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Out of Line: Populist Rhetoric, Immigration, and the Line-Standing Frame

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## Introduction

Populist movements are experiencing renewed support around the world. Apropos of our conference theme, these movements and their leaders rely on a belief that there is a true and justifiably entitled “people” that has been dispossessed by the arrival of foreigners who have not, and perhaps cannot, deserve political standing or its rewards (Canovan 1999, 5, 12).

Populist campaigns and rhetoric seek to limit opportunities for foreigners to enter a country and often also militate against the presence and enfranchisement of foreigners who are already inside the boundaries of the state. Their leaders and adherents treat as illegitimate the claims of those they regard as non-indigenous newcomers.

Indigenusness is a contestable genealogy and basis for entitlement. The construction of indigenusness and arguments that flow from claims of nativeness are complicated for many supporters and leaders of populist movements. First, there are basic factual challenges for most groups seeking to claim that they descend directly from the original people of the nation or have a claim to priorness. Particularly in the United States, there is very clear evidence that supporters of contemporary populist movements are not the indigenous occupants of the spaces they claim. Even in places where populists can prove a longer legacy, exclusive claims to indigenusness would be at best contestable. The second complication to the claims based on indigenusness is the questionable merit of a relationship between indigenusness and those claims. Political and social justice theories offer an array of norms for determining who is entitled to rule, in which ways, and to what ends. Firstness – the idea that whoever first makes a claim to a place, or even a society, is entitled to that place or society – has immense emotional appeal. But, firstness cannot always justify the conclusions that many nativists reach about who is or is not entitled to political goods.

In this essay, I will describe one means by which contemporary populist movements have managed to portray their adherents as indigenous and translate that constructed indigenusness into a set of social justice claims. Here I take as a given the importance of issue “framing” as a means of persuading people to think about an issue in a particular way (Lakoff 2004).

The political frame that has served to simultaneously stake claims to indigenusness and persuade people that indigenusness entitles them to political and distributive goods is the frame of line-standing and its antithesis, line-cutting. Deserving people wait in line and receive political goods in turn. Undeserving people push their way into line and cut in front of deserving

others. Below I will discuss how populist rhetoric, including but not limited to nativist rhetoric, dovetails with the frame of line-standing. I will then discuss the case of immigration in more detail and offer a few features of the line-standing frame that shed light on what we might expect the effects of its use to be for politics. This is part of a larger (brand new) project that (I think) is about the principle of first-come-first-served (FCFS) and distributive justice.

## Populism and its Nativist Discontents

Long prior to the populist groundswell that yielded an enormous upset in the nomination and electoral success of Donald Trump, murmurings of nativist discontent became evident to those who were paying attention and able to decode them. A swath of the US population was angry about immigration, taxes, social welfare spending, identity politics, and other causes that the center and far left have championed. The first inkling that many had about the potential political power of this reactionary movement came when Tea Party candidates started to win primaries and then elections. Tea Party rhetoric combined economic populism with nativist anti-immigrant sentiments.

Although to many the Tea Party movement seemed to be primarily about taxation and social spending, the fundamental importance of nativism to the Tea Party trajectory came as no surprise to scholars of populism who anticipate that populist rhetoric will conjoin economic and nativist claims. Populist movements are widely described as making a “distinction between the corrupt, metropolitan urban elite and the pure indigenous, rural people” (Mudde 2004, 550). In this way, the proper sovereign people is sandwiched between equally illegitimate elites and non-native immigrants. Indigenesness, a claim about being the first and therefore rightful people of a nation, is critical to many versions of populist anger.

