Technology | Tyranny | Transnational Advocacy

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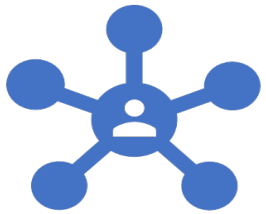
Civil Society

- "Contrasted with government, civil society meant a realm of social life – market exchanges, charitable groups, clubs and voluntary associations, independent churches and publishing houses – institutionally separated from territorial state institutions. This is the sense in which civil society is still understood today: it is a term that both describes and anticipates a **complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected nongovernmental institutions** that tend to be nonviolent, self-organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension, both with each other and with the governmental institutions that "frame," constrict and enable their activities"
  - Source: John Keane, "Civil Society, Definitions and Approaches," in Helmut K. Anheier, Stefan Toepler (eds), International Encyclopedia of Civil Society (Springer: New York, NY, 2010).

Civil Society

- "[T]he ***realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules***. It is distinct from "society" in general in that it involves citizens ***acting collectively in a public sphere*** to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. Civil society is an intermediary entity, standing between the private sphere and the state. Thus it excludes individual and family life, inward-looking group activity (e.g., for recreation, entertainment, or spirituality), the profit-making enterprise of individual business firms, and political efforts to take control of the state. Actors in civil society need the protection of an institutionalized legal order to guard their autonomy and freedom of action. Thus civil society not only restricts state power but legitimates state authority when that authority is based on the rule of law."
  - Source: Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society: Towards Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5 no. 3, (1994): 4 - 17.

Transnational Advocacy Networks



"A transnational advocacy network includes those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services."

"International and domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play a central role in most advocacy networks, usually initiating actions and pressuring more powerful actors to take positions. NGOs introduce new ideas, provide information, and lobby for policy changes."

Source: Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, "Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics," *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 1 (1999): 89.

Civil Society

- Colonial Rule
- Communism
- Social Movements

Civil Society and the Transition from Communism

- Social action by civil society and social movements in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s helped these societies transition from communism. Support from George Soros helped hundreds of millions of dollars get channeled to such associations – for example to purchase Xerox machines in Hungary to help get newspapers printed, and for the solidarity strikers in Poland.

Civil Rights Movement in the United States

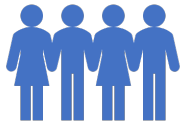
Global civil society and transnational advocacy networks have played an important role in social movements and struggles – from ending colonial rule to overthrowing oppressive regimes to advocating for the rights of marginalized communities—indigenous groups, women, and racial minorities.

Looking ahead, we must coalesce around the impact of technology in society—harnessing its promise, challenging the perils, and maintaining private and public spheres that respect creativity, autonomy, diversity, and freedom of thought and expression.

Looking Ahead

Transnational Advocacy & Technology:

Challenging the Perils



Shrinking Space for Civil Society

Rising Authoritarianism and Surveillance

Attacks on Migrants & Refugees, Ethnic & Racial Minorities

Fake News

Shrinking Space for Civil Society

- Six out of seven individuals live in a state where civic space is under pressure, according to Civicus (2016).
- More than 50 countries have enacted restrictions on foreign funding. Russia requires foreign funded organizations to register as "foreign agents," Ethiopia requires human rights organizations to receive no more than 10% of funds from abroad, and Austria bans Muslim religious organizations from receiving foreign funding. (International Journal of Human Rights, v 22, 2018)
- Civil society faces arbitrary scrutiny, de-registration, fines, arrests, and travel bans, due to problematic or intentionally vague laws.

Shrinking Space: Tactics & Impact

- Public vilification and discrediting of human rights and advocacy groups, their agendas, and their funders
- Legal measures, often tied to anti-terrorism policies
- Shift from rights-based to service-based activities

- Weakened individual impact
- Reduced capacity of ecosystem

Photo: Amnesty International

Digital Authoritarianism

- "A cohort of countries is moving toward digital authoritarianism by embracing the Chinese model of extensive censorship and automated surveillance systems." (Freedom House, 2018)
- "China is the worst abuser of Internet freedom." (Freedom House, 2018)
- Photo: Economist

Mexico conducts surveillance of investigators

- 43 students disappeared, likely dead
- International investigators' cell phones infected with software from the NSO Group that would have allowed those spying to access all their records

- AP Photo: Marco Ugarte

Police Surveillance

Due to sensitivities surrounding recent police shootings, the threat of copycat attacks against law enforcement exist.

