

WHITE

ANTI-WHITE RACIST: One who is classifying people of European descent as biologically, culturally, or behaviorally inferior or conflating the entire race of White people with racist power.

I STOOD IN THE doorframe, sometime in March 2002. Clarence probably sensed another argument coming. We were tailor-made to argue against each other. Intensely cynical, Clarence seemed to believe nothing. Intensely gullible, I was liable to believe anything, a believer more than a thinker. Racist ideas love believers, not thinkers.

“So what you want to tell me?” Clarence asked.

“I think I figured White people out,” I said.

“What is it now?”

I'D ARRIVED AT FAMU trying to figure Black people out. “I had never seen so many Black people together with positive motives,” I wrote in an English 101 essay in October 2000. The sentence seemed out of place, sandwiched nastily between “I had never heard the world famous ‘Marching 100’ perform” and “This was my first ever college football game.” The idea—even more out of place. How did I overlook all those Black people who came together with positive motives in all those places and spaces of my

upbringing? How did I become the Black judge? Racist ideas suspend reality and retrofit history, including our individual histories.

Anti-Black racist ideas covered my freshman eyes like my orange contacts when I first moved into Gibbs Hall at FAMU. When you entered the lobby, to the right you'd see a busy, tired-looking office. If you took a slight left, you'd find yourself walking down the hallway to my dorm room; a sharper left would take you to the television room, where our dorm's cluster of basketball fans regularly lost bitter arguments to the army of football fans over television rights.

There were no arguments on, or games on, in the television room on the evening of November 7, 2000. We still had our game faces on, though. Rookie voters, we were watching the election results unfold, hoping that our votes would help keep the brother of Florida's governor out of the White House. Black Floridians had not forgotten Jeb Bush's termination of affirmative-action programs earlier in the year. We had voted to save the rest of America from the racist Bushes.

The election was coming down to the winner of Florida. The polls closed, and before long we saw Al Gore's winning face flash on the screen. Game over. We rejoiced. I joined a joyful exodus out of the television room. We marched to our dorm rooms like fans streaming from the stadium when the Marching 100's half-time show ended. The people had come to see what the people had come to see.

The next morning, I awoke to learn that George W. Bush somehow held a narrow lead in Florida of 1,784 votes. Too close to call, and Jeb Bush's appointees were overseeing the recount.

The unfairness of it all crashed on me that November. My anti-Black racist ideas were no consolation. I walked out of my dorm room that morning into a world of anguish. In the weeks that followed, I heard and overheard, read and reread, angry, tearful, first- and secondhand stories of FAMU students and their families back home not being able to vote. Complaints from Black citizens who'd registered but never received their registra-

tion cards. Or their voting location had been changed. Or they were unlawfully denied a ballot without a registration card or ordered to leave the long line when polls closed. Or they were told that as convicted felons they could not vote. Earlier in the year, Florida purged fifty-eight thousand alleged felons from the voting rolls. Black people were only 11 percent of registered voters but comprised 44 percent of the purge list. And about twelve thousand of those people purged were not convicted felons.

Reporters and campaign officials seemed more focused on Floridians whose votes were not counted or counted the wrong way. Palm Beach County used confusing ballots that caused about nineteen thousand spoiled ballots and perhaps three thousand Gore voters to mistakenly vote for Pat Buchanan. Gadsden County, next to Tallahassee, had Florida's highest percentage of Black voters and the highest spoilage rate. Blacks were ten times more likely than Whites to have their ballots rejected. The racial inequity could not be explained by income or educational levels or bad ballot design, according to a *New York Times* statistical analysis. That left one explanation, one that at first I could not readily admit: racism. A total of 179,855 ballots were invalidated by Florida election officials in a race ultimately won by 537 votes.

A twenty-nine-year-old Ted Cruz served on Bush's legal team that resisted efforts at manual recounts in Democratic counties that could have netted Gore tens of thousands of votes while pushing for manual recounts in Republican counties that netted Bush 185 additional votes.

