

The Nazi Movement Today: Our Cousins, Ourselves

Written by Patricia Sohn

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

The Nazi Movement Today: Our Cousins, Ourselves

<https://www.e-ir.info/2017/10/26/the-nazi-movement-today-our-cousins-ourselves/>

PATRICIA SOHN, OCT 26 2017

I watched the Richard Spencer visit to the University of Florida from afar. It happened as my blog piece noting the likely Nazi heritage monuments in a former Southern resort town was posted. Meanwhile, in Gainesville, my home university as a faculty member and also my home town, students protested Richard Spencer in his on-going narrative that includes such claims as: white people were just better colonizers than other peoples; they were better at ruling through slavery; that those particular parts of white heritage were to be heralded and would continue to take up normative space in the national narrative if he had anything to do with it.

I am a Trump supporter. I am a Libertarian, typically associated with the Right in today's U.S. But, as a multi-racial and multi-cultural person myself, white supremacy is as far from the American way as anything that would burn Mom, Apple Pie, and the Flag. I grew up singing, "Hey, Look Me Over" and "The Star-Spangled Banner" for my grandfather in traditional parlor format in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, one of the first "white" resort towns to allow African Americans to own property (before the civil rights movement came along, and as horrifying as it is that that should be a claim to fame anywhere). I spent my teens and early twenties growing up in Micanopy and Gainesville, Florida and going to Eastside High School, a predominantly African American high school that has, for many years now, been a top-20 high school, nationally (sadly, the EHS page lists sports championships but does not list the number of times its Madrigal Singers – of which I was part – and Marching Band won state championships!).

I am no expert on American history – far from it – but I have read enough about U.S. history to know that the U.S. would not have been built without the efforts of African Americans, Chinese Americans, Irish Americans, and others. It is in no way Anglo-Saxon except in the imagination of the few people remaining who can identify as purely Anglo-Saxon. So, in many ways counter to Samuel Huntington's argument in his last book, rather than Anglo-Saxon Protestant institutions being what makes the U.S. institutional, cultural, and civic heritage great, I would argue that it is precisely the multiplicity of the U.S. on all of those levels – institutional, cultural, and civic – that makes it the welcoming and thriving place that it is. Take away that multiplicity, the U.S. would be just another Eastern European state (I can say this as someone with Prussian heritage). I had the honor to work briefly with Samuel Huntington when I was a visiting scholar at the Harvard University Center for Middle Eastern Studies in the early-to-mid 2000s and am, perhaps ironically, an enormous fan of his work on institutions and political culture. He brought culture back in to American political science, albeit in ways that were troubling in their specifics. Analytically, what he did was important; he reminded us that culture matters to politics in concrete and world-shifting ways. He brought us back to the classic Weberian position against Marx.

I had the sad honor to visit Dachau when I was thirteen years old. I walked with my family from the train station to the concentration camp, walking the route that Jews were forced to walk with their families – parents, children, grandchildren – during the Holocaust. *Not knowing* about narratives that can and are easily translated into policy and action is not a good idea anywhere. Far better that Richard Spencer give his speeches and give voice to the feelings of what remain a sparse and unsupported few than to allow those views to remain underground and to build in secret. In this way, I applaud my home university and feel some significant pride for its handling of the entire situation.

I do not like Nazis. It is one of the few ideologies against which I could see myself actually going to war, personally and physically, even as I imminently approach fifty years old. Having seen some of the after-effects of Nazi national

The Nazi Movement Today: Our Cousins, Ourselves

Written by Patricia Sohn

socialism and Soviet Bolshevism in Europe, I have always felt that it is important that such views be aired *before* they are able to gain credibility. For now, the rantings of a guy claiming that non-white peoples are just jealous that they were not better at being slave owners and violent colonists looks just like what they are: Rantings.

It appears that local police were fairly even-handed in approaching supporters and counter-protestors of the event, and that most protestors were non-violent. That said, it is unacceptable for counter-protestors to chase or assault a human being of an opposing view, as reported by Fox News above. Police need to enforce the law against the Left, not only the Right.

It is about time that the white supremacists among us learn that they do not own the Right. Nor do they represent it.

It is also time that people on the Left and Right remember that one of the hallmarks of Nazi national socialism was “progressivism” and “progressive change” *from the top-down* – as it always comes. This was also a hallmark of Soviet Bolshevism. Some of their specific policy efforts to modernize their populations are still lauded by the Left today in the U.S. (e.g., forced adoptions for cultures “identified” as “non-desirable,” and the like; ask anyone African American or Native American and you will hear story after story of children being forcibly taken away from their parents for nothing other than color and poverty. There is no statute against color or poverty – yet – of which I am aware. Neither is a crime. And in neither case is the punishment for that non-crime having your children taken away). Thankfully, the Right tends to be a bit more reticent on such state intrusions.

Top-down social change is not a good thing. It is violent. It is authoritarian. It eradicates social and cultural difference. It homogenizes in violent and intrusive ways. It is the antithesis of individual Liberty. It is the antithesis of cultural autonomy. Smashing cultures that you do not value and taking away their children – systematically and without statutory support – does not respect cultural autonomy. It is also against the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So, when the hard Left in the U.S. hears a white supremacist speak, they should be looking themselves in the mirror rather than pointing fingers. White supremacy, at least in the U.S. South, is a Democratic Party issue, as that party well knows, not a conservative issue. I grew up in the Democratic Party world and can vouch for the Lie when it comes to race and white supremacy. Enough said.

About the author:

Dr. Patricia Sohn, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Florida. She is co-editor of *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*, (University of Michigan Press 2022); and author of *Judicial Power and National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel* (SUNY Press 2017 and 2008).