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President Trump's Influence on White Supremacy

The Office of President of the United States is one of great power. The President is the Commander in Chief of the United States, the official spokesperson of both national and international affairs, and arguably the most powerful person on the planet. The office of President of the United States is also the only elected office in America that serves every single citizen in the country. White supremacy and racism go directly against the duties of the President, as they create hate and division that tear our country apart. The President of the United States is supposed to stand up against the racism and hatred that come out of these groups like the KKK, white supremacists, and Neo-nazis because it is his or her duty to be the President of all Americans. The current President of the United States, Donald Trump, clearly does not understand that he is the President of all citizens in the United States. The President of the United States has the ability to both directly and indirectly influence the spread of white nationalism in the United States. It is their choice whether to embrace this hatred ideology that goes against almost everything that the United States stands for or go against it in an attempt to be the leader of all citizens in the United States. The President has even more of an opportunity to embrace this hatred ideology when they run campaigns that embrace and ask for the votes of these white supremacists and Neo-nazis in order to get elected. From what has been seen from Donald Trump both before and during his 4 years as President of the United States, he has both directly

and indirectly expanded the spread of white supremacy, Neo-nazis, and the KKK here in the United States.

Direct Observations of President Trump's Influence on White Supremacy

It is clear that President Donald J. Trump has furthered the strength of white nationalism in the United States. There are several distinct and obvious moments where President Trump has done this. Directly, he furthers the strength of white nationalism in the United States with his divisive rhetoric and the way he delivers the message that he is trying to put across. An example of how President Trump's rhetoric appeals to white supremacists across the country comes from Dr. James Sanchez. Sanchez looks at the use of rhetorical versatility as a language tool for white supremacists in the age of President Trump, and refers to the ways that President Trump and the KKK have very similar ways of reaching out to their supporters. Trump uses language and rhetoric that appeals to white supremacists and allows them to continue following their racist viewpoints and ideology without repercussions. Dr. Sanchez specifically looks at and compares President Trump and the KKK's use of the words "patriotism", "heritage", and "security". Sanchez argues that although President Trump may not directly be telling white supremacists to keep doing what they are doing, the rhetoric that he uses does. President Trump and white supremacist groups like the KKK or Proud Boys use similar bigoted language that when coming from the President of the United States is a huge motivator for white supremacists across the United States, but when it comes from those racist groups it is normal. In other words, it is not and should not be normal for the President of the United States to use the same racist and bigoted language as the oldest white supremacist group in our country. (Sanchez)

President Trump has also failed to denounce the spread of white nationalism and racism on multiple occasions. In the first presidential debate with now President-Elect Joe Biden,

President Trump was asked to condemn white nationalist in front of the entire country. Moderator Chris Wallace asked “Are you willing, tonight, to condemn white supremacists and militia groups and to say that they need to stand down...” When replying to this question, President Trump said "Proud Boys, stand back and stand by!" (The Hill) The Proud Boys are a far-right, neo-fascist and male-only political organization that promotes and engages in political violence against minorities across the United States. When asked to tell them to stop this hatred, President Trump told them to stand by. He no longer was hiding the fact that he was a supporter of these white nationalist organizations, because he openly said it in front of the millions of US citizens who were watching the debate.

Another part of the openness to continuing the spread of white nationalism is the tone that President Trump uses when speaking and the effect that this has on equality, diversity, and inclusion in the United States. A journal article written by Alison M. Konrad talks about how the racist rhetoric of President Trump and his re-election campaign have negatively affected equality in the United States. The article speaks about racist politicians and how they have the largest negative impact on the equality and diversity in America. There is no politician bigger than the President of the United States. With President Trump’s position as the President of the United States, the racist rhetoric that he presents encourages white supremacy and white power in the US. Not only does it affect equality and the spread of white nationalism in the United States, but it negatively impacts the rest of the world because of the large megaphone that the office of President of the United States has.(Konrad)

The largest event where President Trump openly accepted and helped to spread white nationalism in the United States happened in August 2017. On this date, there was a protest in Charlottesville, Virginia where neo-fascists, white nationalists, neo-nazis, and members of the

KKK marched to unify the American white nationalist movement and stop the removal of a statue of General Robert E. Lee who was the leader of the Confederate states during the Civil War. This event made international news because of all the hatred that came out, and President Trump, attempting to capitalize on the media coverage, made a comment on it. In front of the entire country during an address to the nation, President Trump said “you had some very bad people in that group, but you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides.” (Cogan) Not only did President Trump not condemn the racist and violent actions that the white nationalists took during the rally, he also said that there were “very fine people on both sides.” In other words, he was saying that the neo-fascists, white nationalists, neo-nazis, and members of the KKK who were marching in the rally included fine people. Not only did this hurt the millions of minorities living in the United States, it continued to motivate white supremacists to do the evil work that they have been doing all of their lives.

