White Supremacy’s Old Gods
The Far Right and Neopaganism

In 2014, a White supremacist leader, Frazier Glenn Cross, Jr. (also known as F. Glenn Miller), killed three people outside Jewish organizations in Overland Park, Kansas. Although all three were actually Christian, Cross’s intended target was clear, as was the religious justification he found for his supremacist beliefs. Cross, founder of the Carolina Knights of the KKK, which later became the White Patriot Party, was a convert from Christianity to a neonazi interpretation of the pre-Christian, Northern European and Germanic religion of Odinism. In his self-published 1999 autobiography, A White Man Speaks Out, he wrote:

I’d love to see North America’s 100 million Aryan Christians convert to the religion invented by their own race and practiced for a thousand generations before the Jews thought up Christianity. / Odinism! This was the religion for a strong heroic people, the Germanic people, from whose loins we all descended, be we German, English, Scott [sic], Irish, or Scandinavian, in whole or in part. / Odin! Odin! Odin! Was the battle cry of our ancestors; their light eyes ablaze with the glare of the predator, as they swept over and conquered the decadent multi-racial Roman Empire. / And Valhalla does not accept Negroes. There’s a sign over the pearly gates there which reads, “Whites only.”

Cross’ hateful manifesto on the eve of the 21st Century represents more than just the ramblings of one violent terrorist. His argument that White people need to embrace their pre-Christian roots in service of the White race is one increasingly being adopted by White supremacists across Europe and North America. More than a decade ago, in 2003, comparative religion scholar Mattias Gardell wrote that racist forms of neopaganism were already outpacing traditional monotheistic versions of White supremacism. Today, they’re even more prevalent, as White supremacists exploit political instability driven by anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment in Europe, and the racist backlash surging under Donald Trump in the United States.

Only about 0.3 percent of the U.S. population follow beliefs related to neopaganism, an umbrella term for modern interpretations of polytheist and pantheist religions that predate Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Within that figure, an even smaller number—just 7,878 people according to one community census—practice Scandinavian and Germanic forms of neopaganism known as Heathenry. Perhaps the most recognized Heathen faith is Ásatrú, a polytheist religion venerating old Norse gods and goddesses. However, despite its small numbers—in 1996, religion scholar Jeffrey Kaplan estimated fewer than 1,000 U.S. adherents—Ásatrú has come to figure prominently in modern U.S. White supremacist movements.

While most U.S. Ásatrúar (followers of Ásatrú) are inclusive, there exists a divide within Heathen communities about who should be allowed to take up ancient Scandinavian and Germanic spiritual practices. Those who eschew racism and invite potential members regardless of ethnic background are termed “universalists.” Conversely, those groups calling themselves “folkish” stipulate that only members with Northern European
or Germanic ancestry may join. Many of these “folkish” groups are overtly White supremacist, claiming that Ásatrú is the true religion of the superior “Aryan race.”

White supremacists practicing Ásatrú may also use the term Odinism, named after the god Odin, though not all self-identified Odinist groups are White supremacist, and there are ongoing debates within Ásatrú communities about the differences implied by the terms. Others use the name Wotanism. The late White supremacist and convicted murderer David Lane promoted the term Wotanism to serve as an explicitly racist form of Odinism. Lane, who also created the “14 Words” slogan widely cited by White supremacists—“We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children”—favored Wotanism in part because, he explained, “W.O.T.A.N. makes a perfect acronym for Will Of The Aryan Nation.”

