



Victims & Offenders

An International Journal of Evidence-based Research, Policy, and Practice

ISSN: 1556-4886 (Print) 1556-4991 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uvao20>

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To cite this article: Dawn L. Rothe & Victoria E. Collins (2019) Turning Back the Clock? Violence against Women and the Trump Administration, *Victims & Offenders*, 14:8, 965-978, DOI: [10.1080/15564886.2019.1671284](https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2019.1671284)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2019.1671284>



Published online: 28 Oct 2019.



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Turning Back the Clock? Violence against Women and the Trump Administration

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ABSTRACT

The Trump Administration has engaged in a systematic rolling back of protections, regulations, and a host of other social safety net programs for vulnerable people, leaving over half of the population in dismay while others celebrate archaic triumphs. In this context, our focus is limited to the Trump Administration's efforts—through law and words—to turn back the clock for women. We examine the reinforcement of overt forms of inequality rooted in patriarchy through domestic law as well as Trump's misogynistic attitude and language toward women. Given that his words hold a greater significance now that he is President of the United States, he has a "gold-plated" pulpit to share and spread his misogynistic hostile rhetoric and propaganda: anti-women objectification, devaluing, and demonization through hegemonic "wordfare" while feeding and fueling sexism across the country. We conclude by suggesting that Trump's rhetoric and that of other leading political figures are contributing to a darker time for those not in the white elite hetero-normative order with short and long term implications and harm. We caution that the current dangers posed by these attacks are entering us into an endemic misogynist normal: retroactively moving the Country back in time at a dangerous speed.

KEYWORDS

Misogyny; political speech;
Trump; patriarchy; discourse

Following the election of Trump, there has been a marked increase in the implementation of neoconservative agendas across the United States, leaving over half of the population in dismay while others celebrate archaic triumphs. In addition to rollbacks of corporate and environmental regulations and protections at the federal and state levels, the Trump presidency has inaugurated an agenda of draconian, neoconservative social rollbacks that threaten women, people of color, people with disabilities, and those who violate hetero-normative understandings of gender (i.e., LGBTQ) – all aimed at ensuring the continuation of an inept, violent status quo benefiting a White, wealthy power elite. All of these social rollbacks are important and deserve attention. However, due to the inordinate number of policies and their consequential harms, our focus here is limited to the Trump Administration's efforts, through both law and words, to turn back the clock for women to a time when rights were even more limited, women were mere property and when patriarchal order was rarely contested.

This discussion focuses on two forms used by the Trump Administration to attack women. First, we argue that the neoliberal carceral state's use of the United States

domestic legal system to roll back the advancements of women's rights should be thought of as "lawfare." We expand upon the concept of "lawfare" to invoke the metaphor of using law for fighting against an "enemy." Second, we examine Trump and his allies' use of "wordfare" to demean women. This includes but is not limited to, tweets and other forms of discourse to those challenging Trump on political, economic, or gender issues where women are demonized while their victimizers, men, are portrayed as *the* victims. Taken together, these forms of warfare have created dark times for vulnerable populations with long-term implications. They contain the dual risk of fatalistic acceptance of current developments or the false optimism that the effects of Trump will soon pass without long term implications.

The spectacle of political "lawfare"

Dating back to the 1950s, the term lawfare was used in discussions of divorce law, colonialism, and courtroom advocacy. It was later used to refer to national law as a weapon of conflict where lawfare referred to the U.S.'s use of legalized international institutions to achieve strategic ends. In 2001, Colonel Charles Dunlap further popularized the concept of lawfare, where he used the term to refer to the "use of law as a weapon of war" (Lawfare, 2019). The latter definition of the term seems to allegorically characterize the Trump Administration's processes of implementing neoconservative agendas across the United States at the expense of the majority – and, for our point here, women. Domestically and globally the Trump Administration is significantly impacting and harming women, resulting in the rollback of rights that have slowly been gained over more than a century. One of the first official indicators of this attack was reflected in the president's twitter response to the Women's March on January 20, 2018, where he states: "Beautiful weather all over our great country, a perfect day for all Women to March ... Get out there now to celebrate the historic milestones" (Trump, 2018a). What he does not say or admit is that women needed "to celebrate what we gained" as he slowly, and in many cases quietly, planned to dismantle this progress.

