

The Trump Effect: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Racist Right's Internet Rhetoric

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ABSTRACT

The divisiveness witnessed during Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, a nationwide discord on a scale not witnessed since the tumultuous Nixon-Humphrey-Wallace campaign of 1968, has necessitated an examination of hate within the United States. Characterized by rhetoric of nationalism and isolationism reminiscent of ideologies espoused by white nationalists, Trump's campaign energized the American racist right. Indeed, the most prominent US-based white supremacist websites, the neo-Nazi Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, launched extensive online campaigns supporting Trump's presidential bid, and both sites experienced dramatic increases in traffic. This essay examines some of the divisive rhetoric Trump employed during his presidential campaign and the various ways in which that rhetoric appears to have resonated with US-based white supremacists. Examining white supremacists' Internet rhetoric enables persons to be alerted to the possibility of white supremacist advocacy or activity and to better understand how white supremacists attempt to form, or become a part of, a community of like-minded persons. While several acts of murderous violence in the United States have been associated with white supremacist content appearing online, examinations of US-based white supremacists' Internet rhetoric may assist individuals, including law enforcement and homeland security professionals, in guarding against similar violence in the future.

Keywords: Donald Trump, 2016 presidential campaign, Stormfront, The Daily Stormer, white supremacists

INTRODUCTION

The divisiveness witnessed during Donald Trump's presidential campaign, a nationwide discord on a scale not witnessed since the tumultuous Nixon-Humphrey-Wallace campaign of 1968, has necessitated an examination of hate within the United States. The campaign leading up to the 1968 presidential election, set against the backdrop of American involvement in the Vietnam War and the corresponding military draft, was likely to be a

turbulent campaign had it only involved Democratic nominee Hubert Humphrey and Republican nominee Richard Nixon. However, when pro-white Alabama Governor George Wallace, an outspoken critic of desegregation efforts in the United States, entered the campaign as a third-party candidate representing the American Independent Party, the campaign leading up to the 1968 presidential election was destined to be among the most tumultuous political campaigns in modern American history. The pro-white and pro-segregationist rhetoric communicated by Wallace during his presidential bid helped to divide the nation at a time when many Americans had hoped the civil rights movement of the 1960s was lessening the divisions between persons of different racial and ethnic backgrounds living in the United States. Wallace's pro-white and pro-segregationist political platform infuriated racial minorities and advocates of desegregation but energized those Americans who were opposed to desegregation, particularly white Southerners. Indeed, Wallace received support from some racist right groups concentrated in the South like the White Citizens' Council, and many individuals associated with those groups actively assisted Wallace's campaign efforts. Propelled by a groundswell of support for his pro-white and pro-segregationist views, Wallace won five Southern states (i.e., Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi), received nearly ten million popular votes (9,906,473), and was pledged 46 electoral votes in the 1968 presidential election (Eveleigh, 2016; Pearson, 1998; Woolley & Peters, n.d.). To date, Wallace is the last third-party candidate to receive pledged electoral votes from any state (Kapur, 2016).

Much like Wallace's divisive rhetoric from his late 1960's presidential campaign, the divisive rhetoric communicated by Donald Trump during his bid for the presidency incensed millions of Americans while garnering fervent support from millions of others, including individuals within the racist right (e.g., neo-Nazi, Ku Klux Klan, white nationalists). According to Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), an organization that monitors hate and extremist groups in the United States, "Trump's run for office electrified the radical right, which saw in him a champion of the idea that America is fundamentally a white man's country" (2017, p. 37). The extent to which Trump's presidential campaign rhetoric resonated with the American racist right could be witnessed in the rapid growth of pro-white movements such as the Alternative Right, commonly dubbed the "Alt-Right," as well as the physical, financial, and rhetorical support that US-based white supremacists devoted to Trump's presidential bid.

Given the divisiveness cultivated amongst communities throughout the United States during Trump's presidential campaign, a divisiveness that has only intensified since Trump's election as president, examinations of the rhetoric of the American racist right are critical now more than ever. This

essay examines some of the divisive rhetoric Trump employed during his presidential campaign and the various ways in which that rhetoric appears to have resonated with the American racist right, including many individuals who in turn showed their support for Trump in alarming and unprecedented ways. Particular attention will be afforded to the online campaigns in support of Trump's presidency on the neo-Nazi websites Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, the two most prominent US-based white supremacist websites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In attempting to gain insight into how Donald Trump's divisive presidential campaign rhetoric resonated with the American racist right, an effective starting point for conducting research is the Internet, the modern-day communication medium of choice for many US-based white supremacists. Since the development of the commercial Internet in the early 1990s, US-based white supremacists have expanded their range of hateful rhetoric to the realm of online postings, including websites. Indeed, virtually every organized US-based hate group has maintained its own "hate site," a website containing content disparaging one or more classes of people (Barnett, 2007, p. 3). As the trend of disseminating hateful communications online became apparent, researchers began investigating the Internet rhetoric of US-based hate groups.

