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“White Nationalism”

Sriram, Shyam K. 2019. “White Nationalism.” *The Routledge Companion to Race & Ethnicity* (2nd ed.), eds. Stephen M. Caliendo and Charlton D. McIlwain (forthcoming).

Bio: Shyam K. Sriram is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Butler University. He received his Ph.D. in 2018 from the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) and wrote his dissertation on “The Politics of Refugee Resettlement.” He researches immigration, Asian American politics, public opinion, and Islamophobia. He previously taught at the College of Charleston, Georgia Perimeter College, Georgia State University, Morehouse College, and UCSB.

White nationalism is a political ideology predicated on creating political, social, and economic environments that favor white people, families, and children, at the expense of political rights for all non-white minorities. White nationalist rhetoric is often extremist and can range from criticism about government programs that benefit minorities to violent calls for abuse, murder, rape, assault, and even genocide of people of color and anyone who may stand in the way of white people’s advancement.

While some argue that it owes its origins to Adolf Hitler and Nazi beliefs about racial purity and superiority, other scholars argue that **white nationalism** existed in various forms as early as the seventeenth century. Central to an understanding of **white nationalism** is the notion of a nation versus a state and the belief that a sense of nationhood unites all white people of European descent. Whereas a state is a formal, political identity with a government and sovereignty, nations exist across borders and are characterized as entities predicated on a common language, ethnicity, race, or identity. The work of Irish political scientist Benedict Anderson is critical to this discussion. In his landmark work, Anderson argued that nations are “imagined communities” and nationhood is constructed. **White nationalism** becomes then not only a political ideology focused on creating opportunities for the betterment of all white people, but a glue that connects one white person to another through an imagined, yet very strong social bond.

White nationalism is distinct from white supremacy (a philosophy drawing on racism and pseudo-science to argue for the supremacy of white people over all others) and white separatism (a political ideology opposed to multiculturalism whose aim is to create a segregated, separate society where whites allegedly will flourish). **White nationalism** is not the same as Christian nationalism, though most white nationalists, if not all, are Christian, and see their heritage as superior to all other religions. **White nationalism** is often conflated with nativism and other anti-immigration movements because of the former’s belief that immigration has sullied societies that were once heavily dominated or established by European settlers and colonists.

White nationalists often gravitate to conspiracy theories like white genocide, which suggests that white people are purposively being depopulated through lower birth rates, interracial marriage, and increased immigration. The French writer Renaud Camus has also argued that white people in France are being systematically replaced with minorities; he called this “the Great

Replacement” and it has become a popular belief amongst white nationalists. In 2019, the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, said he would incentivize Hungarian women to have more children instead of relying on immigration. Similarly, Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 Muslims in March 2019 in Christchurch, New Zealand, made many references to “The Great Replacement” in his white nationalist manifesto.

One of the key slogans of **white nationalism** is David Lane’s “Fourteen Words”: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children.” He also coined a second 14-word slogan: “because the beauty of the White Aryan woman must not perish from the earth.” Many believe that Lane adopted the “Fourteen Words” from Hitler’s autobiography, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), where he wrote, “What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people, the sustenance of our children and the purity of our blood, the freedom and independence of the fatherland, so that our people may mature for the fulfillment of the mission allotted it by the creator of the universe.”

Notable white nationalists: Adolf Hitler, Alfred Rosenberg, Ben Klassen, William Luther Pierce, Brenton Tarrant, Eric Rudolph, Timothy McVeigh, Madison Grant, Richard Spencer, Matthew Hale, David Lane, and David Duke.

White nationalist organizations: Nazi Party, Ku Klux Klan, Hammerskins, John Birch Society, Identity Europa, National Alliance, British National Party (BNP), The Order, Blood and Soil Party, Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), Aryan Nations, and the Creativity Alliance (formerly World Church of the Creator)

Key Readings:

Grant, Madison. 1916. *The Passing of the Great Race, Or, The Racial Basis of European History*. New York: Charles Scribner & Sons. [Non-Fiction]

MacDonald, Andrew. 1999. *The Turner Diaries*. Hillsboro, WV: National Vanguard. [Fiction]

Parker, Christopher S. and Matt A. Barreto. 2013. *Change They Can’t Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Non-Fiction]

Saslow, Eli. 2018. *Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist*. New York: Doubleday. [Non-Fiction]

Tenold, Vegas. 2018. *Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America*. New York: Hachette Book Group. [Non-Fiction]