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Great Replacement Theory: Here's What Jews Need to Know About White Supremacy



May 17, 2022

Right before a car fatally plowed into protesters near a "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017, neo-Nazis chanted "Jews will not replace us."

The verb "replace" refers to the Great Replacement, also known as [white replacement theory](#) or [white genocide theory](#). The conspiracy theory, rooted in white supremacist ideology, claims there is an intentional effort, led by Jews, to promote mass immigration, intermarriage, and other efforts that would lead to the "extinction of whites."

Its inspiration has been cited in the online manifestos of shooters at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where 11 worshipers were murdered, mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand where 51 died, a Walmart in El Paso, Texas where 23 people died, and most recently a supermarket in a predominately Black neighborhood of Buffalo, New York where 10 people were killed.

In his manifesto to explain the attack, the Buffalo shooting suspect blamed Jews for pushing out whites and accused Jews of believing they are superior because they call themselves "God's chosen people." "Why attack immigrants when the Jews are the issue?" the suspect asks rhetorically. His answer: "They can be dealt with in time."

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Here is what Jews need to know.

1. Jews Top the Target List

Jews are a primary target of the white supremacist movement. "It's those antisemitic tropes that Jews are manipulative and controlling and hold the power," said Natalia Mahmud, AJC Associate Director of U.S. Muslim-Jewish Relations. Black people and other minorities are the tools used by the so-called "Jewish puppeteers" to unseat the white race from the proverbial throne, white supremacists believe.

According to a [2021 study of right-wing domestic terrorist attacks](#) from the 1980s onward, the Global Network on Extremism & Technology found that in every case the perpetrators believed in at least one Jewish conspiracy theory.

Indeed, Arthur Jipson, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Dayton, said antisemitism is the most enduring component of the white supremacist worldview. Though the linguistic flourishes vary, Jipson said, today's white supremacist propaganda echoes 12th Century condemnations of Jews such as [the charge of blood libel](#), the widespread blame of Jews for unconnected murders and other horrific crimes. But in some white nationalist circles, that condemnation is not as blatant. While white supremacists condemn "ZOG," or the "Zionist-occupied government," white nationalists often use more coded language such as "an international conspiracy to undermine white civilization."

2. Murdering Jews Is a Call to Arms

For the white nationalist and white supremacist movements, a murderous attack on a Jewish institution is one way to kill Jews, but also can serve as a call to arms. "White nationalists believe there is an inevitable conflict coming - a race war - that has been building for years, if not centuries," Jipson said. "They envision 'the Day of the Rope,' when white people who have been asleep will wake up and become politically, socially, and militarily active and overthrow the chains of their oppressors and engage in acts of violence on a huge scale that heretofore we have not seen." Both shooters in Pittsburgh and Poway, California believed their attacks would be the spark for this anticipated revolution.

3. Born in the United States

White nationalism is the main byproduct of white supremacy. The movement, which focuses on preserving the political power and authority of the white race, originated in the U.S. and [provided powerful inspiration for Adolf Hitler and the Nazis](#). "It was America that taught us a nation should not open its doors equally to all nations," Hitler told *The New York Times* a year before he rose to Germany's helm in 1933.

References to the movement's American roots are found in the online manifestos of the Pittsburgh, Poway, and New Zealand killers. Today's white nationalists often see themselves as patriots, defending America's founding principles dating to colonial times.

The ideology has continued to be one of the nation's [exports](#). As humanitarian crises increase and shift populations, a fear of being outnumbered and governed by nonwhites has spawned a rise of white supremacist and white nationalist movements around the world. Hate crimes overall have increased in recent years, [up 13 percent since 2019](#). Crimes against Black people rose 49% since 2019. Anti-Asian incidents saw a 77% increase since 2019. Of the hate crimes motivated by religious bias, 55 percent were anti-Jewish. Anti-Muslim crimes remain the next largest religious group targeted at nine percent.

"Study after study shows a disturbing rise in hate crimes in the current socio-political climate," Mahmud. White supremacists are troubled by the growing diversity of elected officials. "All of these things pose a threat to their culture and the definition of America," she said.

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international terror threats.

But on his first full day in office, President Biden directed his national security team to lead a [100-day comprehensive review of strategies to address domestic terrorism](#) and the trend has begun to change.

Last year, the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council (MJAC) convened by AJC with Jewish and Muslim partners, successfully urged Congress to pass the Jabara-Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assaults, and Threats to Equality (NO HATE) Act. These provisions [were included](#) in the [Covid-19 Hate Crimes Act](#) that President Joe Biden signed into law in May 2021.

The legislation helps state and local authorities improve hate crime reporting with training, reporting hotlines, public educational forums on hate crimes, and other tools. The legislation also amends the penalties for hate crimes to allow courts to require offenders to undertake educational classes or service to the victim's community as a condition of release.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also has helped fund a partnership between AJC and Muflehun, a resource center for conflict resolution, to teach city leaders how to recognize antisemitic and anti-Muslim bigotry and what steps to take to prevent and respond to radicalization, domestic terrorism, and violent extremism in their communities.

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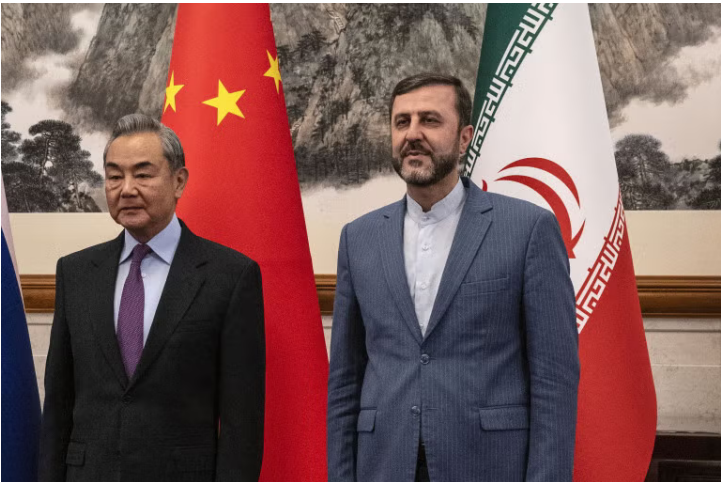


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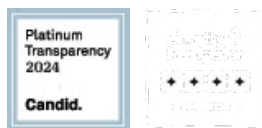
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