platforms in the kind of internet boom of blogging and that kind of age. What was the male equivalent?”

—A Conversation with Sarah Johnson, Founder, The Akin, a global consumer research and strategy studio based in London which has worked with brands like Axe, Nike and Adidas to reach young men and boys.

LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUNG MEN.

“

Young men are constantly being policed or made to feel ashamed if [they]... like blowing shit up, right? **It's like for the longest time, you take a firecracker and you just want to see it explode. It's very basic. But you have to be ashamed of that now because that's violence and it's dangerous and you can't like those things.** Me, personally, I think about boxing. I enjoyed and I miss that unique feeling of leather when someone would hit me. It hits and it twists and it's a weird burn on your face, that leather, just the truth that's in that ring of getting hit by somebody and it's like, 'Oh, you got me and I feel that burn.'

But that sounds crazy when you say that to Democrats. **You sound like a crazy person who wants to get punched in the face, who wants to take part in a sport that I've literally been told is savage and for ignorant people.** But for people in poverty, it's a dream to cling to because you're not going to go to college, you're not going to have opportunities. You're going to be discriminated against. But if you can fight your way out — and I literally fought my way out — it gives you an option, an opportunity. And then you get to a place where, now, people are telling you your opportunities [are] ... the wrong ones; you should have done it some other way. But life doesn't give you ... that path. And so, if you're a young man, what do you do [when] on all sides you're told you're wrong?"

—Alex Berrios, Mi Vecino (a Democratic organization working to register, educate, empower and turnout their vecinos, their neighbors).

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WHAT'S MADE MEN **VULNERABLE TO CALLS FOR VIOLENCE**

Time and time again, in speaking with experts and men who work with young men, we were told about the unique position young men find themselves in today. **It's not that young men have changed, but everything around them (and us) has changed. Scripts of masculinity that center domination, aggression and self-sufficiency have remained fixed, even as they are increasingly denounced as harmful, while few new, compelling scripts offering meaning and belonging have emerged.** This view is confirmed by a preponderance of our research sources.

WE HAVE A CULTURE THAT HAS:

1. Dismantled coming-of-age rituals of masculinity
2. “Group think” + siloes have further isolated men and boys in need of connection
3. Suppressed opportunities for men to feel like their contribution will be celebrated
4. Failed to delineate new, inspiring models of healthy masculinities
5. Elected leaders that fuel violent expressions of masculinity
6. Dehumanized men and encouraged men to dehumanize others
7. Been taken over by under-regulated technologies that thrive off division and anger

WHAT'S MADE MEN VULNERABLE TO CALLS FOR VIOLENCE

1. We've Dismantled Rituals in Our Society

Changing societal norms have meant we have ditched supportive rituals for male development (e.g. rites of passage, the draft, community rituals, marriage, etc.), but we are still requiring men to abide by rigid gender norms that cut them off from their own emotionality, robbing them of coming-of-age purposefulness, and locking them into a place of loneliness and supportlessness.

“These types of ritualistic practices and ways of being embodied were stripped from our grandparents and great grandparents. And so I'm just looking towards ancestral lines to reinstate them.” - **Dr. Brian Strahine, *Men's Sacred Liberation***

2. We've Siloed Ourselves and Further Isolated our Men

Modern developments have exacerbated the effects already set in place by restrictive male cultural training that reward so-called self-sufficiency, leading to isolation. Social media, the pandemic and gaming have meant that we're no longer meeting in person, in community. Our existing communities suppress open expression or don't moderate extreme expression.

“There's almost like a notion of the same rebellious nature of rebelling against the established norms becomes the driver. And then the school in particular is very monolithically progressive, and then there's no room for discussion or debate or disagreement or ‘Oh, you're racist, or, oh, you're, you disagree, therefore you're a capitalist, Or a racist or whatever.’ And so it creates more of a backlash that young men seem to be moving towards more because they feel like the other views are giving him a counter view to discuss.”

- **Brian Boland, *Former Facebook***

3. We've Suppressed Opportunities for Contribution

Shifting norms that criticize traditional masculinity have not been replaced by new models. The reality of economic inequality is especially challenging to men. We talk about men in unfavorable ways and we don't celebrate men's contributions or welcome male energy.