Among the means that recent populist movements have leveraged to attract adherents and express their goals are political frames that portray a political and distributive system **in which people wait in lines for various goods**. In populist renderings of a distributive system that relies on waiting in lines, it is almost always the case that there is a threat or instance of a group cutting in line, causing others to have to wait an unfairly long time while line-cutters gain access without having to wait their turn.<sup>1</sup>

## Three Examples of Line-Standing Frames

Line-standing rhetoric figures prominently in sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild’s ethnography of Louisiana Tea Party populists (and likely Trump voters). In her research, Hochschild sought to learn what motivates people who have been harmed by unregulated capitalism to rally and

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<sup>1</sup> Among the very sparse literature that exists on line-standing in politics is Katharine Young’s discussion of the line as a metaphor for distributing public goods. (Young 2016). In this piece, Young identifies line-cutting as an activity that can undermine by granting unfair access to both privileged and unprivileged persons, depending on the context. This is consistent with a populist argument that would equally object to line-cutting by elites and by people perceived to be outsiders looking to appropriate resources that they do not deserve. In this paper I am focused on the latter – people who are regarded as displacing deserving indigenous persons who are the rightful beneficiaries of public goods that are instead going to outsiders.

vote against candidates, policies, and parties that seek to rein in corporate excess. In the book, she concludes that many people who vote against their own material interests and in favor of right-wing, anti-government, populist programs do so because they feel that Democrats and others who propose social welfare programs are supporting policies that allow unfair line-cutting. In this way of thinking, the admission of immigrants (legally or, by neglect of border controls, illegally) ensures that there is a population of workers willing to accept work conditions and pay that native-born workers cannot and will not accept. Similarly, affirmative action hands out jobs and promotions to people based on identity rather than traditional markers of deservingness such as seniority, taking those opportunities from people who have been patiently waiting and accruing qualifications. Meanwhile, federal and state workers help themselves to subsidized cars and good salaries as “average” workers fall further and further behind. Hochschild did years of ethnographic work including interviews in which she sought and received confirmation that the line-standing frame reflects how her subjects think and feel about their plight in relation to the fate of others. She writes:

You see people *cutting in line ahead of you!* You’re following the rules. They aren’t. As they cut in, it feels like you’re being moved back.... Some of them are black. Through affirmative action plans, pushed by the federal government, they are being given preference for places in colleges and universities, apprenticeships, jobs, welfare payments, and free lunches, and they hold a certain secret place in people’s minds, as we see below. Women, immigrants, refugees, public sector workers – where will it end...These are opportunities you would have loved in your day – and either you should have had them when you were young or the young shouldn’t be getting them now. It’s not fair (Hochschild 2016, 150).

Hochschild’s work echoes many of the thoughts expressed in Kathy Cramer’s book, *The Politics of Resentment*, that chronicles the presence of a rural consciousness in which a sense of displacement by urban elites is critical to the development of resentment and alienation. Cramer’s subjects feel a similar if not identical sense of moving backwards and losing their place. Susan McWilliams also expresses a version of this mentality in an essay for *The Nation*, McWilliams writes, “In Hell’s Angels, the gonzo journalist [Hunter S Thompson] wrote about left-behind people... Thompson concluded that the most striking thing about them was not their hedonism but their “ethic of total retaliation” against a technologically advanced and economically changing America in which they felt they’d been counted out and *left behind*.”<sup>2</sup>

Line-standing rhetoric is also echoed in recent campaign slogans. Italy’s newly prominent populist party’s promises that “We put Italians first – first in housing, first in welfare, first in education.”<sup>3</sup> The catchphrase repeats one of Donald Trump’s repeated assurances that he will

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thenation.com/article/this-political-theorist-predicted-the-rise-of-trumpism-his-name-was-hunter-s-thompson/> (Italics added for emphasis.)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/11/08/560874794/in-italy-right-wing-politicians-set-their-sights-on-parliament>

“put America first.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the French populist party, National Front, has recently changed its slogan from “France for French people” to “French people first.”<sup>5</sup>

