

RADICALIZING MEN

**FASCIST DESIRES,
GREAT REPLACEMENT
PROPAGANDA,
AND
POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

Jessica Johnson

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JESSICA JOHNSON

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PRESS

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Introduction

In 2011, Anders Breivik bombed the offices of the prime minister in Oslo, Norway, killing eight people, then slaughtered sixty-nine at a Worker's Youth League summer camp on the island of Utoya. To encourage similar acts of political violence, Breivik posted a 1,500-page manifesto online titled *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, accompanied by a video. His screed evinces a preoccupation with "cultural Marxism" and its disastrous effects on Western civilization—an antisemitic and xenophobic conspiracy theory with US roots that lead back to the 1970s and the far-right leader Lyndon LaRouche's belief that the Frankfurt School emigrated to the United States to instill an ideology of multiculturalism. This paranoia is narrativized by one of his followers in an essay referenced by Breivik, "The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and 'Political Correctness'" (1992) and was popularized in the late 1990s by the paleoconservatives Paul Weyrich and William S. Lind.¹

"We are sick and tired of feeling like strangers in our own lands, of being mugged, raped, stabbed, harassed, and even killed by violent gangs of Muslim thugs, yet being accused of 'racism and xenophobia,'" Breivik wrote.² He laments the decline of birth rates among white people and the death of the Christian God as governing authority in lieu of the welfare state, while invoking the language of "replacement" as he rails against the "colonization" of European "natives" by nonwhite Muslims. During his trial, Breivik shared that he studied the 1995 Oklahoma City bombings perpetrated by Timothy McVeigh in preparation for his attack, that his declaration contained fifty pages of notes from a Knights Templar meeting he attended in 2002 in London, and that 60 percent of his diatribe was copied from other documents, including *The Unabomber Manifesto: Industrial Society and Its Future* (1995)

by Ted Kaczynski.³ In violent discourse and deed, Breivik transnationally networks fascist desires past, present, and future while conjuring the themes of the conspiracy theory known as the “great replacement,” whereby “great” means “white,” as it does in Make America Great Again (MAGA). Writing less a manifesto than a copy-and-paste exercise, Breivik has inspired several copycat mass killings by white men since, while the great replacement has been normalized on a global scale by political officials, media pundits, and tech entrepreneurs.

The great replacement conspiracy theory has a transnational genealogy and history that overlaps with “white genocide.” As a conspiracist myth, the origins of the great replacement lie in French colonial history, especially the fear of slave uprisings, whereas white genocide is grounded in similar fears among slave owners in the United States. Conspiratorial thinking concerning white genocide was fomented through race science by the eugenicist Madison Grant in his book *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). Grant’s work spread among white supremacists with the publication of William Luther Pierce’s *The Turner Diaries* in 1978, which in turn inspired American neo-Nazis like David Lane of the Order, who also played a role in popularizing the myth of white genocide by coming up with the Fourteen Words slogan.⁴ In 1995, Timothy McVeigh mimicked a scene from *The Turner Diaries* when he killed 168 people at a federal building. The great replacement became more widely known after the publication of the novel *The Camp of the Saints* (1973), by Jean Raspail, which portrays white Christian Europe as terrorized by “dark-skinned” refugees that invade France. More recently, Renaud Camus’s *Le grand remplacement* (2011) advanced the great replacement while contending that white Christian populations are under threat of extinction due to Muslim, nonwhite mass migration and declining birth rates, both promoted by a global elite coded as Jewish.

The antisemitic cast to the cultural Marxism conspiracy theory later spread as antiracist social justice aims were vilified by great replacement propagandists cum policy wonks like Christopher Rufo, who interchangeably linked and falsely claimed that critical race theory (CRT), “wokeism,” and/or diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) demeaned and damaged white people. Great replacement propaganda also carries with it the conspiracist thinking associated with blood libel, whereby Jews allegedly use the blood of Christian children for ritual purposes. In Germany, the Nazis used the blood libel conspiracy theory to demonize Jews in antisemitic propaganda that echoes the conspiracist thinking surrounding Pizzagate. Pizzagate framed Hillary Clinton and members of her 2016 presidential campaign, including

its manager, John Podesta, whose emails published on WikiLeaks supposedly contained coded messages, as the leaders of a child sex trafficking ring that raped and tortured their captives kept in the basement of a Washington, DC, pizzeria. Pizzagate would foreshadow and become transfigured into the conspiracist Trumpian movement QAnon after his 2016 presidential victory over Clinton. Additionally, the label of *groomer* attached to drag queens, librarians, and teachers who identify as, educate about, and/or support the work of LGBTQ+ authors, students, artists, and subject matter echoes the moral panics and conspiracist thinking surrounding CRT, Pizzagate, and QAnon. These political entanglements suggest that the great replacement, Pizzagate, and QAnon should be considered in relation rather than as wholly separate conspiracist narratives, although there are certainly distinctions between them. In this study, I use great replacement propaganda to demonstrate the interconnectedness of anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, nativism, misogyny, transphobia, and LGBTQ+ animus in policies, discourse, technologies, media, and affects that lead to political violence in mosques, synagogues, Black churches, gay clubs, government buildings, politicians' homes, K–12 schools and libraries, college campuses, and myriad other spaces and institutions.

Breivik's testimony signals a transnational genealogy and history not only to the great replacement propaganda that he amplified and embodied both online and offline, but to the fascist desire that led to his calculated killing of seventy-seven people. The insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, is considered the culmination of the "big lie"—a term coined by the historian Timothy Snyder in his *New York Times* article "The American Abyss" (2021)—that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump. However, Breivik's political violence and the great replacement propaganda he networked index an earlier origin story—namely, the civilizational crusade framed in Christian terms by President George W. Bush as the global war on terror. Trump claimed to oppose but in fact supported this military campaign waged in the Middle East while president, increasing bombing in Somalia and Afghanistan, where civilian casualties soared by 330 percent during his administration.⁵ Trump's big lie concerning his 2020 election loss, after he instituted a "Muslim travel ban" through an executive order that forbade travel to the United States from seven predominantly Muslim countries (Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen), reverberated with the big lie that previously led to the military invasion known as Operation Iraqi Freedom—that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. The global war on terror did not come home when Trump's supporters invaded the halls

of the US Capitol seeking a way to stop the transfer of presidential power according to the 2020 election results: It was already here. As the journalist Spencer Ackerman puts it, “The War on Terror was an early red pill, releasing an omnidirectional, violent nihilism that viewed itself as the only rational, sophisticated, honorable, and even civilized option. Its culture was one of manufactured outrage, self-congratulation, and obedience to authority that convinced itself it was transgressive. . . . Any failure to see that the War on Terror was seeding the ground for a figure like Trump testifies to the power of American exceptionalism, which is nothing more than White innocence applied globally.”⁶ This unending war on terror carried on under President Joe Biden as the United States militarily supported the Israeli government’s strategic decimation of Palestinian life in Gaza after the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023. Meanwhile, Trump rekindled homegrown bloodlust during a presidential reelection campaign framed in terms of vengeance for himself and his chosen people while echoing Hitler’s diatribes against the impurity of immigrants, Jews, and interracial couples, affectively networking the great replacement.⁷

In late September 2023, when asked about immigration and the southern border during a video interview with the right-leaning website the National Pulse, Trump replied, “Nobody has any idea where these people are coming from, and we know they come from prisons. We know they come from mental institutions and insane asylums. We know they’re terrorists. Nobody has ever seen anything like we’re witnessing right now. It is a very sad thing for our country. It’s poisoning the blood of our country. It’s so bad, and people are coming in with disease. People are coming in with every possible thing that you could have.”⁸ In a gambit to follow Trump’s lead, the Republican governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, ordered his Texas National Guard to bar the US Border Patrol from entering Shelby Park in Eagle Pass in January 2024, preventing them from rescuing several migrants who appeared in distress while trying to cross the chilly and heavily fortified Rio Grande into the United States.⁹ Mexican authorities eventually found the bodies of Victorina de la Sancha Cerros and her two young children near the boat ramp where they could have been rescued by the US Border Patrol.¹⁰

