

# The Internet, Intelligence Agencies, and Neo-Fascism

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## Some Motivation

**“We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings.”**

**- Ursula K. Le Guin**

**Speech at the National Book Awards, 19 Nov 2014**

# Who/what is fascist? What is fascism?



# Classical Fascism

## - Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*

Selections from his list of “mobilizing passions”:

- a sense of overwhelming crisis beyond the reach of any traditional solutions
- the primacy of the group
- the belief that one's group is a victim
- dread of the group's decline under the corrosive effects of individualistic liberalism, class conflict, and alien influences
- the need for closer integration of a purer community
- the right of the chosen people to dominate others... right being decided by the sole criterion of the group's prowess within a Darwinian struggle

# Where was fascism born?

## - George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*

Description of fascist aesthetics/rhetoric: Masculine, modern, youthful, violent, soldier-like, all-powerful leader. Emphasis on race purity, martyrdom, cultural traditions, and a mythologized past.

## - “Birth of Fascism” 23 March 1919

Speech by Mussolini in Piazza San Sepolcro of Milan. Attended by somewhere between 25-500 people, depending on which historian you ask.



Piazza San Sepolcro

←  
Ceremony in  
the 1930s



# Where was fascism born?

- **Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species***

Published 24 November 1859.

Social Darwinism arises 1870s

The term eugenics is invented in 1883 by Francis Galton, Darwin's half-cousin.

- **Louis Pasteur's germ theory, 1860s.**

- **Social theory on the "masses," late 1800s**

Growing awareness and fear of the crowd as a challenge to the old, familiar social order following the military defeat of France in 1870, and violent social upheavals at the end of the Commune in 1871.

**Gustave Le Bon:** Doctrine of mystification: orators, when addressing the crowd, should appeal to their "sentiments, and never to their reason." Use of mythology, theatrical modes, powerful words.

- **George Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 1906.**

Believed that violence, by destroying materialism, utilitarianism, liberalism, and democracy, could save the world from barbarism and degeneration. Myth as a motivating force.



**Over 100 years later, we still have fascists**

**- Can't they take a hint and just give up the damn ghost already wtf**



# Fascist Spectacle – Persistence in the Era of Mass Politics



SA march in Berlin



German PEGIDA rally



Member of the Base – American neo-Nazi group



Charlottesville rally



Italian Blackshirts



# Neo-Fascists + Mainstream Social Media

## - Reddit



Ellen Pao

Former CEO Ellen Pao and #RedditRevolt, 2015. Came in response to the banning of 5 popular subreddits for violating site rules on harassment; reignited by firing of popular employee. 213,000 signed a petition demanding her resignation.

The usual suspects: r/incele → r/incels → r/braincel; r/theredpill; r/The\_Donald...

## - Tumblr

A hot mess

Lindsay Souvannarath, Halifax mass shooting plot, 2015.



