



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Notes on creeping fear

written by Badly Licked Bear

August 1, 2023

[“In a Facebook post, the owner of Studio 8 Hair Lab said that anyone who identifies as anything other than a man, or a woman needs to get serviced at a local pet groomer.”](#)

The recent SCOTUS decision ([303 Creative LLC v. Elenis](#)) concerning Colorado graphic designer Lorie Smith’s theoretical free speech rights, which now extends to all creative businesses, is a disaster, a nightmare, a present and, now, perpetual, danger. Worse, [it appears that the suit is a possible fraud constructed solely to establish this dangerous precedent](#), the result of which establishes (vaguely) creative business can refuse a client or customer on free speech grounds.

Meanwhile, [in Waco, Texas, Dianne Hensley, a judge, has claimed that the 303 Creative case allows her to refuse to perform same-sex marriages](#). I believe it’s safe to say that a judge should understand the limits of creative speech, including that being a judge is not a creative act. But I think it’s also clear to most of us by now that the folks advancing anti-LGBTQ+ laws in the United States don’t really care what the actual law is. Power is power.

The hair salon in question is located in Michigan. The court case based on a lie emerged from Colorado. The activist judge is in Texas. SCOTUS is in Washington

D.C. But the precedent – the danger – is everywhere.

The tiniest hole in the right place can sink the biggest ship.

Because no one knows what the specific precedent set by the 303 creative case is, or what constitutes a creative business, and no one who wants to use it like a lever cares about the actual reasoning and precedent of the decision, it means whatever any individual wants it to mean. “I know the law” as “I did my own research.”

A few weeks back, I was traveling by van through California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada, mostly in rural areas.

I want to talk about fear, and how it’s held in the body.

When I travel, I stop to do regular stuff, like get gas, buy drinks or snacks, and use the restroom. Sometimes I sleep in hotels. I eat in restaurants. Things you do. I do the same things you do. I have the same needs as you do.

A few months ago, the Texas legislature put forth an anti-trans bounty law, ostensibly to police drag performances, but up to wild interpretation, one thought has consumed me, not just that these laws would legally restrict my travel or my day-to-day life, or be turned against me or cost me my career, health, and home, but that random persons – persons whose interpretations of what these laws and court cases mean is wildly different from what they mean – will act independently on their idiosyncratic interpretation of these laws.

The danger is both inside the law and outside the law.

When I’m traveling, every single time I step out of my vehicle and onto the hot tarmac of a gas station, regardless of what I know or believe my rights to actually be, mentally and physically prepare for worst-case scenarios and could-be-worse scenarios. These range from being screamed at (could-be-worse, I suppose) to being

threatened with violence (worse than just general screaming) to actually being assaulted (worst case).

I'm not even sure what my rights are. I've never had to track differing levels of personal rights are, on a state-by-state or county-by-county basis. I suppose there's an app for this. I no longer really know, out of a combination of "too much to follow" and "I am exhausted by looking." Who can pee in Utah?

Back to scenarios. I've been assaulted - it happens faster than you think - faster than you can think. People without experience with violence have a lot of fantasies about violence. People with experience with violence have realities. Are you experienced (in violence)?

Of course, it's the restroom where fear inhabits the body most. Much has been written about our animal fixation on the toilet as a place of refuge and fear. [1](#)

A restroom is a hard-walled cul-de-sac with a single exit. One enters a second chamber with only one exit, alone, and cannot see what is happening outside. One leans over the hard porcelain sink with its various sharp metal protrusions, back turned to the room. One is distracted by the needs of one's own body. It's a place where the mirrors are useful, where you can wash your hands and watch your back at the same time.

You don't watch behind you while you look in the mirror? Why do you think you don't?

When I first came out at work, I wasn't sure what to do about the bathroom. I'm a college professor. I work with students, including a lot of international students who are socialized along gender lines in diverse ways. Part of me thought that I might just keep using the men's room at my work, since everyone there knows me, and the all gender bathrooms are few, often occupied, and often broken and disgusting. I

just didn't want to make waves. Like anyone else in a bathroom, I mostly just want to be left alone.

I immediately realized that using a men's room made me feel terribly unsafe - I've experienced a lot of violence in my life, but almost all of it has originated with men, and I am a very small person compared to most men. I'm used to males assuming that I am an easy victim.

