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The American Freedom Party: White Nationalist Politics and the Fight for Mainstream Access, Civil Rights Era to Present

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### Author

Steinkuehler, Terra

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**The American Freedom Party:  
White Nationalist Politics and the Fight For Mainstream  
Access, Civil Rights Era to Present Day**

**by Terra Steinkuehler**

Department of Sociology, University of California at Berkeley

July 23, 2014



Institute for the  
Study of  
Societal Issues

Terra Steinkuehler  
Department of Sociology  
University of California, Berkeley

Abstract:

Using a diachronic perspective, this paper explores American white nationalist political parties from the mid-twentieth century to present day and their attempts at securing national votes. The parties included are the National States Rights Party, The Populist Party, and the American Freedom Party. While maintaining the central focus on the contemporary American Freedom Party, the major differences in political strategy between the parties are analyzed. Through examination and comparison of the parties' changes in self-presentation, the societal shift from old racism to new racism becomes evident. The analysis also uncovers a continual change in the understanding of race in American politics within the same time frame.

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The American Freedom Party:  
White Nationalist Politics and the Fight for Mainstream Access, Civil Rights Era to Present Day

A Thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology  
in candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By  
Terra Steinkuehler

Department of Sociology  
University of California at Berkeley  
May 17, 2014

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*“We do this because the world we live in is a house on fire, and the people we love are burning.”*

*– Sandra Cisneros*

## Introduction

White nationalism is inescapably intertwined in our national history, our culture, and therefore our politics. It is not dying out as common conceptions may hold, rather it has adapted to contemporary forms of racism. To gain a better understanding of how white nationalism functions in American society today, I focus on the American Freedom Party (AFP), a white nationalist political party that has attempted to secure votes nationwide; the AFP claims to be “both a political party and activist organization dedicated to the interests vital to the preservation and continuity of ethnic European communities within the United States of America.”<sup>1</sup> My research considers how the AFP remains committed to its core racial beliefs without attracting the stigma of white nationalism. In other words, how does a white nationalist political party attempt to access mainstream politics in the twenty-first century? To address this question, this paper also considers the discourses of AFP’s predecessors – the National States Rights Party (NSRP) of the late 1950s and 1960s as well as the Populist Party of the 1980s. How did these earlier parties dedicated to white nationalism frame their racial ideology to attract votes?

Research on white nationalism in American politics is especially important at this time. According to a recent study by Michael I. Norton and Samuel R. Sommers, Americans who self-identify as white have more concerns about anti-white bias than ever before.<sup>2</sup> The study found that whites rated anti-white bias as steadily increasing, markedly so in recent years, to the extent that whites felt it was now more widespread than anti-black bias. Black respondents, by contrast, saw anti-white bias as very minimal and anti-black bias as slowly decreasing, but still higher

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<sup>1</sup> “The American Freedom Party,” *The American Freedom Party*. December 16, 2013. [www.american3rdposition.com](http://www.american3rdposition.com).

<sup>2</sup> Michael I. Norton and Samuel R. Sommers, “Whites See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game That They Are Now Losing,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6 no. 3 (2011), 216.



than anti-white bias.<sup>3</sup> Although this is a single study, these changes could indicate a potentially increased susceptibility among white Americans to white nationalist ideology.

In another report, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) warned government and law enforcement agencies of a resurgence in far right recruitment and radicalization. The 2009 report based its assessment on several factors including the economic decline and the election of the first African American president as well as increases in firearm bans and a perceived growth in the influence of other countries.<sup>4</sup> The report concluded that persistence of the current climate would increase the strength of white supremacist and militia movements, mirroring a rightwing extremist surge in the 1990s. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a non-profit group that tracks hate groups, found evidence corroborating the DHS's findings. The 2013 issue of their annual report on hate-groups, *The Year in Hate and Extremism*, documented an historic surge in the number of hate-groups between the years of 2008 and 2012. The report claimed that although the number of hate-groups for 2013 finally saw a decline, it remains at historic proportions exceeding that from the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> The SPLC report concluded with a warning: "none of this is to suggest that the radical right in America does not remain highly dangerous. The weakening of groups often has the effect of fostering, rather than retarding, followers' decisions to finally act out violently."<sup>6</sup>

In addition, a report by the Census Bureau based on the 2010 census projected that non-

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<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 in Appendix

<sup>4</sup> "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment," *Department of Homeland Security*, May 8, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/rightwing.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> "The Year in Hate and Extremism," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, May 8, 2014, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2014/spring/The-Year-in-Hate-and-Extremism>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Hispanic whites will no longer be a majority by 2060.<sup>7</sup> The likelihood that white Americans will become a minority lends a sense of urgency to white nationalists in the United States. This idea is particularly disturbing to the American Freedom Party. The AFP responds to this demographic change in an article from the *Occidental Observer*, “White Dispossession and the Racialization of American Politics Accelerate” by Kevin B. MacDonald, a director of the AFP. MacDonald asserts that “we are headed to an Atlas Shrugged situation: An increasingly low-IQ population in need of massive levels of government services supported by increasingly reluctant racially different tax payers. Not a good recipe for a peaceful future.”<sup>8</sup> MacDonald’s statement can be read as a thinly veiled threat of violence against the growing non-white population and an implicit call to action for whites. Responses such as MacDonald’s that regard the precipitous changes occurring in the American racial landscape are important to consider. The AFP’s framing in MacDonald’s statement is reflective of mainstream racial discourse and provides evidence for the proliferation of new racism in American society.

## Literature Review

### *Racial Formation Theory*

The theory constructed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant in 1986 remains invaluable to the study of race. I use racial formation theory to interpret the grander implications of diachronic changes in discourse between the three white nationalist parties. The theory rests on the notion that race is central to every aspect of our society, rather than existing as an addendum

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<sup>7</sup> “U.S. Census Bureau Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation a Half Century from Now,” *U.S. Census Bureau*.

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html>

<sup>8</sup> Kevin B. MacDonald, “White Dispossession and the Racialization of American Politics Accelerate,” *The Occidental Observer*, April 1, 2011, <http://american3rdposition.com/?p=2890>

to class or nationality. Omi and Winant define racial formation as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed.”<sup>9</sup> They argue that racial formation occurs through “racial projects”, which are historically situated.

*A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines. Racial projects connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning.*<sup>10</sup>

Racial projects structure society—and therefore racial formation—through our interpretations of the meaning of race. Because racial meanings change over time, racial formation is unstable and continually changing with history. Omi and Winant also consider racial formation to be an intrinsic force behind the evolution of hegemony or the way that society is organized and ruled.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Symbolic Racism/Color-blind Racism***

The theories of symbolic racism and color-blind racism are very similar. Both expand ideas of racism from what is considered old racism, such as support for racial segregation and blatant prejudice, to a new racism.<sup>12</sup> This aligns with much of the contemporary rhetoric of the white nationalist groups that attempt to gain mainstream appeal. Symbolic racism rests on the notions that: racial discrimination no longer holds back minorities, minorities still do not conform to traditional American values such as work ethic, they make illegitimate demands for special treatment, and they receive undeserved special treatment.<sup>13</sup> David O. Sears et. al. contend, “studies have demonstrated the close association of symbolic racism with opposition to

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 55.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 56.

<sup>12</sup> David O. Sears, P.J. Henry, and Rick Kosterman, “Egalitarian Values and Contemporary Racial Politics,” in *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America*, ed. David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 77.

racially targeted policies...symbolic racism is, among racial attitudes, consistently the strongest predictor of such political preferences.”<sup>14</sup>

Both Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Michael K. Brown discuss color-blind racism, although in separate works. They agree on the major tenet of this idea that, much like symbolic racism, color-blind racism is a new form of racism. According to Brown, this stems from group position theory: “Much of the opposition is based on resentment toward blacks, and this resentment is driven by a fear (conscious or not) that the interests of whites as a group are jeopardized by color-conscious policies. Because color-blind policies are cast as a defense of individualism, the group interests at stake are concealed.”<sup>15</sup> Bonilla-Silva expands the theory by identifying four central frames of color-blind racism, which include abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism.<sup>16</sup> Bonilla-Silva argues further that these frames are used in combination with each other, constructing an “impregnable yet elastic wall that barricades whites from the United States’ racial reality.”<sup>17</sup>

### ***Critical White Studies***

Critical white studies is derived from critical race theory. Its primary focus is the construction of whiteness, white privilege, and other topics that critically analyze what the white racial group constitutes in our society. Charles A. Gallagher states, “The construction of whiteness is based...on a perception of current and future material deprivation and the need to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Michael K. Brown et al., *White-Washing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 56.

