

In the case of the Buffalo tragedy, is Fox News AWOL? And why?

Shooting? What shooting?

You mean the [mass shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo Saturday](#) that left 10 people dead, and three injured? The one where 11 of the 13 victims were African American? The one where the killer posted a manifesto citing the "great replacement theory" as his motivation? The one being investigated as an act of domestic terrorism? *That* shooting?

We watched Fox News for an hour and a half Sunday morning, from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m., curious to hear their take on this horrific event. Surely there would be something — in the inimitable Fox style. Perhaps an expert saying we shouldn't rush to judgment and call it a hate crime. Or that "woke" liberals were seizing on the event as an opportunity to take away your Second Amendment rights.

We waited and waited.

There was one reference, somewhere between 9:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. A shooting in Buffalo had occurred, Fox told its viewers, and people were dead. But no elaboration, no commentary, no on-the-scene interviews. Perhaps 15 seconds, all told.

Among the topics that *were* deemed important enough to merit air time: the baby formula shortage, Biden's "two impeachable offenses," the criminal case against a Clinton-aligned lawyer, Michael Sussmann, the Steele dossier — remember the Steele dossier? — and something about chickens in Times Square.

Fox News has the right to its own agenda, just as MSNBC or CNN or CBS has the right to theirs. Everyone spins in their own way. Everyone orders the news based on their conception of what *is* news.

However, the silence surrounding the Buffalo tragedy, on Fox's Sunday morning cavalcade, is telling.

It is an absence, you might say, that speaks louder than words.

All in writing

It so happens that the alleged killer, Payton S. Gendron of Conklin, New York, left a [manifesto](#).

If his motivation wasn't clear enough by his choice of a supermarket in a Black community, his writing the N-word on his rifle, and live-streaming the attack on Twitch so that like-minded folks could have front row seats to the massacre, he also left a 180-page online manifesto, now being examined by law enforcement.

In it, he apparently bemoans "white genocide" in America, spouts racist and anti-Semitic language, and appeals to "those that wish for a future for white children and the existence of our people."

"The Great Replacement Theory" has been a favorite talking point of Fox News superstar Tucker Carlson for several years now.

It's a liberal plot, "to change the racial mix of the country," [Carlson told viewers on Sept. 22, 2021](#). "To reduce the political power of people whose ancestors lived here, and dramatically increase the proportion of Americans arrived from the third world... In political terms, this is called the policy of Great Replacement, the replacement of legacy Americans with more obedient people from far-away countries."

Other Fox News hosts, including Laura Ingraham, have also [flirted with this idea](#).

There are any number of sane responses to this: from pointing out that non-white people have been part of this country exactly as long as Northern Europeans — African Americans are "legacy Americans" if anyone is — and that, with the exception of Indigenous peoples, literally everyone in this country is the descendent of an immigrant culture.

Or you could point out that America is a country built, not on a race or a religion, but on a set of ideas — enumerated in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. And finally — to put it bluntly — that white racial purity is the fixation of a deranged mind.

The Great Replacement Theory has been hovering in the background of several ugly events in recent years, including the 2017 Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville ("Jews will not replace us!") and the 2019 mosque shootings at Christchurch New Zealand, in which 51 people were gunned down by a fanatic who was obsessed with "white genocide."

The term "Great Replacement" is, as Carlson modestly notes, not his own. It was coined by a French white nationalist, Renaud Camus, in a 2011 book "Le Grand Remplacement" (his specific target was French Muslims), but the idea is an old favorite in America.

An old idea

The dread of "miscegenation," a favorite hobbyhorse of Klansmen, Nazis, and like-minded people, had everything to do with the fear of being "replaced" or racially "diluted."

"A White America or a mongrel America — you must take your choice!" warned Mississippi senator Theodore Bilbo in 1947.

"Have you read 'The Rise of the Colored Empires' by this man Goddard?" asks Tom Buchanan, the wealthy oaf in "The Great Gatsby," published in 1925.

"The idea is that if we don't look out the white race will be — will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved."

To which even the very privileged white people at Tom's tea table roll their eyes.

The actual book was called "The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy," a big 1920 bestseller by Lothrop Stoddard, and Tom sums it up pretty accurately. The Great Replacement Theory isn't new.

But even if Tucker Carlson can't be blamed for concocting the idea — and even if the Fox morning anchors can't be blamed for the stuff Carlson says in the evening — doesn't the network as a whole bear some responsibility for spreading the poison that people like the Buffalo shooter so eagerly lapped up?

At best, call them careless.

"They were careless people," says Nick, "Gatsby's" narrator, talking about the way Daisy and her husband Tom — spouting harebrained racial theories is just one of his bad choices — casually create disaster without thinking about, or taking responsibility for, the result.

"They smashed up things and creatures and then retreated... and let other people clean up the mess they had made."

No wonder Fox wants to change the subject.