"Capitalism, Racism, and Trumpism: Whitelash and the Politics of Oppression"

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Introduction

The rising tides of fascism, headwinds of neoliberalism, and persistence of racism in the United States as institutional, systemic, and part of a long history of oppression towards various groups has been well established. The bigger question is how we got to a point where overt manifestations of racism, sexism, faux democracy, and other forms of illegality and authoritarianism have once again become normalized. What does it mean when a sitting President claims that Mexican immigrants are rapists, criminals, and drug runners? What does it mean when a sitting President refuses to disclose his taxes to the American people, refuses to disclose whistleblower complaints—or worse, retweets the alleged name of his whistleblower—, or tries to act (or lie) as if there was nothing wrong about asking foreign leaders to investigate political opponents? What does it mean when the presumable leader of the "free world" not only downplays but significantly rebukes scientists and health practitioners on significant issues like climate change and, most recently, Covid-19—being sure to racialize the pandemic along the way? As such, how did we get to a point where we, collectively, are not as outraged as we reasonably should be?

In this paper, we argue that part of the explanation for the rise of, and loyalty to, Trumpism[1] lies in Donald Trump's ability to fuel "whitelash." It may be Trump's racial and political extremism that reinforces support among his base deepens the already established roots of white supremacy in U.S. society. His extremism has also encouraged Americans to return to overt racism as a way to create a "new normal" that sounds and performs like 1950's racial hatred. We define this whitelash as an individual, institutional, and/or structural countermeasures against the dismantling of white supremacy or actions, real or imagined, that seek to remedy existing racial inequities. Whitelash, we argue, is a reaction to challenges made to the white status quo; it is a reaction to growing diversity; it is a reaction against progressive changes (perceived or real) that would call out racism, question white privilege, or suggest racial equality is necessary to meet American ideals of fairness, in many of its forms. But whitelash is also inextricably linked to capitalism, class, and gender— as Trumpism exploits all to normalize oppression of working-class whites as well as people of color. That is, in line with intersectional arguments produced by notable scholars such as Oliver Cromwell Cox (1948), Angela Davis (1983), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), David Roediger 2007), and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) among others, we acknowledge that to understand the complex, and often seemingly contradictory, nuances of contemporary politics, we must move beyond

singular class, race, or gender explanations and take into account the fact that these systems of domination are intimately interconnected (Collins 2000).

In what follows, we first outline existing theoretical frameworks that inform this paper. Then, we sketch out our conceptualization of whitelash as a theoretical and intersectional framework for best understanding what seems to be a steadfast (if not slight increase at times) fidelity to Trumpism, despite Trump's consistent obfuscation and lies. We contend that while Trumpism and the accompanying whitelash are admittedly abnormal, unique, and readily apparent, often centered on misdirection and other forms of obfuscation, rash actions, and outright lies, the racial, gender, and class fear-mongering is not new. Whitelash has long been a driving force for public debate and policy decisions when it comes to other racialized issues in the United States. We then provide two prominent historical case studies highlighting the role of whitelash in the U.S.: immigration and affirmative action.

Theoretical Frameworks

Our paper is informed by contemporary racism scholars who understand racism systemically and structurally (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Feagin 2010; Omi and Winant 1994), whereby racism has become less visible and overt primarily because of legal changes. This 'New Racism,' as Bonilla-Silva (2001) argues, has given rise to unique ways in which challenges against racial equality have manifested themselves. We are most influenced by scholars who argue for the importance of intersectional (Cox, 1948; Collins 2000) and interlevel (Ray 2019) frameworks that aim to understand the interconnectedness of systems of oppressions—that can better explain, for example, the steady rise and/or steadiness of Trumpism, in all its racist, sexist, and crass forms.

Racial Formations, Racialized Social Systems, and Systemic Racism

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, in their 1994 book, <u>Racial Formation in the United States</u>, highlighted the major role that the state plays in the creation, shaping, and reproduction of racial categories and racial identities. They contend that race is fluid, dynamic, and highly dependent on the politics of white supremacy at different times in U.S. history. Omi and Winant define racial formation as the process by which the forces mentioned above. Still, in particular, the state determines the racial order of society, to highlight the importance of racial categories and the meanings attached to them. How we come to understand ourselves and others, particularly concerning the racial identity and our sense of belonging (i.e., who belongs and who does not) are predicated on what Omi and Winant call "racial common sense" that helps us to understand our position in society.

In his 1997 article published in <u>American Sociological Review</u>, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (see also 2001) posits racism as a global phenomenon in which racialized social systems are hierarchically ordered, and people gain advantages and disadvantages depending on where they fit in the racial and social order. Bonilla-Silva intended to address the lack of a structural theory of racism that would highlight the practices and mechanisms the dominant race would put into place to secure and maintain their social standing at the top of the racial hierarchy. While the racialization of the world system is based on social, economic, political, and psychological relations of domination and subordination between groups at the top of the racial hierarchy and those below, Bonilla-Silva (1997: 470) does note that historically, "the racialization of social systems did not imply the

exclusion of other forms of oppression," and that "racialization occurred in social formations also structured by class and gender."

In his book, <u>Racist America: Roots, Realities, and Future Reparations</u>, Joe R. Feagin (2010) developed the concept of systemic racism to explain the condition of blacks in the U.S., in particular, to address the consistent and cumulative disadvantages of what it meant to be black in America. According to Feagin, systemic racism highlights structural, institutional, and historical forces that are unique to a country that was explicitly founded to oppress blacks and provide advantages to whites. Feagin argues that the deep roots of racism in U.S. society have resulted in societal and institutional racist practices, at all levels—economic, ideological, and political—that work to preserve white supremacy. White racial frames, according to Feagin, serve as the ideological arm of his systemic racism theory. This concept provides a broader understanding of racism that includes visual images, emotions, and language, for example, as legitimizing and maintaining white supremacy.

Finally, sociology scholars explicating racialized organizations are relatively new, in comparison to racism theorists who interrogate a better understanding of racism at the structural or societal levels. Nonetheless, many scholars have expressed and addressed the need for organizational understanding in race and ethnicity (Douglas et al. 2018; Moore 2008; Ray 2017, 2019; Saenz et al. 2007). The crux of such a call is predicated on the idea that while human agents shape organizational structures, actors are also shaped by the complex arrangements and practices of organizations (Saenz et al. 2007). In Wendy Leo Moore's (2008) book titled <u>Reproducing Racism: White Space, Elite Law Schools, and Racial Inequality</u>, she elucidated the processes by which elite law schools, as a gateway institution, serve to reinforce existing laws and practices that are bound in white supremacy (see also Embrick et al. 2019). More recently, Victor Ray (2017, 2019) contends that organizations are racialized and thus imbued with racial meanings that help shape organizational hierarchies and interactions.

