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# The Public Eye



Blood and Vanishing Topsoil: American Ecofascism Past, Present, and in the Coming Climate Crisis | Battle with Bullets: Advancing a Vision of Civil War  
New England's Joe Arpaio: How a Massachusetts Sheriff Became the Far Right's Perfect Ally | Unholy: Author Q&A with Sarah Posner



As COVID-19 shut down much of the world's economy this spring, a meme spread on social media, declaring humans were “the virus,” and the pandemic “Earth's vaccine.” While many mocked the idea, as Alex Amend writes in **“Blood and Vanishing Topsoil” (pg. 3)**, it also revealed a much more nefarious sentiment: that human life—particularly non-White life—is the key impediment to protecting the environment. That notion is the core of ecofascism today, and also a deeper history of right-wing ecological thought, which White supremacists and factions like the Alt Right have sought to reclaim and publicize as a recruitment tool. As Amend writes, “The ecofascist dream is not just a White ethnostate, but a ‘green’ one too.”

Fever dreams of racial conflict are also the subject of James Scaminaci III's piece this issue, **“Battle with Bullets” (pg. 10)**, an in-depth look at today's chief proponents of a racial civil war within the United States. Over the last few years, Scaminaci writes, the Right has been advancing a narrative of imminent civil war. Sometimes the threat revolves around current politics: an ultimatum delivered to Democrats prior to formal impeachment activities, for example. But more often, the threat taps into right-wing concepts of “White genocide” or “Replacement” theory, which warn of non-White rebellion and demographic shifts that will upend the power balance in the U.S. and Europe. While these theories may have once grown on the margins of the Right, today they have migrated into the center of mainstream conservative thought.

That much can be seen in the career of Thomas Hodgson, a county-level Massachusetts sheriff who lacks standard policing powers but has nonetheless managed to leverage his post as a regional jailer into a national political profile as an anti-immigrant activist. In **“New England's Joe Arpaio” (pg. 16)**, David Ehrens tracks Hodgson's career, from his modest origins to his current status as a close ally of the Trump White House. Along the way, Hodgson has embedded himself within John Tanton's anti-immigrant network and turned the jailing and detention facilities he runs into profit-generating industries—to the severe detriment of the dignity, health, and even lives of the people he is responsible for.

In an online-only feature this issue, **“Beyond Pizzagate” (politicalresearch.org)**, Patrick Strickland delves into the conspiracist claims animating vigilante anti-immigrant activists on the U.S. southern border. While the Far Right has loudly cast non-White immigration as an “invasion”—itself a basic conspiracist claim—among border vigilante groups, the theories go further yet, looping in elements of the Pizzagate and QAnon worlds, as well as Islamophobic and antisemitic claims. The dizzying growth of allegations worries both immigrant rights advocates and law enforcement, who commonly fear that growing conspiracism will lead to increased violence.

Finally, in our book Q&A this issue, PRA speaks with journalist Sarah Posner, author of the newly released **Unholy: Why Evangelicals Worship at the Altar of Donald Trump (pg. 23)**. Posner, a longtime chronicler of the Religious Right, was also among the first journalists to seriously cover the rise of the Alt Right, from significantly before the 2016 election. In her illuminating new work, she explains how these two movements—commonly treated as distinct and even hostile to one another—are in fact working towards common ends: not identical and perhaps not always recognizable, but both grounded firmly in racial grievance and bedrock opposition to civil and human rights.

In between issues, PRA is publishing regularly online, so be sure to visit us at [politicalresearch.org](http://politicalresearch.org).

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BY ALEX AMEND

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# Blood and Vanishing Topsoil

## American Ecofascism Past, Present, and in the Coming Climate Crisis



*Mike Mahoney, aka Mike Ma, still in his twenties, has built up a significant following on social media for his specific brand of violent, accelerationist far-right environmentalism. Credit: Mikemavideo/Wikimedia Commons.*

“We’re the virus.” So read a popular tweet from mid-March praising reports of diminished air and water pollution in countries under lockdown due to the novel coronavirus COVID-19. By mid-April, the tweet, which also suggested that “Coronavirus is Earth’s vaccine,” was liked nearly 300,000 times.<sup>1</sup>

Viewed one way, the sentiment that the earth is “healing” itself in the absence of human activity, now endlessly

lampooned,<sup>2</sup> points to hopes that the world will change for the better in the wake of the worst worldwide pandemic since the HIV/AIDS crisis. Viewed another, celebrating improvements to the natural environment at the expense of mass human death takes us down a much darker path.

The devaluing of human life—particularly of populations seen as inferior—in order to protect the environment viewed as essential to White identity is at the

core of far-right environmentalism and ecofascist thought. The ecofascist dream is a not just a White ethnostate but a “green” one too.

It was an odd coincidence that on April 5, as worldwide infections crossed<sup>3</sup> 1.2 million and deaths neared 70,000, the Finnish writer Pentti Linkola, long associated with ecofascism, died at age 87.<sup>4</sup> For decades, Linkola called for the “controlled pruning” of the human population,<sup>5</sup> described humanity as na-

ture's "very own tumour,"<sup>6</sup> and argued that the reduction of infant mortality should be "distressing to a biologist."<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, Linkola's ideas and image have been adopted by an emerging ecofascist strain within the Far Right, which admires him equally for his com-

## **The ecofascist dream is a not just a White ethnostate but a "green" one too.**

mitment to live simply, his thunderous denunciations of environmental and cultural destruction, and his proposed solution: genocide.

While this subculture congregates largely online, two massacres last year, executed by killers whose manifestos combined environmental and White supremacist grievances, underscore that it can be exceptionally deadly. The fact that those attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, and El Paso, Texas—the deadliest from the Far Right since 2011<sup>8</sup>—both occurred in the last calendar year also suggests that we're witnessing something new.

Over the last several months, a steady drip of stories have added to this uncomfortable trend. In December 2019, a member of the U.S.-based neo-Nazi terror group Atomwaffen Division was outed as a former member of the radical environmentalist group Earth First!<sup>9</sup> In January, a *VICE* report uncovered evidence that an arson in Sweden that destroyed a mink farm—a traditional target for left-leaning eco-saboteurs—may have been carried out by a member of another neo-Nazi organization known as The Base.<sup>10</sup> In March, a UK White supremacist group seemingly impersonated the environmental group Extinction Rebellion while promoting messages cheering on COVID-19.<sup>11</sup> And in May, antifascists revealed the identity of an Oregon-based leader of a now-disbanded ecofascist group named The Green Brigade.<sup>12</sup>

These developments, and ecofascism more generally, demonstrate that environmental activism doesn't always align with liberatory politics, as conventional wisdom would have it. In fact, environmental advocacy has deep roots on the Right as well, which many contemporary White nationalist thinkers have sought

to reclaim. Importantly, mainstream environmentalism has shown itself to be vulnerable to "fascist creep," where far-right concepts and approaches to ecological crisis have been adopted by otherwise left-leaning environmentalists.<sup>13</sup> (A recent Michael Moore documentary,

for example, argued that environmentalists should prioritize work to forestall population growth.<sup>14</sup>)

Today, the single most important concept to far-right organizing is the projection of majority-minority populations in the U.S. and Europe—something often framed by the movement as "the great replacement."<sup>15</sup> The U.S. Census estimates that the country will reach that status by 2045, the same decade the atmosphere is projected to reach the 1.5 degree Celsius warming mark that will exacerbate food shortages, flooding, droughts, and poverty.<sup>16</sup> As these two trends continue to converge, more acts of violence—state-sanctioned and individual—are likely to be committed in the name of environmentalism by far-right actors.

## **The stereotype of tree-hugging hippies in the U.S. has long masked the fact that racist projects were embedded in the earliest days of the American conservation movement and modern ecological thought.**

The coming climate crisis, which promises to scramble all politics, provides ecofascists an opening. So too does the generational drift of younger people of all political persuasions ditching the climate change denialism of older generations. Debates about who is responsible for, and who should bear the burden of, the coming crisis, combined with an ascendant populist Right anchored in White identity, may well open the door to ever more authoritarian solutions.

### **A HISTORY RETURNED**

The stereotype of tree-hugging hippies in the U.S. has long masked the fact that racist projects were embedded in the earliest days of the American conservation movement and modern ecological thought.

Historian Peter Staudenmaier's essay "Fascist Ecology," published in 1995, describes how 19th century German political romantics first forged a "peculiar synthesis of naturalism and nationalism."<sup>17</sup> Staudenmaier highlights the 19th century German nationalist Ernst Moritz Arndt, who argued that the essence of the German people could be found in the landscape and specifically the forest.<sup>18</sup> Arndt was a fanatical antisemite, and, as Staudenmaier writes, "His eloquent and prescient appeals for ecological sensitivity were couched always in terms of the well-being of the German soil and the German people." The soil and *volk* were inextricable, and overexploitation of the land, Arndt argued, led directly to a weakened German race.<sup>19</sup>

In 1866, German zoologist Ernst Haeckel coined the term "ecology," before going on to found the German Monist League, which "combined scientifically based ecological holism with *völkisch* social views," including Haeckel's personal belief in "nordic racial superiority," Social Darwinism, and racial eugenics. His followers developed his thinking further, "embedding concern

for the natural world in a tightly woven web of regressive social themes," as Staudenmaier writes, so that "From its very beginnings...ecology was bound up in an intensely reactionary political framework."<sup>20</sup>

The rise of German nationalism was thus deeply connected to mythical conceptions of race and nature, both of which were viewed as under threat by industrial advances. By the early 20th century, figures like the psychologist Ludwig Klages, whom Staudenmaier notes "anticipated just about all of the themes of the contemporary ecology movement,"<sup>21</sup> were calling for a return to simpler modes of living more natural to the German *volk*. This reaction brought with it the concomitant worship of German rural and peasant life and rabid anti-



semitism—with Jews scapegoated as the bearers of a hated and false ideology of progress—that would feed directly into Nazi Germany’s philosophy of *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil).

Haeckel’s eugenicist beliefs also inspired one of the United States’ most effective early environmentalists, Madison Grant, a close friend to President Theodore Roosevelt who helped found numerous conservation groups and the Bronx Zoo.<sup>22</sup> But in the context of rising immigration in early 20th century industrial America, Grant saw little difference between saving bison from extinction on the Great Plains and protecting White “Nordic” stock from being subsumed by new arrivals from southern and eastern Europe.<sup>23</sup> A key figure in the era’s elite-driven eugenics movement, Grant’s 1916 book, *The Passing of the Great Race*, laid out a pseudo-scientific classification of races that proved enormously consequential. Grant would go on to advise in the creation of anti-immigration and anti-miscegenation laws that served as a template for similar policies under the Third Reich,<sup>24</sup> and Adolf Hitler himself would later write Grant, declaring his book “my Bible.”<sup>25</sup> Roosevelt, who provided a blurb for the book’s later editions, is rightfully celebrated for his expansion of national parks and monuments, but as president he also lectured White women on their duty to prevent “race suicide” by having more children.<sup>26</sup>

The value of this history isn’t lost on contemporary White nationalists. When Grant’s book was rereleased by a far-right publisher in 2012, it included a foreword by Jared Taylor, editor of the influential White supremacist online monthly *American Renaissance*. After praising Grant for understanding “that heedless breeding is destructive,” Taylor added, “*The Passing of the Great Race* unquestionably helped make it respectable to think in terms of the demographic future of the United States.”<sup>27</sup>

## POPULATION AND IMMIGRATION

In the 1960s and ’70s, neo-Malthusian fears of overpopulation came to dominate the environmental movement. Two mid-century books—William Vogt’s *The Road to Survival* and Henry Fairfield Os-

born, Jr.’s *Our Plundered Planet*—helped lay the groundwork for this perspective.<sup>28</sup> And Paul Erlich’s 1968 bestseller, *The Population Bomb*, brought those fears to the mainstream. Erlich was joined by reactionary ecologist Garrett Hardin, who argued that the planet’s “carrying capacity” was fast approaching its limit due to population growth in poor countries in essays like “Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor.” While some environmentalists (notably biologist Barry Commoner) pushed back against Erlich’s and Hardin’s arguments, their work nevertheless gained popular attention and was adopted by prominent environmental advocacy organizations like the Sierra Club (which published Erlich’s book).<sup>29</sup>

Hardin’s work was particularly influential, helping to revive a national debate around Taylor’s concern for the country’s “demographic future” by marshaling ecological arguments in service of anti-immigration policy. Hardin’s impact over time can be measured in his popularization of the “competitive exclusion principle,” which holds that in a fight between two populations over finite resources, one will inevitably lose out, and was cited in a 1961 segregationist tract<sup>30</sup> and in a 2018 White nationalist defense of the South African apartheid regime.<sup>31</sup>

## **Arguments about the environmental toll of immigration and foreign aid to the Global South remain canon among White nationalists, as do prescriptions for worldwide population control.**

Hardin’s arguments about the environmental toll of immigration and foreign aid to the Global South remain influential among White nationalists, as do his prescriptions for worldwide population control including rejecting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to globally regulate procreation.

Hardin found a perfect collaborator in the late White nationalist conservationist John Tanton.<sup>32</sup> Tanton, who died in 2019, was an immensely influential figure in the U.S. anti-immigrant movement, helping to found several anti-immigrant organizations including the Federation for American Immigration Reform

(FAIR), the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), and the now-retired journal *The Social Contract* (which ran Hardin’s famous “The Tragedy of the Commons” in its inaugural issue). Tanton started his public activism in local environmental fights in his home state of Michigan and served on the Sierra Club’s National Population Committee in the 1970s.<sup>33</sup> Like Hardin, he viewed immigration-driven population growth as a central threat not just to the environment, but to U.S. culture as well. The late wealthy heiress Cordelia Scaife May shared Tanton’s fears and used her fortune to bankroll FAIR, CIS, and like-minded organizations.<sup>34</sup> In the late ’90s and early ’00s, Tanton and his allies attempted to gain control of the Sierra Club’s board and transform the organization into another vehicle for anti-immigration policy and advocacy.<sup>35</sup> He failed, but the sharp White nationalist turn he labored to create in the country would eventually find its advocate in President Donald Trump.

Tanton’s groups, which have provided the Trump administration with personnel and policy, produced numerous reports and commentary framing immigration as an important environmental concern.<sup>36</sup> A 2016 FAIR report describes immigration as the “jet engine” of U.S. population growth and argued that re-

ducing it “offers the best chance for achieving environmental sustainability long term,” while a 2008 CIS report argues that immigration—by moving people from low-carbon-using countries to the carbon intensive U.S.—undermines climate goals.

In February 2020, a CIS attorney testified at a White House Council on Environmental Quality event, alongside the director for a Tanton-allied group misleadingly named Progressives for Immigration Reform (PFIR).<sup>37</sup> The two groups have long sought to expand the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)—the landmark 1969 law that requires federal



agencies to prepare environmental impact assessments before “any major federal action” that significantly impacts the environment<sup>38</sup>—to encompass immigration policy. Thanks, no doubt, to Erlich and Hardin’s influence in the 1960s, NEPA’s original language prescribes accounting for “the profound influences of population growth” on the environment.<sup>39</sup> In their February testimony, CIS and PFIR demanded that “population,” under NEPA, be interpreted as including immigration.