By whatever name, the ties between some neopagans and organized racist movements are clear. “The most cursory glimpse at White-racist publications, Web pages, and White-power lyrics,” warned Gardell, “reveals muscular heathens, pagan gods and goddesses, runes and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.” Racist versions of paganism had already become so popular among White supremacists that, by the time Gardell’s book, Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism, was published in 2003, they were displacing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and national socialist parties, and were rendering “earlier racist creeds, Klan and national socialist parties, and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.” Racist versions of paganism had already become so popular among White supremacists that, by the time Gardell’s book, Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism, was published in 2003, they were displacing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and national socialist parties, and were rendering “earlier racist creeds, Klan and national socialist parties, and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.” Racist versions of paganism had already become so popular among White supremacists that, by the time Gardell’s book, Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism, was published in 2003, they were displacing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and national socialist parties, and were rendering “earlier racist creeds, Klan and national socialist parties, and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.” Racist versions of paganism had already become so popular among White supremacists that, by the time Gardell’s book, Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism, was published in 2003, they were displacing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and national socialist parties, and were rendering “earlier racist creeds, Klan and national socialist parties, and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.” Racist versions of paganism had already become so popular among White supremacists that, by the time Gardell’s book, Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism, was published in 2003, they were displacing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and national socialist parties, and were rendering “earlier racist creeds, Klan and national socialist parties, and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.” Racist versions of paganism had already become so popular among White supremacists that, by the time Gardell’s book, Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism, was published in 2003, they were displacing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and national socialist parties, and were rendering “earlier racist creeds, Klan and national socialist parties, and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.” Racist versions of paganism had already become so popular among White supremacists that, by the time Gardell’s book, Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism, was published in 2003, they were displacing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and national socialist parties, and were rendering “earlier racist creeds, Klan and national socialist parties, and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.” Racist versions of paganism had already become so popular among White supremacists that, by the time Gardell’s book, Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism, was published in 2003, they were displacing organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and national socialist parties, and were rendering “earlier racist creeds, Klan and national socialist parties, and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.”

The numbers of incarcerated White supremacists finding themselves drawn to Ásatrú are also growing. Odinism was introduced to the American prison system in the late 1980s by adherents such as Danish immigrant Else Christensen, who traveled through the U.S. spreading the word about Odinism and setting up Odinist prison groups. In 2002, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported that Ásatrú was “one of the faiths that incarcerated White supremacists found most often.” For example, David Lane, who was sentenced to 150 years in prison for his role in the murder of a Jewish radio host, heavily promoted Ásatrú during his incarceration, before dying in prison in 2007.

In addition to the “true believers” drawn to Odinism, the religion has also become a useful organizational tool in providing White supremacists behind bars a chance to gather under the guise of religious worship. This strategy is common for many ethnically-based prison gangs, who are legally permitted to congregate with inmates dispersed across the prison only when united in worship. The Latin Kings, for example, organize under the cover of Santería, while Italian gangs organize under the facade of Catholic worship services. Given that the only jewelry prisoners are allowed to wear are wedding bands and religious insignia, wearing a Thor’s Hammer necklace (as Heathens have been legally permitted to do since 2005) can serve as a signal to other White supremacists in a prison environment structured by de facto racial segregation and interracial violence.

THE POWER OF VINLAND

For many White supremacists, the ability to connect with a religious identity they see as inherently White is alluring. Ásatrú, especially for men, is a celebration of virile Northern European hypermasculinity, a chance at re-enacting the glory of their presumed Viking ancestors. Followers in the U.S. take the idea of this legacy one step further through their notion of “Vinland,” the portion of North America (most likely eastern Canada) explored by Vikings prior to the conquest of Christopher Columbus. In Vinland they are able to envision a past in which they were both victors and victims, beating Columbus in the race for conquest yet not given their proper historical due.

Many “folkish” Ásatrúar, Odinists, and Wotanists defend their desire to restrict the religion to those with Northern European ancestry as akin to Native Americans practicing indigenous religious beliefs. The difference between the two groups, of course, is one of power. Native Americans strive to maintain their cultural and religious practices in the aftermath of centuries of colonization and genocide. White Odinists, by contrast, benefit from White supremacy and deny others membership out of concerns about White “purity” rather than cultural survival in the face of mass slaughter, forced sterilization, and the kidnapping, abuse, and cultural “reeducation” found at American Indian boarding schools.

Given that White people were the perpetrators of this colonization and genocide—and do not have an original claim to the land—professing a connection to Vinland enables White supremacist Odinists to “asser[t] a historical claim over North America,” according to David Perry, associate professor of history at Dominican University in Illinois. In other words, by laying claim to Vinland, Odinists tap into the idea of indigenous belonging while conveniently glossing over their status as settlers on stolen land.