There are also many blatantly racist and white supremacist motivating Tweets that have come directly from President Trump's twitter account. One tweet sent by President Trump was about the new Democratic Congresses' best-known freshman women of color: Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, and Ayanna Pressley. Trump tweeted “Why don't they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came,” he added. “Then come back and show us how it is done. These places need your help badly, you can't leave fast enough. I'm sure that Nancy Pelosi would be very happy to quickly work out free travel arrangements!”(Cohen) This quote was a message to both immigrants of the United States and white supremacists who are against these immigrants. The message could not be any different for these two groups. To the immigrants of the United States, he was saying go back where you come from and you are not welcomed in the United States. To the white supremacists

who are against immigration in the United States, this tweet was a rallying call. The white supremacists finally had someone who agreed with them, and he was the President of the United States. Another tweet that was a clear rallying call for white supremacists and Neo-nazis across the United States came when President Trump tweeted a quote coming from Benito Mussolini. Mussolini was the dictator of fascist Italy during World War Two, and was Adolf Hitler's closest ally. Given the fact that Mussolini was a fascist and the closest ally to a man who murdered over 11 million people during the Holocaust should show that he does not believe in equality. When President Trump tweeted a quote coming from that same man, there is no doubt that Neo-nazis and white supremacists were celebrating across the country because their new President is showing support to a murderous dictator by putting his quotes up on Twitter for his millions of followers to see. (Schneider) These racist tweets really hurt diversity and continued the spread of white supremacy in the United States.

It is clear that Donald Trump has fueled the spread of white supremacy while serving as President of the United States. Whether it is the obvious divisive or racist rhetoric or the hateful tweets directed at minorities, there are many direct examples of how President Trump has helped spread white supremacy in the United States.

Trump's Racist Actions Before the Presidency

While there are many clear examples of how President Trump expanded white supremacy as President of the United States, there are also many examples showing how he expanded this hatred before he ran for public office. Another example of how President Trump has helped spread white supremacy and Neo-nazis in the United States is the fear and hatred that he spread using conspiracy theories before and during his campaign for the Presidency in 2016. An article written in the Atlantic by Ta-Nehisi Coates goes through events where President Trump blatantly

acted racist and therefore spread racism and white supremacy in the United States. One of these events was really the jumpstart to President Trump's political career as a whole. This event was his advocacy for birtherism. According to Adam Serwer, "Birtherism is the baseless conjecture that the 44th president of the United States not only was born abroad and was therefore ineligible for the presidency, but also was a secret Muslim planning to undermine America from within. It is the combination of these two elements that transformed birtherism from mere false speculation about Obama's birth to a statement of values about who belongs in America, and who does not." (Serwer) At the time, President Trump was still businessman Donald Trump, but he was the most famous person who endorsed the birtherism theory. This was his springboard into his political career, and it was fueled by the hatred and racism towards the first African American president in United States history by white supremacists and Neo-nazis. When talking about birtherism, Trump said "He doesn't have a birth certificate. He may have one, but there is something on that birth certificate—maybe religion, maybe it says he's a Muslim; I don't know," (Serwer) White nationalists and Neo-nazis were thrilled that someone was finally backing up the racist conspiracy theories that they had been touting for years, and Trump's racism and ignorance led to the spread of white nationalism and the events that occurred in Charlottesville in 2017. According to Coates, Trump also had a history of many other racist events including fighting to keep blacks out of his buildings, calling for the death penalty for the eventually exonerated Central Park Five, railing against "lazy" black employees, and demanding President Obama's college transcripts because he did not believe Obama was "smart enough" to go to an Ivy League school. (Coates) Coates talks about how President Trump's ideology is that of a white supremacist, and cites how Trump started his presidential campaign in 2016 by calling all Mexicans who immigrate into the United States "rapists". You may be thinking that this is the rhetoric of a racist white

supremacists. Well, that is true. The big problem with this racist rhetoric is that it is coming from the most powerful person in the world, the President of the United States.

Indirect Observations of President Trump's Influence on White Supremacy

Although President Trump has demonstrated many direct observations of how he has continued to spread white nationalistic tendencies across the United States, there are also indirect moments where he continued this same spread. Some of these moments from behind the scenes where President Trump spreads racism and white supremacy is gained through interviews of former and current members of the Trump administration. Examples of this come from a book written by Bob Woodward called *Fear: Trump in the White House*. The book is about what goes on behind the scenes of the Trump administration using interviews with current and former administration members. It specifically looks at the racism that President Trump shows behind the scenes and focuses on the white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia as talked about earlier in the essay. The chapter starts out by talking about President Trump's response, then transitions into the responses and tweets from white supremacists and members of government. The most interesting tweet that was quoted came from David Duke who is the leader of the KKK. This tweet said "Thank you President Trump for your honesty and courage to tell the truth about #Charlottesville." (Woodward). The chapter continues with stunning rebukes of President Trump and his behavior by members of each branch in the U.S. Military and major CEOs that are a part of the Fortune 500 companies. The final quote that is damaging to the President came from Gary Cohn, who was chief economic advisor to President Donald Trump from 2017 to 2018 and managed the Trump administration's economic policy agenda. Cohn was immediately fired after the Charlottesville situation blew up in President Trump's face. Immediately after being fired, Cohn released this statement: "The administration can and must do better.... I have