For example, through the promotion of a pro-life ideology, the Trump Administration has employed a national and global systemic campaign against reproductive health and rights during the last 18 months of his presidency. It began with the reinstatement and expansion of a global gag rule to prohibit foreign non-profits that receive any United States global health assistance from using private, non-United States funding to provide abortion services or advocate abortion policy reform. The Administration blocked all funding for the United Nations Population Fund that supports reproductive health, including maternal health programs across 150 nations (Barot, 2017). In addition to targeting women's reproductive health and freedom to decide the outcome of their own bodies, the Trump Administration has taken every opportunity to disavow women's right to breastfeed. The 2018 United Nations-affiliated World Health Assembly had expected the resolution supporting breastfeeding and breast milk for infants to receive overwhelming support from the hundreds of government delegates attending the meeting. This resolution reduces the reliance on corporatized synthetic infant formulas in favor of breastmilk. The Trump Administration's delegate opposed the resolution refusing to support language that promotes breast milk as being the healthiest option for infant children. When other countries, such as Ecuador, refused to support the United States

in its endeavors, the Administration threatened to punish these countries through trade measures and withdrawal of military aid (Jacobs, 2018). Furthermore, the Trump Administration's pro-life stance has limited abortion services, increased freedom for businesses to deny "no-cost" birth control, and promoted abstinence-only sex education. Many of these changes have been made under Title X (Zaldivar & Crary, 2018), the federal grant program that is solely focused on family planning and related services.

In addition, Trump has assembled one of the "most anti-abortion cabinets in history," stacking "federal courts and the Supreme Court with anti-abortion judges who could serve for the next several decades" (Bassett, 2018). This includes Vice President Mike Pence who, before joining Trump's campaign, led the Republican Party's fight against legal abortion in the House of Representatives for over five years. Given Pence's historical efforts to dismantle women's rights, his ongoing efforts in this regard as Vice President should come as no surprise. Likewise, Trump's nominees for federal judges are almost all pro-life, including now-confirmed Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. In 2018, 66 judges were approved by a Republican-dominated upper chamber, many of whom are white (76%) and in their mid-30s to 40s, taking on lifetime judicial positions (Zhou, 2018). As argued by Daniel Goldberg, the legal director for the Alliance for Justice, "long after Donald Trump leaves the seat, his fingerprints will still be on our justice system – two, three, four decades from now" (quoted in Zhou, 2018).

Trump also quietly signed a bill that would give states the power to withhold federal funds from centers that provide abortion services, such as Planned Parenthood. This action would lead to a million United States teenagers and millions more impoverished women not having access to sex education programs or reproductive health services from pap smears to birth control. In April 2017, Trump signed an executive order, HJ Resolution #43, giving states permission to defund Planned Parenthood (White House). This order reversed the requirement that states pass along family planning grants to all groups regardless if they offer abortion services to prevent states from withholding grants from any organization for reasons other than their ability to provide Title IX services. In addition, the Administration cut more "than \$200 million in federal grants to 81 teen pregnancy prevention programs around the country, leaving an estimated 580,000 students without access to comprehensive sex education" (Scott, 2017). An "abstinence" ideology is supposed to be used rather than sex education or sexual reproductive health education. Trump also rolled back the requirement that birth control coverage by insurers – at no out of pocket cost to 62 million women – be guaranteed (Scott, 2017). He further reinstated a "global gap rule" policy which restricts government funding for international organizations that provide abortion services. And, he became the first sitting president to give a speech at a March for Life rally (Siddiqui, 2018), an annual march for the purposes of ending abortion.

Additionally, through Executive orders, changes in policies, and laws, the Administration is making it harder for women to report sexual discrimination, much less attempt to fight against it. For example, Trump reversed the 2014 Fair Pay Act signed by former President Obama that forbids federal contractors from keeping secret or hushing sexual harassment and discrimination cases (Revocation Executive Order 13673, 13683, 13738, 2017, White House, 2017). Specifically, as it relates to women's rights, the rescindment of The Fair Pay order will no longer require paycheck transparency and continues the draconian practice of forced or mandatory arbitration clauses for sexual harassment, sexual assault, or

discrimination claims – one of Trump’s signature attempts to obfuscate his victims’ abilities to speak out. These clauses legally forbid victims to sue their employer. This prohibition was upheld by the Supreme Court in a March 2018 ruling. Now hundreds of thousands or more claims from women will remain “hidden,” once again suppressing their voices as has historically been the case.