As religion scholars Jennifer Snook, Thad Horrell, and Kristen Horton argue, when it comes to defining indigeneity, “Heathens in the United States certainly do not count.” But claims of indigeneity serve a powerful rhetorical purpose: [C]laiming indigeneity offers an opportunity to understand oneself not as a global villain, an invading destroyer of distinct and diverse cultures and a spreader of global mono-culture, but rather as a fellow victim of these historical atrocities. Most Heathens recognize that their ancestors were global conquerors. Most of these seem to celebrate the fact as an indication of their people’s potency and power. This allows the maintenance of their settler identity... To put it another way, White suprema-
cist Odinists assert their claims as “rightful” inhabitants of North America by paradoxically emphasizing their Northern European ancestry. At the same time, their adherence to Whites-only Odinist beliefs and hypermasculinity aids them in strategically celebrating their presumed ancestors’ conquest of foreign lands. In so doing, they are able to maintain the contradictory idea that they are both indigenous Vinlanders and powerful White invaders.

Above all, writes Perry, “They use the myth of Vinland to position themselves as righteous defenders in the wars of race and religion they believe are coming.”

**CONNECTIONS TO ANTISEMITISM: THE RIGHT FINDS ODINISM**

While White supremacist Odinists use their religion as a way to play at the bygone glory of hypermasculine Viking culture, they see Christianity, by contrast, as a “self-destructive theology created by Jews and forced on White people who were by nature supposedly very different,” in the words of Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) senior fellow Mark Potok.  

On its face, it might seem illogical for Odinists to embrace antisemitism. After all, as John Yeowell, a leading Odinist community figure and author on modern Odinism in the U.K. (also known by the pen name “Stubba”), writes:

> “Antisemitism is a Christian aberration and in no sense a product of the heathen tradition... In the pre-Christian period the Jewish diaspora had not yet spread to the still heathen lands of northern Europe and therefore the question of antisemitism does not arise in the historic tradition of Odinism.”

However, the contemporary White supremacist revival of Odinism is deeply rooted in antisemitism and Nazism. The veneration of ancient Scandinavian and Germanic religions has a long history in modern Europe, particularly in Germany since the 19th Century. Amid a backlash against the Industrial Revolution and German modernity, the 19th and early 20th Centuries saw the rise of the völkisch movement in Germany: a renaissance of romanticized notions about the “German people,” their history and folklore, and a yearning to return to a mythical agrarian past.

During Weimar-era Germany, writes Kaplan, some contingents of the German Youth Movement embraced Odinist beliefs that would later flourish in Nazi Germany, as well as “sympathizers abroad whose antisemitic beliefs would lead them to conclude that, as Christianity is built on a Jewish foundation, it too must be swept away in the construction of a millenarian ‘New Order.’”

During World War II, the “neo-völkisch” movement constituted a revival of this völkisch sentiment, as well as the heavy investment of prominent Third Reich leaders in Odinism. Adolf Hitler’s Schutzstaffel, or SS, for example, relied on Odinist mythology in their initiation rituals and cosmology. After the war, “völkisch ideology in general [was] discredited” in Germany, writes German literary scholar Stefanie von Schnurbein, yet Odinist groups in West Germany were also able to rebuild thanks to the restoration of constitutional protections for the freedom of religion. In the U.S., the American Nazi Party was founded with Odinist influences in 1959, followed by the first U.S. Ásatrú and Odinist organizations in the 1970s. In short order, the new groups would become divided between their White supremacist and universalist contingents.

Stephen McNallen, who became interested in Heathenry as a college student in Texas in the late 1960s, formed the Viking Brotherhood circa 1972 with Robert Stine. This group in turn became the first American Ásatrú organization, the Asatru Free Assembly, about four years later. By 1978, McNallen sought to lessen Odinism’s association with Nazism though he expressed sympathy for the “legitimate frustrations of White men who are concerned for their kind.” He ultimately shut down the Asatru Free Assembly in 1987 before founding the folkish Asatru Folk Assembly in 1994. McNallen is most recently responsible for forming the Wotan Network, a White nationalist Odinist group dedicated to spreading White nationalist Heathen memes.)

Shortly after McNallen disbanded the Asatru Free Assembly, White supremacist Valgard Murray formed the Asatru Alliance (AA) to take its place. Murray was a former member of the American Nazi Party who, until the 1960s, signed his letters with the phrase “Heil Hitler!” He also had a history of violent rhetoric: Viking Brotherhood co-founder Robert Stine, a fellow member of the Asatru Free Assembly and former member of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party, claimed that Murray once threatened to kill a gay man at an official Asatru Free Assembly gathering.

While the current bylaws of the AA claim that the organization “do[es] not practice, preach, or promote hatred, bigotry, or racism,” Murray has served as its chief religious leader since 1997, as well as its treasurer and public contact.

