

Michael Hanchard

Marshall Poe

Welcome to the New Books Network.

Hello everybody. This is Marshall Poe. I'm the editor of the New Books Network, and this is an episode in the Princeton University Press Ideas Podcast, and we're very lucky today to have Michael Hanchard on the show, and we'll be talking about his book *The Spectre of Race: How Discrimination Haunts Western Democracy*.

It is out from Princeton University Press in 2018. Michael, welcome to the show.

Michael Hanchard

Oh, thank you very much for having me on, Marshall.

Marshall Poe

Absolutely. My pleasure. Could you begin the interview by telling us a little bit about yourself?

Michael Hanchard

Sure. I'm currently the Gustave C. Kuemmerle Professor and chair of the Department of Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. I run a project called the Marginalized Populations Project which looks at marginalized populations from a comparative perspective. I grew up in New York City and was educated at Tufts, the New School and Princeton for my PhD.

Marshall Poe

Thank you very much for that. So let me ask you this. Why did you write *The Spectre of Race*?

Michael Hanchard

Well, it's a book that had been rattling around in my thoughts for some time now partly since graduate school--trying to make sense of what I learned up until that point and why I had not encountered too many books or even articles at least in political science that addressed questions of race and racism in the discipline and how the discipline itself was constituted.

Anthropology's had those kind of discussions. Sociology's had those sorts of discussions. Philosophy now has a rich literature and discussion on this topic. Less so up to now in political science, although there are now younger scholars who are putting out very interesting books about the race concept and its effect on the discipline and effect on methodologies.

So I felt that it was a book I needed to write in part as a kind of gift to my discipline and so that's what in some sense prompted me to write the book.

Marshall Poe

Well, it covers a huge amount of territory. You begin with the Greeks and you come all the way up to today. I mean literally almost today. So, it was a huge undertaking and I certainly admire that. In the first page of the book, you introduce the concept of autochthony and you say that it's important to your central claim in the book or one of your central claims in the book. And that is that the concept of race took the place held by autochthony in Athens. Could you explain what autochthony is?

Michael Hanchard

Sure. Sure. It comes out of the Greek and is loosely translated as the notion of origins of a people and literally those people who are tied to a territory and soil and have that relationship to that to

each other through territory and soil. And so autochthony is used really as a kind of political myth after the Persian Wars after 451 BC to make Athenian citizenship more exclusionary because they were afraid given both the number of wars they had been in but also the range of foreigners that were in and traveling through Athens of the time but also the role of women could potentially upend the dominance of the Athenian males.

And so, after 451 a law was created to basically exclude those from citizenship who could not prove that they were descendants of people who literally sprang from the soil, right? And so, but also, it was also patrilineal, not matrilineal. So the idea was that those sprang from the soil and who are eligible to participate in politics as citizens also had to be male. So this excluded women, it excluded foreigners, and of course it excluded the enslaved, right? So the short version of it, which I detail at length in the book is that we think about by the end of the book I talk about and describe the Trump campaign and then Charlottesville, Virginia and the ways in which many of its proponents and advocates argued that their goal was to create an ethno-state in the United States. That is to say, a state, a nation state that was so-called racially and, in scare quotes, "homogeneous" and that its population was consonant with the rulers, with the ruling class or the governing class of people so that there was this symmetry between the state and the nation and the people and territory.

So what that would entail essentially is utilizing instruments, political instruments and coercion to ensure that certain populations don't have access to the right to vote and to participate in the, in the power. And when we think about the campaign that we just went through which produced the 46th president of the United States and all the problems with voter suppression, the tampering of voting machines, the scarcity of voting machines in certain parts of the country many commentators have made of a note of this that many of these dysfunctionalities occurred in predominately black, poor and Latino neighborhoods. In many ways we find a contemporary iteration of the autochthony desired by basically trying to manipulate the outcomes of the vote and suffrage for the purposes of a Trump not only being elected/re-elected, but also in some sense keeping a certain class of people in socioeconomic terms, the elite terms, at the top.

And in effect, that's one of the kind of broad continuities between the Athenian past and the contemporary present.

Marshall Poe

Do we know how the Athenians who invented the concept or criterion of autochthony defended it?