“A guy can't just go and do a hard day's work and be a family provider anymore, so that increases the number of guys who feel without purpose. That's not feminists' fault, that's sort of capitalism or industrialization's fault... But what we need for those guys — you know, ‘I don't work at a factory, I don't feel like I can be a man.’ — we need that high-school educated person to have something that he feels ... gives him meaning, other than maybe joining the militia or just doing self-loathing and taking fentanyl. As I deal only in sweeping generalizations.”

- **Steve Baskin, *Camp Champions***

4. **We're Not Intentional About Healthy Masculinity Models**

A culture of male hypersexualization and dehumanization is still the norm, even as we criticize traditional masculinity. We're not offering comprehensive sex education and lack the kinds of positive role models men need.

“There's many studies that show an increase in porn leads to an increase in depression, suicidal tendencies, male violence, violence with women. For the rest of Europe much more is that even things like sex education models, the way society views sex is really different and more comprehensive.” - *Sarah Johnson, The Akin*

“And a lot of men have not really experienced that kind of brotherhood connection, especially with an elder, which is something else that I think was stripped from our society is this experience of older men. If we think in terms of just age older men who are more experienced in life turning around and reaching out their hand in support of younger men, that just doesn't exist in our culture. It just doesn't exist.” - *Dr. Brian Strahine, Men's Sacred Liberation*

5. **We've Elected Leaders Who Are Inciting Violence**

Elected leaders are flauntingly promoting hostile sexism, aggression and endorsing violent behavior, harkening back to harmful models of masculinity, rather than modeling new ones.

“The part that you can't really predict in a national survey and really not predictable much at all, are the triggers, which are these spontaneous acts like Donald Trump sending a tweet on December 19th, 2019, to Washington. It will be wild. And then the second trigger is he gives that really incendiary speech and then just launches this whole stream off at the Capitol. Well, those events are really critical.” - *Dr. Robert Pape, University of Chicago*

6. We Dehumanize Each Other

Mirroring the dehumanization at the heart of traditional notions of masculinity that otherizes women for domination, we perpetuate dehumanization in our politics, fostering hostility and violence; and our culture continues to perpetuate misogyny, anti-Semitism, and conspiracies

“The thing they have in common is they're dehumanizing people, women particularly, but even the men in it, these online platforms, gaming platforms, dehumanize us, and then these chat rooms and internet kind of culture, it's removed from human interactions.”

- Sarah Johnson, the Akin

7. We Refuse to Meaningfully Regulate Tech

Our tech and media platforms are thriving off destructive emotions of anger, aggression and partisanship, accelerating us towards catastrophe by sending us more and more information, faster and faster. A lot of it is junk that's leveraging existing biases and feeding conspiracies

“The problem is we live in a society where the media is owned by these corporations that benefit from the status quo, and they're money making operations and sensationalized media and anger and hatred sell.”

- Mike German, Brennan Center, former FBI

“

We got half of the country telling men, specifically white men, that you are the cause of all the problems in society. Then we had the other half of the country telling those same men that none of your personal problems are your fault. So on one side you're responsible for everything on a macroscale and the other side, they're telling them you're not responsible for anything on a micro scale. So any personal problems or any lack of self-efficacy or the fact that you're watching 30 hours of porn and video games a week, it's not your fault, man. You're a victim. And on the other side, they're being blamed for 240 years of oppression or discrimination or misogyny that they had nothing to fucking do with. **So on one end, the left is at their back pushing them towards authoritarian demagogues, and on the other end, the authoritarian demagogues are basically pulling them in.** That's a huge problem.

-Dr. Nick Carmody

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HOW WHITE SUPREMACIST MOVEMENTS COME AFTER YOUNG MEN

“It's also being where they're at, and I think that's where a lot of people really struggle because it's hard to gain entry or understand the language in some of these spaces. So if you want to understand or be at the places these boys are at, you have to be there. You have to be in the Twitch and the Discord and be on these channels and hire people of the right age to actually navigate it for you.”

—*Sarah Johnson, Founder of The Akin*

WHITE SUPREMACIST MOVEMENTS ARE ATTRACTING YOUNG MEN BECAUSE THEY LEGITIMIZE THEIR CONCERNS

Eric Ward tells an old joke about a woman who goes to the doctor because she thinks there's something wrong with her arm. It hurts. The doctor insists there's nothing wrong with it. On her way home, she stops at the butcher's shop and mentions her arm and tells him it hurts. This happens a few times, and, eventually, the butcher, tired of hearing about her arm and suggests he could cut it off, having read a book on arm surgery.