Using the men's room also felt confusing - to my self AND others - and I'm already a confusing-enough presence in my workplace. People really only know how to deal with transfemmes when we conform to some very narrow standards of beauty and performance of gender [2](#), but that's a whole other story. I've always gotten a lot of stares in the men's room, anyways. I've been stared at my whole life.

I haven't used a men's room in a long time.

In these little trips to the ladies room, it's like the whole world goes into slo-mo. I just want to get in and get out, but every action feels urgent. As I wash my hands, I don't look at them. I look in the mirror, watching the women behind me watching me or not watching me. Someone I know had his head slammed into a sink by his partner, from behind. I think about porcelain and bone while I wash my hands....

In road trip gas stations, I'm not alone in these thoughts.

In Kanab, Utah, it took a while for me to wander around and buy a drink after using the restroom at a gas station, and my traveling companion came back inside to find me - she's thinking the same things as I am. She was excited and immediately started talking about the bathroom, and we had a whole conversation about it. She's thinking the same thing - that something bad might happen to me in the bathroom, and it might happen fast.

She's wondering if she has to do anything to stop it, or if it's too late.

Of course, I'm presuming if something happens, even if I am battered and bloody, it might be me that ends up in handcuffs - or worse. And, again, **I don't think of the all-too-imaginable worst happening because of the law, but because a rouge actor - maybe one in uniform - doesn't care about the law or sees the law only as a tool to be used in service to power and base impulses.**

America has been dancing with fascism for a long time, now, but the dance is real close, body-to-body, these days.

Fascism is all about power - power and the fear of losing it. Fascists have long rendered certain persons subhuman, and now an American hair salon owner compares transgender people to animals.... How does one oppose fascism? Can one rob it of its power? Or must one overpower it? The latter seems less poetic, but more likely - and more dangerous.

The danger is exhausting. The exhaustion is the fear and the fear is in the body. The exhaustion, like the cruelty, is the point.

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About two weeks ago, I was watching the livecast of the Glendale Unified School District board meeting. For those not in the know, Glendale has become ground zero for alt-right and anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-trans activists in California. The community is very conservative and there is a very clear effort going on to mobilize candidates and votes to flip the school board to become an activist board for a variety of ultra-right or neo-fascist agendas.

During the meeting, nearly all public comment came from activists, as real violence and threats of violence have been experienced by those who have protested attempts by Proud Boys, Moms for Liberty, and various anti-LGBTQ+ groups and individual activists to force an agenda on the Glendale Unified School District - emphasis here

on the word force. The heat is so high, and the potential for real violence has risen to a level that counter-protestation is not safe.

What struck me most during the meeting was how the various speakers seemed to wildly interpret board rules, the law, language, etc.... One speaker talked about the board as if it were a corporation and made a variety of small business analogies that were useless. One speaker used multiple commenting opportunities to campaign for a seat on the board. Multiple speakers invoked religion or used wildly incorrect language to discuss mental health topics, and not in the context of anti-trans bigotry. One proposed a scenario in which he would murder someone for speaking to his child. There were, of course, lots of ad hominem attacks made on individual board members.

It was a hard watch, because the board is not allowed to react or comment, so the speakers are basically given several minutes to rant without any challenges. It presents the notion that these statements might be sensible or that they go unchallenged. The board is considering new rules that would reign in this situation, but they are not in effect, and, of course, those rules will not be perfect, and the same actors will likely find ways to game them to some degree.

Since this meeting, which disturbed me so, at another meeting in Chino, where Proud Boys guarded anti-LGBTQ+ activists, after voting to force teachers and administrators to out trans students to their families, the [Chino School Board had the police throw out the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction](#). And, since that meeting, [Moms for Liberty, a hate group born out of Florida's anti-mask and anti-vax movement](#), that feels very much like the women's auxiliary of the Proud Boys, the "Pinkshirts" to "America's Brownshirts," held a training camp for to prepare activists for local office campaigns at the Glendale Hilton.

