

**VIOLENT WORDS: STRATEGIES AND LEGAL IMPACTS OF  
WHITE SUPREMACIST LANGUAGE**

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WHITE SUPREMACIST LANGUAGE

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*This Article traces the history of three terms in use by white supremacists in the United State within the last and current centuries: “race suicide,” “white genocide,” and “replacement.” It reviews the contexts that gave rise to their usage and analyzes the ways the terms have moved between fringe and mainstream political discourses. Each term, whether as “coded” (also known as “dog-whistle”) or overt expression, characterizes the temporal fears and concerns of the political far right. The Article observes and examines how and when the terms broke into the mainstream, and how they impact public discussion, including policy and law, on specific substantive areas such as abortion rights, immigration, miscegenation laws, laws governing free speech, and voting rights. The Article focuses mainly on the discursive impacts on immigration and inequality pursuant to the franchise. The analysis draws upon scholarly literature and popular journalism. There is value in grappling with the complex meanings and associations of words that at face value seem extreme, excessive, or outrageous, and might therefore be dismissed. This is because the words often hide the strategy of denial and obfuscation that may render them persuasive to a vulnerable and fearful populace in times of stress. Highlighting the hidden strategies, and narrowing the gap, so to speak, between the words and the violence they signify, may contribute to their disempowerment within legal and political discourse.*

## INTRODUCTION

Around the 1890s, during the period known as the Progressive Era, a novel, racially charged concept began to circulate—the idea that the white race was dying out, that it was self-destructing. The name of this idea was “race suicide.” And it held enough sway within social and political discourses that it affected legal policy in several substantive areas: abortion rights, segregation/miscegenation of the races, race and medicine<sup>1</sup>, and immigration. This was also the period of mass migration from Europe. The dictates of “white” identity at the time determined that permissive factors, such factors including liberal immigration policies and

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Jacque Smith & Cassie Spodak, *Black or ‘Other’? Doctors may be relying on race to make decisions about your health*, CNN (Apr. 26, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/25/health/race-correction-in-medicine-history-refocused/index.html> (discussing the work of Samuel Cartwright, a physician in the antebellum south. Cartwright is best known as the inventor of the “mental illness” of “drapetomania,” the desire of a slave for freedom, a disorder akin to madness).

racial integration policies at the turn of the century, were diluting the “original” Anglo-Saxon American stock. Against this backdrop, proponents determined that any political or legal tolerance for racial equality or social pluralism was tantamount to racial extermination: “race suicide.”

Historians suggest that a legal consequence of the “race suicide” idea was the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924,<sup>2</sup> which radically reduced the flow of migrants by limiting immigration from southern and eastern Europe as well as Asia.<sup>3</sup> Another byproduct was Jim Crow, and the disenfranchisement of the freed slave populations. Blacks in America had recently enjoyed a limited franchise under Reconstruction and would continue to struggle against Jim Crow for the rest of the century.<sup>4</sup> “Race suicide” was part of the push-back against Reconstruction, to stop emancipation in its tracks.

There is a through-line from “race suicide” in the 1900s to that of “white genocide” in the 2000s. More recently, “replacement” has come to dominate popular discourses on the political right as the new term to describe the set of concerns that were captured by the prior phrases.

This article is interested in exploring the meaning of these terms within their own historical contexts and the thread that ties them together. This project is important for two reasons: first, because behind the words there is political strategy. We can better understand the thinking and the strategy of white supremacists when we attend carefully to their

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Immigration Act of 1924, Pub. L. No. 68-139, 43 Stat. 153 (1924) (revised 1952), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-236 (1965). When Lyndon Johnson signed the bill into law, he said, “This bill that we will sign today is not a revolutionary bill. It does not affect the lives of millions. It will not reshape the structure of our daily lives, or really add importantly to either our wealth or our power. Yet it is still one of the most important acts of this Congress and of this administration.” The Bill abrogated the quotas of the previous Act of 1924. See, e.g., President Lyndon B. Johnson, Remarks at the Signing of the Immigration Bill (Oct. 3, 1965), in 2 PUB. PAPERS 546, at 1037–40 (1965), <http://www.lbjlibrary.net/collections/selected-speeches/1965/10-03-1965.html>. But see JOHN DEPARLE, A GOOD PROVIDER IS ONE WHO LEAVES: ONE FAMILY AND MIGRATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY 5 (Penguin Books, 2019) (stating “Johnson was spectacularly wrong,” since immigration exploded after the Act of 1965). But see Sabrina Tavernise & Robert Gebeloff, *U.S. Population Over Last Decade Grew at Slowest Rate Since 1930s*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 26, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/26/us/us-census-numbers.html> (“With immigration leveling off and a declining birth rate, the United States may be entering an era of substantially lower population growth, demographers said.”).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR., *STONY THE ROAD: RECONSTRUCTION, WHITE SUPREMACY, AND THE RISE OF JIM CROW* (Penguin Books, 2019).

language.<sup>5</sup> Second, as noted, the strategies of imprecision or deception embedded within the language have often led, sometimes surreptitiously, to the development of laws and policies, as well as to cultural defenses from apologists who may themselves not think that they share the ideology of white supremacy. In short, when we say the terms used by extremists (in this case the far right) are “just words” or “mere propaganda,” we fail to see the work they do in inculcating fear, in shifting important policy debates and, thereby, in potentially creating laws that further the causes of white supremacy.

In Part I, I review the use of the term “race suicide.” In Part II, I examine the more recent term, “white genocide,” asking why it briefly took on such importance within the white supremacist and white nationalist movement(s). In Part III, I review the meaning of the term “replacement” (also referred to as, and in part derived from, the so-called “Great Replacement” theory), whose currency is in the ascendancy.

The article analyses the effects of these terms on the law’s development in two areas: immigration law and the laws governing free speech. The article concludes, however, that “replacement” points back to “race suicide” in its true objective: the disenfranchisement of black citizens within the United States. It is through the deployment of specific language, and the ideological weight behind them, that so-called “dog-whistle” politics or technologies<sup>6</sup> achieves their aims. The article attempts, therefore, to register the ways the language of white supremacy enters the mainstream, more obtrusively of late. By remaining vigilant regarding our own tendency to dismiss these terms (“laughing about ‘white genocide,’”<sup>7</sup> for instance), we can observe and counteract the objectives of the language’s adherents.

My argument will run as follows: “race suicide” was defended by a cadre of American elites and was well received by a large enough segment of the population that it contributed to the development of stringent laws barring “undesirable” immigrants from the United States in the early part of the twentieth century. “White genocide” was borrowed from white

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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., IAN HANEY LÓPEZ, *DOG-WHISTLE POLITICS: HOW CODED RACIAL APPEALS HAVE REINVENTED RACISM & WRECKED THE MIDDLE CLASS* 3–4 (Oxford Univ. Press, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Adam R. Shapiro, *The Racist Roots of the Dog Whistle*, WASH. POST (Apr. 21, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/08/21/racist-roots-dog-whistle/> (arguing that the technology itself, the dog whistle, “was designed [in the 1870s] by Francis Galton, whose most famous work was inventing the term ‘eugenics’ and creating a science of racial differences and race ‘improvement.’” The instrument was used to hunt animals and escaped slaves.).

<sup>7</sup> JIM GOAD, *WHITENESS: THE ORIGINAL SIN* 60 (Obnoxious Books, 2018). The phrase, “Laughing About White Genocide,” is a chapter heading in the book at page 60. *Id.* Goad discusses the case of George Ciciarello-Maher and the controversy following his tweet, “I’m dreaming of a white genocide,” arguing that Ciciarello-Maher and other “liberals” laugh about “white genocide” at their peril. *Id.*

supremacists abroad. This borrowing brought with it problems and challenges from abroad, problems such as postcolonial migration movements from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, and a kind of Islamophobia that was different from the race discourse in the U.S. at the time. The term “white genocide,” once imported, nonetheless operated as a tool of propaganda in the US.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the term remained on the fringes of mainstream discourse, mentioned primarily within the reportage on a spate of mass shootings after 2011. As such, at least in the U.S., although the term had little if any direct impact on law or policy, it bore directly on the meaning of the term “replacement,” which did become more prominent. Finally, as the term “replacement” has been recognized by some as a breed of “hate speech,” it has implicated the scope of protected speech afforded by the First Amendment. Additionally, within the last five years but, arguably, even before then, “replacement” has been intertwined with the turn toward hardline anti-immigrant policies.

### I. RACE SUICIDE

The ideas behind “race suicide” took form during the Progressive Era.<sup>9</sup> I will argue that its underlying meaning is inherited, a hundred years later, by the terms “white genocide” and “replacement.” Writing about the latter terms, David Brooks notes of Patrick Crusius, the racially motivated shooter in the 2019 El Paso massacre at a Walmart, “The ideology he goes on to champion is highly racial, but it’s not classic xenophobia or white supremacy. Its first feature is essentialism. The most important thing you can know about a person is his or her race...Identity is racial.”<sup>10</sup> This is an interesting conception of the ideology of the shooter who, in his manifesto, declared that his intention was to defend against both “white genocide” and “replacement.”<sup>11</sup> Brooks’ reconceptualization of Crusius’s ideology – one that attempts a separation between “white supremacy” and “essentialism” qua identity – implies that the latter is prone to violence. An insistent severance between words and (violent) acts seems inherent, running through the discourses under analysis.

First, however, I begin with the term “race suicide” at the turn of the century and note that, like “white genocide” and “replacement,” it expressed a similar dynamic: on the one hand, the idea of something essential and immutable about identity, and race. On the other, identity cast in

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., White Genocide, ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE, <https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/white-genocide>.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., MADOKA KISHI, THE EROTICS OF RACE SUICIDE: THE MAKING OF WHITENESS AND THE DEATH DRIVE IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA, 1880-1920 (2015) (Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University), at 2, [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_dissertations/189](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/189).

<sup>10</sup> David Brooks, *The Ideology of Hate and How to Fight It*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 5, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/05/opinion/el-paso-dayton-shooting.html>.

<sup>11</sup> RENAUD CAMUS, YOU WILL NOT REPLACE US! 20 (Chez l’auteur, 2018).

these terms attenuates the element of choice and instead calcifies the idea of (racial) destiny. Brooks did not intend to obviate Crusius's culpability or the monstrosity of his acts, but as I will show later, his recasting of the impetus or motive as something beyond an ideology of white supremacy has the effect of shifting the ground away from Crusius the person. We see the horror, and it's not us. In some ways, like the immutability of race, it is nonagentic. This will be an operative trope underlying the terms adopted by white nationalists, from "race suicide" to "replacement."

A scene in the 1915 film, D.W. Griffith's *Birth Of A Nation*,<sup>12</sup> vividly captures this sense of the inevitable or immutable nature of identity that attaches to the term "race suicide." Toward the end of the film, a father, the white patriarchal protagonist, prepares to kill his daughter rather than permit her to fall into the hands of the black mob surrounding the cabin where the remnant of this once-proud landowning Southern family has fled. The scene telegraphs what the film has suggested and prepared its audience to accept as inevitable: that the blacks outside the cabin, fighting their way in, will subject the young woman to a fate much worse than would a quick blow to the neck with the butt of the gun raised above her head by her father. The father's face is filled with both determination and horror, and the daughter's upturned look is pliant, saintly, and ready. This is their fate, the fate of the race. They have no choice.<sup>13</sup>

In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander notes that the loss of slaves required a reconfiguration of black labor, leading to the perception of the "inevitable" criminality of the black man and to his incarceration on the flimsiest of evidence. As a prisoner, he would belong to the infamous "chain gang," performing hard labor for free.<sup>14</sup> In short, Alexander argues that the stereotype of black criminality was strategic, staged, and instrumental; there was nothing "inevitable" about it. But a strategy only works if it doesn't seem like one, if it presents itself as completely natural. And parallel to that stereotype of black criminality was a conversation around

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<sup>12</sup> BIRTH OF A NATION (David W. Griffith, 1915) (originally *The Clansman*).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* But cf. Richard Brody, *The Worst Thing About Birth of a Nation Is How Good It Is*, NEW YORKER (Feb. 1, 2013), <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-worst-thing-about-birth-of-a-nation-is-how-good-it-is> ("The shot of a former slave-owner, under siege by a posse of freedmen for his son's membership in the K.K.K., holding his grown daughter by the hair and raising his pistol above her head—he's preparing to kill her if the blacks breach the door—has a harrowing and exalted grandeur that surpasses the film's specific prejudices to achieve a classical moment of tragedy.") (arguing further that Griffiths undercuts the "disgusting content" of the film precisely through these aesthetic choices; thus, the father hesitates to permit the filmic capture of the moment, but this hesitation may also undercut the nonagentic "driven-by-race" element of the content).