r/incels

u/

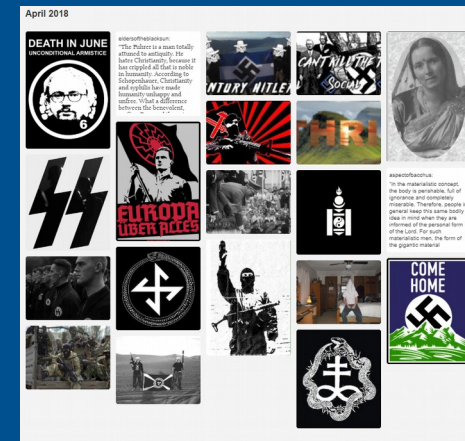


Incel Fundamentalist

Today I saw a woman crying her eyes out and almost couldn't control my laughter



Souvannarath's Tumblr page



# Less Mainstream Platforms for Neo-Fascist Online Communities

- The Daily Stormer
- Stormfront
- 4chan

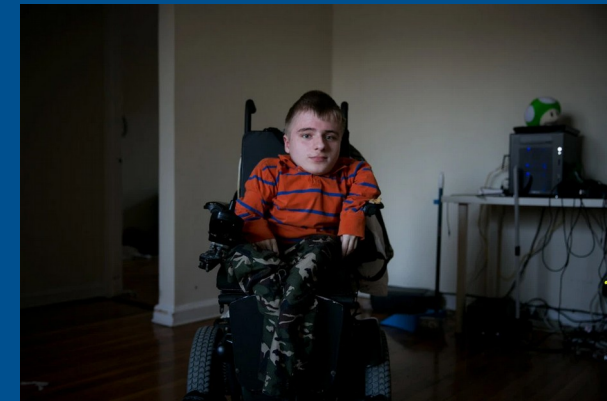
/pol/ (short for politically incorrect) and /b/ ("random") being notable boards

- 8chan/8kun

Originally created as a "free-speech-friendly" alternative to 4chan

Announcements/manifestos for Christchurch, NZ shooting; Poway, CA synagogue shooting; El Paso shooting (all in 2019) posted here

- DDoS mitigation + Internet security (e.g. Cloudflare); domain name service registrars (e.g. BitMitigate); cloud infrastructure providers (e.g. Voxility)
- Encrypted channels



Fredrick Brennan, founder of 8chan

# r/stormfront?

The screenshot displays the Reddit interface for the subreddit r/stormfront. At the top, the Reddit logo and search bar are visible. The subreddit header includes the name "Reddit's Severe Weather Center" and a "JOIN" button. Below the header, there are sorting options: "Hot", "New", "Top", and a dropdown menu. A post by user u/bennyboi100, posted 15 days ago, is shown with a score of 78. The post text reads: "One thing that always amazes me about America is these crazy huge storms every time I'm here". Below the text is a weather radar image showing a map of the central United States with radar returns. The radar image includes a legend for RAIN (green), SNOW (blue), ICE (pink), and MIX (purple). The time on the radar is 12:27. The map shows radar returns over Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri, with labels for cities like Amarillo, Oklahoma City, Springfield, and Wichita. A weather icon at the bottom of the radar shows a cloud with rain and a temperature of 67°. To the right of the post, there is an "About Community" section with the text "Welcome to stormfront", "5.6k Members", "5 Online", and "Created Dec 13, 2009". Below this is a "Moderators" section listing several moderators with their usernames and a brief description of their role or interests. The moderators listed are u/salvage, u/Herkimer, u/tzvika613, u/VOICEOFREASON, u/Einstimer, u/TheGhostOfTzvika, u/COINTELPROAgent, u/TheRevengeOfJosh, and u/BudrickBundy. A "VIEW ALL MODERATORS" link is at the bottom of the list.

reddit Search LOG IN SIGN UP

**Reddit's Severe Weather Center** JOIN  
r/stormfront

Hot New Top ...

↑ Posted by u/bennyboi100 15 days ago  
78  
↓ One thing that always amazes me about America is these crazy huge storms every time I'm here

12:27

**RADAR**

RAIN SNOW ICE MIX

SPRINGFIELD  
OKLAHOMA CITY  
AMARILLO  
WICHITA  
LIBROCK

67°

**About Community**

Welcome to stormfront

5.6k Members 5 Online

Created Dec 13, 2009

**Moderators**

u/salvage "Warm and mild"  
u/Herkimer "Like a full force gale"  
u/tzvika613 "A foul wind"  
u/VOICEOFREASON "Knows which way the win...  
u/Einstimer "Storm conditions ahead"  
u/TheGhostOfTzvika "A wind cold as the heart ...  
u/COINTELPROAgent "Mostly sunny with a cha...  
u/TheRevengeOfJosh "Cold Rain and Snow"  
u/BudrickBundy "Come Rain Or Come Shine"

[VIEW ALL MODERATORS](#)

<3

# Dog-whistles

- Dog-whistle politics is political messaging employing coded language that appears to mean one thing to the general public at large while having a different, more specific resonance for a targeted subgroup.



