

The Buffalo shooting and the fascistic transformation of the Republican Party

Patrick Martin
16 May 2022

President Biden will be traveling to Buffalo Tuesday to speak on the mass shooting by a fascist gunman who murdered 10 African Americans at a supermarket on the city's east side Saturday. It is easy to predict the content of the speech because he has already made it a thousand times. He will deplore the existence of evil in the world and quote a few lines from the Bible. He will call for "healing" the "soul of America." There will be nothing of any substance, and Biden will provide no social and political analysis of the causes of the shooting.

Whatever Biden says, it will be aimed at covering up the fact that the Republican Party, one of the two main parties of the ruling class, has been transformed into a semi-fascistic organization, the ideological and political inspiration for racist and anti-Semitic violence.

On the eve of his attack, the gunman, Payton Gendron, issued a 180-page manifesto dripping with anti-Semitism and anti-black racism. He copied large portions of similar screeds written by previous fascist gunmen, including Anders Breivik, who murdered 77 people in Norway in 2011, and Brenton Tarrant, who killed 59 people at two mosques in New Zealand in 2019. And he was wearing Nazi insignia, including the black sun worn by members of the fascist Azov Battalion in Ukraine.

This makes nonsense of any claim that the gunman is a "lone wolf." He is part of an international fascist tendency, which has its roots in the global crisis of capitalism, and whose political outlook increasingly dominates the US Republican Party.

The gunman's manifesto postulates a Jewish conspiracy to "replace" white Americans with blacks, Hispanics and other immigrants. The Republican Party and its media affiliates substitute references to "elites" and "globalists" for explicit anti-Semitism and racism. But these code words cannot disguise the real meaning of the "replacement theory."

Much of what Payton Gendron wrote in his manifesto has previously been endorsed by Tucker Carlson of Fox News, by Republican legislators, and by ex-President Donald Trump, who began his first presidential campaign with a

denunciation of Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists.

The overlap between Gendron's document and the positions of prominent Republicans compelled the US corporate media, with the exception, of course, of Fox and other Murdoch-owned outlets, to acknowledge this link on Monday, after a weekend of covering up these connections.

A few headlines suffice. The *Washington Post* wrote, "Conservative media is familiar with Buffalo suspect's alleged 'theory'," while a second article cited Republican Representative Elise Stefanik, the third-ranking member of the House Republican leadership: "Stefanik echoed racist theory allegedly espoused by Buffalo suspect."

The *New York Times* wrote, "A Fringe Conspiracy Theory, Fostered Online, Is Refashioned by the G.O.P." The article noted that a previous *Times* analysis of the Tucker Carlson program on Fox found that he had cited the "replacement theory" approvingly more than 400 times. Carlson has the largest audience of any commentator on cable TV.

In response, the Murdoch-owned *Wall Street Journal* published a brief and defensive editorial deploring any attempt to link the Republican right to the massacre. It said only that Gendron "is suspected" of writing the anti-Semitic manifesto and "seems to have targeted" the largely black neighborhood in Buffalo.

"Partisans are already using the massacre to leap to broader political conclusions, as they always do," the editorial claimed, adding that "mass shooters have had many motivations in recent years, and mental illness seems to be the most significant common denominator, to the extent there is one."

Such arguments are absurd. The extent to which prominent Republicans have echoed the arguments of Gendron's manifesto, particularly the "replacement theory," is remarkable and chilling. A few examples:

Charlie Kirk, who heads the right-wing youth group Turning Point USA and appeared as a speaker at the Republican National Convention that renominated Trump in 2020, defended Tucker Carlson against the Anti-Defamation

League, which criticized the Fox pundit for espousing the replacement theory. Last month Kirk tweeted: “There is an undeniable War on White People in The West.”

Representative **Matt Gaetz** of Florida, responding to the same ADL statement, tweeted that Carlson “is CORRECT about Replacement Theory as he explains what is happening to America.”

Scott Perry, the Pennsylvania Republican who now chairs the right-wing Freedom Caucus and was closely linked to the January 6 attack on the Capitol, raised the same idea during a hearing held by a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee last year. “For many Americans, what seems to be happening or what they believe right now is happening is, what appears to them is we’re replacing native-born Americans to permanently transform the political landscape of this very nation,” he said.

Elise Stefanik, cited above, ran Facebook ads last year which warned of “a PERMANENT ELECTION INSURRECTION,” declaring that the Democrats’ alleged “plan to grant amnesty to 11 MILLION illegal immigrants will overthrow our current electorate and create a permanent liberal majority in Washington.”

Representatives **Marjorie Taylor Greene** of Georgia and **Paul Gosar** of Arizona spoke at a conference in February organized by Nick Fuentes, a white supremacist. Greene is a supporter of the QAnon conspiracy theory, while Gosar was intimately involved in the January 6 attack on Congress.

J. D. Vance, the right-wing author who won the Republican nomination for US Senate last week in a primary in Ohio, with Trump’s all-out support, declared at a campaign event, referring to immigrants, “You’re talking about a shift in the demographic makeup of this country that would mean we never win, meaning Republicans would never win a national election in this country ever again.”

There are many more, but none will be cited by Biden when he speaks in Buffalo. This is in keeping with the role of the Democrats ever since the January 6 coup attempt. Biden’s first statement was to declare that the country needed a strong Republican Party. He calls this party, led by plotters against democracy and their enablers and apologists, his Republican “colleagues.”

Why? First, because what the Democrats fear most is the growth of social opposition from below and the break-up of the institutions which have long served to suppress it, above all, the two-party system. They seek to conceal the transformation of the Republican Party into an openly fascist political organization, devoted to the restoration of Trump to the White House as an authoritarian ruler.

Second, a critical component is the Democrats’ war policy. Since the beginning of the Ukraine operation, Biden

has sought to utilize that conflict to forge a “national unity” within the state apparatus, joining hands with the co-conspirators of Trump to wage war against Russia. From Biden’s standpoint, nothing can be done that might undermine unity with the Republican Party behind the war effort.

A significant component of the Ukraine war is the financing, arming and media glorification of the Azov Battalion, which is a genuine fascist movement in Ukraine, led by anti-communists and anti-Semites.

Third, the racialism of the far right is in fact ideologically legitimized by the racialism of the Democrats. The Democratic Party has placed at the center of its program the insistence on irreconcilable racial conflict, the presentation of every social problem in America as arising out of racial division, in order to suppress any discussion of the far more fundamental class divisions.

Finally, there is the complete inability of the Democratic Party and the rotting corpse of liberalism to deal with any of the problems confronting masses of people. To the extent that there is not a progressive solution to the social and economic crisis other than the “solution” of nuclear war, it is the far right that will be able to exploit it.

What is required to fight fascism? The noxious and reactionary appeals to race prejudice and anti-Semitism only find traction under conditions of the complete suppression of the class struggle by the trade unions and their pseudo-left allies.

Any significant movement of the working class to fight for its social and democratic rights, to oppose the capitalist program of austerity, wage-cutting, imperialist war, mass infection with coronavirus and attacks on democratic rights will transform the political landscape.

Workers and young people must take up the fight to break through all the barriers to the development of the class struggle and open up the path for a mass movement of the working class against capitalism and for socialism.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact