

“The Great Replacement:” An Explainer

Once largely relegated to white supremacist rhetoric, “The Great Replacement” has made its way into mainstream consciousness in the past several years. From the chants of “Jews Will Not Replace Us” on the University of Virginia campus to then-U.S. Rep. Steve King’s tweeted protest, “We can’t restore our civilization with somebody else’s babies,” to Fox News’ Tucker Carlson’s complaints that the Democratic party is attempting to “replace the current electorate” with “third-world voters,” the racist conspiracy theory has well and truly arrived.

The following provides an introduction to “The Great Replacement:” Where it began, how it feeds into white supremacist grievances and which “mainstream” personalities have used it to score points and signal (not so subtly) their nativist point of view.

Origin Story

- “[The Great Replacement](#)” theory has its roots in early 20th century French nationalism and books by French nationalist and author Maurice Barres. However, it was French writer and critic Renaud Camus who popularized the phrase for today’s audiences when he published an essay titled “Le Grand Remplacement,” or “the great replacement,” in 2011. Camus himself alluded to the “great replacement theory” in his earlier works and was apparently influenced by [Jean Raspail’s racist novel, *The Camp of the Saints*](#).
- Camus believes that [native white Europeans](#) are being replaced in their countries by non-white immigrants from Africa and the Middle East, and the end result will be the extinction of the white race.

- Camus focused on Muslim immigration to Europe and the theory that Muslims and other non-white populations had a much higher birth rate than whites. His initial concept did not focus on Jews and was not antisemitic.
- The “great replacement” philosophy was quickly [adopted and promoted](#) by the [white supremacist movement](#), as it fit into their conspiracy theory about the impending destruction of the white race, also known as “white genocide.” It is also a strong echo of the white supremacist rallying cry, “[the 14 words](#):” “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”
- Since many white supremacists, particularly those in the United States, blame Jews for non-white immigration to the U.S. the replacement theory is now associated with antisemitism.
- The night before the August 2017 Unite the Right rally, white supremacists, marching across the University of Virginia campus, shouted, “[Jews will not replace us](#),” and “[You will not replace us](#),” clear references to Camus’ theory.

Use By Individual Extremists

- In October 2018, white supremacist [Robert Bowers](#) killed 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, after writing a [Gab post](#) blaming Jews for bringing non-white immigrants and refugees to the U.S.
- In March 2019, white supremacist [Brenton Tarrant](#) livestreamed himself killing 51 people at two mosques in New Zealand. Tarrant also released a manifesto online called “The Great Replacement,” an homage to Camus’ work.
- In April 2019, white supremacist [John Earnest](#) killed one and injured three at a synagogue in Poway, CA. In a letter he released online, Earnest claimed that Jews were responsible for the [genocide of “white Europeans](#),” and cited the influence of Bowers and Tarrant.
- In August 2019, [white supremacist Patrick Crusius](#) opened fire at a Walmart in El Paso, TX, killing 23 people and wounding almost two dozen. In a

manifesto, Crusius talked about a “Hispanic invasion” and made reference to the great replacement.

Use By Politicians

- In April 2019, Heinz-Christian Strache, campaigning for the Freedom Party of Austria ahead of the 2019 European Parliament election, [endorsed](#) the “great replacement” theory.
- [The Identitarian movement](#), a white nationalist movement in Europe, has promoted the “great replacement” theory. Martin Sellner, the head of Generation Identitaire in Austria, is a particularly vocal promoter.
- Marine Le Pen, a far-right French politician, also [promoted](#) the idea of the “great replacement.”
- In March 2017, then-GOP Congressman (IA) Steve King tweeted his support for Geert Wilders a well-known anti-immigration activist from Europe. “Wilders understands that culture and demographics are our destiny,” the Congressman wrote. “We can’t restore our civilization with somebody else’s babies.” The tweet, which won praise [from white supremacists](#), was a clear reference to replacement theory. In August 2018, King gave an interview to a far-right magazine in Austria, in which he [promoted](#) the “great replacement” theory.
- In an interview on Fox News *Justice with Judge Jeanine* in July 2020, GOP Congressman Matt Gaetz [claimed](#) that an “attempted cultural genocide” was occurring in the US and that the left wanted to “replace America.”

Use by Media/Tech Personalities

- In July 2017, [Lauren Southern](#), a Canadian far-right activist, released a video titled, “The Great Replacement,” promoting Camus’ themes. That summer, [Southern](#) was involved in “Defend Europe,” a project lead by European white nationalists to block the arrival of boats carrying African immigrants. Southern’s video further popularized Camus’ theory.

- In October 2018, on Fox News' *The Ingraham Angle*, host Laura Ingraham [said](#), "your views on immigration will have zero impact and zero influence on a House dominated by Democrats who want to replace you, the American voters, with newly amnestied citizens and an ever increasing number of chain migrants."
- In October 2019, Jeanine Pirro was discussing Democrats' hatred of Trump on Fox Nation's *The Todd Starnes Show*. She [declared](#), "Think about it. It is a plot to remake America, to replace American citizens with illegals that will vote for the Democrats."
- On April 8, 2021, on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, the host explicitly promoted the 'great replacement' theory. Carlson discussed "Third World" immigrants coming to the US who affiliate with the Democratic Party. He [asserted](#), "I know that the left and all the little gatekeepers on Twitter become literally hysterical if you use the term 'replacement,' if you suggest that the Democratic Party is trying to replace the current electorate – the voters now casting ballots – with new people, more obedient voters from the Third World, but they become hysterical because that's what's happening, actually. Let's just say it. That's true."
- On April 11, 2021, Andrew Torba, [the founder of Gab](#), posted on his own platform: "Now today the ADL is trying to cancel Tucker Carlson for daring to speak the truth about the reality of demographic replacement that is absolutely and unequivocally going on in The West. These are not 'hateful' statements, they objective facts that can no longer be ignored."