With these arguments in mind, we apply the notions that racism is systematic, intentional, and ever-changing to ensure white superiority in America. Notably, we contend as other social scientists have postulated that racism in the U.S. is still abundant and pervasive in shaping the lives of all Americans and those who cross its borders. Moreover, we argue that structural racism continues to find ways to prop up white privilege and superiority despite the increase in diversity and cries for equality in 21st century America. Here, we reiterate the reality that racist ideologies inform institutional practices and policies that obstruct advances made against white supremacy, thus diluting any progress towards racial equity and equality in the past and present.

Intersecting and Interlevel Systems of Domination

When understanding how racialization reinforces racial attitudes, it is also essential to understand the role of intersecting identities. Many scholars, including bell hooks and Angela Davis, highlighted myriad ways in which women of color, particularly black women, face a heightened form of oppression. Kimberlée Crenshaw (1989) was the first to coin the term 'intersectionality.' As she states, intersectional experiences are higher than the sum of race and gender experiences. Certainly, we can add experiences of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, citizenship, ability, and other marginalized identities.

Of the many contributions in the social sciences that have influenced how we should be thinking about the interconnectedness of multiple oppressions and systems of domination,

Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) acclaimed book, <u>Black Feminist Thought</u>, is near, if not at the top of the list. The book is more than an extension of Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality in its elaboration of what Collins describes as interlocking oppression—or the coextensive nature of racism, sexism, and classism. Further, Collins notes that oppression is systemically organized and arranged, and legitimized by the hegemonic domain. We all participate and are part of a larger matrix of domination that privileges the dominant groups, albeit differently depending on their various positions in society. Thus, white women can be members of an oppressed group while still taking political views deemed to be racist and anti-immigrant.

We also must recognize the intertwined relationships between the questions of racism and group social mobility. As argued by most racism scholars (see Bonilla-Silva 1997; Feagin 2010; Omi and Winant 1994), the American social construction of race and racism is about economic opportunities and securing these privileges for generations to come. Notably, the notion that being white in America equals better access to citizenship, voting, property ownership, better jobs, and better wages (see Gallagher 2008). While never stated directly, Herbert Blumer (1958) suggested that feelings of prejudice and the actions of discrimination by white Americans have primarily been predicted by their perceptions of what they think they economically deserve as white American citizens. He did argue that if whites felt that their group position (i.e., economic situation and social mobility) was threatened, then whites would lash out in prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory actions. Therefore, we believe it is important to note that when white Americans feel economically and politically threatened by various racial and ethnic groups, then whitelash has often been deployed to restore the social, economic, and political order of white dominance.

Whitelash

Our understanding of whitelash is predicated on the notion that white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy(ies) are part of the very fabric of American society; that racism, classism, and sexism are firmly embedded in its structural foundations. Expanding the term 'whitelash,' coined by CNN commentator Van Jones (see Grinapol 2016),[2] we define whitelash as individual, institutional, and structural countermeasures against the dismantling of white supremacy (as it intersects with other systems of domination) or actions, real or imagined, that seek to remedy existing racial inequities. We argue that whitelash is a reaction to challenges made against the white status quo as well as to growing racial diversity. It is also a systematic reaction to progressive changes that would call out racism, question white privilege, or suggest racial equality is necessary to meet American ideals of fairness and equal treatment. In a broader, sociological sense, whitelash is not just about confirming and reaffirming a dominant identity (although this is part of it); it is also about the fear of change in white superiority, whether it be imagined or real. That is, whitelash has less to do with white's opposition to issues such as immigration, for instance, and more about maintaining white domination in all avenues of life and reinforcing the pillars that hold up white supremacy despite growing efforts to at least question it. To that end, whitelash reflects the reactions of individuals and institutions in the more massive racialized social structure that have a possessive investment in whiteness (see Lipsitz 1998, 2011).

We further contend that whitelash occurs at different levels, including individual and institutional levels. Racialized institutional policies and practices that reinforce the status quo are forms of whitelash. These racial mechanisms (see Hughey et al. 2015) or racial projects (see Omi and Winant 1994) serve to at least maintain and solidify white supremacy. Similarly, ever-changing

racial ideologies that help folks to make sense of the current racial and social order, and that help them disregard or minimize racial fissures in society and reinforce white supremacy, are a type of backlash. We provide details below on the specifics of how we might think about whitelash at the structural, institutional, and individual levels.

Structural — We follow the lead of scholars such as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Joe R. Feagin in understanding structural racism as embedded practices within a given society that are formalized and designed as normative societal behaviors that give unequal rewards to groups. Beginning with the erasure of indigenous groups (Glenn 2015), racism is deeply rooted in U.S. history (Feagin 2010), and its tentacles extend politically, economically, socially, and ideologically. Backlash emanates from many racial ideologies that exist in the U.S. racialized social system that serves to help whites (and some non-whites) make sense of their place in the racial, social order, including colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 1997; 2003; Burke 2019), white racial frame (Feagin 2010), diversity ideology (Embrick 2008, 2011, 2018; see also Berrey 2015), racial apathy (Forman and Lewis 2006), or blaming the victim—what Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields (2014) have labeled as 'racecraft.'

Institutional — Whitelash can occur as a result of real or perceived pressures that challenge existing institutional practices or seek to dismantle them. Similarly, whitelash can result in the creation of exclusive spaces that promote white supremacy. Organizational racial mechanisms include, but are not limited to, place, space, polities, programs, practices, methods, logic, or language (Ray 2019). Omi and Winant (2014 [1994]) noted that whites, through many social institutions, have systematically and diligently challenged any racial or ethnic progress towards equality since the U.S. Civil War. The shift to 'New Racism' also makes this shift much more covert and subtle within institutional frameworks (Bonilla-Silva 1997, 2001, 2003).

Individual — At the individual level, we draw on Bonilla-Silva's (2019) advancement of racialized emotions as tied to collective movements that propel groups to react negatively to progressive changes or perceptions of impending or future change. This mechanism is powerful and has been subject to the majority of the work in the social sciences on persistent racism and discrimination. For example, since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, whites have increasingly minimized or ignored addressing racial inequalities over class inequalities, have favored laissez-faire explanations (Bobo et al. 1997; Bobo and Smith 1998) that blame minorities for their social standing, or have couched resistance to equality in terms of neoliberal thought of supporting equality for all and not just those viewed as disadvantaged (Carter et al. 2014). The latter has increased particularly since the 1980s, pushing for policy reform, for instance, that have racialized outcomes (Saito 2009). Even Herbert Blumer (1958) argued that prejudice and discrimination were fed not just by social changes that threatened white supremacy in America but by whites "feeling" like they are losing their grasp of what they think they deserve, including jobs, social welfare programs, public services, and their normative identities. Overall, these emotions have often focused on blaming racial and ethnic minorities, both foreign and domestic, for national issues concerning economic, political, and cultural shifts since the foundation of the United States.

