

# White Extremism: A Brief Review on Origin, Behavior Indicators, and Religious Beliefs

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## Abstract

*Whiteness is fluid, as who is considered 'white' changes over time. Like race, whiteness is socially and politically constructed. Whiteness does not just refer to skin color; however, it is an ideology based on beliefs, values, behaviors, habits, and attitudes, which result in the unequal distribution of power and privilege based on skin color. White supremacy is defined as beliefs and ideas claiming the natural superiority of the lighter-skinned, or 'white', human races over other racial groups. Using a literature review, this article explores the brief history of humans' 'whiteness', indicators of white extremism, and belief systems justifying white extremism. The findings reveal that humans' whiteness has been evident since around 80,000 years ago. Moreover, white extremism's obvious indicator is when violence is used as the only means to achieve goals, on top of other indicators. Extremism comprises radicalism, while radicalism does not always include extremism. Further, the beliefs of white supremacy may have been rooted in the story of Noah's and Abraham's children. These findings may help academics and practitioners understand white extremism through psychological and ideological perspectives.*

**Keywords:** *white extremism; supremacy; superiority; racism; Darwinism; eugenics movement; belief systems.*

## Introduction

The concept of 'whiteness' extends beyond mere physical characteristics and significantly influences historical and contemporary power dynamics, societal norms, and individual identities. Initially, it might seem to refer only to a physical trait; however, 'whiteness' represents a complex social construct that has shaped power relations, privileges, and identities over centuries. In various historical, social, and political contexts, the term 'whiteness' carries profound implications. It is recognized not only as a social construct but also as a symbol of privilege and dominance in many societies. Whiteness, as defined by scholars (such as Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Fields & Fields, 2012; Hooks, 1992; and McIntosh, 1989), encapsulates a series of unearned privileges and has significant implications on race relations, cultural representation, and institutional systems.

The idea of 'whiteness', as a distinct racial category, became especially prominent during the colonial era when European powers expanded into Africa, the Americas, and Asia. European colonists established a racial pyramid that positioned white Europeans at the top, justifying the mistreatment/exploitation of non-European populations and sustaining a social order that favored European dominance (Fields & Fields, 2012). Whiteness became associated with power, privilege, and superiority; it creates a system where physical appearance determined social status. In the 18th and 19th centuries, racial categorization was further strengthened by pseudoscientific theories that classified humans according to racial hierarchies. Prominent thinkers like Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Immanuel Kant contributed to these classifications, positing that lighter-skinned Europeans were inherently superior to other races (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These ideas provided ideological support for imperialism and slavery, entrenching 'whiteness' as a benchmark of superiority and reinforcing discriminatory practices.

In recent decades, scholars and activists have increasingly challenged 'whiteness' by examining it as a social construct and a source of privilege. Critical race theorists assert that race is a fluid, socially constructed category, and that 'whiteness', in particular, has been employed to sustain power imbalances in societies globally (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This perspective fosters a deeper understanding of racial inequality and prompts efforts to dismantle systemic racism by questioning the privileges associated with whiteness. Anti-racist initiatives in schools, communities, and workplaces aim to raise awareness of how whiteness

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perpetuates inequality. Programs focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion seek to rectify the imbalances created by systemic privilege, promoting fair representation and equal access to resources for all racial groups (Fields & Fields, 2012). These initiatives encourage society to recognize and challenge the structures that uphold ‘whiteness’, striving toward a more equitable and inclusive future.

This article aims to explore findings related to white extremism. By reviewing existing literature, it seeks to understand the historical context of ‘whiteness’, indicators of extremism, and the core beliefs that inspire the emergence of white supremacy and, consequently, white extremism. The findings may help academics and practitioners understand white extremism through psychological and ideological perspectives.

### *Whiteness as Privilege and Power*

‘Whiteness’ functions as a system of privilege, providing those identified as white with unearned benefits and access to resources that are often inaccessible to others. Sociologist Peggy McIntosh describes this concept as an ‘invisible knapsack’ filled with privileges that white individuals carry without realizing it. These privileges include the ability to navigate certain environments without the fear of discrimination and the expectation of being treated with more respect by law enforcement and other authority figures (McIntosh, 1989). These privileges manifest in economic, educational, and social domains, granting white people more access to opportunities and fewer barriers in comparison to people of color.

