

ASSESSING THE THREAT OF WHITE NATIONALISM IN NEW YORK STATE & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING THE FIELD

*Political Research Associates,
September 2021*





Political Research Associates is a social justice think tank devoted to supporting movements that are building a more just and inclusive democratic society. We expose movements, institutions, and ideologies that undermine human rights.

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INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

Anti-democratic, White nationalist,¹ and exclusionary social movements continue to threaten lives, promote violence, capture institutions, and drag the political culture away from core principles of justice and democracy—even in New York, one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states in the country.

New York State has a White nationalist problem that is both unique to the region and reflective of broader trends. National groups that are influential in New York include:

- **The Oath Keepers**, whose members are charged for helping plan the January 6 Insurrection, had eleven chapters in the state, including in New York City, as of 2016.²
- **The Proud Boys**, whose members have been arrested for violence in New York City and Portland, and whose members were active in the January 6 Insurrection, are active in the state and have had influence within the state GOP.
- **Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association**, the law enforcement wing of the Patriot movement, has active relationships with three sheriffs in the state and a history of creating alignment between militia, local politicians and law enforcement to undermine democratic leadership and social movements.³
- **Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)**, who had direct influence on the federal government under the Trump administration, has a strategy of working with local officials to undermine the Governor.⁴
- A new militia formation called **Watchmen**, with significant ties to the Homeschooling movement, “Stop the Steal,” and the “ReOpen” movement, has chapters throughout the state, and reflects new formations of far-right conspiracism that demonize social and racial justice movements.
- With overlapping membership in the above network, **QAnon**, whose supporters promote conspiracy theories about a “deep state” plot by Democrats that involves child sex trafficking, has an active presence in the state, and has contributed to eroding trust in public institutions, as well as galvanizing people to join far-right movements.

The above is not an exhaustive list, but demonstrates that New York

State is not exempt from threats that face other parts of the nation. However, there are few movement-facing research, advocacy, and base-building organizations dedicated to tracking, monitoring, and mobilizing against White nationalism in the state.

Still of Charles Pellien (left) and Brett Biro (right) / "The State of America Today" uploaded on December 16, 2020 by Yowowa Media. "The State of America Today" is the podcast of the Watchmen. Credit: Yowowa Meida/YouTube.com



The Engage New York Anti-White Nationalism Working Group enlisted the help of Political Research Associates (PRA), a social justice think tank, to conduct a scan of White nationalist threats in New York State and offer some initial recommendations for building the field.

This briefing is divided into three sections. The first provides a brief background of White nationalism. The second offers a scan of White nationalism in New York State. The third provides an initial needs assessment and recommendations for countering White nationalist threats in the state and building the field to advance a multiracial and truly democratic alternative.

PRA used a combination of primarily qualitative methods to develop this briefing, relying on sources from within and outside New York State, including:

- PRA's 2018 national report, *Advancing Immigrant, Muslim and Refugee Justice in a Period of Ascendant White Nationalism*⁵ (for which PRA interviewed 60+ immigrant, Muslim, refugee and Fight the Right leaders nationally, some of which were in New York, including, *Jews for Racial and*

Economic Justice (JFREJ / NYC), **Anti-Defamation League** (ADL/national), **Southern Poverty Law Center** (SPLC / national), **Detention Watch Network** (DWN / national coalition), **National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum** (national), **South Asian Americans Leading Together** (SAALT/national coalition), **National Coalition for Haitian Rights** (national), **Western States Center** (Pacific Northwest), **Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights** (national).

- In 2020-2021, PRA conducted interviews with Muslim, immigrant and racial justice organizers in New York State (a combination of those recommended by The Engage New York Anti-White Nationalism Working Group and PRA), including **NYCLU Suffolk** (Long Island), **VOICE Buffalo** (Buffalo), **Black Lives Matter—Buffalo** (Buffalo), **New Hour for Women and Children LI** (Long Island), **Equality Labs** (national), **NYC Commission on Human Rights** (NYC), **Desis Rising Up & Moving** (DRUM) (NYC), a former research analyst from the Crow nation that works in community with the Haudenosaunee people, and a collective in Buffalo that monitors the Right. PRA prioritized organizations serving communities directly impacted by White nationalist organizing, organizations with a track record of working in communities most vulnerable to violence at multiple levels, and organizations that have information that can offer valuable insights for the research.
- Decades of experience of PRA staff in contextualizing, explaining, and analyzing the Right.
- Ongoing regular consultations with national movement leaders, Fight the Right researchers, and philanthropic leaders in the field.

