

100 DAYS IN TRUMP'S AMERICA



SPLC  Southern Poverty Law Center
Fighting Hate
Teaching Tolerance
Seeking Justice

100 DAYS IN TRUMP'S AMERICA

WHITE NATIONALISTS AND THEIR AGENDA INFILTRATE THE MAINSTREAM

ABOUT THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

The Southern Poverty Law Center, based in Montgomery, Alabama, is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) civil rights organization founded in 1971 and dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society.

For more information about

THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

visit www.splcenter.org

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TAKES SHAPE	7
100 DAYS REPORT PROFILES	9
THE CONSPIRACY THEORIST-IN-CHIEF: TRUMP AND THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE RADICAL RIGHT	14
100 DAYS OF TRUMP'S AMERICA: A TIMELINE	18
HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN OUR DEMOCRACY	26
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	28

WHITE NATIONALISTS AND THEIR AGENDA INFILTRATE THE MAINSTREAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As he spoke to the nation on Jan. 20, President Donald Trump reminded white nationalists why they had invested so much hope in him as their champion and redeemer. He painted a bleak picture of America: a nation of crumbling, third-world infrastructure, “rusted-out factories,” leaky borders, inner cities wallowing in poverty, a depleted military and a feckless political class that prospered as the country fell into ruin. He promised an “America First” policy that would turn it all around. “This American carnage stops right here and stops right now,” Trump declared.

The inaugural address echoed the themes of a campaign that had electrified the white nationalist – or “alt-right” – movement with its promise to stop all Muslim travelers at the border and deport millions of undocumented immigrants – killers and “rapists,” Trump called them. Four days after the inauguration, white nationalist leader Richard Spencer told a TV interviewer, “Trump is a white nationalist, so to speak. He is alt-right whether he likes it or not.”

Despite his failure to achieve any major legislative victories, Trump has not disappointed his alt-right followers. His actions suggest that – unlike the economic populism of his campaign – Trump’s appeals to the radical right did indeed presage his White House agenda. On Jan. 31, former Klan leader David Duke tweeted: “everything I’ve been talking about for decades is coming true and the ideas I’ve fought for have won.”

During the first 100 days of Trump’s presidency, he surrounded himself with extremist advisers and implemented policies designed to reverse civil rights gains from recent decades and push vulnerable communities even further toward the margins of society.

In this report, the Southern Poverty Law Center examines:

- The extremists who Trump has appointed as key advisers at the White House and leaders within the Administration who are devoted to rolling back civil rights protections, decimating the social safety net and implementing a nationalist worldview.
- How the Trump presidency is a triumph for the true manufacturers of “fake news.” His presence in the White House is the end result of a decades-long project by conservative politicians and media figures to delegitimize mainstream journalism and to herd a highly conservative segment of voters into an echo chamber of right-wing media. First as a candidate and now as president, Trump has given a giant megaphone to the baseless conspiracy theories and fabrications of the radical right.
- Key moments during the first 100 days, including appointments of extremists who have flown under the media’s radar; the promotion of conspiracy theories; the ramping up of deportation efforts; and the elimination of Obama-era efforts to reform the criminal justice system.



THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TAKES SHAPE

THE EXTREMIST ADVISERS

In the hours after Donald Trump's unexpected election victory there was still talk that he might finally pivot away from the extreme rhetoric of his campaign. In his victory speech he declared "now it's time to bind the wounds of division ... it is time come together as one united people." He pledged to be "a President for all Americans." The substance and tone of the speech was a sharp contrast to what Mr. Trump and his surrogates said on the campaign trail. Some thought that he may finally be moderating.

But just 24 hours after that speech it became clear that President Trump would be a continuation of candidate Trump. As early as November 10 rumors began to swirl that **Stephen Bannon**, who bragged about turning Breitbart News into "the platform for the alt-right," would be Trump's chief of staff (ultimately he became a chief strategist). Racists immediately voiced their support, including David Duke who tweeted that "Steve Bannon is the one man Trump should keep around."

Along with Bannon and an array of conservative billionaires, Trump installed a handful of advisers who are closer to the radical right than to the mainstream. They include:

- Retired Lt. Gen. **Michael T. Flynn**, a conspiracy theory peddler with close ties to Muslim-bashing extremists. Named national security adviser, he was fired less than a month into office, ostensibly for lying to Vice President Mike Pence about his conversations with the Russian ambassador.
- **Stephen Miller**, a former right hand to then-Sen. Jeff Sessions and a one-time acolyte of anti-Muslim extremist David Horowitz. From his previous perch in the Senate, the senior presidential adviser served as a

bridge to Breitbart and a key player in helping defeat efforts to reform the immigration system.

- **Sebastian Gorka**, a terrorism adviser who is associated with neo-Nazis in his native Hungary. Gorka has been aligned with anti-Muslim extremist groups since immigrating to the United States in 2008.

Bannon, in particular, embodied the hopes and dreams of white nationalists with his blow-it-all-up style and apocalyptic worldview. He thrilled them with his hyper-nationalism, his firebrand attacks on "globalists" and Republican "cucks," and his stated desire to "deconstruct" the "administrative state."

Trump brought into the White House two writers from Bannon's Breitbart: Gorka, as a deputy assistant, and Julia Hahn, as special assistant to the president.

As chief of staff for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Trump appointed Julie Kirchner, who spent nearly a decade as executive director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). The group, which is included on the SPLC's list of hate groups, has deep ties to white nationalists and eugenicists. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) hired Jon Feere, a legal analyst at the Center for Immigration Studies. The group is an offshoot of FAIR and also listed as a hate group by the SPLC.

Perhaps Trump's most consequential appointment was Jeff Sessions as attorney general. Sessions, who was once denied a federal judgeship amid allegations of racism, was the most powerful ally of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim extremist groups while serving as a U.S. senator from Alabama.

THE WHITE NATIONALIST AGENDA

Trump moved quickly to make good on his most inflammatory promises, particularly those related to immigration, his core issue. Here are the major policy

actions of his agenda over the first 100 days:

- **Immigration.** Trump signed executive orders instructing the Department of Homeland Security to hire 5,000 new

Border Patrol agents; build detention facilities near the border; take steps to begin building a border wall; and prioritize the deportation of undocumented immigrants charged “with any criminal offense” or who “pose a risk to public safety or national security.” In addition, he ordered the withholding of federal funds from so-called “sanctuary cities” that refuse to use local police to enforce federal immigration law – though the order was later blocked in court. Implementing Trump’s orders, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly directed ICE to hire 10,000 new agents and gave the agency broad new discretion to arrest and deport immigrants, including parents who can now be accused of participating in “smuggling” or “trafficking” if they bring their children into the country. The administration began publishing a weekly list of crimes committed by immigrants; directed federal prosecutors to bring more felony charges against detained immigrants; and announced it will hire 125 new immigration judges over the next two years. It also is reportedly considering curtailing safeguards intended to protect the rights and safety of detained immigrants.

- **Muslim ban.** Trump signed an executive order indefinitely suspending the entry of Syrian refugees and temporarily barring citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries – Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen – from

entering the United States. After the order was struck down as unconstitutional, he tried again with a similar order. It, too, was blocked in court.

- **Criminal justice.** Sessions has signaled that he will abandon the Justice Department’s work to rein in discriminatory policing practices. He has ordered a review of Obama-era consent decrees intended to remedy systemic constitutional violations by police departments. And he has suggested he will ramp up the drug war and oppose the bipartisan push to reform sentencing laws. In a memo, he reversed an Obama administration policy reducing the federal government’s use of prisons operated by private, for-profit companies.
- **Other civil rights issues.** Sessions dropped the Justice Department’s legal claim that Texas enacted its voter ID law with discriminatory intent. He dropped a lawsuit against North Carolina over its bathroom law targeting transgender people. Sessions and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos also rescinded federal guidelines protecting transgender students from discrimination. In addition, Trump rescinded President Obama’s Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces order requiring federal contractors to demonstrate compliance with federal law prohibiting discrimination against LGBT people.

