





Human Rights 2016: Where We Are and How We Got Here


Why are “human rights” at the center of international conversation surrounding the US election, but within domestic discourse, they are rarely mentioned, if at all?




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DURING THE FIRST two presidential nominee debates between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, the term “human rights” was never mentioned. Sure, “rights” was mentioned by Trump in terms of gun ownership and by Hillary regarding the protection of women, voters and young men who live in neighborhoods with stop-and-frisk policing policies. But apart from these few isolated mentions of “rights,” the explicit discussion of the entitlements of all individuals beneath “human rights” was notably absent from the most-watched debates in history thus far.

If this election cycle has been so characterized by popular conversation about rights—including women’s rights, religious rights, Black Americans’ rights, migrant rights— then how did two ninety-minute debates with over 80 million viewers (<http://money.cnn.com/2016/09/27/media/debate-ratings-record-viewership/>) each go by without a single mention of “human rights”?

On April 15, in reference to the 2016 Election, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, addressed a crowd in Cleveland (<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=19827&LangID=E>) stating, "It is my deepest hope that the people of this country will demonstrate their profound understanding of human dignity and human rights." Why are "human rights" at the center of international conversation surrounding the US election, but within domestic discourse, they are rarely mentioned, if at all?

Human rights rhetoric has been implemented in inconsistent and often contradictory ways throughout American political history. In the early years after World War II, the United States was an active proponent of creating an international human rights system. The US helped lead the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>), which was signed in 1948 as one of the backbone documents of the then-recently formed United Nations. However, despite the US's early involvement in the creation and wording of international rights rhetoric, its implementation was scarce throughout the Cold War and Jim Crow eras. Rights rhetoric re-emerged in American political conversation with Jimmy Carter, though with an international, rather than domestic focus, beginning with his 1977 inaugural address (<http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/speeches/inaugadd.phtml>). Carter's public commitment to an outwards-looking, rights-driven foreign policy and utilization of rights rhetoric was short lived though, given his successor, Ronald Reagan's subsequent abandonment of a human rights-centric political approach.

Since the Carter years, the US's commitment to the human rights system has been half-baked at best. The US is yet to ratify several treaties that would hold the US to higher standards at home, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-3&chapter=4&clang=_en) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>). Unsurprisingly, American exceptionalism has by and large been the leading doctrine against the human rights system that the US itself helped create.

Now in 2016, after several tumultuous years both at home and abroad, how can and should human rights rhetoric become relevant in domestic political conversation once more?

In a moment where #BlackLivesMatter criticizes the term "#AllLivesMatter," it is hard to justify why "human rights" is not guilty of the same dilution and defocusing of conversation away from the specific demographics of people suffering from rights abuses. Certainly there is a need to boldly acknowledge the specific communities at stake, but perhaps in a moment where American politics seems so harshly divided, a universal term could also aid in unifying a broken public.

While certain bystanders may feel shame, guilt or indignation towards community-specific rights dialogue, "human rights" minimizes opportunities for disengagement. When all parties are brought together as mutual stakeholders in a "human rights" issue, there is little space for actors to distance themselves from atrocities to claim, "No, that's *their* problem, not ours." Further, recognizing certain issues as human rights concerns rather than political differences may do important work in establishing an urgency to act.

Acknowledging domestic human rights issues by name is by no means a complete solution to all of our nation's problems. There is an important distinction between rhetoric and realities. While one is simply words, the other dictates action. However, perhaps embracing the rhetoric could in fact be the missing step in precipitating meaningful action. Whether discussing protecting refugees, ending mass incarceration, improving immigrant detainee systems, ensuring police accountability, or holding uncharged men in Guantanamo in the name of national security, the 2016 candidates have something to gain from confirming a commitment to human rights: a nonpartisan embrace of national flaws.

Maybe what we need as a nation in order to discuss our faults more openly and pursue more meaningful policy is a little less talk about losing emails and a little more about finding a vocabulary for human rights.

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War on Terror Culture and the Strangling of Human Rights

The Islamophobic outpourings from War on Terror culture represent a clear and pressing threat to human rights.



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ON DECEMBER 7, 2015, Donald Trump read a statement to an eager audience: “Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what the hell is going on.” The “hell” was ad-libbed for emphasis.