“That's the kind of cultural moment we're in right now. It's not about, yes, not all of everyone's anxieties are valid, but it doesn't matter whether you're really falling or if you feel like you're falling, your body and your brain are going to respond in the same way. And we are not willing to kind of grapple with the perception or give any space on the perception in order to hold and keep safe that middle constituency. And that's why ultimately authoritarians continue to rise.” - *Eric Ward, EVP of Race Forward*

ON POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND WHITE SUPREMACY -
THE LIGHTNING



AND THERE ARE MULTIPLE ON RAMPS TO RECRUIT VULNERABLE MEN

These narratives are used by various groups worldwide to frame their struggles positively and their opponents negatively, justify actions, and mobilize support. These narratives can be found in political speeches, propaganda, literature, and social media, but are also scattered across pop culture in games and stories.

ULTRANATIONALIST NARRATIVE

Romanticizes a past golden age, portraying the state as having deviated from its glorious path due to corruption or foreign influence, necessitating a violent rebirth or purification.

ETHNIC OR RACIAL SUPREMACY NARRATIVE

Claims superiority of one race or ethnicity over others, often calling for violence to cleanse or maintain purity.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Anti-Semitism within white supremacist ideology often revolves around conspiracy theories alleging Jewish control or manipulation of various societal institutions, such as banking, media, and politics.

RELIGIOUS OR APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVE

Uses religious texts or prophecies to justify violence as a divine command or part of an apocalyptic battle between good and evil.

ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION NARRATIVE

Centers on the struggle against economic inequality and exploitation, portraying violence as necessary to dismantle an unjust economic system that benefits a few at the expense of many.

WAITING IN LINE

You are waiting in a long line leading up a hill. You've waited a long time, worked hard, and the line is barely moving. You deserve to move forward a little faster. but later arrivals are cutting in line ahead of you.

REVOLUTIONARY JUSTICE NARRATIVE

Promotes the idea of overthrowing an unjust, oppressive system through violence to establish a new, fairer society.

TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

Misogyny within white supremacist ideology reinforces traditional gender roles, with women expected to conform to narrowly defined gender roles within the family and society, limiting their freedom and opportunities

LIBERATION THEOLOGY NARRATIVE

Merges religious beliefs with political activism, advocating for the use of violence as a means to liberate the oppressed from social, economic, and political injustice.

WHAT DOES POLITICAL VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE TODAY?

- Most recently, it looks like Jan. 6, 2021, when over 2,000 insurrectionists storming The Capitol to halt the certification of a democratic election, 716 of whom have been charged, a quarter of whom were armed.
- Since the 2017 “Unite The Right” rally, there have been over 150 politically-motivated car rammings across the United States.
- Between 2016 and 2022, **white supremacist attack plots targeting energy systems dramatically increased in frequency**
- Threats against members of Congress rose tenfold from 2016 to 2021
- A third of local elected officials report being harassed in the previous three months, one fifth threatened
- Despite all of this, we’re not tracking domestic white supremacy violence at the same rate as international terrorism.

“The FBI says its primary objective is counter-terrorism - and they've recognized that white supremacists are the most active domestic terrorist group. And since 2016, they've said they're keeping domestic terrorism on the same plane as international terrorism as far as their attention. Although they'll admit that their resources are still sharply disproportionately addressing international terrorism. But they can't tell you how many people white supremacists killed last year or the year before that, or the year before that, or the year before that. And they don't have any current plan in place to collect information.”

- Mike German, Former FBI

A VULNERABLE POPULATION: SOME ILLUSTRATIVE STATS

ISOLATION AND PESSIMISM

- Men aged 18 to 23 have the least optimism for their futures and the lowest levels of social support (44% meet screening standards for depression; 49% report suicide ideation in past fortnight)
- 65% of men aged 18 to 23 say that “no one really knows me well.”