In addition, the Administration rescinded the campus sexual assault guidance for ensuring compliance with Title IX. In essence, this decision undoes the power of the Office of Civil Rights tasked with tackling sexual assault. Such a move was rationalized as a “response” to an undue burden on accused students that must defend themselves under the previous order (O’Hara, 2017). Siding with men’s rights groups, Trump’s Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has doubled down on this justification by arguing the need for equal treatment of victims and perpetrators in sexual assault cases. Specifically, DeVos has reversed the Obama-era guidelines that implemented a lowered burden of proof in campus sexual assault cases – that of a preponderance of the evidence. DeVos, as well as the Trump administration more broadly, has become a heroic figure for the families (particularly the mothers) of sons on college campuses who have been accused of rape and sexual assault (Collins & Dunn, 2018).

The Trump Administration has also used the United States budget to reduce resources for victims of domestic abuse and rape into the 2018/2019 fiscal year. The Administration’s budget funds for the Violence Against Women Act was reduced to \$100 million below what Congress authorized. As noted by The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2018),

Rather than showing a commitment to decreasing gender-based violence by investing taxpayer money in VAWA, the budget pays for the entirety of VAWA with a transfer from the Crime Victims Fund, a fund that is financed by fines and penalties paid by convicted federal offenders, not from tax dollars. This transfer is anticipated to decrease funding available to shelters and other direct service providers by up to almost 26% ... The proposed cuts to important social safety net programs upon which victims and survivors rely to regain self-sufficiency will add barriers to victims seeking safety.

As a result, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence has publicly denounced the budget.

The spectacle of “wordfare”

Unfortunately, we could go on with examples of significant and possibly long-term devastating rollbacks and lawfare through legislation and Executive Orders and Resolutions. Doing so, however, would obscure the more dangerous and damaging impact of the misogynist political discourse that constructs negative narratives of women, further fueling fear, hate, and a particular archaic heteronormative patriarchal viewpoint. To us, the deadly combination of lawfare and wordfare make this moment in time precarious at best. After all, politics and political discourse are the essential elements of persuasion. As Jeffrey Engel, Director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University, so succinctly states:

There is so much hue and cry and rending of cloth over the truly outlandish statements that no previous president would ever make publicly ... that we are missing the fact that the

tweets are the ripples on top of the water. The big, impactful currents are well below. (quoted in Page, 2018)

It is this discourse that builds a narrative to confirm and/or convince his base audience of the “truth” of the order, where the big, impactful currents will be felt.

Notably, Trump’s personal disdain and poor treatment of women are not something new, nor should it be shocking given that his treatment of women as objects and “less than” has a long-standing historical pattern. For example, during George H. W. Bush Presidency in 1991, Trump spoke to *Esquire* magazine about his media coverage: “You know, it doesn’t really matter what [they] write as long as you’ve got a young and beautiful piece of ass” (quoted in Cohen, 2017). The following year in an interview with *New York Magazine*, Trump told readers how women *have* to be treated: “You have to treat ‘em like shit” (Gass, 2015). More recent examples include the now-infamous *Access Hollywood* recording of Trump (2005) where he states:

I moved on her like a bitch ... You know, I’m automatically attracted to beautiful – I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything ... Grab ‘em by the pussy. You can do anything.

It should not be unexpected then that as many as 23 women have accused Trump of sexual assault, all of which he denies and dismisses (Relman, 2019). On October 17, 2016, he tweeted: “Can’t believe these totally phony stories, 100% made up by women (many already proven false) and pushed big time by press, have impact! They are ‘fake news’: false accusations and fabricated stories of women who I don’t know and/or have never met” (Trump, 2016). Trump’s misogynistic views extend to his own daughters as objects of pleasure. In a 1994 interview, host Robin Leach asked Trump and his former wife which physical traits Tiffany Trump inherited from them both. He stated: “She’s a really beautiful baby, and she’s got Marla’s legs.” Then, pointing to his chest making reference to her breasts, he continued: “We don’t know whether she’s got this part yet, but time will tell” (Trump, 1994). More recently he objectified Ivanka when speaking on *The View*, saying she has “a very nice figure and if Ivanka weren’t my daughter, perhaps I’d be dating her” (Trump, 2006).

