

# [***Book Review: Scholars analyze extremist white supremacy’s grip on U.S. politics and culture***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B43-31F1-JC5B-G2V2-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

January 16, 2024 Tuesday 7:14 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

**Section:** DOMESTIC NEWS; ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

**Length:** 843 words

**Byline:** JASON DEAREN, Associated Press

**Body**

Amid threats to elections officials, disinformation about the security of U.S. voting systems and ongoing fallout from [*the Jan. 6 insurrection,*](https://apnews.com/article/capitol-riot-jan-6-criminal-cases-anniversary-bf436efe760751b1356f937e55bedaa5) scientists who study social movements have a lot to teach us about how we got here.

In “Out of Hiding: Extremist White Supremacy and How It Can Be Stopped,” three sociologists who have spent their careers studying racist movements in the U.S. detail how extremist white supremacist ideas, “once tucked away in society’s corners,” became a mainstream and significant threat to democracy.

Drawing on their decades of expertise and field research, sociologists Kathleen M. Blee, Robert Futrell and Pete Simi connect the dots from the ideas and customs of the extremist white supremacist movement they’ve tracked directly to the disinformation-fueled rage of the Capitol insurrectionists.

While domestic terrorism by racist extremists has long been a threat to U.S. stability, the authors identify three critical moments in recent history that are key to our current moment. These are the moments, they argue, when federal law enforcement, political and cultural leaders could have impaired extremist white supremacists’ cultural and political momentum. This failure to act forcefully allowed for the movement to gain power.

“The Republican Party is more deeply connected to racial extremism than any major party since the Ku Klux Klan and other segregationists infected the 1948 ‘Dixiecrat’ Democratic Party,” the authors write. “Racist ideas and symbols, once tucked away in society’s corners, are now widely circulated across digital landscapes and political discourse.”

The first of these critical moments was the violent backlash to the 2008 election of the nation’s first Black president, [*Barack Obama.*](https://apnews.com/hub/barack-obama) The book shows how Obama’s election energized extremist white supremacists, who organized in new ways and launched successful violent attacks like the [*2012 shooting of a Sikh temple in Wisconsin*](https://apnews.com/general-domestic-news-general-news-ae9ba88d049a43ab99980619af236c0c) and the murders of [*Black churchgoers in South Carolina.*](https://apnews.com/general-news-66e8f575f29b4499940129ccf6b8fe66) The movement, using emerging internet platforms and social media, rebranded its racial hatred under the banner of the “alt-right” and “white nationalism.” It drew younger people and some who may have previously been unlikely to affiliate publicly with more traditional hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan or neo-Nazi skinheads.

The second key moment successfully merged this growing, disparate racist movement at the [*Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.*](https://apnews.com/article/crime-lawsuits-race-and-ethnicity-virginia-charlottesville-f6f2e0b337497f9dada75363e25d4a15#:~:text=(AP)%20%E2%80%94%20White%20nationalists%20%E2%80%9C,the%20country's%20most%20well%2Dknown) Despite arrests for violent beatings and the murder of an anti-racist protester by extremist white supremacists, the movement did not face strong government opposition, and was even supported in statements by Donald Trump.

The Jan. 6 insurrection, the third moment, was the result of this new, coalesced movement that was embraced by the then-president – this only four years after the clear warnings of Charlottesville that the FBI and other agencies failed to address with the seriousness they deserved.

“Out of Hiding” reads like an academic study, which it is, but is gripping nonetheless because of these sociologists’ decades in the field studying extremist white supremacist movements. The authors say that the Department of Homeland Security, and some other scholars, have resisted the designation of Jan. 6 as an extremist white supremacist uprising. Yet, they add, “efforts to distinguish ordinary from extreme at J6 missed the underlying constellation that squarely placed that event within the long history of white supremacist extremism in this country.”

Because of this historical context, the authors caution that to view this racial extremism simply by flavor-of-the-month groups like the Proud Boys or Atomwaffen is a mistake. “As history shows, extreme white supremacist culture resonates over time as people seek scapegoats to explain threats they perceive to their power and privileges, or to explain their failings.”

Trump and partisan news outlets like Fox News have exploited this racial resentment for political power, the authors write. As the nation gears up for the 2024 presidential election, “Out of Hiding” provides a clear picture for how the nation’s polarization got to this point, and offers some ideas for what to do about it.

But, there is no panacea. The Biden administration’s National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, launched in the wake of the Jan. 6 insurrection, is lauded as a start, but likely too little, too late. In the end, what will combat racial polarization is a mixture of individual action, use of current laws that are rarely invoked to prosecute domestic terrorists, and evidence-driven programs of deradicalization, some of which are finding success in European countries like Denmark and Germany.

“We need to stop telling ourselves and each other fictions about our present and future and replace false optimism with urgency and sober assessment,” the authors warn. “Only then can we act in ways that directly confront rather than avoid the extremist realities that we face.”

\_\_\_

More AP book reviews: [*https://apnews.com/hub/book-reviews*](https://apnews.com/hub/book-reviews)

**Load-Date:** January 16, 2024

**End of Document**