Watching this horror flick unfold, I recoiled in fear for days after the election. But not some of my peers at FAMU. They amassed the courage I did not have, that all antiracists must have. "Courage is not the absence of fear, but the strength to do what is right in the face of it," as the anonymous philosopher tells us. Some of us are restrained by fear of what could happen to us if we resist. In our naïveté, we are less fearful of what could happen to us—or is already happening to us—if we don't resist.

On November 9, 2000, FAMU's courageous student-government leaders directed a silent march of two thousand stu-

dents from campus to Florida's nearby capitol, where they conducted a sit-in. The sit-in lasted for about twenty-four hours, but the witch hunt we launched back at campus lasted for weeks, if not months. We hunted out those thousands of FAMU students who did not vote. We shamed those nonvoters with stories of people who marched so we could vote. I participated in this foolish hunt—one seems to recur every time an election is lost. The shaming ignores the real source of our loss and heartbreak. The fact was that Black people delivered enough voters to win, but those voters were sent home or their votes spoiled. Racist ideas often lead to this silly psychological inversion, where we blame the victimized race for their own victimization.

When on December 12, 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court stopped Florida's recount, I no longer saw the United States as a democracy. When Gore conceded the next day, when White Democrats stood aside and let Bush steal the presidency on the strength of destroyed Black votes, I was shot back into the binary thinking of Sunday school, where I was taught about good and evil, God and the Devil. As Bush's team transitioned that winter, I transitioned into hating White people.

White people became devils to me, but I had to figure out how they came to be devils. I read "The Making of Devil," a chapter in Elijah Muhammad's *Message to the Blackman in America*, written in 1965. Muhammad led the unorthodox Nation of Islam (NOI) from 1934 until his death in 1975. According to the theology he espoused, more than six thousand years ago, in an all-Black world, a wicked Black scientist named Yakub was exiled alongside his 59,999 followers to an island in the Aegean Sea. Yakub plotted his revenge against his enemies: "to create upon the earth a devil race."

Yakub established a brutal island regime of selective breeding—eugenics meeting colorism. He killed all Dark babies and forced Light people to breed. When Yakub died, his followers carried on, creating the Brown race from the Black race, the Red race from the Brown race, the Yellow race from the Red race, and the White race from the Yellow race. After six hundred years, "on the

island of Patmos was nothing but these blond, pale-skinned, cold-blue-eyed devils—savages.”

White people invaded the mainland and turned “what had been a peaceful heaven on earth into a hell torn by quarreling and fighting.” Black authorities chained the White criminals and marched them to the prison caves of Europe. When the Bible says, “Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” NOI theologians say the “serpent is symbolic of the devil white race Moses lifted up out of the caves of Europe, teaching them civilization” to rule for the next six thousand years.

Aside from the White rule for six thousand years, this history of White people sounded eerily similar to the history of Black people I’d learned piecemeal in White schools of racist thought. White racists cast Black people as living in the bushes of Africa, instead of in caves, until Moses, in the form of White enslavers and colonizers, arrived as a civilizer. Slavery and colonization ended before Black people—and Africa—became civilized in the ways of White people. Black people descended into criminality and ended up lynched, segregated, and mass-incarcerated by noble officers of the law in “developed” White nations. “Developing” Black nations became riddled with corruption, ethnic strife, and incompetence, keeping them poor and unstable, despite all sorts of “aid” from the former mother countries in Europe. The NOI’s history of White people was the racist history of Black people in Whiteface.

According to NOI mythology, during World War I, God appeared on earth in the form of Wallace Fard Muhammad. In 1931, Fard sent Elijah Muhammad on the divine mission to save the “Lost-Found Nation of Islam” in the United States—to redeem Black people with knowledge of this true history.

My first time reading this story, I sat there in my dorm room, sweating, mesmerized, scared. It felt like I had climbed up and consumed forbidden fruit. Every White person who’d maltreated me, since my third-grade teacher, suddenly rushed back into my memory like a locomotive blaring its horn in the middle of the forest. But my attention remained focused on all those Whites

who'd railroaded the election of 2000 in Florida. All those White policemen intimidating voters, White poll officials turning away voters, White state officials purging voters, White lawyers and judges defending the voter suppression. All those White politicians echoing Gore's call to, "for the sake of our unity as a people and the strength of our democracy," concede the election to Bush. White people showed me they did not actually care about national unity or democracy, only unity among and democracy for White people!