Under Trump, the U.S. anti-immigrant movement has been elevated from the disreputable outskirts of the Republican Party to effectively running immigration policy through allies like White House senior policy adviser Stephen Miller. While the administration has yet to fully embrace an environmentalist rationale for immigration restriction, PFIR laid out how Trump might do so in a second term. In a well-produced video that spliced footage of Central American migrant “caravans” with garbage dumps and traffic jams, the group called on Trump to create an entirely new bureau within the Environmental Protection Agency dedicated to studying the impact of population growth on the environment with “jurisdiction over immigration and naturalization programs.”<sup>40</sup> PFIR went on to suggest a total cessation of immigration until such studies could be carried out, and concluded with a direct appeal:

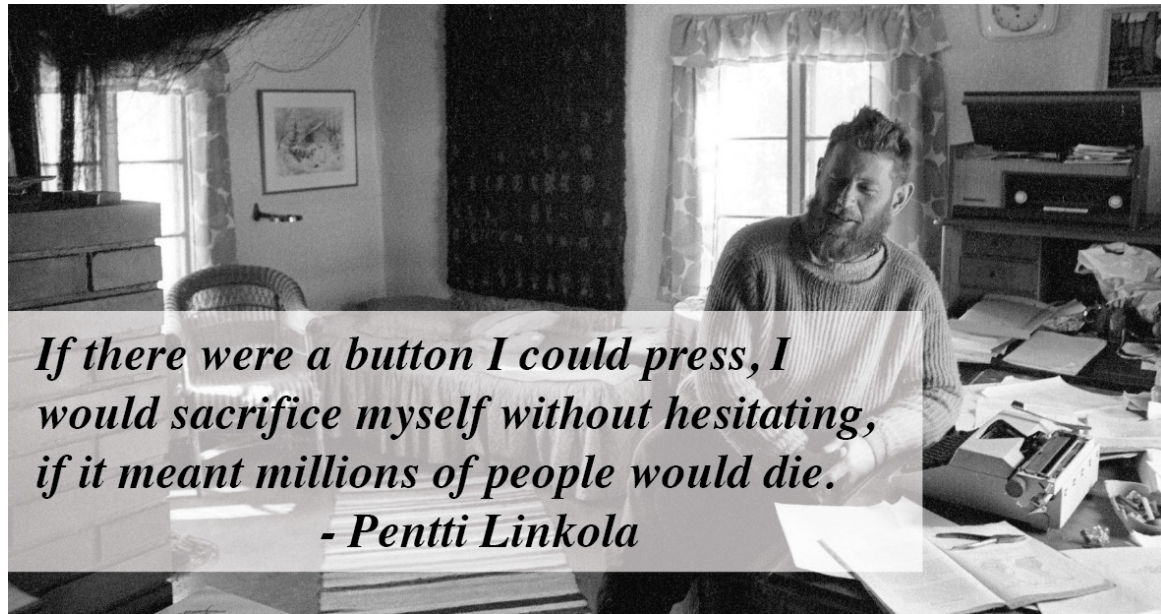
Mr. President, other administrations have failed to study population growth’s impact on our natural resources and treasures. You’re presented with an opportunity to create an environmental legacy not just for you but for generations of Americans. Remember, economic prosperity isn’t the sole measure of a president’s success. Part of making America great again, is making it green again.

## THE INTELLECTUALS

In a February article, journalist Shane Burley described how the two most

influential White nationalist publishing houses working today—U.S.-based Counter-Currents Publishing and Euro-

of essays by Ludwig Klages, who denounced the “ever-increasing mechanization” of mankind that was engendering



*If there were a button I could press, I would sacrifice myself without hesitating, if it meant millions of people would die.*  
- Pentti Linkola

Example of a Pentti Linkola meme. Photo credit: Mlang.Finn/Wikimedia Commons.

pean-based Arktos Media—have developed the “intellectual foundation for a new fascism.”<sup>41</sup> They’re also two of the most prominent sources of ecofascist thinking and ideas, promoting work on “deep ecology”—a biocentric environmental philosophy founded by the late Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss<sup>42</sup> that holds, “It would be better for humans if there were fewer of them, and much better for other creatures.”<sup>43</sup>

That credo, unsurprisingly, resonates with ecofascist thinking and has led to some ugly reasoning by deep ecology advocates.<sup>44</sup> Finnish ecofascist Pentti Linkola arrived at this deep ecology principle with much more murderous vehemence, and Arktos Media published an English-translation collection of his essays in 2009 under the title *Can Life Prevail?* The book’s introduction was written by U.S. ecofascist Brett Stevens, who runs Amerika.org and the fansite PenttiLinkola.com.<sup>45</sup> Several personalities on the influential White nationalist podcast network The Right Stuff have recently translated Finnish documentaries featuring Linkola<sup>46</sup> while memes featuring his writings and image circulate across far-right communities online.

Arktos also published two collections

the “desecration of the natural world.”<sup>47</sup> Klages’ work has been celebrated on the U.S. Far Right by neonazi publisher *National Vanguard*<sup>48</sup> and writers for the now archived alright.com, for developing a “useful deep ecological perspective.”<sup>49</sup>

*Counter-Currents* has also written about Klages<sup>50</sup> and regularly commemorates figures from their own established canon of ecofascists—including some rescued from obscurity—like the Hitler-worshipping Savitri Devi; the English fascist and organic farming pioneer Jorian Jenks; English author Henry Williamson; as well as Linkola and early eugenics-driven conservationists like Madison Grant.

In a 2012 interview, *Counter-Currents* editor Greg Johnson spoke to the key tenets of ecofascist belief, arguing that “the centrality of nature”—terminology borrowed from deep ecology and biocentrism—connects fascism and ecology, in contrast to what he described as the “very much man-centered and anti-natural” outlook of modern liberal society.<sup>51</sup> From the biocentric perspective, Johnson said, “follows an organic, hierarchical view of society, the rejection of egalitarianism, the rejection of modern technology and capitalism.”<sup>52</sup> Both deep ecologists like Næss and ecofascists like Johnson asso-



ciate the anthropocentric view with the Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>53</sup> Ecofascists, including original Nazi theorists like Alfred Rosenberg, often emphasize this fact by embracing paganism and extending antisemitic conspiracy theories to blame Jews for capitalism and industrial society's destruction of the environment.

Johnson additionally describes how valuing biodiversity must extend to human biodiversity, arguing that if the former is viewed as worthy of preservation so too must the latter. With this perspective, Johnson explained, "you get the outlook of somebody like Savitri Devi... who said that her dream is of a world where you have many races and each race has its own place in the world where it can live according to its own lights."<sup>54</sup>

This vision of creating preserves for "human biodiversity," otherwise known as ethnostates, echoes the work of the European New Right (ENR), which *Counter-Currents* and Arktos Media have strived to emulate and promote, and which Alt Right figures like Richard Spencer have heavily drawn upon.<sup>55</sup> The leading philosopher of the ENR, Alain de

manageable levels, but value preservation of distinct racial types rather than suicidal extinction."<sup>62</sup> Accompanying the article was an image that has been circulated widely on 8chan by White supremacists, illustrating concepts considered essential to a new society, including "environmentalism" and "ethnic autonomy." A year earlier, the Christchurch mass killer had used the same image on the cover of his manifesto.<sup>63</sup>

## THE KILLERS

On March 15, 2019, a 28-year-old Australian White man named Brenton Tarrant walked into the Al Noor Mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, during Friday Prayer.<sup>64</sup> With an arsenal and a camera attached to his helmet, he broadcast his own murderous rampage that would continue at another nearby mosque and ultimately leave 51 innocent people dead.

Before beginning his massacre, Tarrant posted his manifesto, "The Great Replacement," on 8chan, an image board that, until last year, provided a playground for an assortment of White

and names into his rifle and body armor.

It also stood out for Tarrant's identification as an ecofascist and how closely he echoed the movement's ideas in describing "immigration and birth rates" as a threat to both "White" nations and the environment. "The environment is being destroyed by over population," the killer wrote. "We Europeans are one of the groups that are not over populating the world. The invaders are the ones over populating the world. Kill the invaders, kill the overpopulation and by doing so save the environment."

Tarrant's manifesto updated the neo-Malthusian fear of overpopulation by synthesizing "great replacement" theory with the climate crisis, and arguing, "Green nationalism is the only true nationalism." And, like Devi's vision of racial biodiversity and Benoist's ethnopluralism, he also advocated for a "green" version of "ethnic autonomy":

The Europe of the future is not one of concrete and steel smog and wires but a place of forests, lakes, mountains and meadows. Not a place where English is the defacto [sic] language but a place where every European language, belief and tradition is valued. Each nation and each ethnicity was melded by their own environment and if they are to be protected so must their own environments.

The attack in Christchurch was the deadliest White supremacist attack since 2011, when Anders Breivik, targeting Leftist youth, killed 77 in Norway. That attack, Tarrant wrote, was the "true inspiration" for his own.<sup>66</sup> Breivik also wrote a manifesto—an encyclopedic-scale collection of far-right conspiracism but his comments on the environment were somewhat overlooked.

While Breivik embraced some climate change denial arguments, and believed that environmentalism was a Communist plot, he also borrowed from reactionary ecology. Specifically, he blamed overpopulation as "the outcome of 2nd but especially 3rd world human behaviour" created by a "Marxist/multiculturalist/suicidal humanist/capitalist globalist elite." Like Garrett Hardin's broadsides against international aid, Breivik attacked the United Nations Declaration of

## **To ecofascists, toppling a destructive techno-industrial society that celebrates multiculturalism could simultaneously advance the White nationalist cause and help the planet.**

Benoist, articulated the almost identical concept of ethnopluralism, or the idea of a racial "right to difference."<sup>56</sup> French political scientist Stéphane François has highlighted Benoist's interest in the environmental sustainability concept of bioregionalism—which envisions a more harmonious human adaptation to the unique natural characteristics that define a given "bioregion" and to live within its natural limits.<sup>57</sup> François described<sup>58</sup> Benoist's interest in bioregionalism as "a concept that joined the rooted regionalism" of his ethnopluralism.<sup>59</sup>

This April, *Counter-Currents* published an obituary of Linkola<sup>60</sup> and celebrated Earth Day by linking to old articles they'd published on ecology.<sup>61</sup> It also ran a new piece, proposing that right-wing environmentalism should be understood as the effort to "keep human population at

supremacist trolls and vicious online harassers. Tarrant's title was a reference to the French author Renaud Camus, who developed the conspiracist *grand remplacement* theory that a global elite is orchestrating the replacement of White Europeans with non-European immigrants. The same concept inspired White supremacists in the 2017 torch-lit march in Charlottesville, Virginia, to chant, "Jews will not replace us."

The Christchurch massacre was the latest in a rising number of White supremacist attacks worldwide.<sup>65</sup> But it stood out for its lethality and how Tarrant tailored the siege to become a meme for the far-right community he'd emerged from: by streaming his attack, packing his manifesto with references and ideas that have long circulated among far-right corners of the internet, and even etching phrases



Human Rights as enabling “third world” overpopulation that was threatening to overtake Europe. Sounding not unlike Linkola or Hardin (who helped popularize the concept of Earth’s “carrying capacity”), Breivik wrote:

We should create population capacity guidelines for continents or countries... If starvation threatens the countries who have failed to follow our guidelines we should not support them by backing their corrupt leaders or send any form of aid. There is no general consensus to the carrying capacity of the planet. Our planet should not exceed 3 billion individuals so radical policies will have to be implemented.

Like a murderous daisy chain, Breivik inspired Tarrant, whose “Great Replacement” manifesto in turn inspired another killer who expressed environmental grievances as justification for shooting down 23 innocent people in an El Paso, Texas, Walmart in August 2019. In a manifesto also posted on 8chan, the El Paso shooter described how he targeted “invaders” as one way to “get rid of enough people...[so that] our way of life can become more sustainable.”

“The environment is getting worse by the year,” the killer wrote, arguing that

ism,” in which he called on others to follow his lead, sowing violence and discord in order to bring about societal collapse from which new White ethnostates can be erected.

### GREEN ACCELERATIONISM AND UNCLE TED

In the immediate aftermath of the El Paso killings, Southern Poverty Law Center analyst Cassie Miller noted that far-right channels on the encrypted messaging service Telegram broke out in celebration of the terror attack and anointed the killer a “saint.”<sup>68</sup> This same Telegram community, Miller wrote, represents the “largest online stronghold for accelerationist ideas.”

Within the White power movement, accelerationism is seen as “the belief that a social system’s internal contradictions should be *pushed* to their limits in order to *encourage* rather than *overcome* the system’s *self-destructive tendencies*. This is done to *hasten* the system’s *collapse* or *demise* as well as create space for *radical social change* to take root,” as the neonazi group The Base put it in a meme shared to Telegram.<sup>69</sup> Before a federal crackdown unraveled the group this spring, The Base held survivalist trainings—another important aspect of ecofascist groups at

and neo-*volkisch* accounts, an account for a North Carolina animal shelter run by a White supremacist,<sup>70</sup> as well as accounts calling for revolutionary fascism. One account described itself by writing, “Yesterday we were Libertarians, today we’re any variety of EcoFash terrorwave collapse cult accelerationists. This is because the only outlet we have left to voice white self interest is a direct hands on approach.” Another account for a short-lived group called The Green Brigade described itself as “consisting of openly accelerationist, Eco-Extremist members focused on tearing down the system that exploits our land, animals, and people.” In December, this group posted photos of an alleged leafletting action in Arkansas featuring a flyer with an image of a human skull atop the crossed monkey wrench and stone hammer from the Earth First! logo.<sup>71</sup>

The accelerationist call to overthrow the “system” also helps explain the growing far-right adulation of Ted Kaczynski, the U.S. terrorist who killed three and injured more than 20 using mail bombs intended to spark an anti-technology revolution. After his arrest, anarchists<sup>72</sup> and radical environmentalists<sup>73</sup> first embraced Kaczynski for his writings attacking

technological developments that he saw as ruining the environment and enslaving mankind. There were also less pronounced

explorations of Kaczynski’s value on the Far Right, including threads on Stormfront dating back to 2002. Notably, Anders Breivik plagiarized Kaczynski in his sprawling manifesto.<sup>74</sup>

But in the last several years, a loose far-right community emerged on social media platforms with users who added pine tree emojis to their profile names and adopted Kaczynski as their own. Members of this pine tree community circulated memes featuring “Uncle Ted” and his Montana cabin, alongside more earnest discussions about Kaczynski’s anti-technology ideas and the desire for simpler, healthier lives more in tune with nature. While some far-right fans recognize that Kaczynski isn’t explicitly a “racialist,”

## **The rise of ethnonationalist movements and groups—inflamed by xenophobia, expressed through violence, and increasingly claiming the mantle of environmentalism—cannot be separated from the challenge of the climate crisis itself.**

immigration from Mexico posed a dual threat to White political power and the environment. “If you take nothing else from this document, remember this: INACTION IS A CHOICE. I can no longer bear the shame of inaction knowing that our founding fathers have endowed me with the rights needed to save our country from the brink [of] destruction.”

The significance of these manifestos, noted historian Graham Macklin, wasn’t just their value as “ideological justification” and propaganda, but the “call to arms” they issued for new killers to follow.<sup>67</sup>

Tarrant made that invitation clear in a concluding section of his manifesto titled “Destabilization and Acceleration-

work today.

