

For the Common Good: Re-inscribing White Normalcy into the American Body Politic

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Nearly a century ago, Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color* articulated his growing concern that white world hegemony was in crisis: "If white civilization goes down, the white race is irretrievably ruined. It will be swamped by the triumphant colored races, who will obliterate the white man by elimination or absorption" (303). For 21st-century paleoconservatives, Barack Obama's successful two-term bid for the United States' presidency, the shifting racial demographics within the nation, and the expansion of civil rights for historically excluded groups demonstrate the "prophetic" nature of Stoddard's observations. In order to address the challenges posed by democratic liberalism and the resulting expansion of the public sphere, the 2016 GOP platform forwards political agendas that are extremist and reactionary: the wall along the border of the US and Mexico, the abolition of abortion, requiring public high schools to offer courses on the Bible, requiring legislators to use Judeo-Christianity as a guiding source, absolute protection of the right to bear arms, promotion of policies and practices that deny basic civil rights to the LGBT community. These cultural "hot spots" have galvanized disenchanted working-class whites who find voice through Donald Trump's vision of America, contrary to Fiorina's (2006) argument that the American people represent a "moderate, centrist, nuanced" body for whom no culture wars exist. This vision of America presented by the GOP platform and Donald Trump has at its roots an ideology of white racial normalcy and nationalism that emerges out of Southern Civil Religion, which values the conservative concepts of moral virtue and orderly society over liberalism, tolerance, and equality. Embedded within the GOP platform, Southern Civil Religion exists as a prescription for Good Society that protects whiteness as a form of social and cultural capital against the perceived onslaught of a pluralistic liberal democracy.