Michael Hanchard

Well part of it was yeah, so so one of the one of the rationalizations was that that there was a fear that with the presence of foreigners and the indebtedness of male citizens in certain transactions to these foreigners some of them exchanged citizenship to relinquish their debt, right? And so this bartering of citizenship for debt, for debt payment became one of the fears that eventually foreigners could actually overwhelm or outnumber the number of citizens. So it was a way of making a citizenship non-transferable, right? And in gender terms it was you know, it's unfortunately one of the ways so many societies and civilizations forge or try to impose patriarchal structures on given politics in a given polity. And so Athens was no different.

Marshall Poe

That's fascinating. Yeah, that's really quite fascinating. So, could you explain how autochthony in Greece is different from modern racial thinking in comparative politics?

Michael Hanchard

Well, this is a great question not just for comparative politics, but for thinking about autochthony and the [inaudible]. There is a pretty intense debate, actually, going on now in several areas of classics and classicists, some of whom claim that that there is enough evidence to demonstrate that there was sort of race concept, an ethno-national concept operative in classical Athens and that it was a way to nationalize citizenship. Others have argued that, in fact, there's no there's no real evidence for the existence of a race concept in classical Athens that resembles in content the contemporary kind of logics which try to impose a racialized view of the world.

But again, these are, these are debates that are going on now and a lot of has to do with the direction of the study of the classics and I think an attempt overall to give an impression--to kind of remove the study and examination of Athens as some ideal form and understand it as one political option among many political options. But even that political option was not designed from the outset to produce equality or parity amongst all people who lived in a society. Now, this required the distinction between citizens of a society and society members, right? That is to say, there could be people who are not citizens but actually live in a society and they can make their own impact upon political and social and economic processes, but they would have to basically have to get laws changed in order to in effect restore them or place them at the same level of citizens.

Marshall Poe

This is a related question and you may not be able to answer it because actual classicists may not be able to answer it. Did the Athenians think of kinds of people in racial terms? That is, according to phenotypic characteristics?

Michael Hanchard

Yeah--question I can't fully answer. I mean, there's some consideration that [inaudible] and others have looked at this and there were, from my reading, there were conditions of servitude and gestures and behaviors associated with servitude which meant in a sense provided evidence approved that a being or group of people were subordinate to another group of people.

But, but whether we would call that race in a contemporary sense is a separate question. But I think it's important to recognize that what the autochthony kind of doctrine has that's similar to contemporary manifestations of certain kinds of bigotry is the effect, in essence, to naturalize the idea of citizenship, right, to say somehow that based on certain characteristics of people and not their behaviors is what determines their ability or capacity for entry into a polity.

Marshall Poe

Yeah. It's almost an attempt to naturalize it so that yeah, to kind of give it the gloss of somehow biology or science.

Michael Hanchard

Yes, yes--and that would of course by, you know, certainly by the late 19th century we see, or even earlier. But where it really takes off with the proliferation of different nationalisms at the cusp of the 19th and 20th Century, nationalism brought with it in certain forms the idea somehow that, again, there was some unity across nation-state and people that bears traces of both race concepts, but also concepts of autochthony and that in the end by the late part of the 19th century Edward Augustus Freeman who wrote the first book that I can find devoted to the study of comparative politics, and he was part of a cohort of scholars who wanted to study comparative politics in order to prove in a sense, in essence, that what they call Euro-Aryans were state-making people par excellence, that they were the best state makers on the planet.

And so we get that version of the correlation between race and state in these writings, but we also see it in other arenas as well--in the work of Hegel and others that the barometer of a civilization is

dependent upon their capacity to create a state and moreover that that capacity creates a functional one.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, this is a nice segue and you've answered my next question actually and that is about the late 19th century comparativists. Can you say a little bit more about Freeman? I mean, I think of myself as pretty well read but I had never heard of him.

Michael Hanchard

Right. Well, I'd say probably the sort of tongue-in-cheek way I've characterized Freeman in different lectures is that he was a 19th century historian who really got taken up with the comparative turn and that comparative turn actually began earlier in the study of literature. One Chauncey Shackford in 1871, basically announced the existence of a comparative literature that would serve the role of basically destroying the boundaries between discrete literatures from different parts of the world and that literary works could be examined on their own in relation to the themes and the subject matter and the character development and that methodologically meant that it would help universalize the study of human beings and in the making of comparisons. Freeman is what I would characterize as an equal opportunity bigot. If you read any of his works, they're just suffused with racist and chauvinist sentiment.