<sup>16</sup> Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006), 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 47.

delineate white culture in a nondemonized fashion.”<sup>18</sup> He argues that there exists a contemporaneous racialization of whiteness, which is useful when interpreting how the American Freedom Party conceptualizes whiteness. Another aspect of critical white studies that is relevant to my study is the analysis of white privilege. Margaret L. Andersen states, “Not only is whiteness conceptualized in this literature as an unacknowledged norm, it is also defined as a system of racial privilege...whiteness is an ‘invisible bundle of expectations and courtesies.’”<sup>19</sup> This will also help me to construct an in-depth view of the American Freedom Party, and to understand the impetus for their political goals.

## **Methodology**

The core objective of my study is to understand how the American Freedom Party negotiates white nationalist stigma while simultaneously centralizing race in their political platform. I pay particular attention to their use of racial politics, and their positioning of whites as a dispossessed majority. I also examine how the American Freedom Party strategizes their party presentation to appeal to a national white audience in the twenty-first century, and how they avoid the stigmatization of promoting overt racial policy favoring whites. Central to this study are the following questions: How does a white nationalist political party attempt to access the mainstream political arena in the twenty-first century? And how is this different from previous attempts to access mainstream politics in the era following World War II? The key concepts that I focus on include race, racism, color-blind racism, whiteness, and white nationalism.

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<sup>18</sup> Charles A. Gallagher, “White Racial Formation: Into the Twenty-First Century,” in *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret L. Andersen, “Whitewashing Race: A Critical Perspective on Whiteness,” in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, ed. Ashley “Woody” Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (New York: Routledge, 2003), 25.

To gain a diachronic perspective on white nationalism in mainstream politics, I include an historical comparison of white nationalist attempts at mainstream inclusion that occurred in the twentieth century. I also briefly discuss the inclusion of white nationalist principles prevalent in the Democratic Party prior to the civil rights movement, and the subsequent shift of whites to the Republican Party as a result of the southern strategy following the Civil Rights Movement. The inclusion of the historical changes regarding white nationalism and mainstream politics provides a more in-depth view of how the American Freedom Party fits into today's political landscape, and how history has affected their positioning.

For my study, I relied on primary and secondary sources. The historical component of the study was derived from content analysis of the National States' Rights Party newsletter, *The Thunderbolt*. The secondary sources included reports by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and a combination of various texts that covered white nationalist politics in depth. For my analysis of the contemporary attempt by the AFP at framing white nationalists politics for a mainstream audience, I was able to interview two key party directors, William Johnson and Tomislav Sunic. I contacted Kevin MacDonald, Tomislav Sunic, and Don Wassall through the email addresses provided on the AFP website. I did not receive a response from Kevin MacDonald or Don Wassall, unfortunately. Tomislav Sunic however, responded to the correspondence request and forwarded my inquiry to William Johnson and several other directors of the party. William Johnson was the only other director who agreed to an interview. I also performed a content analysis on the AFP written material. This included published academic texts from the various party directors, information posted on the party website, and the party booklet published for the 2012 presidential campaign: *Our Vision for America*.

My study was conducted with a qualitative focus, using a narrative format. I centered my analysis of the contemporary group only on the directors, rather than active participants or members, in order to understand the party's ideological motivation, immediate objectives, and long-term goals. The interviews were semi-structured so as to allow topics to organically arise, while still tethered to the research questions. The results of the interviews provided vital insight on white nationalist politics in contemporary society, and particularly the continuities and changes that have occurred in white nationalist politics in the second half of the twentieth century.

### **White Nationalism and Mainstream Politics Post-WWII**

White nationalism and white supremacy have a ubiquitous presence in the history of American politics. Most relevant to my second question—regarding the diachronic changes in white nationalist third party politics—is the political posturing after World War II. During this period, major political parties began to shift away from overt allegiances to white supremacy. According to Sara Diamond, “before World War II southern political elites were solidly Democratic and segregationist. After the war, the migration of large numbers of African Americans into northern cities gave liberal Democrats new incentives to recruit black voters by backing modest civil rights goals.”<sup>20</sup> The resulting changes in mainstream politics marked the beginning of the Democratic Party's increased rejection of a segregationist platform. During the 1940s, the Democratic Party began to support the movement for civil rights; this, in turn, started the defection of southern voters.<sup>21</sup> The 1948 Democratic Party nomination of Harry Truman and his civil rights platform resulted in the creation of the States' Rights Democratic Party (or the

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<sup>20</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 13.

<sup>21</sup> Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism*, (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1990), 175.

Dixiecrats) with Strom Thurmond at the helm as presidential candidate. The Dixiecrats were composed of Democrats who were diametrically opposed to the inclusion of civil rights in the official Democratic platform. The creation of a third party in order to uphold the white supremacist status quo was not an electoral success, but marked the first of many attempts to perpetuate segregation.

### ***National States Rights Party***

The National States Rights Party (NSRP) emerged in 1958, in the midst of the socially and politically tumultuous civil rights era. Politically, this was the nascent transition away from reigning white supremacy within government, towards a central governmental notion that people of color deserve equal treatment and protection. Socially, the white majority was grappling with their loosening legally sanctioned dominance over the African American community. Out of this came the NSRP, a white nationalist political organization with overt Nazi iconography and a penchant for violence.

I begin my inquiry with the NSRP because they are one of the initial white nationalist third party movements—excepting the short-lived Dixiecrats—to emerge as a response to *Brown v. Board of Education* and the crumbling structure of Jim Crow.<sup>22</sup> The NSRP is an appropriate representation of white nationalist political parties of the period due to their ties to White Citizen's Council and the Ku Klux Klan. They were twice investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as well. The NSRP allows us to see how the public persona of the American Freedom Party has changed while maintaining extremely similar foundational ideologies to earlier white nationalist groups. These differences in the political strategy and rhetoric are

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<sup>22</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 88.



observable through the analysis of the FBI reports as well as the NSRP monthly newsletter *The Thunderbolt*.

The NSRP operated from 1958 to 1984, disbanding shortly after the 1983 arrest of founder J.B. Stoner for his involvement in a church bombing that occurred in 1958.<sup>23</sup> The party was managed by the aforementioned J.B. Stoner, the chair of the party, and Dr. Edward R. Fields, the national secretary and editor of *The Thunderbolt*. Both individuals had long histories of involvement with the KKK and anti-Semitic groups.<sup>24</sup> The 1970 FBI report on the party claimed it was “based on racism and bigotry, with Blacks and Jews as the main hate targets. Blacks are regarded as inferior and polluting the White race, while Jews are equated with communists, subverting the government and aiding the blacks.”<sup>25</sup>

The party was very explicit regarding their white nationalist views. On a membership application from 1974 (the earliest issue of *The Thunderbolt*), the party and mission is described in the following manner: “The National States Rights Party is by far the largest White racist political Party in America. Both Democratic and Republican Parties have betrayed the White People of America. The NSRP is the last hope of the Whiteman to save our White Christian Civilization.”<sup>26</sup> The NSRP openly utilizes the term ‘racist’ in their self-description. The declaration showcases the attitude of the era; the label ‘racist’ was a badge of honor that was proudly worn by those who saw themselves resisting the changes brought about by the Civil Rights Movement. The NSRP also clearly demarcated the bounds of whiteness by including only

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<sup>23</sup> John George and Laird Wilcox, *American Extremists: Militias, Supremacists, Klansmen, Communists, & Others* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1996), 359.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>25</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. “White Extremist Organizations: The National States Rights Party Part II” ii.

<sup>26</sup> January 1974 *The Thunderbolt*

those who practiced Christianity in white society and thereby implicitly reaffirmed the party's anti-Semitic stance.

The strategies of the NSRP included national political campaigns, public rallies, speaking tours, and demonstrations; utilizing the media attention to further their message.<sup>27</sup> Their chapters spanned the country, and although frequently speculated, the actual rates of membership for the group are not available. The first presidential campaign was in 1960 with Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus as candidate. The party made it onto the ballot in six states and received a total of 44,977 votes.<sup>28</sup> The party ran another candidate for president in 1964, John Kasper, with Jesse B. Stoner as vice president. Kasper and Stoner only achieved ballot access in Kentucky and Arkansas, and received a total of 4,291 votes. As mentioned previously, the NSRP supported George Wallace in the subsequent presidential race rather than running its own candidate. The party later focused on other governmental positions such as Georgia governor and congress.

The party stance was one of staunch segregation; they advocated the deportation of African Americans to Africa, and Jewish Americans to Madagascar (in later years, the preferred country for deportation changed to Israel). The party also sought to strengthen ties with other 'white' nations. Their slogan was "Honor, Pride, Fight—Save the White". Nazi inspired uniforms were a staple for members, along with widespread use of the Confederate flag with a thunderbolt superimposed in the middle.

The NSRP was repeatedly associated with violence, according to the FBI reports of 1966 and 1970. The NSRP would frequently advocate the murder of African Americans and Jews at their rallies, and party followers engaged in violent crime. For instance, two NSRP members were suspected of having connections to the 1958 bombing of a Jewish synagogue in Atlanta,

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<sup>27</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. "National States Rights Party" August, 1966.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 11.

