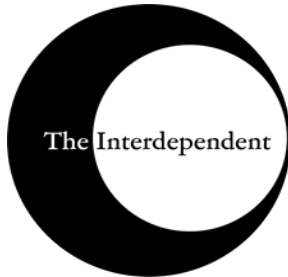


Ecofascism in the United States Political Discourse: Applications to the Southern Border



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Abstract

This article analyzes the evolution of Ecofascism, the ideology of preserving the environment at any cost, including oppressing certain groups, and the Great Replacement Theory (GRT), the belief that white people are losing power to immigrants, with current applications to the United States southern border. The foundation of these approaches traces back to Thomas Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* in the late 18th century. Significant ideas on limits to human population growth have been distorted for generations to support Ecofascist ideologies and violence against marginalized groups. This article discusses how these concepts are prevalent in current United States political discourse and social media, highlighting existing and real dangers that have led to violence in recent years. The primary case study focuses on El Paso. A three-pronged approach to combating Ecofascist ideologies is proposed. Disproving the myths of migration will remove the foundation of the GRT. Education will provide the tools necessary to assess online information critically, and climate optimism offers hope for the future and inspiration to continue fighting for a better future.

Keywords

Ecofascism; Climate; Misinformation; Overpopulation; Immigration; Border; El Paso; Malthusianism; Eugenics

Introduction

In the popular fictional Marvel Universe, Thanos is the ultimate villain, who seeks to create a perfect society by wiping out half of all life forms in the universe to avoid overcrowding and ensure sufficiency of resources. He has a specific philosophy that the problem with the universe is too much life, too many mouths to feed, and too much strain on a finite number of materials. By eliminating half of all living organisms in the universe, the remaining half will thrive and prosper since there will be plentiful resources. As will be illustrated in this article, Thanos is a neo-Malthusian savior, and his ideology exemplifies Ecofascism; the character embodies the classic fear espoused by Malthus and others that unchecked human population growth is a march toward destruction.

Thomas Malthus' Legacy

The ideologies of Ecofascism and the Great Replacement Theory (GRT) are not new; these ideas or their forebears have been around for generations. Ecofascism is an ideology that blames environmental destruction mainly on people of color and people of lower economic status and other marginalized groups including immigrants, justifying measures that target those groups. GRT is the belief that nonwhite immigrants are replacing white people through immigration and higher birth rates (Wilson and Flanagan 2022). The intellectual origins of these ideologies trace back to the late 18th century.

In 1798, Thomas Malthus published *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Malthus 1890). Malthus was not an Ecofascist, although his ideas are the foundations for these types of beliefs, and he is known as the father of overpopulation scaremongering (Molyneux 2020). He argues that human population growth will unavoidably surpass the

ability of Earth to supply enough resources for survival and that as population grows, there will be more competition for finite resources, resulting in poverty, famine, and disease. Since Malthus believed that these were inevitable consequences, he advocated for moral restraint, such as delaying marriage and abstinence. The central argument was that widespread poverty, and starvation would result from a rising human population when finite resources became too scarce to feed the people. Malthus' arguments laid the foundation for eugenics, the idea of improving the genetic quality of humans through selective breeding and murder, including with respect to climate and other environmental discussions (Shermer 2016). His claims were echoed in the late 1960s by Paul Ehrlich, a professor at Stanford, who predicted that “hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death” (Ehrlich 1968, 13). Malthusian fears, reinforced by Ehrlich's predictions, translated into radical policy mandates.

The fear of overpopulation has also led to campaigns to sterilize millions of women in the developing world and, in China, the one-child policy (Kane and Choi 1999). The assertion was that a smaller population would make it easier to solve environmental problems since fewer resources would be necessary for survival. This type of thinking leads to Ecofascism, which argues that some groups of people can be excluded to prevent poverty, misery, and the collapse of society. Currently, eight billion people live on the planet (Treisman and Riddle 2022) and the global population is estimated to increase to 10 billion by 2050 (Suzuki 2019). However, the Ecofascists are mistaken in that the problem does not lie with the number of individuals on Earth but with resource distribution systems and overconsumption (Strubenhoff 2015).

Climate Change

When resources become scarce or conditions are inhabitable, people may respond by moving. Climate change is causing more conflicts, droughts, and a lack of access to basic needs and human rights, which can lead people to want to migrate to another country or within the same country (Mach et al. 2019). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the warming of the Earth by greenhouse gasses will continue to cause long-term environmental changes that spur human migration. The impact will be catastrophic, from the displacement of people driven by rising sea levels, powerful storms, famine, and drought to the destruction of millions of acres resulting in billions of dollars in losses. The instability caused by the effects of climate change will be reframed into issues of radical nationalism and exclusion.

Populist, Ultraconservative, and Far-Right Sentiments

In the narrative of Ecofascism, the main agents of current environmental degradation, including disease and climate change, are certain parts of humanity. This can lead to genocidal language that Ecofascists take advantage of to further their goals. Sustaining the environment at any cost, even when at the cost of selected individuals, is the goal of Ecofascism, with the end justifying the means.

