

The background of the entire cover is a dramatic, high-contrast photograph. It shows a person from the chest up, wearing a white hooded garment that obscures their face. The person is holding a torch, which is the source of a bright, intense light. The background is filled with fire and thick, billowing white smoke, creating a sense of chaos and destruction. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, fiery tones of orange, yellow, and red, with the white of the hood and smoke providing a stark contrast.

# AMERICAN SWASTIKA

INSIDE THE WHITE POWER MOVEMENT'S  
HIDDEN SPACES OF HATE

SECOND EDITION

PETE SIMI | ROBERT FUTRELL

## Violence Prevention and Policy Series

This series publishes new books in the multidisciplinary study of violence. Books are designed to support scientifically based violence prevention programs and widely applicable violence prevention policy. Key topics are community-based youth development projects, juvenile and/or adult community prison re-entry programs, community-based addiction and violence intervention and prevention programs, and school culture and climate studies with recommendations for organizational approaches to school-violence reduction. Studies may combine quantitative and qualitative methods, may be multi- or interdisciplinary, or may feature European research if it has a multinational application. The series publishes highly accessible books that offer violence prevention policy as the outcome of scientifically based research that are designed for college undergraduates and graduates, community agency leaders, school and community decision makers, and senior government policy makers.

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American Swastika

Inside the White Power Movement's  
Hidden Spaces of Hate

Second Edition

Pete Simi and Robert Futrell

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# Introduction

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We live in complicated times. Following Barack Obama's election to the US presidency in 2008, there were commentators who imagined that a postracial era had finally arrived. The rise of a biracial leader who spoke so eloquently about the power of hope and change signaled to many Americans that they were witnessing a momentous turning point in the country's long fight for civil rights. There was a glimmer, if only momentary, that America was on the verge of an open and honest confrontation with our racist legacy. Yet in 2015, race remains America's pivotal point of conflict. Nationwide protests against police brutality, racial violence, and broader structural inequalities erupted after a white police officer killed an unarmed black teen in Ferguson, Missouri, followed by a white Staten Island, New York, police officer's deadly choking of a black man accused of a misdemeanor crime. America remains far from a postracial society.

Some argue American racism is now "color-blind" and expressed more through subtle social conventions that merely hint at biased tendencies rather than through overtly racist acts.<sup>[1]</sup> But overt racists and racist acts remain alive and well. Missouri Ku Klux Klan members responded to protests in black communities over the Ferguson incident with threats of violence and allusions to lynching the "chimps." Two hundred protesters met the NAACP's Journey for Justice march through Missouri with Confederate flags, racial epithets, and a display of fried chicken, watermelon, and a forty-ounce beer bottle placed in the street. Gunfire shattered windows in a van traveling with the marchers.<sup>[2]</sup>

Right-wing extremism persists in social networks whose participants advocate varied combinations of white supremacist beliefs, anti-federalist attitudes, and religio-racist fundamentalism. Participants include loose collections of people identifying themselves as white power racists, militia members, sovereign citizens, anti-immigration activists, patriots, Tea Partiers, Oath Keepers, and birthers to name a few. These groups express conspiratorial anxieties rooted in populist worries about racial and ethnic change, immigration, governmental overreach, and public debt. They share a deep distrust in the government and imagine a shadowy cabal of elites intent on robbing Americans of their freedoms. Some claim the federal government secretly plans to declare martial law and intern patriotic Americans in concentration camps.

Media figures and even some mainstream politicians fuel extremists' beliefs. Popular far-right pundits, including Alex Jones, Ann Coulter, Glenn Beck, Wayne Allen Root, Larry Pratt, and Austin Miles, broadcast intense paranoia and anger to millions of Americans. Following the Ferguson protests, Alex Jones and others insisted that the demonstrations signaled the coming race war and that the federal government would respond by declaring martial law and imposing a dictatorship.<sup>[3]</sup> These claims intensify racial extremists' fears about white racial genocide. White power extremism also periodically seeps into conventional politics, as evidenced by revelations of US House of Representative's majority whi



Steve Scalise's past association with longtime Klan leader David Duke's organization, the European-American Unity and Rights Organization (EURO).<sup>[4]</sup>

Racial extremists infuse far-right beliefs with virulently racist and anti-Semitic delusions. They rant about the necessity of racial and anti-Semitic violence to defend the "white race" from genocide and to combat the specter of a "one world government" bent on making whites subservient to Jews and other "lower-order" races. Some adherents stockpile weapons in preparation for a race war they believe is on the horizon. Virtually all of them participate in a cultural milieu that promotes fantastical visions of racial violence and white power.

