

# THE STEPHEN MILLER EMAILS

## Once Far-Right White Nationalist Ideas Are Now U.S. Policies

AMERICA'S  
VOICE

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Newly leaked emails have recently proven what has been obvious for a long time: Stephen Miller, an adviser with unique influence in the White House, is a white nationalist, obsessed with xenophobic ideas and long on xenophobic ties. Unfortunately, this is not an abstract fact. Stephen Miller's ideology and associations have profound impact on millions of Americans' lives. He has shaped devastating policies from the Muslim ban to zero tolerance family separations. Even if Trump is removed from office tomorrow, it may take years to undo all that Miller has done. And if Trump is not soon removed from office, there is no telling what else Miller may try to do.

On November 12, 2019, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) launched a new series of reports examining a trove of White House senior adviser Stephen Miller's emails. The emails reveal Miller to be deeply familiar with websites and ideas that are associated with the white nationalist movement. For some, this proof of Miller's extremist tendencies might not be surprising. Still, the implications are severe when considering the influence Miller has in shaping immigration policy that affects millions of people and alters the values the United States projects to the rest of the world.

The SPLC obtained over 900 emails between Miller, senior editors at Breitbart, and Katie McHugh, an editor for Breitbart from April 2014 to June 2017.

McHugh, who was fired from Breitbart for Islamophobic tweets in 2017 but has since renounced her far-right views, handed over her emails with Miller from March 4, 2015, to June 27, 2016. At the

time, Miller was a senior aide to then-Senator Jeff Sessions and was transitioning to the Trump campaign team.

The emails show Miller lamenting the removal of Confederate flags after a white supremacist terrorist attack. They revealed that Miller frequently shared links to white nationalist websites like VDARE and American Renaissance. And the emails prove Miller's xenophobic zealotry is rooted in his white nationalist ties.

Miller's association with white nationalism is not new information, but these emails give us additional proof that he was actively promoting white nationalism in the run-up to joining the Trump campaign. And these emails depict a crucial moment shortly before Miller began to eschew written communications, knowing that his ideas would come under greater scrutiny while working for Trump. But it is highly unlikely that Miller kept his white nationalist ideas hidden away after joining the new team. In fact, his emails help to foreshadow the policy ideas he would push once inside the White House.

Once a member of the new Administration, Miller quickly set out to translate the ideas formerly contained in the pages of Breitbart and other far right nationalist websites and networks into official U.S. policy. From the transition team onward, Miller showed sharp elbows to anyone who hesitated to match his xenophobic zeal. One of a handful of staff members to remain in power over all three years of the Trump Administration, Miller has been successful in consolidating power and controlling the Administration's direction on immigration policy. From the Muslim ban to slashing refugee admissions to attacking TPS to xenophobic electoral strategies, Miller's ideas have been extremist and anti-immigrant, through and through.

Thanks to Miller, what were once far-right, white nationalist ideas are now U.S. policy. [Andrew Anglin](#) of the white supremacist site [Daily Stormer](#) appeared to agree that Miller was a conduit for white nationalism inside the halls of power, [writing](#) in 2018 that Miller “actually is pushing for white nationalist policies. That doesn’t mean he is a ‘white nationalist.’ But all of the policies he is advocating are the ones that white nationalists would be advocating in his position. Again: everything that he does is intended to stop brown people coming in while getting as many as possible out.”

Examining the leaked emails, we can draw links from Miller’s white nationalist ideas to the policies of the Trump Administration. Doing this reveals the motivations behind the Administration’s immigration policies and the ideas that animate one of the President’s most trusted advisers.

## Slashing Refugee Admissions

When Pope Francis visited the U.S. in September 2015 to address a [joint session of Congress](#) on rejecting “a mindset of hostility” towards immigrants, Miller spent his time envisioning a racist apocalypse. Miller dashed off [an email](#) to Breitbart editors following the visit, writing, “you see the Pope saying west must, in effect, get rid of borders. Someone should point out the parallels to Camp of the Saints.”

This was a reference to a [violently racist French novel](#) popular with white nationalists; former White House adviser Steve Bannon also often mentioned it. The novel is a racist screed that depicts non-white refugees who come to Europe and then destroy it from the inside out. An English translation of this obscure novel from the 1970s is published by the [Social Contract Press](#), which was founded by the late [John Tanton](#) — a white nationalist who helped found a network of anti-immigrant organizations including the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), both hate groups with deep ties to [Miller](#) and the Trump [Administration](#). Miller’s email makes clear that he views the world through a similarly racist lens and believes that non-white refugees are an existential threat to the U.S. And. He was apparently triggered by the Pope [reminding Congress](#), “in recent centuries, millions of people came to this land to

pursue their dream of building a future in freedom. We, the people of this continent, are not fearful of foreigners, because most of us were once foreigners.”

