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Donald Trump is the New Face of White Supremacy

By Randy Blazak

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Before you think this article is “just one liberal’s opinion,” let me briefly say I have dedicated my life to studying racism. I earned my PhD from Emory University in 1995 after spending several years doing ethnographic field studies of white supremacist groups. I have published books and articles in peer-reviewed journals on the subject and have appeared on more TV shows than I can remember discussing how hate works. In my 20 years at Portland State University, I interviewed scores of committed racists, from teenage skinheads to racist murderers and founders of Nazi prison gangs. So when I say that presidential candidate Donald Trump is a racist hate-monger it’s not just a political pejorative. He has a constitutional right to hold and express racist views, but using those views to manipulate the intellectually vulnerable and mobilize active bigots requires a coherent response. As an expert on hate, I am more than comfortable stating that either Trump is a virulent racist or that he is willing to perform racism and use racism of others to advance his political position.

Trump represents a frightening trend of *convenient racism* rooted in a belief that America was great *before* ethnic and racial minorities, women, and sexual minorities wanted equal rights. (What Trump calls “political correctness.”) These people will say that “racism is wrong, but...” or “I’m not a racist, but...” and then something deeply racist follows. They’ll say that “all lives matter,” in the face of the movement to acknowledge the devaluing of black lives. They’ll say they are not homophobes, just for “religious freedom” (an argument the KKK still makes). They’ll say they’re not Islamaphobes, just against terrorism (ignoring the carnage done by domestic, often Christian, terrorists). And they’ll say that they are not bigots, just opposed to

illegal immigration (of brown people). It's a kinder, gentler form of bigotry, but it's still bigotry. And Donald Trump is the new Father Coughlin and he wants to be free of the political correctness that would stand in the way of his bigotry. (At least he's abandoned the GOP's "go after the gays" mantra from the last election.)

Trump has been visiting states with troubled racial histories to sell his rallying cry that "illegal immigrants are killers and rapists." First Arizona and then, on Friday, Alabama. He started his rally with some classic hate speech, telling the assembled 30,000 supporters and curious (I would have gone to see the Trump clown show) about the alleged rape and torture of a 66-year-old victim in California who was supposedly attacked by an "illegal immigrant." The crowd went wild. "We have to do it. We have to do something," he then said. The crowd roared, and some chanted, "White power!"



Donald Trump gestures and declares "You're fired!" at a rally in Manchester, New Hampshire, June 17, 2015. Courtesy REUTERS

Two things to know about Trump's rhetoric

Anyone knowledgeable about the horrific statistics on rape know that women are overwhelmingly victimized by somebody they know, including family members and dates. Only about 18% of rapes are committed by a stranger (and a tiny fraction of those by undocumented immigrants). So if Trump actually cared about women, it would make more sense to devote his rape obsession to step-fathers instead of Mexican immigrants. Of course, this is a man who has been challenged on the issue of marital rape of one of his ex-wives. Rape is an emotional issue. It was used to lynch innocent blacks in the South and Trump is using it the same way to go after people who are often the hardest workers in the country.

Secondly, in my research I have attended numerous Klan rallies, skinhead gatherings, and meetings of the Aryan Nations, and the rhetoric is almost exactly the same as Trump's. I was at a Klan Rally in Covington, Georgia in 1991 in which a Klan leader told the small crowd the story of a white woman who had been raped and beaten by an "illegal Mexican." As with Trump's story, whether it was true or not didn't matter. It served to whip the racists into a frenzy. And like Trump's crowd they were out to "do something" about it. I've heard Trump's rhetoric many times before. "Let's go back in time to when America was great." Usually the speaker had a swastika tattoo.

So it wasn't surprising last week when a news story emerged of two brothers in Boston who brutally beat a homeless Latino man (and urinated on him), claiming they were inspired by Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric. "Donald Trump was right, all these illegals need to be deported." one said, in the police report. When told of the crime, instead of condemning it, Trump said, "I will say that people who are following me are very passionate. They love this country and they want this country to be great again." Later, after much outcry, he backpedaled, posting that he opposed violence on his Twitter account. We still don't know if he opposes urinating on immigrants. We also don't know if there have been similar Trump-inspired hate crimes, but it is very likely there will be.

The most reasonable Republican candidate might be Ohio governor John Kasich (who was just endorsed by Deez Nuts!). At the first GOP/Fox News debate earlier this month, Kasich (maybe buttering up the Donald), admitted that Trump was "hitting a nerve with voters." But it's not all Americans. It's a small subsection of white people who fear the reality that America is getting less white (and more brown). They see the privilege of their white authority undermined every time they walk into a Home Depot and see signs in English and (gasp!) in Spanish. These are the people who say, "I'm not a racist, but..."