Ten days later, the US Supreme Court appeared to end this standoff between the Texas National Guard and the US Border Patrol by ruling that the federal agents had the right to remove the razor wire across the Rio Grande installed by Abbott’s army, but instead of allowing them to enter the park and remove the barbed wire, Abbott ordered the installation of more, using the language of war: “The Texas National Guard is holding the line

in Eagle Pass. Texas will not back down.”¹¹ On January 24, 2024, Abbott issued a “Statement on Texas’ Constitutional Right to Self-Defense” that said the state had the right to defend itself since President Biden had neglected to perform his duties to secure the border. “For these reasons,” he added, “I have already declared an invasion . . . to invoke Texas’s constitutional authority to defend and protect itself. That authority is the supreme law of the land and supersedes any federal statutes to the contrary.”¹² The following day, twenty-five Republican governors backed Texas, releasing a joint statement that applauded Abbott for “stepping up to protect American citizens from historic levels of illegal immigrants, deadly drugs like fentanyl, and terrorists entering our country.”¹³ This language resonates not only with Breivik’s in 2011 but also with President Trump’s during his first administration. In 2018, Trump used his Twitter account and White House press releases to rail against migrants using the language of “invasion” and “infestation,” while figuring immigrants at the US-Mexico border as violent gang members and “animals” to dehumanize them.¹⁴ In the United States and abroad, including Israel, the ambient figures of the criminal and the terrorist are used to enlist and justify political violence by state and non-state citizen-soldiers who exercise force with impunity against perceived national threats of all sorts.

In October 2018, Trump tweeted about Honduran asylum seekers in terms that framed them as “criminals and Middle Easterners,” while conservative pundits and Republican politicians claimed that George Soros was funding this “caravan,” calling it a “national emergency,” making a military response “critical to our civilization.”¹⁵ This affective networking of great replacement conspiratorial thinking across media platforms inspired Robert Bowers, a white supremacist who regularly posted antisemitic rants on the digital platform Gab, to murder eleven people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in October 2018.¹⁶ His language online prior to this attack mimicked Trump’s: “Open you [*sic*] Eyes! It’s the filthy EVIL jews Bringing the Filthy EVIL Muslims into the Country!!”¹⁷ Bowers’s political violence was foretold in his final post: “I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in.”¹⁸ This resonance machine of great replacement propaganda activated fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings—linking the historical and the contemporary, the national and the global, the online and the offline, the religious and the secular—creating a world that affectively connected Breivik, McVeigh, Trump, Hitler, Bowers, and future coconspirators willing to recruit citizen-soldiers of varied occupations and identities to perpetrate violence for the white Christian masculinist cause.

On February 2, 2024, after he purchased Twitter and renamed it X, Elon Musk posted, “Biden’s strategy is very simple: 1. Get as many illegals into the country as possible. 2. Legalize them to create a permanent majority—a one-party state. That is why they are encouraging so much illegal immigration. Simple, yet effective.”¹⁹ Two days later, this tweet had 44 million views, 250,000 likes, and 73,000 retweets/quote tweets. This instance is far from the only or first time that Musk promoted great replacement propaganda on his platform to his 171 million followers, using language echoed by former Fox News personality Tucker Carlson, among other right-wing pundits. To protect the white homeland against this imaginary onslaught, tech billionaires like Musk and media pundits like Carlson whipped up fear, hatred, and paranoia against an invasion that does not exist except in fantasy, stoking the fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings necessary to (re)elect an authoritarian leader like Trump.

The US war on terror continues abroad and at home—in a battle against nonwhite invaders who are framed as terrorists, criminals, diseased, drug dealers, gang members, and animals by right-wing politicians and pundits. As Trump encouraged Republican governors to send their national guard troops to Texas in support of Abbott, declaring on his social media platform Truth Social, “Joe Biden has surrendered our Border, and is aiding and abetting a massive Invasion of millions of illegal migrants into the United States,” an armed convoy was organized on Telegram channels with names like Take Our Border Back totaling over a thousand members.²⁰ This evidence suggests that in the age of digital communication the great replacement has become less a conspiracy theory than propaganda used to globally stoke and spread fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings that transnationally link acts of political violence. This violence against religious, racialized, gendered, and national threats takes shape in policy and targeted attacks. In turn, the concepts and actions used to critique and combat processes of radicalization must supersede national borders and extremist organizations. When one of two political parties in the United States falls into step with an authoritarian such as Trump, whereby any substantive dissent or hint of disloyalty leads to forceful rebuke and potential dismissal, and all three branches of government are party to his autocratic rule, it is time to concede that the extreme is mainstream and in control of economic, cultural, and foreign policy. As National Public Radio pointed out in May 2025—a few months before it would be slated for a funding slash by congressional fiat in July 2025 in a bill that rescinded \$9 billion meant for foreign aid and public media broadcasting—three Trump officials have close ties to antisemitic extremists. Paul Ingrassia,

the White House liaison to the Department of Homeland Security, worked on the legal team of the infamous “manosphere” influencer and sex trafficker Andrew Tate. Ingrassia has also attended political rallies with Holocaust denier and white nationalist Nick Fuentes and defended him on social media.²¹ In October 2025, the thirty-year-old Ingrassia withdrew his nomination to lead the Office of Special Counsel a day after *Politico* reported on texts he sent to fellow Republicans in a group chat claiming that he “had a Nazi streak” and that “MLK Jr [Martin Luther King Jr.] was the 1960s George Floyd and his ‘holiday’ should be ended and tossed to the seventh circle of hell where it belongs.”²² Although Ingrassia withdrew his nomination for this particular position, he made it clear that he would “continue to serve President Trump and this administration to Make America Great Again!”²³

Perhaps if Democrats had framed immigration as an economic and cultural positive rather than following the Republicans’ lead, and spent more time building and amplifying a policy agenda that addressed gaping wealth inequalities in housing, employment, health, education, and other public services that affect broad swaths of the US population, they could have poked holes in the great replacement propaganda proffered by Trump and his supporters. Instead, Biden remained the presumed candidate until his incompetency due to age was on public display during a sad presidential debate performance, affirming conspiracies concerning his feebleness and inability to lead. Then, Vice President Kamala Harris entered the race late as a candidate who ran on a platform of “joy” while many in the country continued to struggle socioeconomically after the height of a pandemic that was far from over, as its material effects and cultural aftershocks lingered. This political landscape was the perfect stomping ground for autocracy to take hold and militarization to accelerate. Polling results demonstrated that the largest victory of the 2024 election for Republicans was convincing voters across partisan divides that cultural and economic issues are separate rather than inextricably linked. Trump’s biggest gains were along the Texas border among Hispanic voters, where he won twelve of fourteen counties, up from five in 2016.²⁴ Voters’ greatest concerns in the region were inflation and what was described as “uncontrolled immigration” or “unauthorized border crossings.”²⁵ These economic and cultural fears were connected due not to identity or ideology but to propaganda and the ineffectiveness of the Democrats in furthering a policy strategy that would assuage socioeconomic anxiety. One voter noted, “Honestly, I never heard Kamala say any definitive response to anything. . . . Democrats are saying the economy is really strong. But really, the metrics are not there to reflect what people are feeling.”²⁶ Regardless of

what unemployment numbers or the stock exchange were showing, most US citizens were feeling monetarily stretched due to rising costs in housing, health care, food, and education in a gig economy. This sense of worry was exacerbated after economic relief and resources instituted during the COVID-19 outbreak were discontinued. Without a concerted plan of socioeconomic action to address wealth disparities, the myth perpetuated by journalists, politicians, and scholars that working-class issues are primarily a concern of white voters, and people of color are primarily concerned with the cultural issues of identity politics, dashed Democratic hopes for victory in the 2024 election and harmed the country overall.

