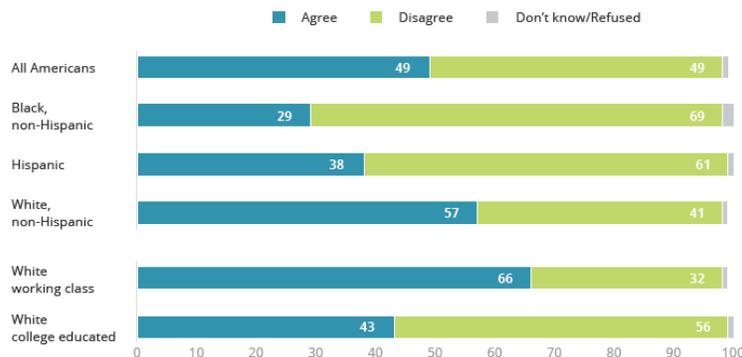


The POTUS is making up Problems for his White Supremacist Solutions

There is one consistent through-line that ties the recently elected president's executive orders, tweets, appointments, and public statements together. He is pushing through a "law and order" agenda that plays on white, Christian fears of a future without white supremacy. When he channeled Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon's "law and order" cries from the 1960s at the Republican National Convention,¹ he was taping into a powerful narrative that has appeared in a cyclical pattern throughout US history. Just as the revolution in Haiti (1791-1903), rebellions of enslaved Africans throughout the US, and social movements of the second half of the 20th century challenged white supremacy in the past, the election of Barak Obama, the prospect of the first female president, and the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement challenged the stranglehold that white men (both symbolically and literally) have on power today.² Combined with the shifting demographics of the US,³ the current white backlash is very predictable.⁴

During his campaign and beginning of his presidency, Trump has stoked whites' racial anxieties and fears of loss. The majority (57%) of white people in the US believe that discrimination against them is as big a problem as discrimination against African Americans and other minorities. This baseless belief⁵ is a potent political force that was clearly demonstrated by the voting behavior of the majority of whites during the 2016 election.

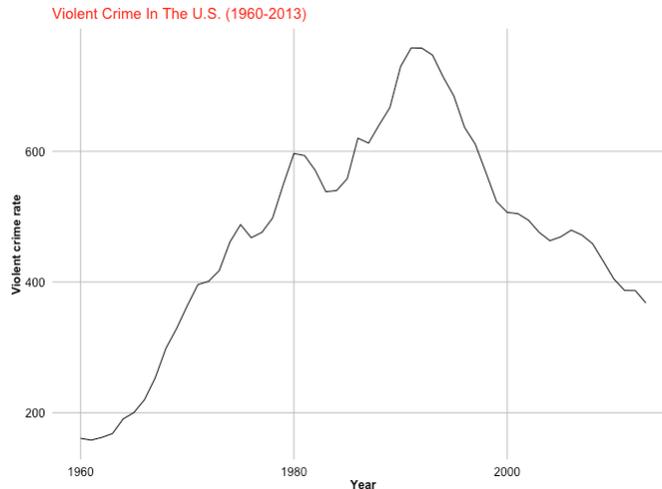
FIGURE 5. Today discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against blacks and other minorities
By race/ethnicity and class



Source: PRRI/Brookings 2016 Immigration Survey.

Likewise, many white Christians believe that people of their religion are discriminated against and many people in the US believe that immigrants are a threat to the character of the US.⁶ Recognizing this evidence can help us understand that the POTUS is playing on whites' irrational fears to garner support for policy-making based on "alternative facts" and inaccurate claims.

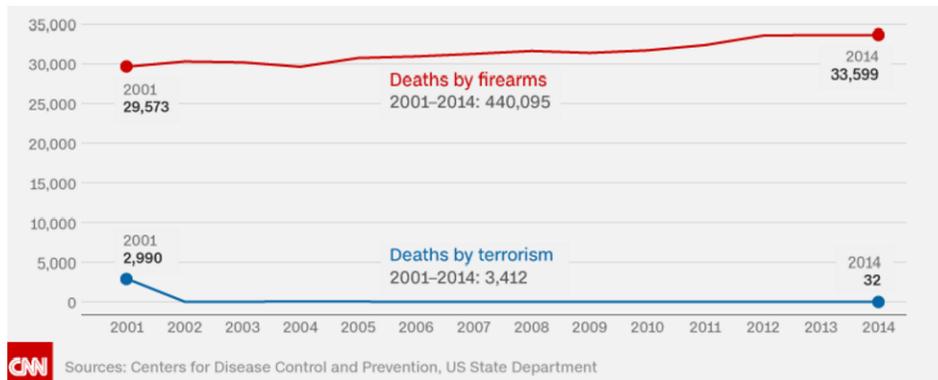
From the moment he took office, he rearticulated his "American Carnage" vision of the US.⁷ According to the POTUS, the country is in a state of disarray with rampant crime perpetrated by gangs and violent illegal immigrants. The first fallacy here is that crime is on the rise and at a historically high level. In fact, crime is at historically low levels.⁸



