

For those wanting more articles and information about Canada's racism, here is an older article. It covers way more people than I know – but you probably recognize more of the politicians than I do.

Please pass on more sources to me so I can share them. And if you have stories – good or negative ones – they help us understand the complexities of race that so often expand into economics, fears, immigration, politics, and on and on, including journalism.

And, I'm assuming everyone is keeping up with current news, so I don't look for recent articles and information, unless it offers a very different insight than the news tends to focus on. Plus, looking back in time as this article does, can offer us a broader perspective than the news we tend to get caught up in. Enjoy and reflect!

The moral cowardice of Canadian media is leaving racism unchallenged

Andray Domise: Our cancerous political climate, and all the attendant bigotry that arrived with it, is what happens when the media does nothing.

By Andray Domise March 28, 2019 Macleans Magazine

For more than a week, ever since a heavily armed white man charged into the Masjid Al Noor and opened fire on worshippers, I've been heavily occupied with thoughts of cowardice. That of the shooter, of course, but also my own. In fact, cowardice is the reason I've been putting off the writing of this column.

Let me explain.

A few weeks ago, Edmonton-based writer and educator Minister Faust asked if I would consider writing about the populist movement coalescing in Alberta, known as the Yellow Vests. I gave it some thought, but decided it was too niche of an issue to pitch my editor. I've written about the ideological capture of populist movements by hate groups before, of course. But I rationalized the Yellow Vests as an astroturfed campaign by oil interests which would, much like America's Tea Party, amount to a brief and self-annihilating costume party for aggrieved white xenophobes.

After the shooting, I exchanged messages with Bashir Mohamed, another Edmonton-based writer, regarding the tendency of Alberta politicians to be photographed or associated with white nationalists. They did so without the prospect of being shamed into resignation by Canadian media. Mohamed was interested in writing a column specifically calling out Kerry Diotte, Member of Parliament for Edmonton Griesbach, and I recommended he broaden the scope to include other politicians, lest the pitch come off as a vendetta column and not cogent political analysis.

In both of these instances, and other conversations I've had with writers of colour lately, I did what I promised myself I would never do as a Black writer with a platform, which was to play the role of gatekeeper. I told myself that I was looking for angles that could find a foot through the door of the notoriously white-centred Canadian media. In reality, I had been cowed by hate groups and their enablers in my industry into silence, and I was unconsciously passing on the memo to others.

In January, after I [wrote a column asserting the MAGA hat is a symbol of hate](#), a deluge of racist emails poured into my inbox. Normally I expect hate mail whenever I write about right-wing white populism, but this was not long after I'd received death threats (that, strangely enough, stemmed from another [article I'd written years ago](#)), so something about this iteration of being called a “subhuman,” a “savage,” and a “n—ger piece of s—t” got under my skin. It was followed by a brigade of harassment spurred by a Rebel Media reporter (with his own [ties to white nationalism](#)), who took one of my tweets and turned it into a [streeter for Yellow Vest supporters in Sudbury](#).

I've spoken often with my fiancée, family members, and friends about prioritizing my family's safety over writing and community work. We've been recognized in public and approached, and while it's so far been in a friendly manner, the threats and hate mail I've received are never far from the imagination when a stranger comes up to us to say hello. The thing is, while my fiancée, children, and I are quite obviously Black (and therefore potential targets for hate crime), we're also Christians. Our racialization isn't further complicated by visible markers of religious affiliation—she doesn't wear a hijab, and I don't wear a topi cap. My beard grows free and styled according only to my own tastes. Nobody bats an eyelash when we say grace before meals when we dine out.

This isn't the case for Bashir and other members of the Somali community in Edmonton, a city which is quickly becoming a cancerous node in the spread of overt white supremacy throughout Canada. This also isn't the case [for someone like Ginella Massa](#), a visibly Muslim anchor for CityNews Toronto, who recently needed to ask security to escort her to her vehicle after a Peterborough-based neo-Nazi made a “hypothetical” open call for the killing of media figures and anti-racism organizations. It wasn't the case for the [Muslim family confronted by a drunk and belligerent white man](#) at Toronto's Harbourfront, who shouted slurs and told them to “get out of my province,” nor for a Muslim man [subjected to a “citizens arrest”](#) on the way out of a London-area Sobeys.