**THE “THUG REICH”**

Murray’s threats of violence weren’t an isolated example. Odinist groups that use Vinland as a defining part of their organizational identity, such as Vinlanders Social Club—who go by the slogan “Thug Reich”—and Wolves of Vinland, have frequently embraced violence. Vinlanders Social Club, according to the ADL, is “one of the larger racist skinhead groups in the United States and has a high association with violence, including multiple murders.” They were formed in 2003 in the U.S. Midwest by one-time members of the Outlaw Hammerskins, a breakaway faction from the Hammerskin Nation coalition of White supremacist skinhead groups. Decrying what they see as the downfall of Western civilization, the group has developed a reputation for us-
In the face of economic despair and entitled, hypermasculine White rage, embracing a religion that seems to be all about White male victory can be appealing.

Policy Institute’s biennial Halloween event in 2015, which was held at the National Press Club, two blocks from the Obama White House. Given how White supremacist violence has become more mainstreamed during the Trump era, especially after the lethal violence in Charlottesville, Wolves of Vinland and groups like them seem bound to grow. And with the token inclusion of gay male members of the Alt Right, such as Donovan and Milo Yiannopolous, these movements also have the potential to attract members from a community typically thought to be excluded from right-wing movements. (Of course, there have long been gay men among the leadership of right-wing groups, although they’ve often been easily disposed of, such as Ernst Röhm, the head of the Nazi Brownshirts, who was ultimately assassinated during the Night of the Long Knives in 1934.)

Other White supremacist Odinists have been linked to multiple high-profile acts of violence and murder in recent years. Anders Breivik, Norway’s worst mass killer who murdered 77 people (mostly youth) in 2011, more recently revealed that he has long considered himself an Odinist. Potential signs of Breivik’s Odinism may not have been as well understood in 2011, prior to the rise of the Alt Right. But during his trial in 2012, Breivik explained how he’d named various of his possessions after Odinist religious beliefs. In 2016, he removed all doubt, declaring during a court proceeding, “I’m an Odinist, I believe in the only god, Odin.” He added that he “had never truly believed in Christianity.”

Since the public rise of the Alt Right, there has been a string of White supremacist, pagan-inflected crimes in 2017. In March 2017, Vinlanders Social Club cofounder Brien James led another White nationalist group he’d founded, The American Guard—formerly the In-suits political world of the Alt Right. Member Jack Donovan made an appearance at the White supremacist National Policy Institute’s biennial Halloween event in 2015, which was held at the National Press Club, two blocks from the Obama White House. Given how White supremacist violence has become more mainstreamed during the Trump era, especially after the lethal violence in Charlottesville, Wolves of Vinland and groups like them seem bound to grow. And with the token inclusion of gay male members of the Alt Right, such as Donovan and Milo Yiannopolous, these movements also have the potential to attract members from a community typically thought to be excluded from right-wing movements. (Of course, there have long been gay men among the leadership of right-wing groups, although they’ve often been easily disposed of, such as Ernst Röhm, the head of the Nazi Brownshirts, who was ultimately assassinated during the Night of the Long Knives in 1934.)

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to social media, with at least 42 state chapters, some of which have only a few adherents, and others with at least 75 members.63

Some members of Soldiers of Odin are notable for their associations with other racist groups, such as Jason Tankersley, founder of the Maryland Skinheads, and Bradley Jenkins, an Alabama neo-nazi KKK leader. Foreshadowing the violence that would unfold in Charlottesville, 27-year-old Jani (no last name given), one of the group’s leaders in Kemi, told the U.K.’s Daily Mail, “The Government screwed things up so bad, and we are the consequence. Politicians are allowing migrants to rape our women, and they are doing nothing about it. There will be a war on the streets, and we are ready to fight.”64

In some regards, that war on the streets may have been underway already. In 2016, Finnish police opened an investigation into three men who had worn Soldiers of Odin jackets while assaulting a man in the city of Imatra.65 Immigrants in Finland report fearing for their safety as a result of the menacing patrols; Kurdish migrant Hasim Keles explains, “We [asylum seekers] don’t go into town any more, particularly in the evenings, because we’re scared of getting beaten up by the Soldiers of Odin.”66

Juha-Matti Kinnunen, a Soldiers of Odin chapter leader in Joensuu, Finland, felt comfortable telling a British journalist, “If things carry on like this, ethnic cleansing will be necessary,”67—an ominous statement that can hardly be seen as a hollow threat on a continent haunted by genocide, whether during the Holocaust, the Bosnian war, or the Armenian genocide—by genocide, whether during the Holocaust, the Bosnian war, or the Armenian genocide.