Participation ebbs and flows across right-wing networks. Militia groups increased during the 1990s but mostly fell apart in the aftermath of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. While many militia members withdrew their participation after that infamous event, extremists persisted in white power networks, which expanded during the 2000s under the radar of most Americans. Paramilitary militia groups resurfaced in 2005 in response to national immigration debates and then declined in 2011 due to disorganization, criminal scandals, and as policy makers in states such as Arizona and Alabama adopted the movement's goals.<sup>[5]</sup>

Participation appears to be growing again as a range of right-wing extremists responds to a recent wave of child immigrants and President Obama's executive order to allow more undocumented immigrants to remain in the United States.<sup>[6]</sup> In 2013, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) counted more than one thousand active "antigovernment patriot groups" in the United States, with 240 paramilitary militia groups among them.<sup>[7]</sup> The SPLC also counts almost eight hundred active white supremacy hate groups.<sup>[8]</sup>

The varied and persistent forms of right-wing extremism surprise many, but not those of us who track the far right. The United States has a long history of heinous and disturbing racial and ethnic discrimination, xenophobia, and violence. The Ku Klux Klan, the nation's most notorious symbol of white supremacy, claimed between three and five million members in the mid-1920s.<sup>[9]</sup> Since then, Klan membership and activities have cycled through peaks and valleys, with the most notable actions coming during the 1950s and 1960s civil rights conflicts. As Klan support waned in the 1970s, emergent neo-Nazi skinheads grew in the 1980s, combining white power rhetoric and ideology with a youth aesthetic expressed through white power music and Nazi symbolism. Like the hooded, white-robed, cross-burning Klan gatherings before them, neo-Nazis like Tom Metzger's White Aryan Resistance held public displays that brought intense, albeit episodic, media attention and helped to form a new white power stereotype: young, wild-eyed, tattoo-laden, sneering, belligerent, in-your-face, skinhead racists. As authorities and antiracist groups challenged white power groups, several branches began to withdraw from the most public forms of activism and advocate for lone-wolf tactics to avoid repression.

Slowly, experts and authorities have come to acknowledge right-wing extremism as a serious threat. In 2009, the Department of Homeland Security identified white supremacist and violent antigovernment groups as important

domestic terror threats.<sup>[10]</sup> More recently, West Point's Combating Terrorism Center demonstrated a dramatic rise in the number of right-wing extremist attacks and violent plots.<sup>[11]</sup> And although violent attacks by homegrown right-wing extremists receive substantially less attention than violence by jihadist militants, domestic right-wing extremism is more deadly.<sup>[12]</sup> In 2014, US attorney general Eric Holder reconstituted a committee on domestic terrorism that was first established after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing but then shelved after 9/11 as the federal government shifted focus to international terrorism.

But the sorts of lone-wolf attacks that right-wing extremists now carry out are notoriously difficult to anticipate. In 2012, longtime white power activist Wade Michael Page gunned down six people at a Sikh temple near Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Page developed his extremist beliefs during a six-year stint in the US Army. After his discharge, he became a prominent fixture in the white power music scene, playing with bands such as Youngland, End Apathy, and Definite Hate. He bounced around from Colorado to California and eventually to Wisconsin with his girlfriend, working blue-collar jobs and performing racist music. Pete Simi spent hundreds of hours talking to and observing Page during fieldwork for *American Swastika*. While Page was steeped in a culture that celebrated violence against blacks, Jews, and other non-Aryans, nothing clearly distinguished him from thousands of others as the one who would translate violent words into violent action.

It remains vital to understand just how the most extreme element of the far right—the white power movement—continues to persist in a society that mostly vilifies and marginalizes fanatical racism. We revised this second edition of *American Swastika* to provide an up-to-date perspective on white power activism and organization. Since the first edition, we have continued our research on white power activists and networks. Our ongoing work confirms many of the conclusions we drew in the first edition about how and why white power activists nurture their violent, paranoid, racist, anti-Semitic, and antigovernment fantasies. Our focus in the second edition remains on how white power extremists sustain a potent culture of hatred in seemingly benign settings such as homes, backyard parties, Bible study meetings, bars, music shows, and the Internet. We call these settings “Aryan free spaces” because they afford racial extremists opportunities to openly express and sustain their radical ideas with like-minded comrades.

Yet, as with all movements, white power activism and organization is not static. People move in and out of white power networks, new groups appear as others fade, new movement websites come online as others go offline, and movement scenes transform. This second edition captures the present-day features of white power activism. We describe the activities of today's most active white power groups while acknowledging the legacy of recently weakened or disbanded networks. We also discuss long-standing white power websites so critical to the movement's continuity, along with more recent manifestations of white power cyberactivism. The music companies who drive the white power music scene have shifted as well. We detail the new players in the scene and how they operate. We also analyze how some white power activists continue to embrace the legacy of white power communities as inspiration to establish new ones.

Extremism and hatred simmer in Aryan free spaces. And when extremist ideology endures, so does the potential for extremist action. It is risky to remain collectively ignorant about how the extremist right persists. Long written off by many observers as politically innocuous wackos, racial extremists persist by concealing their views in public while nurturing them in private. Paramilitary militia radicals wield potent ideas about dispossession and violence. White power neo-Nazis, Klansmen, and others interpret these ideas through a potent lens of racial and anti-Semitic hate. We should not be surprised when more of them violently lash out, because the inspiration for their violence is anchored in the extremist culture that has been percolating for years. American Swastika explains where white power activists, today's most extreme elements of the right wing, sustain their culture of hate.