Other references:

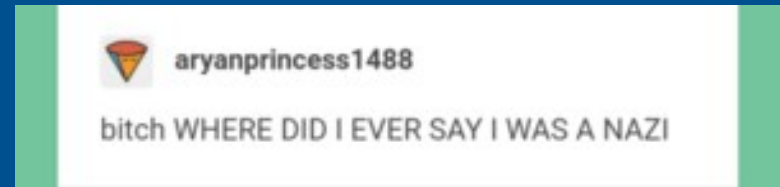
[https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Alt-right\\_glossary](https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Alt-right_glossary)

<https://www.adl.org/hate-symbols>

# Notable Dog-Whistles

## Stuff you might know:

Pepe the frog, OK hand symbol



## Stuff you probably don't:

14/88: Reference to the 14 words of white supremacist David Lane, 88 being HH in the alphabet (aka Heil Hitler)

((())) i.e. triple parentheses: used to insinuate Jewish ancestry

12: AB (Aryan Brotherhood)

311: 11 → K three times

3%er: militia group, catchphrase signifying that one will take up arms for America

Blueish: placeholder for Jewish. Includes photo manipulation giving subject a bluer tint.



# Vague Discussion Questions idk

**Who is responsible for content moderation?**

**Who/what are the most important targets?**

**How should action be taken?**

**Other things we should consider about fascism or neo-fascism?**

# The American Intelligence Community

- 16 agencies
- Coordinated by Office of the Director of National Intelligence
- Budget peak of ~\$80 billion in 2010; budget of a humble ~\$66.8 billion in 2015
- Can collect telephone data of U.S. civilians and foreigners; tap servers of major internet firms (PRISM); tap internet routers and fiber optics cables...



# Random Points about Terrorism in America, 1990-2008

## - 1995 Oklahoma City bombing

Perpetrated by separatist and white-supremacist Timothy McVeigh

168 deaths, >600 wounded. The *deadliest* act of American domestic terrorism to date.

FBI increases staff investigating domestic terrorism

## - 9/11 – no one cares about terror groups that are not Islamist terror groups anymore

## - The internet – easier dissemination + transnationalization of neo-fascist ideology + methods of violence

Monitored by a small team in the DHS, headed by Daryl Johnson

## - Election of President Barack Obama

Led to an explosion in white supremacist recruitment and radicalization

Evidence by spike in membership on Stormfront, formation of anti-government militia groups, at least two assassination plots against Obama in the final months of the campaign



# From the 9/11 Commission Report

We need to design a balanced strategy for the long haul, to attack terrorists and prevent their ranks from swelling while at the same time protecting our country against future attacks. We have been forced to think about the way our government is organized... Congress needs dramatic change as well to strengthen oversight and focus accountability.





# Protecting our country against future attacks, you say?

**Thomas Metzger (leader of White Aryan Resistance) on 9/11:**

“If an Aryan wants an example of ‘Victory or Valhalla,’ look no further.”

**Victor Gerhard (Vanguard News Network):**

“We should be blowing up NYC and DC, not waiting for a bunch of camel Jockeys to do it for us.”





# The Trouble With Words

- 3/2009: Daryl Johnson and co-workers in the FBI brief Janet Napolitano, secretary of Homeland Security, on findings about lone-wolf “right-wing extremism.” Report released in April.
- Immediate backlash from anti-government groups, the far-right, and the Republican party over the term “right-wing extremism” and description of possible radicalization of veterans

John Boehner, then minority leader of the House: the term is used “to describe American citizens who disagree with the direction Washington Democrats are taking our nation.”

Johnson is fired, right-wing extremism unit dismantled, Napolitano forced to publicly apologize to veterans.



# Fun with the FBI

- “We investigate violence, not ideology”

- **James Comey on 2015 Dylann Roof shooting**

“Terrorism is more of a political act... [and] based on what I know [...] I don’t see [the Charleston shooting] as a political act.”

- **FBI Domestic Terrorism-Hate Crimes Fusion Cell established 2019**

At least 7 mass shootings/white supremacist attacks thwarted in the two weeks following El Paso shooting

- **1/2020: Arrests 7 members of the Base**

Intel on the Base gathered with an undercover agent, recordings from a bugged apartment

- **Emphasis on community outreach + wiretaps**

- **FBI Director Christopher Wray, 5 Feb 2020 House Oversight hearing**

The agency has “elevated to the top-level priority racially motivated violent extremism, so it’s on the same footing in terms of our national threat banding as ISIS and homegrown violent extremism.”