THE EXTREMIST STYLE

Trump’s appeal to white nationalists can hardly be separated from his willingness to traffic in the most outrageous conspiracy theories and fabrications of the radical right. He forged his political identity, in fact, by leading the birther movement that questioned the heritage of the nation’s first African-American president.

Trump has long been a fan of Alex Jones, a professional conspiracy theorist who once claimed that Hillary Clinton “has personally murdered and chopped up and raped children.” In 2015, he appeared on Jones’ radio show InfoWars and declared Jones’ reputation “amazing.” Trump also for many years has maintained a close association with the far-right provocateur Roger Stone.

As president, Trump has continued the same pattern.

He has routinely attacked the mainstream media, calling it “the enemy of the people.” He has repeatedly cried “fake news” when media reports cast him in a negative light.

He has spun wild, unsubstantiated conspiracy theories – claiming that the news media routinely covers up terrorist attacks; that 3 to 5 million people cast illegal ballots for Hillary Clinton, costing him the popular vote; and that Obama conspired with British intelligence officers to tap his phones during the campaign.

He has also cavorted with extremists. The Muslim-bashing Brigitte Gabriel reportedly visited the White House and later was dining with Trump at Mar-a-Lago as U.S. warplanes bombed a Syrian air base. The overtly racist rocker Ted Nugent – who once called Obama a “subhuman mongrel” and suggested he might kill him – visited the White House with Sarah Palin.

Despite the alt-right’s windfall, as the end of the first 100 days approached, many white nationalists were growing restive. They feared Trump was straying from his “America First” doctrine after becoming increasingly engaged internationally – bombing Syria, flip-flopping on his rhetoric about China’s currency manipulation and praising NATO, for example.

Taking the long view, though, was FAIR President Dan Stein, whose nativist friends were now, as *The New York Times* put it, “in positions to carry out their agenda on a national scale.”

“We’ve worked closely with lots of people, who are now very well placed in his administration, for a long time,” Stein said.

100 DAYS REPORT PROFILES

BY DAVID NEIWERT



STEPHEN K. BANNON

Stephen K. Bannon, 63, is a onetime Naval officer and Goldman-Sachs investment banker who rose to prominence in the conservative movement by producing such right-wing agitprop documentaries as *In the Face of Evil*, a 2004 encomium to Ronald Reagan; a 2010 Tea Party promotional titled *Battle for America*; a 2010 film blaming the recession on minority-lending programs, titled *Generation Zero*; and a laudatory, 2011 portrait of Sarah Palin, titled *The Undefeated*. Bannon also was one of the founding board members of Breitbart News in 2007. After the sudden death of Andrew Breitbart, the site's founder, in 2012, Bannon took control of its operation as executive chairman. Under his direction, the site became, as he told a reporter in 2016, "the platform of the alt-right": a home for a variety of baseless smears and conspiracy theories, as well as comment forums rife with racism, anti-Semitism, misogyny and anti-LGBT hatred. Bannon reportedly resigned from the company when he joined Trump's campaign in August 2016. As chief



MICHAEL FLYNN SR.

Well before his short-lived stint as Trump's national security adviser, retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn Sr., 58, had developed a long track record of associations with anti-Muslim extremists, particularly ACT! for America, Brigitte Gabriel's Islamophobic hate group. Flynn also had a record of saying and tweeting incendiary things about Muslims, including: "Fear of Muslims is rational," and daring "Arab and Persian world 'leaders' to step up to the plate and declare their Islamic ideology sick and must be healed." Flynn also helped peddle anti-Hillary Clinton conspiracy theories. Prior to his retirement, Flynn enjoyed a decorated military career, including a stint as director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. His career came to an abrupt end shortly after reports revealed that he was under investigation by U.S. counterintelligence agencies over his contacts with Russian officials. Trump

strategist in the White House, Bannon has been largely credited with promoting policy, including the "Muslim ban," based on the conspiracist view that Islam is not a religion but a political faction espousing ideas akin to Nazism, fascism and communism.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"It's a very unpleasant topic. But we are in an outright war against jihadist Islamic fascism. And this war is, is, I think metastasizing, almost far quicker than governments can handle it. ... We have Boko Haram and other groups that will eventually partner with Isis in this global war. And it is unfortunately something that we're going to have to face, and we're going to have to face very quickly."

"I believe the world, and particularly the Judeo-Christian west, is in a crisis, and it's really the organizing principle of how we built Breitbart News to really be a platform to bring news and information to people throughout the world, principally in the west but we're expanding internationally, to let people understand the depths of this crisis. And it is a crisis both of capitalism but really of the underpinnings of the Judeo-Christian west and our beliefs."

fired him, ostensibly for lying to Vice President Mike Pence during an earlier meeting about the contacts.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"I don't see Islam as a religion. I see it as a political ideology that ... will mask itself as a religion globally, and especially in the West, especially in the United States, because it can hide behind and protect itself by what we call freedom of religion."

"We are facing another 'ism,' just like we faced Nazism, and fascism, and imperialism and communism. This is Islamism, it is a vicious cancer inside the body of 1.7 billion people on this planet and it has to be excised."

"Radical Islam is metastasizing throughout the world. What keeps me up at night is the sobering realization that evil exists. The radicalization of Islam and its barbaric cause that uses modernity to influence potentially millions around the world to join their cause should keep us all up at night."



STEPHEN MILLER

Stephen Miller, 32, was a key staffer for former Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, who is now attorney general, and is closely associated with Stephen Bannon's faction in the White House. Miller grew up in Los Angeles and spent his teen years harassing Latinos, African Americans and Asians; while a college student at Duke, he wrote columns so racist his colleagues in Sessions' Senate office were stunned.

Miller had a long association with white nationalist leader Richard Spencer, beginning with their shared college years, though Miller insists he does not share Spencer's hopes for a white ethno-state. Miller also has a record of indulging anti-Muslim rhetoric. "Wherever Muslims are found, which is in almost every country on the planet, there are adherents of the ideology of jihad," he wrote. Miller, largely seen by white nationalists as an ally, is credited with helping write (with Bannon) Trump's October speech that featured shopworn anti-Semitic tropes suggesting that Hillary Clinton was part of a nefarious global conspiracy. Miller also reportedly



SEBASTIAN GORKA

Sebastian Gorka, 47, Trump's deputy assistant and a key adviser on foreign policy, was born in London to Hungarian parents and lived in Hungary from 1992 to 2008, then immigrated to the United States, where he embarked on a career largely associated with fringe anti-Muslim groups, many of whom indulge in Islamophobic conspiracy theories. The scrutiny of Gorka became intense due to revelations in the Jewish magazine *Forward* that he and his family had longstanding ties to a Hungarian nationalist society, *Vitézi Rend*, that was allied with Nazi forces during World War II and had a history of anti-Semitic activity. It also emerged that, during his years as a political activist in Hungary from 2002 to 2008, Gorka failed the national security test and eventually became associated with a number of far-right groups. Gorka has adamantly denied any past associations with far-right

helped Bannon write the blocked Muslim ban and then denounced the courts on news talk shows for issuing their rulings, insisting: "The president's powers here are beyond question. We don't have judicial supremacy in this country. We have three co-equal branches of government."