There is a threat of black supremacist extremists attempting to violently co-opt the upcoming DNC/RNC.

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CNN US » Crime + Justice | Energy + Environment | Extreme Weather | Space + Science Live TV U.S. Edition +

Released NYPD emails show extensive surveillance of Black Lives Matter protesters

By Mark Morales and Laura Ly, CNN

Updated 7:01 PM ET, Fri January 18, 2019

Civil Rights Groups Seek to Expose Surveillance of Black Lives Matter Activists and Others

Contact: press@ccrjustice.org

Civil rights groups mark 50th Anniversary of Freedom of Information Act by filing requests to expose government surveillance of activists of color

The bigger picture

Discriminatory Policing

Government Surveillance

Racial Injustice

Attacks on migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities

- Use of technology to conduct surveillance on migrants and their family members

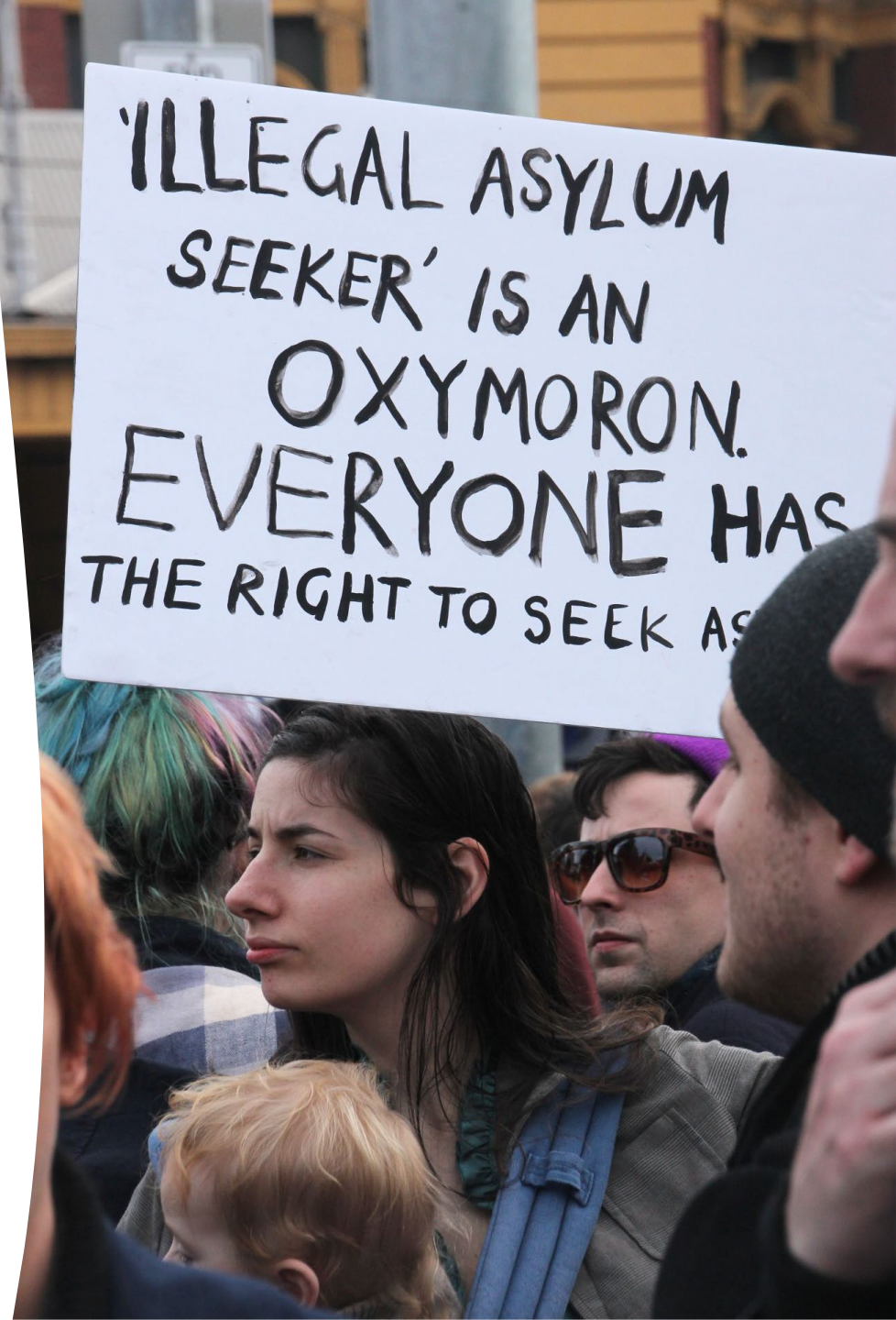
- Photo: Daniel Arauz, Flickr Creative Commons