While the above examples, by far limited here, highlight the preponderance of Trump’s misogynistic historical attitude toward women, his words hold a greater significance now that he occupies the United States presidency. The office provides him with a “gold-plated” pulpit to share and spread his misogynistic hostile rhetoric and propaganda – marked by anti-women objectification, devaluing attacks, and demonization through hegemonic “wordfare” while feeding and fueling sexism across the country.¹ After all, the presidential office carries a symbolic power and shapes public discourse as political speech does not exist in a vacuum or as an abstract realm separate from society and culture. Here, we draw from the concept of lawfare, meaning the use of law in a “war” against some position, ideology, or polity. “Wordfare,” therefore, is the use of words to conduct a “war” against the advancement of women in society as equals in value and essence. This term seems especially fitting to use in a Gramscian frame, where words/language are at the center of the relationship between coercion and consent (Ives, 2004). In addition, language should not be analyzed as an “inert object, as a corpse on the dissecting table ... it comes to life again” (Gramsci, 1999, p. 83), bringing with it the underlying currents. In this sense, Trump is using his platform to spread a political

misogynist “wordfare” that reproduces and maintains asymmetrical power relations and returns society to a more draconian patriarchal society.

Trump’s misogynistic “wordfare” has continued following his election as president. Indeed, he has expanded efforts to demoralize and demonize women beyond his historical fetishism of the “perfect” female body (parts) and as sexual objects. For example, on June 25, 2018, Trump tweeted:

Congresswoman Maxine Waters, an extraordinarily low IQ person, has become, together with Nancy Pelosi, the Face of the Democrat Party. She has just called for harm to supporters, of which there are many, of the Make America Great Again movement. Be careful what you wish for Max! (Trump, 2018c)

In reference to Omarosa Newman, his former presidential aide, he tweeted on August 14, 2018: “When you give a crazed, crying lowlife a break, and give her a job at the White House, I guess it just didn’t work out. Good work by General Kelly for quickly firing that dog!” (Keneally, 2018). His nasty wordfare seems endless. He called Stormy Daniels, his ex-mistress, “horseface” (Keneally, 2018). He labeled MSNBC personality Mika Brzezinski “crazy” and claimed she was “bleeding badly from a face-lift ... off the wall, a neurotic and not very bright mess,” “very insecure” and “crazy” (Keneally, 2018). And in reference to Carly Fiorina, his only female rival for the GOP presidential nomination in 2016, he stated: “Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that?” (Keneally, 2018). After the GOP primary debate on CNN, Trump said in reference to Megyn Kelly: “There was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever” (Keneally, 2018). Trump also attacked Senator Gillibrand, tweeting:

Lightweight Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a total flunky for Chuck Schumer and someone who would come to my office ‘begging’ for campaign contributions not so long ago (and would do anything for them), is now in the ring fighting against Trump. Very disloyal to Bill & Crooked-USED! (Trump, 2017b)

To be sure, men have also been subject to Trump’s ire and bashed by him on twitter. Still, when his target is a woman, his tone can be characterized as mocking, patronizing, and belittling, casting insults that are sexist, such as those that focus on a women’s menstrual cycle, her appearance, or her mental health. Such language has been, and still is, often associated with larger gender myths that frame women as being too emotional, weaker than men, and sexual objects. Again, this is not surprising given Trump’s long recorded history of objectifying and sexualizing women and their bodies.

We have previously mentioned the rollbacks of women’s rights through the national budget, law, and executive orders, but the moral and ethical significance of this Administration’s support of men accused of domestic violence, sexual assault or rape is equally troubling. The president’s public support of perpetrators of violence against women sends a rippling effect through to his audience as he narrates a story that invalidates and undermines women’s claims of abuse, assault, and their victimization. The Trump Administration and other Republican politicians continue to support those that have committed domestic violence and abuse, framing allegations as “fake news” or outright denying them until they no longer can. In this use of wordfare against women, the abusers are touted as “good men” that are having their lives shattered and their careers ruined. Consider Trump’s tweet in response to White House staff secretary Rob Porter and speechwriter David Sorensen, both accused of intimate partner abuse:

Peoples [*sic*] lives are being shattered and destroyed by a mere allegation. Some are true and some are false. Some are old and some are new. There is no recovery for someone falsely accused – life and career are gone. Is there no such thing any longer as Due Process? (Trump, 2018b)

