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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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28.09.2024

## Who's Nazi Now? The Dangerous U.S. War on Immigrants



Alfred Rosenberg at the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, April 16, 1946. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

### **The wrong question**

Faced with two wars, nuclear confrontation, extreme economic inequality, and a climate crisis — not to mention threats to reproductive rights, forever chemicals, housing shortages, gun violence, and rising educational debt – what do 82% of Republican and 39% of Democratic voters, according to a [Pew Research poll](#), say is the most important issue in the Presidential election? Immigration. A [nation of immigrants](#), with dying main streets, empty classrooms, and labor shortages in key industries, is about to cast its votes based in large part on which candidate can best be trusted to reduce rates of both legal and illegal immigration. The biggest news story in the past several weeks was whether or not Haitian immigrants in

Springfield, Ohio (population 58,000) have been snatching and eating their neighbors' pets. (It was quickly established they haven't.)

How did it come to this? What individuals and institutions created and sustained the notion of a "migrant crisis"? What dangers does the myth pose to U.S. democracy and immigrants themselves? Are there historical parallels that may shed light on the false narrative, and can it be challenged? That's what these brief observations are about.

### **Jews; Hitler; immigrants**

Donald Trump has called immigrants criminals, gang members, murderers, rapists, invaders, diseased, insane, vermin and blood poisoners. The list isn't exhaustive. Though he hasn't called for them to be killed, he has proposed arresting twenty million of them, (even though there are only about 11 million undocumented workers in the U.S.), and confining them in concentration camps before deportation to parts unknown. Trump's chief advisor on immigration Stephen Miller – channeling Alfred Rosenberg — told The New York Times last November: "Any activists who doubt President Trump's resolve in the slightest are making a drastic error: Trump will unleash the vast arsenal of federal powers to implement the most spectacular migration crackdown."

The scheme has a familiar ring. In 1940, Hitler instructed Adolf Eichmann to plan the deportation of 4 million Jews over four years to the French island-colony of Madagascar. The idea was quickly dropped because of cost and British control over the necessary sea-routes. (Two years later, a different "solution" was agreed.) As a candidate, Trump has no power to do anything, much less mandate confinement, deportation, or genocide. And it's possible Trump's rants against immigrants – they become crazier every day – will cost him the election. But if he instead prevails, his rhetoric about an alien invasion will have been validated by a national referendum, and he will try to make good on his word. (Despite claims to the contrary, presidents usually do.) The recent supreme court decision granting presidents almost unlimited power in the performance of "official acts" will be Trump's Enabling Act; that was the 1933 decree that granted Hitler unfettered power to violate the German constitution and make laws without the participation of parliament (the Reichstag). Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts is Trump's Paul von Hindenburg.

Does that all sound overheated? Consider that Trump isn't alone in his revilement and that there exists a vast organizational and personnel infrastructure dedicated to expelling immigrants and asylum seekers and denying sanctuary to new ones, especially any with dark skin. It includes anti-immigrant think tanks, such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform, founded by the eugenicist and white nationalist John Taunton; the Center for

Immigration Studies, which has promoted the canard that pregnant immigrants are pouring across the border to give birth to American children; and ProEnglish which promotes laws mandating that English become the “official language” of the United States and that all federal and state initiatives promoting multilingualism and multiculturalism be halted.

The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025, intended as a blueprint for the next Trump administration, and authored in part by key, Trump advisors, would deport so-called “Dreamers” (undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as minors), force states to hand over to federal authorities the driver’s license and tax ID numbers of undocumented workers, and suspend most legal immigration. The Republican controlled U.S. House of Representatives introduced a draconian immigration bill last April (the Border Security and Enforcement Act of 2023 H.R.2640) that would essentially halt all immigration into the U.S., but congressional Democrats have so-far blocked passage.

Among Trump’s most committed individual allies in the anti-immigrant onslaught is his vice-presidential running mate, Ohio Senator J.D. Vance. He has parroted his master, and sometimes gone further, falsely claiming that immigrants to Springfield, Ohio are both spreading disease and eating resident’s pets. His doggedness is such that he insisted upon repeating the libels even after the parents of a local boy accidentally killed by a Haitian driver begged him to stop. Under close questioning by CNN reporter Dana Bash, Vance admitted that: “If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people, then that’s what I’m going to do.” This was a clear case of letting the cat out of the bag.

Many other prominent Republicans, including Texas Governor Greg Abbott, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, House Speaker Mike Johnson, and Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton have similarly extremist views. The two governors have usurped the power of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and undertaken relocations and deportations on their own initiative. The House Speaker tried passing a budget bill that includes a measure requiring proof of citizenship to vote in federal elections; his rationale was that hordes of illegal immigrants are being let into the country to vote and elect Democrats. The idea derives from “White Replacement Theory”, a racist fantasy that gained national attention when neo-Nazis at the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 chanted “you will not replace us” and “Jews will not replace us.” Cotton recently unveiled legislation, supported by Vance and Tennessee Senator Marsha Blackburn, to end constitutionally enshrined, birthright citizenship.