”Bots at the Gate”

- Is your marriage genuine?
- Is your child your biological offspring?
- How do you feel about women who do not wear the *hijab*?
- Are you a likely troublemaker?
- Are you a threat?

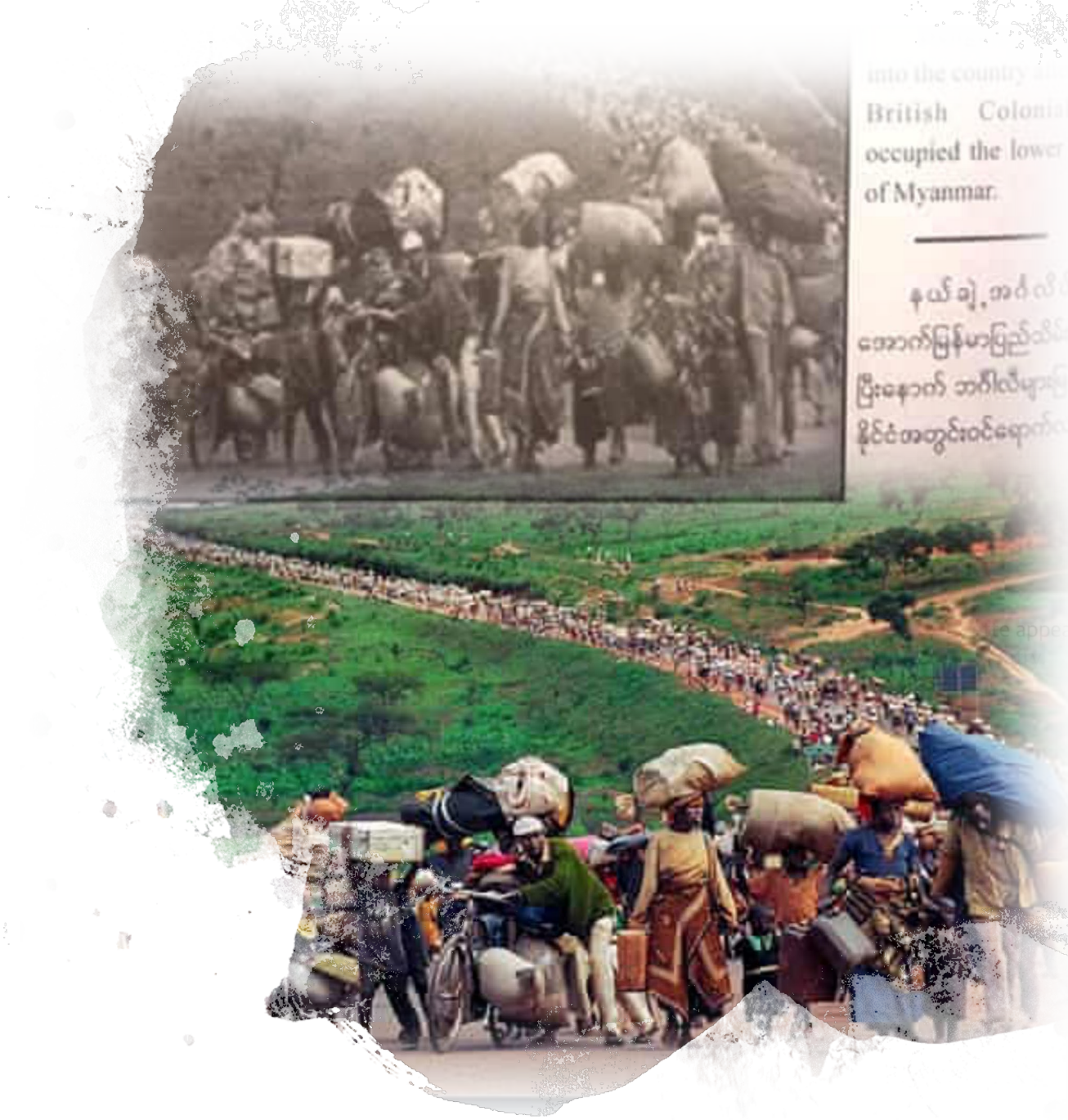
Citizen Lab report

Photo: Flickr Creative Commons, Takver



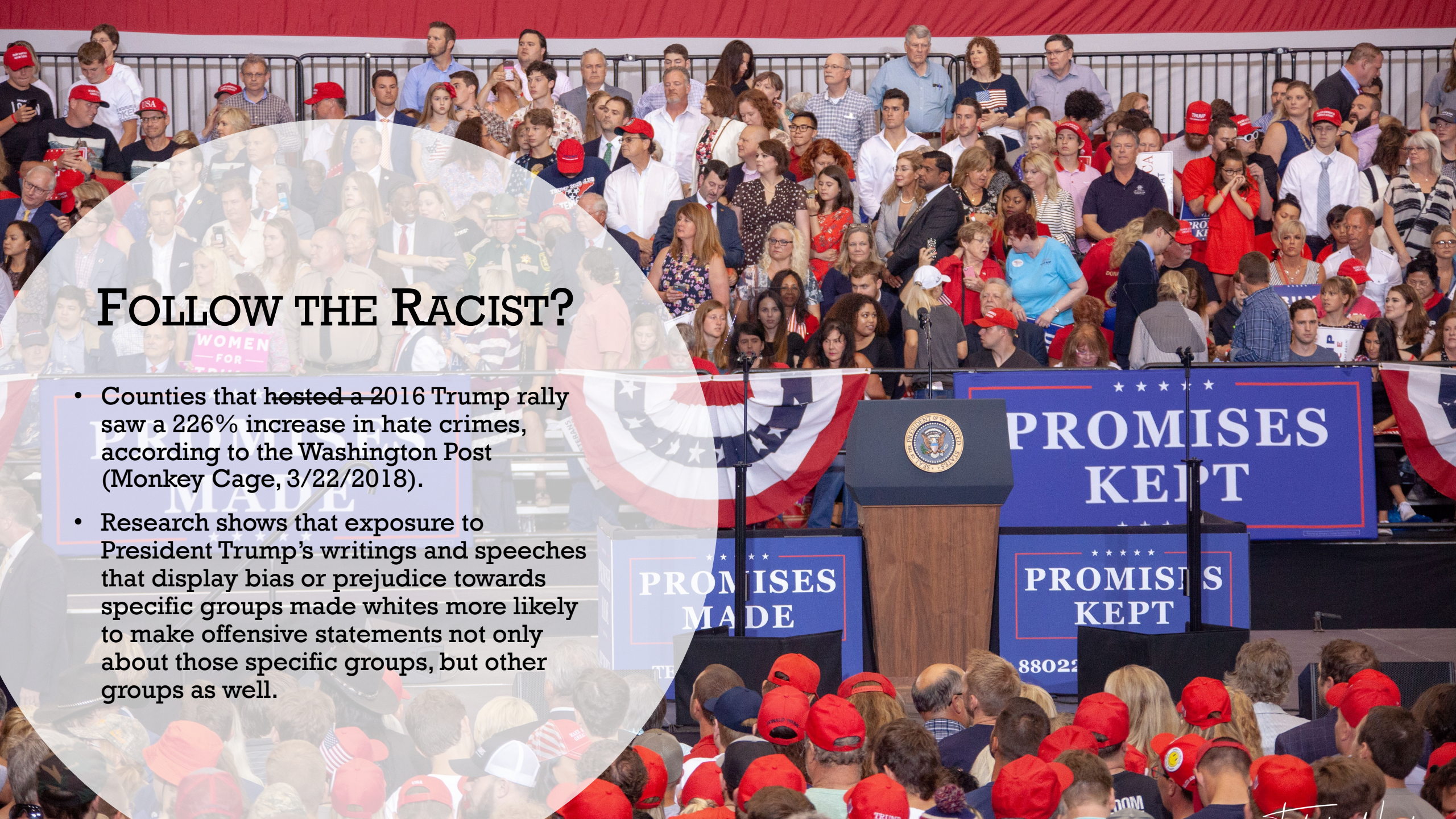
Rise of Fake News

"Bengalis intruded into the country after the British Colonialism occupied the lower part of Myanmar"



Follow the Racist?

- Counties that ~~hosted a 2~~016 Trump rally saw a 226% increase in hate crimes, according to the Washington Post (Monkey Cage, 3/22/2018).
- Research shows that exposure to President Trump's writings and speeches that display bias or prejudice towards specific groups made whites more likely to make offensive statements not only about those specific groups, but other groups as well.