Lari Kuosmanen, another Joensuu chapter leader, claims, “The cops say they hate us, but on the street they often give us the thumbs-up...Some of them would probably join us if they could.”68 In a similar claim, Soldiers of Odin USA also boast of being the “eyes and ears” of the police, characterizing their patrols as “observe-and-report” operations.69 This is special cause for concern given FBI reports from 2006, 2009, and 2015 on the infiltration of White supremacists into law enforcement roles.70

GENDERED VIOLENCE IN RIGHT-WING NEOPAGANISM

Soldiers of Odin’s leaders say their founding motivation was to protect White women’s “honor” in the face of an epidemic of sexual violence allegedly being committed by Muslim refugees in Europe. Between December 2015 and January 2016, women in Helsinki, Finland, and in several German cities reported multiple incidents of sexual harassment and assault, by men who appeared to be Middle Eastern or North African, during holiday festivities. German police connected many of these reports instead to gang activity by men gathering near train stations for the purposes of mugging; and, as journalist Alex Shams points out, “Germans have only to look to Oktoberfest...or other mass drunken gatherings to remember that, unfortunately, misogynist men from many different cultural backgrounds engage in sexual harassment.”71 Still, the damage had been done, as anti-refugee extremists used the reports to justify assaulting asylum seekers and burning down refugee centers.72

“Where are the Freikorps when we need them?” Stephen McNallen wrote in response on Facebook, referencing the right-wing German-aligned mercenaries responsible for political assassinations after World War I. Many Freikorps members went on to become loyal servants of the Third Reich in the Sturmbteilung, the Nazi Party’s original paramilitary wing, colloquially known as the Brownshirts.73

In April 2016, a Soldiers of Odin USA Facebook group with more than 4,000 members declared that “it stands in opposition to the hordes of ‘refugees’ that have invaded Europe and will soon be coming to America, brining [sic] massive waves of rape and crime with them.”74 Contradicting previous assertions that they would serve only as the “eyes and ears” of the police, one graphic from the Facebook group declared:

We are not a nice, polite group that will do nothing but report outrages to the police. The police are overworked as it is, and hamstrung by the dictates of law. WE ARE NOT. We will BEAT THE LIVING SHIT out of any we catch raping American women and terrorizing American citizens.75 However—and unsurprisingly—the claimed concerns about protecting women from violence at the hands of immigrants and refugees also exist alongside a clear pattern of gendered violence at the hands of Odinists themselves. There was Vinlanders Social Club member Michael Parrish, who in 2009 murdered his girlfriend and their two-year-old son,76 for which he entered a guilty plea in 2010.77 Also in 2010, Vinlanders members Travis Ricci and Aaron Schmidt were indicted in Arizona78 after murdering a White woman walking at night with her Black boyfriend the previous fall.79 Separately, in 2011, Ricci was sentenced to 22 years in prison for slapping his girlfriend’s head into a wall during a party and stabbing two men who tried to intervene.80

Underlying these attacks are threads of misogyny throughout a male-dominated movement—one study found that Odinists in the U.S. are 65 percent male81—where women simultaneously serve as the rationale for outward-direct ed bigotry and violence and internal targets of domestic violence.

The misogyny within the movement makes sense for a culture that goes hand in hand with the hypermasculinity and rejection of femininity that’s common in the groups’ literature82 (and its social media, as Wolves of Vinland and other Odinists often add “#frosatsu” to their posts, a play on the words “bros” and “Ásatrú”). It’s also in their disarray of Christianity as a feminine, weak religion. Followers see the Norse gods, in contrast, as “the big tough white guys who, when they see a woman they want, grab her by the hair and pull her in the cave,” says Potok. “It’s seen as this ultra-male, super muscular religion, which is antithetical to Christianity and Judaism ... It’s a comic book religion in a lot of ways.”83

UNIVERSALISTS FIGHT BACK

The good news is that, despite this growing movement of violence, a large contingent of anti-racist Heathens are fighting to take back control of their religion. Given that universalist Heathens are already positioned as a mysterious minority within the West’s Christian-dominated religious landscape, the asso-
association of Ásatrú with White supremacy presents an embarrassing image problem. On a deeper level, universalists have collectively become fed up with their religious beliefs being used to justify bigotry and violence. These Heathens, despite being comprised primarily of White members, see the old Norse gods as deities who might call out to anyone, and they identify their community not through shared Whiteness but shared commitment to Heathen cosmology. Increasingly, they see it as their duty to not only distance themselves from White supremacist movements but to vocally denounce and organize against White supremacist Odinists.

