

## **Feminism and Victim Politics in Neoliberal Times**

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*Space, Race Bodies keynote lecture, 8 December 2014*

Thank you so much for the introduction Holly and inviting me to be the understudy today for this keynote. It's a real pleasure to be here. It's a really exciting conference and you've done so well at putting this together.

Can you hear me alright? So well, while I can't fill the shoes of the keynote who was to speak this morning, I can tell you about my book. So this is just a slide of the cover and I always like to note that the image here, which was a photograph by Valonia DeSuza is of the Dunedin "slut walk". So you just see Dunedin on the right there. It's nice to have that sense of local protest built into this project that I did in my years here. What else do I want to say about the photograph? A couple of people in this room contributed to placards for this march and this is what I'm kind of going to talk about today. You can't talk about a book in 40min or all of the themes. So I'm going to kind of pick up some particular themes and speak to those and kind of give you the kernel of the argument as it were.

So, this is where I'd begin, with this statement "we are not victims stop trying to rescue us". So read the first slide in a conference presentation I attended recently, the presentation was given by a sex-worker activist. So their slide announced the blistering critique of efforts to rescue sex workers' trade and the representation of sex workers as helpless victims. This representation, the speaker explained, elides the personal and political agency of sex workers and feeds the demonization and criminalization of sex work, promoting prohibition. This representation should be replaced, the speaker explained or argued, with a more accurate and respectful understanding of sex workers as agents of erotic labor, deserving of labor rights enjoyed by other workers. So while I concurred with this speaker's political argument for decriminalization and labor rights for sex workers, I became increasingly intrigued by the stories of victimization that the speaker told as their talk continued. The speaker had begun by denouncing victim-identity and establishing sex workers are not victims. Yet his argument for decriminalization was nourished by vivid stories of intense victimization. In support of decriminalizing sex work, he described that multiple victimizing effects of prohibition in the everyday lives of sex workers, surveying a spectrum of forms of diminished citizenship, stigmatization and dramatic loss of legal protection.

He stressed for example the inability of sex workers to complain of rape without facing charges of soliciting. And he described the condition of acute vulnerability to phobic violence and police violence. Telling a particularly poignant story of the violent arrest of a sex worker who was targeted by police on the count of her ethnicity. As the compelling presentation closed with him describing this woman fallen on the side of the road, injured and traumatized before being taken away by police. He reminded us of the racist violence this woman suffered was conducted with impunity. So, in this talk that I saw at a conference in Adelaide, incidentally it was critical race and whiteness conference, so in this talk what had began as a very defiant rejection of victim identity soon developed and to a far more ambiguous position

within the language of victimhood as the speaker rightly unveiled sufferings that are not duly recognized, implicitly framing sex workers as victims of this system of criminal prohibition. This ambiguity wasn't avowed and when in the question time I queried his rejection of the victim label he held firm to this rejection repeating this message: "sex workers are not victims". So what actually took place in this talk is a critical rejection of the framing sex workers as victims of sex work and the replacement of this with a different and in deed persuasive framing of sex workers as presently victimized in conditions of criminal prohibition.

Why could this not be avowed? Why in this particular discursive situation did it seem more politically exigent and certainly more resonant to hold firm to the denunciation of victim as a viable identify and category of analysis. Rather than explore the different framing and usage of this category that took place implicitly but noticeably in the speaker's political argument for decriminalization and labor rights. If sex workers clearly suffer an array of forms of victimization, why does it still make sense to reject the idea that they can be regarded in any way as victims? The ambiguity at play at in how this speaker deals with the category victim, the telling of politically significant stories of victimization amid strident denouncement of 'victim' as a worthy descriptor... this is indicative of much wider predicament. As Fatima Naqvi observes and I quote "a persistent anxiety about victims and victimhood has been present in a variety of cultural manifestations over the past 30 years." And that's from her book that I highly recommend the *The Literary and Cultural Rhetoric of Victimhood: Western Europe, 1970-2005*.

Since the 1980s across our wide array of discourses in media, academia and official politics and movement politics, there has been a kind of concerted movement away from the language of victimhood prompted by the emergence of the surprisingly widely shared critique of the very notion of victim. Now of course the moving away from the language of victimhood has not meant the talk of victimhood ceased, rather it has meant the talk of victimhood primarily assumes the form of the negative critique of the notion of victim. Or the proliferation of discourses in which the notion of victim arises in order to be critiqued and is generally unseated by 'agency' as the trope of legitimacy as preferred analytical choice. So, I pause at that, our ways of thinking and talking about victims, victimization and victimhood have been sort of reorganized around the dominance of anti-victim talk.