TRUST (OR LACK THEREOF)

- Trust in public figures is low. **Young men 18–23 trust Andrew Tate (20%) more than they trust Joe Biden (15%)** - but Donald Trump the most - even if not resoundingly (24%)
- **46% of men 18–23 report trusting manosphere/red pill online venues generally** (highest trust levels among all age groups), even if smaller percentages report trusting them specifically (8% Proud Boys; 10% Jordan Peterson; 16% a voice for men)
- The most trusted government institutions, including among young men 18–23 is the US military

RESTRICTIVE VIEWS IN GENDER ROLES GROWING

- Restrictive ideas about gender and masculinity are **on the rise** among young men 18 to 30
- 51% of 18–30 year-olds agreed that “if a guy has a girlfriend or a wife, he deserves to know where she is at all time” (compared to 46% in 2017)
- 41% 18–30 year-olds agreed that “a man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage” (compared to 34% in 2017)
- 36% 18–30 year-olds agreed that “a gay guy is not a “real man”” (29% in 2017)
- 18–23 year-olds **least likely** of all male age groups to agree that “feminism has made America a better place” (47% agree)
- Adhering to the “man box” (restrictive views of masculinity) gave men the most sense of purpose in life

[note that restrictive ideas about gender are widespread across ages, but are currently most popular in men 24–37]

WHITE SUPREMACY MOVEMENTS ARE **LEVERAGING THESE VULNERABILITIES AND BIASES**

White supremacy movements exploit biases to draw potential supporters further into their ideology. Young men exhibiting misogynistic tendencies at higher rates is not innocuous here: according to researchers, **the number one predictor for support for political violence is hostile sexism.**

“So when we talk about far right, it's not political, it's white supremacy. But what if you look at every violent far right organization in the United States today? They are rooted in two things and, surprisingly, one of them is not hating on the Black race or anything like that. **They are, one, anti-Semitic and two, misogynistic.** Those are the two commonalities every violent far-right extremist group in the United States holds today.”

– Patrick Riccards, CEO of Life After Hate

2X

PESSIMISM, VIOLENCE AND NEWS

Americans who believe the country has changed for the worse since the 1950s are **more than twice as likely to agree that true American patriots may have to resort to violence to save the country.**

89%

PESSIMISM IS TIED TO MASS NEWS CONSUMPTION

Nine in ten Americans who most trust far-right news (89%) and,

Seven in ten Americans who most trust Fox news (71%) believe:

71%

American culture and way of life have mostly changed for the worse.

AND FRINGE IDEAS ARE BEING MAINSTREAMED AND FEEL MORE

ACCEPTABLE

As white supremacist theories now mix with racist tropes, circulating widely among influential right-wing figures and within the Republican party, lending them legitimacy and allowing them to influence policy: **“Black men are inherently criminal, immigrants are ‘invading’ the country, LGBTQ people are ‘grooming’ children, nefarious actors are throwing our elections, leftists are working through schools and libraries to undermine ‘traditional’ gender roles, young people of color are engaging in voter fraud, and multiculturalism is an ideal designed to replace and eliminate white people.”** - SPLC, *The Year in Hate and Extremism 2022*
“Extremism Comes to Mainstreet”

THE STATS BEHIND TWO KEY RHETORICS:

66%

The Big Lie:

A majority (66%) of Republicans **still believe the 2020 election was stolen.**

Per PRRI survey in 2023

7/10

The Great Replacement Theory:

Nearly 7 in 10 Republicans surveyed **agree** to at least some extent that **demographic changes in the United States are deliberately driven by liberal and progressive politicians attempting to gain political power by “replacing more conservative white voters.”**

Per PRRI survey in 2022

“If you’re born in 1978, like I was, or 1988 or 1998, you’ve experienced being a minority. You’ve experienced, let’s say, undergraduate life, where you’ve gone through you know white guilt indoctrination. You’ve experienced trying to get a job at a major corporation, where you know that their hiring is geared almost totally towards not hiring you.”

- Richard Spencer, White Supremacist

“Part of Trump’s huge appeal was that although he does not think in terms of race the way I do, he at least thinks in terms of nation. He recognizes that the United States is a nation with a particular people and that not everyone belongs here. This is a great relief to millions of white people who have seen their nation transformed in the name of diversity, diversity that always comes at the expense of white people.”

- Jared Taylor, White Supremacist and Editor of American Renaissance

“I think China's done a really good job of shutting things down and it's worked for them. I think it'd be very difficult to do here. I think the Democrats specifically, and the progressives broadly, have done a terrible job at community engagement.[...] I think progressives have very much torn each other apart and torn people who don't agree with them apart.”