Since then, Trump has backpedaled on this position, re-orienting it as a “temporary” (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/is-donald-trump-still-sticking-to-his-proposed-muslim-ban/>) ban, then later as a policy of immigration suspension (<https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-addresses-terrorism-immigration-and-national-security>) and most recently, a call (http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/10/us/politics/transcript-second-debate.html?_r=0) for “extreme vetting from certain areas of the world.” On one hand, we could flag the Muslim Ban stance as just another one of Trump’s dangerous antics.

Alternatively, we could view this policy as a reflection of a culture that stems beyond Trump as an individual to American society as a whole – a phenomenon known as “War on Terror culture.”

(http://www.salon.com/2015/12/27/all_muslim_life_in_america_is_seen_through_the_lens_of_terrorism/)

The term “War on Terror culture” was coined by Moustafa Bayoumi, author of *This Muslim American Life*, who writes about how being a Muslim American today often means to exist in a contradictory space between “exotic and dangerous, victim and villain, simply because of the assumptions people carry about you.” War on Terror culture inflicts harm on various groups in various ways, but what it does most notably – apart from incite hate and fear based off of misrepresentative images – is provide the vocabulary for American society to justify violating human rights in the name of national security.

The War on Terror is hyper-visible. Holding uncharged men at Guantanamo, advocating for torture (<http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2016/02/17/donald-trump-calls-for-use-of-torture-resumption-of-waterboarding/>) and pursuing unwarranted surveillance (<http://moustafabayoumi.com/register-muslims-been-there-done-that-and-it-failed-2/>) on Muslim Americans – all under the guise of national security – are just a few manifestations. But what exactly is War on Terror *culture*? We all have learned about the power of Cold War propaganda. From James Bond to “War of the Worlds,” the entertainment industry (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/10441108/How-pop-culture-helped-win-the-Cold-War.html>), along with American legal and political arenas, held patriotic images of loyal Americans up against stereotypical forms of vaguely-defined, Soviet or “Soviet-like” foreign foes. Today, we see the same culture of paranoia driving foreign policy in everything from Showtime’s “Homeland” (https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/10/02/homeland-is-the-most-bigoted-show-on-television/?utm_term=.ec9124c251f8) to Trumpian Islamophobic rhetoric. Unlike Soviet bloc immigrants in the US during the Cold War, Muslim Americans are cast off not only because of abstract political ideology, but also in terms of their cultural, religious and ethnic ties as well. The Muslim American community bears the obvious weight of War of Terror culture at home. Meanwhile, anti-Muslim fear-mongering inflicts tangible consequences on drone-targeted villages and detainment centers abroad. The Islamophobic outpourings from War on Terror culture represent a clear and pressing threat to the human rights of a diverse group of Muslims – not to mention to non-identifying individuals wrongly grouped into the media’s homogenizing image of Muslims.

The first Amendment of the Constitution entitles individuals to freedom of religion. Articles 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12 and 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>), which the US has ratified, outline everything from one’s right to protection against discrimination, torture, unequal protection under the law, arbitrary arrest, invasions of privacy or interference with peaceful religious observance. In what way do the social and political outputs of the War on Terror culture do anything but violate these clearly-defined rights?

Bayoumi offers a chilling reflection

(http://www.salon.com/2015/12/27/all_muslim_life_in_america_is_seen_through_the_lens_of_terrorism/) on the dangers of War on Terror rhetoric in American politics: “Republican candidates for president speak as if the rest of the world can’t hear them. In fact, I think a lot of our policies, whether it be local law enforcement or at the federal level, also speak as if the rest of the world can’t hear them. But the rest of the world, especially with the spread of social media, is definitely listening.” In a world with everyone listening – from children growing up feeling as though their own country does not want them, to abusive officials at detention centers feeling that their psychologically torturing use of high-volume American music is somehow a “patriotic act” – War on Terror is not just a culture, but a cult of hate that must be recognized as such. If everyone is listening to this election, then I wonder how much it will take to get Americans to hear beneath Trump’s hate speech the cries of human rights suffocating.

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You And Trump Can Do Anything




If you voted for a platform of violence, you bear responsibility for the results.