But again, at the top of the heap for him were the Teutonic or Euro-Aryan peoples. He would have an impact clearly on Woodrow Wilson, the 20th president of the United States and he was invited to Johns Hopkins by the founder of the seminar on historical and political science, by Herbert Baxter Adams who was in many ways one of the, and I use this term facetiously, one of the guiding lights, if you will, of the Teutonic school who believed that Teutonic state makers were the best state makers and each of them--Woodrow Wilson, Freeman and Adams, in some sense, conducted research to prove scientifically, but in the most anti-scientific way--that they already had an answer to the question, who were who are the best people at politics on the planet? And for them it was the Euro-Aryans or the Teutons.

Marshall Poe

But Baxter himself is a fascinating figure. He had studied in Germany where he got his chops, so to say.

Michael Hanchard

Yes. Yes. Yes.

Marshall Poe

Yes and I think you said something very important here and it is that this group of people, if I read you correctly and if what I know is correct, were avowed, open racists. It made no attempt to hide this because it was not at the time shameful.

Michael Hanchard

Yes. Yes. Yes, and it's interesting because again in the case of Wilson, I mean if you look at several of his writings particularly the book *The State* and an earlier version of it called *The Modern State* which is in Princeton Library he made it very, very clear that his affinities for racial hierarchy and like a correlation between racial hierarchy and political sophistication and one of his lists of criteria necessary to create a modern nation-state was that the population had to be homogeneous. That was the first criterion of measure for determining how successful a nation state could be and so when he commented, for example, in *The Modern State* about the capacity of negroes for self-rule and this was basically looking back by then on Reconstruction and though he had many, many racist statements, he also had a made of qualifying statement to say I do not, I'm paraphrasing here right,

but I don't like these people not because their skin is dark but their brains are dark, right? They have not had enough study to be sophisticated enough state makers. Right?

And so that was in some sense the-- and these, this seminar that Baxter Adams held had many students who would go on to teach in various colleges and universities with these ideas in tow and with some of their classes in tow. So, in some ways it became a sort of a syllabus or syllabi for studies and racial and ethnic national domination.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, Adams was very important to the founding of the modern American University system because he brought it over from Germany and then he started the first seminars at Johns Hopkins and then Harvard and Yale that didn't really do much but train pastors and preachers took it over from Adams. Yeah, but I should also say and you comment on this in the book that these relatively esoteric academic studies had an impact on policy and I'm thinking about immigration policy in the United States. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Michael Hanchard

Yeah. So we look at several different laws going back to 1789 up to now even the discussion of the so-called illegal immigration that the idea that certain populations should be encouraged to come into the country, while others not and that encouragement and discouragement among several other factors. One of them was the questions of origin, right, and not the question of behavior or whether the person whose background actually made them cognizant of what these thinkers would think of as modern politics, but basically solely on your so-called origins.

Marshall Poe

Yes, and you see this notion of, like, for example, the Yellow Peril, which was openly talked about. I mean nobody hid it. It was common sense that you wouldn't want to let these people into your country. Yeah, and I really think that's one of the things that modern people. I mean people today forget is that is it racism at that time didn't have a stigma, at least among certain populations, that it does today.

Yeah, it's fascinating actually. But then you go on to kind of second era in the history of comparative politics and that is, mid 20th century. And at this point they're working in modern disciplines that we can recognize like political science and it's at this point also that the idea of race is kind of at least explicitly removed.

Can you talk a little bit about that?

Michael Hanchard

Right. Well, it's an interesting moment in a couple of ways because, I mean, one way, one marker epochal marker, would be the 1955 meetings at the Social Science Research Council, the politics of developing areas, which basically would become a kind of incubator, if you will, for scholars who were interested in looking at the comparative study of political institutions across the world and across civilizations. So, in some ways going back to Shackford's initial idea and oddly enough, in many ways, the question of race per se in the next survey of politics was largely absent and in its place were the use of the culture concept, in some sense to supplant the race concept and the use of notions of tribe or ethno-nationality, but in many ways using the same kind of language about hierarchies and cultural hierarchies instead of racial hierarchy that had their origins in some of these racial mythos, right, this idea that you can hierarchically order people based upon their capacities for state building. One of the ironies, I found that got discussed briefly in the book is the fact that you know, 1955 is 10 years removed from World War II and the Nazi onslaught basically that basically brought in to all of Europe to its feet with its designs to basically map Eastern Europe and what we