Georgia, but were acquitted for lack of evidence.<sup>29</sup> Another incident occurred on July 15, 1965 in Anniston, Alabama. Following an NSRP rally in which violence against minorities was openly advocated, one of the attendees ambushed, shot, and killed an African American foundry worker just outside of the city where the rally took place.<sup>30</sup> There was also a shoot-out between NSRP rally attendees and local African American residents in Kentucky in 1968, which ended in the death of two individuals.<sup>31</sup> The 1970 FBI report noted, “A policy of violence has been consistently and emphatically espoused by the NSRP. NSRP spokesmen have made numerous incendiary statements at meetings and public rallies which have served to fan the flames of violence.”<sup>32</sup>

These overt white supremacist and nationalist views were reflected in the rhetoric of the articles and political cartoons in the party’s newsletter *The Thunderbolt* as well. The monthly publication dedicated a large portion of the articles to the discussion of a Jewish conspiracy of government infiltration. For example, a series from the January 1974 issue detailed what the NSRP viewed as a Jewish conspiracy to create gas shortages and cause a depression in the United States.<sup>33</sup> Another article titled “Satan’s Children vs. God’s Children,” utilized biblical quotes to craft a story casting the Jewish community and all people of color as descendants of Satan, and all white Christians as descendants of God.<sup>34</sup> The central tenets of the party were

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<sup>29</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. “National States Rights Party” August, 1966.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. “White Extremist Organizations: The National States Rights Party Part II” July 1970.

<sup>32</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. “White Extremist Organizations: The National States Rights Party Part II” July 1970.

<sup>33</sup> “Jews Cause Gas Shortage Leading Us Into A Depression,” *The Thunderbolt*, January 1974.

<sup>34</sup> “Satan’s Children vs. God’s Children,” *The Thunderbolt*, January 1974.

heavily grounded in the belief that whiteness was biologically superior to other races, and that there was a Jewish conspiracy to infiltrate and destroy the United States.

The NSRP has tenuous ties to the American Freedom Party through the AFP director Harry Bertram. Bertram ran for Ohio State House of Representatives as a NSRP candidate in 1984. He was unsuccessful, but the NSRP awarded him Man of the Year for his efforts. The *Thunderbolt* claimed that he received 4,000 votes to the incumbent's 17,000, while Bertram spent less money on his campaign. The author of the article detailing his Man of the Year award seemed very pleased with Bertram's campaign, wherein they claim:

The local Jewish community was so upset by Harry [Bertram]'s campaign exposing the threat of Zionism and race-mixing that they used intimidation to have Bertram's radio show cancelled.... All we need to do to win this fight is to find more awakened and talented young men like Harry Bertram to carry our messages to the White Christian majority.<sup>35</sup>

Interestingly, Harry Bertram's past involvement with the NSRP is not mentioned in his biography page on the AFP website. This omission can be attributed to AFP's diligent effort to distance itself from violent white nationalists and biological racial ideology, such as the kind espoused by the NSRP. This Janus-faced approach is shown in the stark contrast between Bertram's political stance while a NSRP candidate, and his current platform. In a 1983 interview with a local newspaper that was reprinted in *The Thunderbolt*, Bertram stated, "I'm a racist, but I'd rather be described as a white nationalist, a white nationalist is someone who loves their white race and does something to preserve it."<sup>36</sup> The same article also refers to a pamphlet that was distributed by Bertram, which described the NSRP platform: it called for the "expulsion of all communists, abolition of the United Nations, outlawing interracial marriage, only white immigration, racial separation and for giving all Africans in America a rich country of their own

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<sup>35</sup> "NSRP Member Awards," *The Thunderbolt*, April 1984

<sup>36</sup> "East Ohio Youth Organizing NSRP," *The Thunderbolt*, April 1983

in Africa.”<sup>37</sup> The current positions that Bertram holds, according to his AFP biography webpage, are to stop: mass immigration, automatic citizenship to US-born children of undocumented immigrants, military interventions overseas, the erosion of privacy, and foreign aid. Aside from perhaps his views on immigration and the conferral of citizenship, none allude to his views on race.

In the historic period following the decline of the NSRP and preceding the creation of the Populist Party, major changes were taking place in mainstream American politics. Namely, the Republican Party was fully pursuing their southern strategy, which attempted to win the support of the disaffected white nationalist Democrats. The impetus for this strategy came on the heels of the marginally successful presidential campaigns by George Wallace in the 1960s. “The racist Right’s ill-fated efforts at forming a third party during the 1950s and 1960s served, nevertheless, as a base of support for George Wallace’s 1968 presidential campaign.”<sup>38</sup> The small groups created during that period, such as the NSRP, mobilized around Wallace’s attempt for the presidency. Taking note of the white nationalist political base in the United States, the Republican Party began to actively adopt some of the white nationalist rhetoric in order to obtain support from this segment of voters. According to Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, this use of white nationalist logic was evident in some of the decisions the Nixon Administration made. For instance, the Administration’s requested a deferral in the school integration deadline. President Nixon also nominated a Supreme Court justice who had a record of supporting segregation.<sup>39</sup> Lipset and Raab argue that “A major extremist movement may have lost, but in

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 87.

<sup>39</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 423.

losing had affected the course of a major political party....But there are presumably limits beyond which a mainstream national party cannot go.”<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, this “extremist movement” did not end with the defeat of Wallace.

As Lipset and Raab argue, there are limits to what mainstream parties can and cannot say—this is especially the case with white nationalism. With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, “moral traditionalism subsumed explicit racism as the overall Right’s dominant concern in the realm of domestic social policy.”<sup>41</sup> Because of this, another effort toward a third party based on white nationalist ideology came in the form of Willis Carto’s Populist Party in 1984. Their platform included “a nationalist, ‘America-first’ foreign policy; ‘an awareness of the malign nature of international high finance’ and the banking system... ‘a recognition of human differences’ and the idea that ‘each race has the right to pursue its own destiny free from outside manipulation.”<sup>42</sup> There are also ties between the Populist Party and the American Freedom Party through Don Wassall, a director common to both groups. The parties used similar political strategies as well.

### ***The Populist Party***

The Populist Party was the brainchild of Willis Carto, a vastly influential leader of the far right. Carto spent the majority of his life as an advocate of right-wing principles: “Carto is undoubtedly the central figure in the post-World War II American Far Right. More than any other person, he has fostered continuity within this movement and has been involved in virtually

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 257.

<sup>42</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 262.

all of its major projects.”<sup>43</sup> Much of his involvement came in the form of his organization The Liberty Lobby, headquartered in Washington D.C. The Populist Party was his first direct attempt at achieving change through the electoral system. It was also the “racist Right’s first foray into electoral politics since the 1968 George Wallace presidential campaign...”<sup>44</sup>

The Populist Party came to fruition in 1984, twenty-six years after the creation of the NSRP and the same year as its demise. The Populist Party had no overt connections to the NSRP other than its ties to Robert Weems, the first national chairperson for the Populist Party (and former Mississippi KKK leader), who also worked within the NSRP briefly.<sup>45</sup> One of the rallying points that Carto used to his advantage was the farm crisis, which was at its peak in the 1980s. The farm crisis was due to a rapid spike in interest rates that were driven by inflation, and had devastated much of the agricultural community. This dramatically increased the loan payments for farmers, who saw their land prices drastically decline during the same period “while they read about Wall Street speculators becoming millionaires through insider trading and other crafty means of moving numbers on paper.”<sup>46</sup> The mixture of frustration and anger felt by farmers left a large population of individuals open to Carto’s philosophy, which gave them a target for their ire. “...The Populist Party sought to exploit the fears of Midwestern farmers and focus their discontent on Jewish bankers and financiers. Skillfully, Carto sought to link the specific problems of farmers with the wider perceived menace of global Zionism.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> George Michael, *Willis Carto and the American Far Right* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 262.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>47</sup> George Michael, *Willis Carto and the American Far Right* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 160.

The presidential candidate chosen in 1984 for their first campaign was Bob Richards, a 1954 Olympic gold medalist and “Wheaties” brand cereal spokesperson.<sup>48</sup> Though the Populist Party sought to gain voters from the disaffected farmers, their platform covered a wide spectrum of issues (many of which greatly resemble the AFP platform). Further, the party did not state that it was explicitly for white Americans, despite its leadership’s history, which was steeped in white nationalist activism. The most prominent items in the platform were a call to repeal income tax, abolishment of the Federal Reserve System, a rejection of the Equal Right’s Amendment and Gay rights, and a policy of armed neutrality. They also had several points on their platform regarding issues of race. One called for an end to forced busing, citing a degradation of state’s rights in public schooling.