In legal and political systems, whiteness has historically held significant power. In the United States, policies such as the ‘one-drop rule’ and laws prohibiting interracial marriage created rigid definitions of whiteness, reinforcing a binary racial order that provided privileges to those within its boundaries and systematically marginalized others (Painter, 2010). This framework institutionalized racial discrimination and positioned ‘whiteness’ as the default standard against which all other racial identities are measured.

### *Whiteness as the Norm in Society*

The idea of ‘whiteness’ as a societal norm is deeply rooted in mainstream culture, literature, media, and education. This concept, known as ‘white normativity’, means that the experiences, values, and aesthetics associated with ‘whiteness’ are often seen as the default standard, while other perspectives are marginalized or ignored (DiAngelo, 2018). For example, many media portrayals focus mostly on white characters and stories, leading to a lack of visibility for people of color.

In education, historical narratives are frequently told from a Eurocentric perspective, presenting whiteness as central/dominant to historical progress and civilization. This representation can have detrimental effects on how people of color view themselves and how they are perceived by others, underpinning a system where ‘whiteness’ is seen as the norm (Hooks, 1992). As a result, ‘whiteness’ is not merely a racial category but a pervasive standard that shapes societal expectations, cultural ideals, and institutional practices.

### *The Brief History of Whiteness*

The story of human evolution is formed by the coexistence and rivalry of two closely related species: *Homo neanderthalensis* (Neanderthals) and *Homo sapiens* (modern humans). Both species are believed to have shared a common ancestor, probably *Homo heidelbergensis*, which lived around 550,000 to 765,000 years ago (Meyer et al., 2016). Over time, this ancestral population split into two groups: 1) one stayed in Africa and eventually evolved into modern humans (*Homo sapiens*), while 2) the other migrated to Europe and Asia, leading to the emergence of Neanderthals (Stringer, 2012). By knowing their physical characteristics, cognitive abilities, social behavior, and survival strategies, researchers try to understand why *Homo sapiens* have become the only surviving species of the genus *Homo*.

Neanderthals’ ancestors began migrating into Europe roughly from 400,000 to 500,000 years ago; slowly adapting to colder climates over generations (Arsuaga et al., 2014). This migration eventually led to the development of Neanderthals, who thrived in Europe for an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 years. Their territory was not limited to Europe; they also lived in parts of Siberia and Southwest Asia. Evidence of their

presence, including fossils and tools, has been found at sites such as Sima de los Huesos in Spain, dated to at least 430,000 years ago (Higham et al., 2014). Despite their long survival, Neanderthals went extinct around 40,000 years ago. Their disappearance was likely caused by a mix of factors, including competition with modern humans, shifting environments, and genetic weaknesses (Hublin, 2017).

When considering physical characteristics, Neanderthals might have excelled in ‘modern beauty contests’ due to their lighter skin and red hair, in contrast to *Homo sapiens* who typically had ‘darker skin tones’ (Trinkaus & Tuttle, 2024). These features highlight Neanderthals' adaptations to colder climates:

- **Body structure and build:** Neanderthals had robust physiques, with broad and muscular upper bodies, long collarbones, and wide pelvises. These features, coupled with shorter limbs and compact waists, helped conserve heat in colder environments. They ranged in height from approximately 1.52 to 1.68 metres and weighed between 55 and 80 kg on average (Roberts, 2018).
- **Brain size and configuration:** Their brain sizes ranged from 1,200 to 1,750 cm<sup>3</sup>—comparable to or even larger than modern humans. This indicates anatomical potential for complex thinking, though differences in brain structure may have influenced how they processed information, setting their cognitive patterns apart from those of *Homo sapiens* (Ayala & Cela-Conde, 2017).
- **Facial adaptations:** Neanderthals had distinct facial features, such as prominent brow ridges, large nasal cavities, and elongated skulls. These adaptations helped warm and humidify cold air before it entered their lungs, aiding survival in harsh climates (Hublin, 2009).
- **In contrast, *Homo sapiens* were highly adaptable and innovative.** Their physical traits reflected an emphasis on endurance, agility, and flexibility:
- **Body structure and mobility:** *Homo sapiens* had lighter and more agile physiques, with longer limbs and narrower pelvises. These adaptations supported long-distance running and efficient movement across varied terrains. They were typically taller, ranging between 1.60 and 1.85 metres, with an average weight of 50 to 90 kg (Roberts, 2018).
- **Brain and cognitive development:** Although slightly smaller (1,200–1,400 cm<sup>3</sup>), the structure of *Homo sapiens*' brains supported advanced neural connectivity. This enhanced reasoning, symbolic thought, and linguistic abilities (DeSilva et al., 2021).
- **Facial variability and adaptations:** Flatter faces and smaller brow ridges in *Homo sapiens* resulted from evolutionary adaptations to diverse environments. Skin pigmentation also evolved to match UV exposure levels as they migrated globally (Jablonski & Chaplin, 2010).

