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New Book Explores the History and Motivations Behind Support for Donald Trump

Philosophy professor writes about the particular strain of US political culture that currently takes Trump as its focus.

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Why has Donald Trump become the dominant subject of US politics? The new book by Dr. Douglas Giles, *Why Trump? Why Some People Support Him—How the Rest of Us Can Respond*, considers this and connected questions by looking at American history to show that the MAGA movement really isn't about Trump.

Why Trump? is a valuable book for understanding the current election cycle and for a broader understanding of American history and politics. It is neither a diatribe against Donald Trump nor a hagiography extolling him. Instead, the book illuminates the social and historical context of Trump and the MAGA movement, focusing our attention on what's at issue in politics today. Avoiding oversimplification, Dr. Giles provides a serious historical and philosophical analysis of the dynamics at play in the support of and opposition to Trump and offers concrete proposals for moving politics beyond its current morass of antagonism.

Why Trump? shows there is little new in Trump or the things he says and does. His success in attaining power lies in his ability to harness a long-simmering feeling in a segment of the American population. Realizing that simple reality opens the door to a deeper understanding of the particular strain of US political culture behind the movement that currently takes Trump as its focus.

"Trump is a symptom far more than he is a cause," writes Dr. Giles. He explains that the rhetoric and action from the America right wing is informed by the dualistic theology of Calvinism and fueled by "ressentiment"—what philosopher Max Scheler described as a particular form of hatred that arises from beliefs that one is socially impotent, something more than mere resentment.

Dr. Giles explains that "the right wing seeks a return to a moral purity" that they imagine existed back when America was "great." The MAGA reactionaries can see Trump as "the focal point of their ressentiment against marginalized people who are becoming increasingly empowered." But the MAGA movement is the latest manifestation of American nationalism. Dr. Giles expounds America's long history of anti-immigrant rhetoric and its myth of American exceptionalism and connects that history to the rise of the reactionary right in recent decades—a rise that has adopted Trump as its current focal point.

About the Author

Author Dr. Douglas Giles is a professor of philosophy at Elmhurst University, and he researches the root causes of bigotry and injustice and their role in political action. He earned his PhD in social philosophy at the University of Essex (UK) and has written extensively on the history and nature of ideas, ideologies, and paradigms. He is the author of *How We Are and How We Got Here: A Practical History of Western Philosophy* and *Left Wing, Right Wing, People, and Power: The Core Dynamics of Political Action*.

Dr. Giles is a seasoned lecturer and video producer, skilled in public speaking, panel discussions, and interviews. He is available to those eager for serious and deep conversations about philosophy and politics.

Book Availability

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