<sup>14</sup> See MICHELLE ALEXANDER, *THE NEW JIM CROW: MASS INCARCERATION IN THE AGE OF COLORBLINDNESS* 157 (The New Press, 2012).

eugenics,<sup>15</sup> which also took on the aura and entrenchment of received knowledge, of normalcy. That theory held that within the societal goal of human flourishing and evolution toward a more perfect people and nation, the defective humans – damaged, inferior, weak – must be eliminated.<sup>16</sup>

Into the bucket of the (sub) human to be used and discarded were not only former slaves, but also the immigrants flowing into the US from various parts of southern and eastern Europe: the Slavs and the Jews, the Italians and, further west, the Irish. These immigrants were predominantly deployed as cheap or free labor and were therefore not considered “white” or “Nordic,” in the terminology of the time. And so, the term “race suicide” encompassed not only the fear of weakening the white race through miscegenation but also through the mass migration of the “hordes” of lesser and inferior “non-white” European and Asian peoples.<sup>17</sup>

The term “race suicide” itself was coined by the sociologist Edward A. Ross, one of the founders of American sociology, in 1900 and conceived as part of the widely supported eugenics movement at the turn of the century. As Madosha Kishi notes, Ross’s *The Causes of Race Superiority* (1901) “warned against the drastic decline in the birth rate of Anglo-Saxon Americans. Though the downswing of indigenous whites’ fertility rate had been observed since the 1880s, Ross’s was one of the first arguments that explicitly contrasted it with the rapidly increasing descendants of ‘new’ immigrants from Asia and Southern and Eastern Europe.” Kishi goes on to note that,

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<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., *Eugenics*, HISTORY (Oct. 28, 2019), [https://www.history.com/topics/germany/eugenics#section\\_2](https://www.history.com/topics/germany/eugenics#section_2). (“Eugenics is the practice or advocacy of improving the human species by selectively mating people with specific desirable hereditary traits. It aims to reduce human suffering by ‘breeding out’ disease, disabilities and so-called undesirable characteristics from the human population. Early supporters of eugenics believed people inherited mental illness, criminal tendencies and even poverty, and that these conditions could be bred out of the gene pool. Historically, eugenics encouraged people of so-called healthy, superior stock to reproduce and discouraged reproduction of the mentally challenged or anyone who fell outside the social norm. Eugenics was popular in America during much of the first half of the twentieth century, yet it earned its negative association mainly from Adolf Hitler’s obsessive attempts to create a superior Aryan race. Modern eugenics, more often called human genetic engineering, has come a long way—scientifically and ethically—and offers hope for treating many devastating genetic illnesses. Even so, it remains controversial.”).

<sup>16</sup> Smith & Spodak, *supra* note 1 (“[W]hen the goal was justifying slavery, doctors published articles alleging, [among other] substantive physical differences between White and Black bodies, that Black people have weaker lungs, which is why grueling work in the fields was essential . . . to their progress.”).

<sup>17</sup> Timothy J. Hatton & Jeffrey G. Williamson, *What Drove the Mass Migrations from Europe in the Late Nineteenth Century?*, 20 *POPULATION & DEV. REV.* 533, 533–59 (1994).

Native-born white Americans are being outbred by races capable of “multiply[ing] on a lower [economic] plane”; for the old stock Americans’ proud racial traits of self-reliance and self-denial “overrule[] [their] strongest instincts”(Ross, 86). Refusing to beget offspring in erratic economic prospects resulting from the competition with immigrants, the old stock Americans skate close to a danger of extinction. Ross wagers: “For a case like this I can find no words so apt as ‘race suicide.’ There is no bloodshed, no violence, no assault of the race that waxes upon the race that wanes. The higher race quietly and unobtrusively eliminates itself” (88).<sup>18</sup>

President Theodore Roosevelt also famously referenced the term in his writings and speeches. In 1902, Roosevelt called race suicide “‘fundamentally infinitely more important than any other question in this country’ and argued that ‘the man or woman who deliberately avoids marriage, and has a heart so cold as to know no passion and a brain so shallow and selfish as to dislike having children, is in effect a criminal against the race, and should be an object of contemptuous abhorrence by all healthy people.’”<sup>19</sup> Likewise, in 1905, he argued that a man or woman who is childless by choice “merits contempt.”<sup>20</sup>

Madison Grant, in what Kishi calls the “white-supremacist gospel, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916),<sup>21</sup> also deployed the concept, although not the term, within his writings. His work created a taxonomy of the races, including variants of the “white race” as “Mediterranean” and “Alpine,” the latter reclassified as “Nordics.”<sup>22</sup>

In the main, Grant’s “Nordic theory” advocated for what came to be known as “racial hygiene,” the prohibition against miscegenation of the white race with other races. Grant bemoaned the fact that the Nordics were being affected adversely by miscegenation, including by the “Slavic Alpines” who were arriving on American shores in high numbers during this time.<sup>23</sup> And Adam Serwer, in his study of the modern white supremacist movement, links the terms “race suicide” and “white genocide” through

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<sup>18</sup> KISHI, *supra* note 9, at 1–2.

<sup>19</sup> JOHN VAN VORST & MARIE VAN VORST, *THE WOMAN WHO TOILS: BEING THE EXPERIENCES OF TWO LADIES AS FACTORY GIRLS* vii (Doubleday, Page, & Company 1903), <https://archive.org/details/womanwho-toilsbe02vorsgoog>.

<sup>20</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *On American Motherhood*, Address Before the National Congress of Mothers (Mar. 13, 1905) (transcript available at <https://www.bartleby.com/268/10/29.html>).

<sup>21</sup> KISHI, *supra* note 9, at 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 122. (“Yet Grant’s ‘Nordics’ clearly inherit Chamberlain’s Teutonism, placed at the pinnacle of European racial hierarchy...”)

<sup>23</sup> Hatton & Williamson, *supra* note 17, at 533 (“Between 1850 and 1913, more than 40 million people emigrated from Europe to the New World.”).



the use of the latter by modern white supremacists in their advocacy of the “race suicide” theories propounded by Grant.<sup>24</sup>

Cynthia Levine-Rasky states that the doctrine of race suicide “shaped laws and policies in both the United States and Canada” on such matters as “immigration law, eugenics programs and the prohibition of abortion.”<sup>25</sup> Levine-Rasky points out the importance of intersectionality to the belief system that bemoans the weakening of the race by “suicide.” As she notes, white supremacists’ “targets are not only racial, ethnic and religious minorities, but also sexual minorities and women. Why? Because power is not restricted to whiteness; it is accomplished intersectionally. In other words, whiteness wields maximum power when it intersects with masculinity and heteronormativity.”<sup>26</sup>

A book by one of Grant’s mentees, Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy*,<sup>27</sup> was “the most inflammatory in a line of such books.”<sup>28</sup> The book, and its reception, might have been the apogee of the race suicide discourse. Arguing that “Nordic superiority was ‘genetically recessive’ and therefore unstable and in need of political intervention to ensure the segregation of groups,” Stoddard adds: “[if] the white man were to share his blood with, or entrust his ideals to, brown, yellow, black or red men... This is suicide pure and simple, and the

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<sup>24</sup> Adam Serwer, *White Nationalism’s Deep American Roots*, THE ATLANTIC (Apr. 2019), <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/04/adam-serwer-madison-grant-white-nationalism/583258/>. “The seed of Nazism’s ultimate objective—the preservation of a pure white race, uncontaminated by foreign blood—was in fact sown with striking success in the United States. What is judged extremist today was once the consensus of a powerful cadre of the American elite, well-connected men who eagerly seized on a false doctrine of “race suicide” during the immigration scare of the early 20th century. They included wealthy patricians, intellectuals, lawmakers, even several presidents. Perhaps the most important among them was a blue blood with a very impressive mustache, Madison Grant. He was the author of a 1916 book called *The Passing of the Great Race*, which spread the doctrine of race purity all over the globe.”

<sup>25</sup> Cynthia Levine-Rasky, *The 100-Year-Old Rallying Cry of “White Genocide”*, THE CONVERSATION (Aug. 12, 2017), <https://theconversation.com/the-100-year-old-rallying-cry-of-white-genocide-98378>.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> LOTHROP STODDARD, *THE RISING TIDE OF COLOR AGAINST WHITE WORLD SUPREMACY* (Chapman & Hall, 1924).

<sup>28</sup> Levine-Rasky, *supra* note 25. Ian Frazier traces *The Passing* as “part of a modern genre that began with Arthur de Gobineau’s ‘The Inequality of Human Races,’ published in 1853-55.” See Ian Frazier, *When W.E.B. Du Bois Made a Laughingstock of a White Supremacist*, NEW YORKER (Aug. 26, 2019), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/08/26/when-w-e-b-du-bois-made-a-laughingstock-of-a-white-supremacist>. He notes also: “Hitler... admired what Grant had to say about the great ‘Nordic race,’ and wrote the author a fan letter, calling the book [*The Passing*] ‘my Bible.’ Grant took pride in the Nazis’ use of his book.” *Id.*

first victim of this amazing folly will be the white man himself.”<sup>29</sup> Stoddard’s book, *The Rising Tide*, was a bestseller in the 1920s, and his work was cited with approval by the Nazis, as was the work of Grant and others writing of the plight of the white race.

As to the fate of the term “race suicide” and the fears it encapsulated, Kishi notes that “The apocalyptic scenario, of course, did not materialize. The old stock American did not die out, and the concept of race suicide has sunk beneath our contemporary critical radar, only occasionally mentioned in passing as a ludicrous signifier of the racial hysteria of the Progressive Era.”<sup>30</sup> All of the apologists for white supremacy – Grant, Stoddard, and others who expounded on white supremacy’s links to eugenics, race hygiene, fears of a “mongrelized” mixing with “inferior races,” – might have fallen out of fashion<sup>31</sup> by the end of the 1930s and the rise of the Nazis in Germany. Nevertheless, in its heyday, this racist movement left its stamp on US policy and law,<sup>32</sup> particularly within the area of immigration.

However, there is a coda. Frazier notes that “as dependable old hatreds are rising up again, Grant has become more current.”<sup>33</sup> At the turn of the new century, Grant’s and Stoddard’s ideas were repackaged in new form: the idea, not that the white race was killing itself (“race suicide”), but that it was being threatened with extinction: “white genocide.”

## II. WHITE GENOCIDE

Like “race suicide,” the more recent term “white genocide” also harbors some complexities. What does “genocide” mean to those who use this term? In this section, I first review the early uses of the term, mainly on the Continent. Second, I review the use of the term within the right-leaning reportage of the conflict between white landowners in South Africa and the black majority. For both blacks and whites in South Africa, given the earlier fate of white farmers in neighboring Zimbabwe under the government of President Mugambe (after that country achieved independence from Britain in the 1960s), the status quo ante regarding equity and

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<sup>29</sup> Levine-Rasky, *supra* note 25, at 2.