Cognitively and culturally, Neanderthals displayed advanced skills and complex social behavior. Contrary to outdated stereotypes, they exhibited notable intellectual and cultural traits:

- **Advanced toolmaking:** They crafted tools from stone, wood, and bone, including adhesive use, which highlights planning and technical skill (Roberts, 2018).
- **Social structure and symbolism:** Evidence of caring for injured and elderly individuals shows strong social bonds, while burial practices suggest symbolic thinking and possible spiritual beliefs (Ayala & Cela-Conde, 2017).
- **Artistic expressions:** Though less elaborate than *Homo sapiens*' art, Neanderthals created engravings and shell ornaments, showing early symbolic behavior. Discoveries in Gibraltar illustrate their proto-artistic efforts (Zilhão et al., 2010).

Homo sapiens, however, excelled in cultural and cognitive development, creating intricate social systems:

- Language and communication: The capacity for complex spoken language enabled Homo sapiens to build advanced societies, strategize, and share knowledge across generations (Tattersall, 2017).
- Artistic mastery and spirituality: Homo sapiens produced detailed cave paintings and carvings, as seen in Lascaux and Altamira. These works suggest sophisticated symbolic thought and early religious practices (Clottes, 2016).
- Technological innovation and trade: They developed specialized tools for tasks like hunting and sewing and engaged in long-distance trade, promoting cultural exchange (Bar-Yosef, 2002).

Neanderthals displayed remarkable survival strategies and dietary adaptations, with their hunting skills and lifestyle finely tuned to thrive in glacial environments:

- Diet and hunting skills: They were skilled hunters, targeting large game like mammoths and bison. Their inclusion of fish in their diet shows adaptability (Ayala & Cela-Conde, 2017).
- Use of medicinal plants: Traces of plants like chamomile and yarrow found in dental calculus suggest early medicinal practices (Hardy et al., 2012).
- Environmental adaptations: Their robust build and effective use of clothing and shelters helped them endure extreme climates (Hoffecker, 2017).
- However, the diet of Homo sapiens was more varied and dynamic, evolving over time as humans dispersed across different ecosystems.
- Omnivorous and agricultural practices: Early humans consumed diverse foods and, around 12,000 years ago, began farming, laying the foundation for complex societies (Roberts, 2018).
- Climatic adaptability: Homo sapiens created clothing suited to different climates, enabling survival in diverse environments (Gilligan, 2010).
- Technological innovations: Their inventions, like fishing gear and food storage methods, supported larger populations and advanced societies (Klein, 2009).

The extinction of Neanderthals can be attributed to a variety of factors. Among the likely contributors to their disappearance were:

1. Competition for resources: Modern humans created better tools, formed more organized communities, and used smarter hunting strategies. These advancements probably gave them a big edge over Neanderthals when it came to getting essential resources like food and shelter. This advantage was likely a key factor in why Homo sapiens managed to survive and spread more successfully (Higham, 2021).
2. Environmental changes: During the decline of Neanderthals, Europe's climate was going through significant changes. These environmental shifts may have benefited Homo sapiens, who were better at adapting to different conditions. Neanderthals, being more suited to colder climates, might have struggled to deal with the quick changes in temperature, which would have made survival harder for them (Higham, 2021; Stringer, 2012).
3. Low genetic diversity: Neanderthals had much less genetic diversity compared to modern humans, which likely made them more vulnerable to diseases and less able to handle environmental challenges. This lack of diversity probably weakened their resilience, especially as the growing Homo sapiens population competed for the same resources (Pääbo, 2014).

4. Assimilation hypothesis: Some researchers suggest that Neanderthals did not entirely disappear but instead interbred with *Homo sapiens*. Over time, this mixing of genes allowed parts of Neanderthal DNA to continue in modern humans, even though Neanderthals themselves vanished as a separate group (Green et al., 2010).