Thus, we can identify peaks of whitelash that are systematic and consistent at many points in

U.S. history where the issue has centered on challenging the calls for the rights of non-whites and the reduction of racial/ethnic oppression, whether those issues be regarding economic, political, social, psychological, or even philosophical concerns. For instance, in the U.S., the Reconstruction Era was rife with the backlash against the emancipation of black slaves (Browne 2007). The same can be said with the rise of Jim Crow laws, redlining, anti-miscegenation laws, police brutality, increased non-white incarceration rates, etc. Centuries later, there is the reactionary backlash towards correcting mis-history regarding slavery in the U.S.—whether that correction is because the issue of slavery was an issue of racism and white supremacy and not solely an issue of states' rights; or whether the correction has to do with the ridiculous and factually incorrect perceptions that there were not many slave rebellions because blacks realized how great they had it as slaves. Related to the backlash against correcting U.S. history, there is also backlash toward the removal of monuments (e.g., Confederate statues) that celebrate or represent a nostalgic call back to days of overt legal racial oppression (Fortin 2017; O'Reilly 2017). With that being said, we present two detailed case studies of whitelash on immigration and affirmative action. In so doing, we tie whitelash historically to present day Trumpism. We then contend that Trump's brand of racism may be abnormal to an extent and thus further institutionalize existing racial mechanisms of white supremacy.

The Case of Immigration

The Ideologies that Shape the U.S. Immigration Debate

When it comes to the immigration debate in the United States, whitelash has depended on nativist ideology, which differentiates the native from the foreign (Galindo and Vigil 2006; Knobel 1996; Schrag 2010). Higham (1955:4) defined nativism as "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., 'un-American') connections." It is not surprising that scholars have noted that nativist views and actions often became more exclusory and hostile during times of national crisis such as economic downturns (i.e., the Great Depression), wars (or terrorist attacks), or sudden increases in visibility due to the size or concentration of immigrant populations (Galindo and Vigil 2006; Higham 1955; Perea 1997; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Sánchez 1997). In Higham's (1955) examination of immigration from 1860 to 1925, he concluded that anti-immigrant sentiment and policies were undoubtedly shaped by a real or perceived challenge to native-born Americans' sense of loss concerning their economic, political, or cultural positions in the U.S. However, if the immigrants posed no economic, political, or cultural threat to native-born folks, then they tended to support immigration, regardless of race or ethnicity. Higham (1999) later on realized that by the 1960s, race and ethnicity had become a driving force of determining which groups of immigrants were considered as a threat to native-born resources with the rise of more non-white immigrants arriving to the U.S.

Sociologists Charles Jaret (1999) and Cameron Lippard (2011) support this notion that racial ideology matters in the debate of immigration in the U.S. Both scholars argued that the question of immigration today relies heavily on a racialized perception of non-white immigrants from Asia and Central and South America as problematic compared to "white" European stock. Also, the question of illegal and legal immigration was not new to U.S. immigration debates but became particularly magnified with more Asian and Latinx immigrants entering the U.S. after the 1960s. This seemingly new racialized approach to immigration was further exasperated with several

events, including various wars, economic recessions/depression, and, more recently, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the "Great Economic Recession" of 2008. These events, as well as several others, have pushed scholars to consider that race may be a significant variable in the discussion of immigration in the United States.

Scholars have argued that nativism and racism work together to not only determine who belongs in America but, most importantly, to protect and secure a White supremacist nation. As Higham (1999:384) later lamented at the end of his career, "Racism and nativism were different things, though often closely allied." Reflecting on recent anti-immigrant sentiment concerning Asians and Latinos, he also stated that, "We require no theory of 'new' nativism or 'new' racism to account for the trouble that today's concentrated immigration from abroad precipitates…" (Higham 1999: 388). Or, as Galindo and Vigil (2006: 426) argued, "racism and nativism intertwine during processes of nation-building when immigrants happen to also be people of colour." Therefore, 'racist nativism' in the U.S. has worked in several ways to prop up white supremacy and, in many insistences, allowed whites to protect white privilege and power in a growingly diverse United States. While Karl Marx reflected on worker alienation from the means of production, this indicates a racial alienation of sorts where whites feel alienated from valued resources (e.g., jobs) being unfairly taken by undeserving non-white immigrants. Below we provide several examples of how whitelash has happened at institutional and individual levels throughout history up to today to maintain white superiority.

Historical and Structural Roots of Whitelash against Immigration

Scholars have observed the connection between racist nativism, politics, and federal immigration laws that protect white supremacy in America (see Carter and Lippard 2015; Bernard 1998; Lippard 2011; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). In a review of American immigration laws from the colonial period to now, Bernard (1998) found that all posed most of their restrictions on foreign-born groups who were not from western and central European 'white stock.' Moreover, while non-white immigrants from Asia and Central and South America were not preferred, they were allowed to immigrate to the colonies and the newly formed United States if they represented a steady supply of cheap and able-bodied labor. This "cheap labor" caveat helped to usher in thousands of immigrants from Ireland (not considered white at the time – see Roediger 1991) and China and other East Asian countries to help with the settlement and economic expansion of the U.S. into its brutally-acquired western territories. For example, the Open Door Era from 1776 to 1881 invited any European (and white) settlers to become automatic citizens after living two years in the U.S. colonies and later on, states. This open-door policy favored Europeans from England, France, Germany, and other "white ancestry" locales but also encouraged non-white groups to immigrate who could serve as an abundant and cheaper labor source (i.e., Irish and Chinese immigrants). Interestingly, these federal immigration/naturalization policies were espoused mainly by scientists and politicians who supported eugenics and the notion of biological racism, often labeling those identified by the American public as "non-white" to be disease-ridden and genetically inferior (Higham 1955; Painter 2011). These new immigration/naturalization policies also had little to no provisions to explain ways in which Native Americans and Mexican citizens in the West (who were incorporated as citizens of the U.S. after the Mexican American War) would become naturalized Americans.