Trump won by nineteen points in Maverick County, where Abbott waged his war against “illegals” at Eagle Pass. While this swing in party loyalty among Hispanics from the Democrats to the Republicans on the national stage was framed in terms of an ideological shift that demonstrated Hispanics as a whole were actually conservative at heart, the takeaway was that another kind of shift was underway, whereby the question of US citizenship—who was of the nation and protected by the state—was up for grabs. Rather than prepare for what was to come, Democrats and pundits dithered over who was to blame for the electoral results, which inevitably created division and tension. When the dust settled, it became clear that “the Democratic Party lost ground in the 2024 Election among almost all demographic groups—white people, Black people, Latinos, the young, rural and exurban voters—but all the defections had one thing in common: Democratic losses were significantly greater among men than among women.”²⁷ To attribute this discrepancy solely to sexism and racism is a mistake. Harris fared almost as well as Biden among white women, losing only one percentage point, while among white men, it was four; among Black women, Harris also lost 1 percent of the vote, while among Black men, it was 8; among Latinos, Harris lost seven points, and among men, twelve points.²⁸ Additionally, the most “severe declines in Democratic voting were concentrated among younger cohorts of voters, particularly young men. . . . Support for Democrats from 2020 to 2024 among young Black men dropped from 85 percent to 75 percent” and “among young Latino men dropped from 63 percent to 47 percent.”²⁹ However, it is not enough to attribute this drop in men’s support to Democrats’ disregard for “male issues.”³⁰ Rather than presuming that Trump gave men a sense of belonging when he celebrated hypermasculinity, it is more important to closely examine what he promised men, particularly young men, they could be—citizen-soldiers with bodily autonomy and a sovereign duty to protect the nation against all perceived enemies foreign and domestic. Rather

than something to believe in or belong to, a citizen-soldier is something to desire, embody, and be. Although the men, and some women, who aspire to be citizen-soldiers are not all white, this ideal type is founded on hegemonic (e.g., commonsensical) notions of white (straight, cisgendered) masculinity that Trump and his advocates in various spheres of public life (re)produce and network by enacting and spreading great replacement propaganda.

Subject and Argument

Radicalizing Men: Fascist Desires, Great Replacement Propaganda, and Political Violence examines the radicalization of men online and offline to answer this question: How do connections between hegemonic notions of white masculinity and the perpetration of political violence against perceived existential threats help us to understand and combat processes of radicalization? My study argues that great replacement propaganda affectively networked by state and nonstate actors stokes fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings that lead to transnationally connected acts of political violence. In this book I provide, in the words of the anthropologist Adrienne Pine, “an anthropological engagement of contemporary fascism [that] elucidate[s] the strong links between neoliberal capitalism and today’s global militarized nationalism.”³¹ Too often, studies of far-right radicalization solely address psychological and environmental factors that leave individuals vulnerable to extremist ideology, rhetoric, and recruitment.³² Emphasis is erroneously placed on the self-contained, pathological psyche—the mentally disturbed lone wolf. In turn, radicalization is attributed to the mere exposure to ideologically extreme content, setting up a strict causal relationship between discourse, belief, and potentially violent action. This equation is too simplistic to explain how processes of radicalization that incite political violence work, let alone combat them.

The security studies scholar Peter Neumann notes, “The term ‘radicalization’ is considered political, and its frequent use—especially by governments and officials—is believed to serve political agendas rather than describe a social phenomenon.”³³ Furthermore, he argues, the relationship between “cognitive radicalization” and “behavior radicalization” is a process that needs explication beyond the figuring of extremist views as a precursor to violence.³⁴ Neumann suggests, “A sophisticated approach would aim to understand why certain belief systems resonate with certain populations, and—correspondingly—what combination of factors explains their lack of resonance and decline.”³⁵ My approach to what I call

affective radicalization takes up an analysis of bodies that propagate great replacement propaganda. Instead of extremist ideology per se, it is its embodied communication as corporeal media that is under analysis. Affective radicalization describes a social process, the networking of fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings. Rather than fixating on extremist identities and their explication, I analyze affective radicalization as an assemblage of media, technologies, laws, policies, infrastructures, institutions, and discourse. For example, a “New Jim Code,” in the words of the African American studies scholar Ruha Benjamin, which employs “new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequalities but that are promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory systems of a previous era.”³⁶ Such technologies include search engines that the African American studies scholar Safiya Umoja Noble describes as “algorithms of oppression” that reinforce racism and sexism.³⁷

The Citizen-Soldier and Hegemonic White Masculinity

There has been important scholarship by African American scholars of history and religion, such as Nell Irvin Painter’s *The History of White People* (2010), Carol Anderson’s *White Rage* (2016), and Anthea Butler’s *White Evangelical Racism* (2021), that has trained a much-needed spotlight on constructions of whiteness and their importance in the United States.³⁸ In my study, I engage with and expand on Anderson’s contention that “white rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies. It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly. Too imperceptibly, certainly, for a nation constantly drawn to the spectacular—to what it can *see*. It’s not the Klan.”³⁹ I analyze how the American ideal of white masculinity restricts the bodily autonomy of anyone who is not a white Christian cis-heterosexual man through state-sanctioned violence that is structurally implemented through various public institutions—the church, education, media, and law—building on Painter’s observation that “a notion of freedom lies at the core of the American idea of whiteness.”⁴⁰ However, it is also important to recognize connections between the Ku Klux Klan and bodies sanctioned by the US government, including US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the National Guard, police forces, and even men perpetrating acts of political violence that are tacitly supported and encouraged by state officials. In perpetrating political violence on behalf of the nation, these citizen-soldiers do not follow orders and laws but constitute the Law.

What Anthea Butler calls the “promise of whiteness” supports these structural aspects of white supremacy as a fascist imaginary that affectively animates and emotionally recruits nonwhite brothers (and sisters) in arms to participate in spectacular and imperceptible acts of political violence.⁴¹ Butler’s formulation hinging on the promise of whiteness (security, autonomy, domination) is useful to conceive of individualistic motives of self-interest—and how those motives tap into fascist desires, create the possibility for fascist imaginaries—but it falls short when considering the systemic violence (Anderson’s “white rage”) of whiteness. Hierarchies of class, wealth, entitlement, and status that shape working conditions and labor practices, not to mention the wielding of state regulation and violence, play a crucial role in the materialist structures of white masculinist power through which nonwhite people and white women find a home worth defending. If, as Félix Guattari proposes, “everybody wants to be a fascist,” my examination considers “a politics which addresses itself to the individual’s desire, as well as to the desire which manifests itself in the broadest social field . . . a micropolitics aiming at both individual and social problems . . . (for example, the problems of bureaucracies and fascism), in light of the micropolitics of desire.”⁴² The concept of the citizen-soldier illuminates relationships between hegemonic notions of white masculinity and the micropolitics of (fascist) desire because it draws the individual and the social into relation. By its logic, a citizen has a duty to arm themselves to protect the nation from foreign invaders and domestic tyrants. Trump is a domestic tyrant that has appropriated this concept so that it serves him.

If citizen-soldiers embody the will of the people because they are the people, then the question of who constitutes “the people” is vital yet ephemeral—an imaginary and a feeling—and a matter of life and death. The affective power of great replacement propaganda lies not only in its capacity to proliferate threats to the nation that can multiply, shift, and commingle, intensifying paranoia and creating combat zones apart from a military theater of operation—college campuses, school board meetings, elections, border crossings, city streets, churches, digital platforms—but also in its ability to instill a tenuous sense of national belonging that obliges political violence on behalf of the nation. The way this national border is drawn and maintained is through acts of political violence that perpetually reinforce the citizen-soldier’s right to protection by the state, as others’ rights are increasingly curtailed. In July 2025, Trump’s “big, beautiful bill” passed, a budget that earmarks “an unprecedented allocation of funds for immigration detention and enforcement while simultaneously stripping healthcare from millions of