The interaction between Neanderthals and modern humans marks a significant chapter in human history, occurring approximately 80,000 to 50,000 years ago (Trinkaus & Tuttle, 2024). Neanderthals had inhabited Europe and parts of Asia for hundreds of thousands of years before *Homo sapiens* began migrating out of Africa around this period (80,000 to 50,000 years ago). This encounter predominantly took place in Europe and parts of western Asia, notably in regions such as the Levant and southern Europe, where the two species overlapped (Higham, 2021; Pääbo, 2014). However, some scholars propose that *Homo sapiens* did not reach Europe until around 45,000 to 50,000 years ago, and during this period, they met Neanderthals (Benazzi et al., 2011).

Genetic evidence strongly indicates that interbreeding between the two species occurred, most likely between 60,000 and 40,000 years ago, as both groups occupied overlapping regions in Europe and the Near East (Green et al., 2010; Prüfer et al., 2014). Some interactions may have initially taken place in the Near East before modern humans moved further into Europe (Green et al., 2010; Prüfer et al., 2014). The discovery of a child with mixed Neanderthal and Denisovan ancestry in Siberia underscores the likelihood that interbreeding was relatively common when different hominin groups lived nearby (Slon et al., 2018). While Neanderthals engaged in cultural practices, such as the use of pigments and possibly creating symbolic objects, the arrival of modern humans introduced more advanced tools, artistic expressions, and complex social structures. These innovations likely allowed *Homo sapiens* to gain cultural and technological superiority, enabling them to better adapt to the challenging Ice Age conditions (Stringer, 2012; Higham, 2021).

The interbreeding between *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals has had a significant and lasting impact on human genetics. On average, individuals of Eurasian descent carry approximately 2% Neanderthal DNA, with the proportion reaching up to 4% in East Asia (Currat in Hunt, 2023). In other words, non-African populations today possess about 1-2% Neanderthal DNA, which indicates that the genetic legacy of Neanderthals persists, despite their extinction (Pääbo, 2014; Vernot & Akey, 2014). This interbreeding period is also believed to have contributed to the emergence of traits associated with 'whiteness' in modern humans. Additionally, the *dys44* gene, located on the X chromosome and part of the dystrophin gene, was present in Neanderthals and can still be found in 9% of all modern human populations outside of Africa (Trinkaus & Tuttle, 2024). The B006 gene, which traces back to the interbreeding between Neanderthals and modern humans between 80,000 and 50,000 years ago, is another example of this genetic influence (Trinkaus & Tuttle, 2024). Moreover, certain genes inherited from Neanderthals may be linked to skin complexion, particularly in East Asian populations (Trinkaus & Tuttle, 2024). However, the Neanderthal legacy also includes potentially harmful genes, such as those that increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes under a typical Western dietary pattern (Trinkaus & Tuttle, 2024).

### *Social Darwinism*

Social Darwinism means the application of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories to human society. Following the introduction of the concept of 'survival of the fittest' in Darwin's 1859 work *The Origin of Species*, certain philosophers and scientists argued that these ideas could also account for the social inequalities observed among individuals. Herbert Spencer, who announced the phrase 'survival of the fittest' in 1874, said that just like animals which thrive through strength and adaptation, humans also succeed by being naturally more capable. He explained that aiding those deemed 'weaker' would disrupt the natural order of society. This notion was later expanded upon by other scholars (see Herrnstein and Murray in their 1994 work *The Bell Curve*). They posited that traits like intelligence and social ability are principally determined by genetics and are not easily changed. Their argument claimed that racial and social discrepancies in intelligence and culture are inherent and unchangeable, meaning social programs would have limited impact on addressing these differences. Consequently, Social Darwinists contend that efforts to reduce inequality through social interventions are futile, as they regard these disparities as a natural aspect

of human society. Drawing on Darwin's theories, Social Darwinists used the concept of 'survival of the fittest' to justify racial and social inequalities. The eugenics movement, led by individuals like Francis Galton, further distorted these ideas, advocating for selective breeding to 'enhance' humanity (Dennis, 1995; Jackson & Weidman, 2005).