America is a nation of immigrants, coming from all directions. Most white Americans have ancestors that only go back to no further than the 1880s, making them "less American" the descendants of African slaves. When my great grandfather, Michael Blazak, came here from Prague in the 1890s, he faced plenty of anti-Catholic hostility. His son converted to Protestantism and married the daughter of a Klansman and the cycle of immigrant hating continued. "They're taking our country away! Let's make America great again and DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!"

Trump lies to win support

Obviously, Trump is a clown who will say anything that feeds his narcissism. When he said he was going to get Mexico to pay for a wall between our two countries, I could just hear President Peña Nieto laughing and saying, "Señor Trump, chupamela." Trumpies (I'm coining that term) often say they love Trump because he tells it like it is. If by that they mean that billionaires buy politicians in return for political favors (as Trump admitted in the Fox debate), they are correct. But if they mean all the rest of the crazy stuff that comes out of his mouth, in reality Trump tells it like it isn't, but it's what "I'm not racist" racists wish it was. Politifact works overtime trying the present the actual facts to Trump's lies, but the Trumpies prefer the lie. Something far too

common on the right. (“Obama is a Muslim!” “Iraq had weapons of mass destruction!” “The Jews control the banks!”)

Where Trump’s lies are greatest are his bizarre tirades on immigration. Despite his fear mongering, the number of undocumented immigrants has been on the decline since 2009. And despite his endless mantra about “rapists and murderers,” actual data (a word the “King of Capitalism” should know) shows that crime rates in cities decline as their population of undocumented immigrants increase. Think about it. If you are living in America without papers, you aren’t even going to jaywalk. Why do anything that would risk deportation?

My wife was an illegal immigrant. Thanks to immigration reform under President Bill Clinton, and a lot of difficult hoops to jump through, she earned a permanent resident card and is hoping to become a citizen in time to vote in this election. Our daughter, Cozy, would surely be called an “anchor baby” by Trump (and Jeb Bush). Bush recently asked for a better term to use instead of “anchor baby.” I would suggest the word, “baby.” But dehumanizing immigrants (even infants) wins the “I’m not racist, but...” voters. Trump has said on his first day of his presidency he would immediately “get rid of all these people” (I assume my wife and child are included in that group). Besides the fact it’s not possible (Trump’s “looking into” changing the 14th Amendment of the Constitution), it would devastate the American economy. Who does he think picks the strawberries that go into his daiquiris? His latest wife is not only a lingerie model but an immigrant! Maybe he should ask her. (The new First Lady?)

It’s ironic that Trump laid this line out in Sweet Home Alabama. Alabama Republicans passed a law in 2011 (HB 56, the Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act) to crack down on “illegals.” Residents soon saw produce rotting in fields, disappearing from grocery shelves and restaurants closing. The federal government weighed in (with the help of the Southern Poverty Law Center) on the Constitutionality of the law and it is now a fond memory of the intersection between racist politics and reality.

Alabama tried a Donald Trump-style immigration law. It failed in a big way.

Trump, of course, caters to the convenient racists. At the Alabama rally he was joined on stage by Jeff Sessions, one of the most extreme anti-immigration politicians in the country who has been linked to white supremacist groups. Trump is now using this avowed racist as a “consultant” on his immigration policy. It should be pointed out that when Trumpies blather about “illegal immigrants,” they are not concerned about undocumented Russians, Ukrainians, Irish, Canadians or even Chinese. It’s all about brown people. Trump telling the story of an undocumented Irishman committing a heinous crime wouldn’t get the same roar of approval as a similar story about an “illegal Mexican.”

And now that Trump is trying to woo Conservative Christians, he’s added Islamophobia into his stump speeches, including making up stories about Christian refugees from Syria not being allowed into the U.S., when Muslim refugees are. It’s another lie, but the “I’m not racist” Trumpies send the lie around in chain emails and Facebook stories. (It even got posted by a Trumpie on my page.) Can you imagine what Jesus would say about Donald?

I sincerely doubt Trump really wants to be president of the country and submit himself to the art of the compromise that is politics in the real world. He just wants to win to feed his massive ego. But who knows how many hate crimes he will inspire in the process. It should be noted that Trump is widely popular on the racist Stormfront discussion board. Stormfront is the primary place white supremacists and Neo-Nazis meet and registered members have been linked to almost 100 murders.

White supremacists lining up behind Trump

I know this blog is supposed to be about being a feminist father and the challenges of raising my daughter in a patriarchal world and not about politics. But there is no better example of the failed model of racist, sexist masculinity than Donald J. Trump. He is an artifact of the past and he wants to drag the country back to it. The man's rhetoric directly affects the security of my family. The thought of someone hating my wife and child (or attacking them) because they want to "make America great again," is frightening. When was Trump's America great? In 2008, when the Great Recession started? In 1954, before the passage of Brown vs. the Board of Education? In 1860, before the start of the Civil War? America is better than Donald Trump, but I fight against him for the safety of my family.