This briefing was prepared by Political Research Associates, and financially supported by the Andrus Family Fund, Daphne Foundation, and Park Foundation.

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BACKGROUND

The contemporary White nationalist movement grew as a backlash to the civil rights movement, and then the election of the first African American president. Since 2016, White nationalist movements have been emboldened across the country, including in New York State. With access to the White House under the Trump administration,⁶ White nationalist movements took their place in the mainstream, enacting policies at the federal level in line with their ideology, and elevating cultural myths about *the other* through a variety of media.

Across the country, White nationalist and far-right actors and organizations mobilized in 2020 and 2021 to attack elections and the democratic process, oppose public health measures, and/or intimidate Black Lives Matter and racial justice mobilizations. Their mobilizations also targeted perceived enemies in positions of power. This includes high-profile incidents such as the plot to kidnap Michigan's governor and, more notoriously, the January 6 insurrection.

The rise of an overtly White nationalist movement has become impossible to ignore, underlining the need to examine how this movement mobilizes against communities in New York State, develop strategies to block its influence, and support those that are seeking to build a multiracial and truly democratic alternative.

WITH ACCESS TO THE WHITE HOUSE UNDER THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION, WHITE NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS TOOK THEIR PLACE IN THE MAINSTREAM, ENACTING POLICIES AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL IN LINE WITH THEIR IDEOLOGY, AND ELEVATING CULTURAL MYTHS ABOUT THE OTHER THROUGH A VARIETY OF MEDIA.

A mural in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York, with the names of victims of police brutality, taken on August 30, 2020. (Credit: Wally Goetz/Flickr.com)



A SCAN OF WHITE NATIONALISM IN NEW YORK

Advocates we spoke with in New York discussed how White nationalism crept into the mainstream in New York State via institutions, and through directly intimidating and attacking communities.

WHITE NATIONALISTS EMBEDDED IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

“We can’t have this conversation without acknowledging that these communities were founded on explicit exclusion of others who aren’t White and that’s embedded in a lot of government infrastructure and the way municipalities are structured out here...”

— An immigrant and racial justice organizer in Long Island, New York.

“We know White nationalist and far-right people are in our sheriff’s department, police unions, and in our schools... It’s within every single public sphere... we are seeing more of these threats, and we are becoming more aware of them... For us, it’s life or death.”

— A racial justice organizer in Buffalo, New York.

“Large majority of Long Islanders are middle class, blue collar workers and they have largely identified with Trump’s views. I had a neighbor with a confederate flag. Trump flags flying. It was a statement about White supremacy more than about Donald Trump. That doesn’t seem to be going away. They have been empowered by Trump.”

— A criminal and racial justice organizer in Suffolk county, New York.

Since 2016, community organizers witnessed an increased alliance between White nationalist/vigilante forces and government officials, including law enforcement, resulting in the normalization of fear and intimidation of their communities, as well as government officials’ complicity in racial and ethnic targeting, anti-immigrant sentiment and policies, and leniency

for those threatening the safety of communities of color and activists both online and on the ground.

The January 6 insurrection laid bare how White nationalists embedded in public institutions imperil democracy. At least 27 New York residents have been arrested and charged for their participation in that event,⁷ including at least one former police officer and a prominent GOP official from Queens.⁸ Of the 147 members of Congress that lent legitimacy to insurrectionists' conspiracies with their votes to overturn the 2020 Presidential election results, four were Representatives from New York: Chris Jacobs (R, NY-27), Nicole Malliotakis (R, NY-11), Elise M. Stefanik (R, NY-21), and Lee Zeldin (R, NY-1).⁹

For racial and immigrant justice advocates, the overlap between White nationalist and far-right movements and law enforcement was particularly concerning, both because it leaves communities nowhere to turn when under direct attack from vigilante actors, and because law enforcement oversee institutions that already play a significant role in policing and surveilling their communities.