### *The Scientific Racism and Eugenics Movement*

The Scientific Racism and Eugenics Movement emerged in the late 19th century, deeply influenced by Social Darwinist views on 'natural selection' and 'racial purity'. Francis Galton, an English scientist and cousin of Charles Darwin, is widely viewed as the movement's founder. Galton advocated for the practice of selective breeding, which he termed 'eugenics', as a means to enhance humans. He argued that reproduction should be encouraged among individuals he deemed the 'best' members of society. Furthermore, Galton suggested that eugenics should be embraced as a 'New Religion' aimed at regenerating/improving English society (Galton, 1892; Paul, 1984).

At the core of Galton's theories was the belief in the essential inequality of individuals. He theorized that certain groups, particularly the wealthy Anglo-Saxon populations within Western society, were naturally more 'fit/suitable' than others. Based on this notion, he suggested that individuals from these 'fitter' groups should be heartened to have more children, whereas those from 'unfit' groups (such as the impoverished or people of color) should be discouraged from having children or, in some cases, have none (Kevles, 1985). Galton contended that this form of 'discriminatory breeding' would result in a society composed of individuals with higher intellectual abilities, while reducing the number of those with lesser capabilities (Galton, 1904; Lombardo, 2018).

Galton reasoned that governments should promote the reproduction of 'superior' groups while discouraging intermixing with those he considered 'inferior'. His views contributed to the justification of existing racial and social hierarchies, implying that these divisions were biologically 'natural' and essential for societal progress. Unfortunately, this ideology had a global impact, influencing policies such as forced sterilizations and restrictive immigration laws, which continue to affect society today (Kühl, 1994; Haller, 1963; Selden, 1999).

### *The Behavior Indicators of White Extremism*

Bötticher (2017) describes that extremism operates on society's fringes, aiming to dominate the center by spreading fear of internal and external threats. Due to its dogmatism, extremism is dogmatic, intolerant, and unwilling to compromise. Extremists see politics as a zero-sum game and, when conditions permit, resort to militancy, including criminal acts and mass violence, driven by a fanatical desire to obtain and maintain political power.

Bötticher (2017) draws a clear distinction between radicalism and extremism. The fundamental distinction lies in extremists glorifying violence as a means of resolving conflicts, opposing constitutional states, majority-based democracy, the rule of law, and universal human rights. According to Bötticher (2017), the differences between radicalism and extremism are as follows:

1. Radical movements tend to apply political violence pragmatically and selectively, while extremist movements justify or even mandate violence against their enemies as a political act.
2. Extremism seeks to 'recreate' a mythical golden past, whereas radicalism envisions a golden future, despite both referencing narratives beyond the present.
3. Extremism is anti-democratic.
4. Extremism explicitly opposes the concept of universal human rights.

5. Extremists aim to close open ideological spaces and pursue extreme goals with extreme methods, while radicals allow societal diversity, even as they challenge the status quo.
6. Radicalism, as rebellious opposition, targets establishments, while extremism opposes anyone rejecting its dogmatic values to reshape society.
7. When statistically weak, radicals may withdraw from society, whereas extremists engage in provocative and violent acts against established orders.
8. Extremism is characterized by morality exclusive to its members, whereas radicalism is more inclined towards universal morality.
9. Extremism aligns closely with authoritarian totalitarianism, while radicalism has historically been egalitarian; and
10. Radicalism is tied to Enlightenment ideals, human progress, and reason, whereas extremism adheres to irrational belief systems, often religious and fanatical, that claim a monopoly on truth and aim to reshape society according to a regressive/conservative vision.

Radicalization occurs at the early stages of extremism (Adnan & Amaliyah, 2021). Thus, radicalism is part of extremism but not vice versa: “extremists are radicals, but not all radicals are extremists”. Radicalism becomes extremism when violence is adopted as the sole means of achieving objectives.

At the individual level, there are several behavior indicators of white extremism. The first indicator is a totalistic mindset, where extremists believe that only divine law is valid and that God alone establishes the social order and systems to be followed. Consequently, all human-made laws are deemed illegitimate (Ayubi, 2004; Davis, 1984; Khatab, 2002; Nasir, 2011; Shepard, 1987; Wahab, 2019; Zain, 2019). Any opposition to this belief is regarded as a rebellion against God (Talafihah, Amin, & Zarif, 2017; Zulkarnain & Purnama, 2016).

