

Fox hosts and others spreading 'race theory' embraced by Buffalo suspect



Fox News hosts Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham.

By Paul Farhi
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Washington: The suspect in the killing of 10 people at a Buffalo supermarket allegedly wrote a document endorsing “great replacement theory,” a once-fringe racist idea that became a popular refrain among media figures such as Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham of Fox News and conservative writer Ann Coulter.

Before the shooting rampage that also left three wounded, the suspect, Payton Gendron, 18, allegedly posted a lengthy document invoking the idea that white Americans were at risk of being “replaced” by people of colour because of immigration and higher birthrates.

Gendron, who is white, allegedly indicated that he chose a neighbourhood with a large number of black residents for his alleged attack. In the document that Gendron is suspected to have written, he indicated that he was radicalised online. There’s no indication that he watched Carlson’s program.

The theory was once confined to far-right white extremists, who cast immigration as part of a plot by “elites” to take political and economic power away from white

people. It has gained broader circulation in recent years as a talking point among prominent conservative media figures.

Carlson, whose weeknight program is typically the most popular on Fox, has been an especially avid promoter of the thesis. He has mentioned variations on the idea in more than 400 episodes since 2016, according to a *New York Times* analysis of his program. In April of last year, he said on Fox that people from the “Third World” are immigrating to the United States “to replace the current electorate” and “dilute the political power of the people who live there” – language that essentially distills the replacement thesis.

He was more explicit in a video posted on Fox News’s YouTube account in September. Carlson said President Joe Biden was encouraging immigration “to change the racial mix of the country ... to reduce the political power of people whose ancestors lived here, and dramatically increase the proportion of Americans newly arrived from the Third World.”

White nationalists and racists have celebrated Carlson’s endorsement of an idea they have championed for years. At the same time, Carlson’s rhetoric prompted the Anti-Defamation League to call for his firing.

The organisation noted that racists have spouted the theory in perpetrating violent attacks, such as the killing of 51 people in mosques in New Zealand in 2019, and the killing of 23 mostly Hispanic shoppers in a Walmart in El Paso the same year.

Fox News had no immediate comment. After he was called out for promoting the theory in April 2021, Carlson said on his show: “I mean, everyone wants to make a racial issue out of it. Oh, you know, the white replacement theory? No, no, no. This is a voting right question.”

Other Fox hosts besides Carlson have picked up the theme, giving it a veneer of respectability, at least within the conservative media ecosystem.

Ingraham, another prime-time Fox host, told viewers in 2018 that Democrats “want to replace you, the American voters, with newly amnestied citizens and an ever-increasing number of chain migrants.” During a monologue on her program last year, she called immigration an “insurrection [that] seeks to overthrow everything we love about America by defaming it, silencing it, and even prosecuting it. This is an organised mob funded by billionaires, it’s supported by celebrities.”

Fox host Jeanine Pirro has also echoed the tenets of the “replacement” idea during an appearance on a syndicated radio program in 2019. She said liberals and Democrats were pursuing immigration policies that are “a plot to remake America, to replace American citizens with illegals who will vote for the Democrats.”



People march to the scene of a mass shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo.

The same themes have been echoed for years by such prominent conservative media figures as Coulter, Bill O'Reilly and the late Rush Limbaugh.

O'Reilly, who formerly occupied Carlson's spot on Fox, told Fox's Sean Hannity on his radio show in 2020 that undocumented immigration would cause "traditional America to vanish." Limbaugh said in 2018 that immigration from Central America was intended to "dilute and eventually eliminate or erase what is known as the distinct or unique American culture. ... This is why people call this an invasion."

Charlie Kirk, a conservative pundit who heads Turning Point USA and sometimes appears as a guest on Carlson's program, defended Carlson's "replacement" advocacy last year. After playing a clip of Carlson's comments on Fox, Kirk commented: "Nothing he said there is controversial. It's factual and it's true." He later added that he was "so proud" of Carlson for promoting the theory.

Last month, Kirk tweeted: "There is an undeniable War on White People in The West."

Matt Walsh, a contributor to the *Daily Wire*, also tacitly endorsed the idea during a program he hosted last summer.

"So we're bringing in a flood of immigrants across the southern border, non-white," Walsh said in the video. "We're putting policies in place with the express purpose of having fewer white people in universities and positions of power. And we're celebrating the reduction in the white population. I mean, it sounds like [liberals]

want to replace white people. So this is replacement, is it not? And you're happy about it?"

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