It is therefore no surprise when Miller, working at the White House, once [reportedly](#) said: “I would be happy if not a single refugee foot ever again touched America’s soil.”

Miller has worked hard to transform these words into policy inside the White House. For three years, he has pushed to decrease or eliminate refugee admissions. In deliberations this year, Miller suggested capping refugee admissions at zero for FY 2020, according to reporting by [Politico](#). In the end, the cap was set at [only 18,000](#), a new [record low](#). Miller has been working the Administration down to such a low number for years. For FY 2019, the Administration set the cap at just [30,000](#), the lowest it has been since the caps were first established in the 1980s. The year before, Miller had pushed for setting the cap at [15,000](#), with the Trump ultimately setting the cap at [45,000](#). [Julie Hirschfeld Davis](#) for the New York Times characterized these cuts to refugee admissions as a fundamental change to the face of legal immigration in America.

## Gutting Asylum and Separating Families

The Trump Administration has waged an [all-out assault](#) on our [asylum](#) process, [attempting](#) to eliminate the process in all but name. One of the Administration’s most tragic developments has been the zero tolerance [family separation](#) policy, with Miller playing a [crucial role](#) in pushing the policy forward. He argued that the family separation policy would be a deterrent against future migration; [it wasn’t](#). The policy separated [more than 5,400 children](#) from their families, with some [children kept in cages](#) and tent cities. Numerous [doctors](#) and [pediatricians](#) warned of the dangers of the policy and its potential to cause [permanent harm](#). Despite the horrors, Miller said that for him, the family separation policy “[was a simple decision](#).”

Miller’s “Camp of the Saints” worldview is critical to keep in mind when thinking about his determination to separate thousands of children from their families. Chelsea Stieber, professor of French and Francophone

studies at Catholic University of America said, "a central conceit in the novel is that you cannot respect the humanity of all beings — that you must create a hierarchy and that the white West is the most human and thus must reject this subhuman group." Miller's actions suggest he uses a similar conceit in order to reject the humanity of asylum-seeking families out of a warped delusion that they represent a fundamental threat to the U.S.

Miller has shown a preference for other racist literature in addition to "Camp of the Saints.". In July 2015, Miller praised an article by Jason Richwine that erroneously claimed that Hispanic immigrants would unlikely be able to achieve social mobility "like the Irish and Italians of Ellis Island lore, coming to the U.S. as menial laborers but rising to the middle class within a few generations." Several years earlier, Richwine had been forced to publicly resign from the Heritage Foundation after public outcry against his doctoral thesis, in which he claimed that Hispanics are biologically less intelligent than whites.

In his emails, Miller also lauded the Immigration Act of 1924, which all but excluded immigrants from Asian and African nations and was praised by Hitler as the type of policy he sought to implement. Like his boss at the time, Jeff Sessions, Miller is apparently a fan of the 30th president, Calvin Coolidge, who signed the Act. In 2015 Miller wrote that Immigrant Heritage Month was "a good opportunity to remind people about the heritage established by Calvin Coolidge."

The racist ideas Miller was promoting reflect why Miller may see a horrific, trauma-inducing policy like separating thousands of children from their families as a worthwhile deterrent and a "simple decision."

## The Muslim Ban

In July 2015, Miller shot off an email to McHugh, Steven Bannon (then-CEO of Breitbart), and Breitbart editor Julia Hahn, to perversely brag that a Swedish political party founded by fascists had adopted one of his ideas. Miller had proposed to have a gay pride parade through a neighborhood where a majority of Muslims lived, incite division between the two groups, and then argue that Muslims did not support liberal rights. In the email, Miller claims to have pitched the idea to a leading Islamophobe in the U.S.,

Pamela Geller, and their apparent connection should not be overlooked.

Pamela Geller first came to national prominence with the anti-Muslim campaign opposing the Park 51 Islamic Center project in Manhattan, which she deemed the "Ground Zero Mosque." In 2017, Geller said, "Muslim immigration is tied directly to Islamic terror. If there's no Muslim immigration, you would not have Islamic terror." A recent letter signed by 54 leading civil rights organizations, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, cited Miller's alleged discussions with Geller as one of several reasons Miller must resign.

Miller's emails reflect similar messages as Geller, making the false assertion in a 2015 email that the "U.S. has been taking in Muslim refugees for decades, without any kind of pause or assimilation effort, creating huge pockets of radicalization."

