



Special Publication, January 21, 2021

Antisemitism Rising Among American Right-Wing Extremists

Heidi Beirich¹

Among the throngs of right-wing extremists who invaded the American Capitol on January 6 egged on by President Donald Trump were neo-Nazis, white supremacists and thousands of supporters of QAnon, a bizarre and increasingly antisemitic conspiracy movement that blames prominent Democrats and well-known Jewish figures such as philanthropist George Soros for engaging in child sex-trafficking. This toxic mob attempting to overthrow America's democratic system on the day Congress was to certify Joe Biden as president-elect is a frightening reminder of the ongoing threat in the U.S. posed by antisemitism (Anti-Defamation League, 2021).

No period of American history has been free of antisemitism, and far right movements have long embraced antisemitic conspiracies and bigoted stereotypes about the Jewish community (Dinnerstein, 1994). In general, these stereotypes have accused Jews of international financial conspiracies, blamed them for communism, or described the Jewish community as a threat to the "true" American nation. Today's antisemites continue this despicable legacy, reiterating conspiracies and tropes that have pulsed through right-wing circles for decades, often updating them based on current events, such as recent claims that Jews are to blame for the coronavirus.

Prominent American historical antisemitic figures are revered by today's extreme right. Emblematic of this is auto magnate Henry Ford, who blamed Jews for World War I and claimed Jews instigated wars to profit from them (Baldwin, 2002). Ford asserted that the viciously antisemitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, was legitimate, and he published portions of it in his newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*. During the 1930s and 1940s, far right demagogues linked the Depression, the New Deal, President Franklin Roosevelt, and the threat of war in Europe to an imagined international Jewish conspiracy. By 1938, nearly 60% of Americans polled viewed Jews negatively, as "greedy" and "dishonest"—stereotypes still circulating in the far right today (Greear, 2002).

¹ Heidi Beirich, Ph.D, co-founded The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE) in 2020. Beirich is an international expert on American and European extremist movements, including the white supremacist, anti-immigrant, antisemitic and antigovernment movements, and is the author of numerous academic publications on hate and extremism movements. Prior to co-founding GPAHE, Beirich led the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project, the foremost organization tracking hate and extremism movements in the United States.

World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust changed American opinions of Jews and altered the political landscape, leaving antisemitic propaganda confined mostly to the far right. After the war, the American Nazi Party—founded by George Lincoln Rockwell who introduced and popularized Holocaust denial in the United States—and its offshoots including the neo-Nazi National Alliance and the Liberty Lobby, continued to propagandize against Jews, essentially mimicking the conspiracy theories and stereotypes of the early twentieth century. From the 1970s to the time of his death in 2015, Liberty Lobby leader Willis Carto created a media empire that championed antisemitism and Holocaust denial through publications including the *Barnes Review* and *The Spotlight* (Stern, 2001).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the leading organizations advocating antisemitism were the neo-Nazi National Alliance (NA) and the Aryan Nations (AN). In those years, the AN held annual events at its compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho that brought together several factions of the racist right from skinheads to hardcore neo-Nazis to Christian Identity adherents, whose twisted read of the Bible includes believing that Jews are literally the children of Eve and Satan (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.-a). In the 1980s, members of the most violent white supremacist terrorist group, The Order, which was responsible for the 1984 murder of Denver talk radio host Alan Berg and a string of armed robberies, spent time at both the AN and NA compounds and reportedly provided funds to both organizations (Hilke, 2020). The NA meanwhile built up a hardcore neo-Nazi following of around one thousand members and created a business involving the sale of racist music, books, magazines, and other materials that brought in over \$1 million a year (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.-b). In 1995, the largest mass casualty attack at that point in American history, the Oklahoma City bombing, was committed by Timothy McVeigh. He based the bombing on NA leader William Pierce's race war novel, *The Turner Diaries*. Adherents of both the AN and the NA groups were involved in many other instances of violence during those decades, including murders (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015). *The Turner Diaries* continues to inspire violence to this day, and the book is circulated widely through white supremacist and hardcore neo-Nazi circles (Berger, 2016). Both groups crumbled after the deaths of their leaders, Pierce in 2002 and AN leader Richard Butler in 2004. But a new generation of antisemites soon arose.

