

United States: Trump and Racist Violence

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On October 24, a white man in Jefferson, Kentucky, shot and killed two African Americans at a grocery store. Gregory Bush was seen trying unsuccessfully to break down the doors to a predominately Black church before he turned his attention to the store and opened fire.

After the the killings he was confronted by an armed bystander, also white, who held him at bay until police arrived. Bush told the man who captured him that they shouldn't shoot each other, because "whites don't kill whites."

Two days later packages containing bombs were found, addressed to people President Trump has been attacking including prominent Democratic Party politicians including former President Obama and Hillary Clinton and other Trump targets, as well as, CNN, which he says leads the pack of media who are "enemies of the people." More such bombs were discovered in the succeeding days. None have exploded so far.

The perpetrator, Cesar Sayoc, was tracked down by federal and local authorities in his van in Florida. His van was covered with pro-Trump stickers and right wing posters. His Facebook page was filled with rage and violent fantasies against LGBTQ people, Blacks, other non-whites, and Democrats.

Then on October 27, Robert Bowers, armed with an AR-15-style assault rifle and three handguns, entered a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, shouting "Kill all Jews!" He opened fire on the worshippers gathered for Shabbat services, killing 11, and wounding two others, as well as four policemen who responded to the shooting. It was the worst case of anti-Semitic violence in U.S. history.

Bowers was shot by police and wounded before surrendering.

He especially targeted HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), which was planning a Shabbat service for refugees and immigrants in locations around the country, including Pittsburgh. Before he entered the synagogue, he tweeted, "HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in." In another post he included Muslims as those who want to slaughter whites.

Trump calls immigrants seeking asylum "invaders" who want to wreak havoc on the U.S. HIAS supports refugees from Central America seeking asylum in the U.S., as well as Muslims, and also has organizations around the world where there are large numbers of refugees.

Bowers, although generally a Trump supporter, does criticize the president from the right for "bringing Jews into the White House."

In just a few days, the world saw the racist rage among a section of whites boiling beneath the surface emerge in this display of violence.

One thing Bush, Sayoc and Bowers have in common is white supremacy and addiction to Alt-Right social media, which tie together racism, anti-Semitism, anti-immigrant militancy, Islamophobia, misogyny and so forth in an overall conception that all these targeted groups are ganging up to eliminate white people.

The background for this is the open racism and misogyny Trump has spewed since he first announced his campaign for the presidency, and which he stepped up in recent weeks in raucous rallies around the country to get out the Republican vote in the November 6 midterm elections.

After the synagogue murders, Trump did denounce anti-Semitism. But he gives anti-Semitic dog whistles aimed at his base, which includes white Christian evangelicals, who support Israel with the anti-Semitic belief that all Jews should leave whatever countries (including the U.S.) they live in and go to Israel. This, they say, is a necessary condition for Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ, the “End of Times” where Christians will ascend into heaven and the assembled Jews in Israel will be sent to hell (unless they convert).

When Trump moved the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, he had two white evangelical preachers give the opening and closing prayers. One of these is especially known, when sermonizing on the “End of Times”, to give especial emphasis on the fate of the Jews, shouting “They will all burn in hell!” Netanyahu stood near them at the ceremony, but that is another story.

After the white nationalist demonstration in Charlottesville, North Carolina, last year, that included a torchlight march chanting “Jews Will Not Replace Us” – reflecting the fear that whites are under attack. Trump said there were “good people” among them.

During one of his recent rallies Trump denounced “globalists” and proudly asserted he is a nationalist. “Globalist” has become a code word for the Alt-Right signifying the “international Jewish conspiracy,” as “cosmopolitan” once did. (Stalin was famous for using the latter term.) It goes without saying that “nationalist” means “white nationalist” to his racist base.

During his election campaign rallies Trump openly urged his audience to beat up protesters, especially Black Lives Matter supporters, present. One time he even referred to “times past” when such Black protesters would be “carried out on a stretcher,” referring to the Jim Crow South.

In one speech at his current rallies he took up the theme of violence again, praising a Republican congressman for “body slamming” a reporter. One of Trump’s recurrent themes is that the media (except for Fox News and other pro-Trump outlets) are the “enemy of the people”.

His attacks on all Democratic politicians have become especially violent in his recent rallies, which his supporters loudly cheer (and Sayoc sent bombs to). One of his major themes is that the Democrats are for “open borders” while he will seal the borders (with Mexico, not Canada). Of course the Democrats support no such thing. Both parties are guilty of the oppression of the undocumented, and support reactionary immigration laws.

At all his raucous rallies in the past few weeks his major theme is against immigrants. When the “caravan” of asylum seekers that began in Honduras, in reality a long trek on foot, not vehicles, Trump told associates that it was a blessing. He would use it to rile his base to vote Republican.

Trump raises the specter of an “invasion” of the U.S. by the caravan claiming it included members of the notorious criminal gang known as MS-13, drug dealers, and – to remind his followers that he wants to ban all Muslims from entering – “people from the Mideast”. He also ridiculously charges that the caravan was organized by Democrats and funded by billionaire George Soros. Soros gives money to liberal causes and some Democrats, which is one reason Trump singles him out. Another is

that he is a Jew, and moreover defends asylum seekers against Trump's policy of separating children from their parents. One of Sayoc's bombs was addressed to Soros.

Soros, who was born in Hungary, set up a university there. Hungary's authoritarian government, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, an open anti-Semite and dear friend of Trump, passed a law that would in effect expel the university from Hungary, forcing Soros to close it down on October 25.

Trump vows to keep out all in the caravan by force, ignoring that asylum seekers have the right by law to enter the U.S. and turn themselves over to immigration authorities to hear their cases. The Wall Street Journal reports that some 5,000 troops will be deployed at the border to stop the caravan, in addition to the Border Patrol agents already there.

All reporters who have travelled to interview people in the caravan, which is currently in southern Mexico and won't reach the border for some time, say it is composed of ordinary people, including families with children. No drug dealers, no MS-13 or other criminals, and no Middle Eastern people. The bulk are from Honduras, fleeing poverty and extreme violence abetted by a right-wing regime installed by a military coup in 2009 organized by then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton under the Obama administration. Some Guatemalans have joined the caravan as it passed through, also because of violence and poverty.

All along their trek, the marchers have been well received by the surrounding population, with donations of food and clothing, and messages of support. If it weren't for the military greeting Trump is preparing for them at the U.S. border, many in the U.S. (except for the Trump supporters) would similarly welcome them and support them, and among these supporters would be HIAS.

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