Now this rather profound shift has never gone unnoticed, there has always been those who have questioned the contemporary proliferation of discourses in which victim identity, victim politics and the language of victimhood are described in predominantly negative terms, imposing new limits on the way in which victimization can be signified and discussed. But the work of providing sustained critical analysis of contemporary anti-victim talk, the work of tracking its transformation in the meaning of victimhood and of weighing political, ethical and social sensibilities and implications, this work has only fairly recently began. And as the scholarship emerging in this area suggests the dominance of anti-victim talks is not exactly a progressive development, instead marking a rather largely conservative intervention upon the language of suffering and social being. And I should just note here in terms of this emergent scholarship that I'm referring to, of course there is Fatima Naqvi's book, there Alison Cole, there is Caroline J. Dean there is Carine M. Mardorossian,

... I would situate my own work in this bed, in this sort of movement if you like to provide a sustained critique of anti-victimism.

So, coinciding historically with the rise and consolidation of neoliberal hegemony much anti-victim talk powerfully reflects the values of neoliberal thought, in particular personal responsibility. So the ideal neoliberal citizen is often explicitly figured as one who avoids victim mentality, one who assumes personal responsibility for guarding against the risk of victimization instead of focusing on their right not to be victimized. So complimenting this conception of ideal citizen much anti-victim talk discursively constitutes victimization as a matter of individual responsibility, psychology and will. Endorsing a fundamentally conservative conception of victimhood as a state of mind rather than a worldly situation, an unhealthy attitude of resentment brought on by an individual's lack of personal responsibility. Rather than a circumstance occasioned by wider social forces and the workings of power.

So at this point I like to show some ready examples of what I mean when I say anti-victimism. Or anti-victim talk, anti-victimism is Cole's term and as we will see the term I use is neoliberal victim theory, I provide if you like a more specific analysis of anti-victimism, anti-victimism as specifically a neoliberal construction. So ready examples of anti-victimism here is one, you might be all be familiar with Phil McGraw otherwise known as Dr Phil. So "Don't play the role of the victim" so this is from one of his books "or use past events to build excuses. You will never fix a problem by blaming someone else. Whether the cards you have been dealt are good or bad, you are in charge of yourself now." So strict avoidance of victim mentality is a 'life law' as he puts it, a life law of Dr Phil. Ok so this is a very ready example of anti-victimism. So the virtues of renouncing victimhood are perhaps most visibly extolled in the discursive output of the professional positive thinkers, life coaches, celebrity judges populating fit-for-export American TV. So Tony Robbins, Dr Phil, Judge Mary Anne Gun and so forth... and for the effort to dissuade others from succumbing to victim mentality presents a rich vein of core business.

What we see here in this example is of course victim mentality being counter posed... and the blaming of others for one's own ills be counter posed to responsibility, so politicization of victimization marks a departure of personal responsibility, so there is a kind of psychologizing and pathologizing of activism really that takes place here. And also this notion of this 'one is dealt cards in life', so your place in the scheme of things is a matter of chance. So there is this anti-sociological, heuristic characteristic to anti-victimism that is very strong and obvious if you like.

The virtues of renouncing victimhood are also very visibly extolled in the 'victim panic tracks' and I draw that term from Mark Davis, produced by right wing think tanks such as London Civitas. Civitas dedicates itself to combating 'the ever looming threat that political-correctness may transform civil society into a victocracy', so victocracy where we are governed by the victims, so citizens take up victim identity instead of taking personal responsibility, seeking special treatment through false claims that they are systemically disadvantaged, in this way stopping the proper workings of market freedoms and meritocracy. Larry Elder who is an American conservative pundit and his book is called something like "9 things you can't say in America", I think the main title of the book is a 'nation of victims' so Larry Elder coins this ...the term 'victocrats' for groups "who blame all their ill, problems and

concerns on other people.” And again, all this sort of psychologizing, pathologising depiction of radical politics. But there is a further example, I draw this from one of these 1990s critiques of victim feminism, this is one by Rene Denfeld.