A further point on the platform detailing the Party view on race related issues varies greatly from the NSRP’s stance. The point titled “Respect Racial and Cultural Diversity” states,

Every race has both the right and duty to pursue its destiny free from interference by another race. The Populist Party opposes slavery, imperialist exploitation, ... [and] demands by one race for another to subsidize it financially or politically.... The Populist Party will not permit any racial minority, through control of the media, culture distortion or revolutionary political activity, to divide or factionalize the majority of the society-nation in which the minority lives.<sup>49</sup>

The greatest discernable difference is the race neutral language. The platform also does not address the anti-Semitic conspiracy theories referenced beforehand. In a break from earlier white nationalist political rhetoric, the Populist Party does not specially refer to individuals’ races although it can easily be deciphered by their descriptor of majority and minority. They avoid the language of segregation, and race-based biological determinism. We also see allusions to the

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<sup>48</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 263.

<sup>49</sup> Lyman Tower Sargent, *Extremism in America: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 20.



heavily race-coded welfare debate, and perhaps to the legislative victories of the Civil Rights Movement. This move away from biological assertions of race and overt white supremacy is an indicator of the societal shift of acceptable mainstream political rhetoric and the shift from ‘old racism’ to ‘new racism’. Nevertheless, the platform exerts a thinly veiled yet palpable resentment of Civil Rights achievements. In spite of the changes in their discourse, the Bob Richards campaign was not successful. In the fourteen states that included his name on the ballot, Richards only received 63,864.<sup>50</sup>

In 1986, only two years after the campaign, Willis Carto was voted out of the executive committee for the Populist Party. This divided the group into those who followed Carto, and those who stayed with William K. Shearer in the original party. Those who followed Carto created the Confederation of Populist Party State Leaders, headed by Robert Weems and Don Wassall.<sup>51</sup> This became Carto’s own faction of the Populist Party, and eventually the only iteration when the Shearer faction later dissolved.<sup>52</sup> Don Wassall—the current AFP Executive Director—then assumed the role of secretary for the national office or Executive Director for the reincarnated Populist Party, again firmly under the reins of Willis Carto, in 1987.<sup>53</sup>

At the party convention in September of 1987, following the rift and reformation, the party discussed several strategies and considered nominations for the 1988 presidential campaign candidate. Their most pressing concerns were ballot access and raising funds for the upcoming campaign. In order to increase their chances at ballot access, they decided to run candidates under the Republican, Democratic, and Populist Party affiliations. They also considered several

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<sup>50</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 263.

<sup>51</sup> George Michael, *Willis Carto and the American Far Right* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 162.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

candidates, but nominated George Hansen who declined the offer.<sup>54</sup> The nomination later went to David Duke, who accepted, but only after his failure to capture enough votes for the Democratic nomination. In 1987 Don Wassall also began the official party newspaper, the *Populist Observer*, which he solely owned and operated.

The following year, the campaign for David Duke as the Populist Party candidate was fully underway and run by Don Wassall. David Duke had a particularly colorful political history, which the campaign sought to diminish. In the early half of Duke's life, he was very open about his adherence to neo-Nazism. He was also very highly ranked—a Grand Wizard—in the Louisiana Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>55</sup> It was not until 1980, a short while after he began his perennial attempts at obtaining public office, that he severed ties with the KKK and began his National Association for the Advancement of White People (NAAWP).<sup>56</sup> According to George Michael, “Carto had long admired David Duke for his unabashed racial activism.”<sup>57</sup> Duke's platform for the 1988 campaign, though, did not mention any traditional white nationalist rhetoric. Rather, he avoided the now politically toxic public declaration of support for segregation, anti-miscegenation, and other eugenics-based views of U.S. race relations.

On a campaign flyer from 1988, they no longer mention the Equal Rights Amendment or gay rights as in the 1984 platform, though the original platform was officially reinstated at the September 1987 convention for the party. The distributed flyers for Duke's campaign brought specific attention to many of the race-coded political positions of the time without specifically

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<sup>54</sup> George Michael, *Willis Carto and the American Far Right* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 164.

<sup>55</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 264.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> George Michael, *Willis Carto and the American Far Right* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 164.

mentioning race, one of which was welfare reform. The flyer claimed a desire to “require able-bodied welfare recipients to perform community work in order to receive welfare payments. Enforce family planning among welfare recipients and to stop rewarding those who continue to give birth to illegitimate children.”<sup>58</sup> Again, the statement is completely race neutral; it instead utilizes a “racial project” to elicit racially charged images, and relies on an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality. This strategy was used to appeal to the unspoken ‘us’ (white Americans), in reaction to the benefits made to equalize the playing field for ‘them’ (non-white Americans). The Duke campaign was not successful; he received 48,267 votes or .05% and came in fifth place.<sup>59</sup> “Racist campaign themes and imagery were, nevertheless, appropriated by mainstream politicians—particularly within the Republican Party—who, unlike David Duke, were not tarnished by past leadership of terrorist organizations.”<sup>60</sup>

Not long after the Duke campaign, the relationship between Wassall and Carto deteriorated quickly. “Eventually, Wassall became highly critical of Carto and sought to dissociate the party from the racist onus associated with Carto and Liberty Lobby.”<sup>61</sup> Then in March 1989, Carto wrote a diatribe against Wassall in a memo to the Executive committee for the Populist Party. Carto blamed Wassall for a cancellation by a major speaker for one of the party conventions. Carto claimed, “the present problem has been caused by Don’s rejection of former liberal senator Gene McCarthy.... Apparently the only speakers that Don wants are those who are hated by the press.... I am genuinely mystified at Don’s unsophisticated position.... I

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<sup>58</sup> Lyman Tower Sargent, *Extremism in America: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 24.

<sup>59</sup> George Michael, *Willis Carto and the American Far Right* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 165.

<sup>60</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995), 265.

<sup>61</sup> George Michael, *Willis Carto and the American Far Right* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 171.

am very sad to see that this attempt to create a Populist Party appears to be going the same way as the first.”<sup>62</sup> Carto resigned directly after the memo. Wassall continued to lead the party, but was unable to find another candidate in 1992. The party dissolved a few years thereafter without another campaign, and Wassall changed his newsletter title from the *Populist Times* to the *Nationalist Times*.

## **The American Freedom Party**

### ***Background***

The AFP is a relatively new organization born from the ashes of the defunct Golden State Party in 2009, which had its origin in Southern California. The Golden State Party was created by a skinhead group called Freedom 14, but was dismantled shortly after its inception when a local newspaper exposed the criminal past of the chairman.<sup>63</sup> The Golden State Party was then taken over by the current AFP directors who changed the party name to the American Third Position. The name was changed once again from American Third Position to American Freedom Party in February 2013 following the defeat of AFP presidential candidate Merlin Miller, and as a result of media coverage of their white nationalist ideology.<sup>64</sup>

### ***Leadership***

The American Freedom Party is composed of a Chairman, an Executive Director, and seven directors. The Chairman is William D. Johnson, a Los Angeles based international corporate lawyer. The party website claims his responsibilities are “speaking on behalf of the party, and championing its sensible and just policies before the American people. He is also,

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<sup>62</sup> George Michael, *Willis Carto and the American Far Right* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 170.

<sup>63</sup> “Two Time Felon Runs Pro-White Political Group,” *The Orange County Register*, May 8, 2014, <http://www.ocregister.com/news/white-191355-state-party.html>

<sup>64</sup> “American Third Position Gets A Makeover Following Election Losses,” *Intelligence Report*, Summer 2013, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2013/summer/american-third-position-gets-a-makeov>

more than any other, responsible for safeguarding the course, values, and program of the party.”<sup>65</sup> Johnson has a long history of white nationalism and white supremacy, the most significant evidence of his ideological views is found in his 1985 Pace amendment proposal. The proposal was published under a pseudonym, James O. Pace, in the book *Amendment to the Constitution: Averting the Decline and Fall of America*.<sup>66</sup> The proposal sought to repeal the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the constitution and deport all persons who are not of European American decent, including those who appear white but have discernable traces of African American blood. Johnson used the notoriety from his book to run for a congressional seat in Wyoming in 1989; he was unsuccessful. He remained in the periphery of California white nationalist politics after his defeat, but returned to the political arena in 2006 when he ran for a congressional seat in Arizona.<sup>67</sup> Johnson was also active in the Ron Paul presidential campaign in 2007, and later made a bid for Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge in 2008. Following a local newspaper’s exposé on his white nationalist past, Johnson was unable to receive enough votes for the nomination.<sup>68</sup>

The Executive Director of the AFP is Don Wassall, whose early affiliation with white nationalist politics was through the Populist Party of the 1980s. Wassall, acting in an executive director capacity, was responsible for the Populist Party presidential campaigns of 1988 and 1992. The Populist Party, as discussed previously, was an agricultural movement in the late 1800s, but was revived in 1984—in name only—by white nationalists disillusioned with the

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<sup>65</sup> “Leadership Archives,” *The American Freedom Party*, December 16, 2013, <http://american3rdposition.com/?cat=1019>

<sup>66</sup> “William Daniel Johnson,” *Intelligence Files*, December 16, 2013, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/profiles/william-daniel-johnson>

<sup>67</sup> “William Daniel Johnson,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, May 8, 2014, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/profiles/william-daniel-johnson>

<sup>68</sup> “Judicial Candidate’s Racial Separatist Past Exposed,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 2014, <http://opinion.latimes.com/opinionla/2008/05/judicial-candid.html>

Republican Party<sup>69</sup>. The 1980s platform rested primarily on libertarian values such as supporting armed neutrality and repealing the income tax. The 1988 campaign was perhaps their most prominent effort. The presidential candidate was David Duke, a man who had previously held a leadership position within the Klu Klux Klan. Wassall also founded the *Nationalist Times*, which continues to publish white nationalist articles.