Key Antisemitic Thinking

In recent years, Americans have played a key role in framing and spreading antisemitic ideas not only in the United States but also abroad. In general, neo-Nazis and white supremacists have described what they call the “Jewish threat” as a central cause of white disempowerment. Jews are seen as undermining white hegemony and furthering an alleged white genocide by using their political and social capital to erode white superiority. In neo-Nazi slang, Jews have created “Zionist Occupied Governments,” or ZOG, around the world. These ideas are based on earlier antisemitic propaganda that pushed the idea that Jews are somehow behind the manipulation of governments and markets and, ironically, responsible for both capitalist exploitation and communism among other things. In recent years, the idea of a Jewish cabal running the world has

implicated such figures as the liberal philanthropist George Soros and prominent Jewish bankers—one of the oldest antisemitic tropes—who are labeled “globalists” with no regard for country or heritage (Wilson, 2016). Holocaust denial also continues to be preached widely as a way to wipe away the crimes of the Nazi era and further allow the demonization of the Jewish population.

Vile antisemitic depictions of Jews are an integral part of American white supremacist cultural expression, seen in items like the Camp Auschwitz T-shirts worn by some of the rioters at the US Capitol, hate music labels such as Panzerfaust Records, and scores of books. Most important has been NA’s Pierce’s widely circulated novel *The Turner Diaries*, depicting a race war in which the extermination of Jews is the goal. The novel has been translated into more than a dozen languages and millions of copies have been sold (Berger, 2016). In recent years, the novel has become a favorite in the scariest sectors of American white supremacy, the so-called accelerationist neo-Nazi groups that advocate violence to overthrow democratic systems.

A relatively new variant of antisemitism now found in many key white supremacist movements was devised by Kevin MacDonald,² a former California psychology professor. MacDonald’s basic premise is that Jews are driven by their genetics to engage in a “group evolutionary strategy” that serves to enhance their ability to out-compete non-Jews for resources and destabilize their host societies to their own benefit (Beirich, 2007). The actions of Jews are thus unconscious and cannot be stopped, making them particularly threatening. Because this Jewish “group behavior” is said to have produced much financial and intellectual success over the years and led to non-white immigration in Western nations, MacDonald claims it has produced understandable hatred for Jews. That means that antisemitism, rather than being an irrational hatred for Jews, is actually a logical reaction to Jewish success and the threat Jews pose to white populations. He advocates taxing Jews at higher levels, keeping them out of universities, and similar policies to curtail their supposed genetic disposition to dominate.

MacDonald is read worldwide, and his thesis that Jews bring non-white immigrants into historically white countries to undermine them is now a widely accepted concept in white supremacist propaganda. The main political movement for white supremacists across the globe, Identitarianism, asserts that a “Great Replacement” or a “white genocide” is occurring wherein white people are being replaced by non-white immigrants in their home countries (Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, 2020). This is often blamed on Jews. The chants heard during the deadly Charlottesville, Virginia riots in

² Kevin MacDonald has for years used his academic platform to produce material that argues for circumscribing Jews from public life. His first book in his trilogy on the Jews, *A People That Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy* (1994), was published by Praeger Press. He produced two more volumes, *Separation and its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism* (1998a), and *The Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (1998b). The trilogy provides a new justification for antisemitism that has little to do with Nazi race theories.

August 2017, where extremist protesters proclaimed “Jews will not replace us,” is a direct reference to the idea that Jews import immigrants to displace white populations (NBC News, 2017).

Members of a new generation of young extremists have been raised on these theories, including Andrew Anglin of the Daily Stormer³ and Richard Spencer of the National Policy Institute.⁴ The exact size of these organizations is hard to pinpoint, but The Daily Stormer has approximately four million unique page views per month. These antisemitic ideas are anchored in America’s growing white nationalist movement, whose number of groups has increased by 55% between 2015 and 2019 (Wilson, 2020). They are also found in the global Identitarian movement, which has chapters in at least fourteen countries and had more than 140,000 followers until it was deplatformed by Twitter in the wake of a July 2020 report by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (2020). There are some indications that support for neo-Nazi and white supremacist views may reach into the millions. A 2017 poll by the *Washington Post* and ABC News found one in ten Americans say it is acceptable to hold neo-Nazi views. Extrapolated out to the whole American population that number would equal somewhat more than 20 million people (Langer, 2017).