I've been occupied with cowardice because, in the wake of the most deadly shooting in New Zealand history, I have shrunk back from my responsibility as a journalist to swing the glare of public discourse towards hatemongers, as well as their enablers in media and government. This is something I profoundly regret.

But there's a different metric at work when it isn't your own safety, your family's, or that of your community consistently on the line. Too many of my white colleagues in journalism still seem to believe their profession and the assumed stance of objectivity places them at a distance from white supremacy.

This, to me, is a different tier of moral cowardice.

A week after Ginella Massa tweeted about the threat of white supremacist violence making it unsafe to leave her workplace without security, PEGIDA (a German-based anti-Muslim political movement) organized a march in downtown Toronto. A CityNews reporter assigned to cover the event, Pam Seattle, found herself confronted (and even followed) by anti-racist protesters to the march, who shouted her for “giving a platform to fascists.” [In response, Seattle tweeted](#) “I felt more threatened by them than any of the so called ‘dangerous violent racists.’ ”

The tweet was hastily deleted, probably wisely so. A cornerstone of white supremacist politics is the purported defence of the purity of white women from foreign savages, and PEGIDA supporters have been fairly busy promoting the falsehood that refugees from Africa and the Middle East are essentially roving gangs of rapists. According to PEGIDA's own philosophy, a white woman like Seattle is the

utmost protected class—of course they mean her no harm. The same cannot be said for nonwhites, including her own colleagues.

While Seattle may have had cause to feel unsafe in the moment she was followed by protesters, the fact is, she was covering the march of an organization whose founder, a man who calls refugees “cattle” and filth, was found guilty by a German court for inciting racial hatred. It was not only Seattle’s decision to attend and cover the rally from a rather slanted angle, **calling out the protesters’ lack of decorum**, but the choice of her news department to approve the segment, if not covering PEGIDA’s rally (and the counter-rally) to begin with.

In Alberta, the United Conservative Party continually finds itself dealing with members who espouse bigoted views (including the **recent resignation of Calgary-Mountain View candidate Caylan Ford** and **Calgary-South East candidate Eva Kiryakos**), or have **direct ties to white supremacist organizations**. For his part, Kenney himself **repeatedly reminds people** why his **reputation for homophobia was well-earned**. Yet Kenney and his party somehow continue to deliver press conferences and policy announcements without being pressured to answer how the party could possibly serve all Albertans when bigotry has so clearly infected its ranks.

The people behind the bylines and headlines in Alberta’s media class are, as with the rest of the country, very white. They carry with them the sensibilities that often insulate white supremacy, even if inadvertently (as with the *Calgary Herald* headline that **uncritically repeated Kiryakos’s claim** that she was the victim of a ‘smear’ campaign). That is, of course, when they aren’t outright mainstreaming white supremacist smear campaigns against refugees in European countries, as talk radio host and former Wildrose Party leader Danielle Smith **recently did during a segment on her program**. This is an endless source of frustration for the communities of colour in the province, and across Canada, as we are perpetually dragged back to the same naïve and uncomplicated conversations about racism, even as our communities **increasingly come under attack**.

When infamous white nationalist Faith Goldy carried her message into the Toronto mayoral election, and was photographed **not only with members of the Toronto Police Service**, but also the premier of Ontario, neither the leadership of the Toronto Police nor the premier offered an apology or rebuked Goldy directly. Instead, **Ford tweeted a condemnation** of “hate speech” and “anti-Semitism” should it happen to issue from Goldy “or anyone else.”

And that was that—Ford has more or less moved on from having anything to do with white nationalism (often due to his tendency to surround himself with sycophants of all colours). While his party continues its agenda of governance-by-spite, and while he **heralded the arrival** of the Yellow Vests’ so-called “convoy” to Ontario, Premier Ford is able to show his face in public without the prospect of being questioned by Queen’s Park reporters just why racism seems to follow him around like a noxious cloud.

Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer has also surrendered political principles for the bigot’s vote, presiding over a party willing to virtue-signal anti-immigrant sentiment to supporters whose “Canada First” mantra places them firmly in our country’s white nationalist tradition. There was the empty grandstanding around and misrepresentation of the UN Migration Pact, often reported by media as if the pact were legitimate cause for sovereign concern, **with only a nod to the fact that the pact is non-binding**. There was also an **infamous tweet sent out by the party**, meant to stoke further fear and paranoia over asylum-seekers crossing into Canada from the U.S., that just so happened to echo this country’s **history of migration pessimism** where Black refugees are involved.