now know as the Baltic states were formerly Russia the Soviet Union so that would map on to and be coincident with Hitler's and other racial thinkers he associated himself with with their ideas of racial hierarchy. So, basically we're going to create a kind of cartography of states in this part of the world that match their racial--match their racial reasoning, right? You had at the same time scholars who were-- Karl Deutsch, I think we can think of. There were several other students of either comparative politics, sociology or anthropology who did at least make mention of this moment and in West history and self-imagining and that the West needed to recognize the, I guess, the dastardly deeds and dastardly organizations and institutions that inflicted so much collective misery and genocide upon different people in order that it not happen again, but in the politics of development area is a kind of curious silence, if you will, on the discussion of the role of racism in contemporary politics.

Marshall Poe

I mean after World War II, race as a scientific construct, at least in political science and certainly in history, was taboo. It really couldn't have been mentioned, but it has this kind of peculiar afterlife where proxies emerge.

Michael Hanchard

Exactly. Exactly. That-- that's a good way--that the sort of more elegant way of framing what I had said in some sense--the kind of the proxies that stood instead of the kind of blatant use of racial or ethno-national concepts.

Marshall Poe

Yes. This is one of the many times that you find what I sometimes called racism without racists.

Michael Hanchard

Yes. Yes. And that's the work of people like David Theo Goldberg and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva in the contemporary moment who applied that term to think about--and it's an interesting concept also because it brings home, it returns us to how ultimately this this concept is a cognitive and epistemological one. It's not a natural one, right?

And so that there can be existence of races and in places even in the absence of certain populations, right? It's based upon a kind of mode, a mode of thinking, a mode of reasoning that also informs, for example, European immigration. So, if we look at the rise of the new right and authoritarian political parties can you have such as Alternative for Germany in Germany and Austria, the Netherlands. They too share a common set of assumptions about the themes of non-desirable immigrants polluting the society in politics and that would entail not only demographic shifts, but also the creation of impure peoples, right, or people who are not industrious enough or work hard enough, right? These opinions of different populations often came with a chain of associations that were made to equate certain people with essentially anti-citizen or retrograde ideas about what it means to be a political being in the world.

Marshall Poe

And then you go on to an area that I knew nothing about because I graduated from college in the 80s and so I sort of stopped reading political science. You continued, though. And this is the cusp of the 20th and 21st century and the ways in which the comparativists adapted to what was essentially a new world without the Soviet Union and you called the Perestroika Era. How does comparative politics change in that era?

Michael Hanchard

Well, I'm not sure actually, looking back, if it actually changed that much. I think two different ways, at least two different ways, by my imagination of what impact Perestroika had. One was to, on some

sense, a reaction against more positivist understandings of political science that sought to completely separate fact from value, but also to treat qualitative and interpretive methods with some disdain and a preference for mathematical and quantitative models to make sense of political phenomenon. The creation of new journals--the idea in some sense to open up or democratize the formal institutional and professional discussion and treatment of a variety of political phenomenon concepts, not just race or races.

But again, I didn't, I didn't really see Perestroika as having that transformative an effect on what gets studied and how when we're talking about ethno-nationalism or difference.

Marshall Poe

What are the things I noted in graduate school, and this was in the late 80s and 90s, is that suddenly people in disciplines that had formerly been not historical became historical. Suddenly history mattered a lot. I was very happy to see this as a historian. The case of Russia is obvious because since they did return to an autocratic form of government people were wondering why they did that and historians were all saying, "Well, if you look at their history, you will see why." Did you see a similar sort of thing in political science? Was it historicized, so to say?

Michael Hanchard

Well, you know, there would be a long time and been several subgroups, groups within some different subfields that paid a lot of attention to history. Politics and history, social science and history. American political development, for example, was very much wedded to methods that emphasized th history and historical and historical interpretation.

So that's actually been an enduring feature in comparative politics. But again, the question becomes then well, you know, how is it used? How often should it be used and it can be used in lieu of certain other types of scientific methods. So the question is, what is the value of history among other themes of disciplines within the discipline of political science. And I think one of the issues that I had dealt with, you know, during my career as a teacher is often I teach a course in qualitative methods and I point out to the students very, very early on that, you know, the major texts that became utilized as the basis for political science actually came from sociology and, later, anthropology. So we can think about the trilogy that's the threesome of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, right? And so political science has always been a discipline that's borrowed methods and concepts from other disciplines. I think where we're at now in the discipline and we've been for a while is what makes certain methods legitimate modes of scholarly inquiry and what makes others less legitimate, right? So it's not, so it's not so much whether a discipline is porous or not in its relation to other disciplines, but which parts of other disciplines are considered more favorable or more amenable to political science than others?