And she writes “let’s face it being a victim ourselves is often far easier than taking responsibility for those aspects of our lives we can control” so again victim identity and responsibility are put as being at odds with each other, you know its implied here that there is something rather easy about victim identity, that in this society if you have been victimized and you want to bring this to light, that’s a really easy thing to do and people will shower you with sympathy, people are just rushing to hear your story of victimization, they want to empower you. I would, suggest that actually the response is the opposite of that and in fact these sorts of claims are met with anti-victimism and this is the aspect of contemporary victim politics that we need to be alert to and we need to be cautious to not perpetuate it in our own work if you like.

So further on this question is where we find anti-victimism? Rather than being confined to venues of conservative political expression the virtues of renouncing victimhood and the *société victimale* that’s Baudrillard’s term are also strongly extolled in venues that progressive political engagement among radical thinkers and public intellectuals in the adjacent spheres of academia and social justice movement politics.

So what Gudrun Dahl calls the ‘agents not victims trope’ is strongly evident in the academic humanities and shifts away from the language of victimhood and towards the language of agency visible within human rights advocacy, development politics and in the venues of indigenous politics and policy, where particular population such as victims of human rights abuses, the laboring subjects of globalized neoliberal capital, capitalism, indigenous political actors are exhorted to identify with positive forward-looking agency instead of backward looking victimhood.

Now in terms of my concern with anti-victimism broadly and especially with its presence within the humanities, my focus in my book is on the presence of anti-victimism in feminism. So feminism features prominently right across the field of textual hostilities against the notion of victim occupying an ambiguous position as target, critique and proponent of anti-victim discourse. So feminism is a principal target of conservative anti-victimism, it is routinely held up as the prime exemplar of the ills of victimism. According to our friends at Civitas for example, civil society and its free market have been brought to the brink by victocracies, ultra-feminists and their tenacious but entirely fictional claim that gendered inequality and systems of masculine dominance actually exist in liberal capitalist societies.

So these sorts of depictions of feminist politics as being steeped in fictions of gendered victimhood, as institutionally dominant and pervasive, these kinds of depictions have never gone uncontested by feminists and accordingly feminism is also prominent as a site for critiquing conservative anti-victimism. Such critiques have focused on the ways these kinds of depictions of feminism promote an anti-feminist backlash, a revenge of mainstream values against the gains made by women’s movements across the West. Surprisingly however, this line of critique tends to enjoin textual hostilities against the notion of victim. So against this sort of backlash depiction of feminism as victimism, feminists have tended to declare “we are not victim feminists”. Now this response challenges the idea that all feminists are victimists, but it leaves the kernel of anti-victimism - the idea that the notion of victim

is harmful and gives rise to problematic identifications, attachments and practices - it leaves that undisturbed.

So some examples and of course these are very brief examples I'm not going providing you if you like with a full analysis, but I just want to indicate what I mean say the presence of anti-victimism in feminism. So in 1993 in an interview Judith Butler makes quite a significant statement when she's asked about the future of feminism, she sort of puts the path of feminism moving beyond the paradigm of victimization. Carol Ronai talks about victim identity as disempowering, that we need to get away from this victim identity that disempowers us, that stops us from being able to see our own power.

Ratna Kapur talks about victims as unable to accommodate multi-layered experience so if you're using the term victim to describe yourself or others or if you are coming close to that or if you can be seen to be doing that, then your narrowing down your account of experience.

Rachel Hall talks about the need for feminism to let go of the abstract figure of woman as victims. Ira Gruber (26:07) is an American law professor and she takes up a particular post-structuralist feminist critique of feminist anti-rape politics. She says anti-rape feminism is characterized by myopic focus on women as victims. So the sort of anti-victim claim as you probably can see clearly here is a key point that is made in intra-feminist critique. Saying 'those feminists over there have got it wrong there doing victimism and we need to move beyond this' ...so these sort of reflect the third aspect of feminism's ambiguous position in relation to anti-victimism as well as being a target and a critic of conservative anti-victimism, feminism has also been a key venue for articulating anti-victim discourse. In contemporary feminism rejecting the notion the victim is giving rise to reductive feminist identifications of women with woundedness, passivity, oppression and innocence has become common place. Even among feminists who in other moments are interested in polysemy and resignification there is a kind of consensus that the words victim, victimhood, victimization are incurably connotative of passivity, helplessness, dependence, and innocence.

Now a large and diverse body of feminist work that critiques the theme of victimhood feminist theory and politics seeking to move feminism beyond victimhood. This work primarily assumes the form of intra-feminist critique, so it's launched from a position that is critical of feminism but as Butler describes, is still in and of feminism. And this body of work is what I focus on in my book. I analyze a wide selection of feminist texts that critique the notion of 'victim' probing their conception of and objections to victim identity and victim politics and analysing these in relation to the motifs of conservative anti-victimism, which I term neoliberal victim theory foregrounding the role of neo-liberal values in contemporary victim discourse.