Transnational Advocacy and Technology: Harnessing the Promise

Increasing Individual Opportunity

Improving Humanitarian Relief

Increasing Accountability for War Crimes

Building Digital Social Movements

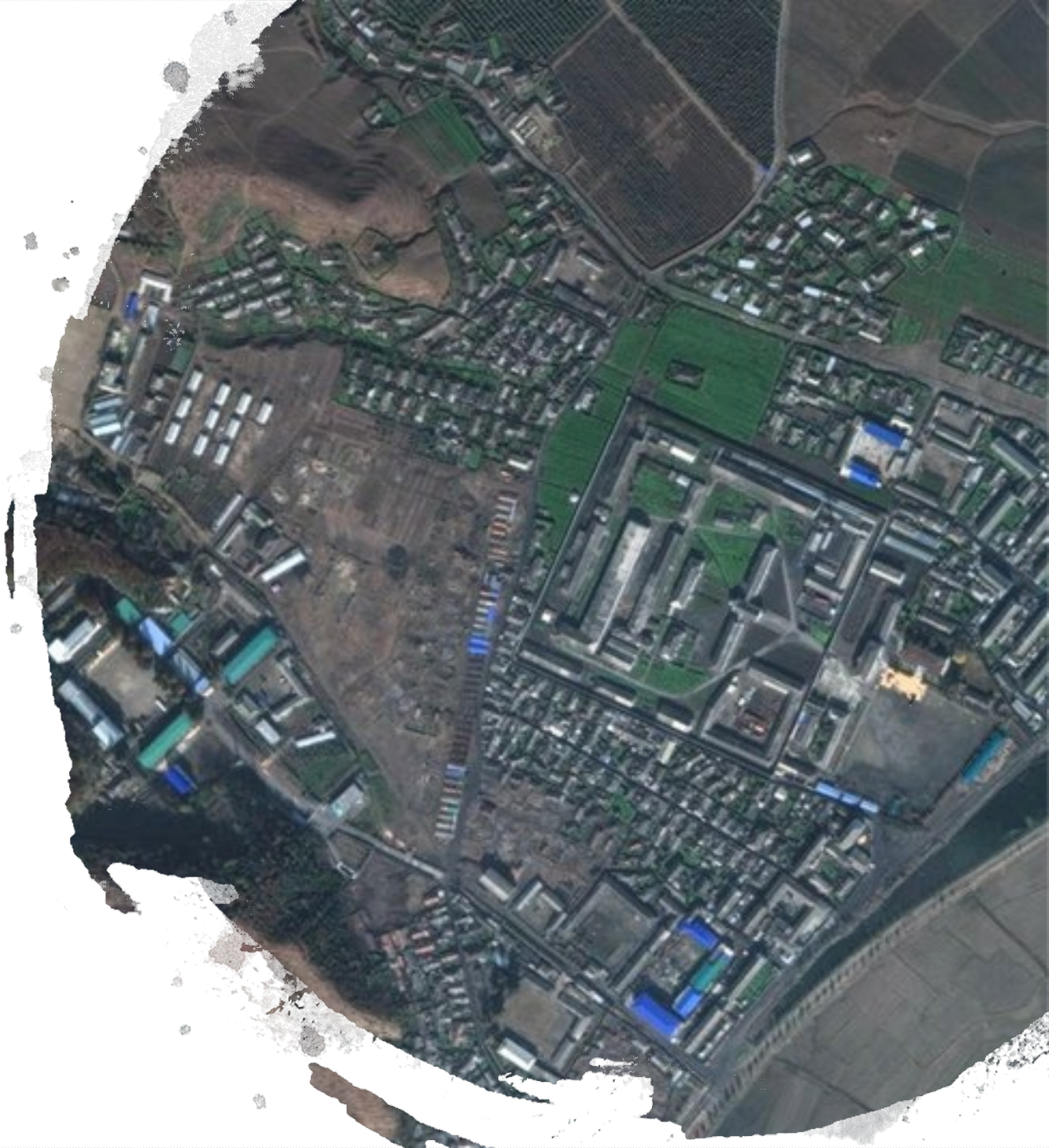
Improving Humanitarian Relief

- Providing Syrian refugees in Lebanon with electronic vouchers to buy food for families
- Using satellite imagery to track the flow of people who are trafficked across borders
- Developing early warning systems for famine, refugee flows, and natural and human made humanitarian crises

- Photo: World Bank

A Spotlight on Atrocities

- Estimated 2.5 million slaves in North Korea
- Harsh prison camps in isolated regions – prisoners face torture, detention, forced labor, slow starvation, and death
- Satellite imagery and former prisoners' accounts helps bring attention



Source: DigitalGlobe satellite imagery

Building Digital Social Movements

- Arab Spring
- #BlackLivesMatter
- Use of hashtags to build solidarity #RefugeesWelcome and celebrate victory #LoveWins

Public and Private Spheres

- Respect for human autonomy and bodily integrity
- Freedom of thought and expression
- Right to privacy

Algorithms' influence on human autonomy, creativity, decision making

- 80% of our decisions on Netflix
- One-third of our decisions on Amazon
- Most of the matches on Tinder
- Move from recommendations or support in making decisions to autonomous functioning

Right to Privacy

- “Imagine a future in which strangers around you look at you with their Google Glasses or, one day, their contact lenses, and use seven or eight data points about you to infer anything else which may be known about you. What will this future without secrets look like? And should we care?”
  - Alessandro Acquisiti, behavioral economist and privacy researcher

Freedom of Thought and Expression

- China's Social Credit Score
- Predictive Policing
- TSA's Big Skies Program

Looking Ahead: Imperatives for Transnational Advocates

- Focus on the immediate and the long-term implications of technological advancements on society
- Focus on both the most egregious and the softer and insidious means of repression
- Center human rights at the heart of technological development and dissemination
- Identify impacts on communities most affected by exclusion and discrimination (algorithmic impact assessments)
- Build macro and micro level capacities in the global South

Looking Ahead: Imperatives for Transnational Advocates

- Move from a historical role of working in opposition to one that is oppositional, influential, and collaborative, as needed
- Focus on governments to a larger focus on technology companies, education of consumers, institutions of global governance, media
- Integrate arts, culture, media, story telling, and communications in social justice and human rights efforts, and vice versa
- Focus on both the political and civil rights implications of new technologies, but also the economic rights implications
- Work in collaboration, not competition, for maximum impact