



## “Today it’s Chauvin, Tomorrow it’ll be Another White Man”: Far-Right Reactions to the Conviction of Derek Chauvin

ICSR Insight by Research Fellows Hannah Rose and Blyth Crawford

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Content warning: this piece quotes directly from extremist content shared on social media and as such includes edited antisemitic and racist language.

On 20 April 2021, as the judge read out guilty verdicts on three charges against former police officer, Derek Chauvin, for the murder of George Floyd, extreme right-wing online communities were already mobilising, offering conspiracy theories and framing the events through their existing worldviews. Extreme right online communities are spreading white supremacist and anti-black narratives, promoting the alleged corruption of liberal democratic systems and calling for violent action to protect white America.

This brief analysis will explore some of the initial reactions to Chauvin’s sentence from online far-right communities - predominantly those in the UK and US. Whilst reactions were not uniform, and some communities did not contest the verdict, various extreme actors used the events as a springboard for more insidious and violent rhetoric.



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### A ‘Leftist Agenda’

Some far-right circles have constructed theories in attempts to prove the guilty verdict wrong, using figures quoted during Chauvin’s trial relating to Floyd’s blood oxygen level to allege that he “didn’t die from lack of breathing”, and that instead “he died [of a drug] overdose”. These theories have resulted in him being branded “Fentanyl Floyd” by some users. In doing so, those in the far-right sphere have argued that Chauvin was not convicted due to evidence against him, but as part of a wider conspiratorial narrative, or at the hands of a corrupt system.

To some, Chauvin’s conviction has been regarded as confirmation that the legal system is fundamentally corrupt and biased towards the political left. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which was reignited in the US and globally following Floyd’s murder, has been [a flashpoint](#) for much of the far right throughout 2020. A common narrative, espoused by many on the far right, is that BLM marches were an illegitimate excuse for violence and looting, rather than acts of political protest, and that they have been treated with unfair leniency by media, politicians and law enforcement who are pressured and controlled by the political left. Within this context, the verdict of Chauvin’s trial is seen as confirmation that the legal system is lenient on the left and unfairly harsh on the right.

For example, in reaction to the verdict, the Proud Boys stated on their Telegram channel that it was effectively impossible for Chauvin to have been found guilty because the jury would have been “doxxed” by “the mob” if they had declared him to be innocent. The post suggests that the political system



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is effectively controlled by the political left through an agenda of intimidation. In a second channel also affiliated with the Proud Boys which generally hosts more extreme content and has openly praised Adolf Hitler, users compared Floyd’s murder with the killing of Ashli Babbitt – a woman fatally shot by a Capitol police officer during the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection. One post argued that Babbitt was a “hero”, whereas Floyd was a “degenerate criminal who got what he deserved”, and that Chauvin’s conviction proved there was a “two tiered justice system”. The post appears to imply that killing white people is tolerated by society, whereas killing non-white people is not.

Far-right communities on Telegram blamed mainstream conservatives for bending to perceived leftist demands, calling for conservatives to “be pushed out of the way”, and blaming them for putting up “zero fight against the narrative”. Users concluded that the far right “have no choice but to build our own [movement] or we will be physically exterminated”, thereby calling for a shift in organising from within the conservative movement to outside it.

### **From Anti-Left to Anti-White**

In extreme far-right circles, this anti-left narrative devolves from dog whistle to explicit racism, framing the political system as explicitly anti-white. Perhaps the most salient narrative among far-right communities is that Chauvin’s guilty verdict is evidence of white persecution and an institutionalised anti-white agenda. On one far-right Telegram channel, a user commented that “the black man officially holds the whip over the white man”, and another reacted that “today it’s Chauvin, tomorrow it’ll be another white



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man”. Various channels agreed that the verdict was “an abortion of justice that cannot be accepted by white people”, mobilising followers towards action in reaction to perceived injustice. One user noted: “the message being sent to the citizens of the country is that if a black [person] overdoses on drugs and you try to arrest him, you are guilty of causing that death”.

By extension, Great Replacement narratives, which posit that white people are being replaced by waves of immigration, propped up by the alleged complicity of liberal democratic governments, are also prominent. To this end, a post made to the Proud Boys’ second channel reads: “the entire BLM movement and anti fascist movement pretends to give a fuck about black people but that’s merely a front for their anti white hatred...they want us dead and replaced”. This narrative poses a significant security threat given its centrality to the mass murder of 51 Muslim individuals in the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings, and subsequent attacks inspired by the terrorist, Brenton Tarrant’s, manifesto “The Great Replacement”. Indeed, on one far-right forum hosted on the Dark Web, a poster argued that the verdict of Chauvin’s trial “vindicated” Tarrant, who argued in his manifesto that white people were unfairly persecuted in modern society.