It’s easy to see how the accelerationist theory of change could include radical, and even murderous, action to forestall environmental destruction. For ecofascists, “the system” is not just a decadent Western civilization enabling its own destruction through immigration and egalitarianism, but also, through its capitalist and industrial economy, the primary threat to the environment. Toppling a destructive techno-industrial society that celebrates multiculturalism could simultaneously advance the White nationalist cause and help the planet.

Throughout 2019, a diffuse group of ecofascist Telegram accounts called the “Ecogram” was active—including pagan



they applaud his hatred of Leftism and social justice activism. (The first section of Kaczynski's infamous manifesto, "Industrial Society and Its Future," concerns

dise, including shirts reading "Kaczynski Electric." His followers—largely young, White men, many of whom are into weight-lifting, tactical weapons training,

The ongoing coronavirus crisis has made "preppers" of everyone, at least in some ways. It has also provided something of a dry run for how society will respond to disaster on the scale of the coming climate crisis. So far, it has led to increased anti-Asian vitriol and violence, due in part to President Trump's insistence

## **The Left must recognize the insight of author and activist Daniel Denvir—that nationalism “poses a greater threat to addressing global warming than climate denialism.”**

"The Psychology of Modern Leftism.") Some new adherents, including members of Atomwaffen, sought correspondence with Kaczynski by sending him letters in prison.<sup>75</sup>

One micro-celebrity to emerge from this community is Mike Mahoney, aka Mike Ma, a former member of Milo Yiannopoulos' entourage<sup>76</sup> who created a brand, the "Pine Tree Party," adopting the Revolutionary War-era "An Appeal to Heaven" flag. In 2019, Ma self-published a novel, *Harassment Architecture*, rife with scenes of brutal violence, racism, and misogyny—including fantasies of shooting up a gay nightclub and curbstomping a Leftist woman—culminating in a fantasy of accelerationist terror the narrator describes as "cleansing fire." In a speech near the end of the novel (sold on Amazon and as an Audible Audiobook), Ma's hero exhorts his followers:

We're here because we understand that today is unsustainable and cruel, that tomorrow will only be worse, unless somebody takes action.... It's today that you have accepted that you, yourself, are an engine of chaos, an accelerationist. You architect harassment... In a week, we'll reenter the world as our usual selves... But this time, we accelerate heavily from within.

PDFs and an audiobook version of *Harassment Architecture* have been circulating across accelerationist Telegram since the book's publication. The book has also been included in an "Audio Nazi Library" on Telegram, alongside William Pierce's infamous race-war novel *The Turner Diaries*, and the manifestos of White supremacist mass killers like Dylann Roof and the Christchurch shooter.

Ma, still in his twenties, has developed a steady following on social media, posting daily Instagram stories featuring fans with his novel or wearing his merchan-

and outdoor survival—constitute a demographic other far-right environmentalist influencers see as ripe for recruitment.

### **COLLAPSE**

Another influential figure to emerge from the Pine Tree community is the obscure U.S. electronic musician Storm King,<sup>77</sup> who in several interviews including on racist podcasts over the past several years has detailed his vision for the Far Right to reclaim environmentalism as an "untried attack vector" that could aid their organizing.<sup>78</sup> In particular, Storm King advocates what he calls deceleration: an alternative apocalyptic approach to accelerationism<sup>79</sup> that involves going off-grid and creating self-sufficient communities organized around shared political beliefs. "Move your family into a situation preferably in a very rural area where you are anti-fragile," Storm King advised in a 2018 interview. "It's essentially prepping. You're decelerating in your own life."<sup>80</sup>

Ma has embraced this concept too, if only for branding purposes, in one of his catchphrases: "ACCELERATE THE WORLD, DECELERATE YOUR TRIBE!" For these two influencers of American far-right environmentalism, then, collapse in the form of environmental and economic crisis is welcomed as an opportunity.

Collapse is also the subject of a French survivalist book, *CBRN: Surviving Chemical, Biological, Radiological & Nuclear Events*, published this March by Arktos, which includes chapters discussing pandemics in general, as well as an "Unknown Virus" and "The Flu." The book is an example of just how savvy (and lucky) neofascist organizations can be in capitalizing on political and environmental crises.

on calling COVID-19 the "Wuhan virus" and other conspiracies about the origin of the virus.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, Trump's administration has supercharged deportations and suspended most types of immigration under the cover of a national emergency—orders influenced in part by the same anti-immigrant organizations arguing against immigration on environmental grounds.<sup>82</sup> Calls from Trump to "LIBERATE" Democratic-led states were answered by armed protesters while the Far Right has cheered at the prospect of economic societal collapse.<sup>83</sup> By early July, the death toll had surpassed 130,000.

Alongside the heroics of doctors, nurses, and everyday workers, there's been a Far Right striving to exploit the crisis in myriad ways. The Left-leaning environmental movement must recognize that the ground will continue to shift beneath them and remain vigilant against what this threat portends for the larger crisis to come. They must recognize the insight of author and activist Daniel Denvir—that nationalism "poses a greater threat to addressing global warming than climate denialism."<sup>84</sup> The rise of ethnonationalist movements and groups—inflamed by xenophobia, expressed through violence, and increasingly claiming the mantle of environmentalism—cannot be separated from the challenge of the climate crisis itself. They are—all of them—the same fight.

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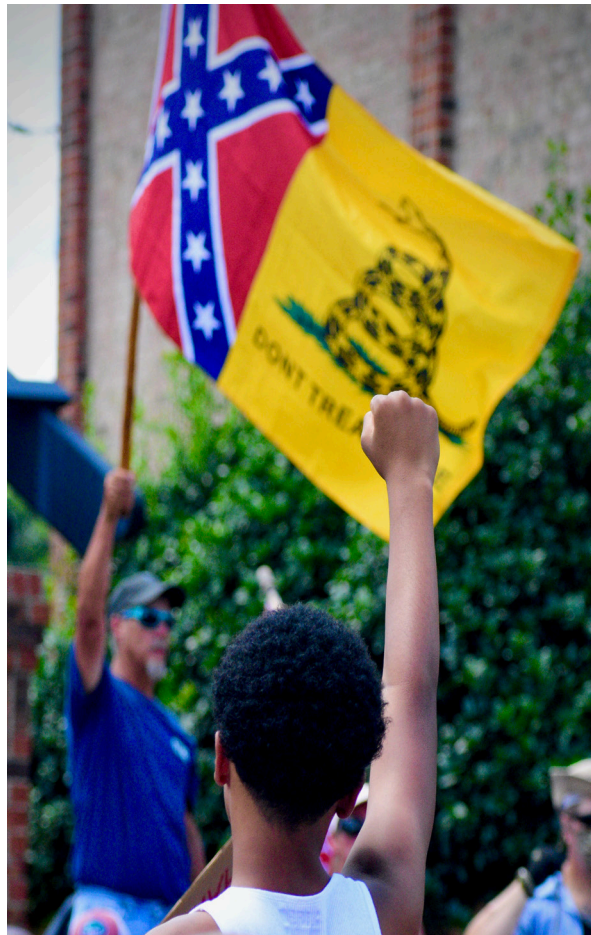
# Battle with Bullets

## Advancing a Vision of Civil War

In January 2019, Rick Joyner, head of Morningstar Ministries, an important New Apostolic Reformation parachurch organization,<sup>1</sup> claimed to have received a prophetic vision in a dream in the form of a sentence reading, “The Second American Revolutionary/Civil War is inevitable, it is right, and it will be successful.” The U.S., he continued, was “already in the first stages” of that war.<sup>2</sup>

Some Republicans worried publicly about how Trump could be tempting these forces. “The flags were American, the vibe 1932 Berlin,” noted GOP campaign strategist Rick Wilson<sup>3</sup> about a July 2019 campaign rally where Trump prompted a 13-second roar<sup>4</sup> from the crowd taunting the Democrats’ “Squad” in Congress—Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), and Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI). Wilson continued on to describe Trump’s reelection bid as “about his ethnic animus and stoking the resentful edges of society into...[a] race war.” Conservative-leaning *Washington Post* columnist Kathleen Parker likewise warned, “Trump has essentially declared a ‘race war,’ for lack of a better term, on minority leaders and their constituents.”<sup>5</sup>

In September 2019, one of Trump’s closest evangelical advisers,<sup>6</sup> the Dallas megachurch pastor Robert Jeffress, also warned a civil war could be imminent. In a Fox News interview, Jeffress said he’d never seen evangelical Christians angrier than over the impeachment investigation. “And I do want to make this prediction this morning,” Jeffress continued, “If the Democrats are successful in



*March of Justice and Community, Graham, NC, July 11, 2020. Credit: Anthony Crider/Flickr.*

removing the president from office, I’m afraid it will cause a Civil War-like fracture in this nation from which this country will never heal.”<sup>7</sup>

Trump tweeted Jeffress’s prediction, made on Fox News, and tagged Fox News in the tweet.<sup>8</sup> The official Twitter account of paramilitary militia group the Oath Keepers responded: “This is the truth. This is where we are. We ARE on the verge of a HOT civil war. Like in 1859. That’s where we are.”<sup>9</sup>

Over the last several years, a narrative around the threat of civil war—and more

specifically, a racial civil war—has been growing on the Right. The most dangerous versions of that narrative come from leaders with paramilitary forces, while other appeals seem intended to generate a heightened sense of crisis. Sometimes the racial aspects of that threat are made explicit, as when Michael Hill, head of the racist League of the South, claimed that the U.S. is “headed for a real civil war”<sup>10</sup> against a “globalist-progressive coalition of Jews, minorities, and anti-white whites.”<sup>11</sup> Other times, it’s more opaque, as when longtime Trump adviser Roger Stone<sup>12</sup> warned, in mid-2017, that any Republican who voted for impeachment would “endanger their own life,” while actual impeachment would produce “a spasm of violence in this country, an insurrection, like you’ve never seen.”<sup>13</sup>

In either form, the message is effectively the same. As Nicole Hemmer, a Columbia University research scholar who studies right-wing communication, explains, “When the President invokes violence—as in a civil war—he sends encouragement to supporters already primed to perceive a coming apocalypse. In the

world of white power, where a civil war is a race war, the President’s words have particular resonance.”<sup>14</sup> This increasingly common rhetoric, which appeals simultaneously to Donald Trump’s core supporters, the Christian Right, and the Patriot movement, didn’t emerge from nowhere. Rather, it’s rooted in a narrative adapted from a 1973 French novel, *The Camp of the Saints*, that some have taken as a guidebook.<sup>15</sup> In its simplest form, the narrative holds that the “White race” faces extinction, “replacement,”<sup>16</sup> or “genocide” due to high non-White birth



and immigration rates (or non-White empowerment), and that patriots' task is to "Repel the barbarians," as *Breitbart News* summarized the book's message.<sup>17</sup> In response to these perceived threats, right-wing forces around the globe choose cruel anti-immigrant policies, massacres intended to ignite racial civil wars, and, in the U.S., threaten a coming racial civil war to save Trump.

This modern narrative, though, is rooted in far older tropes from colonial and imperialist periods.

## WHITE TERRORISM AND ITS VICTIMS

The historical roots of this narrative, for France and for the U.S., lie in the Haitian Revolution—which drove slave owners in Haiti to flee and culminated in Haiti's independence in 1804—and fears or realities of slave insurrections in the U.S. South. Although long overlooked, the 1811 uprising led by Charles Deslondes and slaves from German Coast plantations near New Orleans was inspired by the Haitian Revolution and represented "the largest act of armed resistance against slavery in the history of the United States," as historian Daniel Rasmussen writes.<sup>18</sup> After enslaved people revolted, the response was severe, as Louisiana elites asked President James Madison to permanently station troops in New Orleans in accordance with constitutional provisions to "[protect] planters from the dangers intrinsic in their slave-based society."<sup>19</sup>

These existential fears persisted—and spread—after the abolition of slavery, in the U.S. and France, though the narrative shifted to warn that individual White nations, the White race, or Western civilization itself could be destroyed by differential fertility rates between the races and mass migration into White nations. Two U.S. books helped popularize this idea: *The Passing of the Great Race* by Madison Grant (1916) and *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World Supremacy* (1920) by Lothrop Stoddard.<sup>20</sup> In France, a similar narrative began to spread around 1900 by a trilogy of novels by Maurice Barrès that introduced the term "le grand remplacement," or "The Great Replacement."<sup>21</sup>

Although the driving rhetoric in the

early 20th century concerned fears of Black revolt and White subjugation or diminishment, the most potent violence in U.S. history came from those already in political power, and it was directed downward. As historian Richard Hofstadter has argued, short of the American Revolution or U.S. Civil War, when political violence in the U.S. has achieved its purpose, "it has been, on the whole, the violence of those who already had position and power."<sup>22</sup> That would also become a pattern in narratives of racial civil war.

In his seminal work *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*, W.E.B. Du Bois quoted a 1921 conference paper to describe how, after 1868, the Ku Klux Klan helped unleash a "crime-storm of devastating fury" in which the "Southern states...relapsed into barbarism."<sup>23</sup> Danielle L. McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street* analyzed how rumors of Black men raping White women "sparked almost 50 percent of all race riots in the United States between Reconstruction and World War II."<sup>24</sup> And the Equal Justice Initiative's (EJI) study of nearly 4,500 post-Reconstruction "racial terror lynchings"<sup>25</sup>—2,000 of which took place during Reconstruction alone<sup>26</sup>—found that they served as a "tool...to reinforce Jim Crow laws and racial segregation," and fueled the Great Migration of millions of Black people from the South "into urban ghettos in the North and West."

More recent assessments of White supremacist violence demonstrate wide-ranging targets across racial and class boundaries. Today, White supremacist violence is directed against Jews, Muslims, Black and Latinx people, as well as Asian Americans.

A 2012 West Point study on right-wing violence since 1990 found an estimated 4,420 violent attacks, killing 670 people and injuring 3,053. Attacks were primarily directed against minorities as well as abortion facilities and providers.<sup>27</sup>

An Anti-Defamation League study of right-wing violence between 1993 and 2017 found "150 right-wing terrorist acts, attempted acts, and plots and conspiracies."<sup>28</sup> The realized attacks killed 255 people and injured more than 600. Roughly 85 percent of these incidents were perpetrated by what the ADL

characterized as either White supremacists (43 percent) or "anti-government extremists" (42 percent),<sup>29</sup> with an additional 11 percent committed by "anti-abortion extremists."<sup>30</sup> The study also noted that while the Patriot movement has historically distanced itself from White supremacy, recently the "movement has willingly embraced...anti-Muslim hatred."<sup>31</sup>

The ADL's 2018 report found that "domestic extremists killed at least 50 people" and "[r]ight-wing extremists were responsible for 49 (or 98%) of the 50 domestic extremist-related killings in 2018." Included in the deadly count was the attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh that killed 11 and wounded seven others.<sup>32</sup>

On April 27, 2019, a gunman killed one and wounded three in a subsequent attack on the Chabad of Poway synagogue near San Diego. That gunman was inspired by the killing of 51 Muslims in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, six weeks earlier, and the massacre in Pittsburgh.<sup>33</sup>

And scholar Sangay Mishra, writing in *The Washington Post* after the highly publicized 2017 murder of an Indian-born engineer in a Kansas bar, reported "more than 800 incidents since 9/11 involving physical violence, threat and vandalism against Arab Americans, Muslims, Sikhs, South Asian Americans and those perceived to be of Middle Eastern origin."<sup>34</sup> A 2018 report by the organization South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) recorded 213 violent incidents between November 2016 and November 2017, with 82 percent "motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment," while 20 percent of the perpetrators "referenced President Trump, a Trump policy, or a Trump campaign slogan."<sup>35</sup>

## FROM "WHITE REPLACEMENT" TO MASS MURDER

Today the "White Replacement"<sup>36</sup> narratives that took hold after Reconstruction have arisen again, in conspiracist theories such as the "Great Replacement"—which argues that massive non-White immigration into Europe and the U.S. will fundamentally alter those societies' cultural foundations—and "White

Genocide,” which holds that White people are threatened by a “Black revolt.”