Among the seven directors of AFP, the most prominent is Kevin B. MacDonald. MacDonald is a tenured professor of psychology at CSU Long Beach. His most recognized published works include a series of books on Judaism, which claim the religion to be a group evolutionary strategy.<sup>70</sup> MacDonald is also the editor and founder of *The Occidental Observer* and the *Occidental Quarterly*, web-based journals with articles that focus on “White identity, White interests, and the culture of the West.”<sup>71</sup> The AFP website states that MacDonald “influences the course of the party and provides guidance to both the chairman and the president.”<sup>72</sup>

Tomislav Sunic is another key figure of the AFP. Born in Croatia, but educated in the United States, he earned a PhD from the University of California Santa Barbara in Political Science. His dissertation, *Against Democracy and Equality: The European New Right*, details the philosophy of right wing politics in Europe and was published in 1990.<sup>73</sup> He is the self described

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<sup>69</sup> Leonard Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2009), 109.

<sup>70</sup> Kevin MacDonald, *A People That Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994)

<sup>71</sup> Kevin MacDonald “Mission Statement,” *The Occidental Observer*, December 16, 2013, <http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/mission/>

<sup>72</sup> “Leadership Archives,” *The American Freedom Party*, December 16, 2013, <http://american3rdposition.com/?cat=1019>

<sup>73</sup> “Books and Journals,” *Tom Sunic*, May 8, 2014, <http://www.tomsunic.com/?cat=28>

Prime Minister of the AFP and is frequently sent on speaking tours in Europe and the U.S. to promote the party.<sup>74</sup>

### ***Party Platform***

The official platform published on the AFP website is an extensive list of various ideological beliefs; each belief is labeled as a freedom that the party claims it is fighting to protect. One in particular that alludes to the AFP's white nationalist ideology is termed "freedom of association". The freedom of association entails

[A] return to Americans their traditional right of freedom of association, including freedom in racial matters, along with the abolishment of all forms of government- and corporate-mandated racial discrimination and racial preferences, such as affirmative action, quotas, and all forms of "sensitivity training."... all races, ethnic groups and religions may openly celebrate their heritage and beliefs without interference or harassment from government and from media outlets and privately financed organizations<sup>75</sup>

The rest of the party's platform is a mix of traditionally conservative and liberal positions, ranging from a repugnance towards "militant feminism and radical homosexuality" to opposition to the prison industrial complex. The Party also advocates the "freedom to live without the imposition of foreign ideologies". That is, "America has been infested from the top-down with various unwanted 'isms' – liberalism, socialism, cultural Marxism, multi-racialism, feminism, neo-conservatism, fascism, and corporatism among them. In a free society, people live their day-to-day lives as they wish, without being molded like guinea pigs."<sup>76</sup> The AFP also calls for an end to the War on Drugs, decriminalization of marijuana, and the need for a clean environment.

### ***Funding***

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<sup>74</sup> Tomislav Sunic, interview by author, Skype, February 17, 2014.

<sup>75</sup> "Platform," *The American Freedom Party*, December 16, 2013, [http://american3rdposition.com/?page\\_id=9184](http://american3rdposition.com/?page_id=9184)

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

The party is registered at the Federal Election Committee as a political action committee, which allows them to donate to various campaigns. The sources of the party's funding is unclear and may largely come from the leaders' private funds. The most money received for the declared contributions was during the 2012 campaign. The majority were contributions under \$200, which allow the donor to give anonymously. In total, the AFP received \$19,900 for the 2012 election cycle.<sup>77</sup> Of the \$19,900 raised, \$8,434 was spent explicitly for the 2012 Merlin Miller presidential campaign.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Merlin Miller Presidential Campaign***

The AFP ran its first national candidate in the 2012 presidential election. Their nominated contender was Merlin Miller who appeared on the ballot in three states. The party requested that its supporters vote for him via write-in in the fourteen states where this was possible. The final result saw Miller placed fifteenth with a total vote count of 2,703 of the national vote.<sup>79</sup> His vice presidential running mate was Virginia Abernathy, a Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

### ***American Freedom Party Ideological Inspiration***

As mentioned previously, the AFP refers to Kevin B. MacDonald as their major source of inspiration and guidance within the organization. He is also the most distinguished academic among the party's leaders, having published a plethora of academic materials. Those most relevant to this project are his research on Judaism, and his online blog *The Occidental Observer*,

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<sup>77</sup> "American Third Position," *Open Secrets*, December 16, 2013, <http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/lookup2.php?cycle=2012&strID=C00518969>

<sup>78</sup> "American Third Position Expenditures," *Open Secrets*, December 16, 2013, <http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/indexpend.php?cycle=2012&cmtc=C00518969>

<sup>79</sup> "American Third Position Gets Makeover Following Election Losses," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, December 16, 2013, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2013/summer/american-third-position-gets-a-makeov>



which posts articles from his journal *The Occidental Quarterly*. An overview of the beliefs discussed therein provides vital insight into how the AFP conceptualizes European Americans in contrast to other social groups.

In MacDonald's most acclaimed body of work, he explicates his theories concerning the contemporary and historic relationship between Gentiles (non-Jewish; usually Western Christian) and those practicing Judaism. The majority of this work is contained in three books that draw on an evolutionary psychology perspective. According to MacDonald, Judaism is a culmination of genetic traits that lead to resource competition and in-group altruism. He argues these genetic traits are retained over time as a result of cultural and genetic segregation so that Jews are self-segregated to the point of pseudo-speciation within their genetic pool.<sup>80</sup>

MacDonald discusses anti-Semitism in the second book of the series. In it he contends that anti-Semitism is primarily the result of Jewish self-segregation. MacDonald claims, "Parts of the discourse read as a sort of extended discourse on the role of Jewish self interest, deception, and self-deception in the areas of Jewish historiography, Jewish personal identity, and Jewish conceptualization of their in-group and its relations with out-groups."<sup>81</sup> He argues that Jews are willfully ignorant of their own culpability in fostering anti-Semitism. MacDonald's theory regarding anti-Semitism is comprised of three parts: Jewish separation results in negative stereotyping; there is resource and reproductive competition between Jews and Gentiles; and Jews are highly adept in this competition especially in areas such as influencing culture,

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<sup>80</sup> Kevin MacDonald, *A People that Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 19.

<sup>81</sup> Kevin MacDonald, *Separation and its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), viii.

developing political and intellectual movements, and advocating for specific policies such as immigration resulting in conflict with Gentiles.<sup>82</sup>

The third book contends, “Jewish intellectual and political activity...has been increasingly directed at effecting fundamental transformations of Western societies in the direction of cultural and ethnic pluralism.”<sup>83</sup> MacDonald claims the Jewish community would benefit from such pluralism because their group would be seen as one of many and not a distinct competitor of Gentiles.

In MacDonald’s online blog, he is even more candid about his views of all ethnic groups including Jews. In a post entitled “Race as a Biological Reality and Social Construct,” MacDonald claims, “The reality is that Whites are the only people who have developed moral idealism—in my view a unique feature of Western individualistic culture where groups are constructed less on the basis of kinship than on the basis of ideology and moral reputation.”<sup>84</sup> In other posts, he attempts to solidify white nationalist ideology in more scientific and objective terms. This is seen in “Multiculturalism and the Racialization of Politics in the U.S.” MacDonald claims this post was based on a talk “which was intended as a general overview and designed to appeal to the unconverted.”<sup>85</sup> In it he states, “the belief that increasing diversity is linked to greater conflict is well established by scientific research.”<sup>86</sup>

### ***Discourse Analysis***

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>84</sup> Kevin MacDonald, “Race as a Biological Reality and Social Construct,” *The Occidental Observer*, October 6, 2013, <http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/2013/10/race-as-a-biological-reality-and-social-construct/>

<sup>85</sup> Kevin MacDonald, “Multiculturalism and the Racialization of Politics in the U.S.,” *The Occidental Observer*, November 5, 2013, <http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/2013/11/multiculturalism-and-the-racialization-of-politics-in-the-united-states/>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

The contemporary white nationalist political party, the AFP, occupies a unique space in today's political landscape. They are the only national level political party openly claiming a pro-white agenda, while not aligning themselves with traditional white nationalist groups such as the American Nazi Party. Similar to its predecessors, the American Freedom Party emerged during a time of great social change and instability. The year of their inception coincided with the first election of an African American President, and directly followed the tumultuous financial crash of 2008. Those are not the only precipitating factors in their creation, but nevertheless were invaluable to them as a catalyst for political momentum.