And overall I find that there is considerable overlap between feminist and neoliberal depictions of the victim problem and that feminists have ceded considerable ground to neoliberal values and the contemporary meaning of victimhood. While popular press critiques of victim feminism are very deliberately wedded to neoliberal conceptions of the ideal citizen, scholarly feminist critiques of the theme of victimhood instead demonstrate the circumstance that David Harvey described as and I quote "vulnerability to incorporation into the neoliberal fold or the making of analyses and

interventions that unwittingly echo and support the values and culture syntax of neoliberalism”.

So I argue that the only generally progressive engagement with the theme of victimhood in feminism has actually come from anti-racist and postcolonial feminist critiques which is not so much espouse the movement beyond victimhood as advance critique of the way themes of victimhood and agency are racialised at the junction of feminism and imperialism with agency problematically marking empowered feminine whiteness.

Though originally prompted by anti-racist and post-colonial challenges to western feminist universalism scholarly western feminist critiques of the notion of victim tend to be characterized by more strongly by the agency affirming rhetoric and anti-victim motifs of neoliberal victim theory than they are by the task of interrogating the racialization and other intersecting forms of identificatory particularization of victimhood and agency within and beyond feminine discourse. So that's sort of, I guess you don't have to read the book now, right? I just told you what I argue, but that's sort of what I'm basically trying to put across in my analysis that's what I find. Now in the book I refer to anti-victim discourse as neoliberal victim theory and I argue that NVT has 3 signature features, so what I'd like to do just in the remainder of the talk is talk about these 3 signature features.

There is 'victim bad- agent good' formulation, an ungainly phrase I know but it kind of captures what goes on in anti-victimism. There is secondly the pattern of reverse victimology and thirdly the motif of resentment. All of these features are strongly present in popular press critiques of victim feminism, which use the notion of victim as a venue for introducing neoliberal values into feminist discourse. Which is why I dub them neoliberal feminism. In scholarly feminist critiques of notion of the victim on the other hand these features of neo liberal victim theory are present particularly the first and the third but there present quite ambiguously, as a result I argue of a lapse in theoretical caution in the handling of the theme of victimhood, a problematic but largely unwitting trafficking in the anti-victim discourse is established in neoliberal victim theory.

So neoliberal victim theory is characterized first and foremost by victim blaming conception of victimization as subjective and psychological, rather than social and political. According to this conception victimization does not so much happen to someone as arise from ones inner self through the having of a victim personality, through the making of bad choices, through inadequate practice of personal vigilance and risk management, through the failure to practice the rigorous discipline of positive thinking. This way of knowing victimization transforms social vulnerability into personal responsibility erasing the social foundations of suffering in order to mask rising inequality and making it seem logical to regard victims of poverty, inequality, discrimination and violence as the authors of their own suffering.

The concept of social suffering is arising from individual fault and is ameliorable through individual self-improvement is most clearly active in the context of neoliberal welfare reform where the requirement of public assistance is thoroughly discursively constituted as a personal failing, rather than as an effect of embedded socio-economic inequality exacerbated by fiscal austerity. But the idea of social suffering indicates

inner victim mentality and failed risk management on the sufferers part is active wherever the rubric of personal responsibility prevails and my analysis attends to the way feminist issues, especially gendered violence and economic inequality, have been re-conceptualized around the anti-victim rubric of personal choice and responsibility.

So in this book, in my book, I refer to the values expressed in the neoliberal redefinition of victimhood broadly as 'victim-bad agent-good' formulation. It's really easy to participate in this formulation without explicitly ascribing to a conception of victimhood is self made, namely when we situate agency including the notion of constrained agency over victimhood as the seat of personal or analytical promise and possibility. Pairing derogation of victimhood with celebration of agency as the category of personal and or analytical virtue affirms what is essential to neoliberal victim theory, which is victim-agent dichotomy, or the understanding of victimhood as agency's opposite and demise.

Now at this point I just want to put there that if we think of neoliberalism as sort of an inequality producing machine, we see that discourses that pathologize complaint against inequality are really vital to the workings of this machine. So that's basically what I'm purposing, saying neo liberalism doesn't just incidentally take place in neoliberal times its really vital to the operation if you like of neoliberalism.