Sentiments about who should “come first” figure particularly prominently in debates about immigration politics. In the US, many of these debates have centered around “amnesty” for undocumented immigrants.<sup>6</sup> Shortly after the pro-regularization DREAMer social movement peaked, a rival social movement gathered momentum and was eventually subsumed under the umbrella of the Tea Party. The anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Tea party and the diverse constituencies it united reframed very old xenophobic impulses in the United States as a call for immigrants to “go to the back of the line” or not to “cut in line.” Although there are now countless line-standing references made by politicians and pundits about immigration, for the sake of brevity I will offer one illustration and then move on to analyzing the concept of the queue as a frame. In an NPR feature, naturalized citizen, Miguel Gonzalez, is described by journalist David Greene as sharing the common ground of this issue – concern about line-cutting - with a white supremacist. Both are worried that immigrants seeking amnesty or simply to live in the US without proper documents are cutting ahead of documented immigrants. Gonzalez says:

I am a citizen. I am retired. I already put into the fund for my pension, for my Medicare. I am not using it now. But I am hoping that when I get old I get some benefits. But I been contributing with 45 years of my life in this country. But people come in from outside, *zero seniority* in this country. And already have all these benefits. Medicaid. It is something the government needs to be careful.<sup>7</sup>

Gonzalez is careful to add that he thinks hate is not an appropriate response. But the similarity between his view and the view of openly racist anti-immigrant organizations is striking.

### Parsing Examples of Line-Standing Frames

Each of these examples introduces the idea of a line or a queue as well as some expectation of what constitutes a legitimate or an illegitimate ordering of distribution for very specific or very general political goods. The subjects of Hochschild, Cramer and McWilliams’ research feel dispossessed. A social psychologist might quickly label this a form of relative deprivation, which describes the desires we develop when we see other people get things that we do not have. But the specific grievance they are expressing is not focused solely on what they do not have. Some of their research subjects are not even particularly deprived compared to average Americans. Their grievances are focused on their perception that others have zoomed ahead of them, or

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<sup>4</sup> <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/351320-trump-i-will-always-put-america-first>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/02/france-national-front-marine-le-pen-fascism-antisemitism-xenophobia/>

The author of this piece notes that the change was an attempt to soften the xenophobic overtones of its previous slogan and public face. As I will lay out, line-standing is an important means by which xenophobic impulses and intentions can be framed as neutral and non-racist.

<sup>6</sup> In Europe, the claims of refugees and asylum seekers have drawn similarly intense attention from nativists.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.npr.org/2017/10/30/560767446/in-shelbyville-tenn-proud-to-be-white-and-hate-is-not-the-solution?sc=17&f=3&utm\\_source=iosnewsapp&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=app](http://www.npr.org/2017/10/30/560767446/in-shelbyville-tenn-proud-to-be-white-and-hate-is-not-the-solution?sc=17&f=3&utm_source=iosnewsapp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=app) (itals added for emphasis).

simply ahead of where they think they should be, on the path to acquiring important goods. Consequently, undeserving people have achieved the American Dream without performing one of the key pre-requisite tasks: waiting their turn. By placing this experience into the frame of line-standing, the relative deprivation is redescribed as a very specific form of injustice, often unfairness. The subjects of Hochschild, Cramer and McWilliams' work share this frame: they all use spatial and temporal language to describe the "haves" as unfairly advancing while they, the "have nots" are passed by, stand still, or move backwards.

Likewise, a line is described by each of the political slogans mentioned above. Implied in the idea of putting Italians, Americans, or French people first is that after the Italian, American, and French people have their turn, there are others behind them waiting for their turn. However, if outsiders were to displace Italians, Americans, or French people, it would represent a violation of a line or queue in which those nations' people were supposed to be prioritized. Trump's main campaign slogan provides a useful contrast. Make America Great Again (MAGA) is nostalgic but invokes no sense of others waiting for their turn after Americans are made great. It is not even explicit in MAGA that America is being compared to and deemed greater than other nations. It is simply a sentimental appeal to an imagined great American past and America's greatness potential. The "America First" and "MAGA" frames can co-exist without undermining each other. Here I am interested primarily in why the line-standing frame comes into use and its distinctive role in framing political stances and policies.