Marshall Poe

I just remember very well in graduate school being assigned certain works by Clifford Geertz in every class I took.

Michael Hanchard

Definitely. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly—A fulcrum in the book is drawn from an essay from *The Interpretation of Cultures* where he writes that the sort of period of the politics and developing [inaudible] after World War Two. It was a period where, I'm paraphrasing here, that scholars from a variety of disciplines came to the recognition that they were all working with the same data. That is Geertz's inimitable way, but that's a classic example of a text again where the origins comes from another discipline. Part of what I'm trying to do in the book is that I have a section dealing with this long-standing relationship between political science and anthropology and the creation of the subfield within anthropology called political anthropology. And I guess in some

sense. I'm revealing my own training as I add someone who went to graduate school in the mid-1980s to 1991. These were the text and debates and arguments I was I was weaned on.

Marshall Poe

I was, too. In the book you have a really wonderful comparison of the ways in which France, Britain and the United States have treated creating boundaries, so to say, between an in-group, usually ethnic, and out groups of various kinds and they're interesting distinctions among them. Perhaps we could begin with the outlier. And that is France.

How did France deal with these questions?

Michael Hanchard

I have one question for you: would be how would France be an outlier?

Marshall Poe

Yeah, how is France an outlier among the group the United States, Britain and France in terms of dealing with essentially imperial or conquered or colonial populations and the notion of citizenship?

Michael Hanchard

Oh, I see. Well, I think that even today, I mean, there was actually a long article in the New York Times about a week or so ago about a kind of brouhaha involving Emmanuel Macron and several French scholars, in some sense, who believe that the language and concept of race, which they always often argue invariably as somehow an import from the United States, was diverting attention away from what it was called by Proudhon who first referred to this as a social question, right? So in some sense subordinating other types of political phenomena to class formation. - and there's also enough scholarship now to demonstrate the ways in which even in the absence of what in France a French scholar terms racial statistics, which they often harken back to the Vichy regime and act as if there were no other moment in French history where racial distinction or ethno-national distinction really mattered and he actually looked at France's immigration policy, for example, you know, it's very, very clear that despite these claims to the contrary that you had and have preferred population [inaudible]. You think about for example, you know certainly by the range over the by the 1950s with the Algerian war for independence which the French government has refused to acknowledge as a war for independence. It was referred to state-speech as basically an operation by criminals that kind of unsettled the French State not a desire for actual independence and there's a kind of roughly could refer to the kind of latinized Latin model of relations between different populations and a polity and the overarching frame and France's idea of the practice of Republican, right? But it's become clear that, for example, even in contemporary debates in France about Muslim extremism and targeting of Muslims and not targeting of other organizations and not religions, but other organizations from other religious denominations that also have their own intolerant and often aggressively intolerant dimensions in its interactions with other peoples and groups and I think France is still grappling with its self-image, but I think for Britain and United States as well, you know goes back to what Goffman referred to as impression management, right?--by the idea that you could have these societies and polities that was supposedly the beacons for democracies throughout the world, but in their colonial and imperial policies, they clearly abided by a different set of rules and a different administration and different modes of treatment for different populations, right—it was anything but racially ethno-nationally neutral, right? And so even in the contemporary United States, we think about the discussion with audiences of Joe Biden after January 6th and said, well, this is not who we are. Well, you know my question is well, then who are we in the United States and it's clear that, you know, the kind of thread of white supremacy has been coursing throughout the history of the United States in its Constitution and its political culture and its behaviors that unless statespeople and everyday people acknowledge this part of US history the country will be

forever, in some sense, of mired in these kinds of competing idealizations of what the United States is and could be.

Marshall Poe

In contrast to France where you have this kind of party line about inclusive republicanism, everybody who is the subject of the French state is fully French, right? That's what they said.

If I could tell an anecdote. I was doing some research on maps produced after World War One and one was done by a French photographer and it showed the ethnographic composition of Europe and North Africa, and of course it had all these tiny different colored blotches all over the place and you know, you got to France and Algeria. They were just blue--just blue.