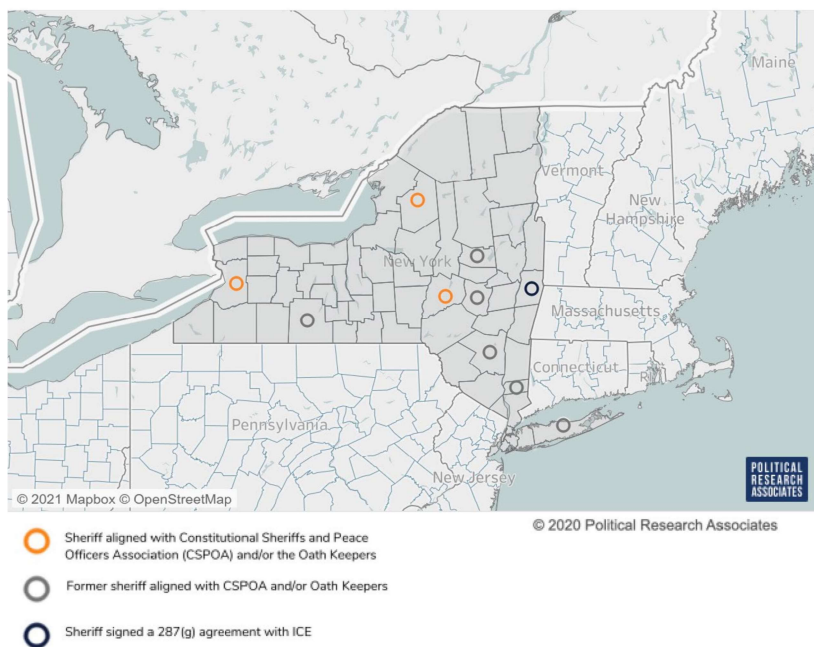
Sheriffs departments are high risk sites of organizing for White nationalists. Ninety (90%) percent of the 3,081 Sheriffs in the U.S. are White men, according to a 2020 Reflective Democracy Campaign report.¹⁰ Sheriffs, who are locally elected, have no term limits, generally oversee jails, and can decide whether their county collaborates with ICE (generally via 287(g) agreements). They also issue evictions and typically operate with little oversight. Leading anti-immigrant organizations, militia organizations, Christian nationalists, as well as the anti-mask movement of 2020 all view sheriffs as strategic allies.

PRA identified nine current or former sheriffs with ties to far-right and White nationalist organizations and policies in New York State.¹¹

New York sheriffs in Erie County,¹² Lewis County,¹³ and Otsego County hold ongoing relationships with state chapters of the Oath Keepers and/or a network of right-wing sheriffs called Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA).¹⁴ Oath Keepers are the largest known far-right militia organization in the country, whose leaders and members

This map depicts two right-wing networks within sheriffs departments in New York State. One network is aligned with the Patriot movement (Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association or the Oath Keepers) and views the sheriff as the last defender of the Constitution against a tyrannical government. The second network is anti immigrant and may indicate active agreements with ICE that allow the sheriff to carry out the duties of federal immigration enforcement. PRA has identified six former—and three current—New York sheriffs (gray and orange circles, respectively) as Patriot movement aligned. We have identified one sheriff with an ICE agreement in the state.

Patriot Movement and Anti-Immigrant Aligned Sheriffs in New York



were charged with planning the January 6 insurrection.¹⁵ The Oath Keepers had five chapters and a statewide chapter in New York State in 2020, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.¹⁶

Former sheriffs associated with far-right militia seek public office after their tenure as sheriff, demonstrating a broader ecosystem between government and the Far Right. Suffolk county's prior sheriff, Vincent F. DeMarco, who was part of the CSPOA network, served from 2006-2017. Once leaving office, he became the U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of New York. Erie County Sheriff Tim Howard, a longtime supporter of the far-right militia, who is not seeking re-election as sheriff in 2021, is running for Supervisor of his county.¹⁷

National anti-immigrant organizations like the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), which was founded by the White nationalist John Tanton, built inroads with New York State's Rensselaer County Sheriff Patrick Russo, who is one of over 136 sheriffs in the country working directly with ICE to place immigrants on the path to deportation.