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"Gripped by complacency and the omnipresent force of political correctness, our nation has failed to educate our youth about the holy war being waged against us and what needs to be done to defeat the Jihadists that are waging this war. American kids attend school in an educational system corrupted by the hard left. In this upside-down world, America is the villain and Jihadists the victims of our foreign policy. Instead of opening eyes, we are fastening blindfolds."

"In this bizarre era it is acceptable to depict virtually any group as the enemy but the actual enemy we are fighting. And if someone does, they are accused of fomenting Islamophobia, an intimidation tactic which has been all too successful. The actual fear that seems to grip America is violating the P.C. orthodoxy. And if this absurd fear means keeping our eyes shut about the Islamist threat, and in turn putting up a weak defense, then we will soon find ourselves face to face with something very real to fear."

groups. In the meantime, he has been closely associated with the White House's conspiracy-driven, anti Muslim policy faction.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"We must jettison political correctness. ... Now profiling has a dirty connotation. That's a dirty word. It's pejorative. But profiling is actually a synonym for common sense. ... If 98 percent of terrorists come from a certain faith community, have a certain ethnic background, have a certain travel pattern, and visit the same sites on the Internet, why are we patting down, you know, 82-year-old Episcopalian grandmothers?"

"We help people when we can help them. But that is not a contract for national suicide. That doesn't mean, as Hillary Clinton said in her private speech to the bankers, 'We don't need any borders, pull down the borders, the whole Western Hemisphere is one big happy party!' It doesn't mean that you quintuple the number of refugees. If she had won, what Nigel is talking about, Europe, is what America would have been like in five years' time, if Hillary had become the President."



MICHAEL ANTON

Michael Anton, 47, is a senior national security official for the White House with a relatively obscure background. A former speechwriter for Rudy Giuliani and the National Security Council, he became famous in conservative circles by penning, under the pseudonym “Publius Decius Mus” (a Roman consul who sacrificed his life for the success of his troops), a September 2016 essay, “The Flight 93 Election.” The essay largely made the alt-right case for electing Trump, condemning “Conservatism, Inc.,” saying it “reeks of failure.” He attacked immigrants as well: “The ceaseless importation of Third World foreigners with no tradition of, taste for, or experience in liberty means that the electorate grows more left, more Democratic, less Republican, and less traditionally American with every cycle,” the essay asserted, describing the children of immigrants as “ringers to form a permanent electoral majority.” Exposed by journalist Jonathan Chait, who described Anton’s essay as “a classic justification for authoritarianism,” Anton has remained largely unapologetic but low-profile. His presence in the White House was

questioned by many critics, including conservative pundit William Kristol, who compared Anton to an infamous Nazi philosopher.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

“[M]ost important, the ceaseless importation of Third World foreigners with no tradition of, taste for, or experience in liberty means that the electorate grows more left, more Democratic, less Republican, less republican, and less traditionally American with every cycle.”

“This is insane. This is the mark of a party, a society, a country, a people, a civilization that wants to die. Trump, alone among candidates for high office in this or in the last seven (at least) cycles, has stood up to say: I want to live. I want my party to live. I want my country to live. I want my people to live. I want to end the insanity.”

“Trump’s two slogans – ‘Make America Great Again’ and ‘Take Our Country Back’ – point to the heart of Trumpism: ‘America First.’ Some will no doubt flinch at being reminded of an alleged stain on America’s past. This is not the place to explain or defend 1940-41’s (unfairly maligned) America First Committee. It’s just that those two words capture the essence and appeal of Trumpism as no others do or could.”



JULIE KIRCHNER

Julie Kirchner, named chief of staff at U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), spent nearly 10 years as the executive director of an anti-immigrant hate group, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, before leaving in 2015 to become an immigration adviser to the Trump campaign. Kirchner began her tenure at FAIR as its director of government relations in 2005, then was named the organization’s executive director in 2007, the

year it was designated a hate group. Among the initiatives launched by FAIR during her tenure was a campaign to erase the 14th Amendment’s guarantee of citizenship to everyone born in the United States.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

“Before President Obama’s failed presidency comes to an end, he is trying to force Americans to accept 30 percent more refugees – providing ISIS a path for their terrorists to enter the country. ... In recent years, hundreds of foreign-born terrorists have been apprehended in the United States alone.”



KELLYANNE CONWAY

A longtime presence on cable-TV talk shows as a conservative pundit, Kellyanne Conway, 50, rose to prominence as Trump's campaign manager during the 2016 election and as a regular spokesperson for Trump both before and after the election; she currently is the chief counselor to the president. Conway built her political career primarily as a pollster for Republican campaigns and appeared on nearly every cable TV channel, particularly Fox News, as a spokesperson for conservative causes. She also developed a lengthy track record of working with anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim extremists, as well as parroting their far-right views. Conway's polling firm conducted polls for anti-Muslim extremist Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy, using dubious data-collection techniques to spread Islamophobic smears. Her company also conducted polling for the anti-immigrant hate groups Federation for

American Immigration Reform and Center for Immigration Studies, and for the anti-immigration group NumbersUSA. Conway and Bannon are both believed to be members of the secretive far-right organizing group, the Council for National Policy.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"And I think this is important because the answer from lots of folks always is, 'Look, don't cast a wide net and call all Muslims nonpeaceful and violent and adhering to jihad and Shariah and bloodthirsty.' Fine. However, look at the data. The Muslims living in the U.S. themselves - 27 percent of them, anyway - say that this is what the purpose of jihad is, to either punish nonbelievers (16 percent) or, the other 11 percent, to undermine non-Muslim states."

"You're saying it's a falsehood. And they're giving - Sean Spicer, our press secretary - gave alternative facts. ... Think about what you just said to your viewers. That's why we feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there."



JULIA HAHN

Julia Hahn, the chief immigration correspondent for Breitbart.com, was named to Stephen Bannon's staff as a special assistant to the president. After beginning her career as a producer for right-wing pundit Laura Ingraham and spokesperson for Rep. Dave Brat, Hahn joined Breitbart in July 2015, and specialized in fear-mongering, anti-immigration pieces attacking both Latinos and Muslims. She also was fond of pieces criticizing House Speaker Paul Ryan for being insufficiently conservative; specifically, Ryan was seen as "soft" on immigration, and Hahn wrote several pieces attacking him for supposedly allowing immigrant criminals into the country. She also penned hysterical pieces claiming that under Hillary Clinton, the Muslim population in the U.S. would explode. In the White House, she is widely perceived as being a key player in the anti-Muslim faction led by Bannon.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"There is no public record that House Speaker Paul Ryan has ever spoken out about Pharis' sexual assault. ... Ryan has remained passive and quiet as criminal aliens have assaulted tens of thousands of American women, but when an 11-year-old audio tape emerged of Donald Trump caught on a hot mic discussing women in crass terms, Ryan declared himself 'sickened' and spoke out."

"If the U.S. had an immigration policy that resembled the admission policy of Speaker Ryan's school - i.e. it recruited migrants from churches and synagogues overseas and offered discounted migration to people who attended churches and synagogues - although a Muslim migrant could theoretically get in, the effect would be to substantially reduce Muslim migration and increase Christian and Jewish migration relative to it - a policy which Ryan finds reprehensible for the country, but ideal for his kids' school."

"While Ryan chooses to insulate his children in an academic environment that considers religion in its admissions process, he has been adamant that the American people are not entitled to be similarly selective about who comes into their country to live as their neighbors, receive their tax dollars, fill public university slots, demand affirmative action, or potentially radicalize against their own country."

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIST- IN-CHIEF: TRUMP AND THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE RADICAL RIGHT

“It is surreal to talk about issues here on air, and then word-for-word hear Trump say it two days later.”