Or his enduring support for his confidants such as Roger Ailes – ousted from *Fox News* amidst multiple allegations of sexual harassment:

I can tell you that some of the women that are complaining, I know how much he's helped them ... And now, all of a sudden, they're saying these horrible things about him ... It's very sad because he's a very good person. I've always found him to be just a very, very good person ... So I feel very badly. (quoted in Dickinson, 2018)

He gave the same support to Bill O'Reilly. "He's a good person," Trump told the *New York Times*. "I think he shouldn't have settled ... I know Bill. Bill's a good person I don't think Bill would do anything wrong" (Dickinson, 2018).

Trump, his allies, and a host of male Republican politicians' denouncements of claims of sexual harassment and rape broadcast a loud message to those coming forward: Shut-up and go away. More troubling is the production and use of a renewed narrative that moves beyond demeaning women and supporting Republican men and personal acquaintances, to one of fear and "conspiracy." As noted by Potter (*in press*), the "conspiracy framework also plays well because it draws on a long-standing American social tradition, which has seen conspiracies as the source of many of America's problems ... the concept of conspiracy seems to play well in American politics, making it a most useful tool." In addition, it is well known that fear is a common political tactic used to spread a particular hegemonic ideology and to garner consent without explicitly coercing the population. Conspiracy coupled with fear, are then deployed to garner public support for those who have been accused of the horrific crimes against women. This tactic is not a new, but one that has been used whenever there are challenges to the existing heteronormative patriarchal social order. For example, days after the 9/11 attacks, Jerry Falwell (2001) commented over the air on the *700 Club* show:

I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way – all of them who have tried to secularize America – I point the finger in their face and say "you helped this happen."

While these views have always existed in the United States, they have mostly resided on the political and religious fringe. Given Trump's elevated platform as president, however, his words have a greater impact on his base and reach a larger audience than evangelicals or other individuals/groups have enjoyed in the past.

The power of his language and discourse as it relates to the dismissal of violence against women was especially evident when Christine Blasey-Ford made public her allegation that then-Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her at a party when they were teenagers. This disclosure led to a very public testimony during Kavanaugh's Senate Judiciary hearings. In response to the Kavanaugh hearings, the Trump Administration – quickly followed by other media pundits, politicians, and others – spun a tale of how scary a time it is now for young men.

It's a very scary time for young men in America when you can be guilty of something that you may not be guilty of. You can be somebody that was perfect your entire life and somebody could accuse you of something ... and you're automatically guilty" (Trump, 2018d).

At a rally in Southaven Mississippi, Trump not only mocked Ford's testimony but used the "appeal-to-emotions" tactic of warning his supporters, "Think of your son ... Think of your husband" (Trump, 2018e). Likewise, Donald Trump, Jr. reacted to the sexual allegations against Brett Kavanaugh by telling the *Daily Mail TV* that "I've got boys, and I've got girls. And when I see what's going on right now, it's scary." With a follow-up question regarding which of his five children he worries more about, he stated, "Right now, I'd say my sons" (Trump, 2018). This kind of remark not only implies the allegations are false and negates Christine Ford's victimization but also makes a larger statement about the motivations are truthfulness of rape and sexual assault victims; they lie. Likewise, Senate Majority John Cornyn stated on the Senate Floor: "A vote against Kavanaugh is a 'yes' vote for more of these despicable tactics being used time and time again in the future" (Cornyn, 2018). This common misrepresentation of rape victims as being motivated by revenge and implying that the perpetrator is the *real* victim is not new. This attempt to delegitimize the victim occurs despite consistent findings that false reporting for rape and sexual assault is very low and no greater than false reports for other criminal offenses (Lisak, Gardiner, Nicksa, & Cote, 2010).

