

Removing Racism from White Bodies: Monstrous White Men Marching with Torches

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White racist monsters seem to be revealing traces of themselves lately. King notes the growing trend of prominent characters who are overt racists and/or enacting white supremacist attitudes have “emerged as something of a meme, a preferred trope for putting drama in motion” (219). The imagery of the overt white racist serves colorblind racism by denoting that white racist monsters exist only within the imagination, their monstrosity confined to the limits of the screen (219). People of color know otherwise. Calafell marks the norms of white racist violence within the everyday and calls for an acknowledgement of the violence of white monstrosity (Calafell *Monstrosity; Latina/o Communication*; “When Will;” “She Ain’t”). Heeding her call, I embarked on a journey to locate the monstrosity of white racism. Not surprisingly, I could only find traces of white racist monsters. Since white monstrosity works through the norms of whiteness white racist monsters become hidden and transformed from white people leaving only pieces of white racism to trace its monstrosity. In his foundational essay for reading culture for the monsters they engender, Cohen assures that I must be “content with the fragments (footprints, bones, talismans, teeth, shadows, obscured glimpses -signifiers of monstrous passing that stand in for the monstrous body itself)” (6). So, I pieced these monstrous fragments together to visualize white racism for a white readership. I use the framing of white racism specifically here to call attention to the relationship between white bodies and racism (Feagin et al. 3). Too often the labor of marking the workings of white racism falls on scholars of color and is overlooked by whites (Anzaldúa; Calafell “When will we”), my hope is that if a white scholar, like myself, marks the embodied workings of white racism there will be a larger acknowledgement of its existence by whites.

This paper unpacks the workings of whiteness, heteronormativity (Yep), and patriarchy to maintain white masculine supremacy by deconstructing two white racist monsters from the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville. I focus on the

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“Unite the Right” event in Charlottesville because of the notoriety of white racism fore-fronted. As Heim put it, “It would prove to be the catalyst for a horrific 24 hours in this usually quiet college town that would come to be seen by the nation and world as a day of racial rage, hate, violence and death.” The workings of whiteness and heteropatriarchy respond to this event to remove racism from white people by isolating racism to extreme white racists, confining white racism to fixed imagery, and transforming the white racists involved back to norms of white masculinity. To denote these workings of whiteness, I conducted a critical rhetorical analysis of media coverage of James Alex Fields and Peter Cvjetanovic. Fields is the convicted white male murderer that drove his car into a crowd of people, injuring at least nineteen people and killing white thirty-two-year-old counter-protester, Heather Heyer. Peter Cvjetanovic is a young white man that participated in the “Unite the Right” march in Charlottesville. Cvjetanovic was pictured marching on the front page of the *Daily Progress* the day after the march and an image of him became an online fascination by identifying him on the @yesyoureracist twitter account. Cvjetanovic quickly became the face of the “Unite the Right” as his image and responses to it are given worldwide attention. Taken together, Fields and Cvjetanovic picture the reality of white racist monstrosity that is part of the racial landscape of white bodies. The news coverage of them demonstrates how white monstrosity is offered the privilege of erasure from white racial consciousness, mirroring DiAngelo’s claims of cultural constructions of “white racial literacy” (*What Does It Mean*).

Within her book *Monstrosity, Performance and Race in Contemporary Culture*, Calafell dedicates an entire chapter on explicating the monstrosity of whiteness through an examination of media coverage of Aurora theater shooter, James Holmes. This chapter demonstrates how and why white terrorists’ actions are never correlated to racist motivations. Along these same cultural lines, the events in Charlottesville are significant as they are inexplicitly connected to white racism but the discourse surrounding the events strategically reframes the white masculine bodies identified by removing these white men from racial narratives and racist motivations. Certainly, the monstrosity of whiteness can be directly connected to white racism within this space. While I am most interested in the discursive (re)framing of Cvjetanovic from a white racist monster to a well-meaning white college student, the constellation of many texts manifests the fragment of white masculinity in/through white monstrosity. I follow McGee’s suggestion that “critical rhetoric does not *begin* with a finished text in need of

interpretation; rather texts are understood to be larger than the apparently finished discourse that presents itself as transparent” (70 emphasis in original). The fragments that point to the monstrosity of whiteness here are the “Unite the Right” event, James Alex Fields and mediated texts involving him, the Cvjetanovic photograph, the tweet identifying Cvjetanovic, the online forums responding to the initial tweet, and the mediated interviews and news broadcastings of Cvjetanovic. These “texts” provide the “fragments (footprints, bones, talismans, teeth, shadows, obscured glimpses -signifiers of [the white] monstrous passing that stand in for the [white masculine] monstrous body itself)” (Cohen 6). The constellation of these discourses compiles a cultural collage of “the meaning we are urged to see in the whole discourse” (McGee 70).

To analyze these discursive constructs, I searched Lexis-Nexis for all newspaper and magazine articles pertaining to Fields and Cvjetanovic. I narrowed my scope to limit repeated articles and then selected the news coverage detailed by *The Washington Post*, *Independent*, and the *New York Times*. I also focused on the local news of Cvjetanovic, as well as, the local college newspapers that had direct interviews with him, *The Nevada Sagebrush* and *Reynolds Sandbox*. As I delved into this research, each international and national news source, in regards to Cvjetanovic, specifically referenced his on camera interview with the local news station Reno’s NBC 4 News. So, I opted to research this interview with Cvjetanovic as well. Finally, Cvjetanovic’s worldwide publicity was primarily linked to his original identification through a tweet on @yesyoureracist twitter account. I researched the original tweet and the comments posted pertaining to it. As McKerrow suggests I examined the workings of whiteness to empower white masculinity by looking to the larger social spectrum that ripples from this event not the event in isolation (446).