Michael Hanchard

But one could argue that different versions of what I call demographic disappearance--the idea too many ways to minimize, neglect or outright ignore these questions of difference. So one of the ways that many French demographers who in recent years have gotten around this because many people have assumed-- many specialists assumed that many of its prisoners were disproportionately populated with people from the Maghreb for example, and because France did not keep so-called racial national statistics the state could deny in a sense the existence of disproportionality in its prison population. But several very capable demographers and sociologists were able to get at some sense of the disproportionate amount by going by last, by surnames for example, religious affiliations and the like to give us a better approximation of what the inequality lurking behind universal or so-called colorblind republicanism.

Marshall Poe

Now the British and the Americans took a very different tack from the French and they were all about classifying populations in terms of, I guess, what we would call ethnicity. Can you talk a little bit about them?

Michael Hanchard

Yes. Yes. Well, probably I mean the probably the most prominent case in recent memory occurs in Britain with what came to be known as the Windrush Generation, the generation of mostly Caribbean British subjects who came to Britain at the request of the British government because the population, the British population was so devastated by World War II and they needed to rebuild the infrastructure. And so these people were encouraged to come to Britain only to face severe hardship when they arrived and being treated like they had no claim to British identification at all and also a campaign undertaken to basically start to rid, to question the status of many of these populations and their descendants and in effect force people to go back to their so-called countries of origin or their children--essentially places they'd never lived or not lived for several decades, right? If you think about you know, the separation of families policy that was undertaken under Donald Trump and it reminds me in certain ways of the McCarran-Walter Act which in effect helped, you know, on the one hand and got rid of certain inequalities in the amount of people and the variety of people that could come from different parts of the world. But in the other hand it also maintained certain kind of inequities in the distribution of immigrants coming into the United States.

Marshall Poe

At one point in the book, you point out that all nation states historically speaking have been comprised of minority groups, ethnically speaking and that the idea of a pure nation is a myth and I would say that every historian that I know would agree with this. My question to you and you may not be able to answer it. I certainly can't. Why do people keep returning to this myth of the pure nation? Why is it so attractive?

Michael Hanchard

I think there's, I mention this at the end of the book, that I think in some ways the advocates of the sort of pure nation, or homogeneous nation, assume with homogeneity amongst its populace, its national population there'll be less prospects for internal political conflict. Right, but we also know from looking at a variety of different countries, for example, that different people have, you know, for ideological reasons, different ideas about how the polity should be created who should be, who should be allowed membership, who should not be allowed membership. So, homogeneity doesn't really get rid of that problem. But I think what has happened is that the mythos--it really comes out of nationalism and I really I think going back really to the question of the non-historical nations after work after World War One was the idea somehow that nationalism provide a sort of unity that that liberal individualism could not in communism could not, right? And, ironically, this was actually one of the arguments put forth by [inaudible] and Mussolini in their texts. On the sort of political doctrine of fascism that they that they wanted to create a kind of political alternative that offered a sense of community to people and a sense of not only membership in a community but need to sacrifice for that--sacrifice themselves for that, for that community, right? And that's something that in general possessive liberalism doesn't really account. Totalitarianism in its own way basically scratches the life out of populations, particularly those who dissent. We can see that in a variety of different places now. So that it remains this for some people is very seductive and also terrible myth with myth with terrifying consequences when applied or when it's when people attempt to apply.

Marshall Poe

I want to talk to us a little bit about American exceptionalism or the degree to which America is different than other places and my thought is that the idea of a pure nation or nativism or any kind of ethno-nationalism just doesn't sit very well in the Americans breast because with the exception of Native Americans, we don't really have a nation in the sense that the French do, the British do or the Germans do. That we were Nation where you adopted citizenship based on ideas.

Is this our myth and to what extent is it a reality in terms of actual comparative politics as done by political scientists?