The major universalist Ásatrú organization is The Troth, formerly the Ring of Troth. The Troth emerged in 1987, as religion scholar Jeffrey Kaplan writes, “from the wreckage of the Asatru Free Assembly,” and it represented remarkable diversity, with Jewish, Black, and LG-BTQ members. As the group noted on its website, “membership in the Troth and participation in our activities is open to worthy folks regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender or sexual orientation, and we do not permit discrimination on these grounds.”

An important turning point came in 2012, when a group called Heathens United Against Racism (HUAR) emerged to unite Heathens opposed to the “co-optation of our beliefs, traditions, and lore by racist groups.” Ryan Smith, one of HUAR’s co-founders, told PRA that the group first started as a discussion and educational space for Heathens to collectively unpack the troublesome problems of bigotry that have so long plagued their communities. “For a long time the racist, fascist types have effectively hogged the microphone and set the tone for how Heathenry is perceived, shouted down any opposition, and effectively marginalized all protest,” said Smith. “This was also made possible by a lot of self-identified moderates and liberals who wanted to be fair-minded, not cause strife in the community, or were defending personal relationships.”

Over time, HUAR’s mission became one of taking bold stances against White supremacy and fascism. Although in previous years, the White nationalist wing of Heathenry engaged in what Smith called “very careful plausible deniability,” he continued.

As we stepped up our efforts and the Alt Right became more visible, the [Asatru Folk Assembly] became more blatant in their rhetoric and positions and more actively linked itself to the rising Alt Right. They effectively self-radicalized and in the process also self-isolated, making it easier to rally opposition and support for genuinely inclusive community.

Women simultaneously serve as the rationale for outward-directed bigotry and violence and internal targets of domestic violence.

HUAR members’ increased education about these issues, and the AFA’s increasingly visible alignment with the Alt Right, caused HUAR to “shift in the direction of exposure, denunciation, and in some cases direct action in solidarity with movements like Black Lives Matter” and antifa, Smith says. HUAR has also sought to hamper Soldiers of Odin’s organizing by publicizing any information they obtain about Soldiers of Odin’s members and supporters, internal organizational structure, and key leaders. Their efforts have sometimes resulted in venues pulling their support from Odinist events, for instance persuading The Cotillion Room and Garden, an events center and wedding hall in Independence, Missouri, to cancel a book-signing event with author and Asatru Folk Assembly member Bryan Wilton.

Smith says HUAR has developed “a substantial, international support base,” including chapters in the U.S., U.K., and Canada, and online connections with the Scandinavian Heathen group Svin-fylking. This international networking has enabled them to coordinate multiple intercontinental actions. In May 2016, according to Smith, HUAR organized an event called Light the Beacons, in which Heathens lit candles and bonfires at over 200 locations across four continents to demonstrate solidarity with inclusive Heathenry. The same year, HUAR took part in signing Declaration 127, an open letter approved by 180 Heathen organizations in 20 countries that publicly disavowed and broke ties with the Asatru Folk Assembly based on the AFA’s “long and well-documented history of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, sexuality, and gender identity.”

As White supremacist Ásatrúr, Odinists, and Wotanists continue to grow in number and influence across North America and Europe, it will be essential to better understand, document, and track their growth. It is critical to have a full view of the connections between racism, antisemitism, and misogyny that animate White supremacist appeals to pre-Christian European religion as activists and researchers develop best practices for countering their recruitment strategies. Going forward, anti-racist advocates will need to continue challenging and dismantling pseudoscientific theories of Aryan racial purity and superiority, ahistorical claims about the nature of pan-European White identity, and teachings that pit marginalized groups against one another. Above all, advocates will need to continue their sustained and vocal pushback on the increasing prominence and validity given to these types of groups by the Trump administration and those adjacent to it. Through these means, as well as through partnering with anti-racist Heathen groups like HUAR, White supremacist Odinism can be countered.

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