Research concerning hate groups' use of the Internet began with Zickmund's (1997) examination of radical newsgroups, also referred to as "radical cyber-sites" (p. 189). Specifically, Zickmund examined the consistently-emerging belief structures on listserves and Usenet newsgroups utilized by various white supremacist groups. Zickmund's analysis demonstrated that white supremacists used the Internet to articulate extremist ideas advocating the persecution of innocent persons within society, particularly Jews, gays, and non-whites, who were framed as the "other" within the discursive culture of the studied newsgroups. Based on analysis, Zickmund opined that these extremist ideas should not be sanctioned and ways of limiting such discourse should be identified.

Following Zickmund's study, communication scholars Apple and Messner (2001) analyzed content appearing on six websites maintained by devotees of Christian Identity, a religious movement grounded on racist and anti-Semitic beliefs (Beirich, 2018, p. 49). Apple and Messner's analysis demonstrated that paranoia and paradox are integral elements of the apocalyptic discourse found on Christian Identity sites. The researchers' findings led them to conclude that mainstream America may be more susceptible to hateful rhetoric as a result of its dissemination over the Internet. Apple and

Messner's study would be followed by several other analyses of hate site content conducted by communication scholars.

Using Bormann's fantasy theme analysis, Duffy (2003) examined four websites maintained by various hate groups (i.e., white nationalist, neo-Nazi, Ku Klux Klan, and black separatist) to gain a better understanding of the worldviews expressed by those groups as well as the potential for persuasion. Duffy's analysis revealed that several enduring fantasy themes identified by Bormann were demonstrated in the examined sites: restoration, "Fetching Good Out of Evil," "holy emigration of God's chosen people," and the preordained drama of "the Christian soldier fighting God's battles and overcoming adversaries to establish the truth church" (Duffy, 2003, pp. 307-308). Duffy also determined that all of the sampled websites shared two common rhetorical visions: "God's Chosen People" and "We Shall Overcome." What is more, Duffy found that each of the four sampled sites included emotional appeals to the principles of fairness and justice, appeals which are powerfully persuasive.

In an even more ambitious study, Bostdorff (2004) analyzed 23 Ku Klux Klan (KKK) websites to determine how hate groups may engage in community building. In conducting analysis, Bostdorff found that the Klan sites attempted to build a community united by an opposition to certain racial and religious groups, particularly Jews, by making appeals to white masculinity and, occasionally, segmented appeals to women, youth, and children. Additionally, Bostdorff found that messages contained on the sampled Klan sites encouraged hateful political activity, including violence, while simultaneously disavowing responsibility for consequences of the online rhetoric. Based on analysis, Bostdorff concluded that the KKK's Internet rhetoric inflamed would-be supporters and discouraged dissenting viewpoints. In the essay, Bostdorff also called for additional examinations of how persons within the hate community respond online to particular public issues.

Following Bostdorff's study, Meddaugh and Kay (2009) analyzed content appearing on the white supremacist website Stormfront. Using the construct of the "other," the researchers showed that discourse contained on Stormfront's website appeared to be less virulent and more palatable to naïve visitors to the site. Meddaugh and Kay concluded that Stormfront may be casting a wider net in attracting audiences by providing a "cyber transition" between traditional hate speech and tempered discourse emphasizing pseudo-rational commentaries regarding race, or what is sometimes referred to as "reasonable racism."

More recently, Barnett (2017) examined how the neo-Confederate group League of the South (LOS) used its website to attract members to its community in the days leading up to the Confederate flag's removal from

South Carolina's state capitol in July 2015. Barnett's analysis revealed that LOS may have aided its community-building efforts by attempting to foster a sense of shared identity within the pro-Confederate community and by employing fear-raising rhetoric relating to the backlash against Confederate symbols. Like Barnett's 2017 study, the present study is a response to Bostdorff's call for research on how persons within the hate community respond online to particular public issues. Now, more than ever, is an appropriate time for analyzing the content of hate sites, particularly those sites maintained by US-based white supremacists, given the myriad ways in which Donald Trump's presidential campaign rhetoric appears to have resonated with the American racist right, a resonance evidenced by this study.

RESEARCH ARTIFACTS AND PROCEDURES

Donald Trump's divisive presidential campaign rhetoric began on June 16, 2015, the first day he announced his intention to run for president and would continue throughout much of 2016 leading up to the presidential election. To demonstrate how Trump's divisive rhetoric resonated with the American racist right, a qualitative analysis was conducted of content appearing throughout the presidential campaign on the neo-Nazi websites Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, the two most prominent US-based white supremacist websites. Specifically, the examination encompassed content from June 28, 2015, the day on which The Daily Stormer first endorsed Trump for president on its website, until November 9, 2016, when celebratory commentary appeared on both The Daily Stormer and Stormfront shortly after election results indicated Trump would win the presidency. Webpages appearing on the The Daily Stormer and Stormfront containing Trump-related content were converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) files to allow for later examination. If content (i.e., video and animation) was not conducive to PDF formatting, the content was immediately examined, and the findings noted.