However, by 1881, the United States would abruptly change its policies on allowing non-

white immigrants to enter as a cheap labor source. A growing anti-immigrant campaign arose against Chinese and other Asian immigrants across Europe, and the U.S. is known as the "Yellow Peril." This ever increasing public concern focused on how Chinese immigrants were a particular threat to national security on multiple fronts concerning economics, politics, and public health (Tchen and Yeats 2014). However, the most consistent worry, mainly expressed by elite white Americans, was that Chinese immigrants were too economically successful in comparison to whites as entrepreneurs. By the 1880s, Chinese immigrants had struck it rich in American gold mines, opened thousands of small businesses across the U.S., and they were also taking working-class jobs from whites for less pay. Irish Catholic immigrants who were also seen as a "foreigner problem" at the time, banded together with white elites to blame Chinese immigrants as a national security problem because they were taking their jobs in many manual labor industries afforded to Irish immigrants (see Painter 2011; Steinberg 2001). More importantly, by aligning their political and economic interests with wealthy white Americans to suppress other immigrant groups and African Americans, Irish immigrants would be excluded from persecution and deportation as immigrants and be newly racialized as white.

After significant public outcry, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was made into law. It was one of the first racist immigration policies in American history that maintained white supremacy against a foreign-born population. The Act ordered that no new immigration be allowed from China, especially Chinese women who could increase birth rates of native-born Chinese children (Bernard 1998). This law also sparked the "Driving Out" period in which mostly working-class whites used mob violence to push out Chinese immigrants from their businesses and towns. For example, in 1885, white American miners in Rock Springs, Wyoming attacked and killed almost thirty Chinese immigrants who they saw as the cause of their unemployment. Other incidents included white Americans forcing Chinese families to move back into their established "Chinatowns," as well as restricting any business interactions between whites and Chinese and other Asian immigrant business owners (Tchen and Yeats 2014).

While the Chinese Exclusion Act would not be fully repealed until 1943, its impact, along with the white mob violence, effectively set Chinese immigrants and Americans back economically and politically for decades. This policy also opened the door to create even more restrictive federal immigration policies including full restrictions on "unfavorable" groups coming from many now-labeled "non-white" countries including most countries across Asia, Central and South America, and Africa, as well as some European countries like Italy (Bernard 1998). Also, by 1921 and after a world war, the U.S. decided that the best way to regulate their stock of immigrants coming into America was through restrictive quotas. The Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 established that each country in the world would be assigned a pre-determined allotment as to the number of immigrants who could enter the country. Eight-two percent of these allotments were given to northern and western European countries (Bernard 1998). The quotas also went to states and racial and ethnic groups who were considered more "assimilable" to American life and culture, which severely limited immigrants coming from all of Asia and Africa, as well as most of Central and South America (Bernard 1998). Overall, these new federal immigration policies were created in the hopes that it would increase the "white" immigration from Europe, as well as would protect the economic and political interests of white "native" Americans.

While these new restrictive laws kept U.S. borders closed to much of the world's non-white populations, it would also make exceptions to the rules when cheap labor was needed. The bending of rules also subversively encouraged whitelash techniques when white America

wanted to remove immigrants when the public and economy demanded it. For example, during and shortly after World War II, Americans recognized they did not have enough cheap labor to keep up productions for war and created the Bracero Program to bring in cheap manual labor from Central America and particularly Mexico. This program continued to operate until 1964, bringing in primarily Mexican immigrant men to harvest crops. However, by the 1950s, American prosperity was at an all-time high, but Mexican immigrants and native-born citizens began to unionize and consider their economic worth in the U.S. (Koulish 2010). This move by Mexican laborers sparked concern and backlash from affluent white farmers and business owners who wanted to keep profits high and labor cheap. Through political connections, these concerns prompted another federal action called "Operation Wetback" in 1954. This operation was responsible for arresting and deporting close to 1.3 million Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans back to Mexico and, ultimately, curtailing farmworker unionization (Blakemore 2018). It also kept wages low even for working-class whites and African Americans (Blakemore 2018). Put simply, up until the 1960s; it was clear that U.S. immigration policies wanted certain groups that would establish and continue white dominance and privilege in America. There were also clear institutional and individual actions taken in response to the possibilities that whites, at the time, would lose economically and politically.

Whitelash and Latinx Immigration Today

Now, flash forward to late 20th and early 21st Century America. After the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, all quotas were eliminated, and immigration was once again opened up to all nationalities/groups, regardless of where they lived or their race or ethnicity. Particularly, these new "liberal" laws would allow for family reunification in which current naturalized, and native-born citizens could vouch for their family members to immigrate to the U.S. (Bernard 1998). While policy makers hoped this new policy would encourage more "white ethnic" migration to the U.S., it helped a "browning" of immigration trends (Lippard and Gallagher 2011; Massey 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). By the 1980s, Asian and Hispanic/Latinx immigration had significantly increased and surpassed all immigration records kept since the 1800s. Most immigrants came from Central America, China, and much of Southeast Asia due to America's involvement in global politics and economics in places like Vietnam and surrounding countries. Thus, the "new normal" was the liberalization and diversification in immigration for the U.S.

By 1986, President Ronald Reagan was persuaded by prominent business owners and public concerns to enact the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (Bernard 1998). Business owners were particularly having a problem with competing against companies who were hiring undocumented immigrants as labor. Thus, this law would be the first to focus on ways to fund and bolster support to find, detain, and remove undocumented immigrants, particularly coming from Central America and Mexico. It would also attempt to penalize companies who hired undocumented immigrants. Still, this provision was primarily eroded by debate and policies later passed that protected business in hiring undocumented immigrants. Reagan also gave amnesty and citizenship to around 2.7 million individuals in hopes they would become honest, tax-paying citizens (Alba and Nee 2003). However, these efforts did not slow down undocumented immigration because companies continued to hire undocumented immigrants with minimal agitation from the federal government.

Despite these efforts by Reagan and subsequent presidential administrations (i.e., Presidents

George H. Bush and Bill Clinton), economic and political tensions continued to rise across the U.S. Whitelash began to show up particularly in various states where the increase in non-white immigration was visible to the white public. For example, in 1994, California's Proposition Bill 187 attempted to curtail undocumented immigration to the state. It was an institutional reaction to some California conservative politicians who argued that "illegals" were abusing public services without paying local or state taxes. This uproar primarily focused on the Mexican immigrant population and attempted to identify all undocumented immigrants and prohibit "illegals" from using non-emergency health care, public education, and other services provided by the State of California (Calavita 2014). While the bill passed and was enacted, the U.S. Supreme Court eventually struck it down as unconstitutional and discriminatory for targeting Mexican immigrants, naturalized citizens, and native-born individuals.

