

Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right

Exposing the Right and Fighting for Democracy

Celebrating Chip Berlet as Journalist and Scholar



Edited by Pam Chamberlain, Matthew N. Lyons,
Abby Scher, and Spencer Sunshine

EXPOSING THE RIGHT AND FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY

This book celebrates the life and work of scholar-activist Chip Berlet. His contributions over four decades have had broad-ranging impacts on activists, independent intellectuals, and academics, from think tanks and social movements to generations of scholars.

Berlet's work over the decades has covered a wide range of topics, from the Christian Right, armed militias, social movement theory, and white supremacy to conspiracism, civil liberties, and government surveillance. This book features contributions reflecting on many of these topics by leading scholars and activists who have been inspired by his work and example.

This book will be of great interest to scholars, students, and activists within antiracist, anti-fascist, and progressive social movements.

Pam Chamberlain worked, for fifteen years, alongside Chip Berlet at Political Research Associates, USA, as a researcher and analyst, helping to produce the Defending Democracy series of activist toolkits. Her writing focused on issues of sex, sexuality, gender, and how the Right sought to limit progress and gain power through its organizing in these areas. She has been a high school English teacher, a sex educator, an anti-nuclear activist, and an advisor to LGBTQ youth organizations.

Matthew N. Lyons writes regularly for *Three Way Fight*, a radical anti-fascist blog. He has written several books, including one co-authored with Chip Berlet, and for various journals, magazines, and websites. His work focuses on the interplay between right-wing movements and systems of oppression, and responses to these movements by leftists, liberals, and the state. He is co-trustee of the Lorraine Hansberry Literary Trust, which stewards the literary legacy of the late playwright and activist Lorraine Hansberry.

Abby Scher is a New York-based sociologist whose writing on the Right, economic justice, and women's and immigrant issues appears in national outlets. She served as Editorial Director and Interim Research Director of Political Research Associates, a progressive think tank that tracks the U.S. Right, where she was a colleague of Chip Berlet. She is a partner in Research|Action, a worker-owned cooperative that allies with community and labor organizations to promote social change. The Ford Foundation recognized her organizing work bridging racial and ethnic divides with its Leadership for a Changing World Award.

Spencer Sunshine has a Ph.D. in Sociology and has spent over fifteen years researching, writing about, and counter-organizing against the Far Right. From 2013 to 2019, he was an Associate Fellow at the think tank Political Research Associates, USA. He has written numerous articles chronicling the Far Right in the Trump era, including one co-authored with Chip Berlet. He is currently working on a history of neo-Nazi James Mason's influential pro-terrorist book, *Siege*.

Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right

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Terre Roche has known Chip Berlet since she was in high school and played in a coffee house he ran. She went on to become famous as a member of The Roches, a group of Terre and her sisters. Together and separately, they toured the world, appearing on stages and TV shows over the course of a very vibrant career.

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INTRODUCTION

In the mid-20th-century United States, few eyes were focused on the growing right-wing social movements that would come to dominate the present political landscape. Chip Berlet was among those who were paying attention. Chip has contributed a lifetime of scholarship to the pursuit of truth and accuracy about the U.S. political Right and its increasingly dangerous threat to our society. After four years of a White House heavily influenced by right-wing forces—and the assault on the Capitol by the Far Right—now seems an appropriate time to call attention to the impact of Chip’s work on activist and academic knowledge.

Most students of the U.S. political Right encounter Chip through his books and articles, many written during his tenure at Political Research Associates. Those of us who are fortunate enough to have worked with Chip have benefited from his intellect and character in other, more personal, ways. All of us have stories to share. In the spring of 2020, the editors of this collection decided to celebrate his many achievements with an invitation to his friends, coworkers, and fellow writers to share something about how Chip influenced their lives.

With many of us at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we met (virtually) and laid out a plan to gather reminiscences and tributes from those who have known Chip across his life. This type of collection is known in academic circles as a *festschrift*, or a volume of tributes to a scholar. Chip had some input by offering the names of some of those he had worked with over his long career. This traded the element of surprise for the gift of a representative set of voices, including areas unfamiliar to us. This project was born.

We have sought to include pieces from a diverse array of people who know Chip, mostly through his work. While we have tried to make the contents representative, they by no means include the thousands of people Chip has influenced in his life, most of whom he has never met.

2 Introduction

In general, we have followed the style sheet Chip used at his long-time workplace, Political Research Associates. Here we use American, rather than British, spelling and lowercase spelling of racial designations such as black and white.

In the course of soliciting and accepting submissions, we found universal respect and admiration for a writer schooled by his own activist experience and his willingness to learn from others. That he knew how to write made it possible to capture his thinking across the years. That he respected and nurtured his relationships with others profoundly enhanced his ideas and ours. Certainly, we can all admire his prescience about the antidemocratic threat coming from the Far Right and Christian Right in the United States and beyond.

We hope that this volume captures a little of who Chip is, how so many of us regard him, and how important his contribution has been to activists and scholars alike. We tip our collective hats to our friend and colleague. May the strength of his character and the integrity of his thoughts help us all endure the challenges of the present and thrive in the promise of the future.

Compiling a *festschrift* is the work of many hearts and minds. We are grateful to the numerous people who have helped put this volume together. The growing number of submissions over the course of the project continued to amaze us. Contributors gave of themselves freely and tolerated our pesky, recurring messages. Some of those who could not submit articles have graciously signed their names to a congratulatory statement found at the end of this volume.

Chip's wife, Karen Moyer, generously worked with Chip to identify photographs and memorabilia from his collection, including his chart describing right-wing populism in the United States, found in the Appendix. Sue Kaiser contributed the photo Chip took of himself with other youth delegates to the 1967 national church conference in Detroit. Pam Chamberlain snapped some pictures of Chip at work. Craig Fowlie, the global editorial director at Routledge, and his inestimable assistant Hannah Rich have kept us on track throughout the process. There are so many more who have felt the presence and influence of Chip despite never having met him! To them, we hope you find some inkling in these pages of the Chip you have come to know. And to those who are just meeting Chip Berlet now, may we have the pleasure of introducing him to you!