The theories differ in some respects, and some researchers and advocates use the terms differently or interchangeably. Ideas of “White Genocide” (as well as “Black revolt”) have also dynamically changed over time in response to ideological opportunity. Depending upon the time and place, fears of “Black revolt” have encompassed slave rebellion, voter registration, school integration, or—as exemplified by one of the earlier contemporary uses of the term “White Genocide”—the introduction of land reform in post-apartheid South Africa. When anything White supremacists perceive as Black people altering society’s distribution of status, power, and wealth can be termed “Black revolt,” the definition of “White Genocide” isn’t limited to physical extermination but a hyperbolic sense of symbolic loss.<sup>37</sup>

But these terms share a common fear

### **Many of the ideas expressed in the manifestos of mass killers like Breivik and the Christchurch shooter were first popularized by the deeply racist 1973 French novel *The Camp of the Saints*.**

that White people are facing displacement—sometimes through immigration, sometimes through a redistribution of power and money (as the response to recent calls to “defund the police” generally suggest). And as Georgetown University researchers have found, White nationalists and White supremacists “often conflate or combine” the theories anyway.<sup>38</sup> Other, similar theories also echo these claims, such as Christian Right warnings about “Demographic Winter”<sup>39</sup>—which holds that low birth rates in Western countries leave a vacuum immigration must fill—or British author Bat Ye’or’s influential “Eurabia” project books, which suggest European Union elites are deliberately trying to replace White Europeans with Muslim immigrants.<sup>40</sup>

The main villains in these narratives are Western elites—politicians,<sup>41</sup> church leaders,<sup>42</sup> and intellectuals—who lack the moral values and strength to stop immigration because they are proponents of multiculturalism or “cultural Marxism.”<sup>43</sup>

As Paul Stocker, a senior fellow at the

UK-based Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, summarized it, “Demographic conspiracies argue that immigration and multiculturalism are not merely negative influences on society... but the product of an intentional plan by elites to weaken or even eradicate national (or European) identity.”<sup>44</sup>

On the anti-immigration website *The European Perspective*, massive immigration from North Africa and the Middle East is characterized as the “colonization of Europe,” the “counter-colonization,” or “conquest” of Europe.<sup>45</sup> In the United States, the anti-immigration movement calls large-scale immigration from Mexico and Central America the “*Reconquista*”—the re-conquest of the southwestern United States—or the “invasion.”<sup>46</sup>

The other major component of these theories is the idea that at some point during this “replacement,” White people might turn to violent resistance. In a 1986 memo, John Tanton, architect

of the modern U.S. anti-immigration movement, wrote, “The current situation...could be...vastly worse in another decade. The political power of the immigrants—legal and illegal—will be so great that nothing can stop it, and the greatest migration in the history of the United States will fundamentally transform our society and economy.”<sup>47</sup> Tanton coyly asked, in the face of such an existential threat, “Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile? ... As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion?”<sup>48</sup>

It would be a mistake to see these various “White Replacement” narratives as isolated from mainstream conservative thought in Europe or America. Andrew Woods of the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) noted that the “metapolitical purpose of radical right conspiracism is to develop ideas and narratives that will slip into mainstream

political discourse and influence public opinion.”<sup>49</sup> Liz Fekete, director of the UK-based Institute of Race Relations, concluded, “the rhetoric of war has become normalised. The idea that European civilisation is threatened by Muslims and by immigration is part of mainstream European political thought.”<sup>50</sup>

These conspiracist claims are directly linked to several mass terrorist killings, with the massacres themselves linked causally to each other, with the killers intending that their acts of terrorism would eventually ignite a racial civil war in Europe, the U.S., Australia, or New Zealand. For example, the manifesto of the Christchurch, New Zealand, mass murderer explicitly sought “to incite violence in the US... with the ultimate aim of civil war, balkanization and the destruction of the ‘melting pot’-ideal.”<sup>51</sup> *The New York Times* found the manifestos and tactics of mass killers influenced at least a third of 347 attacks between 2011

and 2017. *The Washington Post* reported that “extremism experts” believe these mass killings spring from “a global network of white supremacy cells that communicate in much the

same way as other global terrorist networks.” *The Post* quoted Kathleen Belew who suggested these killers shared “the same ideology...the same broad understanding of the world....and the common frame is readily apparent.”<sup>52</sup>

The manifesto of Norwegian mass killer Anders Breivik, whose 2011 massacre of 77 people—mostly children—was intended to spark a “European Civil War” that would drive Islam from the continent,<sup>53</sup> exemplifies this. Breivik’s manifesto is almost entirely a compendium of articles and blog posts from the European and U.S. Far Right regarding Muslims, immigration, and the so-called Western crisis. Breivik, who was inspired by anti-immigrant political parties in Europe,<sup>54</sup> borrowed heavily from Peder “Fjordman” Jensen’s blog “Gates of Vienna”—Vienna being the location at which an Ottoman invasion was stopped in 1683—which was itself inspired by Bat Ye’or’s “Eurabia” project books.

Breivik’s manifesto mentions “demographic warfare” 75 times, often link-



ing that concept to Ye'or's opposition to massive Muslim immigration and subsequent "transformation" of Europe. In one instance, he wrote, "Western Europe is being invaded again, this time through demographic warfare (mass Muslim immigration in combination with high Muslim birth-rates)."<sup>55</sup> Breivik also frequently linked demographic warfare with Christian Right strategist William S. Lind's ideas about "cultural Marxism"—variants of the concept Breivik mentioned over 600 times in the manifesto, according to analysis by former PRA Senior Analyst Chip Berlet,<sup>56</sup> and which Breivik defined as "the European hate ideology which was created to destroy our European cultures, national cohesion and Christendom."<sup>57</sup>

Another of Lind's strategic innovations was the concept of Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW), under which a non-state actor would contest the political legitimacy of a central government via an intensive, unrelenting barrage of ideological propaganda. While Lind's articles for a military audience portray 4GW in terms of a war of disinformation, misinformation, and character assassination,<sup>58</sup> his less public writings, including a pseudonymous (aka Thomas Hobbes) 2014 novel, *Victoria: A Novel of Fourth Generation War*, reveal a preoccupation with catastrophic racial civil war. As researcher and writer Bruce Wilson noted, the book "favorably depicts white Christian militia groups overthrowing the federal government, helping out a resurgent Southern Dixie regime by vaporizing the black insurgent-controlled center of Atlanta with a tactical nuclear weapon, and carrying out the ethnic cleansing of African-Americans... and other ethnic groups such as Puerto Ricans."<sup>59</sup>

Lind's 4GW writings on his traditional-RIGHT blog openly endorse Great Replacement theory,<sup>60</sup> the mass expulsion of Muslims from Europe,<sup>61</sup> and the use of violence against Muslims in Europe<sup>62</sup> and Central American immigrants in the U.S.<sup>63</sup> In 2014, he suggested that mass shooters might be seen as 4GW actors. "If shooters here begin to be inspired by other shooters," he wrote, "Such connectivity would create a new type of 4GW player.... One inspiring another to act is

enough."<sup>64</sup>

And so it has played out. As Andreas Önerfors, a senior fellow at the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, has found, the manifesto of the Christchurch mass-shooter contains "compelling parallels to Norwegian terrorist Breivik in terms of the intentions to kill and the use of a language of power."<sup>65</sup>

### THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS NARRATIVE

Many of the ideas expressed in the manifestos of mass killers like Breivik and the Christchurch shooter were first popularized by the deeply racist 1973 French novel *The Camp of the Saints*, by Jean Raspail. The novel's message is simple and direct: non-White immigrants are arriving in large enough numbers to eventually fundamentally destroy White societies. The only defense against this invasion is expulsion of non-Whites who have already arrived and violent force against those *en route*. In the book, the reader is cast as both victim and hero, while liberal political elites and their allies are the main villains.<sup>66</sup>

Whenever real world events had mirrored events in Raspail's novel or when he came out with a new introduction, Raspail expanded more directly upon the novel's key points. In 2013, as increasing numbers of African and Middle Eastern refugees and migrants fled to Europe,<sup>67</sup> Raspail told a French interviewer, "There are only two solutions. Either we accommodate them and France—its culture, its civilisation—will be erased without even a funeral.... Or we don't accommodate them at all." He went on to suggest that "the measures we would have to take would necessarily be very coercive."<sup>68</sup> In 2019, he added that unless immigrants and refugees from Africa or predominantly Muslim countries were turned away, "we will head inevitably towards a racial war."<sup>69</sup>

What really popularized *The Camp of the Saints* was *Breitbart News*, which in 2014 began to propel the novel and its message into the conservative mainstream.<sup>70</sup> That meant Stephen Bannon, who headed both *Breitbart* and the psychological warfare firm Cambridge Analytica<sup>71</sup> (both heavily funded by billionaire Robert Mercer<sup>72</sup>), was uniquely

situated to frame the 2016 presidential race around immigration.

Bannon had long been obsessed with *The Camp of the Saints* and *The Fourth Turning: What the Cycles of History Tell Us About America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny*, by William Strauss and Neil Howe. Both books forecast the apocalyptic collapse of Western civilization, through either an immigrant invasion or civil war.<sup>73</sup> Subscribing to an anti-Muslim "clash of civilizations" perspective,<sup>74</sup> Bannon's views also aligned with members of Trump's camp, including former Attorney General Jeff Sessions,<sup>75</sup> his former aide Stephen Miller,<sup>76</sup> and Trump himself.<sup>77</sup> Miller was also a fan of *The Camp of the Saints*, as leaked emails revealed.<sup>78</sup>

Bannon used his *Breitbart News* radio show to promote the novel and directed his website's writers to use it to frame immigration developments as the novel coming to life.<sup>79</sup> As *Breitbart News* became an ideological bridge between the conservative mainstream and the then-emergent Alt Right,<sup>80</sup> it helped popularize sanitized neonazi ideas.<sup>81</sup> And, as a Harvard study of social media platforms during the 2016 presidential campaign found, Bannon's outlet was pivotal to the conservative movement's framing of immigration issues in terms of the "fear of Muslims and Islam" and a corresponding fear that "immigrants...in sufficient numbers...will impose their customs, culture, and religion on the U.S."<sup>82</sup> A subsequent study by some of the same authors found that the influence of White nationalists "was only through *Breitbart* and the bridging function that it played in transposing the basic frames of the white supremacists to the rest of the right-wing media ecosystem.... That message framed immigration as primarily about fear of Muslims, and to some extent Africans and Mexicans, who would bring crime, disease, and terrorism."<sup>83</sup>

After Trump won, the same sorts of ideas informed his policy and administration. Investigative articles by PRA<sup>84</sup> revealed that the Trump administration's immigration policies and personnel were directly linked to John Tanton's White nationalist network of organizations, which were the main right-wing publish-

ers of *The Camp of the Saints* after 1990 and leading proponents of its central narrative.<sup>85</sup> Two of Tanton's personnel moved into positions at the Department of Homeland Security, while one of Sessions' aides went to the Department of Justice, and Stephen Miller directed policy from the White House. Anti-Muslim organizations heavily influenced by the "Eurabia" project influenced the Trump administration's policies as informal advisors.<sup>86</sup> In short, *The Camp of the Saints* was fast becoming a guiding narrative for the entire Right, including the Republican establishment.<sup>87</sup>

This became apparent in mid-2018 when a small group of Central American migrants began a long, slow trek northward toward the U.S. border. As disinformation spread about the group—labeled a "caravan" by Trump and Fox News—militia members headed to the southern border to stop what conservative news had cast as an invasion,<sup>88</sup> and conservative writers—even including critics of Trump—began referencing *The Camp of the Saints* to describe the situation. Rod Dreher at *The American Conservative* suggested that U.S. decision-makers might soon face the choice of firing on the unarmed migrants, writing, "The raw logic of Raspail's novel says that the only way to defend Western civilization from these invaders is to be willing to shed their blood."<sup>89</sup>

Trump's campaign speeches, tweets, and Facebook ads condemning the "invasion" spread the frame widely. *The Washington Post* reported that as of October 2019, Trump had made at least several hundred false or misleading claims using the word "invasion."<sup>90</sup> *The Guardian* reported that between January and August 2019, "Trump's campaign has used the word 'invasion' to describe migrants seeking entry at the US-Mexico border in 2,199 Facebook ads."<sup>91</sup> And the message was further amplified by Fox News, as Media Matters researchers found: more than "70 on-air references to an invasion of migrants," "At least 55 clips of Trump calling the surge of migrants an invasion," and 21 instances of hosts Tucker Carlson, Brian Kilmeade, and Laura Ingraham using "invasion" rhetoric.<sup>92</sup>

When Fox News was not promoting the

idea of an impending "invasion," Carlson was busy promoting White nationalist themes that migrated from 4chan, earning him vocal far-right support.<sup>93</sup> At least a year before the El Paso terrorist attack on Latinx people in August 2019, Fox News was amplifying the Great Replacement theory that would be at the core of the killer's manifesto.<sup>94</sup>

### THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS AND THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

It's not just White nationalists, White supremacists, and neonazis who believe in some version of the Great Replacement. The Christian Right, which has its own relationships with the White nationalist anti-immigration movement, also developed a variant called "Demographic Winter."<sup>95</sup> One major influence on the Christian Right's thinking was Bat Ye'or's "Eurabia" project books, which argue that Christians and Jews must unite to repel a Muslim invasion of Europe.<sup>96</sup> In 2002, Roberta Green, wife of Howard Ahmanson, Jr., a major Christian Right donor, co-authored a book, *Islam at the Crossroads*, which thanked Ye'or for her "invaluable insights" and cited three of her books.<sup>97</sup>

The Christian Right's concern with global demography would be unveiled in 2007 at a World Congress of Families (WCF) conference in Poland, where the conference's manifesto stated, "human depopulation is the true demographic danger."<sup>98</sup> The following year, the WCF released a documentary, *Demographic Winter*, promoting the message, as journalist (and *Public Eye* editor) Kathryn Joyce put it, that "The white Christian West...is in danger of forfeiting itself through sheer lack of numbers to an onslaught of Muslim immigrants and their purportedly numerous offspring."<sup>99</sup>

Eight years later, Trump seemed to speak to White evangelicals' fears of demographic decline.<sup>100</sup> As evangelical historian John Fea observed, they saw in Trump someone who "would shelter them from Mexican strangers threatening white evangelical America. He would protect them from Muslims prepared to kill them and their families."<sup>101</sup>

Existential fears and the need for strongman protection prompted the

Christian Right to cast the president as an ancient monarch and his border wall as necessary to "separate us from cultural collapse," as evangelical author Lance Wallnau put it.<sup>102</sup> As Robert P. Jones, author of *The End of White Christian America*, told Gregg Sargent of *The Washington Post*, for "white evangelicals who see the sun setting on white Christian dominance in the country, the wall is a powerful metaphor."<sup>103</sup> And there is strong support for Trump's wall and cruel immigration policies among Trump's closest evangelical advisers.<sup>104</sup>

According to an October 2019 PRRI poll, White evangelical Protestants are the only major religious group, joined sometimes by White Catholics, adopting a *Camp of the Saints* worldview: 75 percent of Republican White evangelical Protestants believe "immigrants are invading our country and replacing our cultural and ethnic background;"<sup>105</sup> 67 percent support building Trump's wall;<sup>106</sup> 76 percent approve of Trump's Muslim ban;<sup>107</sup> 68 percent believe we have no "responsibility to accept refugees into the country;"<sup>108</sup> and 36 to 39 percent favor separating children from parents at the border—the highest level of approval among any religious group.<sup>109</sup>

A further breakdown of this poll shows that 85 percent of White evangelicals overall favor a "restrictive immigration policy," including specifics like building a wall (76 percent), banning Muslims (69 percent), restricting the number of legal immigrants allowed into the country (68 percent), and preventing refugees from entering the United States (54 percent).<sup>110</sup>

### "BOOGALOO" TO A CIVIL WAR

In 2020, the idea of racial civil war began to take an even more literal turn with the emergence—amid the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests—of a loose right-wing network called the Boogaloo or the Boogaloo Bois.