Americans . . . some \$170 billion for immigration- and border enforcement-related funding provisions,” including “\$45 billion for building new immigration detention centers, including family detention facilities,” representing “a 265 percent annual budget increase to ICE’s current detention budget [that] could result in daily detention of at least 116,000 non-citizens.”⁴³ Additionally, the bill offers “\$29.9 billion toward ICE’s enforcement and deportation operations, increasing ICE’s annual budget three-fold,” as it “will deprive 12 to 17 million Americans of basic health care.”⁴⁴ After its passing, this legislation was aptly called the “deportation, debt, and death” bill by filmmaker, author, and activist Astra Taylor in a social media post that I saw on Facebook.⁴⁵ It will accelerate the ongoing abduction, detainment, and deportation of anyone who looks or feels like they do not belong in the United States (e.g., anyone “dark skinned”), which is changeable and amorphous. People who take on underpaid jobs for long hours, often in physically taxing and difficult conditions, simply to live in the United States, are now terrified of going to work. Meanwhile, on social media, as the journalist Nathan J. Robinson pointed out in *Current Affairs*, “the administration posts ‘ASMR’ videos of shackled migrants [and] of alligators wearing Immigration and Customs Enforcement hats while dancing to Vanilla Ice’s ‘Ice Ice Baby’ to celebrate the opening of Trump’s new ‘Alligator Alcatraz’ swamp prison in Florida.”⁴⁶ To call this memeified style of politics honed by young white Republican men, like the “Groyper” who compose Nick Fuentes’s America First movement, “a vibes-based politics designed for social media and born from social media” falls short.⁴⁷ It is critical to get closer to how and why, “when talking to a groyper, one is likely to hear the words ‘demographic change’ or the idea that white Americans are slowly being displaced by nonwhite foreigners.”⁴⁸ Therefore, my research examines how great replacement propaganda is affectively communicated in and through myriad media by varied figures, including those who would not be called extreme, and enacted on the ground. It is important to consider how “trolling democracy” is a form of participatory propaganda that manifests offline, in acts of political violence with material consequences for the populations targeted in memes. Otherwise, the visceral response to this entertaining “rage-bait,” as it provokes laughter and a sense of power, is reduced to individualized, extremist expressions of anger.⁴⁹

In the context of the twenty-first century and often (re)contextualized by Trump’s presidency, sociological studies on whiteness include Michael Kimmel’s *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (2013), Arlie Russell Hochschild’s *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (2016), Robert Wuthnow’s *The Left Behind:*

Decline and Rage in Rural America (2018), and *White Rural Rage* (2024) by Tom Schaller and Paul Waldman. This focus on anger and rage led me to question why these emotions would be more highly valued and validated in sociological studies that figure the working class as white, male, and/or rural—a portrait which Vice President J. D. Vance’s best-selling memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (2016), also paints, albeit in cruder terms. These scholarly books address right-wing populism from macro- and microscale factors both structural (e.g., economic precarity, a crisis of masculinity) and ideological (e.g., the incapacity to attain the American Dream or promise of whiteness). The emotional registers of anger and rage predominant in these studies of white right-wing populism hinge on resentment, individual and collective senses of fear and shame that are repressed and transformed such that “others” turn into targets, as identifications with race and nation intensify. The evidence used in this literature varies, but the interview material used by Hochschild is compelling and supports such conclusions. However, as the 2024 election polls testify, the frame of white right-wing populist resentment is inadequate to analyze Trump’s political success and power. His shamelessness may be foundational to his charisma among the MAGA (Make America Great Again) faithful, but that is not how he won electoral gains among nonwhite people in 2024. Additionally, although most of the men who perpetrate acts of political violence in this study are white, there are enough exceptions (Enrique Tarrio, Nick Fuentes, and Elliot Rodger, to name a few) to consider connections between affective radicalization and political violence using a different emotional lens.

Instead of anger, I call for an attunement to a paranoid register that, in the words of critical theorist Sianne Ngai, is “explicitly amoral and noncathartic, offering no satisfaction of virtue, however oblique, nor any purifying or therapeutic release . . . weaker and nastier than rage, fear, or hate.”⁵⁰ Investigation into the affective networking of paranoia transforms the portrait of the citizen-soldier from a lion into a possum, dispelling the mystique of the supposed lone wolf as a freedom fighter, while transforming the seemingly isolated acts of disturbed individuals into interconnected battles across geographic, historical, and ideological divides. I do not replicate the work on “the paranoid style” of politics discussed in a 1964 *Harper’s* article (and later book) by the historian Richard Hofstadter.⁵¹ His focus on the “radical right” and “extreme right-wingers” in the United States takes paranoia for granted as an emotion, whereas I examine how it is affectively networked, involving bodies online and offline. To do so, my research draws from ethnographic evidence gathered on digital platforms and during multisited fieldwork at

the University of Washington campus in Seattle in 2017 and school board meetings in Hanover County, Virginia, in 2021–22.

Propaganda and Political Violence

The writer Richard Seymour notes, “The vogueish term for internet-inspired violence is ‘stochastic terror.’ This treats online propaganda as being functionally equivalent to advertising. Like advertising, online exhortations against women or Muslims have a conditioning effect that, while individually unpredictable, can be predicted over a whole population.”⁵² While this formulation sounds neat and tidy, Seymour adds, it does not explain anything. He asks, “Why . . . does racist, misogynist or fascist propaganda have an audience in the first place? Why does some content produce violence, even without overtly calling for it, while other content doesn’t? Above all, [stochastic terrorism] doesn’t explain anything about the role of the medium.”⁵³ I analyze radicalization as an affective networking process that is bodily enacted through social relations between humans, media, technologies, laws, institutions, and discourse—presented in sermons, during school board meetings, on message boards, and in a campus quad, and conveyed through algorithms, rhetoric, and memes—to productively complicate easy formulations between extremist discourse and political violence presupposed by the concept of stochastic terrorism. Ideological terms such as *Christian nationalism* or *far right* serve as shorthand for religious and political extremism but do not offer insight into why some men but not others would perpetrate political violence. We need to address more than ideological motives and individual biographies, which can be muddled and suspect, to supplement ideology critique. My research rethinks the concept of the citizen-soldier in relation to great replacement propaganda to understand how men are moved to political violence. I analyze the affective—bodily, sensory, and emotional—dimensions of radicalization to provide a different approach that does not deny the importance of ideology or cleave cognition from feeling.

My analysis of the affective and transnational communication of the great replacement through varied forms of social media requires a shift in lexicon from *conspiracy theory* to *propaganda*. On the whole, examinations of conspiracy theories are framed by empty spectacles and psychological diagnoses that suggest a lack of cognitive ability and political agency.⁵⁴ The excitement over this “stigmatized knowledge” is not the subject of my study.⁵⁵ The philosophical approach of Quassim Cassam to conspiracy theories is most in keeping with my research, since he considers them forms of political

propaganda that promote an explicitly political agenda.⁵⁶ However, Cassam considers conspiracy theories strictly in terms of influencing public opinion. By contrast, my study considers propaganda not as a manipulative tool that changes the political opinions or ideological beliefs of impressionable individuals, but as an embodied and social process constitutive of political subjectivity and collective action. Rather than focusing on an information war waged through social media, I examine great replacement propaganda as social media that inspires political violence.

In a similar manner, the philosopher Megan Hyska acknowledges that “propaganda is an attempt to change the world, [but] contrary to a widespread view, propaganda does not characteristically target the individual’s beliefs or rationality. Propaganda’s characteristic effect is not at the level of the individual at all, but at the level of the *group-agency landscape*.”⁵⁷ To map this group-agency landscape, Hyska uses Hannah Arendt’s characterization of propaganda in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), whereby Arendt argues the “true goal of totalitarian propaganda is not persuasion but organization of the polity.”⁵⁸ In my study, this “organization of the polity”—the social media of bodies, discourse, technologies, policies, and institutions—is an affective process that incites political violence. The philosopher, sociologist, and theologian Jacques Ellul contends, “The aim of modern propaganda is no longer to modify ideas but to provoke action. It is no longer to change adherence to a doctrine, but to make the individual cling irrationally to a process of action.”⁵⁹ Propaganda may incite political violence carried out by an individual, but their actions are social and replicable and take on a life of their own. Likewise, the process of affective radicalization examined in this analysis is also social, a dynamic networking of great replacement propaganda between and among bodies, rather than a strictly top-down political act of manipulation that ideologically converts an individual viewer into a far-right extremist.

Therefore, I use the language of *propaganda* to signal an active and participatory, rather than passive, process of communication. Conspiracy theories, not unlike scientific knowledge, are what Bruno Latour calls “an embodied cultural practice enabled by instruments, machinery, and specific historical conditions.”⁶⁰ Rather than fixating on extremist identities and their explication, I consider how radicalization is an affective networking process that is socially animated through historically and culturally situated interactions, including those conveyed through the instruments and machinery of visual and digital culture. In this way, I extend the question asked by W. J. T. Mitchell, “What do pictures *really* want?,” to include the

infrastructure and policies of public institutions and goods like the university and the internet.⁶¹ This book considers what images, technologies, laws, and institutions really want while considering their relationships to fascist desires, imaginaries, and feeling.

