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NATION WORLD

# In Buffalo, Biden condemns racism, mourns new victims

In a speech at a nearby community center, Biden said the nation must reject the racist "replacement theory" believed to be central to the suspect's motive.

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Published: 4:48 AM CDT May 17, 2022

Updated: 12:25 PM CDT May 17, 2022

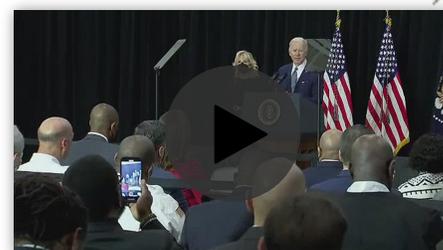


WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Tuesday condemned the poison of white supremacy and said the nation must “reject the lie” of the racist “replacement theory” [espoused by the shooter who killed 10 Black people in Buffalo](#).

Speaking to victims' families, local officials and first responders, Biden said America's diversity is its strength and the nation must not be distorted by a “hateful minority.”

“In America, evil will not win, I promise you,” Biden said. “Hate will not prevail, white supremacy will not have the last word.”

Biden spoke after he and first lady Jill Biden paid their respects at a makeshift memorial of blossoms, candles and messages of condolence outside the Tops supermarket, where on Saturday a young man armed with an assault rifle targeted Black people in the deadliest racist attack in the U.S. since Biden took office.



## President Biden speaks in Buffalo days after mass shooting at Tops Market



In Buffalo, the president was confronting anew the forces of hatred he frequently says called him back to seek the White House.

“Jill and I have come to stand with you, and to the families, we have come to grieve with you,” Biden said. He added: “Now’s the time for people of all races, from every background, to speak up as a majority and American and reject white supremacy.”

Replacement theory is a racist ideology, which has moved from white nationalist circles to mainstream, that alleges white people and their influence are being intentionally “replaced” by people of color.

“It’s important for him to show up for the families and the community and express his condolences,” said Derrick Johnson, the president of the NAACP. “But we’re more concerned with preventing this from happening in the future.”

It’s unclear how Biden will try to do that. Proposals for new gun restrictions have routinely been blocked by Republicans, and racist rhetoric espoused on the fringes of the nation’s politics has only grown louder.

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Asked about gun legislation, Biden said at the airport, “It’s going to be very difficult. ... I’m not going to give up trying.”

Biden’s condemnation of white supremacy is a message he has delivered several times since he became the first president to specifically address it in an inaugural speech, calling it “domestic terrorism that we must confront.” However, such beliefs remain an entrenched threat at a time when his administration has been focused on addressing the pandemic, inflation and the war in Ukraine.

In his remarks Tuesday, Biden paid tribute to each of the 10 people who lost their lives, describing them as model citizens, beacons of their community and deeply committed to family.

Three more people were wounded. Nearly all the victims were Black, including all of those who died.



The shooter's hateful writings echoed those of the white supremacists who marched with torches in 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, a scene that Biden said inspired [his decision to run](#) against President Donald Trump in 2020 and that drove him to join what he calls the "battle for the soul of America."

Payton Gendron, 18, was arrested at the supermarket and charged with murder. He has pleaded not guilty.

Before the shooting, Gendron is reported to have posted online a screed overflowing with racism and antisemitism. The writer of the document described himself as a supporter of Dylann Roof, who killed nine Black parishioners at a church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015, and Brenton Tarrant, who targeted mosques in New Zealand in 2019.

Investigators are looking at Gendron's connection to what's known as the "[great replacement](#)" theory, which baselessly claims white people are being intentionally overrun by other races through immigration or higher birth rates.

"I condemn those who spread the lie for power, political gain and for profit," Biden said, stopping short of naming those he believes responsible for perpetuating it.

The claims are often interwoven with antisemitism, with Jews identified as the culprits. During the 2017 "Unite the Right" march in Charlottesville, the white supremacists chanted "Jews will not replace us."

"These actions we've seen, these hate-filled attacks, represent the views of a hateful minority," Biden said.

"We have to refuse to live in a country where black people going about a weekly grocery shopping can be gunned down by weapons of war deployed in a racist cause," he added. "We have to refuse live in a country where fear and lies are packaged for power and for profit."

In the years since Charlottesville, replacement theory has moved from the online fringe to mainstream right-wing politics. A third of U.S. adults believe there is "a group of people in this country who are trying to replace native-born Americans with immigrants who agree with their political views," according to a poll conducted in December by The Associated Press and the NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Tucker Carlson, the prominent Fox News host, accuses Democrats of orchestrating mass migration to consolidate their power.

"The country is being stolen from American citizens," he said Aug. 23, 2021. He repeated the same theme a month later, saying that "this policy is called the great replacement, the replacement of legacy Americans with more obedient people from faraway countries."

Carlson's show routinely receives the highest ratings in cable news, and he responded to the furor Monday night by accusing liberals of trying to silence their opponents.

"So because a mentally ill teenager murdered strangers, you cannot be allowed to express your political beliefs out loud," he said.

His commentary reflects how this conspiratorial view of immigration has spread through the Republican Party ahead of this year's midterm elections, which will determine control of Congress.

Facebook advertisements posted last year by the campaign committee of Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., said Democrats want a "PERMANENT ELECTION INSURRECTION" by granting amnesty to illegal immigrants. The plan would "overthrow our current electorate and create a permanent liberal majority in Washington."

Alex DeGrasse, a senior adviser to Stefanik's campaign, said Monday she "has never advocated for any racist position or made a racist statement." He criticized "sickening and false reporting" about her advertisements.



Stefanik is the third-ranking leader of the House Republican caucus, replacing Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., who angered the party with her denunciations of Trump after the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

Cheney, in a tweet on Monday, said the caucus' leadership "has enabled white nationalism, white supremacy, and anti-Semitism. History has taught us that what begins with words ends in far worse."

Replacement theory rhetoric has also rippled through Republican primary campaigns.

Although Biden has not spoken directly about replacement theory, his warnings about racism remain a fixture of his public speeches.

Three days before the Buffalo shooting, at a Democratic fundraiser in Chicago, Biden said, "I really do think we're still in the battle for the soul of America."

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Associated Press writer Karen Matthews in New York contributed to this report.

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