Finally, naturalized US citizen, Miguel Gonzalez, and his political anthesis, a white supremacist, express a commonly-cited sentiment about immigration politics in the US: that undocumented immigrants and others trying to enter the country on an express track to social welfare benefits and citizenship are pushing ahead of people like themselves who patiently wait and endure the hoops that one must jump through in order to immigrate, naturalize, or simply succeed. Gonzalez and the white supremacist have citizenship, so they are not worried about whether someone is going to push ahead of them in line to naturalize. In fact, as long as the US government processes paperwork in a timely fashion, there is no queue to naturalize and citizenship is not a naturally scarce good. Theirs is a more abstract concern that an important process of waiting in line and fulfilling different requirements along the way is being undermined. Implicit in Gonzalez's statement is a worry about disorder replacing orderly lines and about freeloading replacing the particular for of dues-paying that is associated with waiting for something valuable.

The prevalence of line-standing rhetoric extends beyond these examples. It appears in debates about affirmative action, welfare, political candidates who seek prominent offices without the slow dues-paying ascent that we expect of politicians, and other areas of political contestation. One might even argue that age-specific resistance to the high school activists organized after the Parkland School follows the logic of line-standing because so much ire has been directed at them for being underage. In the sections that follow, I will offer an overview of line-standing in immigration rhetoric and then discuss it in the context of distributive justice.

## Line-Standing Frames in Immigration

As far as I have been able to discern, the idea that there is a line in which immigrants wait to enter the US, or wait to naturalize, gained purchase relatively recently and gained prominence only in the last 12 years or so. It became a staple of Tea Party rhetoric as that movement took shape. But, as recently as 1996, when there was both presidential and congressional support for anti-immigrant measures such as the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act and the restrictionist elements of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, one cannot readily find almost any public rhetoric that focuses on whether immigrants were cutting in line or ought to go to the back of a line. Those phrases proliferated in immigration rhetoric starting no earlier than 2005.

By the early 2000s, pro-immigrant advocates had been claiming for quite some time that it is unfair to exclude long-term residents from citizenship.<sup>8</sup> At that time, anti-immigrant forces responded with a new claim that went beyond complaints about undocumented immigrants being undesirable, stealing jobs, or breaking laws. The claim was that politically incorporating undocumented immigrants would be unfair to the large numbers of persons who sought to or had immigrated with proper papers and had been patiently waiting either to enter the country or naturalize for a long period of time. This marked a radical departure from the anti-illegal immigration response of the 1980s, when the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) amnesty was seen as a way to accommodate undocumented persons and seasonal workers who had lived and worked in the US for a period of years.

Juxtaposed in this way, even the most innocent undocumented immigrants, DREAMers, posed a challenge – give legal status to long term residents who have been here since they were children – to which their opponents responded by claiming that cutting in a citizenship line was fundamentally unfair to immigrants who played by the rules. One temporal claim about fairness was countered with an opposing temporal claim cleverly based in a different interpretation of the same temporal principle.

The consequences of the line-cutting frame have been transformative for anti-immigrant politics, not just because the line-cutting argument adopts the same terms (temporality) used by pro-immigrant advocates, but also because it claims to oppose unfairness and rule breaking rather than immigration and immigrants. Queues link distributive fairness to ideas of status, hierarchy, norm enforcement, and even property rights. Persuading people that an immigration queue exists has enabled a movement that historically has relied on explicitly xenophobic and racist claims to speak the language of fairness and neutral liberalism. In the eyes of those who think there is a queue for citizenship or a larger queue for the rewards of citizenship, DREAMers and other pro-immigrant activists seek to intentionally subvert an established principle of fairness. Even in a post-2016 climate that is growing ever more tolerant of overtly racialized politics, it is to the advantage of policy advocates to be able to frame their policy goals as being fair rather than racist. Fealty to a recognizable and seemingly impartial distributive principle

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<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of shorthand, elsewhere I have called the idea that a time period of residence can create a political claim to citizenship *jus temporis* (Cohen 2011).

enables skittish or undecided citizens to attach to an argument that is hostile to immigrants, perhaps without even recognizing how hostile it is. This is one reason that queue-talk has not only succeeded as a frame for anti-immigration activists but has also succeeded in other realms such as those described by Hochschild and, to a lesser extent, Kathy Cramer. Hochschild in particular enumerates a set of liberal policy objectives that advocate for previously disenfranchised groups such as women, sexual minorities, racial minorities, the disabled, and immigrants as some of the very policies that white working and middle-class Americans see as cutting in line.