Stormfront

Don Black, a former Alabama Klan leader and current neo-Nazi, is an iconic figure within the American racist right whose white supremacist activities date back to the 1970s when he was a member of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the KKK group led by infamous white supremacist David Duke ("Don Black," n.d.). Black acquired computer programming skills while serving three years in federal prison for plotting with nine other white supremacists to overthrow the black-run government of the small Caribbean island of Dominica in the early 1980s ("Don Black," n.d.). After

his release from prison, Black moved to West Palm Beach, Florida, where he sought to explore the Internet's potential for bringing white supremacists together, and in March 1995 he established the *stormfront.org* message board, which is widely regarded as the first major online hate site ("Don Black," n.d.; "Stormfront," n.d.). As the first major hate site, the *stormfront.org* message board, which is commonly referred to as Stormfront, garnered the website a great deal of media coverage in newspapers and television interviews (e.g., ABC's *Nightline*), publicity which in turn caused a surge in Internet traffic ("Stormfront," n.d.). During a 1996 interview, Black stated: "The potential of the Net for organizations and movements such as ours is enormous. . . . We're reaching tens of thousands of people who never before had access to our point of view" ("Don Black," n.d., para. 12).

Given the site's notoriety and elevated status as the first hate site, Stormfront has always functioned as one of the Western world's most visited white supremacist community-building forums wherein users can post articles and website links, participate in discussions, and share information about upcoming racist events ("Stormfront," n.d.). Stormfront's interest in building a white supremacist community is evidenced by the site's online motto "White Pride World Wide" and the site's posting guidelines: "Our [Stormfront's] mission is to provide information not available in the controlled news media and to build a community of White activists working for the survival of our people" (Black, 2001, para. 1). Despite technological advances, Stormfront has always been organized as an interactive message board wherein site visitors can communicate with one another (e.g., opinions, feedback), and this interactivity allowed Stormfront to become what the SPLC describes as "a genuine white supremacist cyber-community" ("Stormfront," n.d., para. 9). While many individuals have become Stormfront members, something that allows persons to post messages and view other members' personal information, large numbers of visitors to Stormfront's site simply read the postings without becoming a member ("Don Black," n.d.).

By January 2002, Stormfront had 5,000 members ("Stormfront," n.d.). Later in 2002, Stormfront expanded its white supremacist community-building efforts by encouraging prominent writers within the American racist right, like Sam Dickson of the white nationalist group Council of Conservative Citizens and Willis Carto who publishes the virulently anti-Semitic journal *The Barnes Review*, to begin posting to the site ("Stormfront," n.d.). By 2003, Stormfront had 11,000 members, and by early 2004 Stormfront's membership reached 23,000 ("Don Black," n.d.). Stormfront had 133,000 registered users by 2008 ("Stormfront," n.d.). In March 2015, three months before Trump announced his bid for the presidency, Stormfront had almost 300,000 registered members and a daily radio show capa-

ble of reaching a global audience (“Don Black,” n.d.). At the time Trump announced his intention to run for president, Stormfront was regarded as the nation’s largest white supremacist Internet forum (Piggott, 2016), and the site had to upgrade its server after user traffic surged during Trump’s presidential campaign (Schreckinger, 2015).

The Daily Stormer

Andrew Anglin, a neo-Nazi who has rapidly risen in stature within the ranks of the racist right, has used the Internet to develop a white supremacist cyber-community much like Don Black. On July 4, 2013, Anglin, who is infamous for his venomous rhetorical assaults against Jews, gays, and people of color, became the founder and editor of The Daily Stormer (www.dailystormer.com), a white supremacist site touting itself as “The World’s Most Visited Alt-Right Web Site” (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d.; Hanks, 2017). The Daily Stormer, which was originally registered to Anglin’s father, is named for *Der Stürmer*, the weekly tabloid-style Nazi newspaper that specialized in vile attacks on Jews (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d.). Known for its outrageous headlines (e.g., “All Intelligent People in History Disliked the Jews”), The Daily Stormer is dedicated to promoting anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, and white nationalism (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d.; Hanks, 2017). In addition to posting white supremacist rhetoric, The Daily Stormer contains a variety of content (e.g., photos, videos, article excerpts) produced by various media outlets (e.g., ABC, CNN, Fox News, New York Times).