However, the most prominent era of whitelash toward immigration came in 2001. Arguably, a perfect storm of factors arose in 2001 to send America and its white populations into a whitelash frenzy. First, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, began the era of restrictive policies focusing on protecting American interests and its people. The Patriot Act of 2001 created protections for the U.S. government to servile, detain and remove several immigrants and non-white individuals suspected of aiding or conducting terrorist acts. Also, it created the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which would dissolve the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and create a new law enforcement agency called Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Second, the attacks came a significant economic downturn for the United States and the rest of the world by 2008. The "Great Recession" destroyed employment opportunities and retirements for many Americans, which would mean that even jobs primarily regulated to immigrants would be seen as a valuable resource to unemployed Americans. Finally, the broader push of non-white citizens and other marginalized groups for recognition and, at best, equality, sparked whitelash. Growing movements including but not limited to same-sex marriage, racialized police brutality, and the gender pay gap made many white Americans realize they were not the only ones suffering from the political and economic turmoil of the 21st Century, as well as that prejudice and discrimination was a significant concern for most non-white and marginalized Americans and immigrants. All of these factors came together and created what we would propose as the most significant whitelash movement against non-white immigration. This significant change in rhetoric and policy made a move to more liberal views towards immigration disappear and less than usual since the 1960s.

This new era of whitelash included several actions from local, state, and federal institutions to curtail non-white immigration from Central America. For instance, from 2001 to 2010, almost half of all U.S. states passed or attempted to pass anti-immigrant laws to reduce undocumented immigration to their states (Lippard and Gallagher 2011). An excellent example of this push can be seen with Arizona's State Bill 1070, which wanted to enforce federal immigration laws by encouraging local law enforcement throughout the state to ask for documentation of a person's legal status while in the United States (Lippard and Carter 2015). The U.S. Supreme Court contended that law enforcement would target individuals who "may look illegal" based on ethnic and racial stereotypes, and eventually struck the bill down.

Despite this Supreme Court decision, several other states across the U.S. enacted similar laws that looked to punish Latinx immigrants for interacting with public services or working with companies that paid them under the table as undocumented immigrants. The most famous state laws popped up in southern states, including Alabama and Georgia, which attempted to remove

undocumented immigrants from harvesting crops. However, local farmers and business owners in the state lobbied their state governments to remove these clauses because it would significantly deflate crop profits (Lippard and Gallagher 2011).

Local municipalities and counties also set up relationships with ICE to serve as deputies of federal immigration enforcement. For example, the ICE 287(g) Program has funneled federal monies into local law enforcement to train local law enforcement, add new positions, and build detention centers to assist in the war on immigration (see Arriaga 2020). These partnerships often allowed the targeting of Latinx immigrants and their families as suspects of being undocumented immigrants. This practice became evident when local law enforcement such as the Alamance County Sheriff's Department in North Carolina was federally prosecuted for racial profiling during routine traffic stops to locate and detain these immigrants (Arriaga 2020).

On the federal level, there has also been whitelash against immigration. Former President Barack Obama's administration was fundamental in pumping in more federal dollars to build up ICE and border patrol personnel to curtail illegal and legal immigration specifically from Central America. This effort led to some of the highest deportation rates in American history topping out at 5.3 million deportations from 2009 to 2016 (DHS 2016). President Donald Trump has also assisted in furthering whitelash against Latinx and Middle East immigrants. In 2017, Trump signed Executive Order 13769 to ban the immigration of Muslims to the U.S. from several countries including but not limited to Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and other Middle East countries to curtail terrorism in the U.S. President Trump also pushed for more federal funding or even foreign investment (i.e., that Mexico should pay for the wall) into building more walls and increasing CBP personnel on the southern American border to Mexico and the rest of Central America. He has also encouraged ICE and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) to increase raids on industries hiring mostly immigrants (i.e., the raid of seven food-processing plants in Mississippi in 2019) and the separation of immigrant children from families to deter continued immigration to the U.S (Aguilera 2019; Gonzales 2019). He has also restricted or pulled federal funding from local municipalities and cities identified as "sanctuary cities" and pumped money and support into training Mexican immigration enforcement to align with American concerns (Vera 2019).

Of course, much of this whitelash, particularly against Mexican immigrants, has not been a new phenomenon within American history. As argued by sociologist Leo Chavez (2013), the "Latino threat" to white America has been a long-constructed racist nativist story reaching back to the Mexican American War. However, Chavez (2013) argues that the intensity of public support and the amount of federal dollars focused on the Latinx threat is at its highest in history. American media, business owners, and state and federal politicians have effectively spread misinformation about the impacts of immigration on the American public (see Bohon and MacPherson 2011). As infamously stated by President Trump, Latinx immigration to the U.S. has been characterized within the last five years as an immigrant horde made up of rapists, murderers, and drug dealers.

Scholars have demonstrated that whitelash trickles down even into the day-to-day lives of Americans and their interactions with immigrants. For instance, Lippard and Graham (2014) found that in the rural mountain towns of western North Carolina, Latinx immigrants and their families face moderate levels of discrimination and exclusion in receiving public services, including healthcare, attending public school, or interacting with local law enforcement. Other researchers have also noted this across the United States, where Latinxs are often stereotyped and mistreated as undocumented immigrants when accessing jobs, housing, and social services (see Lippard and Gallagher 2011; Marrow 2011; Massey 2008). Journalist Roberto Lovato (2008) coined the

term "Juan Crow" to explain southern state adoptions of discriminatory laws and condoning local discriminatory practices against Mexican immigrants as similar to racist situations African Americans faced during the Jim Crow Era.

Overall, whitelash has become the standard in the treatment of immigration today. Indeed, this was not a new trend since scholars have demonstrated that debates and decisions over immigration have long been rooted in protecting white supremacy. Institutions at various levels in American society have and continue today to play a significant part in creating laws to curtail and remove "foreigners" who threaten white supremacy from federal to local law interventions. However, what is abnormal, to a certain degree, is the outwardly hostile rhetoric by President Trump, the supposed leader of the free world, when describing immigrants attempting to enter the U.S. to obtain employment. Such racist frames indeed promote whitelash and make these times perilous for immigrants of color like we have never seen before.

The Case of Affirmative Action in Higher Education

We now turn our attention to another highly contested and racialized issue in the history of the U.S.: affirmative action. We argue that this policy may be one of the most prominent and well-documented cases of whitelash. This is not surprising given that affirmative action, as an ameliorative policy, is closely tied to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and attempts to promote diversity and redistribute resources away from whites to marginalized groups who have been excluded in the past. President John F. Kennedy supported equal opportunity of employment for minorities and restructured federal efforts to improve the social well being of African Americans and other marginalized groups. While earlier attempts by the federal government were made to alleviate the impact of racism and discrimination (see Kellough 2006 for full discussion), it was Executive Order 10925 of 1961, issued by President Kennedy, that was more proactive in the cause. This order required all federal contractors to take "affirmative action to ensure that applicants are treated equally" without regard to race, creed, color, or nationality. It is this order that first made mention of the idea of affirmative action. Relative to past governmental efforts to alleviate inequality and discrimination, this effort attempted to take concrete and meaningful steps to such ends (Carter and Lippard 2020; Carter, Lippard and Baird 2018).