<sup>30</sup> KISHI, *supra* note 9, at 2.

<sup>31</sup> Frazier, *supra* note 28. Frazier ends his article on a poignant note: in a letter to a reader of Stoddard troubled by the ideas in it and asking du Bois for a rebuttal, du Bois replies that he will take up the matter, but meanwhile reassures him that, “Lothrop Stoddard has no standing as a sociologist. He is simply a popular writer who has some vogue just now.”

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., JONATHAN PETER SPIRO, *DEFENDING THE MASTER RACE: CONSERVATION, EUGENICS, AND THE LEGACY OF MADISON GRANT* (Univ. of Vt. Press, 2009); DANIEL OKRENT, *THE GUARDED GATE: BIGOTRY, EUGENICS, AND THE LAW THAT KEPT TWO GENERATIONS OF JEWS, ITALIANS, AND OTHER EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS OUT OF AMERICA* (Scribner, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> Frazier, *supra* note 28.

land ownership after apartheid remained a contentious issue.<sup>34</sup> Third, I review the use of the term within the “manifestos” of the so-called lone wolf massacres in Europe, the U.S. and Australasia. I will highlight the term’s overlap with the most recent term, “replacement”—a term in more prominent use within the last two years.

“White genocide” was a slogan during the Charlottesville, Virginia “Unite the Right” rally in 2017, but Levine-Rasky notes the following: “What ideas fuel such [white supremacist and white nationalist] groups? A clue lies in the Charlottesville cry of ‘you will not replace us,’ which morphed into ‘Jews will not replace us.’”<sup>35</sup> The anodyne-seeming “replacement” came to dominate the propaganda and the discourse of white supremacy after 2017. But in 2017, the “clue” referenced by Levine-Rasky points to the anti-Semitism at the core of the term “white genocide.”<sup>36</sup> The thread that runs from “race suicide” a hundred years ago, to the current fixation on “replacement,” is this anti-Semitic strain suggested by the use of the term “genocide.” Coupled with the anti-Semitic denial of the Holocaust,<sup>37</sup> the use of the term “genocide” to describe the victimhood of the white race hints at the denial of whites as perpetrators of genocide in other contexts. Some historians classify the mass murder of several indigenous groups in the “New Worlds” as genocidal.<sup>38</sup> Other historians equate the logic of settlement and of colonialism with genocide.<sup>39</sup>

Back to the rally in 2017: the protest held by “a loose coalition of white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and Confederate apologists”<sup>40</sup> quickly

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<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Buchizya Mseteka, *Mandela Calls for Land Reform*, THE INDEPENDENT (Oct. 22, 2011), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/mandela-calls-for-land-reform-1167159.html> (“South Africa’s President Nelson Mandela warned yesterday that only a fair redistribution of land to its former black owners would guarantee peace as the country emerged from apartheid minority rule.”).

<sup>35</sup> Levine-Rasky, *supra* note 25, at 1.

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., David Lane, *White Genocide Manifesto*, DAVIDLANE1488.COM, <https://davidlane1488.com/whitegenocide> (last visited Aug. 2, 2021).

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Sylvain Cypel, *A French Clown’s Hate*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 23, 2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/opinion/deciphering-the-queue-nelle.html>.

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ, *AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES* (Beacon Press, 2014). See also Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Yes, Native Americans Were the Victims of Genocide*, HISTORY NEWS NETWORK (May 12, 2016), <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/162804>.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., SVEN LINDQVIST, “EXTERMINATE ALL THE BRUTES”: ONE MAN’S ODYSSEY INTO THE HEART OF DARKNESS AND THE ORIGINS OF GENOCIDE IN EUROPE (The New Press, 2007). Lindqvist’s title is taken from a line in the novel by Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Coyote Canyon Press, 2007) (1899).

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Marantz, *Birth of a White Supremacist: Mike Enoch’s Transformation from Leftist Contrarian to Nationalist Shock Jock*, NEW YORKER (Oct. 9,

descended into violence, and the police shut it down “before any of the speakers could take the stage.”<sup>41</sup> A few of them “reconvened in a park two miles away,” where Mike Enoch, not well known nationally but “influential within an inner cadre of Web-fluent neo-fascists,” took to the stand. Enoch began his speech: “We’re here to talk about white genocide, the deliberate and intentional displacement of the white race... Have we heard this conspiracy theory of white privilege? This is a concept that was brought to us by Jewish intellectuals, to undermine our confidence in ourselves.”<sup>42</sup> Andrew Marantz notes that, “An hour later, James Alex Fields, Jr., wearing khakis and a white polo (the unofficial uniform of the protesters that day), drove a car into a crowd of people, killing Heather Heyer, a local counter-protester.”<sup>43</sup>

In his article on Enoch, Marantz charts his progress from a left-leaning upbringing to a “contrarian” questioning of ideology to finally settling into his role as an ardent white supremacist. Along the way, Marantz notes a controversy that comes to light after research into Enoch’s background by a group opposed to Enoch’s views, expressed in his podcast, “The Daily Shoah.”<sup>44</sup> The controversy is that Enoch was married to a Jewish woman.<sup>45</sup> For Enoch and his fellow white supremacists, the Jewish question seems to deeply inform their world view, linking them to neo-Nazis, Holocaust deniers, the alt-right and its fixation on George Soros and other powerful Jewish figures on the left. It is as if the collection of grievances, fears, and terrors that animated the early 1900s elites who promulgated the idea of “race suicide” had been transformed by the late century. Those theories of race superiority undergirded the eugenics movement, which in turn was “exported” to and embraced by German extremists during the Weimar years (Hitler called Grant’s book on race his “Bible”<sup>46</sup>), which led to the Holocaust. By this circuitous route, “race suicide” had come back home in new garb. Whilst the collection of fears expressed by the term “white genocide” were continuous with the term “race suicide,” anti-Semitism and its apotheosis in the Holocaust – this is what a ritualized

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2017), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/16/birth-of-a-white-supremacist>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* (Marantz notes that, “The title [of the podcast], a pun about the Holocaust by way of Comedy Central, reflects the over-all tone of the show”).

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., *Resources: About Michael “Enoch” Peinovich*, SOUTHERN POVERTY L. CTR. (2021), <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/michael-enoch-peinovich>. “Peinovich was doxed in January of 2017 by members of 8chan’s /pol/ board. Along with his identifying personal information, it was revealed that he had been married to a Jewish woman for the past decade... Reactions from Alt-Right leadership, including Peinovich’s fellow triumvirate members, were generally supportive despite the massive scandal.”.

<sup>46</sup> EDWIN BLACK, *WAR AGAINST THE WEAK: EUGENICS AND AMERICA’S CAMPAIGN TO CREATE A MASTER RACE* 259–60 (Dialog Press 2012).

purification of the white race looks like, at the heart of civilized Europe – seemed more central, and expressly so, to the platform and goal of a white nation, with a sanitized white populace.

For Enoch, who fell in and out of university (four in all) without completing a degree, history and fact became less appealing, or salient, than belief and myth. In the end, whilst he resisted the “logic” of white superiority, the alternative – that humans are equal in their diversity – required mental work for Enoch. Here is Marantz on Enoch’s journey to acceptance of the basic belief that, because whites dominated the levers of power, they must be superior:

He thought he had carefully examined each of his beliefs, reducing them to their most fundamental axioms. But here was an axiom so fundamental that he hadn’t even articulated it to himself, much less subjected it to logical scrutiny. Now that he thought about it, he wasn’t sure why he should assume that all people were equal. Maybe they weren’t. If this was a textbook definition of racism, then so be it – maybe racism was true. ‘They’re fucking religious fanatics,’ he said later, of liberals like his former self. ‘They believe in the equality of human beings like a Muslim believes that he has to pray five times facing Mecca, or like a Southern Baptist hates the devil...If you’re a liberal, you’ve never thought twice, you’ve never reconsidered, you’ve absorbed what you were taught in the government schools and by the TV.’<sup>47</sup>

For the mass shooters in Norway, New Zealand, and the U.S., there is a similar allergy regarding rational thought versus beliefs, and the study of facts and evidence versus myths. According to A. Dirk Moses, citing to the biographies of these mass shooters, such willful illiteracy was apparently a short road to panic and despair. Whence, as Moses suggests in his analysis of the Christchurch terrorist Brenton Tarrant, “the proliferation of ‘white genocide’ fantasies and the seeming readiness of adherents to take its premises seriously and – for at least one of them – to match paranoid words with murderous deeds.”<sup>48</sup>

Moses examines the use of the term “white genocide” within the “manifesto” written by Tarrant, as well as those of the proponents of other mass shootings, such as Anders Behring Breivik of Norway. Moses writes:

In Tarrant’s telling, “white genocide” is the outcome of declining European (= white) birth rates coupled with mass immigration from faster reproducing non-Europeans (= non-whites). Taken together, they represent an

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<sup>47</sup> Marantz, *supra* note 40.

<sup>48</sup> A. Dirk Moses, “*White Genocide*” and the Ethics of Public Analysis, 21 J. GENOCIDE RSCH. 201, 202 (2019).

‘assault on the European people that, if not combatted, will ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people.’ [Tarrant] continues: “This is ethnic replacement. This is cultural replacement. This is racial replacement. This is WHITE GENOCIDE.”<sup>49</sup>

Moses traces the legacy of the term “white genocide” to the writings and pronouncements of right-wing writers such as David Lane and the influence of his 1988 “White Genocide Manifesto.”<sup>50</sup> Moses also references Renaud Camus, a French intellectual whose 2011 book, *Le grand remplacement (The Great Replacement)*<sup>51</sup> is also cited in the mass shooters’ manifestos. Camus, however, theorizes (and defends) “replacement” as distinct from “white genocide”—the former avowedly both anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic (Camus “was openly gay [and] was not the first European ideologue or politician to argue that Islam’s homophobia justifies Islamophobia.”<sup>52</sup>). For the proponents of the “replacement” movement, the alleged rejection of anti-Semitism, and therefore “white genocide,” is part of the movement’s success.<sup>53</sup> But at the same time, they acknowledge

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<sup>49</sup> *Id.* at 203.

<sup>50</sup> Lane, *supra* note 36. Moses adds: “For analysis of the white power movement, see KATHLEEN BELEW, *BRING THE WAR HOME: THE WHITE POWER MOVEMENT AND PARAMILITARY AMERICA* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2018).” Moses, *supra* note 48, at 208. Belew argues that “white power” encompasses the disparate movements, such as white supremacy, neo-Nazis, under one umbrella term. KATHLEEN BELEW, *BRING THE WAR HOME: THE WHITE POWER MOVEMENT AND PARAMILITARY AMERICA* (Harvard Univ. Press 2018). She also traces modern white power to the post-Vietnam War and the return of the soldiers to an unwelcoming America. *Id.* at 15.

<sup>51</sup> Moses, *supra* note 48, at 208 (referencing RENAUD CAMUS, *LE GRAND REMPLACEMENT [THE GREAT REPLACEMENT]* (Chez l’auteur 2011)). See also, e.g., Norimitsu Orishi, *The Man Behind a Toxic Slogan Promoting White Supremacy*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 20, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/20/world/europe/renaud-camus-great-replacement.html>. On the use of the term “genocide by substitution,” see, e.g., *Greco-Roman Antiquity in Camus’ “Great Replacement”*, PHAROS (Oct. 7, 2019), <https://pharos.vassarspaces.net/2019/10/07/greco-roman-antiquity-in-camus-great-replacement/> (discussing the term “genocide by substitution”).

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Bruno Chaouat, *The Gay French Poet Behind the Alt-Right’s Favorite Catch Phrase*, TABLET MAG. (Aug. 27, 2019), <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/renaud-camus-great-replacement>. Another source also notes that Alain Finkielkraut has supported Camus. Moses, *supra* note 48, at 212–13.

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., JEAN-YVES CAMUS & NICOLAS LEBOURG, *FAR-RIGHT POLITICS IN EUROPE 206–07* (Harvard Univ. Press 2017) (“The success of that umpteenth incarnation of a theme launched immediately after World War II (Camus has personally declared his indebtedness to Enoch Powell) can be explained by the fact that he subtracted anti-Semitism from the argument.”).

“replacement’s” debt to “white genocide,” as in this quotation from “the managers of the ‘Great Replacement’ website”:

The purpose of this site is the documentation of European decline both demographically and culturally, and the spreading awareness of this term ‘The Great Replacement’ both on the internet through hashtags like #TheGreatReplacement and #GreatReplacement and in conversations in the real world, which hopefully inspires change in cultural and political attitudes before it is too late. In addition, it should replace the previous term that was used to describe the same population replacement phenomenon as #WhiteGenocide, which hasn’t been as effective outside the United States, although YouTube alone shows over 50,000 results when you do an exact search for ‘white genocide’ – most of them in English.<sup>54</sup>

In Europe, “white genocide” created a ferment of debate amongst elites on the right but ultimately failed to take off within popular discourse in part because of the imprint of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. In the U.S., the term had a different kind of success, in part, because it arrived here by way of the South African land expropriation debate. It was also not debated and critiqued in the U.S., beyond the South Africa case, like it was in Europe. In effect, when the use of the term “white genocide” is reviewed in the literature, and certainly compared with Europe, it seemed to cater to a lazy, even celebrated anti-intellectualism—a trend that reflected a turn against expertise during the last decade.<sup>55</sup> The trend is represented, in one sense, by the ascendancy of Donald Trump to the

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<sup>54</sup> Moses, *supra* note 48, at 209 (quoting The Great Replacement, <http://www.great-replacement.com>). Moses adds: “Needless to say, invoking genocide is highly metaphorical and tendentious. Whether by Raphael Lemkin’s general definition or by the restrictive UN one, in no way can the processes traced by these neo-fascist white nationalists be understood as genocide.” *Id.* Raphael Lemkin coined the term “genocide” in Chapter IX of his book, *AXIS RULE IN OCCUPIED EUROPE: LAWS OF OCCUPATION, ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT, PROPOSALS FOR REDRESS* 79 (Columbia Univ. Press 1944). *See also*, Ben Zimmer, *How “Genocide” Was Coined: Behind the word “genocide,” a lawyer’s crusade to prevent the crime*, *THE WALL ST. J.* (Oct. 24, 2014), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-genocide-was-coined-1414179131>. The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide (1948) adopted a narrower definition of genocide than the one Lemkin proposed in his book. *See* Moses, *supra* note 48, at 207. White supremacists, including Goad, have adopted the broader definition, arguing falsely that Lemkin meant to include incremental demographic changes as evidence of genocide. GOAD, *supra* note 7, at 62.

<sup>55</sup> *See, e.g.*, TOM NICHOLS, *THE DEATH OF EXPERTISE: THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST KNOWLEDGE AND WHY IT MATTERS* (Oxford Univ. Press 2018).

presidency in his 2015 campaign declaration, “I love the poorly educated.”<sup>56</sup> Lane’s manifesto, for instance, is explicit in its anti-expertise stance:

The format of the White Genocide Manifesto is by calculated intent designed to exclude and ignore the sophistries of establishment sanctioned ‘authorities.’ Power systems both religious and secular throughout recorded time have invented and canonized Bishops, Priests, Professors, Historians, Propaganda experts, Word-smiths [sic], Doctors in various alleged disciplines and a host of similar glorified prostitutes, for the specific purpose of befuddling, misleading, controlling and using the masses.<sup>57</sup>

In this, Lane pulls from William Pierce’s *The Turner Diaries*<sup>58</sup>—a work that classifies educated whites as part of the “System” to be destroyed, its members either cleansed or killed, to clear the ground and inaugurate the purified white nation,<sup>59</sup> purged of the taint of “Jewish-materialist propaganda.”<sup>60</sup>

The mass shooters’ manifestos promoting “white genocide” reflect a kind of cognitive dissonance: on the one hand, they claim their violence is in defense of the rich intellectual heritage of Europe against the “invasion” by the barbarian hordes. On the other hand, Breivik, Tarrant, Enoch, and other white activists are proudly unschooled and anti-intellectual.

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<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., Arlie Russell Hochschild, *What’s Wrong with the Meritocracy*, N.Y. Times (Sept. 15, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/15/books/review/the-tyranny-of-merit-michael-j-sandel.html> (reviewing Michael J. Sandel, *The Tyranny of Merit: What’s Become of the Common Good?* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2020)). See also BravoMe, *Donald Trump I Love The Poorly Educated GIF*, TENOR (Jan. 30, 2020), <https://tenor.com/view/donald-trump-ilove-the-poorly-educated-trump-ilove-the-poorly-educated-trump-poorly-educated-donald-trump-we-love-the-poorly-educated-gif-16189796> (“We won with the poorly educated. I love the poorly educated!”).

<sup>57</sup> Lane, *supra* note 36.

<sup>58</sup> WILLIAM LUTHER PIERCE, *THE TURNER DIARIES* (Cosmotheist Books, 3rd ed. 2019).

<sup>59</sup> See, e.g., *Resources: About David Lane*, SOUTHERN POVERTY L. CTR. (2021), <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/david-lane> (describing Lane’s membership in a terrorist organization, “The Order,” which was “loosely based on *The Turner Diaries*”).

<sup>60</sup> PIERCE, *supra* note 58, at 101–02 (“He has become, in short, just what the System has been trying to make of him these past 50 years or so: a mass-man; a member of the great, brainwashed proletariat; a herd animal; a true democrat. That, unfortunately, is our average White American. We can wish that it weren’t so, but it is. The plain, horrible truth is that we have been trying to evoke a heroic spirit of idealism which just isn’t there anymore. It has been washed right out of 99 percent of our people by the flood of Jewish-materialist propaganda in which they have been submerged practically all their lives.”).



Unencumbered by a proximity to the Holocaust and the potential for running afoul of strong speech prohibitions in European laws<sup>61</sup> and coupled with its link to the older discourses on “race suicide” related to anti-miscegenation laws that ended only recently with the Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia*,<sup>62</sup> the term “white genocide” enjoyed a certain popularity within the US,<sup>63</sup> as evidenced by Enoch’s speech at the “Unite the Right” rally.

A third thread to the meaning of “white genocide” was the issue of immigration. This meaning was prominent within the 2015 biography of Breivik by Åsne Seierstad.<sup>64</sup> In his manifesto, entitled *2083*, Breivik railed extensively against immigration to Norway from Muslim countries. “White genocide” flips the historical narrative for the influx of non-white populations within Europe and other western countries. By calling this centripetal inflow a form of “genocide,” white supremacists tacitly accept that colonialism and settlement were a centrifugal form of extermination and genocide of the colonized indigenous populations.<sup>65</sup>

Tarrant’s manifesto, as Moses points out, completely elides the issue of white migration or settlement to Tarrant’s homeland in Australia that displaced the indigenous population, and instead, like Breivik’s, focuses

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<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., France’s Gayssot Act of 1990, which prohibits any racist, anti-Semitic, or xenophobic activities, including Holocaust denial. Loi no 90-615 du 13 juillet 1990 tendant à réprimer tout acte raciste, antisémite ou xénophobe [Law 90-615 of July 13, 1990 to Suppress any Racist, Anti-Semitic or Xenophobic Act], LÉGIFRANCE (updated Feb. 24, 2004). It is one of several European laws prohibiting Holocaust denial. *Id.*

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., *Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S 1 (1967) (ruling that laws prohibiting miscegenation were unconstitutional).

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Jane Coaston, *The Scary Ideology Behind Trump’s Immigration Instincts*, VOX (Nov. 6, 2018), <https://www.vox.com/2018/1/18/16897358/racism-donald-trump-immigration> (“A decade later, David Lane, a white supremacist responsible for the murder of a Jewish radio host in 1984, wrote the “White Genocide Manifesto” while in prison, arguing that “‘racial integration’ is only a euphemism for genocide.” He later shortened his three-page manifesto to 14 words: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” Three decades later, the term “white genocide” is the single most popular hashtag used by white nationalists on Twitter.”).

<sup>64</sup> ÅSNE SEIERSTAD, *EN AV OSS: EN FORTELLING OM NORGE* [One of Us: The Story of a Massacre in Norway – And Its Aftermath] (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2016).

<sup>65</sup> DUNBAR-ORTIZ, *supra* note 38. She writes: “US policies and actions related to Indigenous peoples, though often termed ‘racist’ or ‘discriminatory,’ are rarely depicted as what they are: classic cases of imperialism and a particular form of colonialism—settler colonialism. As anthropologist Patrick Wolfe writes, ‘The question of genocide is never far from discussions of settler colonialism. Land is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life.’ The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism.” *Id.* (citing to Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native*, 4 J. OF GENOCIDE RSCH. 387 (2006)).

entirely on immigration to Europe.<sup>66</sup> Moses adduces that Tarrant's fixation on Europe has as much to do with denial and "displaced guilt about the process that their forebears undertook to wrest the land from ... Australian Indigenes in the first place,"<sup>67</sup> as it does with what Moses calls "'settler revolutions' – the global tide has slowly turned on European empires, even if they hung on (often violently) until the 1960s and even 1970s in the Portuguese case."<sup>68</sup> Moses continues: "In short: these decades marked the end of a process of European economic and demographic expansion that began in the late fifteenth century. With the end of empire came the return of settlers and also the immigration of the former colonized who were required to work in European factories."<sup>69</sup> He goes on to chart a critical similarity between the white supremacy movements within the major European powers compared with the US, despite some differences in the experiences of empire: "It is time to consider the proposition that the 'white genocide' hysteria is one reaction to the end of white entitlement as the global norm."<sup>70</sup> In short, "white genocide," despite the differences between the experiences of empire and colonialism in Europe and America, is shorthand for the same malaise.

Moses includes the white South African farmers' experience as a source of the white genocide discourse on the American and European right, classifying it a "dangerous hysteria." Its explanatory power is not as salient,<sup>71</sup> he suggests, when the concept of white genocide is "seen in epochal terms." In short, Moses maintains that "decolonization and the unraveling of the settler colonial mythology and its masculine norms"<sup>72</sup> is the key to understanding the popularity of the term within the global white power movement.

There is, however, a subtle difference between American and European white supremacists. For white supremacists in the US, perhaps predicated in part on a stronger American sense of individualism, particularly the right to property, the South Africa case presented a kind of template for the future of whites everywhere,<sup>73</sup> one that was more vivid than the abstract "decline" of a settler mythology with its attendant nostalgia and

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<sup>66</sup> Moses, *supra* note 48, at 211.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> *Id.* at 209.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.* at 209–10.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 210.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.* at 209. ("Certainly, the rapid spread of imagery and information means that the case of South African farmers can quickly assume the status of fact (i.e. that they are victims of 'white genocide' when the evidence suggests otherwise). Thus established in the white nationalist imagination, South Africa represents the future they fear in the former British settler colonies of Australia, Canada, and the USA, even Europe.").

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> See, e.g., James Pogue, *The Myth of White Genocide: An Unfinished Civil War Inspires a Global Delusion*, HARPER'S (Mar. 2019), <https://harpers.org/archive/2019/03/the-myth-of-white-genocide-in-south-africa/>.

guilt. As such, at least in the U.S., the South Africa case was also a window into the “white power movement” in other parts of the world, with its dream of an Aryan Nation (as Belew describes it).<sup>74</sup> But because of the different understanding of the link between genocide and the Holocaust (strong) versus genocide and settlement/colonialism, particularly within the U.S. (weaker),<sup>75</sup> “white genocide” hit a different note here, and accrued a different meaning.

I suggest that in part because of the route taken by the term – coming to America by way of the South Africa land expropriation issue – the term bears a different weight, and performs a different kind of work within the white power discourses in the U.S. In Europe, “white genocide” centralizes the anti-Semitic element. The “white genocide conspiracy theory” maintains that liberal whites, “traitors to the race,” are controlled by a cabal of Jewish billionaires, and blame Jews for the “displacement,” through miscegenation and immigration, of the white, Anglo-Saxon nation.<sup>76</sup> But unlike Europe, the “settler imaginary” as genocide may be more remote here, in part, because in the U.S., the western expansion is the romantic

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<sup>74</sup> See Kathleen Belew, *The Right Way to Understand White Nationalist Terrorism*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 4, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/opinion/el-paso-terrorism.html>.

<sup>75</sup> In short, the link between genocide and colonialism, even assuming one accepts that American settlement is the latter, is argued by historians and not widely understood. See, e.g., Cecily Hilleary, *Did English Puritans Commit Genocide in New England?*, VOA (Jan. 23, 2021), <https://www.voanews.com/usa/did-english-puritans-commit-genocide-new-england> (“Lemkin’s work is usually associated with the European Holocaust of the Jews, but University of Oregon history professor Jeffrey Ostler told VOA that Lemkin did not limit his studies to Europe.” Nonetheless, Hilleary notes that, “University of Oklahoma history professor Gary C. Anderson says what happened at Mystic—and in later conflicts between the U.S. government and Native Americans—does not qualify as genocide.”).

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., S.J. Crasnow, *Can White Jews Still Be White If They’re Reviled By White Supremacists?*, RELIGIOUS DISPATCHES (Dec. 8, 2020), <https://religiondispatches.org/can-white-jews-still-be-white-if-theyre-reviled-by-white-supremacists/> (“The role of Jews is described in THE TURNER DIARIES. Written in the 1970s, the book depicts an apocalyptic race war against a Jewish-controlled world government that culminates in the extermination of non-whites. In the white nationalist worldview, ‘white genocide’ threatens to overrun the U.S. as a result of ‘overly inclusive’ immigration policies that threaten to allow immigrants (who are coded as non-white) to replace white people... Given this history, there’s a clear connection to recent accusations that George Soros, a progressive Jewish billionaire, funded the migrant caravan to the U.S. comprised of Central Americans fleeing violence and poverty. Likewise, the perpetrator of the shooting at Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life Synagogue used the synagogue’s support for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, an organization that supports displaced people globally, as justification. He was motivated by white nationalist rhetoric that casts, especially Jewish, support for immigrants as facilitating ‘white genocide.’”).

myth of American exceptionalism (whereas Europe is burdened by a sense of guilt in relation to its former colonies<sup>77</sup>). These differences notwithstanding, there are parallels evident between the Trump administration's immigration policies and the post-Brexit immigration proposals: both resemble a blueprint for what Moses terms a "settler revolution."<sup>78</sup>

This is not to say, of course, that in both the U.S. and in Europe (and Australasia and elsewhere) the hysteria of "white genocide" is not permeated with the loss of "white self-confidence [and] white entitlement."<sup>79</sup> Much has been written about the Trump supporter who, regardless of class, voted on the basis of racial identity. Thomas B. Edsall cites to Maureen Craig's and Jennifer Richeson's 2018 paper "Majority No More? The Influence of Neighborhood Racial Diversity and Salient National Population Changes on Whites' Perceptions of Racial Discrimination":

White Americans considering a future in which the white population has declined to less than 50 percent of the national population are more likely to perceive that the societal status of their racial group — in terms of resources or as the "prototypical" American — is under threat, which in turn leads to stronger identification as white, the expression of more negative racial attitudes and emotions, greater opposition to diversity, and greater endorsement of conservative political ideology, political parties, and candidates.<sup>80</sup>

As a major source of the "white genocide" term within US discussions around immigration, the South Africa case speaks to the sense of fear and grievance begetting hysteria about eradication. Africa is far away, and "white genocide" seemed like a plausible projection to those on the right considering what was happening to white farmers there. As the stories entered the mainstream, so did the push-back. For instance, a blogger on the website "resisting hate.org." notes that:

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<sup>77</sup> See, e.g., Christian Walker, *Guilt and Predation: Europe's Relations with the Former Colonial World*, E-INTERNATIONAL RELS. (Nov. 14, 2010), <https://www.e-ir.info/2010/11/14/guilt-and-predation-europes-relations-with-the-former-colonial-world/>.

<sup>78</sup> Moses, *supra* note 48, at 209; see, e.g., Maya Goodfellow, *Boris Johnson's Government Is Built on Cruelty*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 1, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/01/opinion/uk-immigration-boris-johnson.html?searchResultPosition=1> (arguing that the government, "to make good on the nativist promise of Brexit, ... has embraced anti-migrant authoritarianism").

<sup>79</sup> Moses, *supra* note 48, at 9.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas B. Edsall, *The Fear That is Shaping American Politics*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 7, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/07/opinion/voting-rights-joe-manchin.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>.

Africa Check, a fact-checking organization, has rejected the claims [of white genocide] as false: They state in fact that: Whites [in South Africa] are less likely to be murdered than any other race group. Africa Check reported that while white people account for nearly 9% of the South African population, they represent just 1.8% of murder victims.<sup>81</sup>

But at the height of the introduction of the term “white genocide” within mainstream media, these facts were set aside, and the belief that whites were being “killed like flies”<sup>82</sup> seemed to take hold.

But what was the South Africa case, actually? Ariel Levy records how the creation of a new, breakaway party from the African National Congress (A.N.C.) called the Economic Freedom Fighters (E.F.F.) pushed the question of “land expropriation without compensation” to the political fore in the 2000s. Levy interviewed Julius Malema, the leader of the E.F.F. and an independently wealthy man. A former head of the ANC Youth League, Malema described himself as a “son of the soil” and said, “I am of the poor.”<sup>83</sup> Malema, Levy says,

demonizes South African whites. “Even under the so-called democracy, you are subjects, you are servants of white people,” Malema said, at a rally in 2016. “I am here to disturb the man’s peace. The white man has been too comfortable for too long.” Malema concluded, “We are not calling for the slaughtering of white people, at least for now... But, white minority, be warned: we will take our land—it doesn’t matter how.”<sup>84</sup>

Central to the use of “genocide” in the South Africa case, then, was the question of black emancipation post-*apartheid*.

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<sup>81</sup> Fash Tasha, *Exposing AMD and her White Supremacy, Resisting Hate* (2017), <https://resistinghate.org/exposing-amd-and-her-white-supremacy/>. See also Nechama Brodie, *Are SA Whites Really Being Killed ‘Like Flies’? Why Steve Hofmeyr Is Wrong*, AFRICA CHECK (June 24, 2013), <https://africa-check.org/fact-checks/reports/are-sa-whites-really-being-killed-flies-why-steve-hofmeyr-wrong> (“According to Lancaster official police statistics show that between April 1994 and March 2012 a total of 361 015 people were murdered in South Africa. Applying the 1.8% figure, it would mean that roughly 6,498 whites have been murdered since April 1994. Even if there were some variation on the 1.8% figure, the number of white murder victims would still fail to come anywhere close to filling a soccer stadium. The fact is that whites are less likely to be murdered than any other race in South Africa. The current murder rate of white South Africans is also equivalent to, or lower than, murder rates for whites recorded between 1979 and 1991.”).

<sup>82</sup> Brodie, *supra* note 81.

<sup>83</sup> Ariel Levy, *Broken Ground*, NEW YORKER (May 13, 2019).

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

Levy adds: “The E.F.F. is currently the third-largest party in Parliament, with six per cent of the vote,” and continues: “Malema’s provocations fuel zealots eager to frame what is happening in South Africa as part of an international ‘white genocide.’”<sup>85</sup> In the 2010s, a few documentaries popped up, the most famous being “*Plaasmoorde: The Killing Fields*,” by British filmmaker Katie Hopkins.<sup>86</sup> Another documentary within this genre is “*Farmlands*,” by Canadian filmmaker Lauren Southern, which asks, “whether there is a ‘white genocide going on right now’ in South Africa, where the ‘government’s anti-white rhetoric is now being realized in legislation to take white land.’”<sup>87</sup>

Levy charts the way these claims are exaggerated and often based upon an intentional misrepresentation of facts. For instance, one victim of a violent attack on his farm was quick to post on social media that it was unconnected to *plaasmoorde*:

Then [Charles Back, a sixty-two-year-old third-generation white farmer] asked for help with his post. It read, in part, “I want it to be known that this attack was not politically divisive in any way, but that these were just three common gangsters motivated by their own self-interests. I believe in the values that this country was built on, and continue to hope for harmony and peace.” The post was viewed by 1.6 million people. “Thousands of messages!” he said. “Not one negative comment.” He was unaware that the photograph [his staff] posted—of Back bruised, bandaged, and bloodied—was lifted and used in Katie Hopkins’s documentary.<sup>88</sup>

The documentaries and the ferment stirred up by the threat of new legislation in South Africa regarding land expropriation caught the attention of the right-wing media in the U.S. One of the South African white nationalist leaders, Ernst Roets, who Levy describes as “the deputy head of the Afrikaner civil-rights organization AfriForum, [and who] appears in Hopkins’s film, and is a favorite of the right-wing international media,”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Id.*

<sup>86</sup> *Id.* (“In ‘*Plaasmoorde: The Killing Fields*,’ the British right-wing gadfly Katie Hopkins asserts, ‘Whites are being systematically cleansed from the land by black gangs. Black gangs are supported by the language and actions of mainstream politicians.’”) See also Katie Hopkins, *Plaasmoorde: The Killing Fields*, YOUTUBE (Sept. 25, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQHtY59PuuE>.

<sup>87</sup> Levy, *supra* note 83, at 47. See also Lauren Southern, *Farmlands*, TOPDOCUMENTARYFILMS (2018), <https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/farmlands/> (“Viewers can decide for themselves if the events and personal stories depicted in *Farmlands* are distastefully misleading or indicative of a larger epidemic of racially motivated violence.”).

<sup>88</sup> Levy, *supra* note 83, at 51–52.

<sup>89</sup> *Id.* at 47.

was interviewed on Tucker Carlson’s show on Fox Television in May, 2018.<sup>90</sup> Levy notes that Roets himself “dismisses the term ‘white genocide.’ ‘Farming is an occupation—you can’t have a genocide against an occupation,’ he said. But, he argues, ‘there *is* a large-scale killing of farmers.’ AfriForum (the group formed by Roets) has verified fifty-four murders of farmers in 2018. The police count sixty-two, of whom forty-six were white.”<sup>91</sup> Levy cautions, however, that, “These killings constitute only two-tenths of one percent of the homicides in South Africa. But to Roets and his constituents they represent part of a politically motivated strategy to push white people off a continent that they have inhabited for hundreds of years.”<sup>92</sup>

Roets argued that although traditionally there had been friction between whites of English descent and Afrikaners (of Dutch descent), “‘I think that tension has lessened as a result of current government policies.... White English and white Afrikaans people are sort of pushed together into one bigger group with common concerns.’ They are united, he thinks, by a shared sense of siege.”<sup>93</sup> Levy interviewed a family that had also been victims of an attack on their farm. Within the family, there was disagreement with Roets’s assertion. Jeanine Ihlenfeldt’s father had told Levy that there should be a foreign intervention to save South Africa from itself. Jeanine disagreed.

