

## Reaching Back to Move Forward

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It has become something of a cliché to suggest that we live in perilous times. Yet it's unclear what else could adequately capture the severity of our present predicament. With the rise of Right-wing fascism, the absence of a robust political Left to serve as a counter-hegemonic bloc, and the ongoing oppression and exploitation – if not outright extermination – of the most disadvantaged among us, we seem to have descended beyond perilousness and into the sort of barbarism described by Rosa Luxemburg over a century ago.

So what if any role can critical psychology play not simply in giving us hope but actually fostering the sort of organized resistance that can – indeed must – orient us in the development of a robust counter-hegemonic bloc? If the answer is not immediately forthcoming, we must at least dispense with one unfruitful point of departure. Perhaps most in need of our interrogation is an orthodox political spectrum that continues to provide the background against which many of us carry out our critical work. It is a story that too often invites us to denigrate our opponents and overlook the extent to which orthodox ways of understanding the political spectrum ultimately obscure opportunities for building the sort of solidarity that is absolutely vital for resisting our descent into barbarism.

If, as Nancy Fraser argues, the populist cat is already out of the bag then it remains incumbent upon us as critical psychologists to take stock not just of those forces that run afoul of our convictions but also recognize the extent to which those convictions may prevent us from engaging in the difficult work of transforming a reactionary populism into the sort of progressive populism capable of challenging the dominant order.

While the future may look dim, perhaps the recent past may serve as a guide?

In 2010, Ian Parker and I organized the inaugural *Marxism and Psychology Conference* at the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada. As you can see from the conference poster, we were fortunate to bring together leading critical psychologists from across the globe to explore the pressing issues of the before-times. While I made video recordings of the plenary sessions, life intervened to prevent me from distributing these videos further. Many years and several computers later, I was unable to locate the recordings and was resigned to the fact that they were lost forever. As luck would have it, I recently stumbled across one of my old computers and discovered the plenary recordings. Perhaps they had been lying in wait until a proper forum came along. Alas, they will have to settle for this one.

In this issue, I've reprinted Ian Parker's conference report which was originally published in *Psychology in Society* (PINS) in 2010. It provides a nice overview of the conference and some important context for making sense of the plenary conversations.

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We are also very fortunate to have another installment of Awry2 curated by Ali Lara, Rachel Liebert, and Teah Carlson. While their introduction provides a succinct overview of the contributions to this section, I would be remiss if I didn't also express my sincere gratitude for their work in pulling together this section as well as their patience with me in getting this issue to press much later than I would have hoped.

Solidarity!