The Boogaloo<sup>111</sup> is a right-wing term for what adherents describe, with varying degrees of desire, as a second U.S. civil war, likely a racial one. Members of the network—which initially organized online and today are recognizable for their mix of tactical gear, guns, and



Hawaiian shirts<sup>112</sup>—first began showing up in person in Virginia in January 2020, threatening violence and incipient civil war if the Democratic-controlled state legislature passed gun control legislation.<sup>113</sup> The FBI arrested three alleged members of the neonazi group The Base days before the Virginia anti-gun control protest for plotting to kill people there.<sup>114</sup>

In more recent months, Boogaloo adherents have shown up at “Re-open” events protesting pandemic-related social distancing policies, as well as at Black Lives Matter marches and demonstrations. Both sets of protests also drew conservative supporters or counter-protesters from patriot groups, the Proud Boys, the Patriot Prayer movement, White supremacists, anti-vaxxers, and QAnon proponents, many of whom also support calls for civil war and Great Replacement theory.<sup>115</sup> The pattern of the protests, both online and in person, resembles a swarm attack that appears and disappears with no single controlling leader.<sup>116</sup> Chats leaked to Left Coast Right Watch revealed the Boogaloo contingent’s intention to co-opt the Black Lives Matter protests,<sup>117</sup> by goading police into a violent response. As one leaked exchange read: “We have to wait until it’s INTENTIONALLY lethal. ... MAKE THEM SHOOT FIRST!!! It won’t be hard.”<sup>118</sup>

One of the more important consequences of these protests has been bringing White Republicans into closer contact with militias and White supremacists who long, respectively, for a civil war or a racial war.<sup>119</sup> White supremacists see the COVID-19 pandemic as a possible radicalizing agent that might foster greater receptivity to Great Replacement theory by the conservative, evangelical Republican base.<sup>120</sup> Previously, Great Replacement advocates claimed billionaire George Soros was financing massive immigration.<sup>121</sup> Now some say that Soros funded a laboratory where they claim the coronavirus originated.<sup>122</sup>

But the most dangerous proponent of the Boogaloo “civil war” isn’t any of its Hawaiian shirt-clad affiliates, but rather Donald Trump, whose tweets and statements have reinforced right-wing calls for such a conflict.

On January 16, the same day the FBI ar-

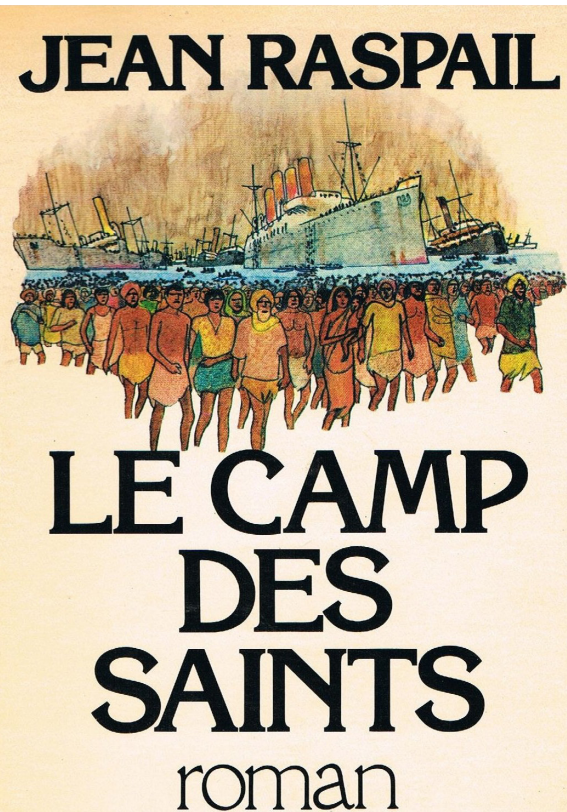
rested alleged neonazis for planning an attack at the Virginia gun rights rally,<sup>123</sup> Fox Nation host Tomi Lahren claimed that any gun control legislation would result in a “major uprising” and “civil war.”<sup>124</sup> The next day Trump claimed the Second Amendment was “under very serious attack.”<sup>125</sup>

In April, Trump urged followers to “LIBERATE” three Democratic-led states that had embraced social distancing protocols.<sup>126</sup> And it was GOP, Tea Party, gun rights/militia, and dark money infrastructures, some with direct ties to the Trump administration, that orchestrated the ReOpen or “LIBERATE” protests.<sup>127</sup>

In late May, in response to the overwhelmingly non-violent protests against police brutality regarding the murder of George Floyd, Trump tweeted the segregationist-era threat, “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.”<sup>128</sup> Blaming violence or vandalism on “ANTIFA and the Radical Left,” Trump vowed to use U.S. military forces to stop the rioting, and instructed the nation’s governors to seek “total domination” over the protesters.<sup>129</sup> The Trump campaign ran more than 2,000 Facebook ads targeting Antifa, 88 of which included Nazi imagery.<sup>130</sup> (The number “88,” a well-recognized neonazi code for “Heil Hitler,” may have been inadvertent, but it’s not the first time that Trump or his campaign have used Nazi imagery in its communications.<sup>131</sup>)

This larger political context created by Trump allowed the Boogaloo movement and other paramilitary and far-right actors to conduct at least 136 violent and intimidating actions against peaceful, unarmed BLM protesters, according to confirmed, catalogued cases by PRA and others.<sup>132</sup>

In late May, Trump again threatened to use military force against Black Lives Matter protesters, just moments after Attorney General William Barr ordered federal police and the National Guard to violently clear demonstrators in front of a Washington, D.C., church, in order to facilitate a presidential photo-op.<sup>133</sup> And in July, Trump ordered federal law enforcement agents into several Democratic-governed cities to crack



The Camp of the Saints cover. Credit: Amazon.fr.

down on anti-racist demonstrations and alleged street crime.<sup>134</sup> As the nation watched footage of federal forces tear-gassing peaceful civilians, and anti-racist demonstrators abducted by unmarked federal forces, it seemed like the civil war the Right has long dreamed of might have begun.

This summer, *Camp of the Saints* author Jean Raspail died in France. The legacy he leaves behind is a powerful narrative utilized by White supremacists and others advocating a racial civil war, as well as justifying mass murder and White supremacy. But the threat of U.S. civil war, influenced by Raspail’s narrative and driven by racial grievance, is Trumpism, the authoritarian GOP, and armed right-wing paramilitaries.<sup>135</sup>

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# New England's Joe Arpaio

## How a Massachusetts Sheriff Became the Far Right's Perfect Ally



President Trump gives a thumbs-up as he is presented with a plaque of recognition by Sheriff Hodgson on behalf of "The Nation's Sheriffs" at the White House on September 26, 2019. Credit: The White House/Flickr.

Two weeks before Donald Trump took the oath of office, Bristol County Sheriff Thomas Hodgson walked into a Fall River, Massachusetts, auditorium filled with law enforcement officers from around the county. With bagpipes blaring, Hodgson was sworn in for his fourth term, following an uncontested election.<sup>1</sup> It was a moment of triumph for the state's longest-serving sheriff, and Hodgson's speech signaled he might now have the political capital to reverse a courtroom defeat seven years earlier, when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court had denied his ability to levy extortionist fees on the prisoners in his custody.<sup>2</sup> But it was his widely reported plan to send detainees south to work on Trump's promised border wall that made national news.<sup>3</sup> Implicit in his speech,

Hodgson was going to focus on national immigration policy, rather than running jails in his 500,000-person county.

Hodgson's grandiose plans, especially in the aftermath of the 2016 election, were alarming but hardly surprising to those who have followed his career. For 23 years, Hodgson has been selling the same brand: a patriot above politics, a tough lawman, a fair jailer, and a man of faith and conviction who says what he thinks, does what is right, consequences be damned.

Despite his denials, Hodgson is deeply political, spending substantial time politicking on national issues. His attempts to patrol Bristol County's towns and cities like his Stetson-hatted colleagues out West have largely been thwarted in a state where sheriffs simply run jails

and serve papers. As a jailer, Hodgson's methods are cruel, ineffective, and target people of color and the poor. But cruelty and caricature has become his political brand.

Hodgson's limited mandate as a county sheriff may first appear to be a liability but it's given him both time and latitude to push "[tough] on crime"<sup>4</sup> measures that have made him a perfect ally for far-right groups. Adopting a persona similar to that of disgraced Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio—media hound and America's self-declared "toughest sheriff"—Hodgson has hitched his wagon to a series of right-wing ideologues and lobbyists, and used cruelty toward those in his custody to appeal to fearful or xenophobic voters. Through association with far-right darlings like Arpaio, anti-immigrant



groups, and—as a bevy of documents revealed this winter—his ingratiating himself with anti-immigrant politicians and staffers like Jeff Sessions and Stephen Miller, Hodgson’s hard work finally paid

of misery rather than rehabilitation.<sup>15</sup>

When Hodgson stood for his first election as the incumbent sheriff in 1998, the United States’ most “famous” sheriff was Maricopa County, Arizona’s Joe Arpaio,<sup>16</sup>

**By 1999, a year after his first election to office, Hodgson was already copying notorious Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio’s methods when he flew to Arizona to visit the future felon. Hodgson even appropriated Arpaio’s tagline: “Jail is not a country club.”**

off with his admission to the inner sanctum of the Trump administration.

## AN UNJUST JAILER

Born in 1954 in Chevy Chase, Maryland, to a Vatican courier and a former Army nurse,<sup>5</sup> Hodgson was one of 13 children in a devoutly Catholic family.<sup>6</sup> In 1977 he dropped out of college to join the Ocean City, Maryland, police department,<sup>7</sup> rising through the ranks to become head of internal affairs before abruptly leaving in 1988 and moving to New Bedford, Massachusetts, his mother’s hometown. In 1991, he won an at-large seat on the city council, where he served nearly three terms.<sup>8</sup>

In 1997, Republican Governor William Weld, who as a gubernatorial candidate had promised to introduce detainees to “the joys of breaking rocks,” appointed Hodgson sheriff<sup>9</sup> to fill a vacancy left by a retiring predecessor.<sup>10</sup> By Massachusetts law, Hodgson’s office is limited to running the county jail, process serving, and transporting detainees.<sup>11</sup> In 2016 the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that sheriffs don’t have the same warrantless arrest powers of police officers.<sup>12</sup> Hodgson’s official duties, then, consist of running the Ash Street Jail in New Bedford,<sup>13</sup> men’s and women’s facilities at the Dartmouth jail, an ICE detention center, and a Civil Process division.<sup>14</sup>

Hodgson embraced Weld’s draconian campaign promise as his own, moving in his first years to remove weight training equipment and televisions from county lock-ups and, according to several public defenders, restricting attorney visits. He reduced the quality and portions of food detainees were served, instituted Southern-style chain gangs, and set about ensuring that his jails were places

then becoming notorious<sup>17</sup> for his culture warring, racial profiling,<sup>18</sup> and use of chain gangs.<sup>19</sup> By 1999 Hodgson was already copying Arpaio’s methods when he flew to Arizona to visit the future felon.<sup>20</sup> “It’s not a buffet here,” Hodgson remembers Arpaio saying of the inadequate and inedible food he served in his “tent city” jail in 120 degree heat.<sup>21</sup> Hodgson even appropriated Arpaio’s tagline: “Jail is not a country club.”<sup>22</sup>

Hodgson’s philosophy as a sheriff is a simplistic, red meat pitch to law-and-order supporters: treat detainees so poorly that they won’t want to return to jail. Such was his message in a 2010 campaign ad:

Jail is the last stage of the criminal justice system, and it’s the most important when it comes to stopping the cycle of crime. ... Jail is not a country club. That’s why, once you’ve done time in the Bristol County House of Corrections, you won’t want to come back.<sup>23</sup>

Complaints about abuse began early in Hodgson’s tenure, including a 1998 lawsuit alleging cruel and unusual punishment. In 2002, the sheriff imposed sweeping per-diem fees on prisoners, requiring each prisoner to pay for room, board, medical care, and education.<sup>24</sup> The fees were struck down in 2004, sparking a lengthy legal fight.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, in 2010, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that Hodgson had “acted in excess of his authority and contrary to the intent of the Legislature.”<sup>26</sup> But Hodgson still found a way to wring profits out of those he incarcerated: by providing such poor and insufficient food and clothing that prisoners were forced to buy both at personal expense from the jail’s commissary.

In 2009 a judge ruled that Hodgson

was housing prisoners under cruel and unusual conditions. Prisoners were being triple-bunked at the Ash Street Jail, forced to sleep on the floor, and kept in cells without toilets.<sup>27</sup> In 2017, it was

also one of two jails Hodgson ran that could not document compliance with safe temperature regulations.<sup>28</sup> Since the jail’s kitchen couldn’t pass a health inspection,<sup>29</sup> meals had to be prepared in Dartmouth and delivered to the New Bedford facility.<sup>30</sup> One detainee described the food as “not enough to feed a five year old child.”<sup>31</sup> In 2018, following a food strike by detainees,<sup>32</sup> *Standard-Times* reporters Jennette Barnes and Michael Bonner discovered expired food in the pantry and meals they described as inedible.<sup>33</sup> Hodgson’s response was dismissive: “I always tell people, ‘Look, [if you want] cake, cookies, you want more ounces of orange juice or what have you, don’t come here.’”