I lay in my dorm room, staring up at the ceiling, silently raging at the White people walking away into the wilderness to plan Bush's presidency.

ELIJAH MUHAMMAD'S WHITE creation story made so much sense to me. Half a century earlier, it also made sense to a calculating, cursing, and crazy young Black prisoner nicknamed "Satan." One day, in 1948, Satan's brother, Reginald, whispered to him during a visit, "The white man is the devil." When he returned to his Massachusetts cell, a line of White people appeared before his eyes. He saw White people lynching his activist father, committing his activist mother to an insane asylum, splitting up his siblings, telling him being a lawyer was "no realist goal for a nigger," degrading him on eastern railroads, trapping him for the police, sentencing him to eight to ten years for robbery because his girlfriend was White. His brothers and sisters, clutching their sore necks from a similar rope of White racism, had already converted to the Nation of Islam. In no time, they turned Satan back into Malcolm Little, and Malcolm Little into Malcolm X.

Malcolm X left prison in 1952 and quickly began to grow Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam, through his powerful speaking and organizing. The suddenly resurgent NOI caught the attention of the media, and in 1959 Louis Lomax and Mike Wallace produced a television documentary on the NOI, *The Hate That Hate Produced*, which ran on CBS. It made Malcolm X a household name.

In 1964, after leaving the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X made the hajj to Mecca and changed his name again, to el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, and converted to orthodox Islam. "Never have I witnessed such" an "overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races here in this Ancient Holy Land," he wrote home on April 20. Days later, he began to "toss aside some of my previous conclusions [about white people] . . . You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But . . . I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds it." On September 22, 1964, Malcolm made no mistake about his conversion. "I totally reject Elijah Muhammad's racist philosophy, which he has labeled 'Islam' only to fool and misuse gullible people, as he fooled and misused me," he wrote. "But I blame only myself, and no one else for the fool that I was, and the harm that my evangelic foolishness in his behalf has done to others."

Months before being assassinated, Malcolm X faced a fact many admirers of Malcolm X still refuse to face: Black people can be racist toward White people. The NOI's White-devil idea is a classic example. Whenever someone classifies people of European descent as biologically, culturally, or behaviorally inferior, whenever someone says there is something wrong with White people as a group, someone is articulating a racist idea.

The only thing wrong with White people is when they embrace racist ideas and policies and then deny their ideas and policies are racist. This is not to ignore that White people have massacred and enslaved millions of indigenous and African peoples, colonized and impoverished millions of people of color around the globe as their nations grew rich, all the while producing racist ideas that blame the victims. This is to say their history of pillaging is not the result of the evil genes or cultures of White people. There's no such thing as White genes. We must separate the warlike, greedy, bigoted, and individualist cultures of modern empire and racial capitalism (more on that later) from the cultures of White people. They are not one and the same, as the resistance

within White nations shows, resistance admittedly often tempered by racist ideas.

To be antiracist is to never mistake the global march of White racism for the global march of White people. To be antiracist is to never mistake the antiracist hate of White racism for the racist hate of White people. To be antiracist is to never conflate racist people with White people, knowing there are antiracist Whites and racist non-Whites. To be antiracist is to see ordinary White people as the frequent victimizers of people of color and the frequent victims of racist power. Donald Trump's economic policies are geared toward enriching White male power—but at the expense of most of his White male followers, along with the rest of us.

We must discern the difference between racist power (racist policymakers) and White people. For decades, racist power contributed to stagnating wages, destroying unions, deregulating banks and corporations, and steering funding for schools into prison and military budgets, policies that have often drawn a backlash from some White people. White economic inequality, for instance, soared to the point that the so-called “99 percenters” occupied Wall Street in 2011, and Vermont senator Bernie Sanders ran a popular presidential campaign against the “billionaire class” in 2016.