In this study, *political violence* entails mass shootings by white men (and their nonwhite brothers in arms) and state policies that target racialized, religious, gendered, and national threats. Rather than invoking the language of domestic terrorism, which justifies heightened state surveillance and force easily turned against vulnerable populations, I use *political violence* to index and rethink connections between domestic and political, and national and transnational, domains. Connections between domestic violence and political violence are rarely made in studies on radicalization. My examination affords insight into how *patriarchal violence*, a term that draws domestic and political violence into relation, incites mass shootings on behalf of family and homeland that are transnationally connected. My use of *patriarchal violence* draws from definitions and studies by Black feminists. Researchers have observed that the white men behind the deadliest shootings in the United States have domestic violence—not mental illness—in common.⁶² In addition, organizations such as the Institute for Research on Male Supremacism and the Southern Poverty Law Center have noted that “male supremacist groups vilify women along paradoxes: manipulative yet incompetent; genetically inferior, yet the progenitors of the White race; and deserving of violent punishment both for having sex and denying sex to men. Many of these narratives about the inferiority and subjugation of women underpin the beliefs of nearly all extremist groups.”⁶³ Domestic violence has been reported across a spectrum of hate and antigovernment groups. However, misogyny and rigid gender roles harm not only cisgender women, but trans people as well, along with LGBTQ+ identified people more broadly, due to hegemonic notions of (straight, cisgendered) white masculinity. While *domestic violence* accurately describes the intimate verbal, psychological, and physical violence that occurs in households, it fails to capture the roots of this cyclical violence at the intersections of race, class, religion, and gender.⁶⁴

The term *patriarchal violence* has existed to describe structural inequities for decades, but Black Feminist Future, Collective Action for Safe Spaces, Freedom, Inc., and Stand with Black Women convened the Abolishing Patriarchal Violence Innovation Lab to resituate patriarchal violence within a comprehensive context. Their definition reads, “Patriarchal Violence (PV) is an interconnected system of institutions, practices, policies, beliefs, and behaviors that harms, undervalues, and terrorizes girls, women, femme,

intersex, gender non-conforming, LGBTQ, and other gender-oppressed people in our communities. PV is a widespread, [normalized] epidemic based on the domination, control, and colonizing of bodies, genders, and sexualities, happening in every community globally. PV is a global power structure and manifests on the systemic, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized level. It is rooted in interlocking systems of oppression.”⁶⁵ As a driver to radicalization, misogyny works alongside racism, anti-Semitism, nativism, and perceptions of waning civil rights and increased inequality for white men. My usage of *patriarchal violence* relies on this definition but extends it to digital technologies such as search engine algorithms.

Is Trump Fascist?

The so-called fascism debate among scholars and journalists, which preceded President Trump’s reelection in 2024 and has carried on sporadically since, centers on whether contemporary authoritarian leaders like Donald Trump, Narendra Modi, Benjamin Netanyahu, Javier Milei, or Viktor Orbán can or should be called fascists.⁶⁶ Objectors often draw historical comparison to Hitler or Mussolini to dismiss the political usefulness or validity of comparisons between Trump and these leaders and their regimes, although there are notable exceptions who make these connections.⁶⁷ Some scholars and pundits also question the usefulness of the term *fascist* as a descriptor, while others have written, edited, and contributed to volumes that trace the historical and contemporary formations of American fascism.⁶⁸ My book takes up an analysis of fascist desires to avoid the fraught historical comparisons to Hitler or Mussolini that occur when fascism is used as a label, as it contends that there are transnational connections to be made between fascist policies, imaginaries, and feelings.⁶⁹ For example, the racist policies of Jim Crow and “Indian Laws” in the United States were used as a guide to configure the antisemitic Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany.⁷⁰ Shifting the terms of this fascism debate from the language of regime to questions of desire affords the possibility to think about the material—socioeconomic and somatic, infrastructural and affective—connections between neoliberal capitalism and militarized nationalism transnationally generating and impacting political subjectivities. Instead of examining a cohesive fascist political movement with an ideological center, I analyze how fascist desires move and move bodies in decentralized yet coordinated ways. Rather than ask if American fascism is possible, this examination asserts that fascism is intrinsic to the creation of the US nation-state and the instantiation of US liberalism due

to their debt to settler colonialism and the transatlantic slave economy. The ongoing structural effects of US empire and racial capitalism are not only institutionalized and adjudicated by the state; they also buttress ideological fictions concerning US citizenship, American exceptionalism, Western civilization, Christian nationalism, and white masculinist supremacy that in turn mutually constitute fascist desires and political subjectivities. Religious, racialized, gendered, and national “others” that do not conform to the ideals of the normative state are treated like criminals, terrorists, unhuman.

In his book *Late Fascism* (2023), Alberto Toscano devotes his second chapter to an examination of “racial fascism” to address how questions of fascism have been theorized in relation to anticolonial, Black radical struggles.⁷¹ In doing so, he wishes to examine “the idea of a differential experience of fascism” to suggest “that within polities which might ordinarily appear to be liberal there can also exist large pockets or enclaves or social areas of control and domination that could with some legitimacy be called fascist.”⁷² Toscano contends that the experience of racialized state terror evident in the exchanges between George Jackson and Angela Davis in the 1970s would be one example of such an experience, but that this empirical evidence can be found in different contexts, such as the contemporary example of settler colonialism in Israel.⁷³ In this introduction, I provide the current US-Mexico border legislation and policing as another example. The Texas National Guard authorized by Governor Abbott to install razor wire across the Rio Grande and the ongoing raids, abductions, and killing of people by ICE during the early stages of the Trump administration are further instances of racialized state terror, whereas the convoys of “sovereign citizens” deployed by no one to support these state efforts at the border is an example of the diffuse power of fascism, what Toscano calls “petty sovereignty.”⁷⁴ Throughout this book, the diffuse power of fascism is examined in relation to its centralized formations via the state and neoliberal institutions as well as the petty sovereignty of various citizen-soldiers.

Are Trump’s Followers Christian Nationalist?

After Trump won the 2024 Republican primary in Iowa despite being charged with ninety-one felonies within the year, a former Republican representative from New Hampshire, Charles Bass, noted, “A lot of the people that support Donald Trump really are fed up with democracy, representative democracy, they think that an authoritarian-style government would probably be preferable at this point, in order to save the nation or whatever. I don’t think

they feel threatened by having somebody who at least has the trappings of being more authoritarian than past presidents.”⁷⁵ This authoritarianism has a Christian cast. Consider the language used by Trump’s most ardent advocates. “I know that he is picked by God for this hour,” said Patricia Lage, an Iowa caucus-goer who spoke in support of Trump. “There are things that he has done in the past, but we all have pasts.”⁷⁶ This theme of redemption buttresses Trump’s charisma among his Christian supporters, as does the language of vengeance that he uses to frame what he will do once reelected. “You and I have been in this battle side-by-side, together—and we have been taking on the entire corrupt system in Washington like no one has ever done before,” Trump told Iowans at a rally, adding, “the political establishment and global elites are at war with us—we have to fight.”⁷⁷ When Trump won the Iowa primary, scrutiny was once again focused on the ideological influence of Christian nationalism on the 2024 election, a catchphrase for a political or cultural conservative Christianity often framed as wholly divorced from the theological and religious implications of what it means to be a Christian, including church attendance.⁷⁸ However, more recent survey data suggest that young men are attending church in greater numbers than women, who are “leaving at a remarkable clip.”⁷⁹ Such empirical evidence suggests that attempts to cleanly separate Christian nationalism as a political ideology from any religious or theological connotations are strategic rather than quantifiable.

