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The Resistible Rise of Sarah Palin: Continuity and Paradox in the American Right Wing[1]

Magali Sarfatti Larson, Douglas Porpora

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† The title borrows from (and alludes to) Bertolt Brecht's play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui.* Editor's note: This article is part of a special section in this issue entitled "Sociological Commentary on Contemporary Issues and Events." For other entries in the section, see **Best (2011)**, **Etzioni (2011)**, and **Repogle (2011)**.

PDF

Abstract

Sarah Palin clearly holds a powerful appeal for a right-wing constituency although even her most fervent followers may doubt that she is electable. This article examines the basis of her appeal. We argue that it can be summed up as an appeal to American authenticity, which consists of several elements: the valorization of small town ordinary life takes second place to faith and religious commitment; an equal faith in American exceptionality implies that Americans should never be apologetic about their country and never waver in their belief in its special greatness; the final elements are a foundational libertarian creed and a peculiar brand of right-wing populism. However, for all her affinities with classical right-wing sentiment, Sarah Palin, we argue, brings something new to the mix: a genuinely maverick right-wing feminism. That is why in the end, we call the Palin phenomenon a paradoxical one.

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