When comparing the political ambitions of the AFP to Carto's Populist Party and the NSRP, the differences in approach becomes readily apparent. The AFP directors expressed a strong interest in distancing themselves from the explicitly white supremacist or eugenics-based groups like the NSRP, and constantly reiterated their discontent with parties similar to the Populist Party who do not openly discuss race. The directors see themselves instead as political activists—akin to civil rights crusaders—for the dispossessed white majority, fighting against a steadily growing non-white populous, and color-conscious policies. They also co-opt the environmental movement and employ anti-capitalist rhetoric to further their differentiation. A large part of their political strategy is distancing themselves from the existing dominant political parties, namely the Republicans and Democrats, in order to carve a space for themselves within the mainstream political landscape.

The most prominent challenge for the AFP, a white nationalist party operating in the twenty first century, is crafting their rhetoric in a fashion that will not be immediately rejected and in a way that is familiar to the general public. Tomislav Sunic, a prominent director of the party, also recognized this as a major challenge facing the group:

We are just about the only party, however small or tiny we are, we are definitely trying to provide—this is important—a discourse that would, by and large, appeal across the board. We are not trying to use radical lingo for that matter, how can I say, lingo that [is derived from the] early twentieth century or late nineteenth century that will put off our potential voters or potential electorate, because we are aware there are different challenges now.<sup>87</sup>

He is referring to the changes in contemporarily acceptable mainstream racial discourse. As discussed previously, the use of racial slurs and a biological determinist framework in national political rhetoric is no longer accepted; something that was achieved through the Civil Rights Movement. The AFP also does not want to invite any comparison to historically white supremacist groups, and therefore avoids using terminology that easily conjures up the specter of white terrorism from the period Sunic references in the passage. The AFP recognizes the failure of Civil Rights era groups that did utilize this strategy, and so seek to avoid the same errors.

They do this by first avoiding terminology used by early white nationalist groups, such as the NSRP. One term they avoid is ‘White Americans’ to describe their target population. In the majority of the public rhetoric, and in the party tagline quoted in the introduction to this paper, the term ‘European American’ is used instead. When asked who were their target constituents, Sunic claimed it to be European Americans but further explained his usage of the term: “Sometimes it can sound a little ugly when you say white populous or white Americans. I prefer the expression, which is more politically correct if I can put it that way, which is European Americans.”<sup>88</sup> The AFP also frequently uses the term European Americans along with a reference to cultural heritage in an attempt to avoid use of explicitly racial ideology, thus couching their defense of white Americans in terms of identity politics; they want to break down

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<sup>87</sup> Tomislav Sunic, interviewed by author, Skype, February 17, 2014.

<sup>88</sup> Tomislav Sunic, interviewed by author, Skype, February 17, 2014.

the homogenous white racial group into a diverse cultural ethnic group to frame themselves after the ethnic rights movements that *were* successful in the mid-twentieth century.

The party does not refer to their target group as white, however. Mention of the term ‘white’ is done so in a very specific manner. The AFP avoids phrases commonly associated with white supremacist groups such as ‘White Pride’ or ‘White Power.’ In fact Sunic states, “We want to avoid this, stupid I must say, hollering about ‘White Pride’ and all those stupid skinhead guys who actually do more harm to us than help. We want to avoid this type of hollering.”<sup>89</sup> When the AFP uses the term ‘White’, it is in reference to the stigma associated with claiming ‘white’ as a political group identity. William Johnson, the party chair, employed a phrase used by the AFP in an attempt to subvert the conflation of discussions of whites’ rights with white supremacy; he stated that “anti-racist is a code word for anti-white.”<sup>90</sup> Johnson expanded on the sentiment by lamenting that, “My particular views have traditionally been the most reviled of any of the views out there; if you say ‘I’m pro-white’, they just say you’re racist, they put all sorts of bad labels on you....”<sup>91</sup>

The AFP also actively avoids the white nationalist label in their attempt to expand the voter base for access to public office positions. To the AFP, the label carries enough stigma to drive away voters due to its association with ‘old racism.’ Sunic explains it in this way:

Myself and my colleagues are trying to avoid it [white nationalism] in our discourse, in our encounters with people, and I myself am concerned. Even when I’m gonna be in the United States, I’m trying to avoid this word because many middle class or disenfranchised white Americans feel a little bit scared when you talk about white nationalism....In my case, I don’t like being tagged or branded as a white nationalist. I prefer being branded as a scholar, as an American of European descent.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Tomislav Sunic, interview by author, Skype, February 17, 2014.

<sup>90</sup> William Johnson, interview by author, Los Angeles, March 8, 2014.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Tomislav Sunic, interview by author, Skype, February 17, 2014.

Sunic is anxious that mention of ‘white nationalism’ will scare away voters. But he also expresses ambivalence about self-identifying as white nationalist. This was not the case with William Johnson, who openly identified himself as a white nationalist, but agreed with distancing the party from the label for the time being.

The party’s name, initially, was American Third Position. According to William Johnson, the original name reflected the values of the party more accurately.<sup>93</sup> The original name was based on one of the party’s core ideals, which is the belief in supplanting capitalism with Third Positionism. According to Johnson, “The concept of third positionism is quite popular in Europe. It’s an economic system... it’s a third position that really supports distributism... to have capitalism in a localized context ... it’s not capitalist, it’s not communist, it’s not socialism, it’s a third position, it’s in the middle.”<sup>94</sup> This is essentially, capitalism without major corporate conglomerates. But Sunic claims he convinced the board of directors to change the name to American Freedom Party because

It sounds just a little better, it sounds logical, it sounds less offensive, it sounds less radical, because again, the European third position, ... this is usually a concept associated with radical right-wing parties in Europe, which often unfortunately lend itself to different verbal abuses. We certainly... want to avoid and dispel this myth of some crazy right-wingers, skinheads walking around and doing some awful things.<sup>95</sup>

However, Johnson did concede that the new name better reflected their libertarian roots.

Another reason for the change may have been the reputation the party was garnering under the first moniker. In January 2013, [mediamatters.org](http://mediamatters.org) broke a story about the American Third Position sponsoring Gun Appreciation Day, a movement that sought to hold a pro-gun day

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<sup>93</sup> William Johnson, interview by author, Los Angeles, March 8, 2014.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Tomislav Sunic, interview by author, Skype, February 17, 2014.

to fight against perceived anti-gun sentiments; the group was mostly backed by conservatives.<sup>96</sup> The group had held open registration, which the American Third Position took advantage of for free publicity. Mainstream news outlet *Huffington Post* ran the story, and Gun Appreciation Day quickly dropped American Third Position and released a statement saying they had “put a screening process in place to avoid associating the event with groups or businesses that might detract from the message...[but] mistakenly missed one,” they continued that, “We believe in equal rights of ALL Americans in every race, gender, religion, location, and economic class to keep and bear arms as guaranteed to them in the Bill of Rights.”<sup>97</sup>

Only one month later, American Third Position announced their name change to American Freedom Party, including a slogan now colored red, white, and blue.<sup>98</sup> The group may have instituted the use of European-American in place of white at this time as well, because the *Huffington Post* story from January 18, 2013 claims, “In its mission statement, [American third Party] writes that it ‘believes that government policy in the United States discriminates against white Americans, the majority population, and that white Americans need their own political party to fight this discrimination.’”<sup>99</sup> The link provided by *Huffington Post* as the source for the quote leads to the AFP’s current mission statement on their website, which now uses European-American rather than white.