- ALEX JONES, AUGUST 2016

The president has a problem with “fake news.” He sees it everywhere – CNN, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*.

He claims to be the victim of a plot by malicious forces in the media – the “enemy of the people,” as he calls them. “[T]hey have no sources. They just make it up,” he said in a Feb. 24 speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference.

The reality is something far different.

President Trump is not the victim of fake news. Rather, he is the purveyor. He is also the beneficiary.

The undeniable truth is that Trump – first as a candidate and now, in his first 100 days as president – has given a giant megaphone to the baseless conspiracy theories and fabrications of the radical right, many of them freighted with racial and anti-Semitic undertones.

His election, in fact, represented a triumph for the true manufacturers of fake news. Arguably, his presence in the White House is the end result of a decades-long project by conservative politicians and media figures to delegitimize mainstream journalism and to herd a highly conservative segment of voters into a hermetically sealed echo chamber of right wing media.

Trump’s brand won the day in a political and media culture in which actual facts are less persuasive or relevant to many partisans on the right than the paranoid, fact-challenged delusions of people like the far-right extremist Alex Jones, America’s most prolific conspiracy theorist.

Trump, in fact, won despite a series of lies and tall tales that in the past surely would have doomed a candidate for president of the United States.

He continued the pattern in his first 100 days in office – spinning conspiracy theories about millions of illegal ballots that cost him the popular vote, about a news media that covers up terrorist attacks around the globe and about an illegal plot by President Obama to wiretap him.

How did this happen? Why are so many conservative Americans willing to suspend disbelief when it comes to politics?

Though only recently has the internet provided a platform to disseminate disinformation to virtually every person in the country, American politics has for centuries been fertile ground for “conspiratorial fantasy” – an “arena for angry minds,” as the historian Richard Hofstadter put it in his famous 1964 essay “The Paranoid Style in American Politics.”

Hofstadter’s still-relevant piece provides important insights that help explain what is happening today and how it relates to Trump’s appeal to white people who feel left behind in an increasingly diverse country experiencing dislocations related to technology and globalization.

What Hofstadter could not have envisioned is the role of the internet and the related diminution of the power of journalistic gatekeepers to act as a sort of firewall to block unsubstantiated, fringe propaganda from mainstream audiences.

But he did note a fundamental shift in the nature of conspiracy theories. For much of the nation’s history, they involved perceived enemies who threatened to rain down economic ruin or undermine the American way of life – secret cabals involving the Pope and the Catholics, the Masons, the Jews, the Illuminati, global bankers, gold traders or others.

During the 20th century, new conspiracy theories provided a general framework – and a set of enemies, even if illusory – for the dispossessed on the right who believed that they were losing control of their country. Now, the villains were leftist conspirators working from within: “The old American virtues have already been eaten away by cosmopolitans and intellectuals; the old competitive capitalism has been gradually undermined by socialist and communist schemers; the old national security and independence have been destroyed by treasonous plots, having as their most powerful agents not merely outsiders and foreigners as of old but major statesmen who are at the very centers of American power.”

What Hofstadter describes is largely the lore promoted by the likes of the John Birch Society (JBS), whose founder, Robert Welch, famously called Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower “a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy.” It’s what we saw during the McCarthy era – and it’s what we see today.

These ideas underpin today's so-called Patriot movement, a collection of far-right militias and groups like the JBS who believe that powerful, secretive elites are plotting to institute a "New World Order" – a socialistic, totalitarian government that will destroy American democracy and enslave its people.

Clearly, most conservatives don't believe the grander elements of these theories. But there are infinite mini-theories and ways that left-leaning figures and their agendas can be neatly folded into this generalized worldview. The Clintons, of course, are central players, as is George Soros – as is any politician who wants to enact, say, gun regulations, land-use protections or single-payer health care.

Because of people like Alex Jones and the platform provided by the internet, extremist conspiracy theories related to these notions now reach millions of people daily. They gain currency in the mainstream through the agency of rightwing politicians and commentators who fulminate on media venues such as Fox News and Breitbart, the website that presidential strategist Stephen K. Bannon bragged became "the platform for the alt-right" when he ran it.

Into this environment stepped Trump, the popular star of a reality television show.

Barack Obama, he said, was really a Muslim named Barry Soetoro who was born in Kenya and never really went to Columbia University. Hillary Clinton was "crooked Hillary," the pawn of nefarious globalists, a woman who was seriously ill during the campaign and may have been on drugs during a debate. And, Justice Antonin Scalia was likely murdered. Then there's Trump's Republican primary rival Ted Cruz – "Lyin' Ted," whose father was involved in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The list of falsehoods goes on and on.

In the case of Rafael Cruz and the JFK assassination, Trump said he got the information from a supermarket tabloid. Many of his lies, however, have come directly or indirectly from InfoWars, the website and weekly radio show operated by Alex Jones. It's important to remember that Jones earns a lucrative living by making the most scurrilous of unsubstantiated claims. He has asserted, for example, that the Sandy Hook massacre of schoolchildren was a government act, that Obama is a "hardcore Wahhabist; he is al-Qaeda," and that Hillary Clinton "has personally murdered and chopped up and raped children."

Trump is a big fan. He appeared on InfoWars in December 2015 and declared Jones' reputation "amazing." He told the internet fabulist, "I will not let you down. You will be very impressed, I hope, and I think

we'll be speaking a lot." Jones has said that he spoke with Trump after the election. He also said in January that InfoWars has been offered White House press credentials.

It's also important to remember Trump's long personal association with two other men who plowed in the field of conspiracy theories for many years: Roy Cohn and Roger Stone. (Not to mention Michael Flynn, the anti-Muslim activist who was fired as national security adviser.)

Cohn was the chief counsel to Sen. Joseph McCarthy who played a key role in the communist witch hunts of the 1950s, which relied on unfounded accusations that communist agents had infiltrated the highest levels of the government. In a June 20, 2016, article about his relationship with Trump, *The New York Times* described Cohn as "Senator Joseph McCarthy's Red-baiting consigliere." Later, he worked as Trump's lawyer and became somewhat of a mentor to the young man who would be president. The two men, the *Times* wrote, were "so inseparable that those who could not track down Mr. Cohn knew whom to call."

It was Cohn who introduced Trump to Stone, the former Nixon man and smear artist who became a long-time Trump political adviser and confidant. Stone, also a former lobbying partner of fired Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, claimed in one of his books that the Clintons were responsible for the murders of as many as 83 people. In another, he claimed that President Lyndon B. Johnson was behind the Kennedy assassination. Not surprisingly, Stone appears regularly on Alex Jones' show. In his book *The Making of the President 2016*, Stone writes that Jones and his media network "turned out to be Trump's secret weapon."

New York magazine recently reported that Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and closest adviser, reassured acquaintances during the campaign that Trump did not actually believe many of the outlandish things he was saying.

If he did believe them, it would demonstrate a dangerous degree of gullibility and ignorance. It would mean the president of the United States is incapable of critically assessing information and distinguishing between demonstrable fact and blatant falsehood.

On the other hand, if what Kushner said is true, it means Trump is deliberately lying – day after day – to the American public, a conclusion that many have already reached.

In any event, in his first 100 days in office, Trump remained true to form, continuing to push conspiracy theories without providing any evidence to support them.

The following are the most prominent ones of his first three months in office.

MILLIONS OF ILLEGAL ALIENS VOTED - FOR HILLARY

Days after the inauguration, Trump told congressional leaders at a White House reception that 3 to 5 million “illegals” had cast ballots in November, causing him to lose the popular vote. Trump called for a “major investigation into VOTER FRAUD” in a tweet later that week.