Justin Herdman, top federal prosecutor in northern Ohio, lecturing local African American pastors on the threat of gunmen targeting their congregations.

# Fun with the DHS

- 2009-2019: Almost nothing
- 9/2019: Releases “Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence”

Under administration of acting secretary Kevin McAleenan. As of 6/2020, the DHS is headed by acting secretary Chad Wolf

Describes in detail the threat of violent white supremacists. Goals include improved data collection on patterns of violence esp. wrt hate crimes, improve information sharing, new threat evaluation and reporting program (NTER)

Issues of budget and personnel cuts will be an obstacle to achieving the goals it sets out

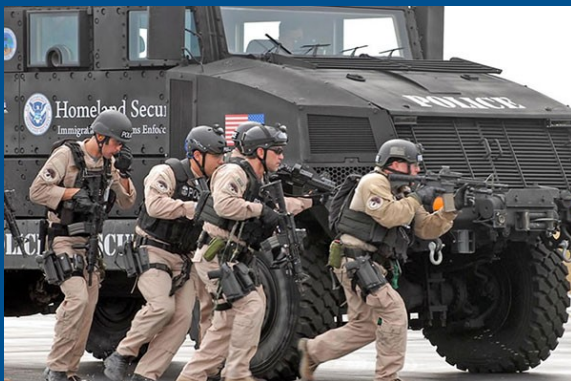
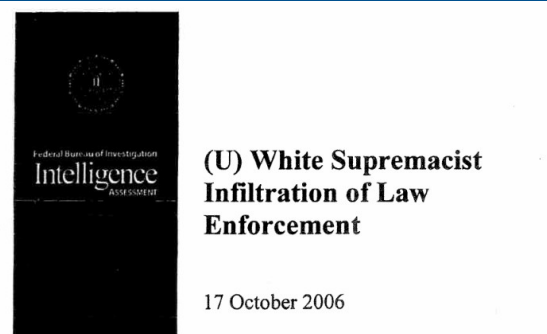


A page from the DHS report.  
Why was this necessary?

# Law Enforcement Ties to Neo-Fascism

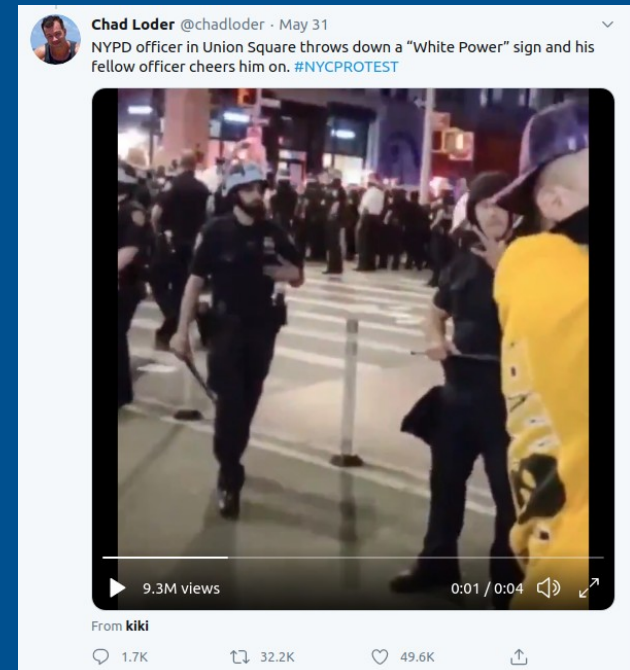
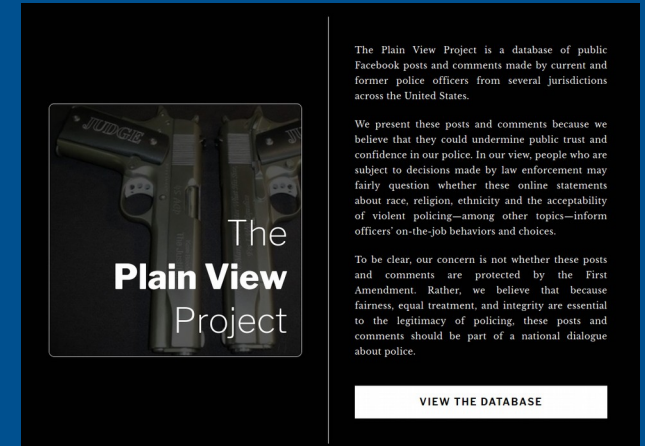