Despite this abysmal record, Scheer is given leave to credibly present the Conservatives as a viable governing party that will act in all Canadians' interests, while retaining the services of staffers such as Hamish Marshall (a former corporate director at Rebel Media). * Scheer doesn't acknowledge the problem of white nationalism in Canada, or within the party ranks, because there is no media pressure on him to do so. Not even when he **speaks at the same Ottawa rally** promoted and attended by far-right hate groups. That's simply not the way things are done in this country.

Scheer's tolerance for subordinates blowing the dog's whistle is not limited to his office, but has trickled down to regional MPs such as Kerry Diotte, himself a former journalist. In 2017, Diotte **tweeted a picture of himself with Faith Goldy**, lauding her efforts to "Make the Media Great Again." The tweet remains on Diotte's Twitter timeline. When this was called out by Bashir Mohamed as an endorsement of racism, Diotte's lawyers **sent him a letter threatening legal action**. Additionally, Diotte filed a lawsuit against *The Gateway*, a student newspaper at the University of Alberta, which is, to date, the only media organization to pull together his history of dog-whistle politics (which includes **tweeting a picture** of a "Liberal Buzz Word Bingo card," including the words "indigenous" and "Syrians," for which he later apologized).

In a private conversation with a white journalism colleague, I discussed Diotte's litigiousness against his critics, as well as the picture he took with Goldy. That colleague, as with others, could not be convinced that Diotte's picture was a problem, as Goldy's full-bore descent into racism apparently didn't take place before **her trip in 2017** to Charlottesville, Virginia*. Even though her Rebel segments, **designed to stoke white paranoia** against nonwhite immigrant populations, long preceded that.

It seems that, no matter the amount of evidence pointing towards a problem with white nationalism in our political ranks, white journalists will quickly get on code to inform those of us (who are the most likely targets of white supremacist violence) where the line is to be drawn in naming that problem. In fact, it seems the only figure in Canadian politics who is consistently problematized as entertaining white nationalist sentiment is Maxime Bernier. And this is a man who is, for the most part, dismissed as a buffoonish and aggrieved crank **with no viable base outside of the alt-right**.

Again and again this happens in Canada, where political figures and movements flirt openly with the **very same white nationalist figures and rhetoric** that have been **cited by multiple anti-racism organizations** as catalysts for the surge in hate crimes and mass violence in recent years. But they are only held to account by journalists for as long as their latest faux-pas can carry a headline. After the news cycle has passed, we're back to square one. This interminable loop not only puts the onus of writing and talking about this problem on journalists of colour, but exposes us and our communities to the opprobrium, and too often the violence, that is increasingly being legitimized under the shifting auspices of normal political dialogue and free speech in this country.

I may have been a coward in failing to speak up when my brothers in Edmonton asked me to say something, or help them find a platform to say something themselves. At the same time, I have thousands of fellow travellers in Canadian media who are not only insulated from white nationalist violence by dint of their political views, but by the fact their whiteness too often qualifies them as Canadian, without question.

Old stock, if you will.

There should, therefore, be thousands of helping hands willing to break this media cycle on white nationalism. But there are hardly any to be found. Instead, we're faced with a wall of white silence, as

if the wave of hate crimes and terrorism in recent years hasn't been aided by the bigoted rhetoric from acquaintances and even family members they've muted in group chats.

Already, **we are moving towards the typical both-sides conversation** that swings the glare away from white supremacists, and back towards establishing terror-inducing violence as the sole province of people of colour. The expressions of horror and sympathy for the victims of the shooting in Christchurch are quickly fading; the platitudes for peace and tolerance were forgotten almost immediately. As always happens with this sort of thing, enough temporal distance from a terrorist incident causes the incandescent urgency of confronting white supremacist violence to gutter out.

The question I would pose to my professional colleagues, then, is this: knowing that your co-workers, your peers, and people you claim to be your friends are facing danger in our homes, in the streets, and in our places of worship, what will it take for you to do something?

Because our cancerous political climate, and all of the attendant bigotry that arrived with it, is what happens when you do nothing.

CORRECTION, March 29, 2019: A previous version of this story located Charlottesville in South Carolina. It is, in fact, in Virginia.