The whitelash against affirmative action was immediate and swift. Former research director of the Institute for Democracy Studies Lee Cokorinos (2003:16) stated succinctly that, "For as long as there have been civil rights law, conservatives have been developing the arguments and instruments to reverse it." As such, we pose that a whitelash occurred against growing diversity and the so-called intrusion of the national government that sought to desegregate formerly white spaces and to redistribute resources against their wishes. As we will describe below, this whitelash has been a socio-historical process occurring at different levels and became more organized in the 1980s just as prominent U.S. institutions (e.g., higher education, businesses) were taking concerted ameliorative efforts to right old wrongs. Whitelash represents a long-standing push by whites (and some non-whites) and conservative elites who oppose growing diversity to eliminate policies meant to alleviate racial inequality; thus, there is a long-fought battle being waged against the "liberal agenda." Furthermore, control over politics and the media played a substantial role in reproducing narratives that argue against affirmative action, including blaming the victim that attacks the culture of marginalized groups and, concomitantly, making whites the ultimate victims of the policy.

The Ideological Roots of Whitelash towards Affirmative Action

Those fighting against affirmative action, whether it be elite actors, politicians or lawyers, tend to be unified on one front: ideological orientation. Accordingly, we argue that the ideology central to the whitelash against affirmative action is noteworthy for two fundamental reasons. One, arguments against policies such as affirmative action use a neoliberal frame. This perspective borrows racist tropes that condemn the policy for violating basic and cherished principles of justice and fairness. This is indeed true for affirmative action. One of the primary frames surrounding affirmative action is that such policies are unjust because education is about meritand entrance into institutions of higher education should be about hard work and effort (Carter and Lippard 2020; Carter, Lippard, and Baird 2019). Many of the arguments posed against affirmative action directly attack the culture of blacks and other marginalized groups. Often termed "blaming the victim," the frame of communication is commonly used to qualify anti-civil rights positions as it lays the problems squarely at the feet of groups suffering the most, who have issues with drugs or with work ethic.

Two, this ideology also reinforces alienation; in this case, it is whites who feel that they are deserving and that resources that they have earned are being taken away by underserving minority groups. While Marx referred to the alienation of the worker from production (lack of ownership of the means of production), alienation, as observed here, is racial alienation where whites feel alienated from the fruits of their labor. That is to say; our society is actively taking away rewards that should be connected to labor. Bobo and Hutchings (1996) defined racial alienation as a collectively shared grievance resulting from a perceived loss of valued resources. This a central frame in the arguments against affirmative action. Opponents express grave concern of reverse discrimination, where deserving candidates are being passed over by undeserving minorities who do not maintain the same work ethic and grades (Carter and Lippard 2020; Carter, Lippard, and Baird 2019). Fundamental to this notion is that of white victimization. Arguments that push reverse discrimination argue that society is more interested in diversity than it is about justice and fairness. In this light, whites are being left behind and punished for their skin color, an ironic twist given arguments made by civil rights icons such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Also central to this argument is that of threat (Carter and Lippard 2020). Social authorities fighting against affirmative action tend to infuse their arguments with a threat to ensure an emotional whitelash among whites who feel they are being abandoned. Carter and Lippard termed this multi-framing technique, <u>Racialized Framing</u>.

With this being said, scholars have argued that the fight against affirmative action is being led by just a few elite actors (mostly white) rather than a grassroots uprising. These elite actors are leading a charge to dismantle any civil rights initiative that attempts to promote the well-being of marginalized groups. Moreover, these groups are supporting ideological orientations (racism is a thing of the past; no more discrimination, the color of skin does not predict outcomes, etc.) and doing so at varying levels of society. How do they accomplish such a monumental task? These entities have gained influential positions in politics and prominent interest groups to ensure control. However, these groups have manipulated the masses, not only with affirmative action but with other issues as well, through access to media. Research indeed shows that social authorities often use media outlets (Entman 1997) to produce hostility toward the policy. Entman (1997:40) observed that the most prominent media frame to be one of competition, where affirmative action represented a "zero-sum conflict of interest between whites and blacks in

which only one group could win, and one must lose." Thus, whitelash is not only about changing policies and procedures, but it is also about changing the minds of the masses. Such dismantling of civil rights initiatives leads to the reproduction of inequality regardless of what is in the hearts and minds of everyday persons.

Historical and Structural Roots of Whitelash against Diversity in Higher Education

It is without a doubt that economics played a tremendous role in whites lashing out against affirmative action. However, the anti-affirmative action movement itself was led by a few well-connected and funded actors rather than a "groundswell" of organized opposition (Corkninos 2003). The names of these actors are synonymous with wealth and power in the U.S. and are considered the who's who of economic, social, and political power in the country. These names include Coors, DeVos, Scaife, and Hunt, to name a few. Scholars have posed that these wealthy few were empowered by in-roads made by conservative politicians against civil rights initiatives that began in the 1980s (Moore 2018). Three factors were instrumental in the fight against affirmative action. First, the Reagan Administration promoted a color-blind perspective toward civil rights initiatives that vilified a common sense understanding of racial inequality and persistent discrimination (Moore 2018; Cokorinos 2003). Second, this color-blind perspective played out in the legislative agenda and was promoted by members (termed "permanent revolution" by Cokorinos) of the Reagan Administration, who opposed civil rights initiatives. Finally, this "permanent revolution" was instrumental in the inputting anti-civil rights advocates in positions of power (e.g., the federal judiciary, well-funded advocacy groups) to have an impact politically, legally, and in the media.

While anti-civil rights advocates made pushes in the 1960s and 1970s, the election of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s marked a transition. President Reagan and his administration brought with it a notable anti-civil rights orientation. While this perspective is problematic given the persistent issues with racism and discrimination, it was the infusion of anti-civil rights operatives into the Reagan administration that provided the bite behind the bark. For example, Reagan enlisted Jay Parker, an African American with a clear anti-affirmative-action perspective, as the head of his Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) transition team (Cokorinos 2003; Moore 2018). Before serving under Reagan, Parker used his company, International Public Affairs Consultant, Inc., to drive South African apartheid propaganda (Cokorinos 2003). Parker was instrumental in enlisting key young "operatives" in the fight against civil rights initiatives, including Ed Meese, William French Smith, and Ted Olson. In turn, Meece and Parker worked to fill Reagin's Justice Department with young conservatives, including members of the conservative Federalist Society (Lee Liberman Otis, Steven Calabresi, and Michael Carnin) as well as members of conservative advocacy organizations (e.g., Michael Carvin from the Center for Individual Rights). Meece and Parker were also instrumental in bringing in Linda Chavez (staff director at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights) and Clarence Thomas (chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), both of which maintained color-blind orientations toward key civil rights initiatives (especially affirmative action).