In 2018 a class-action lawsuit asserted that a phone contract between Hodgson and Securus Technologies, which provided telecommunication services for detainees, constituted an illegal kick-back scheme. Between August 2011 and June 2013, Hodgson made \$1.17 million in “commissions” from Securus, as well as an additional lump sum payment of \$820,000.<sup>34</sup> Hodgson was charging detainees and their families at least double, and in some cases 30 times more per minute than the rate charged by the Department of Corrections.<sup>35</sup> At least one suicide at the Bristol County jail has been directly linked to the cost of phone calls.<sup>36</sup>

The previous year Hodgson had banned in-person visits to detainees, requiring family and friends of detainees to use video conferencing supplied by Securus. The ACLU objected<sup>37</sup> and legislators had to add protections for in-person visitation to the 2018 criminal justice reform package in order to thwart Hodgson’s scheme.<sup>38</sup>

Hodgson has also been repeatedly accused of neglecting detainees’ health. Men formerly jailed at the Bristol County House of Correction (BHOC) report that newly-incarcerated detainees are denied medications for substance addiction and

endure painful withdrawal,<sup>39</sup> in violation of Department of Correction medication policies.<sup>40</sup>

In a second class-action lawsuit in 2018, Hodgson was accused of holding detainees with mental illnesses in solitary-confinement cells and denying them programs and services.<sup>41</sup> Unsurprisingly, BHOC has the highest suicide rate of any county jail in Massachusetts,<sup>42</sup> and Hodgson is currently fighting several wrongful death lawsuits.<sup>43</sup> In 2019, Bristol County was tied for the most pretrial jail deaths in the state.<sup>44</sup>

## CORRUPTION

Allegations of corruption have also dogged Hodgson throughout his career. He's been accused of patronage, boosting his friends' pensions, taking questionable gifts from supporters,<sup>45</sup> receiving kickbacks, abusing taxpayer money for personal expenses, mismanaging his office's finances, and spending millions on

flagged in 2004 for exceeding the legally permitted campaign maximum.<sup>51</sup>

After the state's Commission on Judicial Conduct forced Judge Michael Livingstone off the bench for ethics violations in 2008, Hodgson appointed the disgraced judge to run the jail's medical program, later admitting that former state Sen. William Q. "Biff" MacLean, Jr., New Bedford City Councilor John T. Saunders, and a former mayor, Judge John Markey, had approached him looking for a job for Livingstone, who sought to beef up his state pension.<sup>52</sup>

A state audit, released in 2018, discovered numerous problems with the sheriff's relationship with Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), including Hodgson's failure to reimburse the state nearly \$350,000 in ICE payments deposited into one of at least a dozen sheriff's accounts not monitored by the Comptroller and thus free from state oversight.<sup>53</sup> Also in 2018, the social justice organiza-

cluding K9 units, and loaned them out to local police forces on his own terms. In 2000, Doherty reported, the Fall River Fourth of July parade featured "a contingent of heavily armed sheriff's deputies—helmeted, with combat boots laced to mid-shin, machine guns at the ready—flanked by some of his 10 canine officers and a small armada of gleaming new trucks and vans emblazoned with the now-ubiquitous yellow and black insignia of the department."<sup>58</sup>

Often, Hodgson stepped on toes. When he instituted his chain gangs, New Bedford Mayor Fred Kalisz was outraged. "You can't just go into a community and change the way public safety is done," he told the *Standard-Times*. "To have someone come in with what some would call a privatized police force and try to force their ways on the community is just not productive." George Leontire, New Bedford's City Solicitor, put it less charitably to the *Standard-Times*: "He

**Since his first, opportunistic embrace of anti-immigrant politics, Hodgson has come to forge strong connections with three of the best known anti-immigration groups founded by White nationalist John H. Tanton and the groups' leaders.**

doomed court cases.

When Hodgson initially ran for sheriff in 1998, his opponent, Rep. Joseph McIntyre, accused him of running a "patronage bazaar" in the sheriff's office, and a newspaper slammed Hodgson for practices ranging from "hiring of publicity agents to his fattening of the payroll with patronage employees, who repay him with campaign contributions that he encourages."<sup>46</sup> Hodgson's 2010 challengers charged him with trading jobs and pensions for political support.<sup>47</sup> During a debate, one claimed, "the Sheriff has spent millions of dollars on unnecessary legal fees to three lawyers who are his personal friends and political contributors."<sup>48</sup>

By 2008, Hodgson had spent \$1 million on a labor case he stubbornly took all the way to the Supreme Court.<sup>49</sup> He also spent \$3.4 million on other cases.<sup>50</sup> Of that, \$1.3 million went to attorney—and "special sheriff"—Bruce Assad. Another \$1.3 million went to attorney Ronald Lowenstein, a donor whose family was

tion Bristol County for Correctional Justice obtained Hodgson's travel records through a public information request,<sup>54</sup> revealing that Hodgson had stuck taxpayers with the tab for tens of thousands of dollars of trips to Washington, Texas, Mackinac Island, Foxwoods, anti-immigrant events, and right-wing conferences.<sup>55</sup>

## EMPIRE BUILDING

From his first years in office, Hodgson seemed determined to expand the scope of his role. He added 100 employees, "a SWAT-like special operations team," and rolled out his Jim Crow-style chain gangs.<sup>56</sup> A 2000 article in the *Standard-Times* on "The Hodgson empire" noted, "Once little more than a warden, the Bristol County sheriff is now the very visible head of what has become the largest law enforcement agency in Southeastern Massachusetts, with interests far beyond the mere housing and transportation of county prisoners."<sup>57</sup> Hodgson soon acquired more equipment and staff, in-

thinks it says 'I'm a tough-guy boss.' But I think he's a Boss Hogg."<sup>59</sup> Lee Charlton, then-president of the New Bedford NAACP, recalled how Hodgson's chain gangs rubbed salt into the county's deep racial wounds. In the Whitest parts of Bristol County, Hodgson sold his methods to people worried about an invasion of "urban criminals" and who believed, in Charlton's words, that they needed to "fear people like me."<sup>60</sup>

In 2003 Hodgson declared that New Bedford had become "a killing field" and, without approval from the city, launched patrols on city streets, prompting Mayor Kalisz to file a complaint in Superior Court. New Bedford's police and the Bristol County District Attorney also decried the move, warning that Hodgson's poorly trained officers would compromise investigations and endanger real cops.<sup>61</sup>

Still, Hodgson persisted—for many years—in seeking to acquire the patrol powers that Western sheriffs enjoy. In 2017 a retired Fall River police sergeant wrote a letter to the local paper, blast-



ing Hodgson for conspiring with former mayor Jasiel Correia (who now faces federal corruption charges) to allow his officers to patrol Fall River,<sup>62</sup> in violation of a labor agreement, and to take over the city's jail.<sup>63</sup> Hodgson brushes off criticisms of his many power grabs: "We are completely within our constitutional mandate," he told the *Standard-Times*. "Counties were actually established even before the state... And I've never been a guy who believes before we can do anything we have to get a consensus. I've kind of been the guy to go out and do it."<sup>64</sup>

### HOPPING ON THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT BANDWAGON

In 2008, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) launched the Secure Communities program, enlisting local law enforcement in federal efforts to detect, detain, and remove non-citizens and collect fingerprints and other identification. The program was popular with Western sheriffs with patrol powers like Joe Arpaio, who stepped up his racial profiling of Latinx people<sup>65</sup> and filled his jails to overflowing with federal detainees before being barred from participating in ICE programs in 2011.<sup>66</sup>

ICE had already built Hodgson a \$3.2 million detention facility, later named the C. Carlos Carreiro Immigration De-

ernor Deval Patrick over what he charged was the state's chronic underfunding and attempts to seize control of jails from sheriffs. But Patrick's reservations about expanding Secure Communities was the last straw,<sup>70</sup> and Hodgson went to war with the governor.<sup>71</sup> In 2012, after receiving pressure and assurances from the Obama administration, Patrick relented and Secure Communities was implemented in all remaining jurisdictions.<sup>72</sup> Hodgson had seemingly prevailed.

The campaign would mark Hodgson's entry into anti-immigrant politics, but he would soon embrace the cause much more fully. In particular, he would align himself with various organizations launched by John H. Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist and White nationalist who created a network of over a dozen anti-immigrant groups,<sup>73</sup> nearly half of which have been designated as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center.<sup>74</sup>

The three best-known Tanton groups<sup>75</sup> are the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR),<sup>76</sup> a lobbying and action group that has amassed great influence within the Trump administration; the report-generating Center for Immigration Studies (CIS);<sup>77</sup> and NumbersUSA, a purportedly grassroots organization that claims nine million mem-

bers, 287(g) programs (which authorize state and local authorities to arrest and detain undocumented immigrants),<sup>83</sup> and Intergovernmental Service Agreements. And sheriffs can bring even unpopular immigration policies to their communities in the name of "protecting citizens." In 2011 FAIR began publicly cultivating sheriffs to carry out its agenda.<sup>84</sup> According to the group's 2011 Annual Report, FAIR

...met with these sheriffs and their deputies, supplied them with a steady stream of information, established regular conference calls so they could share information and experiences, and invited them to come to Washington to meet with FAIR's senior staff. We invited sheriffs who played the most prominent roles in addressing illegal immigration locally to FAIR's national talk radio event, *Hold Their Feet to the Fire*, where they shared their stories and expertise with listeners across the country.<sup>85</sup>

By 2014 Hodgson was taking a leadership role in the organization, working with FAIR's long-serving National Field Director, Susan Tully,<sup>86</sup> to organize a "fact-finding mission"<sup>87</sup> to the Rio Grande so sheriffs could "see exactly what is going on along the border," as Tully put it.<sup>88</sup>

The same year Hodgson used Bristol

**By 2014 Hodgson was taking a leadership role in FAIR, working with FAIR's long-serving National Field Director, Susan Tully, to organize a "fact-finding mission" to the Rio Grande so sheriffs could "see exactly what is going on along the border."**

County Sheriff's Office letterhead to write to fellow anti-"amnesty" sheriffs, asking them to travel to Washington, D.C., in late 2014 to support Senators Jeff Sessions, David Vitter, and other Congress members opposed to the Obama administration's border enforcement policies.<sup>89</sup> Hodgson's letter called for at least 200 sheriffs to make the trip and warned that immigrants bring diseases that overwhelm public health and pose a national security threat.<sup>90</sup>

tion Center. The facility opened in April 2007, just missing a raid that swept up 361 Central American workers. More than 200 of that number were immediately transported to Texas, but over 90 were housed in regional jails, including Hodgson's Dartmouth facilities.<sup>67</sup> Yet despite this infusion of ICE money and the millions Hodgson claimed the facility had received in ICE reimbursements, by 2009, the Bristol County Sheriff's Office was running a \$5.4 million deficit<sup>68</sup> and a 2010 state audit found extensive issues, including approximately 1,400 pieces of inventory that had no assessed value at Hodgson's facilities.<sup>69</sup> Hodgson had already been angry at Massachusetts Gov-

### Federation for American Immigration Reform

Sheriffs are elected local officials with surprisingly little accountability<sup>82</sup> but they have a lot of power to enforce national immigration policy through ar-

In 2015, Hodgson helped FAIR host a "border summit" in McAllen, Texas,<sup>91</sup> with CIS's Jessica Vaughan allegedly providing the training.<sup>92</sup> The summit took place at the Texas ranch of Mike and

Linda Vickers, founders of the vigilante group Texas Border Volunteers, itself an offshoot of the Minuteman Project,<sup>93</sup> a loose-knit group of border vigilantes, some of whose members have been affiliated with White supremacist militias and linked to murders<sup>94</sup> and incidents like the illegal detention of hundreds of migrants in April 2019.<sup>95</sup> Like Hodgson, the Vickers are also regular attendees of FAIR's Hold Their Feet to the Fire events.<sup>96</sup>

a racist housing ban on immigrants in Fremont, Nebraska, in 2013;<sup>98</sup> and has maintained extensive contacts with militia members and White supremacists.<sup>99</sup>

Hodgson has been a consistent attendee at Hold Their Feet to the Fire events, most recently in 2019.<sup>100</sup> In 2017, Hodgson joined FAIR's National Board of Advisors<sup>101</sup> and has appeared at anti-immigrant events sponsored by both FAIR and CIS.<sup>102</sup> When asked if his membership on

Challenges.” Likewise, in 2016 he joined FAIR's “Sanctuary Cities and Law Enforcement” roundtable—an event that also included a talk by FAIR's law enforcement manager titled, “Soros Hacked: The Truth Behind His Big Money Network to Destroy U.S. Borders.”<sup>104</sup>

### **Center for Immigration Studies**

Regarded by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group,<sup>105</sup> the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) publishes a variety of statistics and reports, though their accuracy has been challenged by the Cato Institute,<sup>106</sup> the American Immigration Council,<sup>107</sup> and

others.<sup>108</sup> CIS leadership, including Executive Director Mark Krikorian and Director of Policy Studies Jessica Vaughan,<sup>109</sup> frequently testify as expert witnesses before Congress, despite their track record of racist commentary and associations. In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010, Krikorian remarked, “My guess is that Haiti's so screwed up because it wasn't colonized long enough.”<sup>110</sup> Vaughn has appeared as a featured speaker at an annual workshop for the White nationalist publisher *The Social Contract Press* (another John Tanton project),<sup>111</sup> where she spoke alongside White nationalist Peter Brimelow,<sup>112</sup> founder of the racist website VDARE.<sup>113</sup> She's also ap-

## **In 2018, Hodgson announced that the National Sheriffs' Association would be crowd-funding Trump's border wall.**



Construction crews work on the new border wall on the boundary between the United States and Mexico near the Calexico Port of Entry on June 19, 2019. Credit: Mani Albrecht for U.S. Customs and Border Protection/Flickr.

The participation of sheriffs at these events, in which members of far-right organizations become guests on dozens of talk radio shows broadcast directly from the conference site, are typically organized by FAIR's Susan Tully, an anti-immigration hardliner who, according to the Anti-Defamation League, has baselessly claimed that the Obama administration ran school buses across the border to provide free K-12 education for Mexicans;<sup>97</sup> was involved in organizing

the board of a group founded by a White supremacist might be construed as endorsement of those views or just poor judgment, Hodgson bristled, telling me, “I'm on a Board of Advisors. I go once a year to listen.”<sup>103</sup>

But Hodgson is too modest. In addition to his ongoing participation in FAIR events, in 2014 he delivered a two-hour dinner address to its board on “The Effect of the President's Decisions on DACA and Its Impact on Our Law Enforcement

appeared on broadcasts of the CIS radio show “Borderline” with Chilton Williamson, Jr., a longtime editor at the neo-Confederate *Chronicles* magazine.