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ABOUT A MONTH ago today, a tape emerged of President-elect Donald Trump bragging about abusing his fame to sexually assault women. “When you’re a star,” he boasts, “You can do anything.” If Trump’s use of fame to harass women is any indication of his potential to use the presidency to pursue a doctrine of hate, then we must seriously consider the implications of participating in the election of someone who sees power as a free pass to inflict harm on others. Now that Trump has been democratically elected as the next President of the United States, can he still “do anything”?

Republican Senator Mike Crapo denounced (<http://www.eastidahonews.com/2016/10/sen-mike-crapo-withdraws-endorsement-trump-locker-room-talk/>) Trump’s treatment of women as “disrespectful, profane and demeaning.” Marco Rubio called (<http://www.npr.org/2016/08/16/490222799/rubio-backs-trump-but-stands-by-calling-him-a-con-man>) Trump a “lunatic” who is unfit to serve. Richard Viguerie expressed (<http://www.wnd.com/2016/02/viguerie-only-conservatives-can-stop-narcissist-trump/>)

“concern about his mental stability and his moral background, or lack thereof.” Nevertheless, these three, as well as many other Republican figures, still voted (<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/where-republicans-stand-on-donald-trump-a-cheat-sheet/481449/>) for Trump on Tuesday.

So many of Trump’s opponents and allies alike have condemned the real-estate mogul’s actions and comments towards women, immigrants and disabled people– not to mention religious and ethnic minorities. And yet, despite public scandal after scandal that left Republican party members like Mike Lee saying (<http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/279629-mike-lee-trump-scares-me-to-death>) that Trump “scares me to death,” the man with the small hands remained the party nominee. In the face of this, I must emphasize the horror of using the democratic process to legitimize a platform of rights violations.

Trump’s “policies” aren’t just bad– they’re often explicitly unconstitutional (<https://action.aclu.org/sites/default/files/pages/trumpmemos.pdf>) and deliberately rights-violating. The last op-ed (<http://thepolitic.org/war-on-terror-culture-and-the-strangling-of-human-rights/>) in this series explored how Trump’s advocacy for torture, surveillance of Muslims and creation of a Muslim “database” violate Muslim communities’ rights, both at home and abroad. The prospective violations beneath Trump do not stop there though. Forcing mass deportations, ending birthright citizenship, “opening up” libel laws (<http://www.npr.org/2016/03/24/471762310/donald-trump-wants-to-open-up-libel-laws-so-he-can-sue-news-outlets>), allowing for mass surveillance and banning abortion are just a few examples of the policies that encourage mass encroachments on civil liberties.

There was a myth circulating that it was okay to be disgusted by Trump and still vote for him. Contemporary political folklore claims that “supporting one’s political party” makes it excusable to elect a man who’s comfortable praising the words of fascists like Benito Mussolini (<http://www.nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2016/02/28/donald-trump-retweets-post-likening-him-to-mussolini/>). I would like to dismantle these misconceptions and make one thing clear: A vote for a platform built on hate is a vote to participate in systemic violence. If you knowingly empower a bigot through our nation’s democratic process, then there is no way to wipe your hands clean of the blood that the Trump platform promises.

You can say that Trump’s comments about women and minorities are “not okay,” but if you then in turn chose to validate these comments with your vote, then how are you doing anything but claiming the exact opposite– that Trump’s hate speech are excusable enough to allow him to become the next president?

In his book “States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering,” Stanley Cohen explores how organized atrocities– genocide, torture, and political massacres– are denied and thus violently perpetuated by perpetrators as well as bystanders, i.e. those who stand by and do nothing. The difference between Cohen’s bystander and America’s Trump voter though is that while one is accountable for violence simply by passively witnessing horror and staying silent, the other is guilty of actively deciding to support the perpetrator. When Black lives, Brown lives, Muslim lives, LGBTQ lives, undocumented lives and women’s lives are all under direct threat of oppression, discrimination and violence beneath a Trump presidency, the Trump voter moved beyond the position of a passive bystander to an active accomplice.

Does “democratic legitimacy,” having been chosen by the people, somehow make his actions okay? No. Will today’s subtle distinction of recognizing, but still democratically empowering evil do anything to stop the cries of your neighbors, classmates and coworkers within Trump’s dystopian tomorrow? Not at all. As prospective rights violations loom on the horizon of the Trump presidency, remember that a vote for him, for all of him — the tyrannical, the racist and the ugly — allowed such crimes to happen.

Electing Trump told him that he can do anything he wants. And trust me, for better or for worse, he will.