A rash of articles, promotional book tours, social media posts, and TV appearances by Christian (or formerly Christian) scholars and writers took center stage to explain the ongoing support of Trump by white evangelicals and other Christians.⁸⁰ Since Trump’s presidential victory in 2016, historical and sociological studies of Christian nationalism (often interchangeably used with white Christian nationalism) have sought to explain the seemingly paradoxical support of Trump by an overwhelming number of white evangelicals (81 percent in the 2016 election and similar numbers in the 2020 and 2024 elections, with a notable increase of support among nonwhite evangelicals in 2024, in keeping with nonevangelical nonwhite voting trends that year).⁸¹ However, most of these studies refuse to focus on white evangelicals as such.⁸² It appears as though the term *Christian nationalism* was coined (or really revived) in order to deflect from the study of white evangelicals per se, creating a new category of Christian to contend with and, ultimately, vilify.⁸³ This aim was explicitly stated in one of the first popular sociological studies to (re)define this term of classification in relation to Trump’s presidential election in 2016, relying for the most part on survey data, Samuel

Perry and Andrew Whitehead's *Taking America Back for God* (2020). Perry and Whitehead write, "What do we *not* mean by Christian nationalism? First—and this may surprise (or disappoint) some readers—this isn't a book about white evangelicals. Certainly, we will address the considerable overlap between Christian nationalism and white evangelicalism. But the two concepts are not at all synonymous. Christian nationalism is a framework that orients Americans' perspectives on national identity, belonging, and social hierarchies. American evangelicalism, strictly speaking, is a theological tradition prioritizing certain doctrinal commitments including biblical inerrancy and conversionism."⁸⁴ The use of "concept" in relation to white evangelicalism, which is a marker of group identity, is a sign that a project of theological and religious apologetics is underway. Exit polls in 2016 were trained on the overwhelming support of Trump by white evangelicals, not a new group of people called Christian nationalists.

Perry and Whitehead distinguish Christian nationalism by calling it a "framework" so that they can decouple it from religious identity and theological orientation. However, their desire to explicitly divorce Christian nationalism from white evangelicalism is confusing, since the brief stints of fieldwork described in *Taking America Back for God* were conducted at predominantly white evangelical churches in primarily Southern red states. Their evidence points to obvious symbols and overt displays of Christian nationalism (e.g., patriotic hymns, flag waving by congregants, sermons titled "America Is a Christian Nation" and "America—an Exceptional Nation") as they appear in white evangelical churches mostly during services leading up to or on the day that you would most expect it, the Fourth of July. The brief scenes of participant observation (including one service attended online) that they include in their research occurred during events in summer 2018 with explicitly political titles—the "Freedom Sunday" service at Robert Jeffress's First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas; the "Freedom Celebration" service at First Moore Baptist Church in Moore, Oklahoma; the "God Bless America, America Bless God" service at Crossings Community Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and the "God and Country Celebration" at Utica Baptist Church in Seneca, South Carolina. This summer fieldwork was taken up again at the same locations during fall 2018, just before the November midterm elections, when services were either attended or listened to for note-taking purposes. It is unsurprising that displays of Christian nationalism would be present during these events given their timing and context, which the sociologists do not discuss as a limitation or focus. Additionally, the authors do not address why their participant observation was conducted at

white evangelical churches if their argument explicitly states that their study is not about white evangelicalism.

The authors define Christian nationalism as “an ideology that advocates a fusion of American civic life with a particular type of Christian identity and culture.”⁸⁵ However, when they state, “We are not referring to doctrinal orthodoxy or personal piety. (In fact, we find some Christian nationalists can be quite secular),” they do not address how Christian nationalists are secular.⁸⁶ White Christian male supremacy can be a form of doctrinal orthodoxy and personal piety communicated, learned, and embodied in secular spaces and ways, which my study demonstrates, but that remains uninterrogated by Perry and Whitehead. In fact, at one point Perry and Whitehead suggest that Black Protestants, like white evangelicals, have “drawn upon the Christian nation narrative, but to very different ends.”⁸⁷ To their credit, they do acknowledge that Martin Luther King Jr. and Frederick Douglass “cited America’s so-called Christian heritage as a form of rebuke, to challenge an unjust social order,” whereas “white evangelicals in the South, by contrast, have more often cited the Christian nation narrative not to contest the unjust social order but to preserve it.”⁸⁸ However, leaving open the possibility that there is such a thing as Black Christian nationalism then presents the question of what the authors mean by “nationalism,” which they also do not address. Simply adding the term *white* to *Christian nationalism* essentializes race in general and whiteness in particular, while uncritically linking it to the nation form.

Since the authors focus on redefining Christian nationalism throughout their study using quantified data without discussing any of these conceptual issues, white evangelicals are off the hook. Of course, there are historical and contemporary examples of Catholic Christian nationalists—Vice President J. D. Vance is a prominent one—but most studies of Christian nationalism to date focus on US Protestants in general and white evangelicals in particular. My book demonstrates that Christian nationalism and white supremacy are intrinsically entangled as I ethnographically represent and analyze what the religious studies scholars Barbara J. Fields and Karen E. Fields call “racecraft,” or “social facts” that “originate not in nature but in human action and imagination . . . collective yet individual, day-to-day yet historical . . . the outcome [of which] is a belief that presents itself to the mind and imagination as a vivid truth.”⁸⁹ Christian nationalism is systemically white supremacist, whether the Christians shaped by and embodying its framework in the affective networking of fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings are white or not.

I resist using *Christian nationalist* as signifier for an ideology that categorizes individuals or groups to avoid questions and debates concerning what distinguishes a true (good, devout, or churched) from a fake (bad, political, or unchurched) Christian. On Twitter/X, I often saw *Christian nationalist* used as a tool of othering and a self-identifier. This ideological hailing back and forth online became a form of digital mudslinging and pride mongering that advanced the kind of in- and out-grouping that accelerates processes of radicalization. Additionally, Christian nationalism is often couched as a threat to democracy, rather than to people. Focus is placed on electoral politics and upholding the US Constitution. The Christian symbolism on display during the insurrection on January 6, 2021, is repeatedly used to perpetuate a sense of democratic and constitutional crisis. However, scholars of Christian nationalism appear more committed to saving US Christianity or the church than religious pluralism or multiculturalism, and they use *democracy* as though it already exists in this country when it arguably does not. Some of the scholarship is openly framed in terms of preserving the political viewpoints and the activism of conservative Christians whose theological convictions are harmful to people who are not white, male, cis-heterosexual Christians—women, immigrants, Black people, LGBTQ+ people, people of other religions, and the religiously unaffiliated. This shortcoming prevents Christian nationalism from being a useful tool of critique, because it does not challenge Christians' relationships to the world and others. In this study, I do not rehash what Christian nationalism is, but rather what it does. As an ethnographer, I examine how Christian nationalism works to affectively recruit and create religious-political subjects, within and outside of explicitly religious spaces both online and offline, rather than simply take it for granted as an ideology and identifier. Pointing out that something or some person is Christian nationalist does not help to understand or counteract this ideology's affective power, which is critical if we want to comprehend it beyond a list of characteristics and beliefs.

Ultimately, Christian nationalism shores up gatekeeping practices that center US Christians and cultural battles among them. Conservative Christian theology informs not only the US culture war but also racial capitalism, settler colonialism, and US imperialism. Escalating conflicts among white Christians to a national crisis is a form of what Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò calls “elite capture.”⁹⁰ Instead of an identity politics through which diverse people work in coalition on common problems and build solidarity, Christians use the threat of Christian nationalism in a way that promotes a narrow conception of group interests.⁹¹ A gambit to save democracy is more dedicated to the

salvation of US Christianity as church attendance declines (though not at the alarming rate scholars of Christian nationalism advertise and fear).⁹² My study examines the affective power of Christian nationalism by analyzing relationships between Christian imagery, practices, and beliefs, and fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings. Therefore, I also use the terms *Christian supremacy*, *Christian fascism*, and *Christofascism* interchangeably to describe this dynamic.

Overview of Chapters

In March 2020, Pastor Mark Driscoll of the Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, appeared on conservative media personality Steven Crowder's *Ash Wednesday* to discuss "Covid, Fear, and Faith." Two years later, the video recording of their hour-long talk on YouTube had nearly half a million views and over four thousand comments. Chapter 1 opens the book with an analysis of this conversation, during which Crowder and Driscoll illustrate my overarching themes and argument, along with Driscoll's appearance on Charlie Kirk's podcast and a sermon he gave called "Hamas and the End Times: Is Jesus About to Return?" after Hamas attacked Israelis on October 7, 2023. In this chapter, I analyze Driscoll's process of radicalization as he seeks to radicalize and convert young white men after his retirement from Mars Hill Church in Seattle in October 2014. I focus on shifts in Driscoll's discourse, particularly his overtly political messaging, throughout Crowder's show, Kirk's podcast, and the sermon, to examine how he is radicalizing as he desires to radicalize others in a gambit to rebrand himself and regain the media platform that he had while preaching at Mars Hill. I analyze white masculinist rhetoric that is anti-Muslim, -Black, -women, and -government, as George Floyd's murder by law enforcement, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the constitutional right to religious freedom during the COVID-19 pandemic are discussed. I demonstrate how great replacement propaganda is communicated in the language of white Christian supremacy through secular digital platforms and in a charismatic Christian church.