- Brian Boland, Former Facebook

LOOKING AHEAD: THE BIG PROBLEM + ITS NARRATIVES

What leads people to actually commit violence? What are the narratives that might make young men and boys actively join an open, unapologetic white supremacist movement where violence was centered?– and for it to constitute a true, immediate threat to democracy?

- **Being a part of a group that has fun, where members feel like they are embraced, can speak openly and belong (many instances of violence/gatherings/rallies precede full absorption into ideology)**
- **A sense of “authenticity” that doesn’t punish anyone for “making a joke”**
- **A sense of being under threat, a sense of invasion, of loss, of pressing desperation**
- **Nobility and a sense of being accepted, and indeed celebrated through violence (heroes of a movement)**
- **Nobility of a group legitimately fighting to defend their people, their country, their women (purpose)**
- **A sense of revenge over women and non-white people who should know their place**
- **Furor at being lied to (elections, democracy, “reverse polarity theory”)**
- **Furor over an unjust system in which others maliciously hold power**
- **Being already surrounded by violence (military, law enforcement, incarceration; a violent culture)**

So what are narratives for a future vision where everyone – young men and boys included – can belong, thrive and tangibly feel good about the future?

“

I know so many black men who are very clear that, yo, we got to protect our sisters. We got to protect our community, our children, and we've got to protect all of them from these white boys and these proud boys and these people who want to hurt us, et cetera. But in the same vein, are a little bit more open to listening to some rich black person or comedian rail against migrants or some black podcaster talk about how his dating life is screwed up by women who make too much money and talk too much, and who share videos with all manner of black people parading around with Jordan Peterson-esque language. And so I think for me, the more insidious type of political violence — that I believe is violence and that I'm most worried about— is the narrative, the endorsing, the kind of doublespeak that a lot of these black podcasters and hip hop personalities and frankly, wealthy black people, [speak]. **Philip Agnew, Founder Black Men Build**

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FIXING OUR **VULNERABILITIES**

WE NEED A CULTURE THAT:

- 1 Creates **new rituals to celebrate the passage from boyhood to manhood** centering community and consent
- 2 Cultivates **healthy, safe, vulnerable and loving community** for boys and men
- 3 Creates **opportunities for men to contribute** and be celebrated
- 4 Casts **connection and emotionality as central to all humans**, including boys and men
- 5 Celebrates leaders and role models that **exhibit strength through collaboration and de-escalation**
- 6 Fosters and celebrates **a less othering world where we recognize each other's humanity**
- 7 Stands up **against technologies that further create siloes** and divides

FIXING OUR VULNERABILITIES

1

Restoring Rituals

Creating supportive norms for positive male development

“Every culture had an initiation to manhood. I had to prove that I was no longer a drain on the tribe. I had to be a net positive. When I did this ritual for the young men, - unreal transformative stuff. And it brought them to a place where they asked themselves - what are you going to be? How are you going to make a difference in this world? You've just gone through this so you know you're strong. Now what are you going to do with that strength? So they went through this whole thing that proved them that they were capable of dealing with hard things, and then they had the right, a mission statement. We don't have initiations in the manhood anymore. So what we have, is a world full of 50-year-old boys having sex with who they want to or buy the car they want to or living a inner directed rather than other directed life feeling sorry for themselves. There's a whole lot of different ways you can go off the rail. Young men need something to aspire to. It's motivating.”

- *Steve Baskin, Camp Champions*

2

Prioritize healthy community for young men

Cultivate community with other men and places to speak freely and be men

“I had low tolerance for bullies, and then two subcultures gave me an alternative. The mainstream of American society was just never for so many reasons my own. And the society was just never going to be that anchor for me. And so I think subcultures provide particularly for alienated folks, possible anchors and exits. The problem is we don't resource those influencers and subcultures in the way that the far right does.”

- *Eric Ward, Race Forward*

3

Create opportunities for contribution and celebration

Give men purpose and opportunities. Celebrate their contributions and welcome male energy

“I know right away what I would do is I'd create opportunities. Opportunities, always, because that's what men want. We want an opportunity to try, to be heard, opportunity to get an education. We just want opportunity, right? No matter how persuasive I am on support that you should do this or should do that, if you don't have the financial means to support your family, you can't support your family. Don't have the opportunity to be the man. I'm telling you that you should be. Opportunities for us to have open conversations about things without each other feeling under attack and closing off so that way you can understand if I am in this conversation about reproductive just as an example and I don't understand, something should feel like I can ask and someone will explain it to me without judging me.” - *Alex Berrios, Mi Vecino*

FIXING OUR VULNERABILITIES

4

Teach + model healthy masculinity

We must re-introduce emotionality, connection and vulnerability as a key part of men and masculinity – not in opposition to.