“How?” Jeanine asked sharply. There are some twenty thousand homicides a year in South Africa. Would foreign forces guard only the white farms? “It’s not a genocide,” she said, shaking her head. “You must understand: Afrikaans culture is completely different from English. They are *far* right—that’s why they love that word, ‘genocide.’”<sup>94</sup>

The “white genocide” concept caught on in the U.S. in 2012<sup>95</sup> (a year after the Breivik killings) and quickly circulated amongst white

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<sup>90</sup> *Id.*; Ernst Roet on Fox News, YOUTUBE.COM, (May 16, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dMYhLZb96Q> (discussing his book on the “farm murders and expropriation without compensation”).

<sup>91</sup> Levy, *supra* note 83, at 48.

<sup>92</sup> *Id.* at 49.

<sup>93</sup> *Id.* at 48.

<sup>94</sup> *Id.* at 49.

<sup>95</sup> See, e.g., Salvador Rizzo, *President Trump’s False Claim About Murders on South African Farms*, WASH. POST (Aug. 24, 2018), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/08/24/president-trumps-false-claim-about-murders-south-african-farms/> (“In 2012, [Mark Pitcavage, a senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism] said, white supremacists in the United States ‘started promoting something called the South Africa Project, which was to raise awareness of this so-called “white genocide” in South Africa.’ In April, he said, one group appeared at the South African Embassy in Washington, posting signs on the Nelson Mandela statue outside that read, ‘Kill

supremacist groups. And it became more popular during the mainstreaming of white nationalism under Trump when these groups enjoyed a resurgence.<sup>96</sup>

Throughout his presidency, Trump appealed to white supremacists and other sympathizers within his base. For instance, on August 15, 2017, Trump made the “very fine people on both sides” comment in relation to the “Unite the Right” Charlottesville rally that had descended into violent clashes between white supremacist groups and counter-protesters.<sup>97</sup> This comment was taken to indicate that Trump had created a moral equivalence between the extremists and the peaceful protesters. Trump maintained that he was merely pointing out that there were elements in both camps of “very bad people” and “very fine people.”<sup>98</sup> What is missing from his explanation is the fact that the rally was organized and executed by far-right groups, with a roster of speakers that included Richard Spencer, head of the National Policy Institute,<sup>99</sup> and Michael Enoch. Their platform used the opposition to the removal of Confederate statuary as a pretext for promulgating their views and recruiting members to their cause. Finally, the rally’s mantra was, “You will not replace us,” and “Jews will not replace us,”<sup>100</sup> indexing both the “white genocide” and the “replacement” rationales for defensive violence.

Ta-Nehisi Coates describes Trump as “the first white president,” in part because his presidency was predicated on white supremacy.<sup>101</sup> His

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the farmers’ and ‘Kill the Boers.’ (That’s a term for some white South Africans.”).

<sup>96</sup> See, e.g., SOUTHERN POVERTY L. CTR., YEAR OF HATE AND EXTREMISM: FAR-RIGHT IDEOLOGY GOES MAINSTREAM IN 2020 2 (2021), [https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/yih\\_2020-21\\_final.pdf](https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/yih_2020-21_final.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> See, e.g., Angie Drobnic Holan, *In Context: Donald Trump’s ‘Very Fine People on Both Sides’ Remarks (Transcript)*, POLITIFACT (Apr. 26, 2019), <https://www.politifact.com/article/2019/apr/26/context-trumps-very-fine-people-both-sides-remarks/>.

<sup>98</sup> *Id.*

<sup>99</sup> See, e.g., *Resources: About Richard Bertrand Spencer*, SOUTHERN POVERTY L. CTR., <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/richard-bertrand-spencer-0> (last visited Aug. 3, 2021) (“As head of the National Policy Institute, Richard Spencer is one of the country’s most successful young white nationalist leaders — a suit-and-tie version of the white supremacists of old, a kind of professional racist in khakis. Spencer has been credited with creating the term ‘alt-right.’”).

<sup>100</sup> Yair Rosenberg, “*Jews Will Not Replace Us*”: *Why White Supremacists Go After Jews*, WASH. POST (Aug. 24, 2017), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/08/14/jews-will-not-replace-us-why-white-supremacists-go-after-jews/>.

<sup>101</sup> See Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The First White President*, THE ATLANTIC (Oct. 2017), <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-first-white-president-ta-nehisi-coates/537909/> (“It is often said that Trump has no ideology, which is not true—his ideology is white supremacy, in all its truculent and sanctimonious power.”).



call-and-response relationship with white nationalists (e.g., when asked during a presidential debate whether he would condemn white supremacists, such as the Proud Boys, he first refused to, then said they should “Stand back and stand by”<sup>102</sup>) was a constant feature of his presidency. It culminated dramatically in the call to his supporters to march onto the Capitol to prevent Congress from counting the Electoral College votes that would seal the 2020 election results. The insurrection on January 6, 2021<sup>103</sup> was undertaken by a broad swathe of his supporters but prominently featured such groups as the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys, avowed white supremacists devoted to violence.<sup>104</sup>

Within the broader context of his white supremacist leanings, in 2018, Trump tweeted the following in response to a segment in Tucker Carlson’s show about the South African land “expropriation” case: “I have asked Secretary of State @SecPompeo to closely study the South Africa land and farm seizures and expropriations and the large scale killing of farmers. ‘South African Government is now seizing land from white farmers.’ @TuckerCarlson @FoxNews.”<sup>105</sup> Salvador Rizzo includes the tweet in his “fact check” reportage and notes the following:

The president’s first claim about land seizures has some merit but is mostly false. Trump’s second claim, that South African farmers are being killed on a “large scale,” is a fiction not supported by data. We have no clue how this myth about farmers being killed ended up on the president’s Twitter feed. It didn’t come up on “Tucker Carlson Tonight,” the Fox News show Trump referenced in his tweet. But it has been swishing in the alt-right and white-nationalist ether for years. The Fox News segment may have jogged Trump’s memory about something he came across previously.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Anthony Zurcher, *Trump Now Tells Far Right to ‘Stand Down’ Amid White Supremacy Row*, BBC (Oct. 1, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-54359993> (Attempting to clarify his comments during the debate, Trump later said he did not know who the Proud Boys were, and asked them to “stand down”).

<sup>103</sup> Jill Lepore, *What Should We Call the Sixth of January?*, NEW YORKER (Jan. 8, 2021), <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/what-should-we-call-the-sixth-of-january>.

<sup>104</sup> See, e.g., Del Quentin Wilber, *Justice Dept. alleges that Oath Keepers militia, far-right Proud Boys coordinated plans for Capitol assault*, L.A. TIMES (Mar. 24, 2021), <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-03-24/doj-oath-keepers-militia-far-right-proud-boys-coordinated-plans-capitol-assault>.

<sup>105</sup> See, e.g., Rizzo, *supra* note 95 (quoting @realDonaldTrump, TWITTER (Aug. 22, 2018)).

<sup>106</sup> *Id.*

Rizzo later “updated” his article to note that Carlson had discussed the “mass killings of farmers” in May of 2018.<sup>107</sup>

In 2019, Trump appeared before the United Nations General Assembly for the third time and submitted what Hayes Brown describes as a “fiery assault on multilateralism and diversity in favor of nationalism.”<sup>108</sup> The most striking note was his invocation of “dog whistle” language sure to appeal to his supporters:

“Like my beloved country, each nation represented in this hall has a cherished history, culture, and heritage that is worth defending and celebrating and which gives us our singular potential and strength,” Trump said. “The free world must embrace its national foundations. It must not attempt to erase them or replace them.”

“The future does not belong to globalists,” he continued, “the future belongs to patriots.”<sup>109</sup>

Although he did not refer to “white genocide,” the word “replace” was a clear signal, especially as it was quickly followed within the speech by a concern for “border security.”<sup>110</sup> The phrasing in the active/agentive voice, “The free world...must not . . . replace [its national foundations]” echoes the idea of self-harm implicit in the older term, “race suicide,” with reverberations of Trump’s tacit endorsement of the rallying in Charlottesville: “You will not replace us” (replacement); “Jews will not replace us” (genocide).<sup>111</sup>

Several months later, another mass shooting led to another moment of reckoning for the white power movement. The El Pasokiller, 21-year-old Patrick Crusius, included both terms within his manifesto and referenced the previous manifesto by Tarrant, linking his rampage to a line of white nationalist violence “defending” against genocide and replacement. He was, however, at pains to distance his violent action from Trump’s words,<sup>112</sup> even as he purveyed them:

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<sup>107</sup> *Id.* (“Update: A reader pointed out that Carlson discussed the farm murders in May with a leader of AfriForum, though he didn’t bring them up again in this week’s segment.”).

<sup>108</sup> Hayes Brown, *Trump’s Latest Speech to the UN was Filled with Dog Whistles and Unbridled Nationalism*, BUZZFEED NEWS (Sept. 24, 2019), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hayesbrown/trump-united-nations-general-assembly-speech-nationalism>.

<sup>109</sup> *Id.*

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*

<sup>111</sup> Rosenberg, *supra* note 100.

<sup>112</sup> Tim Arango et al., *Minutes Before El Paso Killing, Hate-Filled Manifesto Appears Online*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 3, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/03/us/patrick-crusius-el-paso-shooter-manifesto.html> (“‘My opinions on automation, immigration, and the rest predate Trump and his campaign for president,’ the document says.”).

At campaign rallies before last year's midterm elections, President Trump repeatedly warned that America was under attack by immigrants heading for the border. "You look at what is marching up, that is an invasion!" he declared at one rally. "That is an invasion!"

Nine months later, a 21-year-old white man is accused of opening fire in a Walmart in El Paso, killing 20 people [the number went up to 23] and injuring dozens more after writing a manifesto railing against immigration and announcing that "this attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas."<sup>113</sup>

As Peter Baker and Michael D. Shear note,

The suspect wrote that his views "predate Trump," as if anticipating the political debate that would follow the blood bath. But if Mr. Trump did not originally inspire the gunman, he has brought into the mainstream polarizing ideas and people once consigned to the fringes of American society.

While other leaders have expressed concern about border security and the costs of illegal immigration, Mr. Trump has filled his public speeches and Twitter feed with sometimes false, fear-stoking language even as he welcomed to the White House a corps of hard-liners, demonizers and conspiracy theorists shunned by past presidents of both parties.<sup>114</sup>

And yet, there was always just enough distance between action and rhetoric, not least the complete elision of the term "white genocide" from the discourse of politicians and pundits; enough, that is, to suggest that the actions of these killers were undertaken by "lone wolves" and their murder sprees were "irrational" and unrelated to their own anti-immigration and other divisive campaigns. And so, as Moses puts it, after the word ("invasion" "replacement") has become violent fact, for those on the right, "it is business as usual, as it quickly was after Anders Breivik's massacre of 76 Norwegian young social democrats in 2011, when conservatives rushed into print to reassure everyone that he was not one of them after all, and that his hostility to Islam had nothing to do with their own."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Peter Baker & Michael D. Shear, *El Paso Shooting Suspect's Manifesto Echoes Trump's Language*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 4, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/us/politics/trump-mass-shootings.html>.