New Violent Antisemitic Movements

A new, particularly violent movement called “accelerationism” has arisen in the last five years. Accelerationism has many variants and can be traced back to thinkers including Karl Marx, but when it comes to white supremacists, accelerationists see “modern society as irredeemable and believe it should be pushed to collapse so a fascist society built on ethnonationalism can take its place” (Miller, 2020). Virulently antisemitic, such groups believe that violence is the only way to change politics, and they want to “accelerate” that change through terrorism aimed at destabilizing political systems with the goal of establishing white supremacist states.

Two accelerationist neo-Nazi organizations, Atomwaffen Division (AWD), German for atomic weapons, and The Base, whose name is the English translation for al-Qaeda, are particularly troubling and have violent track records. Founded in the United States in 2015 but with chapters in other countries, AWD initially organized on the neo-fascist Iron March forum. A violent neo-Nazi network that celebrates Hitler and Charles Manson,

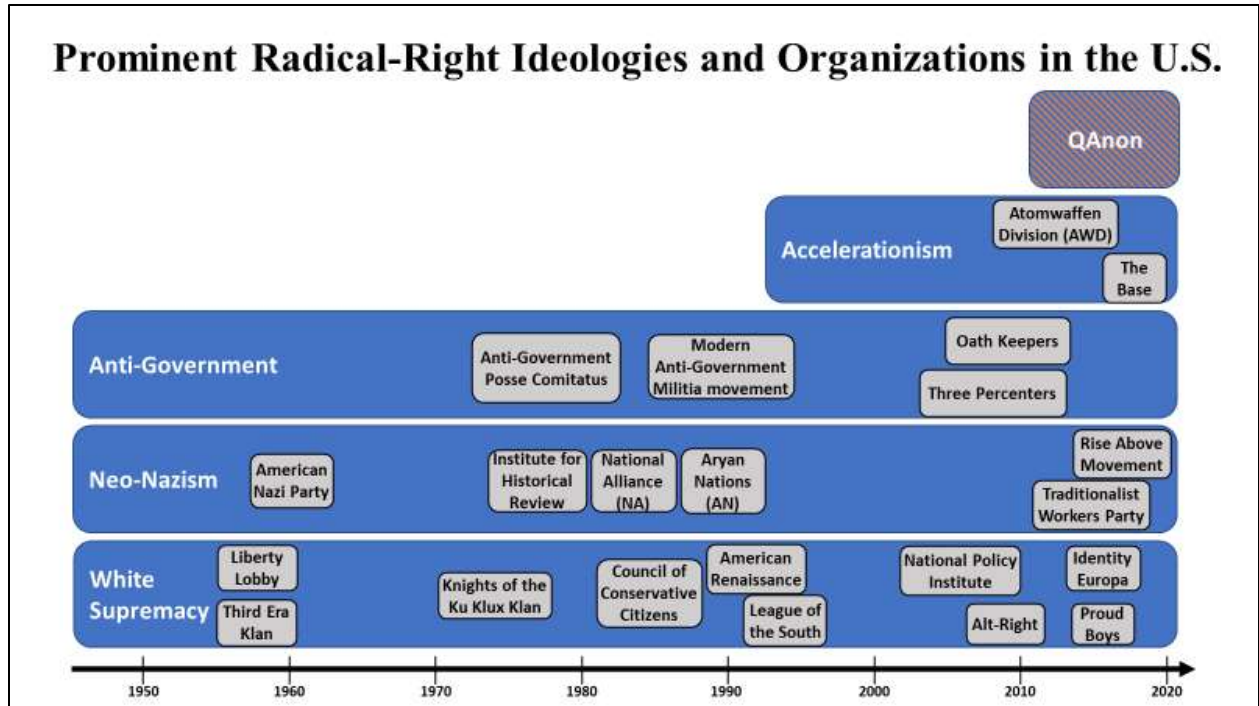
³ Andrew Anglin is one of America’s most vile antisemites. He launched his Daily Stormer website, named after the Nazi publication of the same name, in 2013 and quickly grew his audience numbers into the millions. Anglin was successfully sued for \$14 million by the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2017 for leading an online mob in threatening the life of a Jewish family in Montana. He is on the run but continues to publish on his website. For more see: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/andrew-anglin>.