Like Stormfront, The Daily Stormer allows for a high level of interactivity and the site’s audience is highly participatory (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d.). Indeed, The Daily Stormer has a group of supporters named the “Stormer Troll Army” who perpetrate online harassment at Anglin’s behest, and some of this harassment resulted in The Daily Stormer being banned from the blog comment hosting service Disqus in 2015 (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d.; Hanks, 2017). Also in 2015, Anglin himself was banned from Twitter after he tweeted false claims about the KKK attending student protests against racism at the University of Missouri and the university’s police department being unresponsive (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d.). Unlike Stormfront, however, The Daily Stormer is more visually based and technologically sophisticated as the site was fashioned after modern imageboard websites such as 4chan (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d.). Digital imaging programs are often used to alter photographs appearing on The Daily Stormer and/or add racist or anti-Semitic imagery (e.g., swastikas), cartoonish images (e.g., superhero Trump), or stylized text (e.g., racist and anti-Semitic comments) to posts and articles on the site. According to the SPLC, “Ultimately, Anglin and his readership are striving to shift the needle on the status quo

for public discussion by creating a kind of juvenile, repulsive humor about topics like the Holocaust” (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d., para. 16). Whatever Anglin’s motivation, The Daily Stormer became the most popular English-language website of the racist right during Trump’s presidential bid, a campaign promoted extensively on both The Daily Stormer and Stormfront websites.

Trump’s Presidential Campaign and the Racist Right’s Online Response

In the months leading up to the 2016 presidential election, Americans got their first sample of Donald Trump’s Wallace-like rhetoric. On June 16, 2015, Trump kicked off his campaign by disparaging Mexican immigrants with a speech in which he stated: “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re sending people that have lots of problems. And they’re bringing those problems with [to] us. They’re bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime. They’re rapists” (Durkin & Edelman, 2015, para. 5). Later that day, after being heavily criticized by persons inside and outside the political arena, Trump refused to retract his comments in an interview with Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly, maintaining that his statements were “totally accurate” (Landy, 2015). Indeed, Trump even added, “The border is a disaster, Bill. People are pouring in – and I mean illegal people, illegal immigrants – and they’re pouring in. Three hundred and some odd thousand are in your state jails right now, according to Homeland Security” (Landy, 2015, para. 3). Later that month when CNN’s Erin Burnett asked Trump if he regretted his comments, Trump upheld that the United States was becoming a “dumping ground” for some of Mexico’s worst (Schleifer, 2015). Trump added, “Some are good and some are rapists and some are killers. We don’t even know what we’re getting” (Schleifer, 2015, para. 3).

While Trump’s commentary on the first day of his campaign infuriated millions, his speech inspired white supremacists who were amazed that a public figure as prominent as Trump was expressing views so closely aligned with their own (Piggott, 2016). Before June 2015 had come to a close, Andrew Anglin announced on The Daily Stormer that he was joining other white supremacists in endorsing Trump for president (Anglin, 2015b; Osnos, 2015). On June 28, Anglin (2015b) posted:

I am hereby making an official endorsement of Donald Trump as President of America. (para.1) . . . [H]e is absolutely the only candidate who is even talking about anything at all that matters (para. 3). He is certainly going to be a positive influence on the Republican debates, as the modern Fox News Republican has basically accepted the idea that there is no going back from mass immigration, and Trump is willing to say what most Americans think: it’s time to deport these people. He is also willing

to call them out as criminal rapists, murderers and drug dealers (para. 4). His announcement contained many important statements, but the most important were about Mexicans. (para. 5) . . . I urge all readers of this site to do whatever they can to make Donald Trump President. (para. 27)

Throughout the post, Anglin quoted from the controversial speech Trump delivered on the day he launched his presidential campaign.

Anglin reiterated his support for Trump's presidential bid on July 10, 2015, writing in part, "If the Donald gets the nomination, he will almost certainly beat Hillary, as White men such as you and I go out and vote for the first time in our lives for the one man who actually represents our interests" (Anglin, 2015c, para. 10). On July 12, Anglin (2015d) further amplified his support for Trump:

Immigration is the biggest issue that the United States is facing, and The Don is the only one willing to address it. Given that he is not a politician, I see no reason why he won't deal with this problem exactly as he says he is going to deal with it if he is elected President (para. 3) . . . Perhaps the most moving reason for supporting Donald Trump is that absolutely nothing bad happens if I do that. There is literally no negative (para. 6). . . . My main issue is that Trump is injecting real issues and forcing discussion. Trump is a populist, and he is rallying people around populist issues, getting people more comfortable talking about things they are told by the system they are not allowed to talk about. This cannot possibly be viewed as a bad thing (para. 8). . . . That is why I support Donald Trump for President. (para. 20)

Anglin's post was accompanied by, among other artifacts, a photograph of Trump delivering a campaign speech and a computer-generated, cartoonish image of Trump standing within the presidential seal. Posts (e.g., text, images) supporting Trump and/or attacking his political rivals and their families would appear on The Daily Stormer throughout Trump's presidential campaign, as would images of several Trump tweets and links to various Trump-related videos (e.g., campaign speeches).