Despite this empirical reality, such fear and conspiratorial narratives spread – including on *Fox News*, an outlet widely known to be a pro-Trump and neoconservative in its orientation. Heather Mac Donald, a Manhattan Institute fellow, told FOX News' Tucker Carlson: "Feminism has ambitions to take over civilization and when that happens you can say goodbye to civilization. They're trying to disappear males ... Feminism is really at odds with the civilizational legacy that we have inherited, that we have to preserve at all costs." She continued with "they are simply seizing power, and are in a manic rage to efface males" (Mac Donald, 2018). In agreement, Tucker then responded to his audience with the claim that "institution after institution has been taken over by feminists and the absurd diatribes that are launched against males, and that's the only conclusion you can reach" (Carlson, 2018). During the April 2, 2019 *Tucker Carlson Tonight* show, he belittled Chris Hayes, host of MSNBC's *All In* in the following sexist terms: "Chris Hayes is what every man would be if feminists ever achieved absolute power in this country: apologetic, bespectacled, and deeply, deeply concerned about global warming and the patriarchal systems that cause it" (Carlson, 2019). In short, the false information and demonization being spewed here, as with all other historical forms of demonizing the "other," misrepresent feminism, invalidate rape victimization, and eventually bends toward violence.

We believe the underlying currents are stretching widely as Trump's misogynistic views and "wordfare" have emboldened similar remarks by other politicians (nationally and globally), media pundits, judges, doctors, and CEOs to voice their sexist and derogatory views in the public arena. We are not saying misogynistic views are "new" or because of Trump, given the historical and current levels of sexism and misogyny throughout society. Likewise, we are fully aware of the ongoing misogyny that dominates many platforms of social media (see, e.g., Faludi, 2007; Jane, 2014, 2017; Richardson-Self, 2018). However, as we previously stated, given that the President of the United States regularly tweets misogynistic posts and supports men accused of violence and harms

against women, his platform emboldens and increases the objectification and demonization of women in general.

For example, Oklahoma State Representative Justin Humphrey stated the following during a state legislature debate of a bill that would mandate a woman to have written permission from the man they had sex with before a legal abortion:

I understand that they feel like that is their body. I feel like it is a separate – what I call them is, is you're a "host." And you know when you enter into a relationship you're going to be that host and so, you know, if you pre-know that then take all precautions and don't get pregnant. So that's where I'm at. I'm like, hey, your body is your body and be responsible with it. But after you're irresponsible then don't claim, well, I can just go and do this with another body, when you're the host and you invited that in. (quoted in Smith, 2017)

In addition, on September 21, 2018, South Carolina Republican congressional representative Ralph Norman opened a debate with the comment: "Did y'all hear this latest late-breaking news from the Kavanaugh hearings? Ruth Bader Ginsburg came out that saying she was groped by Abraham Lincoln." And consider the following Facebook post by Republican candidate Courtland Sykes: "I want to come home to a home-cooked dinner at six every night – one that she fixes and one that I expect one day to have daughters learn to fix after they become traditional homemakers and family wives" (quotes in Shugerman, 2018). He continued by portraying feminists as:

career obsessed banshees who forego home life and children and the happiness of family to become nail-biting manophobic [*sic*] hell-bent feminist she devils who shriek from the tops of a thousand tall buildings they think they could have leaped over in a single bound – had men not "suppressing them." (quoted in Shugerman, 2018)

Consider as well, Laura Ingraham's comments on *Fox News* regarding the newly elected Congresswomen Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. She called them the "four horsewomen of the apocalypse" and went on to say that Pressley is "a leftist on the war path against white men" (quoted in Leah, 2018).

Regretfully, there is no shortage of examples of misogynistic, hateful discourse propagated by politicians and media pundits (both men and women) that demonizes women. However, the discussion and empirical evidence of the patriarchal hegemonic discourse touted from the highest levels of government, reinforcing women as objects, property, and liars-undermining and discrediting their lives, experiences and voice across the country represent the surface of what is occurring. From the examples above, we suggest one can see not only the ripples on top of the water as Engel (quoted in Page, 2018) has stated but also the big and impactful currents that are causing a riptide effect well below.

Conclusion

Nothing changes instantaneously: in a gradually heating bathtub you'd be boiled to death before you knew it.

The Handmaids Tale (Atwood, 1986, p. 56)

"The rhetorical power of the presidency has a ripple effect that lasts longer than one's term in office. The implications for the present are clear" (Heer, 2018). Moreover, as the opening quote for this section suggests, nothing changes instantly, though, given

Trump's leading misogynistic wordfare and lawfare efforts, we see the bathtub gradually heating. Or as stated by Jacob Levy (2018, emphasis in original):

"Ignore the tweets, ignore the language, ignore the words" is advice that affects a kind of sophistication: don't get distracted by the circus, keep your eye on what's going on behind the curtain. This is *faux* pragmatism, ignoring what is being communicated to other countries, to actors within the state, and to tens of millions of fellow citizens. It ignores *how all those actors will respond to the speech*, and how norms, institutions, and the environment for policy and coercion will be changed by those responses.