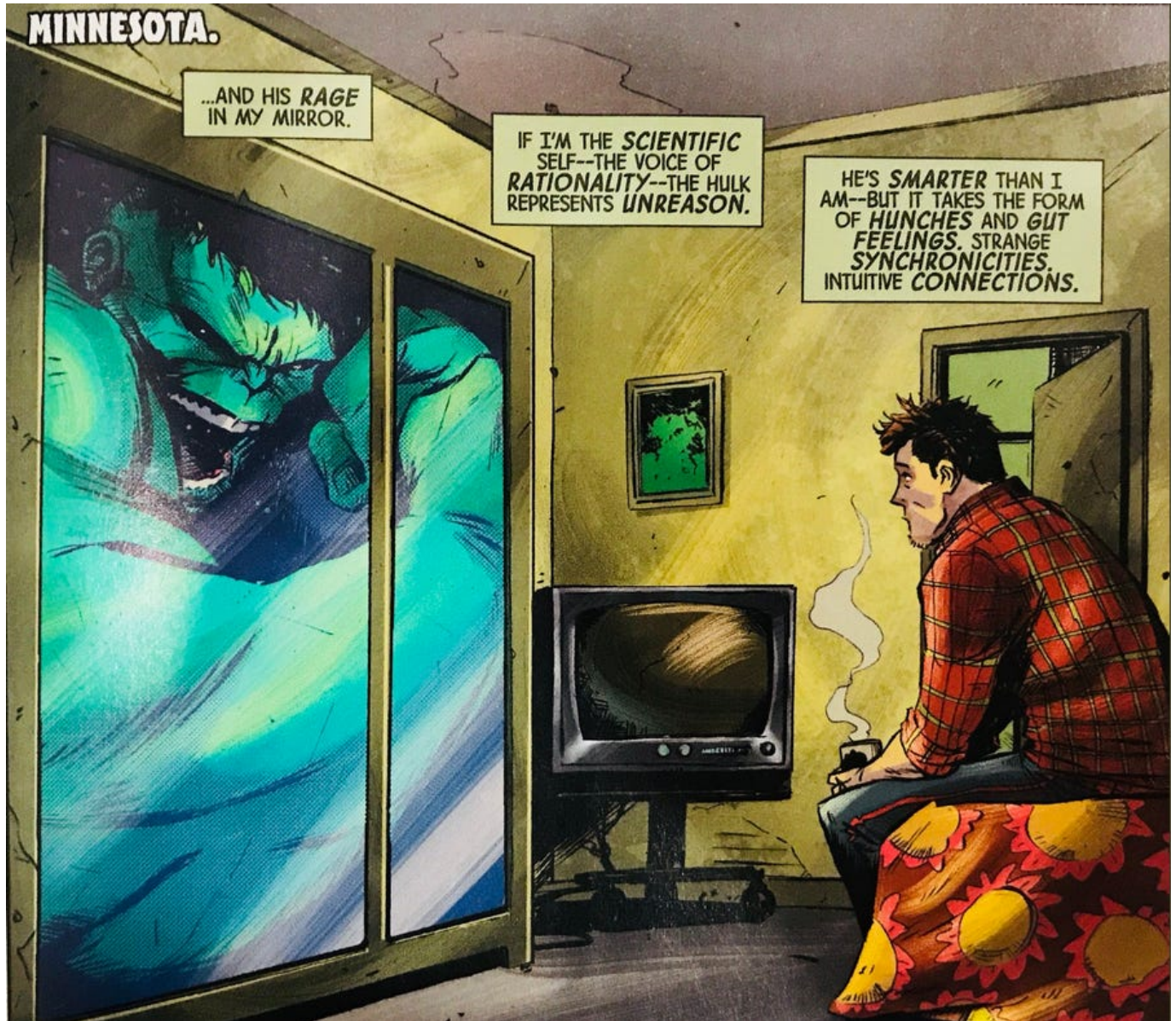
It feels as if Los Angeles is becoming encircled by hate - Temecula, Fullerton, Huntington Beach, Chino, Glendale, etc... ringing the city where I live. These

meetings in smaller cities are anything but small - the Glendale school district budget is \$300 million dollars, and it's all too easy to seize control of the board that oversees it.

The meetings sound like rolling thunder in the distance. Each week the thunder grows closer. Every passing day, the 2024 election gets closer.

I spend a lot of time in Glendale. I no longer feel safe in that city, even just parking my car and walking to the front door of someone's home, I feel very much like I did at that gas station in Kanab, Utah. I am starting to look at my neighbors differently, and I wonder if they're looking at me differently, too.

Anything can happen. Anything IS happening. And it's happening, here.



Source: [Badly Licked Bear's Wordpile](#)