Trump then told ABC News’ David Muir that every one of the votes in the massive fraud operation went to Hillary Clinton. “They all voted for Hillary,” Trump said. “They didn’t vote for me. I don’t believe I got one. Okay, these are people that voted for Hillary Clinton.”

Earlier, in late November, he had tweeted that he would have won the popular vote “if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally.”

Trump’s claim was traced to right wing activist Gregg Phillips, who has been involved with right wing groups promoting myths about voter fraud. On Nov. 11, Phillips tweeted: “Completed analysis of database of 180 million voter registrations. Number of non-citizen votes exceeds 3 million. Consulting legal team.” Three days later, the InfoWars website ran a story reporting Phillips’

“findings,” with a headline that read: “Trump may have won popular vote.” A number of other right wing media outlets also ran with the story.

Trump said in the same post-inauguration meeting with congressional leaders that he would have won New Hampshire if not for “thousands” of people bused in from Massachusetts. Stephen Miller, a senior adviser to the president, vaguely addressed the issue on ABC’s “This Week”: “I can tell you that this issue of busing voters in to New Hampshire is widely known by anyone who’s worked in New Hampshire politics. It’s very real, it’s very serious. This morning on this show is not the venue for me to lay out all the evidence.”

That’s because there is no evidence. Experts have roundly dismissed Trump’s voter fraud claims. To this date, no one – including Phillips – has provided any evidence whatsoever to support the claims. The reality, experts say, is that voter fraud is exceedingly rare.

JOURNALISTS COLLECTIVELY IGNORE TERRORIST ATTACKS

On Feb. 6, Trump claimed in a speech to the U.S. Central Command that the American media was intentionally failing to report terrorist attacks.

“You’ve seen what happened in Paris, and Nice. All over Europe, it’s happening,” he stated. “It’s gotten to a point where it’s not even being reported. And in many cases the very, very dishonest press doesn’t want to report it. They have their reasons, and you understand that.”

Trump offered no evidence, but the administration later gave reporters a list of 78 terrorist attacks “executed and inspired by ISIS.” A White House official said that the attacks, which occurred from September 2014 to December 2016, “did not receive adequate attention from Western media sources.”

The list appeared to be hastily assembled and contained a number of typos. Media outlets responded defensively by republishing their reporting on each attack. Many of the attacks had, indeed, received exhaustive coverage, including the nightclub attack in Orlando, Florida, and shooting in San Bernardino, California.

Trump’s false claims about the media cover-up appear to have stemmed from stories published on InfoWars. For months, the website had been claiming that the mainstream media whitewashes stories of terror attacks to further a political agenda. One typical headline: “SCANDAL: MASS MEDIA COVERS UP TERRORISM TO PROTECT ISLAM.”

TERRORISTS STRIKE IN SWEDEN - AND NO ONE BUT TRUMP NOTICES

At a rally in Florida on Feb. 18, Trump mentioned a terrorist attack in Sweden. “You look at what’s happening last night in Sweden! Sweden! Who would believe this, Sweden!” he told the crowd.

“They took in large numbers [of refugees and immigrants]. They’re having problems like they never thought possible. You look at what’s happening in Brussels. You look at what’s happening all over the world. Take a look at Nice. Take a look at Paris.”

In fact, nothing had happened in Sweden.

Trump’s claims came from a Fox News segment that aired the night before with filmmaker Ami Horowitz, whose new documentary links immigration with areas of high crime in Sweden. As Horowitz described rampant violent crime, including rape, in “no-go zones” – areas “cops won’t even enter because it’s too dangerous for them” – images of a dark-skinned man attacking a police officer and a burning car repeatedly flashed across the screen.

In a clip from the documentary, two Swedish officers

appear to confirm the filmmaker's contention that immigrants were responsible for a surge of crime in their country.

After the controversy erupted, however, the two officers said they had been taken out of context, that immigration was never mentioned in the interview. "We don't stand behind it," one of the officers said. "It shocked us. He has edited the answers. We were answering completely

different questions in the interview."

A riot did occur in a predominantly immigrant neighborhood of Stockholm days *after* Trump's comments. The incident was an isolated one, and an analysis by a Swedish newspaper showed that between October 2015 and January 2016 refugees were responsible for only 1 percent of the country's criminal incidents.

OBAMA - AND THE BRITS - TAPPED HIS PHONE

One of the more bizarre episodes of Trump's first 100 days began on March 4. At 5:35 a.m., Trump tweeted: "Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!"

In three tweets that followed over the next half hour, he compared the episode to Watergate and called Obama a "bad (or sick) guy."

The tweets set off a series of events that led House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes to a secret rendezvous on White House grounds to review documents and then, on April 6, to Nunes' decision to step aside from his committee's investigation of Russian meddling in the election.

A spokesperson for Obama dismissed the "false" claims, saying that neither Obama nor any other White House official "ever ordered surveillance on any U.S. citizen."

Speaking to reporters two days after the tweets, White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer responded simply that Trump's tweets "speak for themselves." In an interview with New Jersey paper *The Record*, Kellyanne Conway listed household items that could be used for spying: "What I can say is there are many ways to surveil each other. You can surveil someone through their phones, certainly through their television sets - any number of ways - and microwaves that turn into cameras, et cetera."

By March 20, FBI Director James Comey weighed in, telling the House Intelligence Committee that he had "no information that supports those tweets."

Trump's claims appear to stem from a Breitbart article published the day before his tweet. Drawing on allegations made by radio host Mark Levin, Breitbart constructed a timeline that it said proved "the Obama administration sought, and eventually obtained, authorization to eavesdrop on the Trump campaign."

Levin characterized the unsubstantiated events as a "silent coup." Levin is no stranger to conspiracy theories. In 2013 he claimed that the Muslim Brotherhood had "infiltrated our government" and that Obama was a Muslim Brotherhood "sympathizer."

Trump and administration officials at various times attributed the claims to news reports they had read or seen on TV. At one point, Trump and Spicer both said British intelligence agents had wiretapped Trump's phone at Obama's behest. On March 17, Trump said, "All we did was quote a very talented legal mind."

The legal mind to which he referred belongs to Andrew Napolitano, a former New Jersey state judge and commentator on Fox News who has a long history of promoting conspiracy theories. Napolitano has appeared repeatedly on Alex Jones' show, where he once cast doubt on the government's account of the 9/11 attacks. Fox News quickly disavowed Napolitano's reporting about the wiretapping, and Napolitano was temporarily taken off the air.

The administration has continued to stand by its claims, though no evidence has been produced to support them.

A TIMELINE

100 DAYS OF TRUMP'S AMERICA

**JAN
20**

Donald J. Trump is sworn in as the 45th president. His inauguration speech paints a bleak picture of an American landscape wracked by “carnage.” The school system, he claims, leaves children “deprived of all knowledge” despite being “flush with cash.” Middle-class wealth, he says, has been “ripped” away and “redistributed all across the world.” He promises to place “America first” – a slogan associated with the America First Committee, an anti-Semitic, isolationist group that emerged in 1940 to prevent American involvement in World War II.

David Duke, the neo-Nazi and former Klan leader, tweets, “We did it! Congratulations to Donald J. Trump President of the United States of America!”

Trump names John Gore as deputy assistant attorney general for civil rights. Gore defended the University of North Carolina against an ACLU lawsuit challenging a state law banning transgender people from using bathrooms conforming to their gender identity. He has also defended controversial Republican redistricting plans enacted after the 2010 census in Florida, New York and South Carolina.

**JAN
22**

The White House announces that two former Breitbart reporters will join the administration. Julia Hahn is appointed special assistant to the president, working under her former boss, Stephen K. Bannon. Sebastian Gorka, who served as Breitbart’s national security editor, is appointed deputy assistant to the president.