The second indicator is a literal interpretation of scripture, disregarding contextual variables (Ghadbian, 2000; Wahab, 2019). Extremists strictly adhere to the literal statements of sacred texts. The third indicator is a symbolic understanding on religious scripts, prioritizing outward symbols over philosophy or essence. This symbolic approach oversimplifies complex realities, reflecting underdeveloped intellectual capacity (Hilmy, 2013; Wahab, 2019). For instance, associating whiteness with superiority, linking Arab with barbarism, connecting blackness with poverty, and so on (Hilmy, 2013).

The fourth indicator is a black-and-white or dichotomous way of thinking (Bruinessen, 2002; Sivan, 2004). This approach categorizes everything in life into two rigid extremes—right versus wrong or good versus evil—without acknowledging the existence of grey areas. Such dichotomous thinking limits the range of responses to various environmental conditions (Hilmy, 2013; Hidayat, 2014; Shihab, 2008). This mindset explains why extremists are often perceived as intolerant towards individuals outside their group (Idris, 2019). The fifth indicator is narrowmindedness. Extremists also tend to focus on superficial aspects rather than deeper, substantive values (Lakoff, 2004).

The sixth indicator is the presence of movements or efforts aimed at purification, which involve avoiding anything or anyone perceived as potentially contaminating their faith, creating an impression of exclusivity (Arjomand, 1984). This behavior is rooted in a doctrine advocating for ‘authenticity’ or the concept of an ‘authentic self’, reminiscent of an earlier era when divine revelations were still being delivered (Hilmy, 2013). This indicator often leads to behaviors characterized by a belief in their absolute righteousness, adopting principles of segregation between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ refusing to engage or collaborate with individuals of different races or religions, and even expressing hostility or negative sentiments toward other groups (Idris, 2019; Nurdin, 2005; Wahab, 2019). The seventh indicator is world-shattering behavior, such as disrupting meetings or forums organized by those they perceive as enemies (Idris, 2019; Wahab, 2019). This behavior

typically emerges when they gain significant numerical strength (Hamli, 2020; Nadzifah, 2018). The final indicator is the use of violence as the sole means to achieve their goals (Bötticher, 2017).

### *The Religious Beliefs Justifying White Extremism*

Throughout history, religion has been used both as a catalyst for liberation and as a means of justifying oppression. In terms of white extremism, religious beliefs have often been misused to support ideas of racial superiority and exclusion. By twisting sacred texts, claiming divine support, and combining religious beliefs with nationalist views, white extremists have tried to legitimize their actions and ideas. Essentially, religion has been misused throughout history to defend white extremism, including colonialism, slavery, and today's hate groups and nationalist efforts.

### *The Noah's Curse*

One example of how religious texts have been distorted can be seen in the interpretation of the "Curse of Ham" found in Genesis 9:20–27. This passage has been used to argue that Black people were divinely destined to serve others (Goldenberg, 2003). In the Book of Genesis, Noah is defined as a righteous man chosen by God to spread His word. One of Noah's most well-known acts was building an ark to survive the great flood, which was meant to cleanse the world of corruption and violence (Genesis 6:13-14; 5:32; 9:18-19). Noah's three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—joined him on the ark during the flood and later came to be viewed as the ancestors of different groups: Shem of the Semitic peoples, Japheth of European and Eurasian groups, and Ham of African and Middle Eastern peoples (Schaefer, 2008).

After the flood, a significant event occurred that has been central to many later misinterpretations. In Genesis 9:20–27, Noah, now a farmer, planted a vineyard and one day became drunk on wine. He lay naked in his tent, and Ham, the father of Canaan, saw him in this state and told his brothers, Shem, and Japheth. Unlike Ham, the two brothers covered their father with a cloth, walking backward so they would not see his nakedness (Genesis 9:22-23). When Noah woke up and learned what had happened, he cursed Canaan, saying, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers" (Genesis 9:25). The exact reason for Noah's curse remains unclear. Some believe Noah avoided cursing Ham directly because Ham had been blessed by God. However, over time, this passage was distorted and used to justify racial biases, particularly against Africans. Although the Bible does not explicitly connect Ham's descendants to Africans or imply any racial distinctions, historical interpreters constructed this link to suit the socio-political agendas of colonialism. This fabricated connection between Ham and Africans gave European colonizers and slaveholders a convenient religious justification for the transatlantic slave trade and systemic oppression.