Michael Hanchard

Well, one of things I engage in is a sort of three-country comparison in some ways to deprovincialize. and question the idea of American exceptionalism, in part because the United States like Britain, like France, essentially were and have been imperial nation states with democracy dependencies—that's to say that that there were a limited number of people who could participate in the polity and there were a large number of people who wanted to or lived in a society, but could not. Ironically, it would be the earlier mentioned Edward Augustus Freeman who made the argument in a book of essays called *Impressions of The United States* and says I'm paraphrasing here, but he says, in a sense, that the United States is an experiment in democracy is not what is novel about it. What is novel about it is the attempt to basically have different races or nations as members of the same power. Like that for him was what was really the unprecedented experiment. Except, if you look at populations that are considered and have long been considered homogeneous, we find ethno-national diversity. We find it in China. We find it in Germany at that the added unification in 1871. We find it in Italy and find it and just about every other nation state we can think of and in that respect the United States is no different. I think what one of the distinguishing features about the United States is its size and scale. So, you know what I talk to colleagues in Europe who work on immigration and the talk about the fact that the scale of immigration into the United States even during periods of tough immigration restrictions just dwarfs immigration streams that have flowed into different countries within the EU, right? But I think that this is something clearly that we know from as early--from as recently as January 6 that this is not a settled question for many citizens of the United States. So, there may be people who keep this idea in their breasts that somehow that an ethno-state is irreconcilable with US democracy. But then again there amongst, I'm not saying all of them, but

certainly amongst the 71 million people who voted for Donald Trump there is a percentage of that population that in fact believes precisely that. That that the best way to make America great again is to limit immigration of peoples from different parts of the world that are considered racially restrictive to basically engage in extrajudicial killings and sanctions against minoritized populations and these are all, you know, all activities or acts that fly in the face of certain definitions of democracy, but I think part of what I point out in the book is that all democratic policies have their coercive and anti-democratic dimensions, right?

So that's in many ways the challenge—that where does the democratic polity or ethos of the United States stop and which its anti-democratic ethos begins.

Marshall Poe

This is a very nice segue to my final question and I'll quote you. You say in the conclusion to the book how to make societies less ethno-centric and more ethos-centric is one of the great challenges of balancing pluralism and democracy in contemporary nation states. Can explain that?

Michael Hanchard

Yeah, sure. So the juxtaposition I was making there was between ethno-centric and ethos-centric, right? So that, regarding that in classical Athens after 451 in some sense moved towards a model that was more ethnocentric than ethos-centric since its citizenship criteria focused on origins as opposed to rights and responsibilities. And in many the French, and French republicanism was an attempt in many ways to emphasize an ethos-centric model of Republican is not necessary democracy, but it was and has been undermined by the very reality that France, like most imperial nation states in the post-world War II period, has had to contend with decolonization and the influx of people who were former colonial subjects into the metropole and into the mainland, right? And this is in many ways the challenge: if democracy, and I guess what I'm suggesting too by the end of the book it would have to be taken up in another book, is that part of what I'm questioning here is the limits of democracy and should we be looking at other models, I think about models that are a bit more expansive than what we operate with. So, most I think people in United States would associate democracy with the right to vote and the right to speak one's mind. But as we know that in the world, you know, this is the period of human history when we've had more nominally democratic polities in the world than at any other time. But it's also the moment of the greatest inequality in history of mankind so that means is it something to Thomas Piketty points out, another economist, that democracy in some sense can well coexist with inequality. So, in order to make democracy more accessible and open we'd also need to change and expand our definition of what democracy is.

Marshall Poe

Yes. You reminded me of something that I learned many, many years ago, maybe even when I was in college and that's the paradox of freedom and equality.

Michael Hanchard

Yes.

Marshall Poe

And it keeps coming back.

Michael, I want to thank you very much for talking with us today. And I want to ask the traditional final question on the New Books Network. And that is, what are you working on now?

Michael Hanchard

Well, I'm actually work--I tend to work on, often, on different books at different times and I'm assuming work on the relationship between fascism and racism and contemporary politics. So I'm going to look at different cases and look at the ways in which fascist regimes and states have often borrowed many of the administrative and coercive features from examining places like the United States and how fascism as part of its political imaginary is a racial, a racist imaginary. And the distance between racial rule and fascism is not that far as people would like to hope that it is.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, I don't think it's far at all. Most historians, I think, would say it's not far at all. Well anyway, Michael, thank you very much for being on the show. We've been talking to Michael Hanchard about his book *The Spectre of Race: How Discrimination Haunts Western Democracy* from Princeton University Press.

My name is Marshall Poe and I'm the editor of the New Books Network, and this is an episode in the Princeton University Press Ideas Podcast. Michael, thank you again.

Michael Hanchard

Thank you so much. And thanks so much for great questions. I appreciate it.