**JAN
24**

During an interview on The David Pakman Show, white nationalist leader Richard Spencer, who coined the phrase “alt-right,” argues that “Trump is a white nationalist, so to speak. He is alt-right whether he likes it or not.”

**JAN
25**

Trump signs two executive orders pertaining to immigration and border security. One instructs the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to hire 5,000 additional Border Patrol agents, build detention facilities near the Mexican border, and immediately take steps to construct a border wall. The second order notes that the administration will prioritize deportation of immigrants who “have been charged with any criminal offense” – but not necessarily convicted – or who “in the judgment of an immigration officer, otherwise pose a risk to public safety or national security.” It also targets so-called “sanctuary cities” by ensuring “that jurisdictions that fail to comply with applicable Federal law do not receive Federal funds.”

**JAN
27**

Trump releases a statement on International Holocaust Remembrance Day that neglects to mention the 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis. When pressed, the White House refuses to offer an apology or addendum, insisting that many groups suffered. “Holocaust denial is alive and well in the highest office of the White House,” responded Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt. White nationalist leader Richard Spencer called it the “de-Judaification” of the Holocaust.

Trump signs an executive order barring citizens from the majority-Muslim countries of Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen from entering the United States for 90 days. The order also indefinitely suspends the entry of Syrian refugees. Trump claims the order is “not a Muslim ban,” but during the campaign he had called for “a complete and total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what the hell is going on.” A federal court subsequently blocks the order, and the government’s request for its reinstatement is ultimately denied.

Trump tweets that “at least” 3 million votes in the presidential election were cast illegally. The White House is unable to provide any evidence to back up the claim.

**JAN
28**

In a White House directive, Trump gives chief strategist Bannon a seat on the National Security Council’s principals committee and demotes the director of national intelligence and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. While previous political advisers to presidents had regularly observed NSC meetings, the decision to give Bannon a seat on the principals committee is unprecedented.

**FEB
2**

Reuters reports that the Trump administration plans to rename the Countering Violent Extremist program “Countering Islamic Extremism” or “Countering Radical Islamic Extremism.” The program will focus solely on terrorism carried out by Muslims rather than include terrorism by domestic extremists associated with the radical right. “Yes, this is real life. Our memes are real life. Donald Trump is setting us free,” the white supremacist Andrew Anglin writes in response. “It just couldn’t get any better than this, I am telling myself. But I know that it is just going to keep getting better.”

Kellyanne Conway defends Trump’s Muslim ban executive order by citing a “Bowling Green massacre” committed by two Iraqi refugees. The supposed “massacre” never occurred.

**FEB
8**

The U.S. Senate confirms Jeff Sessions as attorney general. More than 1,000 legal scholars previously signed a letter expressing concern that Sessions’ views had not changed since 1986, when he was denied confirmation as a federal district judge in Alabama after accusations of having made racist remarks. Sessions also has strong ties to anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim extremist groups.

**FEB
13**

Lucian Wintrich, a writer for the *Gateway Pundit* who is well known for blatant misogyny, attends his first press briefing after being given White House press credentials. Wintrich’s inclusion in the White House press corps gives the alt-right outlet new access to the highest levels of government.

National Security Adviser Michael T. Flynn is fired. The administration says he lied to Vice President Mike Pence about discussing the Obama administration’s sanctions against Russia in a phone call with the Russian ambassador in late December. Flynn has long been associated with anti-Muslim extremist groups, particularly ACT! for America.



Former National Security Adviser
Michael T. Flynn

**FEB
14**

Kellyanne Conway tweets “Love you back” in response to a white nationalist Twitter account that had praised her. The account had previously tweeted anti-Semitic and racist posts, frequently using the hashtags #WhiteIdentity and #WhiteGenocide.

**FEB
17**

In a tweet, Trump refers to the news media as “the enemy of the American People!” He repeats the attack days later at the Conservative Political Action Conference. The phrase “enemy of the people” has troubling historical roots: Stalin used it to refer to his ideological enemies.

The first DREAMer – an immigrant meant to be protected from deportation under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program – is deported to Mexico. Juan Manuel Montes, 23, had left his wallet and identification in his friend’s car when he was approached by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection agent. He was not allowed to retrieve his documents and, despite his active DACA status, was deported only hours later. Montes was brought to the United States at age 9.

**FEB
18**

At a rally in Florida, Trump describes an imagined terrorist attack in Sweden. The night before, Fox News aired a segment dubiously linking violence in Sweden to recent Muslim immigration. Trump apparently misunderstood the report to mean a terrorist attack had occurred.

Trump spends time at Mar-a-Lago with radio host Michael Savage. The conspiracy theorist has a long history of bigotry and has suggested that Muslim immigrants come to the United States “to stab people in the street, jump the curb with a car and run them over.” Savage has also claimed that Obama was using immigration “to destroy this country through genocide.” Trump appeared on Savage’s radio show throughout his presidential campaign.

**FEB
22**

In a joint statement, the departments of Justice and Education rescind protections for transgender students that had allowed them to use bathrooms and other public school facilities corresponding to their gender identity.

**FEB
27**

The DOJ announces that it is withdrawing its claim that Texas enacted a 2011 voter ID law with racially discriminatory intent. The DOJ’s original objection to the law was filed by the Obama administration in 2013, and alleged that the law discriminated against minority voters who lacked the necessary ID.

**FEB
28**

In his first address to Congress, Trump announces that he has ordered the Department of Homeland Security to create the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement office (VOICE). The agency is tasked with producing monthly reports “studying the effects of the victimization by criminal aliens present in the United States,” an apparent effort to link immigration and criminality in the mind of the public. A robust body of research, however, shows that immigrants are less likely to commit crime than native-born American citizens.

**MAR
1**

In an NPR interview, Sebastian Gorka, a deputy assistant to Trump who has close ties to anti-Semitic groups in Hungary, refuses to say whether Trump believes that “Islam

is a religion” as opposed to a purely political ideology. “This is not a theological seminary,” he tells the interviewer, “we’re talking about national security and the totalitarian ideologies that drive the groups that threaten America.”

**MAR
4**

Trump tweets that former President Obama had his “wires tapped” before the election. The FBI disputes the claim, and no evidence emerges to support it.

**MAR
6**

Trump introduces a new executive order blocking citizens from six majority-Muslim countries from entering the country for 90 days, exempting permanent residents and current visa holders. It removes Iraq from the list of countries in the original ban and replaces the original indefinite suspension of Syrian refugees with a 120-day freeze. U.S. District Judge Derrick K. Watson blocks the order before it can take effect, concluding that it “was issued with a purpose to disfavor a particular religion.”

**MAR
7**

Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, a Trump adviser associated with an anti-immigrant hate group, meets with Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff, an anti-Muslim activist who was convicted of hate speech in her native Austria in 2011. At their meetings, Sabaditsch-Wolff repeats racist tropes, claiming that the refugee crisis in Europe has increased rates of crime and sexual assault and led to the establishment of lawless “no-go zones.”



President Trump with Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach

**MAR
13**

The U.S. State Department announces it has named Lisa Correnti as a delegate to the U.N.’s Commission on the Status of Women. Correnti

is executive vice president of the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-FAM), which is listed by the SPLC as an anti-LGBT hate group. Austin Ruse, the group's founder, has offered support for laws criminalizing LGBT people and said in 2014 that the "hard left, human-hating people that run modern universities ... should all be taken out and shot."

**MAR
16**

Trump releases a partial 2018 budget proposal that marks a shift in DOJ priorities. The department plans to eliminate \$700 million in spending for "outdated programs" while bulking up funding in areas that "target the worst of the worst criminal organizations and drug traffickers." It also asks for \$80 million to hire additional immigration judges to "bolster and more efficiently adjudicate removal proceedings."