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# Chapter 1

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## Hidden Spaces of Aryan Hate

RaHoWa! (rä-ho-wä, from Racial Holy War) Expression of white power solidarity

On Passover eve 2014, Frazier Glenn Miller<sup>[1]</sup> gunned down a fourteen-year old boy and his grandfather outside a Jewish community center in Kansas City. He then murdered another woman outside a nearby Jewish retirement community. Only days earlier, as both the Passover holiday and Adolf Hitler's birthday neared, the Anti-Defamation League warned of the increased likelihood of violent attacks against Jewish Americans. As television cameras documented his arrest, Miller, a notorious Ku Klux Klan leader, snarled and shouted, "Heil Hitler!"<sup>[2]</sup>

Less than a year earlier, Wade Michael Page opened fire at a Sikh temple in suburban Milwaukee, Wisconsin, killing six temple members and wounding four others. In the decade before his killing spree, Page, a neo-Nazi Hammerskin, made a name for himself among white supremacists as a member of several notorious white power bands with names like Youngland, Intimidation One, End Apathy, and Definite Hate. He found extremists in the white power music scene who shared and encouraged the virulent racist fantasies that fueled his violence.

Both Miller and Page were longtime Aryan activists, steeped in a potent culture of racial and anti-Semitic hatred, paranoia, and conspiracy. Miller immersed himself in white power culture for more than three decades. Following twenty years of active military duty, Miller joined the neo-Nazi National Socialist Party in 1979 and participated in the group's armed attack, which killed five antiracists and Communist Worker Party members in Greensboro, North Carolina. Miller founded the Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and the White Patriot Party in the 1980s and became notorious for leading a "new, militant breed of Klan leaders."<sup>[3]</sup> Page became a neo-Nazi during his US Army service.<sup>[4]</sup> He was stationed at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, home to multiple clusters of white power members during the 1990s.<sup>[5]</sup> After his six-year military service, Page immersed himself in the thriving Southern California white power music scene, rose to prominence in white power circles by playing the festival circuit with several bands, and joined the Hammerskin Nation, one of the most active and violent neo-Nazi networks.<sup>[6]</sup>

In 2009, Keith Luke shot and killed two African immigrants, then raped and tried to murder a third. After police apprehended him, he confessed that the slayings were part of his plot to kill as many nonwhites and Jews as he could. He had planned to continue his killings at a synagogue bingo hall later that night.<sup>[7]</sup> Like Miller and Page, Luke's rampage was a lone-wolf act. But unlike Miller and Page, he had no known direct ties to organized extremist groups. Luke was radicalized online. His descent into white power violence happened as he "educated himself about the 'nonwhites' on the internet."<sup>[8]</sup> Luke spent most of his free time on white power websites, such as Podblanc, which "celebrates racially motivated murder, along with 'lone wolf' domestic terrorism, and features videos of

skinheads in several countries beating to death non-white immigrants.”<sup>[9]</sup> According to the Anti-Defamation League, Luke was very active online in the week leading up to his killing spree, surfing racist websites, posting racist commentary, and watching more than 2,300 white power videos on YouTube.<sup>[10]</sup> Most of the videos that he tagged as favorites “were anti-Semitic or white supremacist in nature, with titles such as ‘Aryans Rise—They Seek Your Death.’”<sup>[11]</sup>

These attacks are just a few in a growing trend of violent plots and lone-wolf massacres carried out by white power extremists.<sup>[12]</sup> The killers draw inspiration from a potent culture of white power extremism that encourages racist and anti-Semitic violence. Those like Miller, Page, and Luke, who act out their violent fantasies, represent a much broader network of white power activism. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, almost eight hundred racist and anti-Semitic groups exist in the United States.<sup>[13]</sup> The majority of Aryans associated with these groups do not lash out at those whom they consider their enemies. Instead, they gather in typically low-profile face-to-face gatherings and on the Internet, where they support and sustain the cultural milieu from which killers sometimes emerge.

Such extremism is nothing new in the United States. Since the mid-1800s, organized white supremacy has persisted in a variety of forms. For instance, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) emerged in the aftermath of the Civil War “to maintain the supremacy of the White race in the republic,” grew to more than five million members in the 1920s, and persists as among the most commonly recognized symbols of US white power ideology today.<sup>[14]</sup> Early twentieth-century postcards celebrated southern black lynchings with photos of hanged and sometime charred bodies of dead African Americans. White supremacists justified lynchings to protect white women and rein in blacks who had too much freedom. During the civil rights era, Klansmen bombed so many black churches and businesses in Birmingham, Alabama, that many referred to the city as “Bombingham.” Since the 1980s, neo-Nazi and racist skinhead groups have grown in number and now represent the most active factions of US white power activism. These groups show more of a propensity toward lethal racial and anti-Semitic violence than other contemporary white power groups.<sup>[15]</sup>

Today’s racial extremists call themselves Aryans, white power, and racial separatists. They anchor the white power movement (WPM), a loose network of individuals and groups who embrace an ideology that the white race is genetically and culturally superior to all nonwhite races and deserves to rule over them. Aryans<sup>[16]</sup> claim that both their genetic lineage and cultural heritage is under attack by race mixing and intercultural exchange. They draw inspiration and symbols from Hitler and Nazi Germany, Pagan ritualism, Nordic warrior myths, and the Judeo-Christian Bible, which they interpret from a radical, racialist point of view.<sup>[17]</sup> Members of this subculture imagine that African Americans, Jews, Hispanics, homosexuals, and other nonbelievers are out to destroy them. Aryans are driven by a deep hatred of these groups and also by pride, camaraderie, and the solidarity they feel toward fellow believers.