In August 2015, Trump augmented his earlier anti-immigration rhetoric by introducing a six-page immigration plan reminiscent of policies espoused by persons within the US-based anti-immigration movement, consisting of (a) deportation of approximately twelve million individuals living in the United States, (b) having Mexico pay to build a border wall, and (c) revoking the Fourteenth Amendment citizenship guarantee to persons born in the United States (Piggott, 2016). The SPLC reported that shortly after Trump released his immigration plan, dozens of threads regarding the candidate appeared on Stormfront ("Trump stump," 2015). For example, in August 2015 Stormfront's message board contained a "Will you vote for

Donald Trump?” open-forum thread from which site visitors posted comments relating to their level of interest in supporting Trump’s presidential bid (“Will you vote,” 2015). While support for Trump was mixed on Stormfront’s message board, several visitors indicated their support for Trump’s presidential bid by offering comments like “Yeah, I think he’s worth voting for” (“Will you vote,” 2015, para. 7). Another person wrote: “Trump is simply the BEST option for the realistic nationalist that wants to have ANY hope of awaking [*sic*] the GOP base and working class white dems to their common plight—that is he is a USEFUL step in getting to a real Mass Movement” (“Will you vote,” 2015, para. 9).

On December 7, 2015, shortly after Islamic State attacks in France left 130 dead the month prior, Trump proposed a “total and complete shut-down” of Muslims entering the United States (Piggott, 2016). The SPLC and the Anti-Defamation League reported that Trump’s Muslim ban statements ignited a great deal of online chatter among white supremacists (Schreckinger, 2015). That same day, Andrew Anglin posted a story about Trump’s proposed Muslim ban on The Daily Stormer, ending the post, “Heil Donald Trump – THE ULTIMATE SAVIOR. Make America White Again!” (Anglin, 2015a, para. 5-6). After Trump’s Muslim ban proposal, Don Black reported an increase in callers and listeners to his phone-in Internet radio show and Stormfront noticed a bump in its own site traffic (Schreckinger, 2015). In an interview with Politico, Black indicated that he believed Trump’s campaign rhetoric had been a boon to the white supremacist movement, stating: “He has sparked an insurgency and I don’t think it’s going to go away” (Schreckinger, 2015, para. 13). Black went on to claim that Stormfront receives a million visitors per month and Trump’s presidency contributed to a steady increase in visitors to the site, including thirty to forty percent upswings in site traffic when Trump’s rhetoric made news relating to Muslims or immigration (Schreckinger, 2015).

In March 2016, Black joined other white supremacists in endorsing Trump’s candidacy like David Duke, the ex-Klan leader and former Republican Louisiana State Representative whose success in getting his white supremacist beliefs accepted within the political mainstream nearly garnered him the governorship of Louisiana in 1991 (“David Duke,” n.d.; “Trump stump,” 2015). Black encouraged his Internet radio audience to throw their support behind Trump, urging “despite all of our misgivings about not having the perfect candidate here, we are all pulling for him [Trump], voting for him if we can” (Kaczynski & McDermott, 2016, para. 3). Black went on to recount:

[I]n 1968 . . . when George Wallace ran as an independent from my home state but ran for president as an independent candidate. . . . he got some

of the same kind of audience that Trump is getting, but the issues weren't as clearly defined back then. Wallace at that point was still speaking in code words but now things are a lot different. I've seen other campaigns. The David Duke campaign which is very, very much like the Donald Trump [campaign] except that David Duke knew more about the issues and talked about them, but the kind of support he had was very similar. (Kaczynski & McDermott, 2016, para. 9-10)

Before signing off from his show Black concluded, "I think Trump has sparked an insurgency in this country, a movement. . . . I'm very optimistic" (Kaczynski & McDermott, 2016, para. 12-13).

Near the end of April 2016, after Trump received majority support in the polls for the first time during the Republican primary (Hartig, Lapinski, & Psylos, 2016), Andrew Anglin amplified his online campaign in support of Trump's presidential bid by posting the following message on The Daily Stormer: "Jews, Blacks and lesbians will be leaving America if Trump gets elected – and he's [Trump's] happy about it. This alone is enough reason to put your entire heart and soul into supporting this man" (Anglin, 2016c, para. 1-2). Throughout Trump's presidential campaign, The Daily Stormer, which uses the mainstream media to amplify its neo-Nazi message, posted hundreds of articles supporting Trump or attacking his opponents ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). Moreover, Anglin and his supporters referred to Trump as "Glorious Leader" and "Humble Philosopher" while commending his racist and xenophobic rhetoric ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). Oftentimes, new banners featuring Trump were posted on The Daily Stormer on the days of major Republican primaries ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.).