Furthermore, Ono and Sloop challenge critical rhetoricians to acknowledge how our positionalities influence our analysis and remain committed to analyzing how identities influence cultural politics. As a white straight married cisgendered mother, my positionalities situate my analysis from an intragrouping perspective. The politics of my identities inform my analysis of Fields and Cvjetanovic as much as their normative white masculinity frames the discursive (re)workings of their white monstrosity. I was and continue to be culturally trained to not see whites as a race, as racists, nor my role in white racial privileges. hooks reminds me, white supremacist thinking is “imprinted on the consciousness of every white child at birth, reinforced by the culture” and “tends to function unconsciously”

(3). These affective responses are key junctures to how whiteness functions through white bodies and are all too often overlooked as consequences of affective lacking located in white bodies' consciousness (McIntosh "Feeling White") or defended through white fragility (DiAngelo "White Fragility") or excused by notions of whiteness functioning as invisibility (Frankenberg "Introduction"). Thus, my interrogation of these white masculine monsters is informed by my hetero-feminine whiteness and locates how whiteness benefits whites and is maneuvered by white bodies.

Specifically, this piece extends the theoretical conversation on the monstrosity of whiteness to articulate how white racist discourse serves white people in a strategic manner to remove white racism from white bodies. White masculinity redefines itself as a protector not perpetrator, and in turn, white racist monstrosity is separated from all white bodies and displaced on white racist imageries and isolated events. To demonstrate this claim I first articulate how I define whiteness, white racism, and employ the theoretical lens of the monstrosity of whiteness. I then describe the events of Charlottesville alongside the assailant James Alex Fields and how white monstrosity serves white racism through him. Finally, I examine the discourses circling Cvjetanovic and how the monstrosity of whiteness transforms white racism back to norms of white masculinity.

Reading White Racism through the Monstrosity of Whiteness

Alcoff claims "...social dynamics form races, racialized groups, and racial identities, and not just racial ideas" (63). Her proposed theory of identities informs how whiteness functions to frame race contextually, discursively, and in turn, constructs our material realities. Frankenberg adds, "Whiteness is always constructed, always in the process of being made and unmade" (16). Approaching whiteness from this perspective denotes how whites are offered the power of fluidity which allows for white racialization to be in a constant state of definition. Thus, white bodies are not confined to norms of race but rather are offered the privilege to be un-definable. In their foundational piece, Nakayama and Krizek demonstrate how whiteness functions through strategic discursive practices to position whites at the center. Other scholars have noted how whiteness functions to empower the white race by normalizing race as white (Dyer; Shome; Warren; Frankenberg, "The Mirage;" Crenshaw). To mark the racialization process is key

to deconstructing the harmful realities of white racism. However, this process of marking whiteness and the white race has led to visceral white racist responses in/through white fragility (DiAngelo, “White Fragility”).

If white racism is a practice then whiteness is a mode for racism’s reiteration to be contextualized, embodied, and theorized. Raka Shome contends, “Whiteness indeed matters as *a current of racism*” (45 emphasis in original). Whiteness’ ability to normalize and centralize whites in relation to bodies of color is a foundation of white racism. Bonilla-Silva points out, “Whereas for most whites racism is prejudice, for most people of color racism is systemic or institutionalized” (8). Inferential racism is a response to these growing cultural realities and propelled by whites denying personal responsibility in racism. In turn, whites are able to retain white privilege by never being seen as racists. Post-race ideologies pull from these same colorblind norms to feed white fragility. Hence overt, rather than covert, white racism is manifesting rapidly. For example, hate groups have grown from 602 noted hate groups in 2000 to 930 formed hate groups today (Berman).

The rapid growth in hate groups is not surprising given the current escalation in white-supremacist activism that is visible across the country today, “signaling a new willingness by racist groups to put themselves front and center on the American public stage” (Greenblatt 12). Greenblatt adds, “Modern day white supremacist ideologies are founded on the belief that white people are on the verge of extinction...it becomes easier for them [white supremacists and other racists] to justify or rationalize violence in the name of ‘preserving’ the race” (13). White fragility is a response to post-race ideology and a colorblind era that has led many whites to become violently racist, while simultaneously not being categorically termed as such¹ (DiAngelo *White Fragility*). According to the Anti-Defamation League’s annual assessment on extremist-related killings, white supremacists and other far-right extremists were responsible for fifty-nine percent of all extremist-related fatalities in the U.S. in 2015, up dramatically from twenty percent in 2016. Clearly the manifestation of systemic racism is a product of our current cultural climate, and the growth of violent white racism is a terrifying fact. Violent white racism is often muted by post-race rhetoric that places explicit

¹ For further explanation of white fragility see DeAngelo’s work on *White Fragility*. DeAngelo points to multiple manners in which white bodies are violently racist but are allowed to continue to culturally frame themselves as not racist through cultural tactics.

racism as functioning at the cultural margins and reduces white racism as “bad” or “taboo” isolations rather than functioning at the center of the white race. The monstrosity of whiteness is a theoretical tool to understand the growing correlation between violence and white racism and also how white bodies are removed from the articulations of racism.

