

It's time to talk about fascism

Published: January 13, 2026, 4:52 am

I have published this video this morning. In it I argue that no one wants to talk about fascism, but unless we do, and realise what is required to beat it, then we are all in the deepest of trouble.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9MLf7GrjHA>

The audio version of this video is here:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=6ht6e-16548e0-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=3267a3&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

The transcript is:

It's time to talk about fascism.

I hate to have to bring it up. It's not a subject that one wishes to raise in polite conversation. But in reality, it's with us. Alongside us. And we have to deal with it.

It is a major factor in three current elections.

I have no doubt at all that Trump is a fascist in the USA.

He fits the stereotype. Let me explain what the stereotype is. The stereotype of fascism is the strong man who comes in and says, "I am able to deal with the threat to you, the ordinary person, from "the other"" (who they define as the enemy) "and I will deliver you into salvation." But in practice, what they will do is organise the economy for the

benefit of the very rich, who are the people that they really serve? That is what fascism is really all about.

And Trump typifies the role.

There are others who try to do that in the world. For example, there are questions about Modi in India, and Oban in Hungary. But we're now also seeing, of course, the rise of fascism in France.

There is no doubt that Marie Le Pen's party is fascist in orientation, and the threat that they make, based in particular on pure Islamophobia, is fascist in style.

Have we got fascism in the UK? It's a question that is uncertain as to the answer at present.

Have we got neo-fascism? Yes, quite clearly we have.

So let me explain what I think fascism is, and for this purpose I'm going to use the definition created by Jason Stanley in his 2020 book on the subject, because I think it's more accessible than some of the other lists created by people like Umberto Eco, which are often cited, but tend to be a little dated now.

In his list, Jason Stanley said that there are ten characteristics of fascism.

The first is a mythical past. The claim is that there was an ideal to which we will aspire. It's not a chance that all right-wingers love a military parade. Some are particularly dedicated to D-Day in the UK.

Then there's propaganda. The whole point about fascism is propaganda. It's there to attack your enemy. The enemy may not be real. For example, migrants are not actually a threat to anyone in the UK. But there's always an "other" created by the fascist who is the person who has to be undermined by the propaganda machine.

This creates the other who must be attacked. You are part of us, and then there's "them" who are undermining you.

The whole of this is, of course, anti-intellectual. Experts are questioned.

"We're going to drain the swamp."

"We're going to clear the politics out of Westminster."

"We're going to challenge the role of universities in education because they "poison the minds of our young people."

This is anti-intellectualism.

And then a lack of reality: an unreality. It's all about conspiracy theories, that there are these "others" who are threatening us, and they create these theories to support that idea.

The "people in boats" claim is one of those conspiracy theories, and the idea that this is all down to "smuggling gangs" is another one. Of course, there are smuggling gangs, but there needn't be. We could provide legal routes for people who wish to seek asylum in the UK with ease and solve the problem of smuggling gangs overnight. But, it's much better for those who are enabling fascism, or something close to it, to claim that there are smuggling gangs, because then there's an "other", which there won't be if people are coming over on a boat called a cross channel ferry.

What else is there? There's hierarchy. The whole purpose of fascism is to promote the idea that we live in a structured society where there's an organization of power which we should respect. Very, very male-orientated, of course. Very traditional. Very conservative. Very doff your cap, and everything else. It's all about that, but it's also about the morality of hard-working, law-abiding people, and that there are these who don't comply with that. And they become the threat. You then become the victim.

And of course, that is the corollary of this us and them idea. Because the whole story is that people are being "victimized" by those who are the "other".

And, to follow on from that, there's always law and order. The idea that there's a breakdown. The claim is that there's only Sharia law in Birmingham, according to some people. There isn't only Sharia law in Birmingham. There actually isn't Sharia law in operation as a legal system anywhere in the UK. It's all utter nonsense, but it's claimed, nonetheless.

And there's a high degree of sexual anxiety implicit in the fascist story. If you're straight, you're okay. If you're gay or lesbian or bisexual or trans or queer or whatever else, you're a threat. You're not normal. And whether they say it or not, that's one of their clear messages. It's all about compliance. And they are threatened by people who are not compliant. And so they create this tension.

Which is, of course, also deeply misogynistic. They claim they're protecting women from trans people. No, they're not. They're just using the opportunity of claiming they're protecting women to actually constrain the rights of women in the process of doing so. That's what that's all about.

And then there's an appeal to the heartland. What does that mean? Well, the appeal of the fascist is very much to the rural community. Look at where Reform is popular in the UK. Deeply rural Lincolnshire. Deeply rural East Anglia. The heartlands of the East Coast port, Great Yarmouth, and so on. Places which are alienated from most of the country by being different by being rural and different by being peripheral, i.e. on the edge of the country, and different by being poor. But they appeal to that as though "you are the

common folk and we will deal with your needs". Which is a compelling story for those who live in these places, because the main parties aren't.

And finally, there is this idea that you should be able to look after yourself, because that's the image that the strongman wishes to project. You will wish to be like the strongman. Able to provide, able to support, able to deliver. Very male, of course. The whole of this is orientated towards men, and very often towards young men. But the aim is to dismantle the welfare state. It is to say, stand on your own two feet, or bad luck. In which case, this is also of course, a whole political philosophy that is opposed to those who are ill, who have disabilities of any sort, and who are unfortunate because of the circumstances that life has played out for them. That's what fascism is.

And we can hear those ideas resonate in far too much of the political campaigning going on in the UK at present.

I worry about fascism. I think it is a real risk.

I think Trump might deliver it in the USA.

I think Le Pen might deliver it in France.

I think it is where at least two of the UK's political parties are heading, and those two political parties are Reform and the Tories. They may not be there yet, but I think they're heading in that direction, and the success of parties in France and the USA will encourage them to go there, but this is a threat to the well-being of everybody, and it's a threat that we can't tolerate.

Over the next five years, we have to put in place robust systems to defeat fascism. If we don't, we are in the deepest of trouble in this country. We will by then have seen the damage that fascism will have caused in France and the USA. Maybe we will learn our lessons from that, but if not, heaven help us because we're going to have the most almighty fight on our hand to make sure that fascism does not take hold in the UK.

This is Jason Stanley's list of fascist characteristics:

- 1. The mythical past—used to invoke a nostalgia for a fictional time when the nation was great as it was not yet sullied by the "Other."*
- 2. Propaganda—to attack enemies, to justify violence, to justify laws against "Them" and to support the authoritarian leader.*
- 3. Anti-intellectualism—to attack the media, universities, and scientists when they contradict the strong man's authority.*
- 4. Unreality—supporting conspiracy theories that tarnish the "Other" along with an outright denial of facts when convenient.*
- 5. Hierarchy—espousing a "natural order" where the "Us" are hardworking, moral, law-abiding and productive members of society, while the "Other" is not.*
- 6.*

Victimhood—casting “Us” as victims of “Them”, who are taking resources from “Us” and demanding special rights. 7. Law and order—using laws to justify violence, oppression, and expulsion of the “Other”. 8. Sexual anxiety—as the “Other” embraces non-traditional approaches to sexuality, 9. Appeals to the heartland—as rural communities are often more homogeneous and conservative (more “Us”) while urban cities are often more diverse, cosmopolitan (more “Them”). 10. Dismantling of public welfare and unity—by casting aside safety net programs as unfair giveaways to “Them”, who are not working, as opposed to “Us”, who are.

I used Wikipedia as a source, for convenience.