- White supremacist infiltration of law enforcement
- Militarization of local police forces and other groups, such as ICE
- Facebook groups of police officers posting violent and hateful memes
- Pattern of a lack of repercussions for police officers who exhibit violent/racist behavior, commit crimes, and lie



<https://www.justsecurity.org/70507/white-supremacist-infiltration-of-us-police-forces-fact-checking-national-security-advisor-obrien/>

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/emilyhoerner/police-facebook-racist-violent-posts-comments-philadelphia>

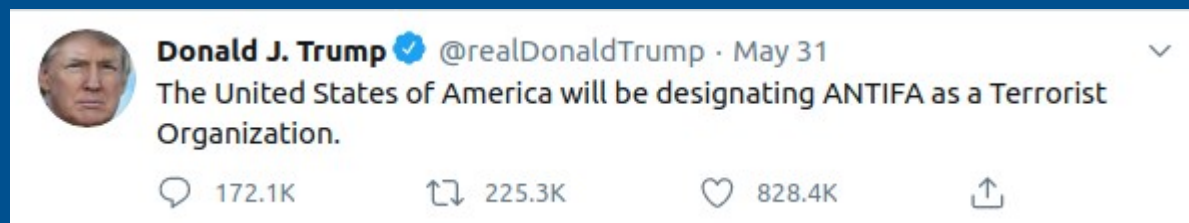
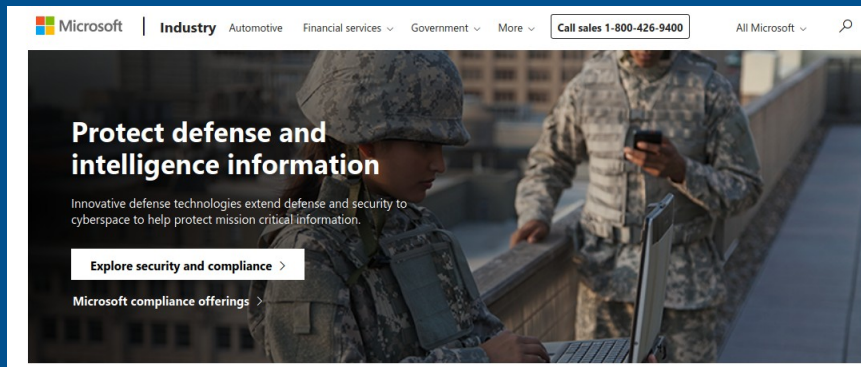




# Law Enforcement, Surveillance, and Neo-Fascism



- Clearview AI Facial Recognition
- NYPD + DAS (partnership with Microsoft)



[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/clearview-ai-facial-recognition-alt-right\\_n\\_5e7d028bc5b6cb08a92a5c48](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/clearview-ai-facial-recognition-alt-right_n_5e7d028bc5b6cb08a92a5c48)



# What ever shall we do?

## - Neo-fascism in police forces

- instituting and enforcing civilian review boards + community meetings on these issues
- a court ruling on more expansive enforcement of the Brady doctrine  
<https://law.lclark.edu/live/files/28080-lcb231article2johnsonpdf>
- pressure on local offices of budget and management

## - What should be put under surveillance?

- Seattle and California's Oakland, Berkeley, Davis, and SF have banned municipal police from deploying new surveillance methods w/o approval from local government / members of the community. What are some guiding principles?