In response to immigration and globalization, there has been an increase in populist, ultraconservative, and far-right sentiments around the world (Rooduijn 2020; Santi Amantini 2022). The issues of income inequality and class conflict have been exacerbated by globalization, with some voters in the United States and the United Kingdom believing they have been left behind and are losing out (Silver et al. 2020), while the rich continue becoming richer and benefiting from the more globalized world (Moloney 2022). Their

beliefs incorporate anti-immigration and anti-government sentiment, climate denialism, anti-globalism, and extreme nationalism, which are some of the underlying ideas of Ecofascism and the Great Replacement Theory. In June 2022, the Southern Poverty Law Center and Tulchin Research published a poll analyzing the extent of extremist beliefs among the general population. It concluded that a plurality of Americans has a positive view of the changing demographics, including decreased whiteness, of the United States. However, 67% of respondents reported believing that demographic change is due to “liberal leaders actively trying to leverage political power by replacing more conservative white voters” (Miller 2022). The poll showed how mainstream the Great Replacement Theory is now among the public, with half of Republicans believing it to an extent (Bump 2022). It is increasingly popular due to social media, news organizations, and politicians using it for political gains (Bump 2021).

Countries worldwide are adopting hardline policies toward immigration and to handle the impact of climate change and the associated migration. For example, France is experiencing an increase in far-right sentiments with anti-Islamic rhetoric and violence (Lokmane 2022), and the National Assembly party claims a hardened border is an essential environmental policy (Mazoue 2019).

In Hungary, President János Áder called for significantly more effort in the fight against climate change through climate protection efforts, such as investments and cooperation with other countries, as an aggressive mechanism to limit migratory pressures in 2018 (Eldarov 2018). Combating climate change has been endorsed by premier scientific and policy bodies worldwide, but the link between refugees and climate change for hardliners, such as far-right conservatives, is focused on border security (Levitz 2019). In 2018,

President Áder signed a bill that criminalizes seeking asylum in Hungary and helping migrants and refugees (Kingsley 2018). At the same time, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told supporters that there is an existential battle for the survival of Hungary and Europe, and “[t]he countries that don’t stop immigration will be lost” (S. Walker 2018). Viktor Orbán, the past leader of Hungary, argued that the Western world is committing suicide by replacing European, Christian children with adults from other countries through immigration (Garamvolgyi and Borger 2022).

In Italy, Giorgia Meloni, the first female prime minister of Italy, formed the most right-wing government there since World War II in 2022 (Kirby 2022). Contributing factors to her victory were her anti-immigration stances and policies (Chotiner 2022).

Evolution of Ecofascism and the Great Replacement Theory

An early proponent of the theories of Ecofascism and the Great Replacement was Madison Grant, considered one of the founding fathers of Ecofascism (Tucker 2019). Born in the United States on November 19, 1865, he was surrounded by wealth and privilege. Grant soared as a socialite and an “influencer” equivalent of the time, joining all of the elite men's clubs of Manhattan (Spiro 2009). Other members included Calvin Coolidge, J.P. Morgan, Theodore Roosevelt Sr., members of Congress, and future presidents of the United States. Membership in these clubs allowed Madison to socialize with the most affluent and influential figures in the United States.

Spending most of his life in New York, Madison Grant witnessed the change occurring in his city with each new wave of immigration (Figure 1; Martin 2013). The growth in immigration in his eyes was not solely the problem, but was exacerbated by the

identity shift from northern and western Europeans to southern and eastern Europeans. He thought that the new immigrants were inferior to those of the Nordic race from Northern Europe, as discussed below in the context of his *The Passing of the Great Race*.

Being a member of elite gentlemen's clubs granted Grant access to powerful government figures. A good friend of Grant's was Teddy Roosevelt, founder of the hunting and conservation Boone and Crockett Club. Both were concerned about the possibility of "race suicide" and the problems associated with excessive immigration. The term "race suicide" signifies that stocks of newer immigrants are replacing and leading to the extinction of the older stock of immigrants (Thompson 1917). Madison Grant believed that allowing immigrants or "inferior stock" from southern and eastern European countries would destroy the nation's identity, and Nordic Americans would be committing "race suicide" (Alba et al. 2021). During this time, statisticians believed and warned that "inferior immigrant stock" was replacing Anglo-Saxons (C. A. Finnegan 2017). Early in the 20th century, New York City was home to over 3 million residents, and more than 40% of them had at least one foreign-born parent (Foner 2007; Lambert 2000). Grant felt that these immigrants did not appreciate his ancestors and how they built this country or the history of the United States. Through his studies, he understood that the fall of Rome was due to opening the empire to immigrants of "inferior stock" who did not appreciate nor understand the importance of the institutions of the past, and he feared it would happen to his country (Spiro 2009).

Grant was also a fierce campaigner across the country for eugenics. Indeed, twenty-eight states adopted eugenic sterilization laws by 1931. Although Grant might not have directly impacted the ruling, he was influential in Congress, advocating for passing laws across the country. Through his lobbying efforts, Congress enacted several laws in the United

States, such as the Immigration Act of 1924, which restricted immigration only to applicants with a college education, banned migrants from Mexico, and limited entry into the United States for people coming from Southern and Eastern European countries and Japan (History.com Editors 2009). It also implemented a 2% quota on immigrants from any nation of citizens already in the United States. During the debates on the Immigration Act of 1924, Senator Ellison Durant Smith of South Carolina used Grant's ideas to argue that restricting immigration would preserve American resources (Durant Smith 1924).

Additionally, Grant influenced the passage of coercive sterilization statutes in the majority of states and worked with southern white racists to ban miscegenation (Spiro 2009).

In 1916, Grant published *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, The Racial Basis of European History* (Grant 2017), one of the earliest examples of white replacement theory. Scientific racism is a significant theme of the book, filled with discriminatory and pseudoscientific ideas. In the preface, Henry Fairfield Osborn, a highly influential paleontologist and staunch eugenicist, reflected on the perceived greatest danger facing the American Republic at the time, his words clearly define the Great Replacement Theory, the idea of nonwhites replacing whites leading to the extinction of the white race (D. Jones 2022).

The main argument is that the Nordic race will become extinct, and the United States will cease to exist or become corrupt due to the growth and immigration of other races. According to Madison Grant, race is a biological category based on physical and genetic traits passed from generation to generation. He argues that there are three races: the Nordic, the Alpines, and the Mediterraneans, claiming that the superior race is the Nordic with their biological and intellectual characteristics. Madison Grant presents and expands on the Nordic

superiority theory, warning about the decline of the race and his generation's responsibility of saying what forms of life shall be preserved (Grant 2017).

Grant argues that the United States has always been a Nordic country and states: "When a country is invaded and conquered by a race speaking a foreign language, one of several things may happen, replacement of both population and language" (Grant 2017). Offering historical examples, he warns that this will happen to the United States: "There is great danger of a similar replacement of a higher by a lower type here in America" (Grant 2017).

In his book and United States current political discourse, many similarities in the style of thinking show the lasting influence of Grant, including fear of immigrants replacing him and other Anglo-Saxons. In terms of support for these arguments, anti-immigration sentiment rose at the start of the 20th century in the United States due to high unemployment following World War I, which contributed to ending strikes through immigrant labor, worsening working conditions, and lack of housing (Morris and Ash 2014). The high unemployment led to many Americans blaming immigrants for their job losses. Employers took advantage of immigrant labor through economic coercion by using them during strikes and exploited the differences between the immigrant and the native-born worker, leading to suspicion and resentment.

With the influx of people into the United States, there was a significant demand for housing, especially in cities. Immigrants were blamed for the housing shortage. Widely held beliefs by US citizens about immigrants entering the United States were that they were poorly educated, spreading diseases and increasing crime (Morris and Ash 2014). In response to these beliefs, and the increase of anti-immigrant sentiment, Congress passed the Quota Act

of 1921 to limit the number of immigrants entering the country (Hadley 2021).

Even with his influence, the reception of Grant's book was not strong; it only sold 17,000 copies by 1937 in the United States. Yet, President Calvin Coolidge, who signed the Immigration Act of 1924 into law, embraced Grant's ideas by writing: "The Nordics propagate themselves successfully. With other races, the outcome shows deterioration on both sides. Quality of mind and body suggests that observance of ethnic law is as great a necessity to a nation as immigration law" (Serwer 2019).

Nazism and Germany

Outside the United States, Grant's book was popular with Adolf Hitler, who thanked him for authoring it and called it his "Bible." The eugenics program and genocide by Nazi Germany and Hitler were partly influenced by Grant's work (Kühl 2002). Following the end of World War II, Major General Karl Brandt of the Waffen-SS was on trial for conspiracy to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity, and part of his defense was *The Passing of the Great Race* (Spiro 2009). Ecofascism manifested in Nazi Germany with the idea of *Blood and Soil*. Many modern Ecofascists and historians point to Nazi Germany as the origin of Ecofascism (Biehl and Staudenmaier 1995).

The Nazi slogan *Blood and Soil* represented the national policy of the party. *Soil* refers to the duty of Germanic people to maintain the land to which they are connected. *Blood* refers to the idea of racial purity through the long history of Aryan descent in Germany. Richard Walther Darré formulated the slogan in the Nazi Party in 1930, asserting that "The unity of blood and soil must be restored" (Biehl and Staudenmaier 1995). Shortly after, he became the Minister of Food and Agriculture. Under *Blood and Soil*, farmers were

to defend the racial purity of Germany; Darré believed that Germany's agrarian population was essential in preserving the Nordic Race. With the support of Hitler and Darré, the policy was used to justify land seizures in Eastern Europe and remove local residents in favor of ethnic Germans (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The Nazi rhetoric became popular among rural farmers by providing them with national pride. Currently, the slogan is mainly used by Neo-Nazi and white nationalists, such as the *Unite the Right* rally.

Garret Hardin

An American ecologist, writer, and significant thinker of the Ecofascist movement, Garret Hardin was a proponent of environmental conservation and opposed human population growth because of its relationship with environmental degradation (Doolittle 2014). He is known for his influential essay, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” published in 1968 (Hardin 1968). Hardin's views are commonly discussed in environmental studies, economics, ecology, and political science courses (Mildenberger 2019). *The Tragedy of the Commons* refers to individuals acting in rational self-interest to utilize open-access or common-pool resources, resulting in depletion. Some causes are the lack of enforced property regulations; individuals can overexploit an open-access resource, focusing on short-term successes instead of long-term benefits, and externalities, the impact of overconsumption will be on future generations. This belief was unanimously held by economists that over the long term, natural resources would be over-exploited and destroyed (DeMello and Weber 2018). Rational self-interest can lead to the destruction or degradation of open-access resources because of individual incentives to maximize their own gain, which leads to overuse of the resource. For example, adding one cow to a communal pasture does

not cause any significant problems. However, if everyone among a dozen farmers did this, the addition of 10-20 cows would ruin the land.

Hardin further published the controversial and influential *Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor* (Hardin 1974). Its main argument is that wealthy people should not help the poor, who should be left alone because help would only lead to harmful consequences for society as a whole. He uses the analogy of a lifeboat to highlight his argument: “Suppose the 50 of us in the lifeboat see 100 others swimming in the water outside, begging for admission to our boat or for handouts. Since the needs of all in the water are the same, and since they can all be seen as ‘our brothers,’ we could take them all into our boat, making a total of 150 in a boat designed for 60. The boat swamps and everyone drowns. Complete justice, complete catastrophe” (Hardin 1974). His argument is that not helping other people is justified because, by doing so, more lives would be saved from that action. Hardin applied the lifeboat ethics to policies: World Bank, Immigration, and food supply. During famines, he lobbied against food aid because he believed and argued that helping these groups of people would lead to Earth reaching its “carrying capacity,” the maximum number of population that can live without degrading the environment (Mildenberger 2019). Hardin believed that the root of environmental destruction was overpopulation by the wrong sorts of people (Mildenberger 2019). In essence, his argument was that by keeping immigrants out, both nature and the nation would be protected.

Garret Hardin is considered a well-known white nationalist by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Many of his writings and political activism led to the anti-immigration sentiment that still has an influence today. He worked with the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), an organization that has promoted the ideas of replacement theory as

immigration policy (R. Jones 2022). His ideas are also cited by American Neo-Nazis to justify violence against marginalized groups (Mildenberger 2019).

A common theme in Ecofascism is the connection between environmentalism and nationalism, and some believe that Ecofascism is the only way to combat climate change by utilizing the beliefs of eugenics and the suppression of minorities. Taken to the extreme, the belief is that reducing the human population is the only way to preserve life, even by force.

Violence Associated with Ecofascism

Ecofascist ideologies have led to violence, terror, and death at a Norway summer camp in 2011 (Reuters 2011), a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015 (Gilsinan 2015), a rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, synagogue in 2018 (Chavez et al. 2018), two Christchurch, New Zealand, mosques in 2019 (Coaston 2019), a supermarket in 2019 in El Paso, Texas (Romero et al. 2019), and more recently a supermarket in Buffalo, New York in 2022 (Collins 2022). The Norway shooter, for example, committed his act to fight against mass immigration and believed that the government was not doing enough to solve the problem (Cineas 2022).

These attacks are connected through similar ideas or directly influenced by one another. Within seconds, a manifesto can be posted and viewed online, allowing for its ideas to continue spreading around the world. The attacks in Charleston, South Carolina, and a Pittsburgh synagogue in 2018 were hate crimes and domestic terrorism by targeting, in particular, Black people and Jewish people, featuring aspects of the replacement theory. The Norway attack, in turn, partly inspired the massacre in Christchurch, New Zealand, through the ideas of the Great Replacement Theory. Both the El Paso and the Buffalo shootings were

influenced by Christchurch, New Zealand (Gelineau 2019). The El Paso shooter showed his support by stating: “In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto” (Arango, et al. 2019). His attack targeted a deeply interconnected community along the southern border with a rich history and identity shared between the citizens of both Mexico and the United States.

El Paso, Texas, located on the United States-Mexico Border, was home to the first lethal outburst of American Ecofascism but also rebuts these ideologies (Guidi 2022). The reason behind the attack in El Paso was violence in the name of environmental and racial conservation. Yet, throughout the city, there are murals highlighting the shared identity of Mexico and the United States.

The region of El Paso Del Norte includes both sides of the border: El Paso and its sister city of Ciudad Juárez. The area is home to a complex intersection of politics, culture, economics, religion, and history. Even though there is a physical boundary in El Paso dividing the United States and Mexico, the history, culture, and identity of the region go beyond when the border wall was first constructed. The United States and Mexico border has become one of the largest and most contested borders in the world, and the crossing is the deadliest in the world for migrants (Aitken 2022). In 2021, there were 728 reported deaths at the United States-Mexico border with more than 1,000 occurring on the journey throughout the Americas (Rosenberg et al. 2022).

Throughout its history, El Paso has played a role in fighting for the rights of Chicanos and migrants. In 1981, textile industry workers established the Border-Workers Center, providing immigration and notary services. At the same time, major manufacturers moved to Mexico to avoid labor protections and exploit cheaper labor. The history of El Paso continues

to shape the present, including contentious issues such as immigration. El Paso provides a glimpse into the reasons why immigrants come to the United States: wanting to achieve the American Dream, seeking a new job, or escaping persecution in their country (Petersen 2021). It is essential to note that the United States intervention in Latin America in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s has contributed to the current situation in these countries.

Since its inception, the United States has been a nation of immigrants, even though the laws and legislation may contradict that (Bon Tempo & Diner 2022). Covid-19 provided a unique rationale for the US government to expel millions of immigrants at the border under Title 42. At the start of Covid-19, March 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) invoked Title 42 as a way to address public health and limit the spread of communicable diseases, such as Covid-19. It granted Border Patrol the power to expel migrants back to their home country. Since the implementation of Title 42, more than 4.2 million migrants have been deported based on data from the United States Border Patrol (Gonzalez 2022).

A surge of migrants took place only weeks before Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas planned to visit El Paso and the ruling on Title 42 (Montoya-Galvez 2022). For the region, it is considered one of the largest single migrant crossing occurrences in history (Romero et al. 2022). In February 2023, President Biden announced the end of the Covid-19 public emergency effective in May, which in part led to the termination of Title 42 (LaFraniere & Weiland 2023). Immigration is a decisive issue in implementing immigration policies between the current Trump administration and the previous Biden administration. Furthermore, it is a contentious issue in Congress between the two parties, causing significant gridlock on the issue.

The lack of government action on immigration and climate change can lead to individuals acting violently as seen in the attack in El Paso, Texas. I will avoid using the name of the gunman. I will mention the ideas in his manifesto to dispel the myths of Ecofascism. Before the shooting in El Paso, the shooter posted his screed on an online platform, 8chan. The name of the document was "The Inconvenient Truth," a reference to a 2006 documentary by Al Gore of the same title, in which Gore educates people about global warming. In his screed, the shooter stated: "The environment is getting worse by the year...the next logical step is to decrease the number of people in America using resources." Prosecutors believe that he used the attack to intimidate Latinos to leave the United States by blaming them for taking American jobs and the degradation of the environment. In his screed, he wrote: "If we can get rid of enough people, then our way of life can be more sustainable."

This is a bogus claim that immigrants are to blame for widespread environmental issues. In fact, "a new human being born on Earth will have a carbon footprint a thousand times greater if she is born into a rich family than into a poor family in a poor country, and eighty richest individuals in the world have a combined income higher than that of the 416 million poorest" (Bonneuil & Fressoz 2016). Research shows that the drivers of consumerism, climate change, and wildlife habitat loss are not working-class immigrants, but massive industries and middle- and upper-class people, including wealthy Americans.

There has been a history of anti-immigration rhetoric in the United States, especially in the 21st century along the southern border. An NPR/Ipsos poll found the belief that the United States is experiencing an invasion at the southern border with more than half of the respondents. Half of the respondents also believe the increase in fentanyl is due to

immigrants bringing it and other drugs across the border (Newall et al. 2022). There are parallels between Madison Grant's view on immigration in 1924 and the present day.

There is fear and paranoia that leads to beliefs that environmental destruction is due to immigrants. It is not only in the United States; the gunman was influenced by the shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (Gelineau 2019). The killer in New Zealand was a self-proclaimed Ecofascist (Achenbach 2019). The Christchurch shooter wrote: "They are the same issue, the environment is being destroyed by overpopulation, we Europeans are one of the groups that are not overpopulating the world. The invaders are the ones overpopulating the world. Kill the invaders, kill the overpopulation, and by doing, so save the environment." Both connected environmentalism and nationalism, which is a common theme in Ecofascism. Currently, its proponents believe that Ecofascism is the way to combat climate change by utilizing the beliefs of eugenics and the suppression of minorities. As climate change becomes a greater threat and the impact becomes more apparent, people will search for scapegoats and ideologies, such as Ecofascism, to address the catastrophe in their own way.

The philosophy of blaming the cause of environmental damage on immigrants is known as an ideology of "greening the hate" (Hartmann 2010). This type of thinking blames poor people for environmental degradation. Betsy Hartmann dubbed the term when she noticed racial undertones at the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. Ecofascism uses greening the hate because it is the theory that overpopulation, immigration, and over-industrialization are to blame for the degradation of the environment, and the solution is through mass murder of immigrants and refugees (Kamel et al., 2020).

Ecobordering

Ecobordering is the term to describe using immigration control as a form of environmental protection (Turner & Bailey 2022). In 2021, Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich sued the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other federal government officials for its destructive immigration policies violating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Under NEPA, before the government takes any large action, it must consider the environmental impact of the policy. Attorney General Brnovich argues that population growth fits under that consideration. Furthermore, it seeks to void the decision to stop the construction of the border wall and the ‘Remain in Mexico’ policy. The lawsuit asks the United States District Court for both laws to return to effect until the government meets the requirement of the NEPA. In the case, AG Brnovich said: "It's the pinnacle of hypocrisy for the Biden Administration to claim it wants to protect our environment, while not enforcing federal statutes that are specifically designed for that purpose." The first part of the lawsuit is stopping the construction of the border wall, leading to more migrants crossing the border than before.

However, the border wall does harm the environment. Following the 9/11 attacks, the Department of Homeland Security can exempt any law for national security and it has been applied to the border wall (Tatelman 2008). Construction does not have to meet the requirements of federal environmental laws (Peters et al. 2018). Furthermore, it disrupts the flow of water in the ecosystem impacting humans and the environment (Parker 2019). According to the Center for Biological Diversity, campaign worker Laiken Jordahl said: "This new construction has bulldozed a huge amount of desert habitat, blasted rugged mountains, and destroyed cultural sites" (Medrano 2020). Despite the impact on the

environment, Attorney General Brnovich states in the lawsuit that halting the construction is harming the environment.

The second part of the lawsuit argues about the environmental impact of migrants entering the United States: “Migrants, like everyone else, need housing, infrastructure, hospitals, and schools. They drive cars, purchase goods, and use public parks and other facilities. All of these activities have significant environmental impacts, including displacement of undeveloped lands and additional air emissions.” However, immigrants do not impact air pollution levels (Price and Feldmeyer 2012). Yet, despite the science, immigrants continue to be blamed for environmental degradation. Even though native-born Americans contribute more to pollution compared to immigrants (Fong et al. 2022; Kolankiewicz & Camarota 2008), immigrants are more likely to experience the consequences of air and chemical pollution based on where they live in the United States (Popovich and Tabuchi 2021).

Finding Solutions to Ecofascism

This article suggests a three-pronged approach to counter Ecofascism—education to improve digital literacy, to build climate optimism, and to dispel the myths of immigration.

The greater the role climate change plays in our lives, the more likely certain far-right politicians and groups will start using environmental ideals to further goals in other areas, such as immigration. For some politicians, it is nearly impossible to campaign and win using climate denialism when extreme weather occurs due to climate change. A 2019 Ipsos MORI survey found that across 11 countries, 77% of potential voters rank climate change as one of the most significant factors in whom they will vote for in the election (Ipsos MORI 2019).

Seventy-five percent of young people under 30 agree with the sentiment. The Republican Party is one of the last remaining groups to continue denying global warming (Båtstrand 2015). However, there has been a shift within the Republican Party from denying global warming to devising a policy strategy to handle climate change. 60% of Republicans aged 23-38 believe that the effects of climate change are occurring in the United States (Friedman 2019). As denialism decreases and new strategies emerge, it would be dangerous for marginalized groups, if political parties, such as the Republican party, adopt hardline Ecofascist policies.

Humans are living in an ever-connected and information-saturated world. Freedom of speech is a fundamental part of the United States. Despite the codification of freedom of speech in the First Amendment, there have been recent attempts to restrict disinformation and misinformation in the United States due to its harmful effects. A failed attempt to limit disinformation occurred in California. In September 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 2098 into law. The purpose was to specify that distributing misinformation or disinformation regarding Covid-19 was unprofessional conduct (California Legislature 2022). In November 2022, a month later, five physicians sued Governor Newsom over the law, arguing that it impedes their ability to communicate with their patients over the course of treatment, violating their First Amendment freedom of speech (Bernstein 2022). Furthermore, the law is vague in defining misinformation and disinformation, which has a severe chilling effect, violating the Fourteenth Amendment due process law. In January 2023, U.S. District Judge William Shubb blocked the California law temporarily for its “unconstitutionally vague” (Myers 2023). Within the United States, the political system makes it difficult to limit speech, and nor should we. Banning misinformation will not solve

the problems and may lead to even more polarization and the popularization of these ideas.

Estonia and Finland are two small European countries leading the world in media literacy and digital competency. Both countries have implemented successful methods to educate their youth on the dangers of misinformation and fake news. Estonia, with a population of 1.3 million, is considered one of the most digitally advanced countries in the world. Estonia's identity is strongly linked to media literacy and digital competency, both are part of its national security strategy after experiencing multiple disinformation campaigns by Russia meddling in its public discourse and attempting to sow doubt in the relationship with NATO and European Union and divide the public on polarizing issues. Meanwhile, Finland, a neighboring country of Estonia, developed a national curriculum that is woven into all classes to combat misinformation in 2014 following a fake news campaign by its neighbor, Russia. Finnish students are taught about misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. Finland is the most resistant country to fake news, confirming the effectiveness of its educational approach. The approach by Estonia and Finland is about "trying to vaccinate against problems" rather than telling its citizens what's right and wrong, which can lead to polarization. These two countries can function as effective models for other countries in incorporating methods of combating misinformation into their educational systems.

Social media is how one in five Americans receive their news (M. Walker 2021). Outside of school, children and teenagers spend on average around 8 hours online (Rideout and Robb 2019). Despite spending so much time on the internet, students are unable to recognize false information. Schools are not teaching media literacy, the ability for students to critically assess online information (C. Jones 2023). Data from the News Literacy Project

concluded that regarding the skill to recognize false information, 55% of students were uncomfortable with their own ability to do that (Ali 2022). Children and teenagers are not the only ones to fall for misinformation. Adults are more likely to fall for misinformation and more likely to spread the information (Pehlivanoglu et al. 2022). Illinois is the only state that requires media literacy in high school (Cooper 2022). Given the political climate and teacher shortage, implementing a media literacy curriculum in all schools will be difficult. However, a lesson from Estonia is that it does not focus on politics, and media literacy is naturally woven into the classes. By incorporating these lessons, such as lateral reading, teachers can successfully teach students how to critically analyze information, perhaps allowing for a more realistic and less pessimistic outlook. The appendix includes 10 steps for combating misinformation (Figure 2).

Ecofascism takes climate anxiety to the extreme, arguing that since the government is not doing enough to solve climate change, “I” must do “my” part in limiting the effects of climate change through violence (Bove 2021). Climate change can indeed lead to many emotions: anger, hopelessness, and sadness. In a worldwide survey of young people, 68% of the participants were feeling sad and scared about climate change, and almost 60% of them were extremely or very worried about it (Hickman et al. 2021). Climate anxiety is an issue predominantly experienced by young people. With all the negative news surrounding climate change, it may seem like there is no hope for the future. In Union Square Park, there is a doomsday clock counting down the days until we reach the moment of irreversible damage. It is a constant reminder that not enough is being done to solve the problem. However, the future is not set in stone, and around the world, progress is being made in almost every sector, giving rise to a new notion of climate optimism.

There are recent examples showing progress in the fight against climate change. After two decades of negotiations, on March 5th, 2023, countries in the United Nations reached an agreement to protect marine life in international waters, meaning outside the jurisdiction of national boundaries, covering two-thirds of the ocean (McVeigh 2023). A British research group developed wheat that can grow in hot temperatures and potentially flourish despite climate change (Molero et al. 2023). Around the world, the consumption of wheat provides 20% of all calories, more than any other crop, and the new form of wheat can increase production, reducing the likelihood of famines. Recently, scientists discovered the bacterium *Rhodococcus ruber* that eats plastic in the ocean (Goudriaan et al. 2023). In England, a ban on single-use plastic started in October 2023 (Sheldon 2023), and in Edinburgh, the city council passed a plant-based treaty (Webber 2023). In 2025, the world's top source of electricity became renewable energy (Elton 2023). In Australia, the government blocked an open-pit coal mine near the Great Barrier Reef (McGuirk 2023) For the first time in 400 years, beavers returned to London (Ambrose 2023), and for the first time, the EU's electricity was from solar and wind more than fossil fuels (Ellerbeck 2023). This was some of the good news from only 2023. More stories from around the world can give hope for the future. One person can be effective, as highlighted by Katherine Hayhoe in her *Saving Us*. She uses examples to demonstrate that every action matters and that even tiny changes in behavior are significant in making an impact over time.

Grassroots campaigns can be successful, and individual actions do matter in combating climate change and Ecofascism. Ecofascism is a hateful ideology that divides people. Coming together and working together limits its influence. Individual steps are small but can grow into a collective movement. A decision to cut down on meat consumption is a

personal journey, and from that experience, it can lead to friends, family members, or community members joining as well. By making minor changes to our actions, like eating less meat, taking fewer connecting flights, and line-drying our clothes, we can start making a significant difference. A recommendation for starting is creating a sustainable action plan for 30 days (Figure 3). The appendix features a monthly action plan for a zero-waste challenge and a table of action items (Figure 4). Climate optimism is one way to combat Ecofascism.

Another way to combat Ecofascism is to dispel the myths about migration. One-fifth of the globe's immigrants are in the United States, more migrants than in any other country (Connor & Lopez 2016). In 1890, the percentage of foreign-born people in the United States was 14.8%, and in 2018, it was 13.7% (Budiman 2020). Each year, roughly a million migrants come to the United States from all over the world. Immigrants have always been an essential part of the United States.

From Madison Grant in the 20th century to the present day, there are myths about immigration that continue to influence our political discourse. There is a belief in some of the population in the United States that immigrants are taking over the country. The notion that immigrants are taking over the country is not credible. Another persistent myth is that immigrants are violent criminals. Based on data collected by Stanford Professors Ran Abramitzky and Leah Boustan, it concluded that the opposite is correct: for all offenses, compared to immigrants, those born in the United States are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated (Abramitzky and Boustan 2022). It applies to the past as well. In the United States, a myth that continues today is that immigrants are stealing jobs from United States-born workers. The research shows that immigrants work jobs that native-born workers will not do. The researchers concluded: "Today, immigrants tend to hold jobs that have few

available U.S.-born workers, including positions that require advanced education like those in tech and science, and jobs that require very little education like picking crops by hand, washing dishes, or taking care of the elderly" (Abramitzky and Boustan 2022). Dispelling the myths about immigration will remove the foundation of Ecofascism and the Great Replacement Theory.

Conclusion

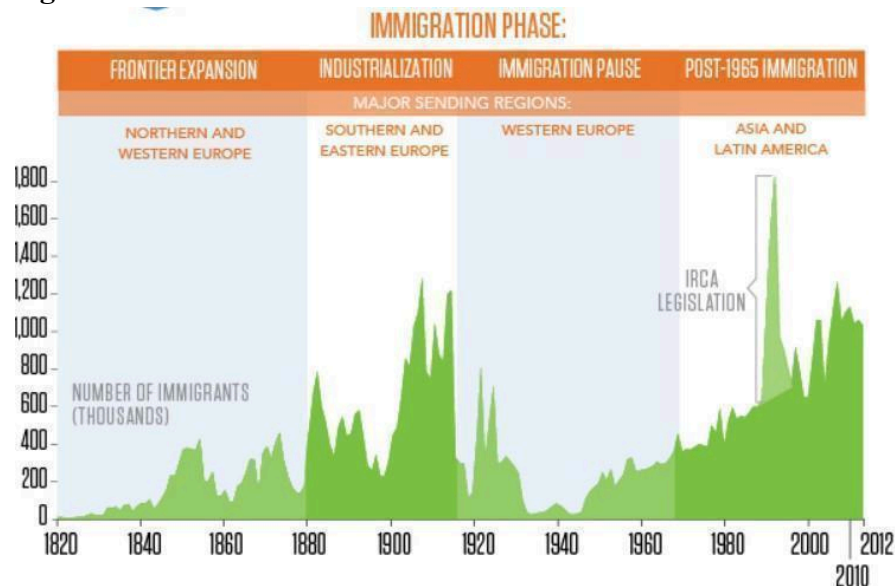
The ideologies of Ecofascism and the Great Replacement Theory (GRT) are not new; these ideas or their forebears have been around for generations. The utilization of Malthusian ideology was prevalent in the eugenics movement to justify regressive measures, such as forced sterilization and infanticide, to combat human population growth. The problem does not lie with the number of individuals on Earth but with resource distribution systems and overconsumption. Immigration is a political issue globally, and the increase in migrants from climate change will only add more to political discourse influencing how countries respond to environmental crises, including in public health. Distortions about how there are too many people living on Earth can lead to violence, with individuals acting against marginalized groups. Ecofascist ideologies have led to violence, terror, and death recently. Disproving the myths of migration will remove the foundation of the Great Replacement Theory. Education will provide the tools necessary to assess online information critically for all issues, and climate optimism offers hope for the future and inspiration to continue fighting for a better future.

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Appendix

Figure 1:



Four Phases of Immigration in the United States Source: United States Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, 2011)

Figure 2:



10 Ways to Combat Misinformation Source: Institute for Public Relations

Figure 3:

Week 1: Focus on Food Storage						
Day 1: Recycle worn, scratched, or mismatched and unused food and drink storage containers—worn plastics are more likely to leach chemicals into your food.	Day 2: Use less plastic cling wrap.	Day 3: Choose your plastic-free water bottle	Day 4: Purchase the proper water filter if your water contains contaminants.	Day 5: Be done with baggies.	Day 6: Vow to use safer, reusable food-storage containers.	Day 7: Educate yourself (and your friends and family) on the importance of avoiding “BPA-free” plastics.
Week 2: Rethink Your Garbage						
Day 8: Get in the right mind frame. The less plastic stuff you buy, the less you'll have to throw out later.	Day 9: Take your own reusable containers for takeout.	Day 10: Reuse any grocery or shopping bags you already have on hand.	Day 11: Empty smaller wastebaskets into a larger trash can so that you don't have to throw away the bag used to line the smaller basket.	Day 12: Become a human trash compactor	Day 13: Start making a conscious effort when making a purchase to look for products with the least amount of packaging.	Day 14: Keep yard and garden waste and compostable food waste out of your trash cans
Week 3: Clean Up Your Hygiene						
Day 15: Swear off microbeads. Check the labels of exfoliating products	Day 16: Make your own skin-care products.	Day 17: Phase out phthalates.	Day 18: Look for more sustainable toothbrushes that allow you to replace only the head.	Day 19: To help cut back, learn how to make your own homemade hair products.	Day 20: Invest in a safer, reusable shower curtain. Replace vinyl ones with organic cotton or even hemp versions.	Day 21: To avoid plastic, choose nontoxic bar soaps instead of bottled liquid soaps and body washes
Week 4: Conquer the Kitchen						
Day 22: BYOB—Bring your own (grocery) bags.	Day 23: Avoid soda bottles by making your own carbonated drinks.	Day 24: Make your own, rather than buy, “packaged” foods like yogurt.	Day 25: Only use wooden or metal utensils to cook your food	Day 26: Get your java jolt from a French press.	Day 27: The next time you're at the store and forget your bags, you will resist the temptation to use plastic ones.	Day 28: Treat yourself for completing the plastic purge!

30 Day Plan to Cut Down Your Footprint **Source:** United Nations Environment Programme

Figure 4:

FLY LESS	WALK AND CYCLE MORE	DRIVE ELECTRIC	EAT MORE PLANTS
CUT YOUR WASTE	SEASONAL AND LOCAL	SWITCH YOUR ENERGY	GET SOLAR
INSULATE YOUR HOME	DIAL IT DOWN	GREEN YOUR MONEY	REPAIR & RE-USE
CLOTHES THAT LAST	TALK TO FRIENDS	SPEAK UP AT WORK	TELL YOUR POLITICIANS

Ways to Cut Down Carbon Footprint **Source:** United Nations Environment Programme

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