**MAR
20**

Pursuant to an executive order, DHS releases the first installment of a weekly list of crimes perpetrated by immigrants. Andrea Pitzer, an expert on concentration camps, notes that the list is eerily reminiscent of lists of Jewish crimes published in the Nazi press.

**MAR
21**

Brigitte Gabriel, the leader of the nation's largest anti-Muslim hate group, ACT! for America, visits with White House legislative staff. Gabriel has spent her career condemning the "cancer" of Islam, which she once described as "a natural threat to the civilized people of the world." She told *Australian Jewish News* in 2007, "Every practicing Muslim is a radical Muslim."



ACT For America's Brigitte Gabriel visits the White House

**MAR
24**

Roger Severino, a staffer at the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation, is appointed director of the Office of Civil Rights for the Department of Health and Human Services. When the office issued a rule banning discrimination against transgender patients last year, Severino co-authored a critique published by the Heritage Foundation that called the new regulation a threat to the religious liberty of health care professionals.

**MAR
26**

Violence breaks out at pro-Trump rallies held over the weekend, echoing similar outbreaks at campaign rallies, including one during which Trump exhorted supporters to "beat the hell out of" protesters.

**MAR
27**

Trump rescinds the Obama-era Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces order, which required companies contracting with the federal government to demonstrate compliance with federal laws, including those prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

**APR
1**

Former Minnesota Congresswoman Michele Bachmann characterizes the Trump presidency as a divine intervention that represents a "reprieve" from immorality. Her comment comes during an interview on the "Understanding the Times" radio program alongside Philip Haney, a former DHS officer whose recent book outlines the "government's submission to Jihad" under Obama.

**APR
3**

Sessions orders the DOJ to review all of its reform agreements with local police departments. These include a consent decree with the Baltimore police and a decree still being pursued with Chicago. Both were intended to remedy systemic misconduct. Sessions previously said he had not read the Obama-era DOJ reports documenting racial disparities in policing practices in Chicago and Ferguson, Missouri. He has suggested that the DOJ would not open any new civil rights investigations of police departments under his watch.



Attorney General Jeff Sessions

**APR
4**

Donald Trump Jr., the president's son, says in a tweet that Mike Cernovich, a right-wing social media provocateur, deserves a Pulitzer Prize for a blog post reporting that Obama's national security adviser, Susan Rice, requested information on Trump associates who appeared in foreign surveillance intelligence reports. Cernovich gained an online following through advice aimed at teaching men to cultivate "dominance." He has written that "date rape doesn't exist" and that "women want to be tamed." Cernovich promoted claims that Hillary Clinton suffered from a "grave neurological condition" as well as the "Pizza-gate" conspiracy theory that Democratic officials were running a child sex ring from a Washington, D.C., pizza restaurant.

**APR
6**

The Daily Beast reports that Bannon called Trump's son-in-law and trusted adviser, Jared Kushner, a "cuck" and a "globalist." Both are terms popularized by the alt-right. The former refers to conservatives who have submitted to multiculturalism and liberalism. The latter is used to describe opponents of "nationalism" and contains anti-Semitic undertones. Kushner is Jewish.

Anti-Muslim activist Brigitte Gabriel has dinner alongside the president at his Mar-a-Lago resort. While dining, Trump carries out an air strike against Syria.

After learning of the strike on Syria, Trump's alt-right supporters turn on him. Breitbart News explodes in negative comments and rabid alt-right Trump supporters – including Paul Joseph Watson of InfoWars, social media

personality Mike Cernovich, and far-right political commentator Ann Coulter – quickly criticize Trump for betraying his pledge to put "America first." I'm officially OFF the Trump train," Watson tweets.



President Trump with son-in-law and trusted adviser Jared Kushner

**APR
7**

Trump nominates Mark E. Green, a retired Army officer and member of the Tennessee Senate, as secretary of the Army. Green has criticized federal legislation that protects LGBT individuals against discrimination in workplaces and businesses, and once referred to being transgender as a "disease."

Vice President Mike Pence speaks to the Family Research Council – an anti-LGBT hate group – during a surprise visit to an event held for the group's supporters in Washington, D.C.

**APR
8**

According to *The Washington Post*, Sessions has signaled that he will revive the war on drugs by appointing Steven H. Cook, a Knoxville-based federal prosecutor, to one of the top advisory positions in the DOJ. Cook has been a strong proponent of mandatory minimum sentencing, increasing drug prosecutions, and layering charges to increase the severity of sentences – all prosecutorial tools developed during the drug war that disproportionately harmed minorities. Though crime rates have trended downward over the last four decades, Sessions has argued that there are "clear warning signs – like the first gusts of wind before a summer storm – that this progress is now at risk," thereby justifying his moves to halt criminal justice reform.

**APR
11**

Sessions releases a memo directing federal prosecutors to bring more felony charges against undocumented immigrants. They're

instructed to tag on charges for identity theft and document fraud whenever possible. The memo also states that the DOJ will hire 50 immigration judges this year and 75 next year to supplement the 275 immigration judges currently serving. “Be forewarned,” Sessions says during a speech in Nogales, Arizona, “This is a new era. This is the Trump era.”

**APR
13**

The New York Times reports that the Trump administration intends to pare regulations that protect immigrants detained in jails. Less-burdensome contracts are designed to encourage law enforcement officials to open beds in local facilities before new detention centers can be built to accommodate the administration’s intensified deportation efforts.

After Sessions rescinds a 2016 DOJ memo that ended the use of private prisons within the federal system, the private prison corporation GEO Group announces it has signed a \$110 million contract to build a 1,000-bed immigrant detention center in Conroe, Texas. Sessions argues that the Obama-era moratorium – enacted after a DOJ study found private prisons to be less safe than those operated by the Bureau of Prisons – “impaired the Bureau’s ability to meet the future needs of the federal correctional system.”

**APR
14**

The Trump administration announces it will keep White House visitor logs a secret. The records will not be available to the public until five years after Trump leaves office.

Betsy DeVos picks Candice Jackson to serve as the deputy assistant secretary for the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights. As an undergraduate at Stanford, Jackson complained that she experienced discrimination because she was white. She also helped edit a book by an economist who criticized the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The DOJ drops a lawsuit against North Carolina over a bill that required transgender people to use public bathrooms that match the gender listed on their birth certificate. The DOJ claims to have dropped the suit because North Carolina repealed the original

law, but its replacement kept many of its provisions in place. Municipalities are now prohibited from passing their own anti-discrimination ordinances.

In response to a suit filed by three protesters he attacked at a 2016 Trump rally in Louisville, Alvin Bamberger, a 75-year-old veteran, files a countersuit alleging he attacked them at the “urging and inspiring” of the future president. Three days later, Matthew Heimbach, the leader of the white supremacist Traditionalist Youth Network, who is also being sued by the three plaintiffs for assault, files his own countersuit. Heimbach claims he “acted pursuant to the directives and requests of Donald J. Trump and Donald J. Trump for President Inc. and any liability must be shifted to one or both of them.”

**APR
15**

Far-right extremists hold a pro-Trump rally in Berkeley, California, where they clash with anti-fascist counter-protestors. Eleven people are injured and six hospitalized. Nathan Domingo, founder of a student-oriented white-nationalist group, Identity Evropa, is filmed punching a young woman in the face. Afterward, a member of the alt-right group Proud Boys, the organizers of the rally, call it an “enormous victory!”