At the centre of the perceived conspiracy against white people are anti-Jewish narratives. Overarching Great Replacement conspiracy messaging concluded that “the Jewish left is going to push and push and push and subvert and destroy and upend our norms, culture, values, rule of law and civilization” as “that’s what enemies do”. Telegram users commented that, given that “blacks have no agency in any of it” as “in a sane world they’d just be a problem to be solved”, “it’s all thanks to Jews and spineless white



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traitors”. Jewish people are seen to control the police as “expendable pawn[s]”, with one antisemitic 4Chan post reading: “k\*\*\*s controlled the entire thing, the game was rigged from the start”. These posts show that antisemitism remains extremely salient within the online extreme right, and Jewish people are often framed as controlling world events with the overarching aim of extermination the white race, thereby making antisemitism integral to anti-black narratives.

### **The Police Should Resign**

As a result of this aforementioned perceived injustice within the legal system, another narrative which has gained prevalence within far-right circles following the trial is that the verdict should be a catalyst for a mass exodus of police officers. On 4chan’s /pol/ board, for example, in the hours following the verdict, one post read “all police officers should resign immediately. It’s too risky”, while another speculated that many officers would quit the force in the wake of the verdict, and that the job inherently came with the risk of going to prison for life. Similarly, a post on the Proud Boys’ second channel reads: “Thousands of cops will quit in fear of being in the same situation due to it being impossible to police black neighbourhoods”.

These posts frame violence and killing civilians as a necessary part of being a police officer, particularly when directed against black people – who are thus framed as more dangerous than whites. Chauvin’s conviction is therefore framed as unfair as he was ‘just doing his job’. The implication, therefore, is that in the current political climate where white people and the



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political right are unfairly persecuted, it is impossible to be a police officer as killing black and African American people – perceived as a necessary part of the job – will lead to a conviction, and thus police officers must resign as they are unable to fulfil their duties. This reaction therefore is a further extension of the far-right’s notion that they are being unfairly persecuted in modern society.

### **Accelerationism and Incitement to Violence**

Finally, in some far-right circles, users have used Chauvin’s conviction to fuel narratives of accelerationism. In brief, accelerationism posits that societal chaos and disorder should be intensified to bring about collapse in order to rebuild a new, utopian civilisation. This worldview is aptly summarised in one Telegram post to a far-right channel where a user frames the verdict as an event which will bring more supporters to the far right, saying “America needs to lose so we can win. Embrace it. We can build a nation later”. The post indicates that Chauvin’s conviction will increase political tension within society, thereby hastening its eventual collapse, from which point the far right can take power. Similarly, on 4chan one poster suggested that, as a result of the trial, fellow users should contribute to police abolitionist campaigns as a way to encourage more crime and violence on the streets, leading to the collapse of society. These posts are just one indication of the far-right’s ability to capitalise on current events, utilising them to further their existing narratives, no matter how antithetical to their cause these events may appear.

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Beyond accelerationist narratives, some online communities have seen Chauvin’s verdict as a turning point away from the democratic system and towards violence. One 4chan user stated that the verdict is “the final nail in the coffin, vote doesnt [sic] matter, courts are rigged, media is completely censored. There is only one path to salvation and it doesnt [sic] involve being peaceful”. There is a palpable sentiment of despair at the current system and a demand to organise and take action through other means, given the perception that the legal system is now proven to be untrustworthy. An anonymous 4chan user posted that they felt “doomed to sit and stew in misery as the world just rots away”, and “utterly discarded and without hope in the future.” The interpretation that there is no way that perceived societal ills can be corrected within the current political system is particularly concerning, as it frames violence as being the only reasonable response.

## Conclusions

As has been demonstrated, Derek Chauvin’s guilty verdict is already being capitalised upon by far-right online communities to promote extreme ideologies, further radicalise users, and justify calls for violence. By framing current events using existing white nationalist narratives, online communities have further pushed distrust in democratic institutions, painting a picture that there is no viable political solution, and thereby promoting accelerationism and framing violent extra-legal action as necessary. As has been shown here, these far-right communities are reactionary to current events, and as

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the BLM movement continues to gain momentum, narratives surrounding it will continue to be twisted and integrated into anti-BLM and white supremacist messaging.

Threat levels of violent extremism will need to be continually reassessed by law enforcement in line with key moments in the BLM social movement. Notably, with the upcoming trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, accused of shooting and killing two people during unrest in Kenosha, online extreme right communities are likely to react with equal fervour. This has already been noted by such communities, who are “guessing it’ll go the very same way”, and may already be preparing to violently mobilise. With such conspiratorial focus on black and Jewish people, specific threat vectors against these communities will need to be consistently monitored and tackled.