Hodgson has worked closely with the organization. In 2013, halfway through the Obama administration, a bipartisan group of senators known as the Gang of Eight was trying to find common ground on immigration reforms, while two CIS alumni, Janice Kephart and Steven Camarota, were working for Alabama Sena-



tor Jeff Sessions to scuttle those efforts.<sup>114</sup> Shortly before the Gang of Eight spoke in one chamber of the Senate, Sessions' aide, current White House immigration advisor Stephen Miller, was busy in another room readying the microphone for a parade of sheriffs and ICE agents ready to testify against the reforms as "amnesty first, enforcement perhaps never" and painting immigrants as "criminals who have committed felonies, who have assaulted our officers, and who prey on children."<sup>115</sup> Hodgson was among them, and when he spoke, he painted a grim picture of 12 million dangerous, criminal aliens "disrespect[ing]" U.S. laws and bringing disease. "Illegal immigrants are creating public health hazards, public safety concerns," he said, "living in homes, one-room apartments with three families, taking mattresses off the streets that are infested with bedbugs, filling our emergency rooms for lack of preventative care and costing the taxpayers millions and millions of dollars."<sup>116</sup>

In 2017, Hodgson testified with Vaughan at Immigration and Border Security hearings in Washington.<sup>117</sup> In January 2020, the two teamed up again at the Massachusetts State House to testify against the Safe Communities Act, a bill that would limit state involvement in fed-

with numerous White supremacist connections<sup>122</sup> that relies on visceral testimony by relatives of victims of car accidents or crimes committed by undocumented immigrants to push its anti-immigrant agenda.<sup>123</sup> During January's hearings about the Massachusetts Safe Communities Act, AVIAC's president and vice president both testified, alongside Hodgson, in opposition to the bill.<sup>124</sup> Also testifying that day was Lou Murray, a member of President Trump's Catholic Advisory Group<sup>125</sup> and founder of the FAIR- and CIS-aligned group Bostonians Against Sanctuary Cities;<sup>126</sup> and Steve Kropper, Co-Chair of the Massachusetts Coalition for Immigration Reform,<sup>127</sup> which the Southern Poverty Law Center classifies as a "nativist extremist group"<sup>128</sup> and whose members have collaborated with the Minuteman Project,<sup>129</sup> which has documented connections to White supremacist groups.<sup>130</sup>

Besides FAIR and CIS, MCIR is also affiliated with the Tanton network's The Social Contract Press, which in 2016 published a piece by MCIR Executive Board member John Thompson,<sup>131</sup> who approvingly quotes White supremacist Jason Richwine, author of a paper titled, "IQ and Immigration Policy."<sup>132</sup> (One line from Richwine's paper reads, "No one

Sense,<sup>136</sup> and its communications director, Jeremy Messina,<sup>137</sup> frequently posted White supremacist content on his Facebook page, before it was deleted.<sup>138</sup> In January 2019, Hodgson appeared at a Washington, D.C., press conference with ABF leadership and members of AVIAC, congratulating them. "Thank you for representing what I think is the best of America," he said. "I will tell you that the sheriffs of America are standing with all of you."<sup>139</sup>

## ISLAMOPHOBIA

Hodgson's ire isn't limited to Latinx immigrants and refugees; he's tied into a broader far-right ecosystem that includes a network of Islamophobic leaders responsible for mobilizing resentment against Muslims in the U.S. and abroad. During our September 2019 interview,<sup>140</sup> Hodgson parroted a debunked claim that New Jersey Muslims had celebrated the fall of the Twin Towers on 9/11. This claim is similar to one made by Donald Trump, which earned a "Pants on Fire" rating from Politifact.<sup>141</sup>

Hodgson is also connected to Dennis Michael Lynch, a filmmaker and staunch supporter of far-right movements from anti-immigrant groups to Patriot movement leaders like Cliven Bundy.<sup>142</sup> In

## **Hodgson's ire isn't limited to Latinx immigrants and refugees; he's tied into a broader far-right ecosystem that includes a network of Islamophobic leaders responsible for mobilizing resentment against Muslims in the U.S. and abroad.**

eral immigration enforcement.<sup>118</sup> Most recently, this April, Hodgson participated in a CIS teleconference with Krikorian titled "Should ICE Release or Continue Detention for Aliens during Pandemic?" Hodgson said it was "outrageous" that he was held accountable by the Massachusetts congressional delegation for opposing the release of detainees during a COVID-19 outbreak at one of his jails. The teleconference ended with a plug for a hotline to report "illegal-alien crime."<sup>119</sup>

### **Front Groups and White Supremacists**

In September 2019 Hodgson appeared at an "Angel Families" event sponsored by Advocates for Victims of Illegal Alien Crime (AVIAC),<sup>120</sup> a FAIR front group<sup>121</sup>

knows whether Hispanics will ever reach IQ parity with whites, but the prediction that new Hispanic immigrants will have low-IQ children and grandchildren is difficult to argue against.")

In 2018, Hodgson announced that the National Sheriffs' Association would be crowd-funding Trump's border wall.<sup>133</sup> The project eventually folded and its website now redirects donors to a site named *Fund the Wall*, run by the American Border Foundation (ABF), a Wyoming charity connected<sup>134</sup> to the right-wing militia group American Defence Force, and which to date has only managed to collect a little over \$227,000.<sup>135</sup> ABF Managing Director Quentin Kramer has appeared on the right-wing radio show Southern

2015 Hodgson appeared with Lynch at Ahavath Torah Congregation in Stoughton, Massachusetts, a synagogue run by Rabbi Jonathan Hausman,<sup>143</sup> who has hosted numerous anti-Islam speakers, including far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders, frequently described as a neofascist.<sup>144</sup> When asked about the appearance, Hodgson downplayed the connection, saying he was just there doing his duty to inform the public about terrorism: "They asked me to come speak about terrorism," he told me. "That's why I was there, because of my involvement with the terrorism task force."<sup>145</sup>

Another group of Muslim-bashers Hodgson is connected with, Brigitte Gabriel's ACT for America, claims to

have more than 1,000 chapters around the country (although this figure is disputed) and espouses the crudest sort of Islamophobia.<sup>146</sup> The Anti-Defamation League,<sup>147</sup> the Southern Poverty Law Center,<sup>148</sup> Political Research Associates,<sup>149</sup> and others<sup>150</sup> have documented ACT's many links with antisemitic, neonazi, Christian Right, Identitarian, and White supremacist groups. The group, which claims that the U.S. Constitution, Western civilization, and Judeo-Christian culture are under attack by Islam, has sponsored anti-Muslim legislation<sup>151</sup> and organizes anti-Muslim events, sometimes with neonazis.<sup>152</sup> In 2017 and 2019, Hodgson and Gabriel, a long-time guest at the event,<sup>153</sup> appeared

an anti-immigrant intelligence agency. Hodgson complained to Miller about Massachusetts laws, courts, legislators, and its attorney general, and repeatedly asked for Miller's help circumventing state oversight of his ICE-related expenses.<sup>158</sup> In one email that particularly outraged Bristol County residents, Hodgson reported his own church to Miller for displaying "Know Your Rights" cards for immigrant congregants.<sup>159</sup>

This March, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, detainees in Hodgson's tightly packed ICE detention facility at the Bristol County Jail and House of Correction unsuccessfully petitioned him for release and sanitation of the facilities.<sup>160</sup> The Massachusetts congressional delega-

News reporter that "Hodgson threw his client to the ground and pepper sprayed him when he was on the phone with counsel."<sup>166</sup> On May 6, the Massachusetts congressional delegation and several members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus called for an investigation into the Bristol County jail riot.<sup>167</sup> Both the Department of Homeland Security's Office of the Inspector General and the state Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight promised investigations as well,<sup>168</sup> as did Attorney General Maura Healey, who asked for surveillance footage of the incident.<sup>169</sup>

By May 12, nine total detainees and six jail staff had been infected.<sup>170</sup> A week later, the ACLU of Massachusetts an-

## **Hodgson's emails to House immigration advisors were filled with suggestions for punishing state law enforcement agencies and municipalities that didn't cooperate with ICE, and for turning his state Department of Motor Vehicles into an anti-immigrant intelligence agency.**

together at FAIR's Hold Their Feet to the Fire event in Washington, D.C.<sup>154</sup>

### **FROM BRISTOL COUNTY TO WASHINGTON**

In December 2019, the ACLU of Massachusetts published a trove of documents requested from Hodgson, including hundreds of emails between him and the White House, and dozens with White House immigration advisors Stephen Miller and John Zadrozny.

The correspondence revealed that Hodgson had made more than a dozen trips to meet with Miller, attend White House briefings, and participate in events organized by FAIR and attended by CIS staffers.<sup>155</sup> The ACLU's release of documents followed a prior cache of emails published by the Southern Poverty Law Center, exposing the extent of Stephen Miller's contacts with worst-of-the-worst White supremacist organizations.<sup>156</sup> Hodgson's unctuous emails to Miller and to Zadrozny, who came from FAIR and is now acting chief of staff for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services,<sup>157</sup> were filled with suggestions for punishing state law enforcement agencies and municipalities that didn't cooperate with ICE, and for turning his state Department of Motor Vehicles into

tion called for the release of people who posed no danger to society.<sup>161</sup> And at the end of March, the detainees, represented by Lawyers for Civil Rights, sued Hodgson, ICE, and the Department of Homeland Security for the immediate release of vulnerable people and for greater COVID-19 testing.<sup>162</sup> U.S. District Court Judge William Young issued a preliminary injunction, finding that both ICE and Hodgson had likely violated the constitutional rights of detainees by refusing to test them for the virus.<sup>163</sup>

Young's ruling—ordering both testing and the release of vulnerable detainees<sup>164</sup>—infuriated Hodgson, who countered by publishing a "Prisoner Release Alert" newsletter, listing charges some of the detainees faced.<sup>165</sup> On May 1, 10 ICE detainees were finally summoned for testing and told to bring their belongings. Suspecting the punitive use of solitary confinement for requesting the tests, the detainees refused to leave common and sleeping areas.

The riot that followed has differing accounts. Hodgson claims the ICE detainees "rushed" corrections officers. But immigration attorney Ira Alkalay, who was speaking with one of the detainees during the disturbance, told a WBSM

nounced they were suing<sup>171</sup> to obtain jail records, explaining, "The public deserves to know what happened in Bristol County's immigration detention facility." Their statement continued, "That is especially true when the leader of that government institution has been accused of personal misconduct during the incident, and given ongoing controversy about potentially unsafe conditions there."<sup>172</sup>

Eleven New Bedford area groups have since called on Hodgson to resign,<sup>173</sup> but the sheriff waves away their demands and complaints as a "false narrative" from people with a "socialist agenda."<sup>174</sup>

Hodgson faces re-election in 2022.

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BY KATHRYN JOYCE

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# Unholy

Author Q&A with Sarah Posner



*President Trump authorized law enforcement to use tear gas and forceful riot control tactics to clear peaceful protestors, creating a path for him to pose for a photo op in front of the parish house at St. John's Church in Washington, D.C., on June 1, 2020. Credit: Official White House Photograph.*

For years, Sarah Posner has been one of the most perceptive journalists covering the political activism of U.S. evangelicals and the broader Religious Right. In 2016, she became one of the first reporters to track the rise of the Alt Right, and its relationship to the wider conservative movement, including getting former White House advisor Steve Bannon to admit that he saw his website, *Breitbart News*, as “the platform for the alt-right.” With the release of her new book, *Unholy: Why White Evangelicals Worship at the Altar of Donald Trump* (Random House, 2020), Posner has vividly demonstrated how these two movements overlap and tie together in surprising and disturbing ways. Posner spoke with PRA this spring about her groundbreaking reporting.

**PRA: One of your book's most impressive accomplishments is in revealing the connections between the Christian Right and the Alt Right, two movements people often think of as separate.**

**Posner:** Both movements oppose changes that took place in the second half of the 20th century that promoted civil rights, human rights, and dignity for all citizens. Obviously those goals still need to be fully attained. But both movements similarly opposed those changes. And so what unites them in support of Donald Trump is his contempt for those very liberal democratic virtues: pluralism, democracy, the rule of law, human rights. The Alt Right doesn't really care about abortion, and you won't meet many people on the Christian Right who'd go to a Nazi rally and walk around waving a swastika. But Trump is a vessel for both movements and their hostility toward liberal democracy and human rights.

**Almost everything written about Trump and evangelicals highlights the contradiction between his personal immorality and the Christian Right's purported values, concluding that evangelicals hypocritically traded their values for raw political power. You say that's too simplistic, and that a deeper bond exists between them.**

As much as Trump couldn't cite a Bible verse correctly, he nonetheless articulated, in a way few other politicians dare to do, his contempt and disdain for “political correctness”—which is code for everything they believe is infringing on their rights as Chris-

tians or that's diminishing the Christian America they claim is the true foundational nature of the United States. They saw in him a hero who was not cowed by what they claim is this oppressive, tyrannical political correctness that's trying to silence Christians. So it didn't matter that he can't talk about the Bible, or the time he was saved, or when he was baptized, or had his Road to Damascus moment. None of that mattered because they'd never had a champion like that who would so unabashedly voice their grievances.

**You also write that Trump offered evangelicals something more than just political power; that he gave them "new life."**

When I talk about him giving them new life, I was talking principally about politics and policy. If the 2016 election had gone the other way, the country was on the road to, for example, full equality for LGBTQ people. The Christian Right thought 2015 and the Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide was a watershed moment, like *Roe v. Wade*, where they would have to mobilize to either overturn or chip away at it. They were a very powerful demographic within the Republican Party, but a minority in the country in their view that LGBTQ people shouldn't have full and equal rights. That view was about to be culturally marginalized, so it was a tipping point for them, where they might have been unable to do that chipping away without Trump's help, in terms of policy and personnel, and also in terms of all these anti-LGBTQ judges that he's nominating.

With regard to the fringe or less well-known players who now have greater prominence, I think that's a function of Trump's fluency in the televangelist world and also his position on political correctness. Unlike previous Republicans, Trump doesn't shy away from people who believe in QAnon, or that vaccines are a government plot, or whatever conspiracy theories his supporters believe. So not only has he given them new life in that policy way, but he's also giving new exposure or notoriety to figures that were far from being household names.

**You observe that Trump seems to have studied televangelism and used it as a model for his public persona and career.**

Trump has long been friends with Paula White, a fairly popular televangelist who is now not only his personal spiritual adviser but an official White House adviser to his faith initiative. Back in the early 2000s, the lore goes, he supposedly liked watching Christian television, saw White preach, and had his office call her. And the rest is history: they've been friends for close to two decades. But whatever the truth is in that story, it's pretty clear that he has studied televangelists and their ability to entertain, to promote magical thinking, to talk about money, and just the ostentatiousness that's so evident in televangelism.

It's also said that as a kid he went to the church of Norman Vincent Peale, who promoted "the power of positive thinking" even before these televangelists were on the scene. I think that mentality is on display with Trump right now during the COVID pandemic, because he clearly seems to think that if he just hopes that it goes away, it will.

But his connection to contemporary televangelists goes deeper than that. It's really about money and celebrity and thinking that being rich is evidence of God's blessing on you. The prosperity gospel goes a long way toward explaining what these self-professing Christians see in Donald Trump.

**Racial grievance is an important through-line of your book, not least in your history of how the contemporary Christian Right came into being.**

Again, it all goes back to this antagonism toward the government doing anything to promote civil or human rights that the Christian Right sees as a threat to their own rights. The modern Religious Right got organized around a grievance about IRS policy regarding private schools. After *Brown v. Board of Education* ordered the desegregation of America's public schools, a lot of private schools were formed in areas where people didn't want to send their children to desegregated schools. Some were segregation academies, explicitly formed to avoid

desegregation. Then there were others, like Christian schools, that weren't formed with that explicit purpose but because Christians had other grievances, too, like the striking down of mandatory school prayer and Bible readings, which occurred around the same time.