<sup>114</sup> *Id.*

<sup>115</sup> Moses, *supra* note 48, at 201 ("Centre-right politicians and journalists are wary about taking [the killers] seriously because they have also been busy panicking populations with catastrophic declarations about Muslim immigration, and about the imminent collapse of 'Western Civilization' due to the 'war'

In this way, “white genocide” was alchemical, catalyzing a certain kind of thought related to white supremacist ideas but ceding its rhetorical ground to the more translatable term “replacement,” at least as part of mainstream discourse. White genocide remained within the fringes but, I would argue, had already transformed the way “replacement” was invoked and deployed on far-right news reports, blogs and social media within the U.S. This shift may be indexed by the easy slippage between “you will not replace us”—associated with “border security,” “invasion” and so on—to “Jews will not replace us.” The slippage fuses the objectives of white nationalists in their quest for segregated ethno-states, with supremacist visions of racial purity, and with neo-Nazis and their desire to violently eradicate the non-white other.

### III. REPLACEMENT

In the previous two sections, I discussed the overlap between the three terms at issue: “race suicide,” “white genocide,” and “replacement.” I suggested that the second term, “white genocide,” performed a complex role within debates on the far right. It connected back to the “race suicide” theories at the turn of the century, and in the U.S., it reemphasized within racial discourses the anti-Semitism of Holocaust denialism that animated its use within Europe. Additionally, in the U.S., “white genocide” was associated with the alleged disenfranchisement of white South African landowners and farmers, allegedly “under siege” from a black majority coming out of a long period of subjugation under apartheid. The preparation against a “white genocide” of the farmers was the fear of a “genocide by the oppressed.”<sup>116</sup>

Although the term “white genocide” did not survive to directly affect government policy or law, its meanings and implications carried over into the term “replacement,” which during the Trump administration operated first at the periphery and then increasingly within mainstream debates pertaining to a more restrictive immigration policy.<sup>117</sup> Some have argued that this turn toward a hardline anti-immigration policy preceded the Trump

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that academics and feminists supposedly wage on it with their ‘cultural Marxism’ and ‘political correctness.’ [Tarrant] is thus dismissed as a misfit and a loner, a crazed product of an isolated, extremist milieu with no links to the mainstream, his violence ‘senseless.’ . . . In one notably myopic deflection and displacement tactic, a senior journalist ascribed Tarrant’s white nationalism to the ‘identity politics’ he thinks leftists are responsible for introducing into the body politic after 1968 and their inexorable march through the institutions.”)

<sup>116</sup> See, e.g., IND. UNIV. PRESS, *GENOCIDES BY THE OPPRESSED: SUBALTERN GENOCIDE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE* (Nicholas Robins & Adam Jones eds., 2009).

<sup>117</sup> See, e.g., Mary Papenfuss, *Anti-Defamation League Calls for Tucker Carlson’s Firing Over White Supremacist Rant*, HUFFPOST (Apr. 9, 2021), [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/tucker-carlson-adl-jonathan-greenblatt-white-supremacy-replacement\\_n\\_6070cc91c5b6616dcd781f19](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/tucker-carlson-adl-jonathan-greenblatt-white-supremacy-replacement_n_6070cc91c5b6616dcd781f19).

administration *parallel* discourse on “replacement,” tracing the latter concept back to the Civil Rights Act of the 1960s.<sup>118</sup> In that sense, “replacement” has seen a resurgence in light not only of the ascendancy of white supremacist thought but also as a replacement of the more controversial term “white genocide.” Interestingly, as if tacitly attesting to the interplay between these two terms, some commentators have begun to refer to the latter concept as “white replacement.”<sup>119</sup>

But the reference to “*white* replacement” may actually be more pointed. Following Tucker Carlson’s comment that “‘Every time they import a new voter, I become disenfranchised as a current voter,’”<sup>120</sup> Charles Blow asserts that “replacement” may be a new name for an old ideology, one that has previously affected not only immigration policy but voting rights and black enfranchisement.<sup>121</sup> “Replacement,” and particularly “white replacement,” ties the concerns of the three terms together.

In response to several Trump tweets stating that “Representative Elijah Cummings’s district ‘is a disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess,’ a ‘very dangerous & filthy place’ and ‘No human being would want to live there,’” Blow notes that, “Cummings is black, as are most people in his district.”<sup>122</sup> Blow adds: “This talk of infestation is telling, because [Trump] only seems to apply it to issues concerning black and brown people.”<sup>123</sup> Blow is struck by the term “infestation,” which Trump has used in relation to metropolitan areas (“crime infested” and “the burning and crime infested inner- cities of the U.S.”); to sanctuary cities (“a ‘crime

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<sup>118</sup> Nicole Hemmer, *History Shows We Ignore Tucker Carlson at our Peril*, CNN (Apr. 15, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/15/opinions/tucker-carlson-replacement-theory-peter-brimelow-republican-party-hemmer/index.html> (“Understanding the fluidity of these racist ideas, how they have been operated in the past and are now being repackaged, reframed, or simply given a new face, makes it easier to counter the ideas and discredit the people who carry them forward.”).

<sup>119</sup> Charles Blow, *Tucker Carlson and White Replacement*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 11, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/11/opinion/tucker-carlson-white-replacement.html?search=ResultPosition=2>.

<sup>120</sup> *Id.*

<sup>121</sup> *Id.* (“But although white replacement theory is a conspiracy theory, the fact that the percentage of voters who are white in America is shrinking as a percentage of all voters is not. Neither is the fact that white supremacists are panicked about this. White supremacists in this country have long worried about being replaced by people, specifically voters, who are not white. In the post-Civil War era, before the current immigrant wave from predominantly nonwhite countries, most of that anxiety in America centered on Black people.”).

<sup>122</sup> Charles Blow, *The Rot You Smell Is a Racist Potus*, N.Y. TIMES (July 28, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/28/opinion/trump-racist-baltimore.html>.

<sup>123</sup> *Id.*

infested & breeding concept”) and to “‘illegal immigrants’ [who] will ‘pour into and infest our Country.’”<sup>124</sup>

Blow then makes the point that the term “infestation” is informative. “White supremacy isn’t necessarily about rendering white people as superhuman; it is just as often about rendering nonwhite people as subhuman. Either way the hierarchy is established, with whiteness assuming the superior position.”<sup>125</sup> As Blow notes, “There is a reason that Martin Luther King Jr. said, ‘In the final analysis, racism is evil because its ultimate logic is genocide.’” He adds, “The mouth that demeans may not always be attached to the hand that destroys, but they are most assuredly connected in spirit and in spite.”<sup>126</sup>

Strikingly, in their own view, racists do not commit genocide. On the contrary, they often believe they are its victims. But the use of the term “genocide” to describe their victimhood seems to have had its high point in the El Paso manifesto. Since then, “replacement” has been the rallying cry. I’ve suggested that the term “replacement” is pregnant with the logic, meaning, and nihilism of the term genocide, notwithstanding the contrary view adopted by “replacement’s” European intellectual defenders.<sup>127</sup> According to them, “replacement” has successfully entered the mainstream because it has extracted the anti-Semitic element that is carried by the term (white) “genocide.”<sup>128</sup> I have tried to show that this logic is flawed. Rather, “replacement” may well be more successful than its predecessors because it elides the strong concept of “genocide.” But more likely, “replacement” has entered the mainstream because it seems like ordinary, everyday language that may strike its audience as bearing a logical relation to reality. Since the 1960s, society has been transformed. For instance, the demographic ratio of white to non-white,<sup>129</sup> religious to secular, and even the old patriarchal order compared with new wave feminism, have either changed or are in transition.<sup>130</sup> The process can be frightening, and whilst some see it as pluralism and democracy in action, others see it as

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<sup>124</sup> *Id.*

<sup>125</sup> *Id.*

<sup>126</sup> *Id.*

<sup>127</sup> See, e.g., Chaouat, *supra* note 52.

<sup>128</sup> CAMUS & LEBOURG, *supra* note 53, at 206–07.

<sup>129</sup> See, e.g., William H. Frey, *The nation is diversifying even faster than predicted, according to the new census data*, BROOKINGS INSTITUTE (July 1, 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/new-census-data-shows-the-nation-is-diversifying-even-faster-than-predicted/>.

<sup>130</sup> See, e.g., Lydia Saad, *10 Major Social Changes in the 50 years since Woodstock*, GALLUP BLOG (Aug. 16, 2019), <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/265490/major-social-changes-years-woodstock.aspx>.

replacement and loss, including the loss of one's own humanity,<sup>131</sup> particularly as the changes have political and legal effects regarding the franchise.<sup>132</sup>

The point is that the words – suicide, genocide, replacement – and their deployment within discourses surrounding substantive areas like race, immigration, speech, and the franchise are strategic. They involve choices, including the choice to be indifferent to the underlying meaning and implications of the terms. In effect, the elisions and denials and the reverse logic implicit in these terms are all themselves strategic. For instance, we think, as Moses notes, of genocide as “hysterical and dangerous,” and of course, we reject the use of the term because “we” are not those things. But then we embrace language that on the surface is not “hysterical” even as it does the work of the prior terms at a more subterranean level. It is this quality or capacity of these words, in effect, to create and legitimize a kind of internal separation of word and meaning that then facilitates a separation between *our own* use of the words and the violence and dehumanization<sup>133</sup> they represent.

It is a seamless and almost ingrained capacity. Blow articulates the danger of this capacity in a passage, ostensibly describing Trump’s use of the term “infestation,” but really about how racist thought works:

The core of this man is racist in a way that is so fused to his sense of the world that he is incapable of seeing it as racist. It is instinctual for him to attack people of color. It is instinctual for him to denigrate the places they live and the countries to which they trace their heritage.

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<sup>131</sup> Chaouat, *supra* note 52 (“Despite the allure of Camus’ theory of replaceable man, despite his denunciation of the reign of quantity, the claim that human beings can be replaced because the place of dwelling is something static and defined once and for all is inherently counterfactual and artificial. The great replacement is an ideology based on a static, artificial conception of the human. It contradicts the legitimate denunciation of the cynical conception of the human as disposable material. European settlers have not replaced native Americans, the Jews have not replaced the Palestinians, the Hispanics will not replace the white Americans, and the Muslims and Africans will not replace the white Europeans.”).

<sup>132</sup> Hansi Lo Wang et al., *Here’s How the 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 Census Results Changed Electoral College, House Seats*, NPR (Apr. 26, 2021), <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/26/983082132/census-to-release-1st-results-that-shift-electoral-college-house-seats> (noting, for instance, that Joe Biden would have won in 2020 by 303 Electoral College seats rather than 306, and that the broader trends of a more populous and powerful south and west, compared with the north and east, have continued in 2020 despite a slower population growth within the last ten years).

<sup>133</sup> Chaouat, *supra* note 52 (noting the syncretic link between the concepts of “replaceable” and “disposable” humans).

He has so bought into the white supremacist narrative that his ideology no longer requires, in his own thinking, a label. For him, this lie of it is just the truth of it, and what is “right” can’t be racist.

This is a means by which racists have operated throughout history, to rescue themselves from association with those who flayed the flesh of the enslaved, who raped the women and sold the children, who released the dogs and aimed the water cannons, who noosed the necks and set ablaze the crosses.

Those demonstrative few, those consumed by hatred and sadism, those were the racists. Not the exponentially larger groups who swallowed and regurgitated a warped view of the world, a doctored view of history.<sup>134</sup>

What Blow touches on here recalls the element of Crusius’s “ideology” that Brooks highlighted (see Part I).<sup>135</sup> For Brooks, the ideology in question, that expressed within the manifestos of the mass shooters, goes beyond white supremacy: “Its first feature is essentialism.”<sup>136</sup> But saying this is to subtly shift the focus away from racism and in a sense, to Blow’s point but at a different register, to deny and even to absolve it.