Of course, ordinary White people benefit from racist policies, though not nearly as much as racist power and not nearly as much as they could from an equitable society, one where the average White voter could have as much power as superrich White men to decide elections and shape policy. Where their kids' business-class schools could resemble the first-class prep schools of today's superrich. Where high-quality universal healthcare could save millions of White lives. Where they could no longer face the cronies of racism that attack them: sexism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, and exploitation.

Racist power, hoarding wealth and resources, has the most to lose in the building of an equitable society. As we've learned, racist power produces racist policies out of self-interest and then

produces racist ideas to justify those policies. But racist ideas also suppress the resistance to policies that are detrimental to White people, by convincing average White people that inequity is rooted in "personal failure" and is unrelated to policies. Racist power manipulates ordinary White people into resisting equalizing policies by drilling them on what they are losing with equalizing policies and how those equalizing policies are anti-White. In 2017, most White people identified anti-White discrimination as a serious problem. "If you apply for a job, they seem to give the Blacks the first crack at it," said sixty-eight-year-old Tim Hershman of Ohio to an NPR reporter. African Americans are getting unfair handouts, "and it's been getting worse for Whites," Hershman said. Hershman was complaining of losing a promotion to a Black finalist, even though it was actually another White person who got the job.

Claims of anti-White racism in response to antiracism are as old as civil rights. When Congress passed the (first) Civil Rights Act of 1866, it made Black people citizens of the United States, stipulated their civil rights, and stated that state law could not "deprive a person of any of these rights on the basis of race." President Andrew Johnson reframed this antiracist bill as a "bill made to operate in favor of the colored against the white race." Racist Americans a century later framed supporters of affirmative action as "hard-core racists of reverse discrimination," to quote former U.S. solicitor general Robert Bork in *The Wall Street Journal* in 1978. When Alicia Garza typed "Black Lives Matter" on Facebook in 2013 and when that love letter crested into a movement in 2015, former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani called the movement "inherently racist."

White racists do not want to define racial hierarchy or policies that yield racial inequities as racist. To do so would be to define their ideas and policies as racist. Instead, they define policies not rigged for White people as racist. Ideas not centering White lives are racist. Beleaguered White racists who can't imagine their lives not being the focus of any movement respond to "Black Lives Matter" with "All Lives Matter." Embattled police officers

who can't imagine losing their right to racially profile and brutalize respond with "Blue Lives Matter."

Ordinary White racists function as soldiers of racist power. Dealing each day with these ground troops shelling out racist abuse, it is hard for people of color not to hate ordinary White people. Anti-White racist ideas are usually a reflexive reaction to White racism. Anti-White racism is indeed the hate that hate produced, attractive to the victims of White racism.

And yet racist power thrives on anti-White racist ideas—more hatred only makes their power greater. When Black people recoil from White racism and concentrate their hatred on everyday White people, as I did freshman year in college, they are not fighting racist power or racist policymakers. In losing focus on racist power, they fail to challenge anti-Black racist policies, which means those policies are more likely to flourish. Going after White people instead of racist power prolongs the policies harming Black life. In the end, anti-White racist ideas, in taking some or all of the focus off racist power, become anti-Black. In the end, hating White people becomes hating Black people.

IN THE END, hating Black people becomes hating White people.

On October 15, 2013, workers unveiled a twelve-by-twenty-four-foot sign near a major roadway in Harrison, Arkansas, known in those parts as Klan territory. The same sign showed up on billboards overlooking major roadways from Alabama to Oregon. Passing drivers saw bold black letters against a yellow background: ANTI-RACIST IS A CODE WORD FOR ANTI-WHITE.

Robert Whitaker, who ran for vice president of the United States in 2016 on the American Freedom Party's ticket, popularized this declaration in a 2006 piece called "The Mantra." This mantra has become scripture to the self-identified "swarm" of White supremacists who hate people of color and Jews and fear the "ongoing program of genocide against my race, the white race," as Whitaker claimed.