Former military and Department of Defense officials also play a significant role in the far-right ecosystem, particularly for paramilitary formations. Figures like Bush administration Defense Department official Stephen Coughlin, and former Trump administration national security advisor Richard Higgins, write for a think tank called Unconstrained Analytics. A 2019 white paper called *Warning on Racism*¹⁸ and a report titled, *Insurrection and Violence*,¹⁹ advance a theory that Black Lives Matter, Antifa, "Islamic Extremists," the left wing of the Democratic Party, and progressive organizations work in tandem to use issues of race to undermine the United States. The so-called analysis builds off of "The New World Order" theories that were advanced by the Far Right under the Clinton administration. The reports identify Black Lives Matter and Sunrise Movement, among others, as "domestic threats," points that are directly echoed by militia formations such as American Contingency (with chapters in New York State and beyond) who make Unconstrained Analytics reports mandatory reading for members.²⁰

"FORMER SHERIFFS ASSOCIATED WITH FAR-RIGHT MILITIA SEEK PUBLIC OFFICE AFTER THEIR TENURE AS SHERIFF, DEMONSTRATING A BROADER ECOSYSTEM BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE FAR RIGHT."

ETHNIC POLICE OFFICER ASSOCIATIONS INTERNALIZE WHITE NATIONALISM

“In the last two years, when we’ve done immigrant rights work, when ICE raids were announced or anticipated, we did some counter programming. Talking with people in the community to know your rights and we got a lot of hate comments on our social media—by people from our own community. We traced it and it turned out to be a lot of police officers or family members of police officers.”

— An organizer that works with South Asian and Indo-Caribbean working class people in New York City.

Ethnic police officer associations in New York City have become more prominent within many Muslim Asian American communities, according to an organizer that works primarily with Asian American, Muslim, working class, immigrant communities. They “internalize the general White supremacist attitudes that exist in law enforcement in general” and “serve a dual role of community engagement as well as surveillance, and promoting right-wing agendas,” the organizer noted. Members of these associations participated in an online campaign of verbal harassment when the organizer and their network organized against ICE raids. He viewed it as a form of surveillance and repression.

The NYPD’s widespread surveillance of Muslim communities following September 11, while technically shuttered in a 2018 legal settlement, is still felt by many. The NYPD still utilizes a variety of widespread surveillance and monitoring practices that marginalize communities with limited oversight.²¹ Granting the department continued access to these technologies with little to no accountability diverts funds from communities, bolstering systems of mass incarceration, deportation, and marginalization. Community organizers note that in many cases surveillance continues by federal law enforcement, maintaining a climate of fear and intimidation among Muslim communities. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, at the explicit command of the Trump administration, has also increased its street presence in recent years, amplifying a sense of fear and intimidation that local law enforcement already represents for many communities. Several New York City community-based organizers consulted for this briefing also note the troubling presence of police and law enforcement in public spaces, like schools and courthouses, and the disproportionate responses of law enforcement to social justice protests and demonstrations.

“COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS NOTE THAT IN MANY CASES SURVEILLANCE CONTINUES BY FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT, MAINTAINING A CLIMATE OF FEAR AND INTIMIDATION AMONG MUSLIM COMMUNITIES.”

DIRECT ACTION & ATTACK: THE RISE OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION

“My concerns are two-fold. They will continue to perpetrate acts of violence which will have a chilling effect on political expression and that they will not be prosecuted for doing so.”
— Anti-Racist Researcher in Western New York

Violence and intimidation against perceived racial and ethnic targets sharply increased in 2020 and 2021. Last year in New York State alone, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 37 active hate groups,²² the Stop AAPI Hate coalition reported 517 anti-Asian hate incidents (making the state second only to California for the highest incidents in the country),²³ and the Anti-Defamation League documented 309 incidents of White supremacist propaganda and intimidation.²⁴

In the summer and fall of 2020, PRA documented 22 incidents of far-right, White nationalist, or mob related harassment and intimidation of racial justice protesters in New York State.²⁵ A majority of these incidents came from mobs of MAGA supporters, but some came from members of established far-right and vigilante groups like the Proud Boys.