This misinterpretation became a core component of white supremacist ideologies. During the 17th and 18th centuries, European colonizers and slaveholders leaned heavily on the so-called "Curse of Ham" to justify enslaving African peoples (Goldenberg, 2003). By framing this subjugation as divinely mandated, they 'twisted' religion into a tool for maintaining systems of exploitation. Stimulatingly, Noah's curse specifically targeted Canaan—not all of Ham's descendants—but this detail was conveniently ignored by those pushing racial hierarchies. Instead, the curse was expanded to include all people believed to be of 'Ham's descendants', further reinforcing systems of slavery and racial discrimination.

The misapplication of the "Curse of Ham" have not stopped. White supremacist groups use other biblical passages to support their agenda. For example, Ephesians 6:5, which instructs slaves to obey their masters, was frequently quoted alongside the "Curse of Ham". By selectively interpreting scripture, these groups advanced ideas of obedience, rigid hierarchies, and racial superiority. This manipulation of religious texts provided a theological framework that white supremacist ideologies relied on to justify systems of oppression and maintain power structures favoring white dominance. In the end, these distortions of scripture went far beyond justifying slavery. They were part of a deliberate effort to legitimize and sustain racial hierarchies. By framing subjugation as both a religious and social mandate, these interpretations have rooted systemic inequality and left behind a legacy of racial injustice that still impacts society today.

### *The Narrative of Abraham, Hagar, and Their Descendants*



Abraham as a figure is the cornerstone of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, embodying themes of faith, covenant, and lineage that resonate deeply across this tradition (Smith, 2012). complexity of their family dynamics intertwines with miracles and human imperfections (Brown, 2015). Over time, theological interpretations have amplified certain aspects, often favoring Isaac's lineage over Hagar's and Ishmael. Later this bias has far-reaching implications, shaping societal views on race, power, and even slavery (Johnson, 2018).

Abraham's journey begins with God's covenant, promising he will be a father of many nations (Genesis 12:3-3; Collins, 2007). However, this promise was then conflicted with Sarah's struggle with infertility, a deeply personal trial combined with cultural pressure to produce heirs. Thus, to follow the customs of ancient Eastern, Sarah offered Hagar, her Egyptian slave, to Abraham as a surrogate (Genesis 16:1-4; Matthews, 2013). Although that arrangement could be seen as pragmatic by the era's standard, it underscores the stark inequality between the two women. Hagar, as Sarah's property, had no real agency in the matter. Yet when she becomes pregnant, the balance of power subtly shifts, sparking tensions that drive Hagar to flee into the wilderness (Genesis 16:6-7; Coogan, 2011).

The expulsion of Hagar is revisited in Genesis 21:8-14, where the stakes are even higher. With Isaac now born, Sarah demands that Abraham cast out Hagar and Ishmael to secure her son's inheritance (Genesis 21:10; Hamilton, 2005). Abraham is torn, caught between familial loyalty and Sarah's demands. It is only after God reassures him that Ishmael will also be blessed and father a great nation that Abraham consents (Genesis 21:12-13). This moment is laden with tension, illustrating how divine intervention intersects with human fragility. Remarkably, even in the wilderness, where Hagar and Ishmael are left vulnerable, God's protection affirms their inclusion in the larger Abrahamic promise (Alter, 2018).

Hagar's identity as an Egyptian slave situates her within a framework of racial and social subjugation (Anderson, 2014). Her portrayal as a black African woman in the narrative ties her fate to her status as Sarah's property, leaving her vulnerable to exploitation and eventual expulsion (Exum, 1995 The Biblical text offer scant detail about Hagar's autonomy and personal history, which highlights her marginalization (Van Seters, 2004). Yet, in both Rabbinic and Islamic present her in a more layered light. in some Midrashic interpretations, Hagar is depicted as a righteous woman, one that is attuned with God's will (Baskin, 2006). In similar narrative the Islamic culture celebrate her perseverance, particularly her search for water for Ishmael are commemorated in their pilgrimage (Hajj) culture (Ahmed, 2010). Through these perspective Hagar emerges no longer as a merely a servant but as a resilient and devoted mother, embodying strength during hard time.