Chapter 2 addresses how men who perpetrate acts of political violence spread great replacement propaganda, encouraging copycat events of mass murder on a global scale to combat racialized, religious, gendered, and national threats. I analyze how digital platforms, social media, and search engine algorithms encourage transnational acts of political violence by (primarily) white men. I draw these acts into relationship while examining how patriarchal and transnational political violence are connected. This chapter

contends that the language of stochastic terrorism commonly used by extremist researchers to explain connections between hateful online discourse and acts of political violence needs to be reexamined in relation to the infrastructure of digital technologies and their role in amplifying and networking affective processes of radicalization.

During his first debate against Joe Biden in 2020, President Trump stated, “Proud Boys, stand back and stand by,” then added, “Somebody’s got to do something about antifa and the left.”⁹³ With these words, Trump emboldened a loyal patrol of foot soldiers that sought his attention as it heeded his bidding. The night of the debate, a post on the Proud Boys’ Telegram channel Western Chauvinists declared, “Standing down and standing by,” precipitating an uptick in views of over fourteen thousand.⁹⁴ Chapter 3 examines how fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings can excite, legitimize, and sustain an extremist far-right group vying for mainstream political power. After President Trump’s call to arms, the Proud Boys’ self-appointed role as Western chauvinists gained specificity, purpose, and national notoriety as they waged street wars in cities throughout the United States against Black Lives Matter protesters, antifascists, and other “threats” to “Western civilization.” At the same time, the Proud Boys promoted the radicalization, recruitment, and mobilization of mainstream conservatives online by circulating alt-right memes and great replacement propaganda. The Proud Boys also played a pivotal role in the insurrection on January 6, 2021. After the storming of the Capitol, the group appeared as though they were in danger of decline; however, due to their physical and digital activism, they proved resilient as local chapters multiplied throughout the country. The Proud Boys recruited new members and grew at a time when other loosely knit organizations involved in the insurrection shrank. Research shows that the storming of the Capitol was a product not of “the fringe” but of “the mainstream,” meaning “over half of those . . . arrested [were] business owners, CEOs from white-collar occupations, doctors, lawyers, and architects.”⁹⁵ The thread that connected the mainstream to the extreme was their conviction in the great replacement. This chapter examines discursive evidence from the Proud Boys’ Telegram channels as well as mainstream media to consider how convictions in the great replacement are formed. I argue that the Proud Boys and outlets like Fox News viscerally promote the great replacement as fact to radicalize “MAGA normies.” Meanwhile, the transnational circulation of great replacement propaganda evinces a global movement of fascist desires, imaginaries, and feelings affectively networked to encourage political violence. This chapter analyzes how the Proud Boys’ great replacement

propaganda uses Christofascist, white supremacist, and masculinist discourse to inspire, organize, and incite geographically disparate far-right groups, by admonishing white men to defend their homelands from invasion and protect white Christian populations from genocide. I examine this fascist discourse in relation to policy shifts in reproductive rights that curtail the bodily autonomy of women.

Chapter 4, based on ethnographic research during public school board meetings in Hanover County, Virginia, examines debates over the supposed teaching of CRT and woke antiracist initiatives in curriculum and administration. I provide a brief history of white supremacy in the county during Virginia's massive resistance against the integration of public schools after *Brown v. Board of Education*, then address how this legacy has become entwined with ritualized performances and discursive articulations of Christian nationalism in the secular space of school board meetings. I also examine the legal activism of the Hanover NAACP to change the Confederate names of public schools over decades, culminating in the case *Hanover County Unit of the NAACP v. Hanover County and County of Hanover School Board* in 2019, while addressing Ku Klux Klan recruitment and other white supremacist movements honoring Lost Cause ideology active in the county. This ethnographic research is situated by great replacement propaganda spread throughout the nation at the end of the Trump administration by Christopher Rufo, and the successful campaign of Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin in 2021 as he championed parental rights. I examine Youngkin's campaign as well as the anti-CRT education policies he immediately signed into law after his victory, which curtailed the teaching of "divisive concepts" in US history. I also analyze heated discussions in Hanover as model trans student policies suggested by the Virginia Department of Education in 2020 were debated. After Youngkin's victory, the Virginia Department of Education changed course and suggested more intrusive model policies that infringed on trans students' rights to access facilities and care in K–12 public schools. Hanover's adopted policies were particularly cruel, undermining trans students' rights to exist without criminalizing, demonizing, and pathologizing them.

On Inauguration Day 2017, Milo Yiannopoulos gave a talk sponsored by the University of Washington College Republicans titled "Cyberbullying Isn't Real." Chapter 5 is based on participant observation conducted in the crowd outside the venue that night and analyzes the violence that occurs when the blurring of the boundaries between free and hate speech is enacted on the ground. This ethnographic examination rethinks relationships between law, bodies, and infrastructure as it considers debates over free speech on college

campuses from the perspectives of legal and public policy, as well as those who supported and protested Yiannopoulos's right to speak at the University of Washington. This chapter situates this event in relation to Trump's presidential campaign rallies and policy promises to impose stronger restrictions on immigration by Muslims and at the US-Mexico border. I argue that debates over free speech rights on college campuses need to be situated by processes of neoliberalization in higher education, while considering the ways in which an absolutist position disproportionately protects certain people at the expense of certain others. This chapter shows that fascist desires to control discourse and bodies are enabled by the manipulation and exploitation of the constitutional right to free speech. In turn, this examination demonstrates that white men are afforded greater access to and protection from state power than Black, Muslim, LGBTQ+, and women students, as well as non-tenure-track faculty, in public institutions of higher education. Great replacement propaganda is put into action as political violence happens on the ground, while educational resources are drained and disrupted to accommodate white nationalists' hate speech. I conclude by drawing comparisons between the administrative defense of Yiannopoulos's free speech on campus and the administrative clampdown of students protesting the genocide of Palestinians by the Israeli government in Gaza.

The conclusion examines the arguments and themes of this book in relation to Charlie Kirk's assassination as well as my experiences as a contingent faculty member in various departments for fourteen years.

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Notes

Introduction

- 1 Minnicino, “The New Dark Age.”
- 2 Breivik, 2083.
- 3 *The Guardian*, “Anders Behring Breivik Trial, Day Four.”
- 4 “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”
- 5 Ackerman, *Reign of Terror*.
- 6 Ackerman, *Reign of Terror*, xv–xvi.
- 7 Gabriel, “Trump Escalates Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric.”
- 8 Gabriel, “Trump Escalates Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric.”
- 9 Bunch, “Eagle Pass Is Today’s Fort Sumter.”
- 10 Bunch, “Eagle Pass Is Today’s Fort Sumter.”
- 11 Bunch, “Eagle Pass Is Today’s Fort Sumter.”
- 12 Abbott, “Statement on Texas’ Constitutional Right.”
- 13 Cabral, “25 Republican Governors Back Texas.”
- 14 Griffiths, “Trump”; Nussbaum, “Trump Leans on Inflammatory Rhetoric.”
- 15 Johnson, “Affective Radicalization.”
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- 17 Johnson, “Affective Radicalization.”
- 18 Johnson, “Affective Radicalization.”
- 19 Elon Musk, “Biden’s strategy is very simple,” X, February 2, 2024, <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1753590787130994745>.