After Trump became the presumptive GOP nominee in May 2016 following the suspension of Ted Cruz's campaign, celebratory comments appeared on both Stormfront and The Daily Stormer. One Stormfront member gleefully exclaimed, "What can I say? The Donald as GOP nominee, hopefully destroying that anti-white criminal Clinton" ("Incredible day," 2016, para. 16-17). In addition to celebratory Trump rhetoric, Stormfront members began posting links to articles about Trump (e.g., Yahoo News) as well as a series of pro-Trump computer-generated images like a photograph of Trump with the following text superimposed: "I'm telling you . . . we're gonna make America white again" (Neiwert, 2016). On The Daily Stormer, Andrew Anglin exalted, "White men in America and across the planet are partying like it's 1999 following Trump's decisive victory over the evil enemies of our race" (Anglin, 2016b, para. 1). Anglin also posted a video in which Trump, portrayed as a hero, saves white civilization from a group of non-whites led by Barack Obama, who was thrown into a bottomless pit by Trump (Neiwert, 2016).

In the aftermath of the June 2016 massacre of 49 people at the Pulse

nightclub in Orlando, Florida, Trump expanded his Muslim rhetoric to include critical speculations about the motivations of Muslims living within the United States. Trump repeatedly suggested that the Muslim community was somehow complicit in the attack, speculating “for some reason, the Muslim community does not report people like this” even though persons within the community were aware that the attacker “was bad” (Piggott, 2016, para. 31). In another interview, Trump made a similar unsubstantiated claim regarding the December 2015 massacre of 14 people by a Muslim couple in San Bernardino, California, contending “in San Bernardino, many people saw the bombs all over the apartment of the two people that killed 14 and wounded many, many people” and “Muslims have to report the problems when they see them” (Hamilton, 2016, para. 3).

Trump continued to denigrate immigrants while appearing on Michael Savage’s radio show *Savage Nation* on July 14, 2016, alleging “people are pouring into this country and, in many cases they’re not well people, in many respects” (Piggott, 2016, para. 23). After accepting the Republican nomination, Trump told NBC’s *Meet the Press* that he was seeking to expand his planned Muslim immigration ban by restricting entry into the United States from territories deemed to have a terrorism problem (Piggott, 2016). In a somewhat rambling manner, Trump stated: “I’m looking now at territory. People were so upset when I used the word Muslim. Oh, you can’t use the word Muslim. Remember this. And I’m OK with that, because I’m talking territory instead of Muslim” (Diamond, 2016, para. 2).

While Trump’s rhetoric infuriated millions of Americans during his presidential bid, support for candidate Trump continued to be expressed in postings on The Daily Stormer throughout the remainder of the campaign. On July 18, 2016, shortly after Trump’s Muslim ban comments, The Daily Stormer became the most popular English-language website of the racist right, officially eclipsing the status Stormfront had held since being established (Hankes, 2017). In the few remaining months of the presidential campaign, Andrew Anglin repeatedly posted comments and quoted media reports on The Daily Stormer about how Trump was surpassing Hillary Clinton in the polls. To further emphasize Trump’s success in the polls, Anglin also posted state-specific (e.g., Ohio, Iowa) and national polling data from various agencies (e.g., Bloomberg, Reuters, LA Times). Many of Anglin’s polling-related posts were accompanied by polling charts and/or pro-Trump imagery (e.g., Trump campaign photos, computer-generated images portraying Trump heroically) as well as imagery portraying Hillary Clinton negatively (e.g., computer-generated image of a defeated-looking Clinton with head in hands). Some of Anglin’s later pro-Trump campaign rhetoric was not only directed toward convincing visitors to The Daily Stormer that a Trump presidential victory was inevitable but that the white

supremacist community had also played a major role in the ultimate election outcome. Indeed, the day after former FBI Director James Comey's pre-election announcement regarding the re-opening of the investigation of Hillary Clinton's email usage while Secretary of State, Anglin posted an article entitled "Donald J. Trump is Now President of the United States of America." In the post, Anglin (2016a) wrote in part: "The US Presidential election ended yesterday (para. 1). . . . We've won, brothers. All of our hard work this year has paid off. And make no mistake – every meme you posted, every comments section you trolled – all of that is what made this happen" (para. 15-17).