Breaking Points

“This is a breaking point,” my friend stated as we walked away from an anti-Trump rally on the New Haven Green. I nodded. As I went home though, I couldn’t but obsess over this passing phrase. I took the long route and along the way wondered what makes a moment a “breaking point.” Is it the heat of the moment in and of itself, or is that title contingent on what comes after? Does a “breaking point” suggest that social movements will grow, sustain and ultimately produce change? Or, will our ever so wounded country simply stay broken?

America has seen many breaking points. The year 1969 shook America to its core with its seemingly endless anti-Vietnam war protests. The 1992 Rodney King riots were similarly shocking in the moment, but when the physical flames were extinguished, Los Angeles’ fervor went flat as well. The #BlackLivesMatter movement’s lifespan is already impressive, but many worry about how long non-Black allies will stay invested. The history of social movements in the United States is a history of breaking points, with some predicting revolutionary change while others leading to fatigue. Looking at 2016, it is hard to discern whether or not this year will fall in the same history book chapter as other tumultuous times before it. Today’s anti-Trump/Islamophobia/xenophobia protests may be a turning point, but it is important to keep in mind one thing as we move forward: the breaking point itself is not the most critical moment for the country, but rather what comes after.

Beyond being merely an abstract breaking point, 2016 may also be dubbed the year of breaking silences, for better or worse. As demonstrated by Trump’s triumph, his rhetoric of hate and racism allowed for many other “closeted” bigots to feel safe enough to express similar sentiments out loud. The wave of [hate crimes](#) and racially-targeted hate speech since the election has been evidence of such phenomena. Former KKK Leader David Duke brought his

terrorist organization back into public light after he [endorsed](#) the President-elect, which in part inspired the emerging [alt-right](#) movement. When it comes to opening up the stage for hate speech, Donald Trump proved wildly acceptable. That said, silence was not always broken for the worse this year.

If anyone had a wakeup call in 2016, it was the urban, white liberal population. Years of ignoring the concerns of poor, white America while standing by the concerns of non-white populations in name, but not in practice, all came to fruition when the DNC failed to prevent a Trump election. The uselessness of being a “passive supporter” or “sympathetic” without action was revealed. For these people who have never seen their passive disregard of more vulnerable communities as something that could ever end up affecting themselves down the line, the 2016 Election has been a call to action to rectify those years of lethargy. In this way, silence was broken for the better.

Now that silences have been broken on both sides, there is a need for a unified voice to articulate the claims of concerned Americans as a counter-narrative to the far-right hate speech. I believe that human rights can be this vocabulary. Before the election, I was concerned the human rights might not be the correct framework to articulate the diverse claims of diverse movements. However, November 8th proved that the divides in our country extend beyond party lines to fracture communities with similar interests. [Fifty-three percent](#) of white women chose their race over their gender by voting for Trump. Letting mainstream women’s rights disengage from the vocabulary of Black/brown liberation movements failed to bring these women together. The need for a macro-intersectional vocabulary to unite different demographics is clear. It is absolutely necessary to show people how “my problem” and “your problem” are in intimate conversation with one another. Human rights, though not perfect, can be the umbrella terms for this new collaboration.

This is not to say that a human rights framework should replace more specific causes. Rather, a human rights-centered dialogue could serve as the complementary terms for inter-group collaboration. LGBTQ rights, environment justice and undocumented movements can all maintain their community-specific work, but can maintain a common thread with one another through a shared vocabulary of human rights. This solution is by no means perfect, but still a first step to build coalitions.

Though for a moment, human rights felt hopeless, I feel as though they are more critical now than ever. A vocabulary is needed. Action is necessary. As Ms. Audre Lorde says, “My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you.” Human rights can work to break these silences for the betterment of us all.

An Antidote to the Glitch:
Human Rights as a Tool for Radical Re-Imagination

Social Science Fiction is the genre of the chillingly familiar. Imagine a world of gated communities and terrorism paranoia where elites build fortresses to protect what they have while the impoverished fight for scarce resources on the fringes whilst battling rising oceans and temperatures. Does this look recognizable to you? Is this science fiction, social science or something inbetween?