Clint Bolick, an assistant of Clarence Thomas, may have had the most significant impact on the anti-civil rights movement. Bolick laid the framework for the way elites would fight these initiatives through advocacy groups (Cokorinos 2003). He posed that groups with interest should use politics, media, and courts to attack affirmative action. This blueprint seems to be still working

today. Advocacy groups (think tanks in particular) have been quite active in fighting affirmative action on all three fronts (Carter and Lippard 2020). Some of these groups include the American Civil Rights Institute, Center for Equal Opportunity, Center for Individual Rights, Institute for Justice, and the Civil Rights Practice Groups of the Federalist Society. This counter conservative movement has also resulted in legal organizations entering the fight. Some of these groups have been instrumental in the fight against affirmative action in particular, including the Pacific Legal Foundation, Southeastern Legal Foundation, and the Mountain State Legal Foundation. These groups used legal briefs to fight against the policy in the last two affirmative-action U.S. Supreme Court cases (Fisher v. The University of Texas at Austin and Gratz/Grutter v. Bollinger).

Carter and Lippard (2020) found that think tanks, in particular, are prominent entities in arguing against affirmative action at the level of the Supreme Court. They describe the insidious role of think tanks in the political process. As opposed to specific interest groups who often attempt to use their economic prowess to protect the rights of their members, think tanks are not. Like special interest groups, think tanks are dependent on funding; thus, they turn to policy advocacy. Three socio-political factors make these groups useful in this process. One, elite individuals and groups can interject themselves in the U.S. political scene because it is an open and complex system where a war of ideas is ongoing. Two, party polarization has resulted in the inclusion of interest groups. Finally, the rise in cable and 24-hour network news channels (e.g., CNN, FOX, MSNBC) has created a niche for political experts. Accordingly, elite actors and think tanks can use their resources and the media to advocate for a particular position.

In summary, the Reagan era brought great harm to civil rights initiatives like affirmative action and reflected a grave example of whitelash against diversity. Reagan's clear color-blind plan led to the infusion of anti-civil rights political and judicial appointments that challenge any implementation of favorable policies. However, this administration also enabled a host of elite citizens, political and wealthy, to attempt to affect policy via different avenues, including advocacy groups. It is not surprising then that the number of advocacy groups that challenge various civil rights-related policies grew from around 20 in 1975 to over 200 by 1990 (Cokorinos 2003). The result of such intervention is that the Equal Protection Clause (that promises all citizens equal protection under the law) of the 14th Amendment became a color-blind mechanism that ignored the history of oppression of marginalized groups and persistent discrimination while simultaneously casting whites as victims (Carter and Lippard 2020).

This anti-civil-rights and anti-diversity movement did not end with Reagan. George H. Bush had key conservative appointments detrimental to affirmative action, including the successful nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court. This nomination is particularly harmful to the civil rights cause because not only did Thomas hold a color-blind orientation, but he replaced civil rights stalwart, Justice Thurgood Marshall. Thomas has supported the banning of affirmative action in the last two Supreme Court cases (Fisher and Gratz/Grutter). This anti-civil rights push was also carried out by Presidents George W. Bush and Donald Trump. It was President George W. Bush who came out strongly against affirmative action (referring to it as a quota system) in the Gratz and Grutter v. Bollinger cases in 2003. While President Obama, a Democrat President, never expressed strong support for affirmative action during the Fisher v. The University of Texas at Austin cases (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011), his support seems glowing when compared to that of Donald Trump, who was elected President in 2016. Trump expressed disdain for the policy and, in leaked documents produced by the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, pushed for applicants that would prosecute cases of race-based

discrimination in college admissions. Trump has also enlisted conservatives in his administration that maintain anti-civil rights orientations. For instance, his first Attorney General, Jeffrey Sessions, blames the flow of immigration for American job loss and increases welfare dependency. Sessions also expressed disdain for the Defense of Marriage Act and the Voting Rights Act (Sessions 2015). William Barr, another appointee for Attorney General under President Trump, supports the ban of asylum seekers and expanding border detention centers, including those that separate the children from their parents (Waheed and Tashman 2019).

At the state level, the political winds are also shifting against civil rights initiatives like affirmative action. Eight states have banned the use of affirmative action (that is, the use of race in decisions) in admissions particularly at public colleges and universities: California (1996), Washington (1998), Florida (1999), Michigan (2006), Nebraska (2008), Arizona (2010), New Hampshire (2011) and Oklahoma (2012). Colorado came close to doing the same, but the initiative to amend the state's constitution did not pass. In 1996, the state of California banned affirmative action via the passage of Proposition 209. Soon after, in 1998 and 1999, the states of Washington and Florida also voted to ban the use of affirmative action at colleges and universities (Initiative 200 and One Florida, respectively). With that being said, it is clear that the fight against affirmative action reflects a broader whitelash, where whites (and some non-whites) are attempting to push back against growing diversity and the idea of losing valued resources (e.g., seats and elite universities) to an undeserving group.

Discussion

Given the racial nature of these debates and the incendiary rhetoric used by Trump about these issues, media, and political pundits have raised concern that racism is still alive and well. Social science scholars studying prejudice, however, have not been surprised by such rhetoric and have noted that the resurgence of overt manifestations of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other "isms" is not necessarily new within the American context. These "isms' have at best only been symbolically or marginally addressed within American life, and whatever feeble attempts have only scratched the surface of these major societal injustices. Moreover, despite these efforts, the status quo of white affluence among men, in particular, has been propped up publicly and privately behind the scenes of supposed change during the Obama administration moving forward to Trump's America (see Omi and Winant 2014 [1994]).