Ishmael has been acknowledged by the bible as the progenitor of the twelve tribal leaders (Genesis 25:12-18), fulfilling God's Promise to make him a great nation (Tigay, 1996), However Ishmael achievement is overshadowed in the narrative by Isaac, who is framed as the "Child of Promise" (Genesis 17:19-21). The prioritization of Isaac over Ishmael reflects a broader pattern in western theological traditions, where interpretation have often aligned with Eurocentric views that reinforces social hierarchies (Taylor, 2016). This narrative contradicts with the Islamic tradition esteems Ishmael as both prophet and an ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Qur'an 2:127-129; Nasr, 2007). This divergence further highlights how religious viewpoint influence cultural understandings of Abraham's lineage. While both the Bible and the Quran accounts for God's favor towards Ishmael, western reading have frequently downplayed his significance, relegating his descendants to a secondary status (Kugel, 2003). This bias intricately tied to the narratives that privileged Western, Christian frameworks, and so often at the expense of the Arab and African decent.

Depiction of Hagar as black African slave played a troubling role in the shaping racial ideologies, during the colonial and transatlantic slavery period (Thompson, 1998). The records of Hagar's servitude are wielded to justify racial hierarchies, depicting blackness and slavery as divinely sanctioned conditions (Hayes, 2011). The distortion theology perpetuated further the white supremacy, dehumanizing Africans people and legitimizing their exploitation under the skewed narratives (Blount, 2013). in regards to the distortion, critical scholars have worked to dismantle these interpretations, by shifting the narratives to her resilience and divine blessings which extend to her and Ishmael, exposing the racial and social prejudice

embedded in traditional readings of Hagar's story (Washington, 2005). This reclamation challenges Eurocentric interpretations, affirming the shared humanity and inherent worth of all Abraham's descendants (Weems, 1991).

Ultimately, the story of Hagar and Ishmael, when examined through historical, theological, and sociological perspectives, reveals how interpretative choices have reinforced cultural and racial hierarchies (Sugirtharajah, 2002). The depiction of Hagar's descendants as marginalized mirrors broader societal patterns, where selective readings of religious texts have been used to exclude and devalue African and Arab identities within Abrahamic traditions (Lopez, 2014). Reclaiming Hagar's story requires confronting these biases head-on, embracing her full legacy (Kassam, 2017). As a figure of resilience and divine favor, Hagar's story offers a powerful vision of inclusivity, transcending racial and cultural boundaries and challenging entrenched ideas of exclusion and supremacy.

## Conclusions

Whiteness is a complex idea that has been influenced by history and still has an impact on relationships, societies, and personal identities. It initially gained traction during the colonial era and was subsequently strengthened by laws, customs, and social mores, becoming a gauge of privilege and power. Whiteness determines who has access to resources, whose voices are heard, and which history are remembered; it is not only about skin color. Society may better comprehend the injustices it perpetuates and strive toward a future that really embraces diversity and justice if it examines how whiteness functions in greater detail.

Looking at the evolution of Neanderthals and Homo sapiens offers a fascinating window into human history, including why humans became 'white'. Neanderthals were skilled hunters and had their own social structures, but it was Homo sapiens' ability to think critically and adapt to different environments that allowed them to thrive and spread across the world. Unfortunately, this evolutionary history has been misrepresented by others to bolster racist beliefs. This just emphasizes how important it is to do thorough and truthful scientific research on human evolution. The tale of Neanderthals and modern humans also emphasizes our common heritage, serving as a reminder to society of the complexity and variety of humanity.

Certain acts are frequently unmistakable markers of white extremism. A totalistic attitude, in which everything is viewed in black-and-white with no space for subtlety, is a big indicator. A strict, literal interpretation of religious scriptures that disregards their historical context is another. There's also symbolic thinking, where certain symbols or beliefs are given more weight than they deserve. People with these views often think in narrow, fixed ways and are unwilling to entertain other perspectives. Some groups within this movement also promote 'purification' efforts, trying to reshape society based on their own narrow ideals. These radical organizations also frequently engage in revolutionary activity and resort to violence in order to accomplish their objectives.

Misunderstood religious texts are frequently the source of the ideas that fuel white extremism. An illustration of this is the tale of Noah and his offspring. The story has been twisted over time to support white supremacy and the oppression of Africans. This view is a blatant misapplication of text, according to contemporary biblical academics. Comparably, historical, theological, and sociological analyses of the Hagar and Ishmael story demonstrate how these kinds of myths have influenced racial and cultural hierarchy. By casting Hagar's descendants as inferior and marginalized, dominant cultural narratives have played a role in devaluing African and Arab identities within religious traditions. This selective use of religious texts is part of a larger societal pattern, where racial and ethnic divisions are reinforced through carefully chosen interpretations.

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