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<sup>96</sup> “Gun Appreciation Day is Sponsored by a White Nationalist Party,” *Media Matters*, April 29, 2014, <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2013/01/18/gun-appreciation-day-is-sponsored-by-a-white-na/192318>

<sup>97</sup> “Gun Appreciation Day is Sponsored by a White Nationalist Party,” *Media Matters*, April 29, 2014, <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2013/01/18/gun-appreciation-day-is-sponsored-by-a-white-na/192318>

<sup>98</sup> “American Third Position Gets A Makeover Following Election Losses,” *Intelligence Report*, Summer 2013, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2013/summer/american-third-position-gets-a-makeov>

<sup>99</sup> “Gun Appreciation Day Sponsored by the American Third Position, a White Supremacist Group,” *Huffington Post*, April 29, 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/18/gun-appreciation-day-\\_n\\_2502568.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/18/gun-appreciation-day-_n_2502568.html)

## *Field Notes*

### **Interview with Tomislav Sunic**

My interview with Tomislav Sunic was conducted over Skype on February 19, 2014. At the time of the interview, he was living in Croatia. Because he did not have a webcam, I was only able to hear Sunic although video was transmitting from my end. Because of his ability to ascertain my race (white), I believe that Sunic may have been more candid in our interview than he would have been otherwise. This seemed to be the case in a particular exchange, when I asked him whether the AFP considered Jewish individuals to be European American. His response was, “We should ask them, do you guys consider yourself European? Do you guys consider yourselves Gentiles? And both of us know what the answer is.”<sup>100</sup> The response may have simply been his way of answering the question, but my impression was that he was referring to a sort of shared racial knowledge or ideology; he seemed to have been insinuating that I already knew they would not be.

Despite our conflicting ideological beliefs (although I never discussed my personal opinions), I found him to be very open and friendly. He seemed to want to portray the AFP as a welcoming and non-violent organization whose racial ideology—specifically their anti-multiculturalism—was rooted in academic concern, rather than the rabid violence associated with white nationalist groups. Other than my preliminary nervousness, which stemmed from not knowing how the interview would unfold, the only other time I felt distinctly uncomfortable was during our discussion of homosexuality. When asked why the AFP takes a stance against homosexuality, he replied, “I’m not interested in someone’s lifestyle, as long as his lifestyle is not being imposed on a legal, legislative, state, and federal level upon my own lifestyle. Then, I get very, very angry, and then of course I get quite upset. This is where I am opposed to

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<sup>100</sup> Tomislav Sunic, interview by author, Skype, February 17, 2014.



homosexuality.”<sup>101</sup> His demeanor during this response was the only time in the interview that he showed anger or sternness. His passion on the topic came across very clearly. Being a lesbian identified person, this made me quite uncomfortable although he was unable to see my response at that point in the interview (the call had disconnected shortly beforehand, and we reconnected without video). I also strived to maintain a neutral presentation of self. I found his display of anger interesting, because anti-homosexuality is a small issue to the party when compared with their beliefs on race. During our discussions of race, he was extremely careful about maintaining a calm demeanor. In fact, he was very careful about presenting his views on multiculturalism in an academic fashion. He reiterated that capitalism was the main enemy on more than one occasion. He also emphasized his identity as a scholar, and invited me to attend any future lectures he gave in the United States.

### **Interview with William Johnson**

The interview with William Johnson took place at his law office in Downtown Los Angeles on March 8, 2014. His law office address is also listed as the location for the West Coast AFP branch office. We had arranged the face-to-face interview a couple of weeks prior, through his office telephone number. His law office was located in the World Trade Center for Los Angeles. His office was strikingly nondescript. There was no mention of the AFP on his door, only his name. The reception area was very small and contained two chairs and a side table with beauty and lifestyle magazines, a landscape painting, and a small unmanned counter with a service bell. The room was devoid of any political insignia. Shortly after walking into the room, Johnson came out to greet me. He was roughly 5’4, slightly rotund, wore glasses, and had light brown graying hair. He gave me a big smile and extended his hand upon introducing himself.

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<sup>101</sup> Tomislav Sunic, interview by author, Skype, February 17, 2014.

I found Johnson to be exceedingly friendly, similar to Sunic, although very forthright when discussing his white nationalist views on society. Many of his responses were punctuated with laughter and a somewhat self-deprecating sense of humor. Despite his forthrightness, he seemed to hold back when answering specific questions about AFP operations and political connections. He also made the point to indicate that many of his views on society were his own, rather than the party's. The line between his views and those of the AFP seemed incredibly blurred, however. I noted this when he made the offhand comment that the platform issue against homosexuality, which is listed on the AFP website, was his own particular view. This was in response to my inquiry regarding the influence of religion on the party. He meant to emphasize the religious inclusiveness of the party. I was also surprised to find that he was a devout Mormon, and seemed to be very active in his church. During the interview, there were several interruptions from his wife calling about a baptism that was to occur at his church later in the evening. I am not sure how he reconciles his religiosity with his white nationalist views, but he was passionate about both. His most animated moment in the entire interview was his effusive recounting of the plight of the white race. He vehemently stated, "The white race is dying out. Every country in Europe is dying out. When I was a kid, the whites were probably ten percent of the population of the world, and now its only five percent, and multiculturalism is destroying the white race...."<sup>102</sup> He emphasized each statement with a chopping motion against his desk. Despite his strong beliefs, he was very open to my analysis of the party, and offered to post my research on the AFP website regardless of my thesis conclusion being "good" or "bad", to which I politely declined.

## **Discussion**

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<sup>102</sup> William Johnson, interview by author, Los Angeles, March 8, 2014.

The latter half of the twentieth century, continuing into the twenty first century, has been tumultuous and full of dynamic change. By analyzing the NSRP, the Populist Party, and the AFP it becomes clear that an evolution is taking place within this narrow frame of white nationalist nation-wide political parties.

The central and unchanging aspect has been the foundational belief that the white racial category exists, is superior to other groups, and must also compete with other groups, as predicted by group position theory. Using group position theory allows us to understand the immediate response of the political parties to perceived threats from civil right achievements, and can partially account for perennial white supremacy in the United States, but does not allow for a more in-depth analysis of the changes in racism over time.

When comparing the white nationalist strategies for accessing mainstream politics, we are able to discern that changes in societal interpretations of race and racism are in fact occurring. In our contemporary period, the AFP has needed to consciously change much of their dialogue in order to avoid the stigma associated with openly declaring themselves pro-white, choosing instead an appropriation of identity politics to minimize the stigma of white nationalism. The AFP's new attempt to attract voters is a reflection of our society's new racism or color-blind racism. Their endeavor to paint themselves as defenders of increasingly marginalized white Americans can only be an effective political strategy in a climate teeming with color-blind racism. This is because color-blind racism hinges on the belief that America is truly an equitable society as a result of the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement, and racial barriers have been completely removed.<sup>103</sup> If one adheres to this belief, then it is reasonable to assume affirmative action is indeed racial discrimination, and other various color-conscious

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<sup>103</sup> Michael K. Brown et al., *White-Washing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 56.

policies as well. The AFP is intentionally positioning themselves within this range of acceptable racially discriminatory views, as we have the earlier groups attempt for their individual time periods.

Throughout the roughly fifty years since the Civil Rights movement, the changes in racial politics have been radical. There have been distinct shifts in mainstream discussion of race as demonstrated by the NSRP, who unabashedly promoted violence and eugenics through their racial apartheid platform, the Populist Party who strictly avoided explicitly referring to race in their political efforts, and now the AFP who deem now an appropriate time to again discuss race in their political campaign, albeit with specific caveats. Racial formation theory would suggest that these changes are a result of the blow against our central white supremacist structure made by the Civil Rights Movement. But we know that racial formation is not fixed, it is an ever-changing structure and advocating for the white racial category is slowly becoming once again acceptable in the mainstream. Considering the rapid changes in mainstream racism and the continuity of white supremacy, along with the various reports regarding growing opinions that whites are becoming marginalized, it seems likely that we are again coming to a pivotal era of change in our racial formation.

### **Conclusion**

When my research began, I did not expect to find so many connections between the various political parties. My initial curiosity was simply in understanding how the American Freedom Party changed their presentation to appeal to mainstream audience, and if the other groups used similar strategies. Now, we can see that they absolutely have. Each political party is a reflection of the specific time period in which they existed. Understanding that each group is a reflection of mainstream society over time has interesting implications. What does this say about our society? One key aspect it reveals is the diachronically changing mainstream political

dialogue regarding race. Political dialogue is an important mirror of social ideas because it is our public forum to debate how we feel society should be structured. Again, the stark differences between the political discourse of the NSRP and the AFP provide strong evidence of our society's transition from old racism to new racism.

Another key social factor exposed is the unwavering undercurrent of white supremacy in American society. The changing interface between the political parties and the mainstream did not change the heart of each political attempt, which is white supremacist motivation. The ideology has evolved with society, and has by no means diminished. Despite the societal shifts and changing discourse between the parties, essential tenets of white supremacy have endured. These tenets include belief in the existence of a white category and that it is something to be protected above all other groups, regardless of the effect on other groups. The connections between the parties, especially the common directors, are evidence of a shared core white supremacist ideology that has changed masks over time. The idea that white supremacy is adaptable, and has evolved along with mainstream society is troubling. Particularly in light of the increased apprehension among whites regarding changing racial demographics. The evidence discussing historic increases in white supremacist groups, along with unwavering white supremacy inherent in society should be closely observed, as it has the potential to be a powder keg. The racial formation that we find ourselves in currently appears to be in a crucial fluctuation. It is imperative that Sociologists pay heed to these dynamics, as there are many potential social consequences if left unexamined.