The IRS developed a policy that if you don't have a certain percentage of minority students, and you're not taking steps to make your school more diverse, then you're not entitled to a tax exemption because you're basically trying to evade the policy of the U.S. government. One of the schools that had its tax exemption taken away was Bob Jones University, because they had a policy against interracial dating. Bob Jones became this rallying cry for the Christian Right: that the government was trying to impose its views and interfere in the religious beliefs of Christian schools. And while Bob Jones was the most celebrated case and went all the way up to the Supreme Court, a lot of other schools, particularly primary and secondary Christian schools, were also getting very riled up. This pushback to the IRS led to White evangelicals getting involved in the Christian Right. It really wasn't abortion, which was tacked on and later marketed as the primary reason evangelicals got involved in politics.

**You describe Trump as not an aberration but rather the belated culmination of the New Right's plans: a figure whom social conservatives could use to punish establishment Republicans for taking them for granted.**

A lot of the historical memory of the creation of the New Right focuses more on the Religious Right than on racial grievance. And I think that's by design. But at the time, the founders of the New Right, like Paul Weyrich and Howard Phillips, really wanted to stick it to the Republican establishment, the country club Republicans. They thought there was going to be this Middle America, blue-collar, White Christian guy who would reject the [National Review founder] Bill Buckley view of what conservatism should be.

From the 1980s through the early 2000s, the Republican Party looked pretty much like the Buckley view of the world: respectable, connected with the



Chamber of Commerce and the foreign policy establishment. But when I looked back at the writings from the early '70s to early '80s, when Weyrich was putting the New Right infrastructure together, you realize how much it was driven not just by the Christian Right's desire to "return America to her Christian roots," but by the idea that liberalism has ruined America. That all these liberal ideas about immigration and civil rights have been terrible for us and we need to create this new right-wing movement that opposes that stuff, but also opposes the country club Republicans. And when you look at that early writing, it's remarkable how much it sounds like Trump. There's this desire to shunt aside the establishment Republican view of things and create this new right-wing movement that pushes back on the government trying to institutionalize these new civil rights that have gone way too far.

Looking at that, you could almost make the argument that the Bushes and McCain and Romney were the aberrations. Because if the New Right was the beating heart of the American Right wing, that really spoke to their grievances and antipathy to government or judicial action to promote civil rights and democratic values, then Trump speaks to those roots more than Mitt Romney or John McCain or George W. Bush.

**You also report that, although mainstream conservatism treats the Alt Right as marginal, there's a sort of dance between the establishment GOP and the Far Right in terms of what they admit is part of their coalition. For example, you report that Peter Brimelow, founder of the racist website VDARE, told you many Alt Right people have mainstream roles, staffing conservative think tanks, flying under the radar.**

Brimelow himself is a case study in this. He once worked as a staffer to Senator Orrin Hatch. He's written for mainstream conservative publications, including the *National Review*, until Buckley let him go—to Brimelow's ever-lasting resentment. On VDARE, Brimelow still talks about Buckley and "Conservatism, Inc." But while Brimelow was cut loose from *National Review*, and some people have

been cut loose from places like the Heritage Foundation, others don't get that treatment. And there's no more glaring example of somebody who believes in the White nationalist agenda in a very aggressive way than Stephen Miller, who previously worked for Senator Jeff Sessions and Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, and who now has a very prominent role as one of Trump's longest lasting aides in the White House.

I don't know precisely who Brimelow was thinking of when he told me that back in 2016. But when you think about how Miller ascended to the highest level to the White House, and how many other Stephen Millers there are who haven't ascended to that level, who might just be working at a think tank or for some obscure member of Congress, I think that's what Brimelow was talking about.

**You also write about the ways the Christian Right and the White supremacist Right overlap, including on the international stage, with figures who seem different but are fighting similar fights—people like Allan Carlson of the World Congress of Families and former Trump advisor Steve Bannon.**

I don't think they're secret allies but that they have affinities that are coming together in this moment when we're seeing the rise of far-right authoritarianism across Europe and the former Soviet Union and even in South America. To them, it's important to have a strong leader to push back on liberal ideals, or what Bannon might call globalist ideas.

When Bannon talks about globalism, it's code for the idea that we're all global citizens and human rights should be protected and promoted and ensured for everyone. And when Allan Carlson talks about gender ideology—which is World Congress of Families jargon for reproductive and LGBTQ rights—he's talking about a very similar thing: that there are these outsiders or minorities who come in and demand these rights, but those rights infringe on our rights. So while you might not see Carlson and Bannon in the same room together—although that wouldn't surprise me greatly—these affinities are working together such that both movements are not only okay with

autocratic leaders like Vladimir Putin or Viktor Orbán, but they're actively promoting them.

Bannon also recognizes, at least domestically, that he needed the Christian Right to be on board with the Alt Right. In the same interview where he told me Breitbart was the platform for the Alt Right, he also said the Alt Right needs the Christian Right in order to win elections.

So I'm not arguing that Tony Perkins got together with Richard Spencer and had a meeting about how to get the Christian Right and the Alt Right together. I don't think those two would get along in the slightest. But there are these affinities and Trump worked those affinities and Bannon worked those affinities and here we are.

**Is the Right's use of religious freedom rhetoric an example of that?**

Religious freedom was the language used to push back on Christian schools' efforts to oppose desegregation. And it's the very same language that's used today to push back on LGBTQ and reproductive rights.

Now, you won't see the mainstream Christian Right saying that civil rights for African Americans infringes on their religious freedom. Even though they're in an effective relationship with the Alt Right in supporting Trump, and Trump is obviously very racist, they try to keep up this pretense that they're a big tent and not just about White evangelicals and Catholics. We can have a separate discussion about whether that's sincere. But they use the same language and arguments that they used with respect to Bob Jones then with regard to LGBTQ and reproductive rights today. And when *Obergefell* was on the verge of becoming the law of the land, they were gearing up for this. They were talking about explicitly invoking the Bob Jones case and saying this is going to be a disaster for our religious freedom because now the government will come after us over what we believe about marriage and they're going to take away our churches' tax exemptions. Obviously, that wasn't going to happen and didn't happen. But the language is deployed to great effect.

## Blood and Vanishing Topsoil

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- Deep ecology is decidedly biocentric, viewing every living thing from microbes to humans as equal in intrinsic value. Deep ecology contrasts itself to what Naess and his followers term "shallow ecology," an anthropocentric environmentalism that is concerned with preserving the environment solely for human ends. See Alan Drengson "Some Thought on the Deep Ecology Movement" *Foundation for Deep Ecology*, <http://www.deepecology.org/deepecology.htm>
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- In a rather infamous case from the 1980s, deep ecology-adhering radical environmentalist group Earth First! published pseudonymous editorials celebrating AIDS as a "welcome" process of population control that Western countries should allow to take their course. Martha F. Lee, *Earth First!: Environmental Apocalypse*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 101-103.
- Stevens' Amerika.org banner appears at the bottom of the Linkola fan site. Stevens was also involved in an earlier fascist web forum circa 1999-2005 of the so-called Libertarian National Socialist Green Party, which adopted a Nazi Germany flag with a green background. "From the Green party we inherit extreme concepts of practical ecological value," reads an archived version of the forum. See Libertarian National Socialist Green Party, <https://web.archive.org/web/20020328181956/http://www.nazi.org/>
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- Ludwig Klages, *The Biocentric Worldview* (Budapest: Arktos, 2013), 123; Ludwig Klages, *Cosmogonic Reflections* (Budapest: Arktos, 2015).
- A number of Klages' essays and aphorisms are made available online via an archive managed by the American neozoi Kevin Alfred Strom, who founded National Vanguard as an offshoot of the once prominent neozoi organization National Alliance. Strom has published several of these translations on Nation-

- al Vanguard's website.
- Joakim Anderson, "Ludwig Klages and the Biocentric Worldview," *AlRight.com*, November 6, 2015, <http://archive.is/WYRk>; <https://donotlink.it/wv3WQ>
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- Both Naess and ecofascists like Johnson, drawing on Devi, locate the source of the West's anthropocentric orientation to nature in the Judeo-Christian tradition.
- Robert Stark, "Robert Stark Interviews Greg Johnson on Eco-Fascism," *Voice of Reason Radio Network*, April 2, 2012, <http://archive.is/5rLQX>
- Deep ecologists point to Genesis 1:26, which reads "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."
- Ibid. In a recent article at the antisemitic journal *Occidental Observer* titled "Racial Ecologism," an author stressed this aspect of ecofascist thinking writing: "We have already noted the importance of population-habitat balance. Now consider the irony of U.S. state and federal governments requiring the integration of human racial groups and promoting miscegenation while they also spend millions of dollars to preserve unique genotypes among mammals and fish." Nelson Rosit, "Racial Ecologism: An Environmental Position Paper for the Dissident Right," *Occidental Observer*, December 2, 2019.
- Counter-Currents'* tagline is "North American New Right."
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- Blair Taylor details another connection between biocentrism and racist movements in the figure of Kirkpatrick Sale, a longtime writer on topics of environmentalism and technology and author of *Dwellers In The Land*, who has made common cause with several secessionist groups including the neo-Confederate group League of the South. Blair Taylor, "Alt-right ecology: Ecofascism and far-right environmentalism in the United States," in *Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication*, ed. Bernhard Forchtner (Routledge, 2019).
- Stéphane François, "La Nouvelle Droite et l'écologie: une écologie néopaienne?" *Parlement[s]*, *Revue d'histoire politique*, no. 12 (2009): 132-143, [https://www.cairn.info/revue-parlements-1-2009-2-page-132.htm?&translation=1](https://www.cairn.info/revue-parlements-1-2009-2-page-132.htm?)
- In the U.S. context, this vision hearkens back to the concept of the "Northwest Territorial Imperative," a call to White supremacists to move to the Pacific Northwest en masse, and establish a stronghold. Neozoi author Harold Covington—whose work Greg Johnson has promoted—further popularized the call and until Covington's death in 2018, sought to establish an "independent and sovereign White nation in the Pacific Northwest" which they believed to be "the only possibility for the survival of the White race on this continent." See Blair Taylor, "Alt-right ecology: Ecofascism and far-right environmentalism in the United States," in *Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication*, ed. Bernhard Forchtner (Routledge, 2019) and "The Northwest Front," *The Northwest Front*, <http://archive.is/QGc0l>. It's also reminiscent of the efforts by White supremacists to establish "Pioneer Little Europes" in Georgia, Idaho, and Oklahoma in the late '90s and early '00s. See Mark Potok, "Closed Circuit," *The Intelligence Report*, November 20, 2013, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2013/closed-circuit>. In Germany, there exists a more mature movement of right-wing "Völkisch settlers" who "establish themselves as small-scale organic farmers, skilled artisans and helpful neighbors in the village community" and number in the low 1,000s. See Maik Fieitz, "Practicing The Radical Right Exit: The Case of the Völkisch Settlers," *Center for Analysis of the Radical Right*, August 7, 2018, <https://www.radicalright-analysis.com/2018/08/07/practicing-the-radical-right-exit-the-case-of-the-volkisch-settlers/>
- Timo Hännikainen, "Remembering Pentti Linkola December 7, 1932 — April 5, 2020," *Counter-Currents*, April 7, 2020, <http://archive.is/M4Eyy#selection-273.0-277.32https://archive.is/M4Eyy>
- John Morgan, "Earth Day Special," *Counter-Currents*, April 22, 2020, <http://archive.is/wipPO8rj>
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- In Matthew N. Lyons' analysis of the Christchurch shooter's manifesto, he rightly locates the killer's anti-capitalist writings in the fascist Third Position tradition, which has its roots in the "left" Stasserite wing of the early Nazi Party. Importantly, this is another fascist tradition that has long embraced environmental protection. The White nationalist American Freedom Party, formerly known as American Third Position,

- has a pro-environment plank and claims to be the United States' "only true Green party." See Matthew N. Lyons, "The Christchurch massacre and fascist revolutionary politics," *Three Way Fight*, April 18, 2019, <http://threewayfight.blogspot.com/2019/04/the-christchurch-massacre-and-fascist.html> and *American Freedom Party*, "Environment," <http://archive.is/JHbc>
- It's worth noting two older incidents of violence that have a connection to the ecofascist subculture. In 2005, a 16-year-old user of the Libertarian National Socialist Green Party forum killed 10, including himself, starting at his home and continuing at his former high school in Red Lake, MN. See Sarah Left, "A neozoi 'angel of death,'" *The Guardian*, March 22, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/mar/22/usa.usgviolence1>. In 2007, a school shooter in Finland named Pekka-Eric Auvinen killed seven fellow students and the principal before killing himself. Shortly before the murders, Auvinen, who expressed deep misanthropy, made a tribute video to Pentti Linkola. See Brendan O'Neill, "Rating humanity," *The Guardian*, November 14, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/nov/14/rating-humanity>
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- Adam Taylor, "New Zealand suspect allegedly claimed 'brief contact' with Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik," *The Washington Post*, March 15, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/03/15/new-zealand-suspect-allegedly-claimed-brief-contact-with-norwegian-mass-murderer-anders-breivik/>
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- Cassie Miller, "El Paso Massacre Galvanizes Accelerationists," *Hatewatch*, August 5, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2019/08/05/el-paso-massacre-galvanizes-accelerationists>
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- Tia Foster, who also co-ran accounts for Ananda Animal Refuge and Rescue and Mercy Line Transport, was active on both Telegram under the name "White Tree" and other social media throughout 2019. See Asheville Anti Racism, "TIA AZAR FOSTER, ECO-FASCIST MONSTER," September 13, 2019, <https://avantiaracism.blackblogs.org/2019/09/13/tia-azar-foster-eco-fascist-monster/>
- This same account promoted the manifestos of a Latin American anarchist terror group called Individualists Tending Toward the Wild (ITS) with memes imploring followers to "READ BAYAQ" which the same way neozoi spread "READ SIEGE" propaganda. ITS started in Mexico as a violent, anti-technology anarchist movement that targeted university professors and researchers in fields like nanotechnology with mail bombs (while clearly seeking to emulate Kaczynski, the American condemned the group's actions from prison in 2011. See "Ted Kaczynski on Individualists Tending Toward Savagery (ITS)," *The Anarchist Library*, 2017, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ted-kaczynski-ted-kaczynski-on-individualists-tending-toward/>). Other anarchists have condemned the group. See Scott Campbell, "There's Nothing Anarchist About Eco-Fascism: A Condemnation Of ITS," *It's Going Down*, <https://itsgoingdown.org/nothing-anarchist-eco-fascism-condemnation/>
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## Battle with Bullets

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## The Art of Activism: Favianna Rodriguez



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Favianna Rodriguez is an interdisciplinary artist, cultural strategist, and social justice activist based in Oakland, California. Her art and praxis address migration, gender justice, climate change, racial equity, and sexual freedom. Her practice boldly reshapes the myths, stories, and cultural practices of the present, while healing from the wounds of the past.

### CHANGE STORIES. TRANSFORM CULTURE. END INEQUALITY.

This piece is about building collective power through love, dignity, and community. The figure in the piece is touching their heart, which is a source of power, and this is creating ripples of change. Inside of the figure's imagination is a person who is sharing their story. As the person speaks, the seeds of the change are planted.

The image represents the way in which people build power by transforming the culture around them. By changing the stories and the culture around us, we can change society.

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