Former Fox News star Tucker Carlson, now a popular podcaster, regularly spreads the Replacement conspiracy, claiming that Democrats and “global elites”, led by Jewish billionaire George Soros, plan to replace “legacy Americans” with “a new electorate from the Third World.” Lately, he has endorsed Neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers, including Daryl Cooper, whom he described to his audience as “the best and most honest popular historian working in the United States today.” Cooper claimed Churchill not Hitler was the reason “the war become what it did” and that the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust died because the Nazis lacked the resources to take care of them. Vance has defended Carlson’s embrace of Cooper, saying that while he may not share his views, Republicans like himself value “free speech and debate.” Vance, however, should watch his back; Carlson is positioning himself as Trump’s most likely successor as head of the MAGA movement.

Trump’s former Senior Policy Advisor, Miller, cited above, was among the most rabid white nationalists to hold a high administration position. In a series of leaked emails from 2015-6, he was revealed to have endorsed openly racist, online publications such as *VDARE* (now defunct) and *American Renaissance*. Recent article titles in the latter include “Building White Communities,” “Fear of a White Planet,” and “Anti-White Manifesto Leaked.” Miller championed the Trump Muslim travel ban and use of Title 42 to block asylum seekers at the Mexican border during the pandemic. He remains a close advisor to the former president and will almost certainly return to government if Trump is elected again.

And there’s more: Former White House Chief Strategist, Steve Bannon has explicitly embraced the ideas of Julius Evola, the Italian fascist philosopher who supported both Mussolini and Hitler. Evola wrote about the superiority of men over women, and “higher castes” (powerful, spiritual, “Aryan” men) over lower castes (slaves, blacks, Jews and women). He called Jews a “virus” and applauded Mussolini’s 1938 anti-Semitic laws. Bannon’s fervent Zionism has largely protected him from charges of anti-Semitism by conservative Jewish organizations, despite his embrace of Evola and a history of anti-Semitic remarks. His racism, however, is open and unapologetic. He told a meeting of France’s National Front in 2018: “Let them call you racist. Let them call you xenophobes. Let them call you nativists,” he said. “Wear it as a badge of honor. Because every day, we get stronger and they get weaker.” Bannon, who is now serving a three-month prison sentence for contempt of Congress, recently told a BBC reporter that on “day one.” Trump would “stop the invasion” and begin the “mass deportation of 10 to 15 million illegal alien invaders”.

Finally, Trump’s eldest son, Donald Jr., also a close advisor to his father, openly expresses racist views. He told far-right broadcaster Charlie Kirk that Haitians have congenitally low

IQs and that if they continue to be admitted to the U.S. “you’re going to become the third world. It’s not racist. It’s just fact.” Don Jr. was repeating long debunked ideas linking IQ (itself a discredited measure) with ethnic or national origin. Such views were commonplace among Nazi doctors, such as Karl Brandt and Joseph Mengele, as well as Rosenberg, editor of the rabidly anti-Semitic newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* (*Racial Observer*) and author of *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*. That book argued that the Nordic-German soul was under attack from subversive, Jewish modernism and cosmopolitanism. It sold more than a million copies in Nazi Germany, second only to *Mein Kampf*. In Trump’s circle and among Republicans generally, biological and cultural racism are ascendant.

### **A vicious circle of hate**

Trump’s popularity among many Republican voters is not despite his racism and xenophobia, but because of it. Polls and scholarly papers reveal consistently high levels of racial animus among Republicans, and strong support for Trump’s extremism. But it’s not clear how much that racism preceded Trump, and how much was generated by him. To understand the dynamic, another parallel with Nazism must be drawn.

Before Hitler’s ascendancy to power in 1933, anti-Semitism was widespread in Germany, except among supporters of Social Democratic and Communist parties. But it was a dilute brew of longstanding religious and cultural prejudices, nothing like the toxic Judeophobia of Hitler and the Nazi party he directed. But after passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, which restricted Jewish participation in civic and social life, and especially after the Austrian *Anschluss* in 1938 and invasion of Poland a year later, racial attitudes hardened to the point that Judeocide could be publicly espoused by Hitler, Goebbels, Heydrich, Rosenberg and others. While the details of the Holocaust were never presented to the German public – indeed an effort was made to hide them from the world – the facts of Jewish deportation, ghettoization, concentration, and murder – were an “open secret” as the historian Richard Evans writes, available to anyone who cared to know. The German public had largely internalized Hitlerian anti-Semitism and shrugged at its genocidal consequences.