Ironically, while Trump and those now emboldened to use the same demonizing "wordfare" continue debasing women, he simultaneously, along with his daughter Ivanka, have started the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative with \$50 million (White House News, 2019). We are already seeing the currents below as the politically divisive and hateful discourse is increasingly playing out in society as a whole where private misogyny is becoming public as people become more and more emboldened. Consider Dr. Gary Tigges's (2018) comments in the *Dallas Medical Journal* (2018):

Female physicians do not work as hard and do not see as many patients as male physicians ... This is because they choose to, or they simply don't want to be rushed, or they don't want to work the long hours. Most of the time, their priority is something else ... Family, social, whatever.

Also instructive are the cases of two men accused of sexually abusing women on airplanes, something that was later revealed to be an increasing problem. The FBI notes that sexual assaults on planes have increased at an alarming rate, with 63 investigations being launched into sexual assaults in 2017 alone (Diego, Jimenez, Marsh, & Summers, 2018). While we are not making a direct causative claim, the connection to and impact of Trump's "wordfare" to incidents such as these is creating an environment where the harassment, violence, and harm perpetrated against women is increasingly normalized, trivialized, and justified. Trump's language and actions are more often used to justify gender-based violence as a defense against the perpetrator's actions. Consider, for example, a Florida man accused of groping a woman's breast on a Southwest Airlines flight. He defended his alleged behavior by noting that "the president of the United States says it's OK to grab women by their private parts" (Fox2 Now, 2018). In addition, in a poll by the Morning Consult Survey National Tracking Poll (October 4–8, 2018), it was found that 57% of adults that responded said they equally worried about women facing sexual assault and the men "facing false accusations." This level of moral equivalence occurred after the "wordfare" of Trump and others aimed at protecting men accused of violence and sexual assault or rape. Note that as a group, Republican men expressed more concerned about men and false accusations than about women facing sexual assault (86%).

Overall, we see increases in hate crimes, racism, anti-immigration, and anti-religious choices. Although such ideologies and hatred have long existed, the rhetoric of Trump and other leading political figures is lending to darker times for those not in the White elite heteronormative order (Eligon, 2018; NAACP, 2018). It is important to recognize the very real risk that misogyny will be fatalistically accepted as normal as sustained political efforts are made to move backwards from the hard-won rights and protections afforded the nation's vulnerable populations. Blind optimism that all will be restored once the Trump Administration ends will get us nowhere. The rapidly mounting danger posed by the

lawfare and wordfare against women will continue to have a ripple effect moving back to a draconian era.

Thus, we give a cautionary note to all citizens, critical criminologists, and women in particular, with a quote by Bob Dylan (1965), “You don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows” as we are in the midst of a “wordfare” aimed at rolling back women’s rights, value, and essence. We close with a dystopian warning, we believe is very appropriate for the topic on hand in the novel, *The Slave and the Free* by Suzy Charnas (1974, p. 4):

These men will enslave us if we let them: They tried to convince the others ... The men heard and they rejoiced to find an enemy they could conquer at last ... They pulled all the women together, and harangued them, saying, remember that you caused the wasting. It was a Black female’s refusal to sit in the back of the bus that sparked the rebellion ... female terrorists made bombs side by side with our own rebel sons, whose mothers had brought them up to be half-men; female vermin of all kinds spewed our millions of young to steal our food supplies and our living space! Females themselves brought on the Wasting of the world ... (And so) the men, armed with staves and straps, reminded them and saw to it that these things were not forgotten again.

Soon all that was remembered were the “evil races, youths who repudiated their fathers’ ways ... and most of all the men’s cunning, greedy females” (p. 4).²

Note

1. We use the term “propaganda” to mean the information given through political discourse that is “intended to persuade an audience to accept a particular idea or cause, often by using biased material or by stirring up emotions” (author unknown, n.d.).
2. We use the term “propaganda” to mean the information given through political discourse that is “intended to persuade an audience to accept a particular idea or cause, often by using biased material or by stirring up emotions” (author unknown, n.d.).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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