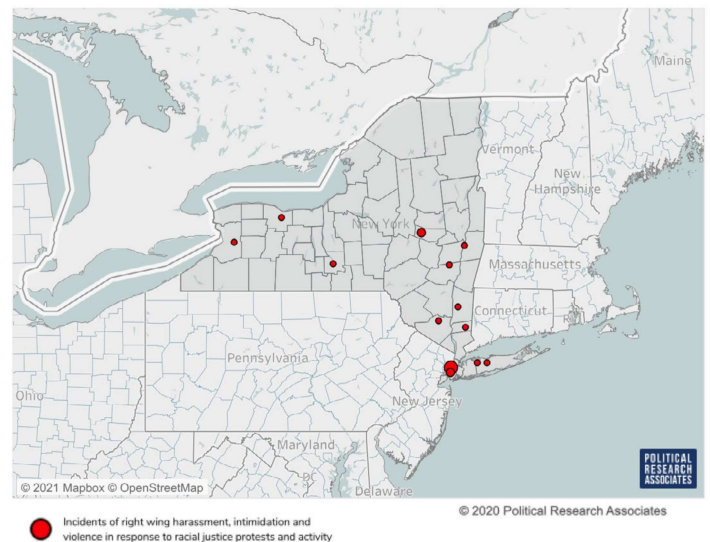
On June 3, 2020, an unknown armed civilian group showed up at local businesses to allegedly protect them from racial justice protesters in South Brooklyn. Three days later the KKK distributed recruitment stickers after a racial justice protest in Fort Plain, New York.

Nearly a month later, MAGA supporters threw punches against racial justice protesters in New York City.²⁶

The number of incidents verified by PRA represent only a fraction of the number of incidents that actually occurred. But it demonstrates that communities advocating for racial justice are vulnerable to far-right and White nationalist violence, and harassment.

As evidenced in the rise of right-wing and vigilante violence, organizers in the field also noted new militia and paramilitary organizations forming in the state, parading as law enforcement,

Incidents of Right-Wing Violence in New York



This map depicts 22 incidents of right-wing violence and harassment of racial justice protesters, verified by PRA, in New York from May 29, 2020- November 7, 2020.

orchestrating “Stop the Steal” demonstrations, and intimidating racial justice protests. Interviews with organizers in Western New York indicated that a new paramilitary formation with connections throughout the state, is gaining membership. An organizer in Buffalo revealed substantial evidence of a new far-right militia with deep ties to the homeschooling movement and anti-vaccination circles called The Watchmen.²⁷ A preliminary assessment of the militia reveals their involvement in intimidating racial justice protests in the summer of 2020, the January 6 insurrection, statewide “Stop the Steal” demonstrations and participation in the anti-mask movement in 2020.²⁸

These statistics and stories of new paramilitary formations, however, are not the crux of the problem, but only an index to it. The reach of White nationalist and closely related ideas and attitudes is far broader, as reflected in the number of New Yorkers who supported Stop the Steal efforts and approved even the most racist and anti-democratic policies and statements that flowed from the Trump administration.

Protesters at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. (Credit: Blink O'Fanaye/Flickr.com)



NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS

After conducting a scan of White nationalist threats in New York State, it is clear that White nationalist movements and their allies are active in the state, and while many organizations on the frontlines of fighting for racial and immigrant justice are aware of the threats, they are not yet equipped to defend their communities or confront it. Moreover, there is an ongoing divide between research and policy groups that often work with government agencies, and community-based racial and immigrant justice groups that are often kept out of the know on issues related to White nationalism.

“MOREOVER, THERE IS AN ONGOING DIVIDE BETWEEN RESEARCH AND POLICY GROUPS THAT OFTEN WORK WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, AND COMMUNITY-BASED RACIAL AND IMMIGRANT JUSTICE GROUPS THAT ARE OFTEN KEPT OUT OF THE KNOW ON ISSUES RELATED TO WHITE NATIONALISM.”

PRA advises organizers and philanthropy to look toward ecosystem models for building a field to confront White nationalism directly accountable to communities most impacted. Some might call this the “Justice” arm of the Fight the Right sector. PRA recommends bringing together the targets of White nationalism, as well as experts, policy makers, movement leaders and cultural producers to confront White nationalism in three arenas: 1. Defend organizations, communities and leaders from direct attack and harassment, 2. Block White nationalist policy and institutional capture as we build toward a more just society and 3. Invest in cross-movement building, cultural interventions and narrative change.

A THREE-PRONG APPROACH TO COUNTERING WHITE NATIONALISM

The White nationalist movement mobilizes across multiple spheres of influence, including direct action (intimidation and violence), policy, and culture. PRA recommends a three-prong approach to building the field to counter White nationalism and advance justice in New York.

1. Defending Organizations, Leaders, and Communities From Direct Attacks, Intimidation, and Disinformation.

a. Invest in Local Monitoring of White Nationalist Threats:

National organizations as well as national security organizations can provide training and integrated analysis, but local organizations should understand the landscape of the opposition, its aims and tactics. This requires permanent infrastructure, the components of

which will need to be adapted to local concerns.

b. Document White Nationalist Harassment & Violence:

Communities most targeted by White nationalism need to have trusted institutions to turn to in order to document the full extent of the threat—institutions that remain accountable to the communities most targeted. Communities deserve full access to this data, so it can be used and analyzed.

c. Support Community Defense & Rapid Response Networks:

This needs to include not only reaction, but anticipation and assessment of risk levels and threats—and a commitment to “right-sizing” threats, neither exaggerating or minimizing, and to anticipate backlash and counterprotest.

d. Support Offensive Strategies That Seek to Expose & Deplatform White Nationalist Organizations:

Every time communities organize to expose and deplatform White nationalist organizations, activists, and politicians, it provides an opportunity for broader political education, and gives venues and institutions a chance to take a stand.

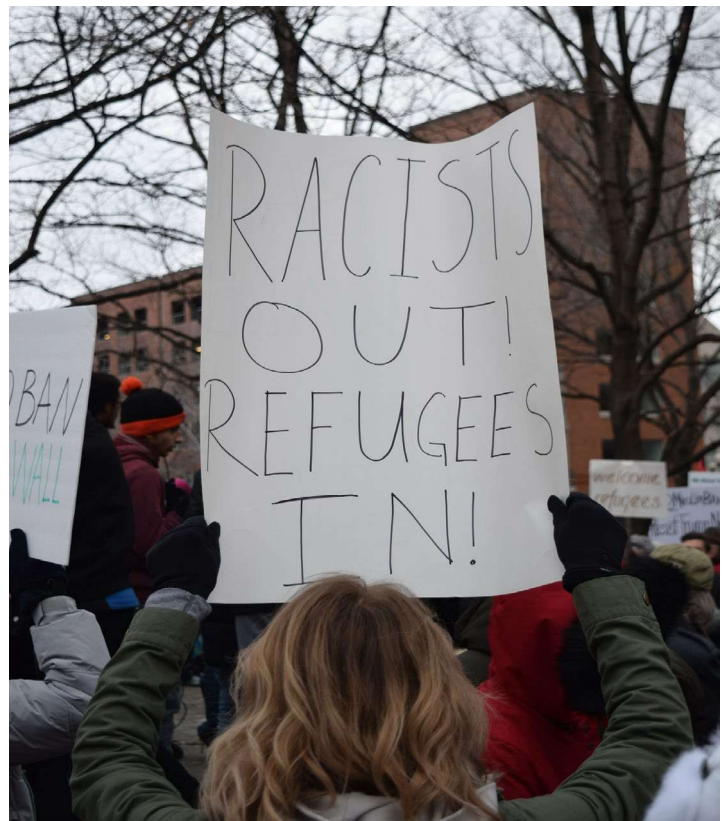
e. Secure Ongoing Digital Security for Targets of White Nationalism and Related Far-Right Social Movements:

Movement security is a larger issue that requires more attention and care, but all organizations and leaders that are potential targets of White nationalism and related far-right movements need digital security training and resources to ensure that they and their families are protected online for their speech and activism.

f. Long-Term Funding for Community Organizations:

Organizers noted how they didn't have capacity to win policy and defend their communities since their funding streams were insecure. “Most issues that we are working on are going to have 2-3 year outcomes. We have to create a five-year strategy. For the long term game, it's better to pick a couple of projects to have a deeper impact, but we constantly have to worry about staff turnover because our funding is so precarious,” a racial justice community organizer in Western New York noted. That

A protest against racism in Rochester, NY, on January 29, 2017 (Credit: rchappo2002/flickr.com)



sentiment was echoed across multiple people who spoke with PRA for this briefing.

One interviewee from Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM) in NYC said some of the most effective campaigns in Brooklyn and the Bronx against White nationalism came out of community-led initiatives to de-platform White nationalist punk bands from music venues. DRUM and their network used the intelligence as an opportunity for political education by flyering the community and small businesses nearby to let them know they could take a stand against White nationalism. Local music venues didn't understand they were providing a platform for White nationalism until they were notified by community organizers, the DRUM representative noted.