⁴ Richard Spencer is one of the most recognized white supremacists in the United States. After Trump’s election, his National Policy Institute held an event in Washington, DC, where supporters chanted “Hail Trump” while giving Roman salutes. Spencer was a key organizer of the 2017 Charlottesville, Virginia, white supremacist rallies, and a key purveyor of the idea that the United States needs to ethnically cleanse of non-whites to create a pure white ethnostate. For more see: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/richard-bertrand-spencer-0>.

AWD has been key to promoting the accelerationist ideas (Beirich, 2020). AWD videos portray young men, wearing camouflage and scarves over their faces, firing rifles during military-style training. One video begins with group members shouting “Race War Now” in unison. The group has been responsible for five murders in the United States, threats to German journalists and politicians, and planned terrorist attacks.

The Base, largely patterned after AWD, was founded in 2018. That December, Rinaldo Nazaro, the group’s leader who is now presumed to be living in Russia, purchased thirty acres of remote land in Republic, Washington (Wilson 2020). His intent was to create a training compound for his recruits to prepare for a coming race war. Expressly supportive of Hitler, Base members see themselves as soldiers defending the “European race” against political systems infected by Jewish values (Anti-Defamation League, 2021). The Base members believe that, in the coming chaos, the federal government will grant them the power to construct an all-white homeland in the Northwest. The Base planned to accelerate a full system collapse through acts of terrorism, and several members were arrested in 2020 for planning terrorist attacks and conspiracy to murder an anti-racist couple in Rome, Georgia. (Beirich, 2020).

Jews are also increasingly targeted by the American conspiracy movement QAnon, which began to spread online in 2017. It posits that an anonymous individual with a high-level American security clearance known as “Q” has evidence of a secret war President Trump is waging against a criminal cabal of Democratic politicians and Hollywood elite who are Satan-worshipping pedophiles operating a global child sex-trafficking ring (Roose, 2020). Believers often argue that the activities are funded by prominent Jews, including George Soros and the Rothschild family. According to the World Jewish Congress, “the QAnon core beliefs include antisemitic tropes related to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and blood libel repackaged and rebranded for a modern audience” (World Jewish Congress, 2020a). Over the past three years, the QAnon myth has quickly gained support internationally and moved into the offline sphere both in the United States and in Europe, with supporters engaging in physical violence (Prothero, 2020). A n FBI intelligence bulletin from May 2019 described QAnon as a growing domestic terrorism threat in the United States (McCarthy, 2020).



Rising Antisemitism, Hate Crimes, and Terrorism

As accelerationism, white genocide, the Great Replacement, and QAnon theories have proliferated across the web in recent years, the threat to Jews in the United States and around the world has increased markedly. On October 27, 2018 the deadliest attack on an American synagogue took place in Pittsburgh at the Tree of Life synagogue. Robert Bowers, an adherent of Kevin MacDonald's theory that Jews were importing immigrants into the United States thereby furthering white genocide, killed eleven people praying in the synagogue in a shooting spree. The following April, another shooter, motivated by similar beliefs, attacked a synagogue in Poway, California, killing one person. Other antisemitic attacks include the 2019 Halle, Germany synagogue shooting by a neo-Nazi that left two dead. The Anti-Defamation League, based on its own data, reported that 2019 had seen more antisemitic incidents than any other year over the past four decades (Kunzelman, 2020). The FBI reported that antisemitic hate crimes rose by 14% between 2018 and 2019 (Sales, 2020). Other terrorist attacks inspired by the Great Replacement theory targeted immigrants in an El Paso, Texas Walmart store, Muslims in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, and in two shisha bars in Hanau, Germany, where the shooter is believed to have been targeting Muslim immigrants. Although the targets of these attacks were Muslims and Latinos, the killers were motivated by propaganda that often asserts that the growth of immigration is the result of Jewish actions.