“But what we're doing is saying that the old ways of being a man, the old ways of manhood, the western ways of being a man, what we are talking about when we say the old ways are cowardice, they are insufficient. They are death dealing, they are so stifling, they are suffocating. [...] what we say is that strength is in vulnerability, strength is in intimacy. Strength is in knowing yourself and your interior world and being open to sharing that with other people in the world. And that John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, David Hasselhoff, Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger are personifications of a deep insecurity of a deep lack of curiosity, a lack of true knowledge of yourself, and that in this case, Black, Latino, indigenous men in this moment, we must be the midwives for new men to be born, that these new men that will usher in a new era of society will be able to connect deeper with themselves, with their partners, whomever they may be, with their communities, with their families, with their country.” - *Philip Agnew, Black Men Build*

5

Get better leaders who won't incite violence

Leaders who tell them to stand down and cut it out

A Stanford study entitled [Strengthening Democracy](#), found that leaders telling a population to not commit political violence, a la Trump on January 6th, is one of two effective ways to stop political violence. So too is humanizing the other side and reminding people that the other side isn't trying to hurt them.

6

Humanize the other side

Our demonization of the other even when well meaning is laying the groundwork for violence. While we're at it, we need to work on misogyny, anti semitism, conspiracies on a cultural level. Our cultural biases are being leveraged against us.

7

Regulate Tech

It's speeding us on our way to disaster

“I think digital gets a lot of blame for creating things, and I think it's more of the gasoline on the fire than the creation of the fire. I think it's a kind of situation where I would see digital and social media as the Santa Ana winds of California fires. You can have small fires and somebody else is starting 'em, and they're not great, and they grow. But once you put the winds on those fires and they lose control completely. And so are the winds responsible or is the person who lit it responsible? Well, they're kind of both playing a big role.”
- *Brian Boland, Former Facebook*

A NATION ON A PRECIPICE ?

“For men to plunge headlong into an undertaking of vast change, they must be intensely discontented yet not destitute, and they must have the feeling that by the possession of some potent doctrine, infallible leader or some new technique they have access to a source of irresistible power. They must also have an extravagant conception of the prospects and potentialities of the future. Finally, they must be wholly ignorant of the difficulties involved in their vast undertaking. Experience is a handicap.”

- *Eric Hoffer, The True Believer, Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements. P11*

“I just go to what I think is the worst problem in political violence in the world. And that unfortunately right now is the United States. So I've been focusing on the United States for the last four years, actually. So even before the George Floyd protest, even before January 6th, I became very concerned that the pandemic led to the federal government dropping the ball that would lead to mass deaths in the United States. And 1.2 million dead due to covid is mass deaths. That's both at the hands of the Trump administration and the Biden administration. And then you end up, once you connect that with my work on political violence, you start to worry as not very many people did, that this would lead to a rise in political violence in the United States that we haven't seen before. **And it's because when people come to lose confidence that their government will protect them, that's what tends to move people toward political violence. It's trying to solve political problems by other means when the government is not really working in a serious way.**” - *Dr. Robert Pape*

WHY YOU SHOULD WORRY

You only need a small portion of any given population to erupt into political violence.

Economic disenfranchisement

This is not a movement led by them, but it's built for them.

The right wing is doing a better job at recruitment of/ appealing to young men (their grievances, their biases). They are giving them a place where their emotional needs are met.

Young men have a very high lack of trust in institutions and are open to conspiracies ("do your own research" culture + high trust of the manosphere).

Feelings of loneliness, disconnection, etc. make young men vulnerable for extremist grooming.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T

A lot of young men are just fine - playing games in their basement, living their lives - if anything, most of them are just apathetic to politics.

The economy is growing! Opportunity abounds!

But that doesn't mean it's turning them into politically violent actors. And leading indicators show that young men as a population are not as open to political violence as older people.

← Yeah you should worry about that one.

Purported values (e.g. lack of trust/belief in conspiracies) do not necessarily translate into actions.

Stage of life argument: everyone is a rebel/disillusioned at this age, but it passes.