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American Nazis riding high during Trump era

Reelection ushers in new wave of far-right activists

Aram Roston
REUTERS

HOCHATOWN, OK – Wearing cargo shorts, flip-flops and a baseball cap shading his eyes from the sun, Dalton Henry Stout blends in easily in rural America.

Except for the insignia on his hat. It bears the skull and crossbones of the infamous “Death’s Head” SS units that oversaw Nazi Germany’s concentration camps – and the initials “AFN,” short for Aryan Freedom Network, the neo-Nazi group Stout leads with his partner.

From a modest ranch house in Texas, the couple oversee a network they say has been turbocharged by President Donald Trump’s return to the White House. They point to Trump’s rhetoric – his attacks on diversity initiatives, his hard-line stance on immigration and his invocation of “Western values” – as driving a surge in interest and recruitment.

Trump “awakened a lot of people to the issues we’ve been raising for years,” Stout told Reuters. “He’s the best thing that’s happened to us.”

While the Aryan Freedom Network and other neo-Nazi groups remain on the outermost edges of American politics, broadly regarded as toxic by conservatives and mainstream America, they are increasingly at the center of far-right public demonstrations and acts of violence, according to interviews with a dozen members of extremist groups, nine experts on political extremism and a review of data on far-right violence.

Several trends have converged since Trump’s reelection, Reuters found. Trump’s rhetoric has galvanized a new wave of far-right activists, fueling growth in White supremacist ranks. Trump’s pardons of Jan. 6, 2021, rioters and a shift in federal law enforcement’s focus toward immigration have also led many on the far right to believe that federal investigations into White nationalists are no longer a priority.

And the boundaries of the far right itself are shifting. Ideas once confined to fringe groups like the Proud Boys – who helped lead the Jan. 6 siege – are now more visible in Republican politics, from election denialism to rhetoric portraying immigrants as “invaders.” Trump’s public support and pardons for far-right figures helped normalize those views, the researchers said. As the MAGA movement has come to define the party’s identity, the line separating the far right from mainstream conservatism has grown

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Drivers tear up sand course at Jeep Fest

Photos: People drive offroad on the Jeep Fest sand course on the beach on Aug. 22 in Ocean City, Maryland.
LAUREN ROBERTS/SALISBURY DAILY TIMES



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