Much of this propaganda is spread across social media by neo-Nazis and other extremists. Research on online antisemitism has found a sharp rise in the amount of such material, particularly since the pandemic started (World Jewish Congress, 2020b). Also, antisemitism has been spread through new conspiracy theories, such as the

QAnon movement. American Jews will continue to be targets as these antisemitic conspiracy theories and propaganda proliferate through online hate communities, inspiring both terrorism and hate crimes. The global pandemic and the economic crisis have also contributed to greater levels of antisemitism both in the United States and abroad, with right-wing extremists alternately claiming that either Jews, Zionists, or Israel are to blame for the pandemic and have benefited from it (Kantor Center, 2020).

By 2020, nearly every American federal law enforcement agency including the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the State Department, and the National Counterterrorism Center has gone on record saying that white supremacy is the greatest terrorism threat Americans face, even greater now than ISIS or Al Qaeda (Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, 2020). American Jews also seem well aware of rising antisemitism and the threat it poses to the community. The American Jewish Committee 2020 poll found that nearly nine out of ten American Jews believe antisemitism is a problem in the United States and more than four out of five believe it has increased in the last five years (Mayer, 2020).

Although the US government security agencies realize the seriousness of the threat, little was done to counter it under the Trump administration. In fact, Trump was a major purveyor of noxious ideas, pushing xenophobia, anti-Muslim hatred, and even posts from neo-Nazi social media accounts from his Twitter feed and refusing to address the issue of the growing white supremacy movement. Indeed, after the Christchurch massacre, Trump described white nationalists as a “small group of people,” minimizing the threat just as he had after the Charlottesville chants of “Jews will not replace us,” when he said there were “very fine people on both sides” of the conflict (Hernandez, 2019). The incoming Biden administration has signaled its wish to create a robust policy agenda to take on white supremacy. Biden’s transition teams have started meeting with extremism experts and there is talk of the establishment of a possible White House position to coordinate efforts countering white supremacists and other forms of extremism (Levine, 2020).⁵ The scenes of extremist mobs invading the Capitol after being encouraged by Trump have only heightened the need for a new policy agenda to meet this growing threat.

References

Anti-Defamation League. (2021, January 6). *Extremists engage in political violence during pro-Trump rallies*. <https://www.adl.org/blog/extremists-engage-in-political-violence-during-pro-trump-rallies>.

Baldwin, N. (2002). *Henry Ford and the Jews: The mass production of hate* (1st edition). Public Affairs.

⁵ The author’s organization, Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, is sharing its proposed policies to combat rising hate and white supremacy with the Biden transition team. The policy brief can be found here: <https://www.globalextrmism.org/post/transnationalagenda>.

Beirich, H. (2007). Cal State University Long Beach psychology professor Kevin MacDonald publishes anti-semitic books. *Intelligence Report*.

---. (2020). Dangers of white supremacist movements, accelerationism, and militias; Online recruitment and growth. Testimony before the Congress of the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Intelligence and Counterterrorism Subcommittee. <https://www.globalextrmism.org/post/dangers-of-white-supremacist-movements-accelerationism-and-militias-online-recruitment-and-growth>

Berger, J.M. (2016, September 16). Alt-history: How a self-published, racist novel changed white nationalism and inspired decades of violence. *Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/how-the-turner-diaries-changed-white-nationalism/500039/>

Dinnerstein, Leonard. (1994). *Anti-semitism in America* (1st edition). Harvard University Press.

Duke, David. (2003). *Jewish supremacism: My awakening on the Jewish question* (1st edition). Free Speech Press.

Global Project Against Hate and Extremism. (2020). *Generation identity: international white nationalist movement spreading on Twitter and YouTube*. <https://www.globalextrmism.org/post/international-white-nationalist-movement-spreading-on-twitter-and-youtube>.

Greear, W. P. (2002). *American immigration policies and public opinion on European Jews from 1933 to 1945*. East Tennessee State University. <https://web.archive.org/web/20071127070803/https://etd-submit.etsu.edu/etd/theses/available/etd-0322102-113418/unrestricted/Greear040102.pdf>.

Hernandez, S. (2019, March 15). *Trump downplayed the threat from white nationalists after the deadly New Zealand attacks*. Buzzfeed. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/salvadorhernandez/trump-white-nationalists-new-zealand-mosque-christchurch>.