The point here, is that anti-Semitism and racism may exist at relatively low levels in a society, without doing great damage. But when they are amplified by a demagogue and repeated by other politicians and the mass media, they become a powerful force. Jewish assimilation became “the Jewish question”; immigrant integration becomes “the migrant crisis.” Who’d have thought, a dozen years ago, that a major party candidate for President would propose the round-up, concentration, and mass deportation of between 10 and 20

million American residents? Trump inflames his core of racist supporters, who then encourage him to even more extreme slanders, which further excites his followers, and so on.

### **Can anti-immigrant views be changed?**

There is a debate on the left, here in England, about whether recent anti-immigrant violence masks legitimate, working-class grievances. One side argues that the rioters in Rotherham, Hull, Sunderland, Leeds and elsewhere, were primarily poor whites whose communities have been devastated by decades of neo-liberal privatization, Tory austerity, and infrastructure disinvestment. They are badly paid (when they have work), ill housed (rents and home prices have risen to exorbitant levels across the U.K.), and in poor health (the NHS has for years been in a parlous state.) They suffer high rates of alcoholism and drug addiction and live in blighted cities and towns in the north. While attacks on immigrants are both misdirected and abhorrent, it's unsurprising that oppressed people object to the government paying almost \$3 billion a year to house migrants in hotels and guest houses. With modest adjustments to migration policy, a modicum of social spending, and considerable grassroots education and organizing – so the argument goes — these supporters of Nigel Farage and the Reform UK Party (the Trumpist, anti-immigrant party) could become a progressive, vanguard proletariat that renounces racism.

The alternative view, however, seems more persuasive. According to a recent survey, 36% of Reform UK Party voters (a bloc that largely approves the anti-immigrant riots) are upper-middle class (professionals and managers); 22% are middle-and lower-middle class (supervisory, administrative, and clerical workers); and 42% are working-class (unskilled, semi-skilled or unemployed). Just under 40% were over 65 years old and 80% say that “immigration has made life worse in Britain.” The anti-immigrant riots were not desperate outcries by an oppressed working class but pogroms by white men (and some women), schooled for decades in nationalism, xenophobia, and racial hatred, and prodded to violence by Tory and Reform UK Party politicians.

The anti-immigrant rhetoric heard on the streets in England was coarser but, in substance, little different from what has long been spouted by leading British politicians. Former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his Home Secretary Suella Braverman, for example, pushed a policy – as impractical as it was mean-spirited – to deport to Rwanda a small number of migrants as a way of deterring others from attempting to cross the English Channel in small boats. The plan, which recalls Eichmann's Madagascar scheme, advanced in fits and starts for about two years before finally getting binned by the new Labor Prime Minister, Keir Starmer.

The latter too, however, is promising to reduce immigration, possibly by holding and processing all immigrants offshore.

Trump's anti-immigrant MAGA base comprises about 35% of the U.S. electorate. Like Reform UK voters, they are mostly older, middle-class (or at least, in the middle of the income distribution, or Lorenz curve) and white. They have been a powerful force in U.S. politics for generations. In presidential contests, they supported Goldwater, Nixon, Wallace, Reagan, both Bushes and Trump. Because of their concentration in rural states, or ones with low populations, they have controlled a solid bloc of seats in the U.S. Senate and votes in the Electoral College, giving them an outsized role in U.S. politics. The idea that this constituency, any more than rioters in Rotherham or voters for Reform UK, can be seduced, persuaded, or cajoled into changing its stripes is ludicrous.

### **Solutions to the so-called “migrant crisis”**

The “migrant crisis” must indeed be addressed. But the issue is not the immigrants; their positive contribution to the U.S. economy is incalculable. Without the infusion of new workers – legal and informal — productivity and living standards would be reduced and inflation would rise. Whole industries – agriculture, hospitality, construction and healthcare – would grind to a halt if Trump was able to implement his promised deportation scheme. The real problem is a political and economic order that leaves masses of the population hungry, badly housed, sick, poisoned, drug addicted, isolated and angry. The best responses, therefore, to Trump's and other Republicans' Nazi-like calls for arrest, confinement, and mass deportation of immigrants are progressive programs that will appeal to the two-thirds of voters who do not march in MAGA goosestep. That means an increase in the minimum wage, affordable health care for all, federal housing initiatives, guaranteed higher education or job training, investment in a green transition, protection of reproductive rights, and other measures to achieve greater social and economic equality.

I admit these proposals are both predictable and common sense. Implementing them is more challenging. Doing so starts with defeating Donald Trump in November, quickly followed by mass, community organizing to inspire and empower a nation alienated from government and politics. Progress will also require registration of young voters, infiltration of Democratic party cadres at local, state, and federal levels, strategic and sustained protests of corporate titans and the billionaire class, and mobilization of support for legislation that benefits working-class voters. When that gets underway, the “migrant crisis” will magically disappear, and American Nazis recede from view.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2024

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