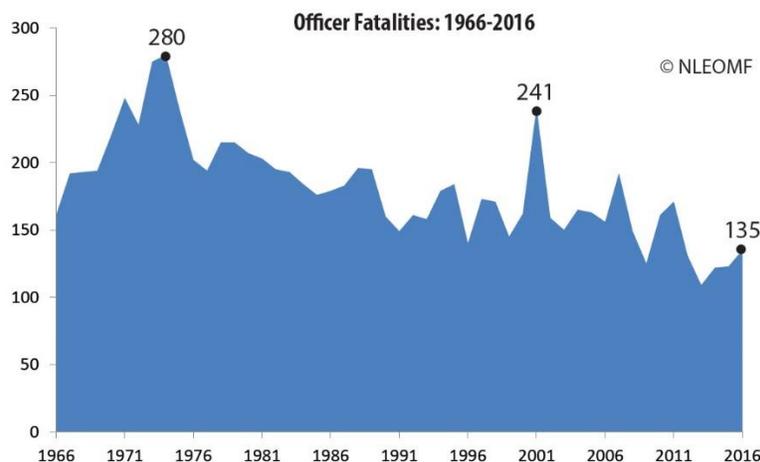
In his executive order “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States” he argues that undocumented people pose a substantial threat to the safety of the country. As the order states, “Many aliens who illegally enter the United States and those who overstay or otherwise violate the terms of their visas present a significant threat to national security and public safety. This is particularly so for aliens who engage in criminal conduct in the United States.”⁹ Despite the implication of rampant criminality, immigrants and undocumented residents are less likely than other US residents to be perpetrators of crime.¹⁰ Facts aside, this characterization does political work for a POTUS who is interested in solidifying his xenophobic base with a rallying cry that includes building a \$15 - \$20 Billion wall between the US and Mexico.

In a similar vein, the recent Executive Order banning travel from seven predominantly Muslim countries states that “to protect the American people from terrorist attacks by foreign nationals admitted to the United States.”¹¹ However, the 7 countries identified collectively have produced exactly zero terrorist deaths in the US since 1975.¹² Moreover, the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack came from countries not on this banned list – most notably Saudi Arabia.¹³ However, the ban stokes fears about threats with a focus on “radical Islamic Terrorism” a favorite villain of the POTUS. It also allowed him to double down on the claim that Christians are being discriminated against in the US and around the world (another rallying cry of white Christians in the US).

The focus on external forces as key threats overlooks many other more proximal safety concerns. By way of comparison, the threat of gun violence in the US is much greater than the threat from terrorism coming from someone outside the US. In fact, it is 1000 times more likely.¹⁴ As you can see below, there were 440,095 gun deaths in the US compared to 3,412 deaths from terrorism 2001-2014.



His executive order designed “to enhance the protection and safety of Federal, State, tribal, and local law enforcement officers, and thereby all Americans” and to “pursue appropriate legislation, consistent with the Constitution's regime of limited and enumerated Federal powers, that will define new Federal crimes, and increase penalties for existing Federal crimes, in order to prevent violence against Federal, State, tribal, and local law enforcement officers,”¹⁵ is another example of a solution in search of a problem. While the rhetoric of a war on police continued to circulate in conservative circles, none exists. In fact, according to National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, police deaths have declined steadily since 1971 (despite a 10% increase last year).¹⁶



Meanwhile, police involved shootings leading to deaths of civilians average over 1000/year and as we have seen through video evidence (notwithstanding court findings to the contrary) many of these deaths are unjustified.¹⁷

The POTUS is also using false claims of voter fraud to support republican voter suppression efforts. There is no legitimate evidence of large-scale voter fraud in the US.¹⁸ He claims that over three million illegal voters voted for Hillary Clinton and that voters were bussed from Massachusetts to vote in the last presidential election. These (and many other lies) are words of a compulsive liar – even according to the conservative *National Review*.¹⁹ What’s more, the Republican Party has been engaged in a systemic effort to suppress the voting among communities of color.²⁰ Immediately following the Supreme Court’s decision that struck down portions of the voting rights act, for example, states like North Carolina and later Wisconsin added voter ID requirements that disproportionately impact voters of

color. As many as 300,000 voters who would have otherwise been able to vote in Wisconsin lacked the proper ID.²¹