Aryans believe they are prosecuting a war to combat the extinction of the

white race. Advocates of white power ideology proclaim themselves as race warriors fighting a shadowy cabal of powerful Jewish families they call ZOG, or Zionist Occupied Government, that directs America's culture industry, business, and government with the intent of eradicating the white race. Aryans have committed some of the most violent acts of homegrown terror and hate crime in American history, brutalizing and killing their racial enemies and those they suspect of supporting those enemies.<sup>[18]</sup> Many Aryans still plot against their enemies, and they hope to one day awaken the sleeping masses of whites, fight a race war, and retake their rightful position of power.

## EXPLAINING ARYAN PERSISTENCE

How is such radical hatred able to persist in modern America? American Swastika provides an answer to this question. We build our explanation from firsthand ethnographic accounts of Aryans' lives. Our goal is to provide a sober explanation of Aryan persistence and inform strategies to counter the threats posed by Aryans and white power ideology. Our discussion exposes how Aryans cling to their extremism even as they are enmeshed in a wider society that vilifies their radical beliefs. Where radical beliefs endure, violent radical action may follow. One factor in the endurance of these beliefs is the role of the hidden social contexts where Aryans gather to privately cultivate racial hatred. We call these contexts Aryan free spaces.

### **Aryan Free Spaces**

Aryan free spaces are settings where white power members meet with one another, openly express their extremist beliefs, and coordinate their activities. The term free space is a metaphor social scientists use to describe a type of setting where marginalized groups feel some degree of freedom to express oppositional identities and beliefs that challenge mainstream ideas.<sup>[19]</sup> Free spaces provide relatively powerless groups opportunities to safely articulate the aggression and hostility they feel toward the powerful.

Free spaces can be created in real-world physical settings, such as at a corner table in a busy restaurant where political activists quietly discuss plans for a guerrilla demonstration, or in small, private, at-home meetings behind locked doors. Free space can also be created for larger gatherings such as backwoods survivalist camps organized on private lands. Likewise, activists may find sanctuary in virtual spaces on the Internet, where they log into chat rooms, read political writings, listen to movement music, or watch videos that promote their causes. Whether large or small, physical or virtual, the common denominator of free spaces is that participants use them to nurture oppositional identities that challenge prevailing social arrangements and cultural norms.

American Swastika describes how Aryans use free spaces to overcome feelings of isolation and alienation by connecting with other Aryans and immersing themselves in white power culture. Aryan free spaces offer members solidarity,

affection, and support for their crude fantasies of a utopian, militant, racially exclusive, all-white world.

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Aryan free spaces may take the form of ordinary and benign settings and activities, but the content of the talk, rituals, and symbolism is anchored in white power ideology. For instance, most Aryan homes do not stand out as dens of hatred to neighbors or casual passersby. Outwardly, they tend to blend into their neighborhoods, apartment buildings, and communities. Inside, however, swastikas decorate the walls, white power literature lines the bookshelves, family pictures are full of Aryan symbolism, and mealtime prayers stress white power visions. Aryan homes are refuges from the mainstream world where members escape into a context defined by their white power beliefs.

The groups that meet in Aryan free spaces can vary greatly in size. Small Aryan cadres of a dozen or less may gather under the auspices of informal gatherings such as backyard barbecues, Bible study meetings, weekend campouts, or hiking excursions. Up to five hundred Aryans may attend the bar shows, concerts, and festivals that make up the white power music scene. Millions of Aryans from around the world meet online through racist websites that promote white power culture. In some private Aryan communities, white power advocates are physically walled off from the outside world in order to live their image of a pure Aryan lifestyle.

## **Stigma, Concealment, and Aryan Survival**

Aryans straddle the worlds of white power ideology and the mainstream culture. Aryans detest the mainstream culture as the mainstream detests them. They are abhorred and stigmatized at work, school, and in their neighborhoods, where their self-conceived enemies surround them.

### **Sources of Aryan Stigma**

A stigma is a mark of infamy and disgrace.<sup>[20]</sup> Perhaps the most significant source of Aryan stigma derives from their reverence for Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany as a model nation-state. Aryan advocacy of racial separatism and white supremacy also valorizes the most bigoted aspects of the Southern Confederacy. White power ideology claims that whites' biological superiority is reflected in their political and cultural superiority as well. Aryans see the mainstream masses who oppose white supremacy as deluded by Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG) conspirators into supporting white genocide. They fantasize about exposing ZOG to the masses of whites and empowering Aryan ideologues.