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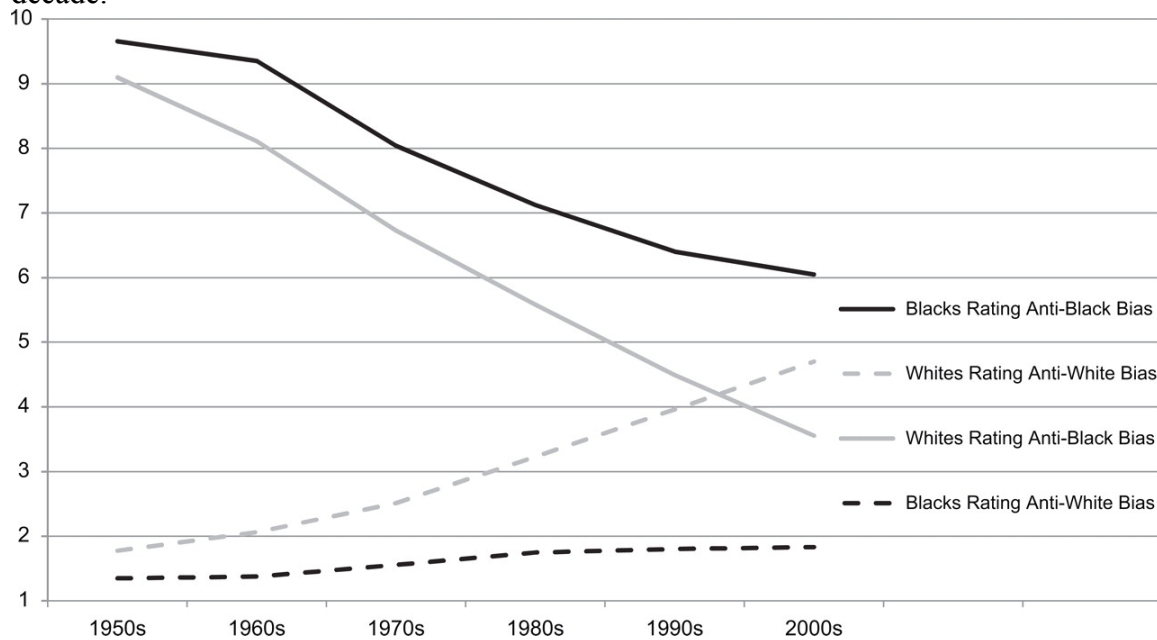
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## Appendix

Figure 1: White and Black respondents' perceptions of anti-White and anti-Black bias in each decade.



Source: Norton M.I. , and S.R. Sommers Perspectives on Psychological Science 2011;6:215-218; Copyright by Association for Psychological Science.

Figure 2: Harry Bertam NSRP, April 1983

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(Below reproduced from "Tiltonsville News," April, 1983)

### East Ohio Youth Organizing NSRP

By PATRIC DOLAN  
The Intelligencer Staff

#### Atlanta Area NSRP Meeting Packed Hall

##### Dr. Fields Addresses Atlanta Meeting

The weather was terrible. Thunderstorms and 50-mile-an-hour winds greeted us at the hotel. But an enthusiastic crowd packed the meeting hall near the Atlanta airport. The standing room only crowd cheered the speakers on.

Dr. E.R. Fields talked about the fact that we have the truth and it is just a matter of reaching the people and involving them in this work. Time is running short for America with the exploding black and colored birthrate and colored immigration. It is vital that Patriots bring their friends to meetings and encourage them to join the NSRP or subscribe to *The Thunderbolt*. Dr. Fields said that unless the White people take back control of our nation we will eventually have to pack our bags and move back to the lands of our ancestors.

Harry V. Bertram Jr. of Tiltonsville looks like a boy scout in his crisp, clean uniform complete with thunderbolt insignia. But if looks are deceiving, Bertram fits the bill.

In actuality, Bertram, 23, is a self-described racist who has been active throughout the Ohio Valley in the last year attempting to form a local chapter of the National States Rights Party, "a white racist political order that stands for the rights of white people."

His activities have drawn the ire of Jewish and black leaders in Ohio and West Virginia opposing his plans to form such a group, but they are unable as yet to stop him because he has done nothing illegal.

"I'm a racist, but I'd rather be described as a white nationalist," Bertram said. "A white nationalist is someone who loves their white race and does something to preserve it."

Bertram said the NSRP local chapter, based at his home in Tiltonsville, was officially formed about 6 months ago. Most of its members are from the Martins Ferry-Wheeling area, he said, "but I'm not allowed to reveal any numbers because it keeps our enemies guessing and off balance."

He has been actively distributing leaflets around the Ohio Valley asking for potential members if they are "loyal white people." The leaflets have been sent through the U.S. Mail and placed on cars throughout several communities and shopping malls.

The "white rights party" is headquartered in Marietta, Ga. Its platform reads: "expulsion of all communists, abolition of the United

Nations, outlawing interracial marriage, only white immigration, racial separation and for giving all Africans in America a rich country of their own in Africa."

In 1981, Bertram ran for Tiltonsville Village Council and came in fourth out of a field of five. He said he garnered 125 votes or 10 percent of all those who voted. Bertram also submitted petitions to run for Tiltonsville mayor in this year's election, but said he decided to pull out because he didn't have time to campaign.

In 1984, he said, "it will be something big that I run for, like state representative."

Jews must be stripped of any political power, Bertram contends, because the Jewish community supports the overthrow of the American government in favor of communism.

"I'm just like a sergeant in the Army. I only know what I need to know," he added of the racist doctrine handed down by NSRP national headquarters in its monthly publication *The Thunderbolt*.



Harry V. Bertam Jr. of Tiltonsville, a self-described racist, has formed a local chapter of the National States Rights Party.

Source: *The Thunderbolt*, April 1983

Figure 3: Harry Bertam NSRP, March 1984

PAGE 8

**VOTE  
BERTRAM**

NSRP Organizes  
On Ballot

Tiltonsville, Ohio, Harry Bertram, Jr. is National States Rights Party organizer for southeastern Ohio and northwestern West Virginia. Mr. Bertram has qualified for the ballot in the race for State Representative for the 98th District of Ohio.

Harry Bertram, Jr. is running an active campaign on a pro-White ticket including opposition to forced school busing and job quotas for

**Red Official:  
Jews In  
Soviet Politburo  
Mexico's Soviet Am-  
bassador, Rotislav Sergeye-  
v held an audience for Jews  
concerned about Jews in**



**HARRY BERTRAM JR.**

minorities. He also opposed the Ohio State tax on labor and will introduce a bill making it illegal for the state to buy foreign steel for state construction projects. Mr. Bertram is a dynamic speaker and will make a good showing.

All who would like to aid Harry should send donations to The Committee to Elect Harry Bertram, Jr., N.S.R.P., P.O. Box 6373, Wheeling, West Virginia 26003.

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**ISSUE #289** — 20 million illegal aliens may gain amnes-

Source: *The Thunderbolt* March 1984

Figure 4: Harry Bertram, NSRP April 1984

# NSRP Summer Action C



Harry Bertram, Jr. holding his "Man of the Year" award at NSRP convention.



J. B. Stoner re-elected National Chairman of the NSRP.



NSRP National Organizers presented to Dr. E. R. ... years as a National Organizers (Paul Niswonger on left).

The Officers and

The following officers members attending representing a majority J. B. Stoner, National Chairman; Jerry Pope, National Secretary; Dolores M. National Executive DeShazo, Roy Wake,

In this issue you will see the nation's foremost organization both the Jew problem and the mince words and believe me, we will awaken the vast majority of you and help sign up a

### NSRP Candidate's Radio Show Cancelled

A decision to cancel a scheduled interview this morning with an avowed racist who is seeking Democratic nomination for Ohio's 98th District House of Representatives.

### Big Vote For NSRP Candidate

Ohio NSRP candidate, Harry Bertram, Jr., running for the State House of Representatives polled 4,000 votes to his opponents 17,000 votes. Bertram is only 24 years old and was running against an incumbent who has held office for 15 years. Bertram spent less than \$500 in his campaign while the incumbent spent thousands of dollars in what turned out to be a desperate bid to head off the young White Patriot.

Mr. Bertram was aided by NSRP National Organizer Jerry Pope who printed literature and posters which were used in the campaign. The local Jewish community was so upset by Harry's campaign exposing the threat of Zionism

and race-mixing that they used intimidation to have Bertram's radio show cancelled. Harry Bertram is an excellent speaker who knows how to explain our stand to the general public. All we need do to win this fight is to find more awakened and talented young men like Harry Bertram to carry our messages to the White Christian majority.

Source: *The Thunderbolt*, April 1984