So drawing on Lyotard concept on the 'different' and using the example of rape law I argue that one of the problems with the 'victim-bad agent-good' formulation is that it blinds us to instances in which recognition as a victim is progressive and it blinds us to instances in which recognition as an agent is far from liberating. And here I draw for example on, well traditional rape law which does indeed see woman not as vulnerable to rape but as the agents of rape. It's through the victims behavior, did she secure her own safety, did she do enough to communicate non-consent and so forth. This sort of spotlighting of the victim on the part of traditional and contemporary rape law is a real example of the way in which being regarded as an agent are can produce a different or make it impossible for your victimization to be made visible. Most of us think of agency and identifying somebody's agency as this virtuous thing to do but I'm saying there are... I have given one example but there are many examples in which one can see identifying someone agency as a kind of, as cover up basically and not at all as a liberating gesture, that is really what I'm getting at, this sort of notion that we have I think of agency and liberation as coterminous somehow. I am trying to interrupt that.

So I pointed out that rape law primarily figures femininity as responsible agency. woman are responsible for avoiding rape, and the agency is not coterminous with liberation. So in neoliberal victim theory the rather uncompassionate conception of victimization is self-made, the idea that winners win and losers lose because they have in some sense chosen to do so. This fairly obviously evacuates sociological explanation of social suffering directly subverting progressive political efforts to make victimization through poverty, inequality, and discrimination and violence visible as collective and socio-economically embedded in an array of intersecting engines of social hierarchy and difference. But the concept of victimization as self-made is made more palatable because in neoliberal victim theory it's couched within an appealing narrative of liberation that's borrowed from the very forms of progressive politics neoliberal victim theory notionally subverts.

So the second primary feature of neoliberal victim theory - and this is what I am calling reverse victimology - is that it co-opts and reverses in order to rival and replace progressive narratives of liberation from established orthodoxy and structural oppression. So you see with that notion of victocracy and Civitas' critique of victocracy that's like their version of a structural critique, so that kind of borrow a left narrative of structural critique. Or critique of structural oppression. So neoliberal victim theory depicts society as awash with fraudulent claims to victim status and the state as held to ransom by victim politics promulgated by progressives, even as it is these depictions themselves in their putative self-evidence and sheer pervasiveness and not prolific victim claims that actually dominate. So neoliberal victim theory always assumes the form of an anti-establishment liberation narrative, in which we free ourselves from the yoke of oppression brought on by leftist political correctness and its power victims. And if you look at those 1990's critiques of victim feminism you see that they are actually arguing for women to liberate themselves from feminism. That's the logic of those texts.

So I developed a reading of this aspect of neoliberal victim theory is marking a form of reverse victimology, a reverse discourse that serves to reorganizing the way suffering and the sufferer is perceived, in which those claiming victim status for themselves or for others are recast as non-credible victimizers. Now as this feature of reverse victimology implies neoliberal victim theory doesn't actually move beyond victim politics instead articulating a new form of victim politics. Neoliberal victim theory self-presents as an effort to restore clarity about the genuine victimization, intensifying the perception of victim identity as peculiarly susceptible to fraudulent uses and engaging in what Caroline Dean calls the 'fashioning of the exemplary victim' or the articulation of the new attenuated criteria of ideal victimhood. In this way neoliberal victim theory draws upon and updates the semantic heritage of the word 'victim' in Christian theology, which figures the ideal victim as forgiving and compliant and the bad victim as angry, vengeful and politically threatening. So neoliberal victim theory remakes the distinction victim and victimizer into a distinction between the ideal genuine victim and the reviled figure of the power victim, a subject who plays the victim and blames others for their misfortune, undertaking activism and claiming unearned power on the basis of this fraudulent victim identity. Progressive political projects are blamed ... it's always feminism and anti-racism that are blamed for the rise of the power victim with progressive political actors and power victims alike portrayed as perniciously oppressive, destructive and victimizing. Somewhat paradoxically then the anti-victimist orientation of neoliberal victim theory leads to a new form of victim politics. Neoliberal victim theory impugns deserving power victims on behalf of deserving real victims. So to be real victimization must either take place at the hands of progressives and power victims for example through so-called reverse sexism or reverse racism, or else it needs to constitute a form of injury, loss or misfortune that stands out clearly from everyday life, that can be construed as an isolated event and not as evidence of the structure, the victim objectively occupying the position of pure innocence. So victims of perceived political correctness and the nanny state, victims objectively unforeseeable and preferably spectacular crime and disaster become the locus of legitimate victim talk along with subjects readily constructed as existing in an abject position of absolute oppression, notably non-western women. So I discuss in the book the way this kind of plugs into legitimation of the wars on terror and subjects easily identified with