These Aryan fantasies contradict several trends in modern American society. Since the late 1950s, integrationist policies and multicultural ethics have isolated racial extremists in the United States and increased the public stigma attached to white power culture and its adherents.<sup>[21]</sup> Public opinion data indicates strong opposition to overt Aryan extremism in the United States.<sup>[22]</sup> And fantasies of white genocide and an impending race war have little significance in the lives of



most American citizens.<sup>[23]</sup>

Popular media, government, and human rights organizations all vilify Aryans and white power culture. News accounts of white power activity typically lampoon Aryans as ignorant buffoons and fringe wackos.<sup>[24]</sup> Government attempts to combat white power groups have been ongoing since the 1960s, when the FBI began the Operation White Hate Group Program.<sup>[25]</sup> Most recently, human rights organizations, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and the Anti-Defamation League, have challenged white power groups through successful lawsuits against White Aryan Resistance, Aryan Nations, and Imperial Klans of America.<sup>[26]</sup>

## **Aryans Hide among Us**

Aryans are intensely aware of the stigma attached to their beliefs and the risk of publicly communicating their ideas.<sup>[27]</sup> Exposure would likely mean loss of employment and possibly the vandalizing and picketing of their homes.<sup>[28]</sup> Most of the Aryans interviewed for American Swastika reported such concerns about being shunned or even surveilled and arrested if they were to openly voice their extremist beliefs.<sup>[29]</sup>

Aryans camouflage their identities in public to avoid constant confrontations they cannot win. In our midst, they blend into ordinary life and often pass by us without our recognition. These are not, as popular images have us believe, strident, hostile fanatics who stand out from the crowd and are always ready to fight.<sup>[30]</sup> In most everyday settings, Aryans are invisible.

To be sure, Aryans do not always keep a low profile. Racist skinheads brawl with blacks and Hispanics. Klansmen beat racial enemies and white race traitors. Neo-Nazis go on gay-bashing walkabouts. National Socialists stage intermittent marches and rallies to promote white power. And there are the spontaneous confrontations that occur on subways, in bars, and on the street. White power groups have also spawned organized crime, murders, and bombings.

But for all the vitriol and valorizing of violence in white power ideology, overt confrontations and organized violence are still relatively rare events.<sup>[31]</sup> James Scott notes that hiding hostility is a rational tactic of marginalized, powerless groups.<sup>[32]</sup> Only fools fight openly when the deck is so stacked against them. Aryan resistance is a much more prosaic struggle to withstand or counteract the forces they oppose.

While Aryans project an image that hides much about their extremism, they do not see their secrecy as a lack of commitment to white power ideas or acquiescence to anti-Aryan mainstream culture. Rather, they see concealment itself as a form of activism. Concealment is essential for Aryan survival, both for individuals and for the movement. Many white power leaders now explicitly advocate that Aryans limit their public displays of allegiance. When members go to jobs where they work alongside African Americans, attend schools with Jews, live in neighborhoods with Latinos, buy groceries from gays, and ride trains with white

race traitors, there should be no hint of hatred for these groups. In these contexts, Aryans play down their extremist identity.<sup>[33]</sup> Most Aryans see members “who use overtly racist symbols in public or who adopt an exaggerated racist style as movement novices.”<sup>[34]</sup> By strategically concealing their extremism from outsiders, savvy Aryans prepare themselves for future opportunities to instigate and fight the race war they believe is drawing near.<sup>[35]</sup>

Aryans use their free spaces to escape from the mainstream and openly celebrate their mutual bigotry and hatred. In these hidden cultural worlds they are able to build the emotional connections that reinforce individual and collective white power identity.<sup>[36]</sup> Aryans’ use of free spaces helps them overcome isolation, despair, and hopelessness, which might otherwise sap their devotion to white power culture.

## **Hatred and Violence Thrives in Free Spaces**

Aryans are not unique in their use of free spaces to sustain a radical worldview. By definition, extremists operate on the margins of society and face repression from those in power. They try to avoid repression by hiding their radical beliefs, blending into the crowd with an appearance of normality. Extremist groups—from al Qaeda in the Middle East or Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia to environmental extremists, right-to-life radicals, and racial extremists in the United States—create places of refuge where they meet, find comfort with like-minded comrades, and plot to advance their cause.<sup>[37]</sup> For such marginalized groups, “the sheer maintenance of a cultural community of activists is the outer limit of what is possible” under some circumstances.<sup>[38]</sup>

Free spaces shed light on how Aryanism persists and where potential sources of hate violence remain in America. Aryans’ low-profile activities typically do not produce the sort of headline-grabbing events that bring attention to their extremism. But we should not confuse a low profile with a weak and innocuous form of radicalism. Their efforts reproduce a radical cultural milieu filled with ideas about hate and violence. Ideas of violence may precede acts of violence, and Aryan free spaces create the contexts for nourishing such ideas. Thus, the potential for radical action persists. Violent Aryan terror remains a constant threat to tolerance and integration in America.