Writer Peter Frase tackles these themes in *Four Futures* and a piece called “Social Science Fiction.” In this essay, Frase discusses “the philosophy of posterity,” with “posterity” here implying the “reverse of history,” (Frase, 2010). He analyzes Walter Benjamin’s famous “angel of history” within the context of the philosophy of posterity claiming: “We cannot know what, concretely, will happen in the future. But we know about the social forces-- the storm --which are pushing us inexorably into that future. Herein lies the distinction between the study of history and the study of posterity: a theory of posterity is an attempt to turn the angel of history around, and to tell us what it sees,” (Frase, 2010). I find this philosophy intriguing when trying to make sense of our world today in 2016-- a year that many have already labelled as “historic,” but not for good reasons. Amidst a Donald Trump election and global calamity, how can the “study of posterity” help us prepare for what is to come? More specifically, how does human rights fit into this vision of what lies ahead?

On November 8th, many Americans were “shocked” by the election results. Why were we shocked though when all the signs-- the social forces, the storm-- had been looming on the horizon for so long? “How did we not see it coming?” Yale Professor Joanna Radin writes. “Was Trump’s ‘triumph,’ as it was dubbed by the *New York Times*, a glitch? Or were America’s liberals

simply more comfortable imagining that misogyny, racism, and xenophobia hadn't been so deeply programmed into American political life?" In *The New Inquiry's* recent Science/Fiction volume, Radin pushes these questions in a piece called "Where Nothing Can Possibly Go 'Worng.'"

Radin explores the line between science and fiction, playing with the concept of the "glitch." The etymology of the term is believed to come from the Yiddish word *glitshn*—to slip and fall. In 1965, the *New York Times* defined it as "space jargon for a malfunction." A malfunction seems accidental, but what Radin pushes us to consider is the idea that a glitch may not be just an occasional mishap, but rather a symptom "of a larger and more insidious dysfunction." The glitch, she writes, "is not the diagnosis. Rather, it's the canary in the coalmine, a way of beginning to understand the flawed assumptions that are programmed into the machine." If Trump is a "glitch" in the American political machine, then he should not be seen as an unexpected error, but rather as a moment when the machine revealed itself for what it truly is: monstrous. Recognizing that a "glitch" is not an error, but rather an unveiling of a darker, previously-concealed reality is a terrifying moment. This change in perspective implies a loss of control and, in many senses, a loss of identity. Since November 8, 2016, many Americans have been experiencing this pain brought on from recognizing that "Trump has won!" was not a typo.

Throughout this capstone project, I have tried to draw on various sources to make sense of 2016 and its impact on our political process. One genre that I have yet to draw on though is science fiction.

As an avid science-fiction fan myself, I have long been fascinated by the production and philosophy of this genre. Dystopia and utopia are often at the heart of many of these stories that look towards alternate realities to tell us about our lived conditions today. In many ways, I feel as though "human rights" does similar work. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon once said: "I

believe in a world of justice and human rights for all. A world where girls can grow up free of fear of abuse. A world where women are treated with the respect and dignity that is their right. A world where poverty is not acceptable. My dear young friends, you can make this your world.” This world that the Secretary General articulated is a utopia reflecting the future prospects of human rights work yet fulfilled. Take the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as another example. Written up soon after the worst conflict none to man at that time, the post-WWII project in many senses reads as a sci-fi document in and of itself. (Though let me be clear, this is, by no means, a bad thing). The preamble to the UDHR reads: “This Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.” The forward-thinking document was envisioned as a document reflecting a reality that does not yet exist. It is a utopian manifesto. In the UDHR’s imagined reality, “everyone is entitled” to x and “no one shall” have to deal with y. The document’s use of both positive and negative rights language to stake claims functions similarly to that of the writing of sci-fi, which creates alternate realities to warn us about today. Frequently, this warning carries the ominous message of how certain insidious trends in our current moment, if given the right conditions, could easily run awry down the line.

In 2016, imagining utopias and dystopias-- whether through a human rights or sci-fi lens-- seems like a natural response. *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* is a 1974 utopian science fiction novel by Ursula K. Le Guin that speaks eerily similar to today’s day and age. When the protagonist Shevek travels to a new planet, he struggles to understand the local society: “Was it because, no matter how much money they had, they always had to worry about

making more, lest they died poor?” What kind of concerns will contemporary utopia writer's voice in their reflection on the anxieties of today? What kind of world will people imagine? For many reasons, I believe that the utopias imagined in 2016 will be inextricably tied to human rights.