- 20 Gilbert, “Far-Right Extremists Are Organizing.” Trump’s Truth Social post was shared on X by conspiracy theorist Jack Posobiec on January 25, 2024. When I checked Telegram on January 30, 2024, there was an account with the name “Take Our Border Back,” with over four thousand members and a few others with the same main handle and state names after it (California, Florida, and Arizona) with fewer members.
- 21 Dreisbach, “Multiple Trump Officials Have Links.”
- 22 Lippman, “Ingrassia Withdraws Nomination.”
- 23 Lippman, “Ingrassia Withdraws Nomination.”
- 24 Goodman et al., “‘An Earthquake’ Along the Border.”
- 25 Goodman et al., “‘An Earthquake’ Along the Border.”
- 26 Goodman et al., “‘An Earthquake’ Along the Border.”
- 27 Edsall, “Democrats Have ‘a Massive Blind Spot.’”
- 28 Edsall, “Democrats Have ‘a Massive Blind Spot.’”
- 29 Edsall, “Democrats Have ‘a Massive Blind Spot.’”
- 30 Edsall, “Democrats Have ‘a Massive Blind Spot.’”
- 31 Pine, “Forging an Anthropology.”
- 32 Of course, such books can also offer insight. One example of a study that has been useful to my thinking is David Neiwert’s *Red Pill, Blue Pill*.
- 33 Neumann, “The Trouble with Radicalization,” 878.
- 34 Neumann, “The Trouble with Radicalization,” 875.
- 35 Neumann, “The Trouble with Radicalization,” 881.
- 36 Benjamin, *Race After Technology*, 5–6.
- 37 Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.
- 38 Whiteness studies has permutated over the years, and there are different strands. In the context of the twenty-first century and particularly as situated by Trump’s presidency, sociological studies on this subject include Arlie Russell Hochschild’s *Strangers in Their Own Land*, Michael Kimmel’s *Angry White Men*, and Robert Wuthnow’s *The Left Behind*.
- 39 Anderson, *White Rage*, 3.
- 40 Painter, *The History of White People*, 34.
- 41 Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*.
- 42 Guattari, “Everybody Wants to Be a Fascist,” 155–56.
- 43 American Immigration Council, “Senate Approves Unprecedented Spending.”
- 44 American Immigration Council, “Senate Approves Unprecedented Spending.”

- 45 Astra Taylor, "Deportation, debt, and death bill," Facebook, July 3, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10171627101180593&set=pcb.10171627119680593>.
- 46 Robinson, "The Right's Cruelty to Immigrants."
- 47 Pemberton, "Trolling Democracy."
- 48 Pemberton, "Trolling Democracy."
- 49 Pemberton, "Trolling Democracy."
- 50 Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 6–7.
- 51 Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style."
- 52 Seymour, "Willing Servants."
- 53 Seymour, "Willing Servants."
- 54 One example of such a scholarly approach to the study of conspiracy theories is Douglas et al., "Understanding Conspiracy Theories."
- 55 For more about the concept of "stigmatized knowledge" furthered by the political scientist Michael Barkun and its relationship to conspiracy theories, see Schaefer, "Buying into Conspiracy Theories."
- 56 Cassam, *Conspiracy Theories*.
- 57 Hyska, "Propaganda, Irrationality, and Group Agency."
- 58 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 361.
- 59 Ellul, *Propaganda*, 25.
- 60 Kofman, "Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher."
- 61 Mitchell, "What Do Pictures Really Want?"
- 62 Brueck and Lebowitz, "The Men Behind the U.S.'s Deadliest Mass Shootings."
- 63 Bates, "Patriarchal Violence."
- 64 Bates, "Patriarchal Violence."
- 65 Bates, "Patriarchal Violence."
- 66 A helpful overview of the position of those who object to the use of the term *fascism* and why historical analogies to other fascist leaders or totalitarian regimes are bound to be fraught and ill equipped to think about contemporary formations of fascism on a global scale is outlined in an interview with Alberto Toscano conducted by Jake Romm and published in two parts, wherein the first part discusses Toscano's formulation of the idea of "petty-sovereignty" (Toscano, "Late Fascism").
- 67 Finchelstein, *A Brief History of Fascist Lies*; Ben-Ghiat, *Strongmen*; Whitman, *Hitler's American Model*.
- 68 Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1836*; Horne, *The Color of Fascism*; Horesh, *The Fascism This Time*; Rosenfeld and Ward, *Fascism in America*; Stanley,

How Fascism Works; Steinmetz-Jenkins, *Did It Happen Here?*; Tannehill, *American Fascism*.

69 In taking this approach, I rely more on studies such as Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*; Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*; Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vols. 1 and 2; Toscano, *Late Fascism*; and Whitman, *Hitler's American Model*. While I am certainly indebted to other authors' expertise and scholarship, I am less invested in making historical and contemporary analogies to draw comparisons between fascist leaders, movements, and regimes.

70 Whitman, *Hitler's American Model*.

71 Toscano, "Late Fascism."

72 Toscano, "Late Fascism."

73 Toscano, "Late Fascism."

74 Toscano, "Late Fascism."

75 Bender and Glueck, "The Most Durable Force."

76 Bender and Glueck, "The Most Durable Force."

77 Bender and Glueck, "The Most Durable Force."

78 Graham and Homans, "Trump Is Connecting."

79 Graham, "With Gen Z."

80 A summary of quantitative data on white evangelicals' support for Trump, including multiple surveys from different sources that dispel the myth that the unchurched are among his stalwart advocates, is written up in article form by Jones, "Iowa and the Zombie Myth."

81 Martínez and Smith, "How the Faithful Voted."

82 Perry and Whitehead, *Taking America Back for God*; Gorski and Perry, *The Flag and the Cross*; Jones, *White Too Long*; Miller, *The Religion of American Greatness*; Whitehead, *American Idolatry*. Two books included in this canon that do use the descriptor "White Evangelicals" in their titles are Butler's *White Evangelical Racism* and Du Mez's *Jesus and John Wayne*; two others that use "Evangelicals" are Alberta's *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory* and Hendricks's *Christians Against Christianity*.

83 There are instances of the term *Christian nationalism* before the glut of books published around 2020 contextualized by Trump's first presidential election. One example is Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming*.

84 Perry and Whitehead, *Taking America Back for God*, ix–x.

85 Perry and Whitehead, *Taking America Back for God*, ix–x.

86 Perry and Whitehead, *Taking America Back for God*, ix–x.

87 Perry and Whitehead, *Taking America Back for God*, 16.

88 Perry and Whitehead, *Taking America Back for God*, 16.

- 89 Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 19.
- 90 Táíwò, *Elite Capture*.
- 91 Táíwò, “Identity Politics and Elite Capture.”
- 92 Jones, “Iowa and the Zombie Myth.”
- 93 USA Staff, “Read the Full Transcript from the First Presidential Debate.”
- 94 As I discuss at length in chapter 3, note 3, as a platform, Telegram does not work like Twitter/X or Facebook. There are no URLs, and the posts are anonymous, so I am unable to provide full citations for any of that material.
- 95 Ismail, “We Know Exactly Who.”

1. The Radicalizing of Pastor Mark Driscoll

- 1 Fea, *Believe Me*, 137.
- 2 Johnson, “How Mega-Macho-Pastor Mark Driscoll.”
- 3 Fea, “‘God and Country’ Preaches.”
- 4 Fea, “‘God and Country’ Preaches.”
- 5 Seitz, “God and Country.”
- 6 Graham and Homans, “Trump Is Connecting.”
- 7 Graham and Homans, “Trump Is Connecting.”
- 8 Johnson, *Biblical Porn*.
- 9 Wicker, “The Democrats as the Devil’s Disciples.”
- 10 Graham and Homans, “Trump Is Connecting.”
- 11 For details on the four qualities, see Ligonier Updates, “Bebbington’s Four Points of Evangelicalism.”
- 12 Perry, “America’s Becoming Less Religious.”
- 13 Joshi, *White Christian Privilege*.
- 14 Perry, “America’s Becoming Less Religious.”
- 15 Perry, “America’s Becoming Less Religious,” emphasis added.
- 16 Wolfe, *The Case for Christian Nationalism*.
- 17 Jones, “Iowa and the Zombie Myth.”
- 18 Jones, “Iowa and the Zombie Myth.”
- 19 Jones, “Iowa and the Zombie Myth.”
- 20 Jones, “Iowa and the Zombie Myth.”
- 21 Jones, “Iowa and the Zombie Myth.”
- 22 Johnson, “The Citizen-Soldier,” 338.
- 23 Johnson, *Biblical Porn*, 36.