## **STUDYING ARYAN PERSISTENCE**

Gaining access to Aryan free spaces was not easy. Our approach was time consuming, labor intensive, and emotionally draining as we tried to overcome our gut feelings of shock, revulsion, rage, and sadness at the things we saw and heard. Our research goal was to understand Aryans on their own terms in their natural settings. This required listening to them with the discipline to temper our reaction to what our subjects said. It meant repeatedly reading over Aryans’ views about the world and taking those views seriously. It was necessary to exclude our own moral and ethical values and assumptions in order to understand and interpret th

meaning of Aryans' point of view.

We conducted fieldwork with white power activists and groups between 1996 and 2014. We used a multimethod approach,<sup>[39]</sup> including interviews, participant observation, and content analysis of white power movement websites and related Aryan literature. Interviews included one-hour to six-hour face-to-face and telephone interviews with 128 current and former Aryan activists. Thirty-six respondents were group leaders, and ninety-two were rank-and-file members. Ninety-four follow-up interviews with primary contacts led to 222 total interviews.<sup>[40]</sup> Snowball and purposive sampling strategies produced contacts with a wide range of white power networks.<sup>[41]</sup> Specific organizations represented in the sample include White Aryan Resistance, Aryan Nations, Hammerskin Nation, National Alliance, and branches of the Ku Klux Klan.

Of the 128 interviewees, ninety-seven were male and thirty-one were female. Their ages ranged from eighteen to seventy-eight years. Our informants represent a broad cross section of socioeconomic status found in the movement.<sup>[42]</sup> The majority described either their current or childhood socioeconomic status as middle class. We confirmed that a sizable minority worked in mid- to upper-level professional occupations, such as attorney, college instructor, X-ray technician, and so on. Most informants had a high school diploma or the equivalent, and a quarter of all informants attended some college.<sup>[43]</sup>

Our participant observation includes Christian Identity adherents in the southwest and northwest and a variety of Aryans in Southern California. We made twenty-three house visits with groups in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. These visits lasted from one to three days and gave us access to a variety of social gatherings, such as parties, Bible study sessions, hikes, and campouts. Additionally, we made four separate three- to five-day visits to the Aryan Nations' former headquarters in Hayden Lake, Idaho, to observe and interview participants at Aryan Nations World Congresses and informal gatherings that Aryans organized outside the official congress proceedings.

Our fieldwork in Southern California included observations of social gathering and twenty-two stints in activists' homes ranging from two days to five weeks. Our extended involvement in these settings allowed for, among other things, insight into how these Aryans express their racist identity. Our firsthand data are rare among research on Aryan activism.<sup>[44]</sup>

We organized our data around six primary themes: (1) early childhood experiences (for example, political socialization in the family); (2) educational experiences and peer group socialization; (3) entry into the white power movement; (4) level and type of movement participation; (5) ideological orientation; and (6) identity-maintenance strategies. Our qualitative coding techniques<sup>[45]</sup> helped us to identify and extract relevant information across our data set.

In the book's chapters, we intersperse analysis with extended descriptive, firsthand observational, and interview data. Our observations and interview data give readers insight into the raw experience of being in the settings and the

energy and emotion Aryans express as they bond with one another.

~~Some of the stories described or language used throughout the book may be offensive to readers. It was offensive to us. But omitting it would only serve to soften the positions of the people quoted. We have kept some of the language in the book to illustrate the intensity of Aryans' feelings. In some instances, we have paraphrased, while in other instances we have let the record speak for itself.~~

We have disguised names and certain details of our observations to protect the confidentiality of our research subjects. While we present our themes in a systematic and organized way, we do not intend to depict a homogeneous picture of Aryans and their experiences. Our goal is to render an accurate and insightful representation of the enduring culture and organization of contemporary white power activism and the hidden social contexts where hate endures.

## PLAN OF THE BOOK

American Swastika provides intricate descriptions of Aryan free spaces to explain how white power ideas are sustained and reproduced. Before turning to those free spaces, chapter 2 discusses the various branches of the white power movement, their specific ideological beliefs, and the common doctrines among the branches that bind diverse Aryans together.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on Aryan free spaces where small, local cadres of Aryans meet. Chapter 3 describes Aryan homes as free spaces where parents socialize their children into their white power visions. Aryans also use their homes to stage a range of small, informal gatherings, Bible study groups, and ritual parties. Chapter 4 highlights parties, skinhead crash pads, and other Aryan meeting places where activists model their culture of hatred and recruit new members to the cause.

In chapter 5, we focus on white power music as an organizing resource that draws together Aryans in a range of activities such as concerts, festivals, music websites, streaming radio, fan magazines, and chat rooms. The movement's music scene engages both seasoned activists and new members in activities that promote Aryan style and politics.

Chapter 6 turns to white power activists' use of the Internet to promote their politics. Aryans utilize cyberspace to create strong virtual links between organizations that members use to quickly transmit information about the movement. Aryans also use cyberspace for online social networking and as a gateway to connect in real-world settings.