2. POLICY: BLOCKING WHITE NATIONALIST POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPTURE AS WE BUILD TOWARD A JUST SOCIETY

- a. **Monitor White Nationalist Institutions & Policies in the State:** This requires both monitoring of candidates and political appointments, but also tracking the origin and spread of policies and talking points. The point, of course, is not just to “know” but to anticipate, prepare, and respond.
- b. **Conduct Power Mapping to Assess How White Nationalist Institutions Work Within Government and Across Far-Right Groups:** A racial justice organizer in Western New York called for more power mapping in the state. “We know it’s deeper rooted than what we see on the surface. We just don’t know how to pinpoint how deep it is.” Another organizer in Long Island was interested in exploring overlaps between law enforcement PACs and state legislators.
- c. **Educate Groups in the State About White Nationalist Policies & Elected Officials:** This is an ongoing process and has to be incorporated into the playbook of justice-oriented organizations.
- d. **Support Offensive Strategies to Expose and Deplatform White Nationalist Institutions & Elected Officials:** VOICE Buffalo and Standing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Buffalo have led a campaign over several years to unseat Erie County Constitutional sheriff Tim Howard, an opportunity that has also led to broad political education

“WE KNOW IT’S DEEPER ROOTED THAN WHAT WE SEE ON THE SURFACE. WE JUST DON’T KNOW HOW TO PINPOINT HOW DEEP IT IS.”

in the community. These campaigns have an opportunity to block far-right movements, and build alternatives.

- e. **Propose Policy Initiatives that Block White Nationalist Policies and Build Alternatives:** Policies that block White nationalist agendas and support racial and gender justice, such as the NYC Against Hate policy paper, as well as policies that build a robust public good—education, healthcare, housing—and just economics are crucial. The strategies for establishing such policies, however, must include a plan for coping with backlash from the Far Right, including harassment, legal challenge, and counter organizing. Unfortunately, the NYC Against Hate policy platform stalled due to lack of funds.

“POLICIES THAT BLOCK WHITE NATIONALIST AGENDAS AND SUPPORT RACIAL AND GENDER JUSTICE, SUCH AS THE NYC AGAINST HATE POLICY PAPER, AS WELL AS POLICIES THAT BUILD A ROBUST PUBLIC GOOD—EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, HOUSING—AND JUST ECONOMICS ARE CRUCIAL.”

3. CROSS-MOVEMENT BUILDING, CULTURE AND NARRATIVE CHANGE

- a. **Identify How White Nationalist Narratives Are Seeping into Mainstream Culture:** The Center for Right-Wing Studies, the Institute on Male Supremacism, Media Matters, the Shorenstein Center, and Data & Society, study how White nationalist narratives shift cultural understandings of belonging, and the mechanisms through which they do that. Support New York based academics, narrative change analysts, and digital experts to analyze local narratives and mechanisms of dissemination.
- b. **Invest in Narrative Interventions that Disrupt White Nationalist Ideologies:** Journalists, Podcasts, Documentary films, Public Art that directly confront and disrupt White nationalist ideologies for mainstream and popular consumption can shift public consciousness.
- c. **Invest in Cross-Movement Building and Narratives that Build the “We”:** Cross-movement building and narratives that build a sense of belonging and solidarity, including futuring, particularly among those most targeted by White nationalism, need to be a part of a cultural shift. Free the People WNY Coalition, The NYC Against Hate coalition and the Long Island Social Justice Action Network are all models to explore.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Comparative studies to examine how other states have built a field to address White nationalism. Example: Oregon (Western States Center, Rural Organizing Project, Coalition for Human Dignity, etc) and Montana (Montana Human Rights Network).
- Local and state power mapping of White nationalist forces in the state, as well as how they intersect with elected officials, policy and institutions.
- Research examining the threat of White nationalism against Indigenous communities in New York. A question to explore: Are there any connections between trafficking of Indigenous women and girls and White nationalist groups?
- What kinds of transformative strategies are effective for confronting the rise of White nationalism? What transformative strategies could be employed to counter the specific manifestations of White nationalism in the state? For example, “What if our schools actually had deeply immersive studies on race, racial justice, and slavery across the board to help combat some of these things,” an organizer in New York City questioned.

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

WHY PRA AVOIDS USING “HATE” AND “EXTREMIST” TERMINOLOGY

While the terms “hate” groups and “hate” crimes effectively evoke overt supremacists, they are less useful for addressing systemic, even government-backed, programs of discrimination, expulsion, and supremacy. Hatred is not so much the agenda as a tactic used in pursuit of political and social goals, for example, the expulsion of people of color and religious minorities and the establishment of a White Christian ethnostate. We can remain flexible in our use of terminology as we adapt to changed circumstances and improve how we communicate about the stakes for our society and about our alternative vision.