**APR
18**

In a speech at George Washington University, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly tells lawmakers critical of his department’s heavy-handed approach to immigration and drug enforcement to either find “the courage and skills to change the laws” or “shut up.” He repeatedly chides detractors for underestimating ever-present dangers. “While you’re binge-watching *Mad Men* on Netflix, TSA is stopping an actual mad man with a loaded gun from boarding a flight to Disney World,” he said. “We are under attack from criminals who think their greed justifies raping young girls at knifepoint, dealing poison to our youth, or killing just for fun. The threats are relentless.”

After news emerges that the first DREAMer has been deported by federal agents, U.S. Rep. Steve King of Iowa tweets a photo of a beer with

the caption “Border Patrol, this one’s for you.” King previously made statements criticizing immigrants, tweeting “We can’t restore our civilization with somebody else’s babies.”

**APR
19**

Trump hosts former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin and musicians Kid Rock and Ted Nugent at the White House. In 2012, Nugent described Obama as a “gangster” and “subhuman mongrel.” The same year, he attracted the Secret Service’s attention when he said, “If Barack Obama becomes the president in November, again, I will either be dead or in jail by this time next year.” In 2016, he called for Obama and Hillary Clinton to be “tried for treason and hung.”



President Trump with former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin and musicians Kid Rock and Ted Nugent at the White House.

**APR
21**

The DOJ sends letters to officials in Chicago, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, New York City, Miami-Dade County, Milwaukee County, Cook County, and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations to warn that their federal justice program funding may be in jeopardy if they fail to prove they’re complying with immigration enforcement. “Many of these jurisdictions are also crumbling under the weight of illegal immigration and violent crime,” an accompanying press release states. It cites “gang murder after gang murder” in New York City as the “predictable consequence of the city’s ‘soft on crime’ stance,” though a reduction in gang-related shootings helped drive the city’s murder rate to historic lows in the last several years.

During an interview with The Associated Press, Trump calls Marine Le Pen, the French National Front presidential candidate who ran a campaign attacking immigrants and Muslims, the “strongest” election contender.

Trump also said a recent Paris terrorist attack that targeted police and resulted in one officer’s death will “probably help” the far-right Le Pen’s election bid.

**APR
23**

During a speech to the World Jewish Congress Plenary Assembly on Holocaust Remembrance Day, Trump recounts that the Holocaust – “the darkest chapter of human history” – resulted in the death of 6 million Jews at the hands of Nazis. For white supremacists, Trump’s remarks signal that he has abandoned their cause. “You remember when he gave the Holocaust Day message that didn’t include the Jews?” neo-Nazi Andrew Anglin writes the next day on the Daily Stormer, before claiming that the president has become “a hostage of the Jews, and he is doing their bidding.”

While discussing possible funding sources for Trump’s border wall on ABC’s “This Week,” Sessions suggests the structure could be paid for by reducing tax credits that go to “mostly Mexicans.” The 2011 report Sessions appears to reference is a study showing that \$4.2 billion in tax credits went to people who were not authorized to work in the United States but had children who were U.S. citizens, and made no reference to the nationality of the tax credit’s recipients.

**APR
24**

Trump hosts a White House reception for far-right members of the media, whom Press Secretary Sean Spicer suggests were “neglected” by the previous administration. Attendees include reporters from Breitbart News, One America News Network, Daily Caller, The Washington Free Beacon and Christian Broadcasting Network. According to Charlie Spiering, the Breitbart White House correspondent, Trump answered the reporters’ policy questions for more than half an hour.

The Anti-Defamation League reports that anti-Semitic incidents rose 86% during the first quarter of 2017 as compared to the same period the previous year. The increase is part of a longer trend that gained steam after the November election. Many of the perpetrators invoked the name of the president.

**APR
25**

A federal judge in San Francisco temporarily blocks Trump's executive order that aimed to withhold federal funding to sanctuary cities, marking the third time a judge has blocked one of Trump's executive orders.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations reports that the number of anti-Muslim profiling incidents carried out by U.S. Customs and Border Protection have increased 1,035% thus far in 2017 as compared to the same period in 2016. The 193 incidents recorded this year exceed all incidents in the past three years combined.

**APR
26**

Trump signs the "Education Federalism Executive Order" directing Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to examine whether federal regulations interfere with state and local control of the nation's schools.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN OUR DEMOCRACY

Many of you have been asking us what actions you can take to defend our democratic values. Here are several suggested actions — and we’re working on more. Whatever you end up doing, it is vital that you maintain your activism. **Whatever way you choose to fight back, do not stop. Never get discouraged.**

1. ATTEND TOWN HALLS HOSTED BY YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS.

One of the best ways to hold your elected representatives accountable is going to public forums and asking tough questions that will be answered on the record. This is especially important with lower-level officials who rarely face questions from the press.

HERE'S WHAT YOU DO:

1. Sign up for all of your elected officials’ email lists and follow them on social media so that you know when they’re hosting a town hall. Don’t just focus on Congress. Follow your state, county and city representatives. A lot of bad laws get passed at the state and local levels.
 - Cite studies and articles to bolster any claims made in your question.
2. Prepare your question ahead of time and phrase it so that it cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no” (instead of asking “Do you support...” ask “Why are you supporting...” or “How will you solve...”).
3. Bring a friend who can broadcast you asking the question on Facebook Live so those who could not attend can still participate.
4. Be polite. Your representative could give a terrible answer, but being respectful will highlight the answer.

2. STOP “ALTERNATIVE FACTS” FROM BEING SPREAD.

We know you’re on top of this, but many are not. Many Americans buy into fabrications they see in the media because it is so hard to believe that prominent political figures would knowingly make false claims. Social media is where many of us get a portion of our news — specifically, the news stories we see in our feeds. You can play an important role in influencing the news that your friends and family read by simply posting articles expressing your views on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms.

HERE'S WHAT YOU DO:

Every day post at least one important news story from a respected news outlet on Facebook. Make sure your post includes what you believe are the most important two or three sentences from the story. Realistically, most people are not going to click on the link and read the whole story, but they will read the headline and those few sentences you excerpt.
This may all seem too simple to have any real impact, but it’s how information is spread.

3. GET INVOLVED WITH LOCAL CIVIC GROUPS.

Just as important as fighting a regressive agenda is helping the people it is harming. Make a regular commitment to volunteer with a local group that is dedicated to serving vulnerable communities. Make it a group activity that you do with friends and/or family members. Also consider volunteering for a museum and similar organizations that engage in public education. Helping to spread information is vital, and these institutions need your help.

4. #REPORTHATE.

The SPLC is committed to tracking and reporting the rise in bias incidents around the country. If you or someone you know is targeted, or if you come across hateful vandalism in your community, please report it to us after reporting to the proper authorities.

www.splcenter.org/report hate

Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by Ryan Lenz, Booth Gunter, Cassie Miller and David Neiwert, and edited by Booth Gunter, Susy Buchanan, and Christine Harrison. Cierra Brinson designed the layout.

SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

CO-FOUNDERS Morris Dees, Joseph J. Levin Jr.

PRESIDENT & CEO J. Richard Cohen

INTELLIGENCE PROJECT DIRECTOR Heidi Beirich

OUTREACH DIRECTOR Lecia Brooks

LEGAL DIRECTOR Rhonda Brownstein

CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS & DEVELOPMENT OFFICER Wendy Via

DESIGN

DESIGN DIRECTOR Russell Estes

DEPUTY DESIGN DIRECTOR Valerie Downes

DESIGNERS Shannon Anderson, Cierra Brinson, Michelle Leland, Sunny Paulk, Scott Phillips, Kristina Turner

DESIGN ASSOCIATE Angela Greer



SPLC

Southern Poverty Law Center

400 Washington Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104
(334) 956-8200
splcenter.org