Chapter 7 describes private white power communities. These Aryan settlements are devoutly racist. They create a pure white space that symbolizes the white supremacist world they seek. The communities support worship centers and white power archives stocked with Aryan literature and movement paraphernalia. The settlements also support paramilitary training and have been the seedbed for the most notorious acts of extremist violence.

White power families, parties, crash pads, music shows, cyberspace, and private communities are the free spaces where Aryan hatred survives. We conclude

American Swastika by discussing what Aryan persistence means for the future of racial and anti-Semitic hatred and violence in America.

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1. Frazier Glenn Miller is a pseudonym that he frequently used. His legal name is Frazier Glenn Cross.
2. David Eulitt, "White Supremacist Charged in Kansas City-Area Shootings Appears in Court," CBS News, April 15, 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/frazier-glenn-cross-facing-murder-charges-in-kansas-city-area-shootings> (accessed November 15, 2014).
3. SPLC, "Extremist Files: Frazier Glenn Miller," <http://www.splcenter.org/get%20informed/intelligence%20files/profiles/Glenn%20> (accessed November 15, 2014).
4. Daniel Trotta, "U.S. Military Battling White Supremacists, Neo-Nazis in Its Own Ranks," Huffington Post, updated October 21, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/21/us-army-white-supremacists\\_n\\_1815137.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/21/us-army-white-supremacists_n_1815137.html) (accessed October 22, 2014).
5. Marilyn Elias, "Sikh Temple Killer Wade Michael Page Radicalized in Army," Intelligence Report 148 (Winter 2012), <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2012/winter/massacre-in-wisconsin> (accessed October 22, 2014). In the mid-1990s Ft. Bragg was home to multiple clusters of white power activists, including James Burmeister, a private in the Eighty-Second Airborne Division. In 1995, Burmeister murdered an African American couple out taking an evening walk in order to earn his spiderweb tattoo. The tattoo symbolizes a murder committed for the white power movement.
6. Elias, "Sikh Temple Killer."
7. Anti-Defamation League, "Massachusetts Lone Wolf Convicted of First-Degree Murder," ADL (blog), June 11, 2013, <http://blog.adl.org/tags/keith-luke> (accessed October 12, 2014).
8. David Holthouse, "Website Read by Accused Racial Killer Encouraged 'Lone Wolf' Murders," SPLC Hatewatch (blog), January 23, 2009, <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2009/01/23/website-read-by-accused-racial-killer-encouraged-lone-wolf-murders> (accessed March 3, 2011).
9. SPLC, "Experts Discuss the Role of Race Propaganda after White Massachusetts Man Kills Two African Immigrants," Intelligence Report 134 (Summer 2009), <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2009/summer/from-hate-to-hurt> (accessed March 3, 2011).
10. Anti-Defamation League, "Massachusetts Lone Wolf"; Ron Kampeas, "Kansas City Shootings Highlight Threat of 'Lone Wolf' Attacks," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 14, 2014, <http://www.jta.org/2014/04/14/news-opinion/united-states/kansas-city-shootings-highlight-threat-of-lone-wolf-attacks> (accessed November 15, 2014).
11. Anti-Defamation League, "Massachusetts Lone Wolf."
12. Arie Perliger, *Challengers from the Sidelines: Understanding America's Violent Far Right* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2012), <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ChallengersFromtheSidelines.pdf> (accessed July 6, 2014).

13. SPLC, "Hate Map," <http://www.splcenter.org/hate-map> (accessed December 12, 2014).
14. Betty Dobratz and Stephanie Shanks-Meile, *White Power! White Pride! The White Separatist Movement in the United States* (New York: Cengage Gale, 1997), 36.
15. Perliger, *Challengers from the Sidelines*.
16. We use Aryan as a descriptor for all individuals who are involved in the white power movement. The term Aryan has a long history and signifies specific geo-cultural groups. See also Romila Thapar, "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics," *Social Scientist* 24 (1996): 3-29. Aryan was a name widely used in Nazi Germany as part of the Third Reich's "master race" theory. Contemporary white power advocates continue to use the term to describe themselves. There is some disagreement among neo-Nazis about what is and what is not Aryan. Over the past couple of decades there has been a shift toward "Pan-Aryanism," or the idea that despite variations among whites, all belong to a single racial family that stretches across the globe. Research on the human genome shows no genetic differences between so-called races. DNA evidence demonstrates that humans are a single race, evolved in the past 100,000 years from the same small number of tribal groups that migrated out of Africa and colonized the globe.
17. It is difficult to distinguish hard-and-fast boundaries of white power hate culture. Like most movements, there are few absolute lines to be drawn. The different branches of the white power movement overlap with other subcultures that are not necessarily directly connected to white power ideals. For example, a large number of neo-pagans reject white supremacist doctrine, while other neo-pagan groups clearly endorse neo-Nazi and white supremacist ideals. For a fuller discussion of this point in regard to neo-paganism, see Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
18. We acknowledge that hate crime is a sweeping category that includes a wide range of offenses. For an in-depth discussion of the concept of hate crime, see James Jacobs and Kimberly Potter, *Hate Crimes: Criminal Law and Identity Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Specifically, we are thinking of activities explicitly carried out in the name of white power, such as the violence of the group known as The Order and the Oklahoma City bombing. For a chronological listing of white power violence, see Michael Newton and Judy Ann Newton, *Racial and Religious Violence in America: A Chronology* (New York: Garland, 1991).
19. Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (London: Vintage, 1979); Sara Evans and Harry Boyte, *Free Spaces* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Francesca Polletta, "'Free Spaces' in Collective Action," *Theory and Society* 28 (1999): 1-38.
20. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963).
21. James Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of