2016 has been a disappointing year in terms of advancing towards Ban Ki Moon's human rights utopia. From the lack of empathy surrounding the Syrian refugee crisis, to the rise of the alt-right and, of course, the triumph of the Brexit movement and Donald Trump, 2016 has been a tough year for humanity. When thinking about how I wanted to wrap up my project, I felt like it was important to explain how human rights is so integral to the project of radically re-imagining our world moving forward. In a moment so bleak, looking forward may seem “unproductive,” but I disagree with that notion. Last year, a gifted professor of mine, Birgit Brander-Rasmussen, assigned our class a “vision project.” The goal was to break from the confines of academic writing and power-relations study to imagine a world where everything that ethnic studies as a discipline/social movement fights for came true. Writing that piece last year felt radical and subversive, which probably should not have been the case. Has having an imagination of the future really become taboo?

Last week, a friend directed me to the online essay series *Speculating Futures*, where authors examine past speculative narratives and create new ones, radically critiquing and reimagining futures. The introduction to the series explains, “Feeling like there's a future is vital for moving through the present.” This could not be more true given that for many people, November 8th and every day since has felt apocalyptic.

Though I think it is incredibly urgent to think about the now and focus on today's issues, that does not mean that there is not also room for conversation about dreams, visions and utopias. The #BlackLivesMatter movement is an important example of such resistance through

re-imagination. Their “About Us” page reads: “#BlackLivesMatter is working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically and intentionally targeted for demise... The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation.” There is something so powerful about a call for “liberation.” The “liberated” world where Black lives unequivocally matter stands in stark contrast to the white supremacist world that won the 2016 U.S. election. Perhaps in addition to just calling out white supremacy and its failures by name, we also need to post up an alternate “liberated” reality as a counter-narrative to show what could be.

Human rights stands as a beautiful counter-narrative to today’s dystopia. It is a gleaming alternative vision to “Make America Great Again.” In 1963, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used civil rights to open America’s imagination of a racially harmonious utopia in the “I Have a Dream Speech.” In 2016, human rights could be the new vocabulary to articulate similarly groundbreaking claims to open hearts and imaginations towards the idea of a world without xenophobia, Islamophobia, racial hatred, white supremacy and economic exploitation. Beyond legal and political uses, human rights can and should be posited as the progressive utopian standard for our world to strive towards.

The radical nature of human rights and science fiction lies in their ability to conjure new realities, which hold more power than one may at first assume. Fiction and ideology are both capable of reflecting and shaping current realities. Radin writes, “Whether it’s entertainment or politics—and there may no longer be any difference—we need to be awake to how sexism, racism, and violence continues to be part of the design. It’s time to start taking our fiction seriously. It may be the best resource we have to create a world that won’t kill us, and avoid the ones that will. After all, *The Apprentice* was great reality TV until it became reality.” Trump’s election truly felt like reality tv wrong awry or a failed episode of Ashton Kutcher’s “Punk’d.” Our fiction, our media, our “reality tv,” is no longer limited to the world of make-believe. In 2016 we watched

what felt like a tv show become reality during Trump's election. Maybe what is now needed is to boldly conjure up another "fiction"-- but one that emphasizes human rights-- and work to slowly erase the line keeping it a dream until that world too become a new reality.

In feminist dystopian novel *A Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, the protagonist reflects on the world before everything went wrong and asks herself, "We yearned for the future. How did we learn it, that talent for insatiability?" Amidst an exhausting year, I find myself able to move forward by constantly yearning for the future. As human rights scholars and activists, we must all maintain our "talent for insatiability." Trump's election is not business as usual. We must not become stagnant and be greedy for a new future. Human rights vocabulary possesses the kind of speculative reality with world saving, or at least world remaking, potential. Throughout this semester we have heavily critiqued human rights, and I still stand by all of my reservations, but the stakes have changed since November 8th.

In surprising ways, I've found renewed hope in human rights. Last month, our political machine revealed to us a "glitch." It is now up to us to pull back the curtains to dig deeper and see how to attack the flaws in the coding of our political system. 2016 may feel like the premise of an apocalyptic novel, but through on-the-ground organizing, resistance and radical re-imagination, perhaps human rights can be the vocabulary to articulate the new utopia that we all need.

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