Coupled with the appointment of a white supremacist Chief Strategist (Steve Bannon) and an Attorney General with a history of supporting voter suppression against African American (Jeff Sessions), it is clear that the POTUS is backing up his racist, xenophobic rhetoric by surrounding himself with people who will support policies that perpetuate white supremacy. Our ability to challenge these white supremacist policies depends, in part, on our ability to call them what they are and to not lose focus on their sinister motivations.

John B. Diamond

¹ Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press. Ava DuVernay. 2016. 13th.

² Haeyoun Park, Josh Keller, & Josh Williams. Feb. 26, 2016. The Faces of American Power, Nearly as White as the Oscar Nominees. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/02/26/us/race-of-american-power.html?_r=0. For a discussion of how the white backlash is a core element of Trump's victory see the following piece. Donald Trump's victory is part of a global white backlash. <http://www.vox.com/world/2016/11/9/13572174/president-elect-donald-trump-2016-victory-racism-xenophobia>

³ Colby, S. L. & Ortman, J. M. 2015. "Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060: Population Estimates and Projections." <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf>

⁴ For a succinct discussion of this history see the following video <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/video/2016/may/11/trump-has-to-be-the-next-president-american-history-dictates-it-video>.

⁵ How Immigration and Concerns about Cultural Changes Are Shaping the 2016 Election. Survey Findings from the 2016 PRRI/Brookings Immigration Survey. <http://www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/PRRI-Brookings-2016-Immigration-survey-report.pdf>.

⁶ How Immigration and Concerns about Cultural Changes Are Shaping the 2016 Election. Survey Findings from the 2016 PRRI/Brookings Immigration Survey. <http://www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/PRRI-Brookings-2016-Immigration-survey-report.pdf>.

⁷ <http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracynamerica/2017/01/american-carnage>

⁸ Cooke, C. 2015. Careful with the Panic: Violent Crime and Gun Crime Are Both Dropping. *The National Review*. <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/427758/careful-panic-violent-crime-and-gun-crime-are-both-dropping-charles-c-w-cooke>.

⁹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/25/presidential-executive-order-enhancing-public-safety-interior-united>.

¹⁰ PÉREZ-PEÑA, R. *Contrary to Trump's Claims, Immigrants Are Less Likely to Commit Crimes*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/26/us/trump-illegal-immigrants-crime.html>. January 26, 2017.

¹¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/27/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states>

¹² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/no-terror-attacks-muslim-ban-7-countries-trump_us_588b5a1fe4b0230ce61b4b93

¹³ It has also been pointed out that his ban did not include countries where he has business interests.

¹⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/04/us/gun-violence-graphics/>

¹⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/09/presidential-executive-order-preventing-violence-against-federal-state>.

¹⁶ There was a high number of police deaths in 2001 as a result of the 9/11 attacks in New York. This figure represents deaths from all causes. <http://www.nleomf.org/facts/research-bulletins/>.

¹⁷ For a compilation of deaths caused by police shootings see

¹⁸ Ingraham, C. 2017. "Here are nine investigations on voter fraud that found virtually nothing." *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/01/25/here-are-nine-major-investigations-on-voter-fraud-that-found-virtually-nothing/?utm_term=.9117f61b12ba

¹⁹ Williamson, K. D. "Thanks Goodness Trump is a Compulsive Liar." *The National Review*. August 10, 1026. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/438829/donald-trump-social-security-lies-lies-lies>.

²⁰ New York Times Editorial Board. "Republicans Hold on to a Myth to Hold on to Power." *New York Times*, February 11, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/11/opinion/republicans-hold-on-to-a-myth-to-hold-on-to-power.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FVoter%20Registration%20and%20Requirements&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection

²¹ Berman, Ari. Wisconsin Is Systematically Failing to Provide the Photo IDs Required to Vote in November. *The Nation*. September 29, 2016 <https://www.thenation.com/article/wisconsin-is-systematically-failing-to-provide-the-photo-ids-required-to-vote-in-november/>; Murphy, B. "Wisconsin's "epidemic" of voter suppression: Trump won by 27,000 votes, and 300,000 registered voters lacked the proper credentials." *Isthmus*, November 17, 1026.