ON THE TERM “WHITE NATIONALISM”

For purposes of this briefing, “White nationalism” is being used to refer not only to the explicit movement seeking an exclusively White racial state, but to the much broader range of authoritarian, right-wing populist, cultural exclusionists, theocrats, and conspiracists oriented to a politics of racial resentment and anxiety. However, we use this term distinctly from White supremacy, the system of racial hierarchy that is maintained through institutions and laws, even without an active movement.

However, some Black, Indigenous, and People of Color avoid using the term “White nationalist” at all, because they think it undermines the structures and designs built into the fabric of this country that were always designed for White people. Jackie Old Coyote, a former research analyst from the Crow nation who works in community with the Haudenosaunee people in New York State, said, for her, the term White nationalism refers to all of the United States, not just the social movement. “When you are speaking with Indigenous people, call it White supremacy and racism,” she said. Developing frameworks that navigate this tension among those most capable of collectively challenging White nationalism will be essential for our movements.

FURTHER READING / LISTENING

- “Advancing Immigrant, Muslim and Refugee Justice in A Period of Ascendant White Nationalism,” Political Research Associates, Nov. 2018, <https://bit.ly/AdvancingJusticeReport>.
- Kay Whitlock, “Reconsidering Hate: Policies and Politics at the Intersection,” Political Research Associates, 2012, <https://bit.ly/ReconsideringHateReport>.
- “Mapping Far-Right and Anti-Immigrant Movement Alignment with County Sheriffs,” Political Research Associates, Sept. 2020, <https://bit.ly/MappingSheriffs>.
- “Mapping Paramilitary and Far-right Threats to Racial Justice,” Political Research Associates, June 2020, <https://bit.ly/mappingparamilitaries>.
- “Where the White House Gets Its Racist Immigration Policies,” Political Research Associates, 2018, <https://bit.ly/PRAWhiteHouseRacistImmigrationPolicies>.
- “It Did Happen Here,” Podcast, <https://itdidhappenherepodcast.com/about/index.html>.

A protester at a Black Lives Matter protest on May 31, 2020 (Credit: Miki Jourdan/flickr.com)



ENDNOTES

1 For purposes of this briefing, “White nationalism” is being used to refer not only to the explicit movement seeking an exclusively White racial state, but to the much broader range of authoritarian, right-wing populist, cultural exclusionists, theocrats, and conspiracists oriented to a politics of racial resentment and anxiety.

2 See Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report, 2017, <https://bit.ly/3teegbB>.

3 See Mapping Far-Right and Anti-Immigrant Movement Alignment With County Sheriffs, *Political Research Associates*, 2020, <https://www.politicalresearch.org/sheriffs-map/>.

4 See FAIR’s work supporting lawsuits against NY’s Green Light law: <https://bit.ly/3ByehtW>; <https://bit.ly/3zEYDfR>; <https://bit.ly/2WO4XCZ>.

5 From 2017-2018, PRA interviewed 60+ leaders of community-based organizations, national coalition leaders from immigrant, Muslim and refugee communities, and experts on White nationalism from across the country to assess the threat of White nationalism. PRA found that a key feature of ascendant White nationalism during the Trump administration, was the movement’s ability to influence policy recommendations at the federal level, including the Muslim Ban, and an increasingly overzealous deportation machine. Coupled by narratives of exclusion and grassroots far-right groups, the movement posed a severe enough risk to racial and immigrant justice that movement leaders needed to break from movement silos to address the threat. The report made the case that in order to build a movement to counter the threat of White nationalism, advancing immigrant, Muslim, racial and refugee justice would be necessary as not only defensive strategies, but integral to advancing a multiracial democracy as an alternative to White nationalism.

6 See “Where the White House Gets Its Racist Immigration Policies,” *Political Research Associates*, 2018, <http://www.politicalresearch.org/2018/03/01/where-the-white-house-gets-its-racist-immigration-policies>.

7 27 New York residents were arrested related to the storming of the Capitol on January 6, according to GW Program on Extremism, “Capitol Hill Siege,” June 2021, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/Capitol-Hill-Cases>.

8 See “Retired NYPD cop and Queens ‘Republican Messiah’ arrested in Capitol riot probe,” *CNBC*, Feb. 2021, <https://cnb.cx/2YnhX3x>.

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