History tells a different story. Contrary to "the mantra," White

supremacists are the ones supporting policies that benefit racist power against the interests of the majority of White people. White supremacists claim to be pro-White but refuse to acknowledge that climate change is having a disastrous impact on the earth White people inhabit. They oppose affirmative-action programs, despite White women being their primary beneficiaries. White supremacists rage against Obamacare even as 43 percent of the people who gained lifesaving health insurance from 2010 to 2015 were White. They hail Adolf Hitler's Nazis, even though it was the Nazis who launched a world war that destroyed the lives of more than forty million White people and ruined Europe. They wave Confederate flags and defend Confederate monuments, even though the Confederacy started a civil war that ended with more than five hundred thousand White American lives lost—more than every other American war combined. White supremacists love what America used to be, even though America used to be—and still is—teeming with millions of struggling White people. White supremacists blame non-White people for the struggles of White people when any objective analysis of their plight primarily implicates the rich White Trumps they support.

White supremacist is code for anti-White, and White supremacy is nothing short of an ongoing program of genocide against the White race. In fact, it's more than that: White supremacist is code for anti-human, a nuclear ideology that poses an existential threat to human existence.

I CARRIED THE White hate into my sophomore year, as anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate filled the American atmosphere like a storm cloud after 9/11. Many Americans did not see any problem with their growing hate of Muslims in the spring of 2002. And I did not see any problem with my growing hate of White people. Same justifications. "They are violent evildoers." "They hate our freedoms."

I kept reading, trying to find the source of White evil. I found

more answers in Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop's two-cradle theory, long before I learned about his antiracist work on the African ancestry of the ancient Egyptians. Diop's two-cradle theory suggested the harsh climate and lack of resources in the northern cradle nurtured in Europeans barbaric, individualistic, materialist, and warlike behaviors, which brought destruction to the world. The amenable climate and abundance of resources in the southern cradle nurtured the African behaviors of community, spirituality, equanimity, and peace, which brought civilization to the world.

I blended Diop's environmental determinism with Michael Bradley's version of the same, his theory in *The Iceman Inheritance* that the White race's ruthlessness is the product of its upbringing in the Ice Age. But I still felt thirsty for biological theories. How we frame the problem—and who we frame as the problem—shapes the answers we find. I was looking for a biological theory of why White people are evil. I found it in *The Isis Papers* by psychiatrist Frances Cress Welsing.

The global White minority's "profound sense of numerical inadequacy and color inferiority" causes their "uncontrollable sense of hostility and aggression," Welsing wrote. White people are defending against their own genetic annihilation. Melanin-packing "color always 'annihilates' . . . the non-color, white." Ironically, Welsing's theory reflects fears of genetic annihilation that White supremacists around the Western world have been expressing these days in their fears of "white genocide"—an idea with a deep history, as in the work of eugenicists like Lothrop Stoddard and his 1920 bestseller, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*.

I devoured Welsing, but later, when I learned melanin did not give me any Black superpower, I felt deflated. It turns out, it's the racist one-drop rule that made Black identity dominant in biracial people, not any genetic distinction or melanin superpower. My search continued.

BY THE FALL of 2003, Clarence had graduated and I decided to share my ideas with the world. I began my public writing career on race with a column in FAMU's student newspaper, *The Famuan*. On September 9, 2003, I wrote a piece counseling Black people to stop hating Whites for being themselves. Really, I was counseling myself. "I certainly understand blacks who have been wrapped up in a tornado of hate because they could not escape the encircling winds of truth about the destructive hand of the white man." Wrapped in this tornado, I could not escape the fallacious idea that "Europeans are simply a different breed of human," as I wrote, drawing on ideas in *The Isis Papers*. White people "make up only 10 percent of the world's population" and they "have recessive genes. Therefore they're facing extinction." That's why they are trying to "destroy my people," I concluded. "Europeans are trying to survive and I can't hate them for that."

The piece circulated widely in Tallahassee, alarming White readers. Their threats hit close to home. My new roommates, Devan, Brandon, and Jean, half-jokingly urged me to watch my back from the Klan. FAMU's new president, Fred Gainous, called me into his office to scold me. I scolded him back, calling him Jeb's boy.

The editor of the *Tallahassee Democrat* summoned me to his office, too. I needed to complete this required internship to graduate with my journalism degree. I walked into his office in fear. It felt like walking into a termination, the termination of my future. And, indeed, something would be terminated that day.