I turn now to look more closely at what line-standing and queuing mean and why this is a powerful and successful frame for the purpose of nativists as well as specific effects the frame has on those who adopt it.

### Line-Standing as a Distributive Principle

Sociologist Leon Mann, who studies an array of non-political queues, tells us that “[A] queue is a line of persons waiting in turn to be served, according to order of arrival” (Mann 344). Not all waits take place in queues. In many cases, one may endure a waiting period in which one’s receipt of the good is not contingent on another person receiving it ahead of you.<sup>9</sup> Mann goes on to say that “...the act of queuing involves more than the acquisition of a right to prior service because of earlier arrival. To validate this priority, a person must also spend time in the queue, not only to show latecomers that he occupies a given position, but also to demonstrate that his right to priority is confirmed by unquestionable willingness to undergo further suffering to get the commodity” (Mann 344).

As a political frame, line-standing serves three purposes. It establishes a principle for distributing goods and political power. It defines the category of people who are eligible for these goods and power. Finally, line-standing defines how the distributive principles it implies will be applied. Each of these three purposes relies on the principle that the first in, or the first to come, ought to be the first out of the queue, or the first served (FCFS). In the language of distributive justice, this elevates temporally prior claims over temporally subsequent claims. All lines reward priorness. When we use the word “priority” we may intend to refer to a generic hierarchy of values. However, the most literal meaning of the word is temporal and refers to who or what ought to be first.

One of the most famous invocations of FCFS as it pertains to distributive justice is contained in Robert Nozick’s *Anarchy State and Utopia*. The argument that firstness entitles a person or entity to land or resources because they held those goods before anyone else appropriated them relies on reasoning similar to the reasoning that Nozick uses to derive principle of “justice in acquisition.” Justice in acquisition dictates that we can legitimately and justly be entitled to anything that was not previously owned. The first to come to the thing being claimed has the

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<sup>9</sup> I have addressed non-contingent waiting periods elsewhere and here address myself only to lines in which one must wait for others to receive the good.

legitimate claim on that thing. Thereafter, all claims to ownership of that thing can only be legitimate if they follow rules of his second principle, just transfer.

In important ways it should not be surprising that the line-standing frame shares a core principle with Nozickean libertarianism. In fact, first FCFS is a perfectly reasonable means with which to realize important elements of liberal theories of justice. Within a queue that abides by FCFS, people experience what many generally describe as impartial treatment. Once one enters a queue, FCFS dictates that no ascribed characteristics affect one's standing. One's race, social class, gender, or other characteristics do not bear on how they receive things from the queue. The first to arrive in the queue will be the first to receive the good for which the queue-members are waiting. If the queue forms, and is later rearranged to privilege people based on any characteristic other than their arrival time, it is no longer a FCFS distribution. This doesn't mean that entry into the queue is determined impartially, or that everyone from all social groups can manage to enter and remain in the queue. But, once in a queue, people tend to cling extremely tenaciously to the idea that they are entitled to their position and others are entitled to their positions. If you do not believe me, try cutting the queue in the airport security line on your way to or from this conference. Even if you offer a plea about when your flight takes off, perhaps with a few adorable children in tow as props, you will almost certainly be on the receiving end of many people's righteous ire.

Line-standing is also a comfortable fit with liberalism insofar as it offers a loose sense that people in the queue have invested or made a form of effort to receive the good that the queue is distributing. As I have written elsewhere, time is attributed forms of political value within liberal democracies (Cohen 2018, Ch 3). This value helps commensurate that which is otherwise incommensurable. (Cohen 2018, Ch 4-5). By waiting in a line, people demonstrate their valuation of that for which they wait. The time they spend is an investment, without which one might be able to say that the good had been devalued by not requiring people seeking it to pay a proper price for it.<sup>10</sup> This reassures anyone observing the distributive aspect of a society that distributive contestation rewards only people who deserve the good in question. For example, the attachment to the belief that a more seasoned political candidate who has "paid her dues" ought to be nominated before a more junior but otherwise highly qualified candidate expresses an underlying conviction that waiting one's turn is a part of earning the right to be a candidate. The belief that waiting imposes a cost on the person waiting, thus demonstrating that the person properly values the thing they are waiting for, holds true even when that good is not scarce and could be available to everyone who seeks it. Naturalization requires an in-residence waiting period in almost every country in the world, even though citizenship itself is not a naturally scarce good and could be awarded to anyone who is otherwise qualified without a waiting period.

Because line-standing is more directly relational than discrete independent waiting periods, it requires that we observe rules and are observed obeying the rules. Perceived or actual

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<sup>10</sup> Gray 2009 has an excellent discussion of the ways in which people come to think of their place in a queue as a form of property.

violations of line rules threaten the social ordering of the what is a very simple but rigid distributive system. Sociologists and psychologists have studied queuing behavior extensively in order to determine the informal or unstated expectations generally held by people in queues. For the purposes of this memo, one observation stands out. When queuing violations occur, members of the queue will hold responsible fellow line-standers who allowed the violation as much as or perhaps even more than they will hold responsible any formal authority figure who is in charge of the queue. Hochschild notes this in her discussion of the fact that her subjects felt betrayed not just by the state, but also by all who sympathize with line-cutters. (Hochschild 2016, 153). I take this to mean that immigration politics generate (or exacerbate) antipathy that is projected from those who accept the line-cutting frame onto those who they perceive to support policies such as amnesty that they believe violate a queue. Put more generally, I hypothesize that line-cutting frames contribute to partisan antipathy.

Following Lakoff's argument in *Moral Politics*, line-standing is a particularly potent frame for conservatives. This stems from the fact that the line-standing frame encourages people to view themselves in hierarchical relationships, with some at the head and some at the end of the line. Such a view is consistent with the world view of someone who are drawn to hierarchy, especially if the hierarchy also contains a simple temporal principle for mobility. It's almost a direct replication of Lakoff's observation that respecting one's elders is a popular guiding principle for conservatives (Lakoff 1996, Ch 2). In Lakoff's telling of "strict father morality," the world should be well-ordered and disciplined, governed by a patriarch whose subjects obey rules without questioning them. As one becomes more senior, one gains freedoms by virtue of that seniority.

## Queues as Boundary Setting

Finally, to return to the core claim of populism, I will discuss how queues define the category of people who will be eligible to benefit from the distributive system that FCFS delineates. This brings us back to the subject of nativism. At the outset, eligibility seems like a non-question in queuing. The category of people eligible to receive the good being distributed are the people who enter the queue. People who want to enter the line will invest the effort required to get into it as early as possible and to hold their place for as long as is necessary to receive the good being distributed. And people who enter the line very early will receive the good sooner than those who enter later. A queue creates a miniature social system in which questions of indigenouness, firstness, or nativeness, which are ordinarily quite complex and contested, can be presented as radically simple, uncontested, and uncontestable. The most important variable in the distributive process of the queue is firstness, and firstness is a function of joining the queue. Even if one enters the queue as a group, for example as a family seeking to immigrate and naturalize might, one can be logged in the precise order in which one arrives, as can every other individual and family that seeks to immigrate and naturalize. One can be placed into a very clear hierarchy behind earlier arrivers and in front of latecomers.

The simplicity with which nativeness is ascribed within a queue is belied by the fact that most queues involve gatekeeping that offers different people differentiated access to the queue.