Within hours of election results indicating Trump would win the presidency, celebratory commentary regarding the election outcome began appearing on both Stormfront and The Daily Stormer. Even before Trump's victory speech, a "Donald Trump elected President of the United States" thread appeared on Stormfront's message board, and shortly thereafter several site members posted links to media coverage of the election results (e.g., AP) and/or began expressing their satisfaction with Trump being elected as president. Among the comments appearing on Stormfront following Trump's presidential victory were "I'm happy," "This is amazing," "That wall better be tall," and "LET US REJOICE, WHITE NATIONALIST BROTHERS AND SISTERS!!!!" ("Donald Trump," 2016). Also appearing on Stormfront following Trump's presidential victory were some letters (i.e., initials) and numbers that white supremacists use as a basic shorthand to communicate their ideologies. Among the letters and numbers appearing on Stormfront following the presidential election were "WPWW" (White Pride World Wide), "88" which represents "Heil Hitler" (HH, the eighth letter of the alphabet doubled), and "14" which represents the phrase "14 words" (We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children) ("Donald Trump," 2016). Andrew Anglin enthusiastically posted on The Daily Stormer, "We won, brothers. All of our work. It has paid off. Our Glorious Leader has ascended to God Emperor. Make no mistake about it: we did this. If it were not for us, it wouldn't have been possible" (Anglin, 2016d, para. 1-4). The next day, The Daily Stormer featured a new masthead promoting the site as "Andrew Anglin's The Daily Stormer, 'America's #1 Most-Trusted Republican News Source,' First in Facts – First in Integrity!" (Hankes, 2017). Flanking the masthead's text were photos of Ronald Reagan (left-side) and Donald Trump (right-side). Most disturbing, Anglin also used Trump's election to call for the harassment of Muslims and "any foreigners," writing "We want these people to feel unwanted. We want them to feel that everything around them is against them. And we want them to be afraid" ("SPLC sues," 2017, para. 9).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For nearly half a century, the groundswell of support George Wallace was able to generate through his divisive campaign rhetoric leading up to the 1968 presidential election appeared to be a relic of the past, not to be witnessed again in the United States. However, the groundswell of support Donald Trump was able to generate through his divisive rhetoric during the most recent presidential campaign reminds us of what celebrated American author William Faulkner once wrote: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” Moreover, the American racist rights’ enthusiastic response to Trump’s presidential campaign reinforces Daniels’ (2009) notion that the election of Trump’s predecessor, Barack Obama, signified “a blow to white supremacy but not the end of the struggle against it” (p. 193).

Characterized by a rhetoric of nationalism and isolationism reminiscent of ideologies espoused by white nationalists in both the United States and abroad, Trump’s presidential campaign energized many within the American racist right in much the same way as George Wallace had leading up to the 1968 presidential election. Like Wallace’s campaign, Trump’s presidential campaign received assistance from members of the American racist right, including some who actively assisted Trump’s campaign efforts at calling centers and politically-oriented rallies.

More disturbing, pro-Trump rallies sometimes even involved whites physically assaulting non-whites (Piggott, 2016). In November 2015, a Black Lives Matter activist was beaten by Trump supporters at a rally in Birmingham, Alabama, and afterwards candidate Trump told Fox News, “Maybe he should have been roughed up, because it was absolutely disgusting what he was doing” (Johnson & Jordan, 2015, para. 7). Matthew Heimbach, a well-known white supremacist within the American racist right, was recorded shoving a black woman at a Trump rally in Louisville, Kentucky, on March 1, 2016 (Piggott, 2016). At a rally in Fayetteville, North Carolina, on March 9, 2016, 78-year-old Trump supporter John McGraw was recorded sucker-punching a black protester even as the protestor was being led away from the rally by police (King, 2016; Piggott, 2016). Trump told news outlets that he was looking into paying McGraw’s legal fees, which was consistent with a pledge Trump made during a February 2016 caucus speech in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to pay the legal fees of supporters who beat up protesters at pro-Trump rallies (Piggott, 2016). During that speech, Trump stated: “If you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of them, would you? Seriously. OK? Just knock the hell – I promise you, I will pay for the legal fees” (Terkel, 2016, para. 11).

Also, like Wallace’s campaign, Trump’s campaign received public support from some racist right groups, and many individuals associated

with those groups actively assisted Trump's campaign efforts. What is more, much like Wallace's 1968 presidential campaign, Trump's presidential campaign could be characterized by its friendly relationship with members of the racist right. During the presidential campaign, Trump's staff gave press credentials to persons affiliated with racist media (Potok, 2017, p. 37). On February 27, 2016, Trump's staff gave press credentials to James Edwards, host of the racist radio show *The Political Cesspool* that has featured many well-known individuals from the American racist right, to cover a Memphis rally (Piggott, 2017). At the rally, Edwards interviewed Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr., who later claimed he had been unaware of Edwards' history (Piggott, 2017; Wilkie, 2016). That same month, Trump received public support for his presidential bid from the American racist right, most notably ex-Klan leader and former Republican Louisiana State Representative David Duke ("David Duke," n.d.; "Trump stump," 2015).