Hilke, W. (2010, August 18). Death of an assassin: The Order's Bruce Pierce dies in prison." *Hatewatch*. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2010/08/18/death-assassin-order-s-bruce-pierce-dies-prison>.

Kantor Center. (2020). Antisemitism worldwide 2019 and the beginning of 2020. Tel Aviv University.

https://enhumanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/Kantor%20Report%202020_130820.pdf.

Kunzelman, M. (2020, May 12). *Anti-semitic attacks hit highest point in 40 years in U.S., report says*. The Associated Press. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6932622/anti-semitic-attacks-highest-point-us/>.

Langer, G. (2017, August 21). *1 in 10 say it's acceptable to hold neo-nazi views*. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/28-approve-trumps-response-charlottesville-poll/story?id=49334079>.

Levine, M. (2020, December 29). *Domestic terrorism and hate exploded in 2020. Here's what the Biden administration must do*. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/domestic-terrorism-hate-exploded-2020-biden-administration/story?id=74604589>.

MacDonald, K. (1994). *A people that shall dwell alone: Judaism as a group evolutionary strategy* (1st edition). Praeger.

---. (1998a). *Separation and its discontents: Toward an evolutionary theory of anti-semitism* (1st edition). Praeger.

---. (1998b). *The culture of critique: An evolutionary analysis of Jewish involvement in twentieth-century intellectual and political movements* (1st edition). Praeger.

Mayer, A. (2020, October 26). *The state of antisemitism in America 2020: Insights and analysis*. *Global Voice*. <https://www.ajc.org/news/AntisemitismReport2020/the-state-of-antisemitism-in-america-2020-insights-and-analysis>.

McCarthy, B. (2020, August 26). *PolitiFact: QAnon has been linked to violence*. *Tampa Bay Times*. <https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2020/08/26/politifact-qanon-hoax-has-been-linked-to-violence-fox-news-greg-gutfeld-falsely-claimed-it-hasnt/>.

Miller, C. (2020, June 23). *'There is no political solution:' Accelerationism in the white power movement*. *Hatewatch*. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/06/23/there-no-political-solution-accelerationism-white-power-movement>.

NBC News. (2017, August 13). *Former KKK leader David Duke also says Saturday's Rally is in a 'turning point' in the effort to help people like him 'fulfill the promises of Donald Trump'*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fULPIGwjJMA>.

Prothero, M. (2020, October 13). *European intelligence agencies are deploying resources to track QAnon as the conspiracy theory spreads beyond the U.S., sources*.

say. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/europe-intel-agencies-starting-to-monitor-fear-qanon-sources-say-2020-10>.

Roose, K. (2020, October 19). What is QAnon, the viral pro-Trump conspiracy theory? *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-qanon.html>.

Sales, B. (2020). Anti-semitic hate crimes rose by 14% in 2019, according to the FBI. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 16, 2020. <https://www.jta.org/2020/11/16/united-states/anti-semitic-hate-crimes-rose-by-14-in-2019-according-to-the-fbi>.

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2015). The alliance and the law. *Intelligence Report*. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2015/alliance-and-law>.

Stern, K. S. (2001). Lying about the Holocaust: Inside the denial movement. *Intelligence Report*. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2001/lying-about-holocaust-inside-denial-movement>.

---. (n.d.-a). Aryan nations. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/aryan-nations>.

---. (n.d.-b). National alliance. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/national-alliance>.

Wilson, J. (2018, October 25). Dripping with poison of antisemitism': The demonization of George Soros. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/24/george-soros-antisemitism-bomb-attacks>.

---. (2020, January 23). Revealed: The true identity of the leader of an American neo-nazi terror group. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/23/revealed-the-true-identity-of-the-leader-of-americas-neo-nazi-terror-group>.

---. (2020, March 18). White nationalist hate groups have grown 55% in Trump era, report finds. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/18/white-nationalist-hate-groups-southern-poverty-law-center>.

World Jewish Congress. (2020a). QAnon: A conspiracy myth. <https://wjc-org-website.s3.amazonaws.com/horizon/assets/Z1Vbha1v/quanon-r4-final.pdf>.

---. (2020b). Antisemitic conspiracy myths. <https://wjc-org-website.s3.amazonaws.com/horizon/assets/3yqx8bza/myths-r6-final.pdf>.