Social scientists have described the growing but "silent" disgruntlement of white America since the 1960s. For example, Gallup Polls (see Gallagher 2008) have demonstrated that the majority of white Americans believe that racism is a thing of the past. It has had less of an effect on the life outcomes of non-white Americans since the 1960s. These polls also noted that whites believe that they are the new target of racism, where non-white groups get an advantage due to their skin color in public programs, including access to welfare and college entry. Moreover, white Americans have begun to consider the issue of immigration as a real challenge to their job security, economic prosperity, and safety from terrorism. As argued by sociologist Herbert Blumer (1958), whites perceive that their economic, political and social group position in America is threatened by ever-growing non-white populations, despite few personal experiences and overwhelming amounts of research to suggest otherwise. Thus, they feel significant threats to their economic and political livelihoods, which has led to events of whitelash to restore order to their access to privilege that has included but is not limited to markers of social mobility such as citizenship,

access to higher education, and first access to jobs and wages.

Since the 1980s, white Americans have also tended to suggest that, within any given situation, race or racism is not the problem in any sort of discrimination or mistreatment (Bobo et al. 1997; Bonilla-Silva 2001, 2003; Feagin 2010). Instead, a majority of whites have suggested that race had nothing to do with unequal treatment toward non-whites, and respect for authority and cultural depravity were keys to continued strife for many non-whites. These neoliberal arguments have come up repeatedly when discussing police brutality (e.g., Black Lives Matter v. All Lives Matter or Blue Lives Matter; see Embrick 2015a, 2015b, 2016), issues concerning Mexican immigration (see Chavez 2013; Golash-Boza 2012; Lippard 2011; 2015), and during discussions of the failure of public schools (i.e., school choice issues) (see Kozol 1991; 2005). While such reproach of overt racism is commendable and speaks to changing norms in the U.S., it also highlights the need to spread a new definition of racism. Moreover, it speaks to the alarming realities that with the abnormalities of the Trump regime may come not only the maintaining of status quo white supremacy but real throwbacks to Jim Crow racialized policies and practices.

Conclusions

The lack of insight expressed by whites has been linked to the problem of "whiteness;" the idea that many whites do not see the privileges provided to them by being associated with the white "race" while concomitantly ignoring the lack of privilege granted to marginalized groups based on their racial classification. Some scholars have attempted to situate whites into the broader societal context of white supremacy (Fredrickson 1982) or racialized social systems (Bonilla-Silva 1997, 2001, 2003). For example, the 2003 book, <u>Whiteout: The Continuing Significance of Racism</u>, edited by Ashley "Woody" Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, represents one of the earlier attempts by sociologists to show how white racial attitudes have led to efforts to challenge debates concerning race in the U.S as a matter of social inequality and a charge for social movements. But, how might we best understand structural racism, whiteness, and white attitudes in the Trump Era? And are current racial attitudes and actions just old perfume in new bottles, or does the abnormal racial and political extremism of Trumpism much more alarming to those of us hoping for racial progress and equality?

Old Perfume in a New Bottle?

One the one hand, based on our arguments, we see the Trumpian calls for border walls, Muslim bans, and a return to an America that was "great" during the racially segregated-1950s as not new but, in fact, well-established tactics of white supremacy. While this article only has room to provide two examples of whitelash, the actual list of ideologies, events, and people involved with reinforcing white supremacy in the U.S. is almost endless and daunting. Scholars examining the impacts of President Trump and his policies on race relations and social justice efforts will need to consider how backlash is key to keeping the racial status quo in check and ongoing. More importantly, scholars will need to tie together how whitelash can be legitimately argued as "necessary and normal procedures for Americans" to secure power, wealth, and privilege for white Americans despite minority cries for equal access.

Indeed, we contend that racism is but one way in which dominant groups in American society hold on to their dominance. As noted by Susan Faludi (1991), the backlash against women's rights

has been pervasive in holding back and shaping gender equality in the U.S. This argument would also be evident in discussions on how equality has been stymied for other important movements by deploying backlash tactics in America. The simple point here is that scholars must note the moments in which ideologies, institutions, and individuals rally to strike at chances of social change towards equality. These moments of backlash, or when it comes to racism—whitelash, have been and will continue to be mobilized to secure privilege in its most hegemonic forms. As such, ideologies, as well as broader structural barriers (e.g., organizational policies and procedures) that shut down change and movement to equality, should be the focus on research as we move forward. It should also be noted that these persistent and discriminatory ideologies should not be normal in a country founded on democracy and individual freedoms.

This is NOT Normal!

There are very few who would argue that Trump is a typical "business as usual" conservative U.S. President. Trump's hardheadedness and consistent refusals to tell the truth, for example, are examples of how he deviates from past Presidents. So too makes his demand for total Trump loyalty, regardless of what crimes, misdemeanors, or breaking of basic social or moral norms further set him apart, however, many would argue not for the better. The abnormality of the Trump regime exacerbates whitelash, further deepening racial roots in a society historically rife with white supremacist notions and practices. For instance, one oddity that stands out consistently is Trump's vendetta toward Obama policies or most things currently or historically associated with his predecessor. It is noteworthy that during his time in office, Trump has consistently rolled back liberal public policies and laws to promote diversity put in place by Obama, perhaps indicative of Trump and his voting base's hatred toward people of color, but most likely a reflection of his and others white supremacist attitudes and understanding of the racial and social order. In essence, this reflects Trump's constant vigilance in erasing any legacies of Obama that would thwart white males supposed rightful position at the top of society's echelon.

Trump's abnormal fixation on Obama (as well as Hillary Clinton) is a guiding motivator that fuels anger and hatred among his base, but also in U.S. society, in general. The result is not just the lack of questioning by the public to Trump's racist regime, but a buy-in by many constituents who believe these racist actions and politics to be okay and justified. We can see this in the silence that followed Trump's announcement of his "Deal of the Century Plan" to bring peace to the Israeli/Palestinian conflicts, yet failed to include Palestinian voices in the deliberations. We can see this pattern in Trump's refusal to deracialize the Covid-19 pandemic, choosing instead to refer to the virus as the Wuhan (or Chinese) virus. It is also noteworthy that, in the face of statistics suggesting that non-whites are more likely to die from complications due to the coronavirus, this administration continues to back away from any real public policies aimed at medically and financially helping the patients and their families. As such, the Trump era can be seen as abnormal in that he departs from traditional political norms in ways that are racialized, and that could further promote a broader whitelash against change and the cause of white supremacy. Most importantly, Trump's rhetoric and policies depart and destroy the liberalization of America that was started in the 1960s but now has become almost a dream today.

Endnotes

1. While there are a few definitions of Trumpism, most notably the use of the term as urban slang, we define it here as the philosophy, politics, and language used by President Donald Trump.

2. In response to the surprising result of Trump's win in the election, Jones' remarks reflected a general sentiment of some people—that Trump's victory was fueled, in some part, by a backlash against the perception of a changing country that would aim to promote more diversity. Moreover, it was a backlash against the election of a Black President.

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