North Carolina Press, 1994); David Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Mitch Berbrier, "The Victim Ideology of White Supremacists and White Separatists in the United States," *Sociological Focus* 33 (2000): 175-91; Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford, 2000); Kathleen Blee, *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Sam Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford, 1995); Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, *White Power White Pride!*; Jeffrey Kaplan, "Right-Wing Violence in North America," in *Terror from the Extreme Right*, ed. Tore Bjørgo (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 44-95; Richard Mitchell, *Dancing at Armageddon: Survivalism and Chaos in Modern Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); David Wellman, *Portraits of White Racism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Joe Feagin and Hernan Vera, *White Racism: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Abby Ferber, *White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Leonard Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).

22. See Michael Lewis and Jacqueline Serbu, "Kommerating the Ku Klux Klan," *Sociological Quarterly* 40 (1999): 139-57.

23. Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*; Kaplan, "Right-Wing Violence." See Cornell West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage, 1994). Mainstream racism in the United States shares some important assumptions with white power ideology, but there are also important differences. As Blee explains, "The ideas that racist activists share about whiteness are more conscious, elaborated, and tightly connected to political action than those of mainstream whites. . . . The difference between everyday racism and extraordinary racism [of the WPM] is the difference between being prejudiced against Jews and believing that there is a Jewish conspiracy that determines the fate of individual Aryans, or between thinking that African Americans are inferior to whites and seeing African Americans as an imminent threat to the white race" (76). Moreover, notions of an impending "race war," a "Zionist Occupied Government," and the current "genocide of the white race" are core beliefs that are widely shared by WPM adherents but have little salience with the general public. Perhaps the most telling indication of the WPM's marginalization from the mainstream is the tendency among "everyday" racists to disavow and disassociate themselves from the Klan, skinheads, neo-Nazis, and other openly racist groups. See also Feagin and Vera, *White Racism*.

24. For similar arguments, see Aho, *Politics*; Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*.

25. Kenneth O'Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

26. SPLC, "SPLC Wins \$2.5 Million Verdict against Imperial Klans of America," *SPLC News*, November 14, 2008, <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?aid=345> (accessed January 28, 2009).

27. This circumstance reflects Doug McAdam's distinction between the substantial

physical, social, economic, and legal costs incurred by “high-risk activism” and those incurred by “low-risk” forms against which intense and enduring repercussions are much less likely. Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 208.

28. Tore Bjørgo, “Entry, Bridge-Burning, and Exit Options: What Happens to Young People Who Join Racist Groups—and Want to Leave,” in *Nation and Race: The Developing Euro-American Racist Subculture*, ed. Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjørgo (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 231–58; Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*.

29. See also Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, *White Power! White Pride!*, 23.

30. Aho, *Politics*, and Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, also make this point.

31. The relative infrequency of Aryan violence is hard to fully interpret. And while the topic is exceedingly interesting, we want to bracket analysis of when and why Aryans choose to engage in conflict and fully express their hatred toward non-Aryans. A systematic analysis of violence is beyond our focus in this book, but several factors appear to influence whether individuals fully assert their Aryanism including: age and experience, alcohol consumption, group reputation for violence, and the number of Aryans present during the situation. Based on our observations and interviews, however, the volume of these instances is minimal in comparison to the amount of concealment these activists perform on a daily basis.

32. James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

33. Pete Simi and Robert Futrell, “Negotiating White Power Activist Stigma,” *Social Problems* 56 (2009): 89–110.

34. Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 167.

35. Simi and Futrell, “Negotiating Stigma.”

36. Robert Futrell and Pete Simi, “Free Spaces, Collective Identity, and the Persistence of U.S. White Power Activism,” *Social Problems* 51 (2004):16–42.

37. Any time people feel constraint and coercion we can expect a “prosaic but constant struggle” to withstand or counteract the force. False compliance and backstage defiance are “weapons of the weak” used to mitigate or deny claims of the powerful. See also Scott, *Weapons*; Scott, *Domination*.

38. Steven Buechler, *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 208; see also Hank Johnston, “New Social Movements and Old Regional Nationalisms,” in *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, ed. Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 267–86; Verta Taylor, “Social Movement Continuity,” *American Sociological Review* 54 (1989): 761–75.

39. Norman Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978).

40. We interviewed several informants three or more times.

41. Bruce Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Pearson, 2004); John Lofland and Lyn Lofland, *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide*



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