come under enormous pressure to resign.... I also feel compelled to voice my distress.... Citizens standing up for equality and freedom can never be equated with white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and the KKK.” (Woodward) This statement is nothing else but a shot at President Trump. With this statement, Cohn is practically saying he will not work for a President and administration that makes people fight that are ing for freedom and white nationalists equally moral. Woodward then talks about how another administration felt about President Trump's effect on racism in the United States when talking about Rob Porter, who served as White House Staff Secretary for President Donald Trump from 2017 to 2018. Woodward writes “As Porter saw it from up close, the Trump election had rekindled the divide in the country. There was a more hostile relationship with the media. The culture wars were reinvigorated. There was a racist tinge. Trump accelerated it.” (Woodward). This again a perfect example coming from the Trump administration on how President Trump has accelerated racism and the spread of white supremacy in the United States.

Another behind the scenes action where President Trump helped spread white supremacy is his failure to speak out against endorsements from white supremacists and KKK members. During his run for the Presidency in 2016, President Trump was on CNNs show *State of the Union*. He was then asked by host Jake Tapper if he would distance himself from the endorsement of David Duke who is the former grand wizard or leader of the Klu Klux Klan. Then Trump failed and blatantly refused to condemn the endorsement or say he did not want the support of white supremacists 4 different times throughout the interview. (Domonoske)

President Trump's Counterargument

Now although many Americans believe that President Trump is racist and helps to spread white supremacy, he still has a base of tens of millions of people who do not believe this and still

vote for him. When confronted with these issues, President Trump and his administration always point to data to show that he is not racist. For example, President Trump and his administration always seems to point to the unemployment rate of minorities in the United States to make his claim that he does not spread racism and white supremacy. According to CNBC, the jobless rate for Hispanics hit a record low of 3.9% in September 2019, while African Americans maintained its lowest rate ever, 5.5%. (Fitzgerald) President Trump also points to his work with Opportunity Zones, which are “an economic development tool that allows people to invest in distressed areas in the United States. Their purpose is to spur economic growth and job creation in low-income communities while providing tax benefits to investors.” (IRS) There is no doubt that these zones helped African Americans and minorities across the country, but in no ways did it make up for President Trump's consistent divisive rhetoric. Whenever confronted about his racist rhetoric before and during his Presidency, President Trump points to these numbers as if they take away the racist and divisive things that he does. In fact, during one of his most recent press briefings President Trump claimed to have done more for Black Americans than anyone with a "possible exception" of former President Abraham Lincoln, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation and freed America's enslaved people. (NBC) President Trump says this simply based off of the unemployment numbers that were record lows for minorities before the Covid-19 pandemic, but he completely ignores the fact that his racist and divisive rhetoric and actions have led to the spread of white nationalism across the United States. President Lincoln would be offended by the fact that Trump is actually attempting to compare what the two of them have done for African Americans and minorities in the United States. Although all of these policy accomplishments by President Trump and his administration did help the African American and minority

communities greatly when looked at economically and are programs that have good intentions, his divisive rhetoric hurt African Americans and minorities in all aspects of their lives.

While there are some examples of Trump having economic policies that benefit minorities, those policies are not necessarily only beneficial for minorities. Low unemployment for these minorities is not the effect of a good policy for minorities necessarily, but instead is a side-effect of a strong economy. For example, opportunity zones are advantageous to minorities in urban areas but actually benefit white developers as much if not more than the minorities that live there. Even though the Trump administration claims these policies are proof that President Trump is not racist, the evidence of this is not necessarily causal. In other words, there are both direct and indirect instances of President Trump supporting white supremacy, but there is really only indirect evidence of how President Trump is not racist.

The current President of the United States supports white nationalism and white supremacy. Not only is this wrong because it is openly racist, but it also a complete failure of what the Presidency of the United States stands for. The President is the only elected official in America that represents each and every citizen, and it is the President's duty to represent each and every one of those citizens equally. When the President of the United States supports white supremacy, Neo-nazis, and the KKK like President Trump it is impossible to represent each and every citizen equally. President Trump is going against his duties as President of the United States by pandering to white supremacy instead of trying to bring the country together. This pandering to white supremacy is demonstrated through direct reach outs to white supremacy, indirect reach outs to white supremacy, and even moments before his Presidency where Trump expanded the spread of white supremacy. To conclude, it is clear that President Donald Trump has helped to fuel the expansion of white supremacy in the United States.

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