

ALL IS NOT WELL IN THE GOLDEN STATE: THE SCOURGE OF WHITE NATIONALISM IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

History

Southern California may have a reputation for leaning liberal, but it has a long history of white nationalist activity. The first section of this report explores the historical longevity of white nationalism in Southern California.

This section studies the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in Southern California between WWI and WWII, and ends with an examination of how 9/11 amplified Islamophobic and Antisemitic sentiments within white nationalist circles.

Ideology

The ideology of white nationalism can be divided into four distinct pillars:

1. **Antisemitism:** White nationalists have long viewed Jews as both a threat to and distinct from the white race. The racial targeting of Jews continues to the present for white nationalists who consider Jews to be the absolute antithesis of whiteness.
2. **White Ethno-Nationalism:** White nationalist groups in Southern California staunchly support the creation of a white ethno-state. These groups believe that white-dominated cultures are under threat of extinction due to the expanding influence of multiculturalism.
3. **Anti-Immigration Nativism:** Ideas about immigration are intertwined with the ideology that calls for a white ethno-state. Much of the current anti-immigration rhetoric is aimed at Arab or Muslim refugees. White nationalists with ties to California have expressed hatred towards the Latinx community as well.
4. **Hate Speech:** Hate speech is an easily transferable toxin that white nationalists use to gain attention and attract new adherents.

Internet

Independent websites of white nationalist and related organizations primarily serve one of two purposes: to proliferate ideology and/or to recruit official members. The most prominent hub of white nationalist propaganda, *The Daily Stormer*—which has an active “book club” of supporters operating in Southern California—received 2.85 million visits in July 2019 and is currently the 8,131 most visited website in the United States.

Social media has also become an important tool for white nationalists. The most used mainstream social media platforms for white nationalists in Southern California are YouTube and Twitter, while the most used fringe social media platforms are 4chan/8chan/Neinchan and Gab. The internet and social media have brought with them a greater embrace of lone wolf tactics, an integration of internet meme culture into white nationalism, and the use of the

internet to meet and coordinate with fellow white nationalists.

Mapping

The report features a map, constructed using Google Maps and data from the Anti-Defamation League's H.E.A.T. map, that pinpoints every incident of white nationalism that has occurred in Southern California between 2016 and 2019.

Almost all incidents laid out in this map took place around large metropolitan areas, particularly in areas with large Jewish communities such as Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego. There were little to no occurrences of activity in more remote regions outside of these areas. Almost all propaganda flyers and banner postings were distributed on college campuses throughout Southern California. We therefore concluded that white nationalist groups are looking to recruit young, white, and educated men (and sometimes women), and that these groups do not spread their message through the explicit use of violence in order to avoid drawing too much attention to themselves.

Recommendations

Our report concludes with three policy suggestions:

1. Increase education about white nationalism and training for encountering it in schools.
2. Provide media literacy training to parents and teachers so they can better see warning signs.
3. Create a rating scale for assessing white nationalist identity and expression. Our scale is as follows:

Level 1) Accidental Absorption: Illustrated by a young internet user without knowledge of the Holocaust laughs at an image of Pepe the Frog standing outside of a gas chamber.

Level 2) Social Transgression: A teenager who *does* know about the Holocaust makes Holocaust jokes, but with the intention of shock humor rather than ideological expression.

Level 3) Political Provocation: This is our broadest category. One example of a political provocateur is Richard Spencer, who advocates for the creation of a white ethno-state but vehemently denies any affiliation with violent white nationalist action.

Level 4) Overtly Hateful Rhetoric: Includes Andrew Anglin, who celebrated the death of Heather Heyer on his website *The Daily Stormer*.

Level 5) Physical Violence: The shooting at the Chabad of Poway Synagogue is a blatant example.

Each category represents a further escalation from the preceding; when linked together, the scales reflect a possible path toward radicalization within white nationalism.

The above scale provides a means for detecting and, through media literacy training and increased education in schools, halting the spread of white nationalist activity.