Unlike Wallace, however, Trump's presidential campaign received support from racist right groups from across the United States (e.g., American Nazi Party, Knights Party), rather than just organizations concentrated in the South. Amid Trump's campaign, US-based hate groups grew in number (917), including racist right groups (e.g., neo-Nazi, white nationalist) with the most dramatic growth being the near-tripling of anti-Muslim groups (34 to 101) in 2016 ("Hate groups," 2017; Potok, 2017, p. 38, 43). Also, unlike the presidential campaign that took place in the pre-Internet era of 1968, racist right groups were able to express their support for Trump's 2016 presidential campaign by way of the Internet, which has long been the communication medium of choice for hatemongers. Racist right groups (e.g., KKK, neo-Nazi, white nationalist, racist skinhead) have increasingly taken advantage of the Internet's communicative power, and that trend has continued with the advent of social media and mobile technologies. Indeed, as a growing number of hatemongers have opted to operate mainly online without any formal association with hate groups, the real level of organized hatred in America is likely understated by any census of the number of active US-based hate groups ("Hate groups," 2017).

Certainly, the extent to which Trump's presidential campaign animated the racist right could be witnessed in the rhetoric that US-based white supremacists communicated on the Internet. The two most prominent US-based white supremacist sites, the neo-Nazi websites Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, launched extensive online campaigns in support of Trump's presidential bid, and both sites experienced dramatic increases in traffic during Trump's presidential campaign. Stormfront had to upgrade its server after traffic on the site surged during Trump's presidential campaign, while The Daily Stormer became the most popular English-language website of

the racist right in July 2016, eclipsing the status Stormfront had held for over twenty years.

Given how Trump's presidential campaign fueled the online rhetoric of US-based white supremacists, who in turn utilized the Internet to promote Trump's campaign for presidency, further examination of white supremacists' Internet rhetoric is certainly warranted. Examining white supremacists' Internet rhetoric enables persons to not only be alerted to the possibility of white supremacist advocacy or activity but also to better understand how white supremacists attempt to form, or become a part of, a community of like-minded persons, a community that increasingly includes tech-savvy youth and adolescents. Certainly, there is a need to understand the online shorthand of white supremacists given the rapid proliferation of digital communication technologies, such as mobile devices (e.g., phones, PDAs, portable tablets) and social media sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) where online shorthand (e.g., "14," "88," "WPWW") like that posted on the sites examined in this essay abounds.

The relevance of examining US-based white supremacist websites has substantially increased in recent years as the United States has witnessed a series of deadly mass shootings perpetrated by various extremists, and some were apparently motivated by rhetoric they accessed on US-based hate sites (Barnett, 2016). Indeed, the Internet rhetoric of US-based white supremacist groups (e.g., Council of Conservative Citizens, White Aryan Resistance, World Church of the Creator) is believed to have played a role in motivating individuals to perpetrate race-based (e.g., black, Asian) and religion-based (e.g., Jewish) murders since Stormfront, the first US-based hate site, was established in 1995 (Barnett, 2007; Barnett, 2016). Significantly, registered users to Stormfront have been linked to almost one hundred murders ("Stormfront," n.d.). For example, 22-year-old Richard Andrew Poplawski, who fatally shot three Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania police officers and wounded another in 2009, was a registered member of Stormfront for 20 months immediately prior to the shootings and had accessed his account less than four hours before committing the murders (Potok, 2014, pp. 26-30).

Like Stormfront, The Daily Stormer has been associated with murderous violence, including violence perpetrated against people of color. Passages from a manifesto authored by 21-year-old Dylann Roof, who gunned down nine black worshippers participating in Bible study inside Charleston, South Carolina's historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in June 2015, were found almost verbatim to comments posted on The Daily Stormer ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). The person who posted the comments on The Daily Stormer was dubbed "AryanBlood1488," a username having added significance as the numbers "14" and "88" are well-known white supremacist taglines oftentimes used together ("Andrew

Anglin,” n.d.). In March 2017, another individual who frequently visited The Daily Stormer, 28-year-old James Harris Jackson, allegedly used a 26-inch sword to murder a 66-year-old black man, Timothy Caughman, in Manhattan (“Andrew Anglin,” n.d.). During a jailhouse interview, Jackson told a reporter from the *New York Daily News* he communicated with “like-minded people” online and mentioned The Daily Stormer in particular (Moynihan & Brown, 2017).

While several acts of murderous violence in the United States have been associated with white supremacist content appearing online, examinations of US-based white supremacists’ Internet rhetoric may assist individuals, including law enforcement and homeland security professionals, in guarding against similar violence in the future. Indeed, considering the unprecedented ways in which the American racist right has been animated by Trump’s presidential campaign and subsequent election, examinations of rhetoric appearing on Stormfront, The Daily Stormer, and other US-based white supremacist websites are needed now more than ever.

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