wordless innocence thus excusable non-responsibility, such as children and the unborn fetus. In the book I refer to Baird's concept of child fundamentalism and anti-abortion politics in the US and the way this fits into this logic of anti-victimism. So in other words neoliberal victim theory doesn't move beyond or let go of the category of victim instead reorganizing in ways that we can track perception of who can and cannot be seen as a real and legitimate victim. And I suggest there is scope for analysis of how this plays out in relation to most political events and contexts. One can sort of deduce new things about where the concept of victim goes in the discourses at play.

The third primary feature of neoliberal victim theory is the motif of resentment with progressive political actors and the figure of the bad victim routinely depicted as being driven by resentment or as having succumbed to resentment. And resentment itself is construed as a form of toxic psychology that develops in response to suffering, real or imagined, one's own or that of others that produces a willed politicizing complaint about suffering. (44:06) or merely reflects neoliberal victim theory the victim problem is repeatedly linked to the psychology of resentment construed not only as an inability to let go of suffering but as a pathological, psychological attachment to suffering, that it is supposed to breed a colorful variety of character traits and political tendencies, willful mendacity and perpetual other blaming, toxic vengefulness through to undemocratic moralism and Manichean authoritarianism. So the motif of resentment always appears in the vein of diagnosis enabling neoliberal victim theory to adopt the clinical and quasi-clinical psychological knowledge lending authority to its value laden constructions of victim mentality, the victim personality and their political expression as victimism. The motif of resentment powerfully supports the personalizing, psychologizing and pathologizing turn that victim talk takes in the context of neoliberalism and in this way it is profoundly depoliticizing. This motif directs skepticism toward the inner feeling presumed to motivate collective and individual acts of politicizing victimization sponsoring the problematic and narrow depiction of progressive political projects as grounded in toxic emotion rather than in a credible account of power relations in the social world.

So of the features of neoliberal victim theory outlined here the motif of resentment is the most pervasive being strongly present on both sides on the permeable border between progressive and conservative depictions of the victim problem. Now in some of the texts I examined, namely critiques of feminism as a politics of 'ressentiment' in feminist political theory, Nietzsche's concept of 'ressentiment' or resentment is drawn on extensively to inform and authorize the diagnosis of feminists as negatively fixated on suffering and as harboring, as Wendy Brown puts it, "toxic resentments parading as radical critique". So my analysis closely examines this depiction of feminism and investigates Nietzsche's concept of 'resentiment', so I spent a lot of time in the last chapter going back to the Nietzschean text, so I weigh the way Nietzsche theorizes resentment against the diagnostic instrumentalization of Nietzsche's theory in feminist anti-victim discourse. I argue that Nietzsche's theory of ressentiment provides a way to conceptualize victim identity as actual a site of identificatory upheaval, rather than fixity. My reading of Nietzsche foregrounds the theme of asceticism or the way a political regime can preserve itself amidst counter-hegemonic threats by popularizing a victim blaming discourse that encourages subjective practices of, as Nietzsche puts it, self-discipline, self-surveillance and self-

overcoming. I observe the operation of asceticism, the use of victim blaming to return complainers to compliance quelling the threat that their rebellion poses to the established order. I observe that Nietzsche's account of the operation of asceticism bears a striking resemblance to the political tasks of neoliberal victim theory which is to deprive certain kinds of political plaintive credibility and authority to normalize and promote the victim blaming values of personal responsibility. So in other words, where I go with that Nietzschean analysis is that I argue that it is actually Nietzsche's discussion of asceticism and not diagnostic use of the concept of resentment as toxic psychology that provides the most useful Nietzschean resource for interpreting the dynamics of victim politics in the neoliberal era.

I'll give my final point now. So as part of the critical work that I undertake in this project I marshal and archive of alternative conceptions of the victim, so I draw from Nietzsche, Lyotard, anti-rape feminism among other resources, critical victimology is another one in order to show that using this concept of victim does not necessarily mean collapsing into this unthinking assertion of passivity that has become so strongly associated with that term. So my hope is that future engagement with the notion of victim will come from a place of strong cognizance of the politics of the language of victimhood as its taken shape in the neoliberal context. And I leave it there. Thanks for your attention.