First coined by Calafell, the monstrosity of whiteness refers to the manners in which whiteness is in a constant state of translation that manipulates monstrosity from the white race in order to idealize whiteness and demonize racialized Others (*Monstrosity* 46-53). Calafell exposes how the monstrosity of whiteness functions through white privilege, entitlement, and narcissism to reposition culture to identify with white terrorists through inferential racism (52). The premise of the monstrosity of whiteness is the ability to manufacture idealized whiteness through projections of the monstrum. First monstrosity in relation to whiteness functions through dichotomy rhetoric to formulate whiteness as normalized and stigmatize Othered bodies (38-46). Additionally, the monstrosity of whiteness constructs white monsters as an isolated, “individual problem rather than as a product of an increasingly violent culture” (36; also see Smith and Hollian). Finally, Calafell notes the monstrosity of whiteness works through a post-racial era to remove whites’ responsibilities from any constructs of non-idealized cultural norms (46-52). While each of these white monstrosities pull and press on the other in order to function culturally, I am most interested in the monstrosity of whiteness as a means to remove white accountability from the monstrum. I build on Calafell’s theorization of the monstrosity of whiteness by continuing to draw correlations between whiteness, white bodies, and white racism in the everyday.

Cohen claims one primary thesis of monstrosity is the monster’s ability to always escape (4-6). He notes, “The anxiety that condenses like green vapor into the form of the vampire can be dispersed temporarily, but the revenant by definition returns. And so the monster’s body is both corporal and incorporeal; its threat is its propensity to shift” (5). This assertion of temporality and fluidity detonates a condition of whiteness to divert white bodies as monstrous and shapeshift white bodies to idealized/normalized racial constructs. What the monstrosity of whiteness demonstrates is how post-race ideologies strategically function to remove embodied racism and inferential racism from correlations of white embodiments. As a white straight woman allowed the privilege of racist escape, I take up the responsibility to (re)locate the monstrosity of white racism, “to concern [my]self with strings of cultural moments, connected by a logic that

always threatens to shift” (6). The remainder of this essay specifies how the monstrosity of whiteness removes white racism from white embodiments to benefit whites.

Excusing White Racism through Extremes

James Alex Fields: The Face of a Deranged Racist

In the evening of August 11th, 2017 rumors became reality as a surprise torchlight march came to fruition on the campus of University of Virginia. A group of roughly 250 young white men dressed in khaki pants and white polo shirts gathered and marched with ignited torches, chanting “Blood and Soil!” “You will not replace us!” “Jews will not replace us!” Waiting in response were roughly thirty University of Virginia students - some students of color, some white students - interlocked in arms around the base of the statue of Robert Lee (Heim). As the “Unite the Right” march closed in on the statue of Robert Lee, protesters and counter protesters collided and marked the beginning of the violence that ended a day later in nineteen injured and one woman’s death. Roughly sixteen hours following the first altercation, James Alex Fields drove his car into counter protesters as they dispersed, injuring and terrifying many, and killing Heather Heyer.

I, like most white people, was captivated by the news coverage of this event. My engagement entranced by the “white supremacist logic” to make sense of the ‘who and why’ behind this white racist tragedy in order to separate myself, and whites in general, from this event (hooks 3). The media responded accordingly by never revealing the twenty-year-old white man’s motives. Instead what is reiterated are discourses about his lifestyle, personality, and misguided investments in Germans and Nazis (Bromwich and Blinder). The media stories that surface around Fields significantly frame the monstrosity of whiteness. The coverage of Fields describes him as shy, quiet, and introverted but also troubled (Bromwich and Binder). His high school teacher describes him as “a very bright kid but very misguided and disillusioned” (Bromwich and Binder). This rhetoric echoes Calafell’s argument of the discourses that framed Aurora shooter James Holmes as exceptional with poor social skills, removing the accountability of monstrous white masculinity from these white male perpetrators (41). The

discursive workings to frame Fields as misguided follow the same whiteness rhetoric to remove white masculinity from the responsibility of white violence.

What differentiates Fields from other violent white terrorists is his clear link to racism. Connections with other white terrorists and racism are absent in mediated coverage to strategically remove racism as a factor in white embodiments (Calafell 49). However, the reality of Fields' actions in correlation to the weekend's events connect him to structural racism. Thus, the media responds by associating Fields to hate groups and constructing him as an extreme racist which place him outside normative white masculinity. Images of Fields holding the Vanguard America shield and dressed in a white polo and khaki pants, the attire of white supremacist groups, circulate the media (Hensley). Simultaneously people that know Fields are interviewed, claiming that at a young age he was politically obsessed with the neo-Nazi movement and is a self-declared white supremacist (Bromwich and Binder). Mediated constructions of Fields as an extreme racist serve to substantiate the whiteness logic that white racism exists only on the fringe through white extremists. King claims white racism is always constructed as existing in extreme, excessive, and marginal spaces (219). Positioning Fields as an extreme racist removes white racism from white masculinity. More poignantly the reality of white racism in relation to violence is reconstituted as a tokenized radical event by a disillusioned man rather than a systemic underlining component to white racism.

These white narratives function to remove white responsibility. The more I follow the coverage of Fields I find myself feeling less implicated. I am set to conclude white racism is not imbued in violence. Instead Fields is framed as deranged by his racist ideologies. White viewers, myself included, embrace the strategic rhetoric of whiteness set into motion through the news coverage of Fields because these extreme white racist characters serve to let white audiences "off the hook" (King 220). King concludes, "Such disengagements, anchor post-racial worldviews, nurturing racial power and its reproduction, precisely because they prompt (predominately white) audiences not to see race and racism or discern their lasting significance" (221). The coverage of Fields transforms him from normative framings of white masculinity to a monstrous white racist. The discursive connection between white racism and the disillusioned, self-proclaimed white supremacist murder allows for all "normative/civil" whites to be removed from white racism. The specificity given to white racists functions to limit who a white racist is, as opposed to the generalized brown Muslims as terrorists.

Detailing Fields as a racist extremist grants the white audience points of departure from white racism, which serves to remove whites' personal engagement with white racism. White racism is removed from violent enactments and systemic norms and instead exists only in isolated events by white extremists, allowing the normative nature of white racism (which is inherently violent) in correlation to all whites remain unmarked and unacknowledged as violent.

Photos not only surface of Fields holding the Vanguard America hate group shield, but these pictures also situate him "on the front lines of the volatile rally flanked by other white men in polo shirts and tan slacks clutching the racially charged black and white insignia of the Vanguard America hate group" (Hensley). From these pictures I interpreted Fields as not only associated with the group but ranking in power based on his placement within the group. He leads the march. The association with this group was a clear opportunity to connect violence with white racism and we should acknowledge that *no* discussion arises. Instead media focus on the quickly released tweet by Vanguard America that states, "The driver of the vehicle that hit counter protesters today was, in no way, a member of Vanguard America. All our members had been safely evacuated by the time of the incident" (Hensley). Even members of white racist groups can distance themselves from Fields, leaving his monstrous portrayal to stand in solitude. Once again, whiteness provides white racism definitive points of isolation. The public acceptance of Vanguard America's statement demonstrates how white audiences are allowed the privilege to separate white racist norms from white bodies at large. The monstrosity of Fields strategically confines white racism as existing only in these disillusioned white supremacists and white racial violence only occurs during these radical racially charged events.

What we learn from the analysis of Fields is the way whiteness removes racism from whites by constructing white racism as a dark pathway that corrupts isolated mentally unstable individuals. White racism is reduced to these extreme cases, not a systematic reality enacted through our everyday lives. Alongside the media coverage of Fields was the newspaper picture and online subtexts of Peter Cvjetanovic. The discourse associated with the picture of Cvjetanovic overshadows Fields in many capacities. It could be suggested that this shift in focus was due to the fact that Cvjetanovic's picture had received significant news and social media attention prior to Fields' violent attack. But the monstrosity of whiteness suggests otherwise. Whereas Fields forces white audiences to acknowledge the correlation of violence with white racism, Cvjetanovic provides

whites a means to transform white racism entirely as a misguided mediated moment.

Normalizing Logics of White Racism

Peter Cvjetanovic: The Face of a Racist Monster

Peter Cvjetanovic looks like any other white male college student. His thin white frame, dark hair, soft voice, and quiet demeanor culturally situates his white masculinity as rational, controlled, and moral. But late Saturday afternoon following Fields' malicious attack, the social media Twitter account, @yesyou'reacist, identifies Cvjetanovic at the "Unite the Right" march. The tweet picturing Cvjetanovic and identifying him quickly went viral "as of Sunday (after the rally) its (sic) been retweeted more than 26,000 times and received nearly 1,500 comments" (Roedel, Mariott, and Bales). In addition, the news and social media coverage of Cvjetanovic continued to reference and re-reference the tweeted image of him. This does not account for the thousands of comments in response to the online news coverage and blogs of him. Or the 35,000 people that had signed a petition to expel Cvjetanovic from his academic institution ("UNR Student"). In many respects, the mass outcries against Cvjetanovic positioned him as a racist monster and shifted the public focus from Fields to Cvjetanovic. In turn, Cvjetanovic quickly became the face of white racism, the face of the racist monster. What transpires from the public vilifying of Cvjetanovic is how heteronormativity and whiteness permit white masculinity to transform him from racist monster to white normative masculinity. The texts of Cvjetanovic demonstrates the discursive and performative tactics the monstrosity of whiteness employs to remove racism from white masculinity.

The photo identifying Cvjetanovic positions him as a racist. His polo adorns the "Dragon's Eye" emblem for the far-right extremist group Identity Evropa. Established in March of 2016, Identity Evropa describes themselves as, "an American Identitarian organization. As such our main objective is to create a better world for people of European heritage -particularly in America -by peacefully effecting cultural change. Identity Evropa is thus an explicitly non-violent organization" (Discover What Your). While the organization constructs itself definitively against violent propaganda, the Anti-Defamation League labels them as a neo-Nazi and white supremacist organization and is designated as a hate

group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. These framings are acknowledged by Identity Evropa as “smears.” They respond by saying “We are not supremacists because we do not believe that White people should rule over non-White people. Rather we are etho-pluralists... all racial groups should have somewhere in the world to call home” (Discover What Your). The discursive ideologies of hate can also be detected by Identity Evropa’s stated belief that, “The fetishization of diversity has resulted in a paradigm wherein ‘less White people...’ is accepted as a moral imperative. We categorically reject this ‘progressive’ morality and instead demand that we, people of European heritage, retain demographic supermajorities in *our* homeland” (Discover What Your, my emphasis). Cvjetanovic’s association with the group positions him as a white racist and the public acknowledges his affiliations to racism. For example, John Beazley’s comment in reference to Cvjetanovic’s story in the *Independent* states, “He’d do a better job of convincing us he’s not a racist if he wasn’t wearing a t-shirt with a logo of a white supremacist group on it.” In the end, Cvjetanovic’s association with Identity Evropa inexplicitly connects him to white supremacist ideologies and racist categorizations -despite the group’s efforts to speak against these articulations.

I am not surprised to see Cvjetanovic’s affiliation with this white nationalist group as it heavily targets college campuses with its outreach programs and online feeds (Discover What Your). Noteworthy then, Cvjetanovic is among many young white male college students that are members of Identity Evropa. He and others employ the logics of Identity Evropa that white nationalist organizations are not white supremacist groups, or racists for that matter, but conservative groups that are simply fighting for their personal rights. In his first interview, Cvjetanovic employs these same racist discourses. He qualifies that he identifies as a white nationalist and “identitarian,” not a white supremacist. In fact, he does not believe that whites are supreme in any way (Roedel et al.). He believes all cultures are under threat by globalism and all nations need to preserve their culture and history (Roedel et al.). Cvjetanovic’s response mirrors white nationalists’ new branding framed by “discourses of unity, acceptance, and multiculturalism and principles of abstract liberalism, fairness, and laissez-faire egalitarianism and individualism” (Hughley). Cvjetanovic employs the discursive strategies of what Bonilla-Silva terms abstract liberalism, which situates whites as morally engaged for all cultures while blatantly ignoring the fact of people of color’s realities (74-76). Of course, Cvjetanovic employs these same discursive strategies of the white nationalists to remove themselves from framings of white

supremacy. Cvjetanovic invites white audiences to reevaluate racist logics by framing himself through normative white ideologies. In turn white racism becomes normalized. These discursive logics form the foundation for whites to justify white racism as not actually being racist.

Diverting White Racism

The photograph of Cvjetanovic pictures him holding his torch, screaming, sweat beaded along his forehead, eyebrows furrowed and leaning forward as if about to pounce. He is pictured as violent, monstrous, in essence, scary. In many respects the photo transports viewers back to the 1960s Jim Crow era of violent racism. His image provides a face to the masked, nameless, silhouetted figure of the white racists Klansmen of the past. But more so, it disrupts the ideologies of post-race, colorblind whites by fore fronting that white racism is still very prevalent. Notably the close range in which this image frames him thrusts viewers to intimately engage with the affective norms of the monstrosity of white racism. Cvjetanovic's viral image is such a depiction of rage and violence he becomes dubbed "The Angry Torch Guy" (@yesyourearacist). In many respects the scope of his imagery forced whites to acknowledge the existence of white monstrous racism among white people. The photo identifying Cvjetanovic also indisputably locates his participation in a racist event and in racist organizations. These circumstances alone serve to vilify Cvjetanovic in the public space because white people must demonize him to exonerate whites from racism. I echo this white supremacist practice by dumbfoundingly staring at his picture. I am shocked by the image because I am forced to acknowledge that violent white racists exist. My whiteness provides me the privilege to not have to experience violent white racism daily. But I perpetuate its violence by never acknowledging its existence. In response to this image, whites, myself included, separate ourselves from Cvjetanovic by responding with distain towards him. Cvjetanovic is a horrible person because he is a racist. This white supremacist logic nullifies whites from white racism. Whiteness functions strategically here to characterize a particular type of white masculinity as racist in order to remove "good" whites from "bad" racists. It is not the identifying of Cvjetanovic that drives him to viral status. It is the photograph that poignantly projects a monstrous racist image of him. It is this monstrosity of whiteness that propels the media hype. Colorblind

racist ideologies postulate white racists/racism exist solely within these enraged, torch carrying, screaming white male images. In turn, whiteness and patriarchy work to secure white racism to this stand-alone image.

The strategic manners of post-racist and liberalist discourses that arise to remove white racism from white people is perhaps best located in the social media backlash to the Cvjetanovic's image. The online comments function to recenter post-racist ideologies and displace white racism from white bodies onto the Cvjetanovic image. Leonardo reminds us that strategies of whiteness "frequently serve to perpetuate white racial supremacy through color-blindness, ahistorical justifications, and sleights-of-mind" (141). The social media responses to the photo of Cvjetanovic is used by whites to define what white racism looks like, removing the reality of covert norms of white racism. Furthermore, the posted comments provide the larger white audience the capacity to escape from their own white monstrosity. Whites are granted a projected imagery to disassociate themselves from racism and also erase the reality of systematic inequality embodied by white masculinity as inadvertently racist and misogynist.

For example, one comment posted in response to the original "@yesyoureracists" tweet by a presumably white woman said, "I spy a virgin" (sonotpopular @anne_mohri). Interestingly, her comment assumes a heteronormative stance and challenges his white masculinity through her degrading comment of lack of masculine sexual conquest. It also provides white femininity a means to disassociate white straight women with racist white men. In essence, white straight women would never engage with any form of racism. This white-looking woman is able to ascribe that white racism cannot hold heteronormative ground and removes Cvjetanovic from normative whiteness. McIntosh notes that white women feed the workings of heteronormative whiteness by defending the racism of white men ("Victims"). This white women's comment mirrors the many other attacks on Cvjetanovic's physical appearance, sexuality, last name/heritage, and intelligence.

Rather than reflexively engaging with our own (white peoples') relationship to white racism (McIntosh and Hobson), the online forum functions as a narrative space to vilify the image of Cvjetanovic while never noting our white enculturation with white supremacy (Moon). While much of the other online feeds reiterate his racism, not anywhere in these dialogues does any white person acknowledge their white relation to this imagery, to our white history, or relate to the fact that this does not actually affect us (white people). Rather whiteness

serves to exonerate those whites attacking Cvjetanovic from white racism. Whites -at large- should be held accountable for the grotesque reality of these white men's racist actions, but instead whiteness absolves white accountability. Whites subsequently capitalizes on this image by perpetuating post-racist narratives and neoliberal ideological constructs of racism. White racism becomes reduced to the image of the "Angry Torch Guy," enabling white folks to separate themselves from our role in white monstrosity by vilifying Cvjetanovic as the tokenized white racist monster. In essence, whites maintain the norms of white supremacy by claiming we are not racist since we did not march through a college campus holding lit torches and screaming neo-Nazi slogans. Before reflexively diving into my analysis I consumed these comments with vindication. The comments allowed for me to displace racism onto Cvjetanovic. Overall by rebuking him, I can further exonerate myself from white racism and instead believe I stand in solitude with people of color.

The image of Cvjetanovic serves an imperative role in the monstrosity of whiteness to construct what white monsters look like. This strategy of whiteness excuses white folks because the real racist monsters are these white extremists. With the monstrous image of Cvjetanovic serving to define racist white people, white masculinity is discursively secured as *not* racist when in fact these monstrous diversions are *the* norms of the monstrosity of whiteness. In a post-race era, liberalism works diligently with whiteness to ensure that white patriarchy continue to be crowned as savior figures, not the monstrous racism that is inexplicitly part of the white race/white realities. Discursive workings of whiteness function to contain white monstrosity to this image not the person represented in it or other white bodies. With his image fixed, Cvjetanovic is then provided ample news and media outlets to transform himself back to norms of white masculinity.

Transforming White Racism

First and foremost, Cvjetanovic embodies norms of white masculinity, which serves to transform him from the screaming racist imagery to a humanized white male college student. Cvjetanovic's transformation detonates white masculinities shapeshifting privileges and abilities to always return to points of normative power. Calafell writes of Chicana feminists legacies of escaping psychic and

physical trauma through their abilities of shapeshifting (*Monstrosity* 59-68). Notably white masculinities' shapeshifting is not a response to harms but a norm. In other words, the monstrosity of whiteness grants white masculine embodiments shapeshifting capabilities in order to always re-conform white masculinity back to normative frames of power. These transformations are effortless enactments most often embodied by white men and accomplished through the dominating powers of heteronormativity, patriarchy, and whiteness. Cvjetanovic is a beautiful depiction of white racism's shapeshifting.

Upon his return to Reno following the Charlottesville protest, the news media awaited Cvjetanovic's arrival in the airport. Cameras followed him in a blue polo shirt and jeans as he rode the escalator down to baggage claim. Cvjetanovic was not embarrassed or surprised by the reporters awaiting him. Instead, he welcomed their questions and was provided over thirty minutes to voice his views and clarify his positions (Roedel et al.). In all his interviews, Cvjetanovic embodies power and control, confidence and assurance; he perfectly enacts hegemonic masculinity (Trujillo). Despite being crowned as the picture of white racism in America and completely vilified, Cvjetanovic is composed and prepared to speak publicly on his own behalf. He and his family received hundreds of death threats (Roedel et al.), yet he calmly walks through the airport and confidently articulates his views. He is completely unscathed. Here in his white masculine embodiments begins the transformation of repositioning his white masculinity away from white racism.

Cvjetanovic showcases his privilege of white masculinity as he looks directly into the camera and responds. He demonstrates how, as a white man, he owns the power to re-frame himself and what he says will be accepted as truth by other white listeners. Trujillo reminds us the media affirms hegemonic masculinity through the (white) male body (297). The confidence in which Cvjetanovic speaks forefronts that he knows he has this power. He understands his white monstrosity must be redirected and he knows exactly how to conduct himself in order to regain his masculine white normativity. He nonchalantly addresses the cameras with a matter-of-fact tone and ends his interviews with a "business as usual" demeanor. I am reminded of Thompson's descriptions of his own understandings of white masculinity. He writes, "I always had a deep sense of confidence that came, in part, from my privilege" (27). Confidence is a primary trait awarded to white masculinity, and when embodied correctly, white men are afforded authentication.

White masculinity also maintains privilege to define itself even in vilified contradiction. Cvjetanovic testifies that he attended the march “for the message that white European culture has a right to be here just like every other culture,” and he believes the removal of Lee’s statue symbolized “the slow replacement of white heritage” in the U.S. (Sheth). In a later interview, he clarifies his intentions were simply to “hear a few alt-right speakers and then go home” (“UNR Student”). He is then referenced quoting, “The 14 words, one of the most famous white supremacist slogans. ‘We all deserve a future for our children and for our culture. White nationalists aren’t all hateful: We just want to preserve what we have’” (Sheth). Cvjetanovic is pictured at the center of a hate-filled chanting protest and then calmly claims he is not hateful but simply went to listen to some speakers. He recites the words of a white supremacist slogan but claims he is not a white supremacist.

The media allows Cvjetanovic to redefine himself in the space of vilified contradiction in order to remove the monstrosity of racism from white bodies. He states, “...I hope that the people sharing the photo are willing to listen that I’m not the angry racist they see in that photo” (Sheth). His comment drips with contradiction as just days earlier he is pictured chanting neo-Nazi sentiments. Whiteness and patriarchy ensure that the embodiment of white masculinity always be allowed to define itself no matter the circumstances, no matter the contradiction. In fact, not one interviewer challenges Cvjetanovic’s contradictory sentiments. In his airport interview, the white male reporter asks Cvjetanovic to explain his views rather than challenge his contradictory claims. He asks, “You have been called a White Supremacist, tell me how you identify?” (Roedel et al.). Even in his questioning, he opens the door for Cvjetanovic to redefine himself. Each following interview allows Cvjetanovic to respond to the image as not representing who he is as a person (even though it was in fact him participating in a racist march, adorned in racist emblems, and screaming racist chants). But he defines himself as not a racist. This blatant discursive contradiction only functions through white masculinity.

Atkinson and Calafell demonstrate a primary component of hegemonic masculinity is its ability to function in/through “grey areas” that remove responsibility for taboo acts and violent associations. They define grey areas as “the nebulous and confusing space where responsibility for inappropriate actions becomes tangled and lost” (5). Cvjetanovic’s grey areas are further seen when he responds to being directly asked about participating in “Blood and Soil” chants. He

claims, “I did *not* participate in those chats like ‘Jews will not replace us.’ I think that is actually stupid. What I did chant was ‘One people, one nation, end immigration,’” which he goes on for more than a minute clarifying his thoughts on immigration (Roedel et al.). He explains the picture of him screaming was when the march got really “heated” and “I was just saying this was ‘Our Home and we have the right to defend it’” (Roedel et al.). As with the grey areas of hegemonic masculinity, Cvjetanovic never assumes responsibility for his depictions, nor even needs to defend his actions, rather “clarifies” how he was negatively portrayed.

White people use the defense of a mistaken identity and employ colorblind liberalist rhetoric to explain away their racist acts, while bodies of color are confined to the monstrous threats/villains/terrorists/criminals ascribed to them. Whiteness and patriarchy empower the embodiment of white masculinity to control who is ascribed as monstrous, even when white men enact violence. In another interview, Cvjetanovic responds to people calling him a Nazi. He says, “[Those claims] are gross lies... I am a Nationalist... It’s their own fear of nationalism that is twisting how they see us. And I am hoping if they sit down and talk with us, they will see I am not a monster, that we are not all monsters” (Roedel et al.). Here again, Cvjetanovic redefine himself. Cvjetanovic is pictured monstrous but he is not a monster. The systems of power, “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy,” always provide the embodiment of white masculinity the power to position itself how it *should*, and in turn, *will* (by white people) be seen (hooks 3).

Cvjetanovic’s transformation from screaming, volatile white supremacist is further removed as he claims he is “quiet, shy, and non-confrontational” (“Post UNR Decision”). To follow the lineage of white liberal colorblind racism he finishes his self-definition by stating, “I’m a good person” (“Post UNR Decision”). Interestingly he acknowledges the photograph does not portray an image of a “good person” but asks that we see him differently. This falls in line with what Feagin et al. term as “sincere fictions,” which they define as “personal ideological constructions that reproduce societal mythologies at the individual level” (186). They go on to clarify, “In such personal characterizations, white individuals usually see themselves as “not racist,” as “good people,” even while they think and act in antiblack ways” (186-7). Once Cvjetanovic redefines himself, he then shapeshifts to a victim of misrepresentation and finally into a

white savior. Cvjetanovic demonstrates how white masculinity can transform from negative framings to idealized norms.

In another interview, we learn of the online petition to expel Cvjetanovic and his personal choice to quit his job as a university escort driver (“UNR Student”). In fact, before his plane had even landed in Reno-Tahoe International Airport more than 35,000 people had signed a petition on change.org to have Cvjetanovic expelled from his university and fired from his campus position (“UNR Student”). However, we learn of this petition through Cvjetanovic’s response to it. The media as an agent of hegemonic masculinity supports his voice over the thousands of voices of those that signed the petition. There is no effort to interview or invite a comment from change.org, only Cvjetanovic’s response to the petition is offered. So, the lone rhetoric heard is one that places Cvjetanovic at a loss and as an outcast from his university, all while reiterating, “I didn’t commit any crimes.” (UNR Student”). The monstrosity of whiteness pulls on white ignorance and white victimization to create empathy for his white embodiments.

Calafell notes that white terrorists are humanized to structure victim ideologies (51). As I listen to the interviews I find myself even beginning to sympathize with Cvjetanovic. He utilizes tactics of white ignorance by claiming he had no idea this would happen, he claims he “didn’t even know about the march until he got there and wasn’t sure he would do it” (Roedel et al.). He also employs victimization discourses to reposition himself from white monstrosity to an innocent victim of misrepresentation. Over a series of interviews, we hear how this experience has affected his life and future (e.g. see Roedel et al.; Goss and McAndrews). There is certainly an intradiscursive connection to my growing sympathy as a white straight mother to this white young man’s story. My white body responds to the role white women play in securing white masculinity (McIntosh “Victims”). The racist monster is slowly removed from my eyes and I come to only see the normative of white masculinity. My personal relations here to Cvjetanovic’s interviews demonstrate how white cultural memory removes racism from whites.

Along with being a victim Cvjetanovic manifests himself as a white savior. When questioned regarding the threats made against him (Roedel et al.), he simultaneously positions himself as the white savior that wants liberty for all but refuses to acknowledge the racial disparages that benefit him. After repetitively noting the personal threats against him, he goes on to say how these threats have extended to his father, grandfather, mother, and sister. He offers,

I understand the photo is very, very, bad looking but I don't believe you should threaten my family. To me that's monstrous. I mean call me a Nazi; you can hate my ideology. But I wouldn't threaten anyone. And they are threatening my sister and my mother, my dad, my grandparents and to me, I can't say, "Oh that's ok."... I can understand if you want to threaten me, but they are threatening innocent people. (Roedel et al.)

Here Cvjetanovic strategically positions himself through white masculinity as also a protector². In turn, the rhetoric used empathetically frames him as a victim to death threats, then reconstructs him as the brave protector to stand in for the innocent. Cvjetanovic redefines his monstrosity and to do so he relies on the Other to define his normality (Shildrick). Discursively he constructs himself as a martyr noting the threats against him. Simultaneously he also becomes a protector unwilling to accept threats against "the innocent." Like the seductive vampire, his transformation is complete from white monstrosity to white savior by framing those threatening his family as the *real* monsters.

Cvjetanovic's story denotes the extreme privilege afforded to white masculinity to fluidly transform from "The Angry Torch Guy" to normative white masculinity. Whiteness and patriarchy shapeshift his body from the once irate monstrous racist into the rational and confident white savior. Cvjetanovic's white masculine embodiments afford him authority and authenticity. In the end, whites are only left with small traces of Cvjetanovic's monstrosity. The fleeting white cultural memory of his volatile imagery is nearly removed as the university releases a statement that Cvjetanovic will not be expelled and that his second amendment rights will be upheld ("Post UNR Decision"). The worldwide acceptance of the university's decision demonstrates how whites benefit from Cvjetanovic's life returning to normal. He serves as a clear representation that white racism is not confined to mediated tropes but is a part of white racial expectations. Furthermore, white monstrosity leaves white masculinity completely unscathed. As Cvjetanovic says in an on-campus interview on November 28, 2017, just over three months after his public racist debut, "He no longer feels like his safety is being threatened and that life almost feels like it has gone back to normal" (Reynolds Sandbox). Cvjetanovic's life is back to normal,

² For more on white masculinity as saviors/protectors see Dawn Marie D. McIntosh "From White Ladies" and Bernadette Marie Calafell "When Will We All Matter."

meaning he has regained full ownership of his white masculine privilege. His vilified image has faded from white cultural memory and shapeshifted him back to the normative white masculinity he has owned his whole life. The monstrosity of white racism provides whites the privilege of purifying erasure, while bodies of color continue to hide from the white monsters among them. Like a green mist that vaporizes away, white racism slowly vanished from white cultural reality.

Signifiers of White Racist Monstrosity

The events in Charlottesville require whites acknowledge the monstrosity of white racism is a current reality. White racists exist everywhere. What is more telling is how discursive responses to Fields and Cvjetanovic denote white racism as more than simply monstrous violent acts or angry torch carrying men. White racism is a norm of whiteness shielded as anything but racism. Cohen cautions, “The monster always escapes because it refuses easy categorization” (6). Similarly, whiteness provides whites a means to escape from the constructs of racism. Like “the undead returns in slightly different clothing, each time to be read against contemporary social movements or specific, determining event” (5), white racism alters its form and vaporizes from white cultural realities. The tales of Fields and Cvjetanovic serve as clear examples for how white racism works for white people and the discursive tactics to remove white racism from white cultural realities. This work adds to the theoretical understandings of whiteness by demonstrating how whites employ monstrosity in order to remove racism from whites and white culture. It is the covert workings of white racism by all whites that is quite possibly the most monstrous of white racism because these forms of white racism completely vindicate whites from white supremacy and remain unacknowledged by whites.

Calafell began the conversation of the monstrosity of whiteness by demonstrating what monstrous whiteness is in relationship to violent white assailants/terrorists. This piece builds on her work to challenge white readership to locate the monstrosity of whiteness that exists in our everyday white embodied realities by demonstrating how whiteness and patriarchy function to purify whites, even those whites blatantly caught in racist enactments, as normalized non-racist protectors of the innocent. Racist monstrosities are historical realities of our white enculturation that cannot and should not be pushed to the extreme boundaries of

select racist assailants. Rather, white people must come to see how these monstrosities can be transposed from our (white) bodies to isolated imagery and/or denoted extremists. Shome challenges, “Critical engagements with formations of whiteness (as part of larger racial formations) must continue to remain an important and urgent political project for our times” (44). Now more than ever, whites must not only express disdain for public displays of white racism, but more so, we (white people) must reflexively engage with how our everyday white cultural norms are “signifiers of monstrous passing that stand in for the monstrous body itself” (Cohen 6). Whites must acknowledge the historical and present realities of our white racism. We must hold tight to these cultural realities as present states of how we benefit and negotiate our everyday ways of being. In doing so whites are then capable of locating our personal investments in white racism.

*** Post-Script ***

A year later students of color hang the notorious picture of Cvjetanovic around the campus warning of the white racist monsters existing among the college students (Perdue). These students haven’t forgotten. There are still monstrous sightings, but they seem to dissipate faster as each day passes from the initial event. And life for Cvjetanovic, as he claims, is “pretty much back to normal” (Reynolds Sandbox). He goes to class, works his job, goes to lunch, hangs with friends never to be confronted for his monstrosity. Whites benefit from Cvjetanovic’s life being unscathed. In the end, whites benefit from his white racism being forgotten. However, students of color continue to live in fear of his racist monstrosity. In response to this fear, during Black History Month a poster draped over the University of Nevada, Reno’s, Charlton Family Business and Lecture Center proclaimed “UNR Protects Racists” (Perdue). These students challenge whites to acknowledge that by allowing Cvjetanovic’s life to return to normal, we protect white racism. White bodies must acknowledge the role we take in this national imagery of white monstrosity and our role in the current political pulse of inferential racism. But more so, this white acknowledgment must remain present in our white consciousness each day. In full transparency before beginning this project the imagery of these events and the conscious awareness of white racism had faded from my thoughts. These students reminded

me of my white privilege to disregard white racism. They cannot forget the reality of white racist monstrosity. Have you forgotten?

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