Line-standing frames excise some people from the distributive system entirely by preventing them from entering the line or limiting the supply of goods being distributed in a way that makes waiting in the line fruitless. It isn't that difficult to imagine that FCFS advantage people who are proximate to the location where the queuing is occurring. Proximity may be physical, in the case of a physical queue. But it might also be the case that knowledge provides entrée. If entering the queue in a timely fashion requires special knowledge that is not universally available, those with access to that information will be advantaged. Just being aware of the different types of visas that are available to immigrate to an affluent country is knowledge many people have no access to. Applying for one of those visas requires literacy and bureaucratic skills that many do not possess. Paying a lawyer for help may also be beyond the reach of those same persons.

Also advantaged will be people who are available to get into and remain in the line for as long as is necessary to receive the good. If one cannot afford to wait for a visa, for example because one fears for her life or has no way to provide for herself, one cannot afford to enter the country, or at least to do so legally.

And, perhaps most significantly, if entering the queue requires any specific characteristics, those who possess those characteristics will be advantaged over those who do not. Being well-educated, of the right race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc. can be a requirement to enter a queue. Asylum seekers sometimes benefit from geographic proximity and resources. For these reasons, queues that proceed in an orderly and fair-seeming fashion from the perspective of those in the queue may not seem nearly as fair to anyone who encountered structural obstacles to entering the line, or to entering in a timely fashion.

More salient, though, are questions about whether FCFS is a defensible distributive principle. There is more contained in that question than could be plausibly covered in a memo. In brief, FCFS is almost certainly a terrible distributive principle in politics. It cannot accommodate any normative nuance. Even Nozick, who uses it to ground justice-in-acquisition, pairs FCFS with justice-in-transfer. The only other contemporary theorist of justice who I have observed applying FCFS is Michael Sandel, who complains in *What Money Can't Buy* that paid line-standers for access to goods as varied as facetime with a Congressional representative and baseball tickets monetizes what should not be monetized. However, Sandel never actually defends FCFS or the idea that spending time in a line is a fair way to gain access to valuable goods. FCFS is only a good way to distribute when we have no other means of discerning who is more deserving of a good. In this sense it is closer to a lottery than an actual principle of distributive justice.

A very simple rejoinder directly to nativists wielding the line-standing/queue-cutting frame would be to point out that, unless they are direct descendants of indigenous persons, they are not in a position to defend any queue that doesn't prioritize all indigenous claims over the claims of settlers and their descendants. Another simple rejoinder would involve pointing out that line-standing doesn't accomplish what populists actually want, which is a flattening so radical that every member of the "true" *demos* is offered equal and identical access to basic

political goods. Line-standing means waiting and waiting means some people, regardless of how hard they work or how loyal there are, will be advantaged over others. But, because this memo has focused on line-standing as a frame, undermining the principle of FCFS won't get us very far. Frames operate below the level of consciousness where we make decisions about our normative commitments. The real work lies in reframing the distributive questions that have been framed using line-standing rhetoric.

## Conclusion

Populist nativism is never entirely absent from democratic politics. But it also waxes and wanes in prominence. Starting in the early 2000s, anti-immigration rhetoric adopted a highly successful frame describing immigration as a queue that undocumented immigrants, amnesties, and other procedures and processes violate. This frame has proven durable because it is capacious enough to allow people who do not think of themselves as anti-immigrant or racist to feel comfortable joining a cause that is anti-immigrant and racist. Because many people assume that the principle of first-come-first-served is inherently fair, framing distribution in terms of line-standing recasts many circumstances that are not just in a way that makes them sound just. Conversely, framing distribution in terms of line-standing recasts many circumstances that are just in a way that makes them sound unjust. Line-standing frames encourage some people to think of nativism and other forms of exclusion as fair because nativism is premised on a certain understanding of what being "first" actually means and what it entitles someone to. Line-standing frames therefore encourage some people to think of affirmative action or immigration amnesties as unfair because they mistakenly regard those programs as violating line-standing and "firstness" principles. Furthermore, the immigration version of the frame aligns with a larger populist iteration of the frame in which immigrants are only one of myriad groups that have been cutting in line, ahead of more deserving people.