This point was driven home during a recent PBS Hour with Brooks and another journalist, Jonathan Capehart, discussing the El Paso shooting. The host, Amna Nawaz, put up on the screen for the viewers a photograph of Trump during his visit to El Paso after the shooting. In the picture, he stands in the center, with his wife beside him holding a baby and a group of Texans ranged on either side of them. Trump is smiling broadly, his hand in a thumbs-up gesture. Nawaz notes that it looks more like a campaign photo-op than a moment of national mourning in the midst of a recent crisis.

Capehart has just finished describing how Trump is incapable of showing empathic leadership during a crisis, compared with other presidents such as George W. Bush after 9/11 or Barack Obama after the shooting in Charleston, South Carolina. The picture seems to confirm this. Brooks agrees but then adds a political note: “When I look at that photo, and the Democrats are having a debate is he a racist is he a white supremacist? When I look at that photo, well he’s a sociopath.” Nawaz picks up on Brooks’s point about white supremacy and asks him directly whether he thinks Trump is one. Brooks replies, “It’s easy emotional inflation,”

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<sup>134</sup> Blow, *supra* note 119.

<sup>135</sup> Brooks, *supra* note 10.

<sup>136</sup> *Id.* (“The ideology he goes on to champion is highly racial, but it’s not classic xenophobia or white supremacy. Its first feature is essentialism. The most important thing you can know about a person is his or her race. A white sees the world as a white and a Latino sees it as a Latino. Identity is racial.”).



adding, “I don’t know, but he [Trump] is certainly enabling them, he’s certainly speaking their language.” He then draws a contrast between Trump and Crusius, Tarrant, and other shooters (“I spent some time reading their manifestos”). Both Trump and the shooters, Brooks says, share the same language about “invasion” and “replacement,” but the shooters “start with ‘invasion’ and they go many more steps.” For instance, “they believe that racial mixing really is a cancer. They have this deep separatism. I don’t know if Trump has that, but he’s certainly set an atmosphere where it’s easier to talk of human beings as an invasion.” In his response to the same question posed by Nawaz, Capehart is less equivocal: “It pains me to say this, but we’re talking about it because the president of the United States is a racist with a white supremacist policy agenda.”<sup>137</sup> Capehart, who had already bemoaned Trump’s lack of empathy (sociopathy), says, in effect, that one can be a sociopath and a racist too.

The difference, at least in the segment, between Capehart and Brooks seems twofold. First, Brooks is willing to separate the words from the deeds: just because Trump uses language that enables white supremacists to thrive under his watch doesn’t mean he is one himself. Trump’s “essence,” if you will, is his (evident?) mental diagnosis as a sociopath. This means that his will is overborne by his condition, and consequently, he has no real agency, at least not enough to make the strategic “policy” choices that define a deep-seated ideology of racism or racial superiority. Racism, as a function of the words we use, then becomes a free-floating signifier, an “inflation.” For Capehart, however, racism is tethered to actions and choices, to a “policy agenda,” to plans and strategies and vested interests. Whether Trump’s sociopathy preceded or followed his racism does not make them mutually exclusive.

Both interlocutors, however, seem to acknowledge the immense power of language and the potential for words not only to describe acts but also to become speech that incites someone to execute the acts. At that point, the words *become* the (violent) acts and, by extension, implicate the law. The words themselves may run afoul of protections afforded to free speech under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.<sup>138</sup> The second difference between the interlocutors, then, may be that for Capehart, the distance between word and act may not be as great as it is for Brooks. In a sense, Capehart’s view comes closer to the legal model in Germany, France, and other nations that have prohibited the “mere” use of certain words, such as denial of the Holocaust, even though the words themselves

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<sup>137</sup> PBS NewsHour, *David Brooks and Jonathan Capehart on Trump’s Mass Shooting Response*, YOUTUBE (August 9, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knC3aT5mLg>.

<sup>138</sup> One basis for speech to violate the First Amendment is “incitement.” See, e.g., IVAN HARE & JAMES WEINSTEIN, *EXTREME SPEECH AND DEMOCRACY* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).

may not “directly cause specific imminent serious harm.”<sup>139</sup> The European approach has been rejected within the U.S.

Later during the PBS segment, Brooks elucidates his avoidance in calling Trump a racist or a white supremacist. He doesn’t disagree with Capehart necessarily, he says, but asks,

How do we address ourselves to Donald Trump’s supporters, many of whom are very realistic, and supporters of him for good reasons having to do with their own lives and the dissolution of their own communities. It’s – it’s going to be hard to have a conversation with them once the president has been declared, sort of really beneath contempt.<sup>140</sup>

In short, if we call him a racist, then we castigate his millions of supporters in the same light. Such an assessment would not only be politically impracticable but would also be a form of “emotional inflation.”<sup>141</sup>

The predicate, once again, is a conception of racism as somehow “essential” and, like sociopathy, the predisposition of the few, the fearful, the “anti-pluralists,” rendering their actions irrational, nonagentic, involuntary. Crusius couldn’t help himself. But these Trump supporters are well-meaning people who make choices and decisions that have nothing to do with the actions of Crusius and his breed of racial/racist terrorists. For the supporters, “replacement” is just a word.

Capehart responds that politics, or actions, cannot be so easily separated from words. Citing to then-Vice President Biden and Senator Cory Booker, Capehart says,

America is an idea but we have deep-seated issues that go right back to white supremacy being woven into our founding documents and we have to – we have to talk about that, we have to address it, we have to acknowledge it, and once we do that, then we can take the steps to reconciliation.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> NADINE STROSSEN, HATE: WHY WE SHOULD RESIST IT WITH FREE SPEECH, NOT CENSORSHIP xxi (Oxford Univ. Press, 2018) (disputing the effectiveness of prohibiting speech that does have this link to (imminent) acts).

<sup>140</sup> PBS NewsHour, *supra* note 137.

<sup>141</sup> Brook’s argument raises the question whether, as a function of strategy, it is prudent to raise the question of race at all as an appeal within political discourse, when attempting to attract constituents. *See, e.g.*, Thomas Edsall, *Should Biden Emphasize Race or Class or Both or None of the Above?*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 28, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/28/opinion/biden-democrats-race-class.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage> (“Should the Democratic Party focus on race or class when trying to build support for new initiatives and — perhaps equally important — when seeking to achieve a durable Election Day majority?”).

<sup>142</sup> Blow, *supra* note 119.

## CONCLUSION

Brooks describes himself as a pluralist, and as such, defends the preservation of a good-faith presumption that we can all live together within one community. The alternative, of course, is a serious threat to democracy.<sup>143</sup> But for Brooks, preservation of the presumption requires that we carefully avoid certain linguistic connotations (or, as he calls them, “emotional inflations”), that we excise certain labels as being unhelpful within the larger political sphere and that we learn to live with “the occasional horror [that] fanatics cause.”<sup>144</sup> If one accepts the predicate, then all of that may be unexceptionable. Indeed, this article has attempted to show how the terms deployed within the broader “white power movement,” as Belew reminds us,<sup>145</sup> have different meanings for different factions (European, American, South African, etc.) of the movement. They also mean slightly different things at different times. But the caveat, and the warning, is that a word as seemingly innocuous as “replacement,” a word that may even seem slightly ridiculous when attached to a grand-sounding theory with a fancy name – “The Great Replacement,”<sup>146</sup> is actually more sinister than the “hysterical” term “white genocide,” especially since it performs double work. At least in the American context, it carries its own racial baggage, it is associated primarily with a hardline turn in immigration discourses, and it purports to elide the racist implications attached to its “hysterical and dangerous”<sup>147</sup> cousin even as it embeds an idea of humans as replaceable and disposable.<sup>148</sup>

More fundamentally, “replacement’s” real objective returns us to the beginning, to “race suicide” and black disenfranchisement. Carlson’s

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<sup>143</sup> See, e.g., Nate Cohn, *Why Political Sectarianism Is a Growing Threat to American Democracy*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 19, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/us/democracy-gop-democrats-sectarianism.html>.

<sup>144</sup> David Brooks, *Pluralism Is the Tonic for the Small Terror We Face*, DALL. MORNING NEWS (Jan. 5, 2016), <https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2016/01/05/david-brooks-pluralism-is-the-tonic-for-the-small-terror-we-face/>.

<sup>145</sup> Kathleen Belew, *The Right Way to Understand White Nationalist Terrorism*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 4, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/opinion/el-paso-terrorism.html> (“To be sure, mass attackers today have a new set of coded phrases, such as ‘replacement,’ as a code for racial annihilation through intermarriage, immigration and demographic change. But the idea of that threat has been central to white power activism for decades. To the people in this movement, the impending demographic change understood by many commentators as a soft transformation. – the moment when a town, a county, or a nation will no longer be majority-white – isn’t soft at all, but rather represents an apocalyptic threat.”).

<sup>146</sup> CAMUS & LEBOURG, *supra* note 53. See also CAMUS, *supra* note 11.

<sup>147</sup> Moses, *supra* note 48, at 9.

<sup>148</sup> Chaouat, *supra* note 52.

infamous “white replacement” diatribe,<sup>149</sup> for example, was all about the attenuation of his vote—the white vote—by immigrants. But the context of his segment is also key. In the midst of a heated debate regarding voter “reforms” around the country, mainly in Republican strongholds, Carlson’s comment drove home for his listeners an additional reason for the (white) voter to fear the takeover and replacement of their franchise unless the enfranchisement of black and brown voters was limited.<sup>150</sup>

In conclusion, I have argued that the three terms are linked and interwoven and that the work of the older, more obviously racist language has been adapted sub rosa by “replacement.” In response to a spate of mass shootings, “white genocide” briefly occupied a dark footnote within mainstream discourse, revealing what an alarmed and threatened populace will think has or might become its imminent reality. It will invert language and, with it, detach itself from rational thought and historical context. In the wake of “white genocide’s” elision, the meanings and associations have been carried forward. The same ideas percolate within “replacement,”<sup>151</sup> but the discursive strategies of racist thought make this connection opaque. Pointing this out, as the ADL has recently done in response to Tucker Carlson’s provocative use of the term, and calling out “replacement’s” racist/white supremacist index, may begin to dismantle its power to create and propel policy by subterfuge.

This article has attempted to examine and to highlight the proximity between words and the violent acts associated with them. It has analyzed the thread that runs between “race suicide” and the ideology of genocide, the logic that connects genocide with settlement/colonialism, and the strategy of denial at the heart of a term like “replacement.” For those who value pluralism, this article is submitted as part of the effort to analyze and expose this logic, and thereby to erode the power of denial, obfuscation and, ultimately, erasure. For that is white supremacy’s discursive ground, and its mandate.

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<sup>149</sup> Blow, *supra* note 122 (quoting Carlson, “Every time they import a new voter, I become disenfranchised as a current voter.”).

<sup>150</sup> See, e.g., Jeremy Peters, *As Republicans Push to Limit Voting, Disagreements on Strategy Emerge*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 21, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/21/us/politics/republican-voting-laws.html?searchResultPosition=3> (“Trump-friendly state lawmakers trying to enact new voting laws are facing pockets of opposition from fellow Republicans who argue that some measures go too far or would hurt the party’s own voters.”). *But see also* Astead Herndon, *Why Some Black Democrats Haven’t Embraced a Voting Rights Push*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 26, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/26/us/politics/democrats-voting-rights.html?searchResultPosition=2> (“In the South, Black Democrats describe a party too slow in combating Republican voting limits. And Black lawmakers are wary that a major elections bill could reduce their power in Congress.”).

<sup>151</sup> See, e.g., Papenfuss, *supra* note 117 (“Carlson’s ‘white replacement’ conspiracy rhetoric was ‘not just a dog whistle to racists – it was a bullhorn,’ the ADL [Anti-Defamation League] said in a letter to Fox News.”).