The extent of Miller's Islamophobia and relationship with Geller is unclear, but it is possible they met during the years Miller worked with another leading Islamophobe, David Horowitz, and his so-called Freedom Center. The SPLC has previously documented a decade-long relationship where Miller was the national director for an organization funded by Horowitz, which claimed "nowhere in the world where one can escape the jihad. Wherever Muslims are found, which is in almost every country on the planet, there are adherents of the ideology of jihad." This fear-mongering would continue to show up in Miller's ideas.

In another email from Miller in 2015, after the terror attack San Bernardino, California, Miller blamed the Middle Eastern heritage of the attackers even though they were born in the U.S. Miller wrote: "the San Bernardino killer was born here to Pakistani immigrants? You can't screen for that. The chatanooga [sic] killer came here from Kuwait when he was 6! If you bring in more people who support Sharia you get more terrorism." In this email, attempting to link all Muslim immigrants to such horrific acts.

A year and a half later, Miller would again discuss a plan to target Muslims with Steve Bannon, but now, instead of trying to stir resentment and outrage at

Breitbart, they were both in positions of real power. Bannon had joined the Trump campaign not long after Miller, and they sought to quickly put into effect Trump's campaign promise of "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." Miller wrote the first version of the Muslim Ban, which barred nationals from seven Muslim-majority countries from the U.S. and was announced within Trump's first week in office in 2017.

Massive confusion followed the announcement of the ban, which left lawyers, immigrants, U.S. permanent residents, elected officials, and even immigration agents without answers. Over 721 people were initially detained, and some 60,000 individuals had their visas revoked. The courts quickly blocked the ban, and Miller was reportedly removed from the revision process. But after a few cosmetic changes were made to the ban, Miller went on Fox News to make sure everyone knew the follow-up versions still preserved the discriminatory nature he outlined in the original. Miller said that the second ban had the "same basic policy outcome for the country," which was later cited by the judge who blocked the Administration's second attempt at the Muslim ban.

## **A Push to End Temporary Protected Status (TPS)**

As the strongest ever recorded hurricane to hit Mexico made landfall in 2015, Miller cynically dismissed the destruction of the hurricane in an email; instead, he wanted Breitbart to warn against any attempt to provide Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to displaced Mexican nationals. Miller warned that Mexicans affected by the hurricane "will all get TPS. And all the ones here will get TPS too. That needs to be the weekend's BIG story. TPS is everything." Miller was taking a program that exists to protect people when their home country experiences disaster, and blowing it up into yet another xenophobic fear.

Miller appears to have gotten his idea from the white nationalist website VDare, where an article was posted earlier that day fear-mongering over the exact same scenario. Miller then sent McHugh the link to the VDare article.

Once inside the Administration, Miller seems to have still felt that "TPS is everything." Miller pushed to end TPS designations affecting some 300,000 immigrants, over the objections from U.S. embassies and regional experts who argued the State Department should not end TPS for Hondurans, Salvadorans, and Haitians. Despite the warnings from experts, Miller called then-DHS Chief of Staff Chad Wolf and top State Department advisers and told them to end TPS anyway, according to reporting from the Washington Post. A subsequent court ruling that temporarily blocked Miller and the Administration's efforts to end TPS cited potential racial "animus" as a motivating factor.

The Administration continues to try to end TPS for almost all of the recipients who were covered under the program when Trump first took office. They have also refused to grant TPS status to Venezuelans, despite severe and ongoing upheaval in that country. In September 2019, after a devastating hurricane hit the Bahamas, Trump responded by denying Bahamians TPS, calling them "bad people," "gang members," and "drug dealers."

## **Demonizing Immigrants**

The SPLC leaked emails also reveal Miller's history of fear-mongering against immigrants in order to paint them as terrorists and criminals. Michael Edison Hayden, who wrote about the emails for SPLC, writes that Miller "never highlights a violent crime committed by a white person. Sporadically, however, he uses the subject as a potential springboard for Breitbart to write about crimes by nonwhites. In one example from 2015, Miller sent an email to McHugh from his government email with the byline reading "illegal immigrant child sex offenders" and an attachment of alleged offender's names. But Miller wanted the information to not appear as if it had come from Sen. Sessions' office, writing "articles compiled by our staff. Didn't get from me."

Miller's xenophobic characterizations of immigrants stand in stark contrast to reality. Multiple studies looking into the issue have found no relationship between immigrants and crime. And many of the studies found that immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, bring a benefit to the



neighborhoods they join through economic and cultural revitalization.

Nevertheless, Miller doubled down on this belief while in the White House. Miller reportedly likes to start meetings by retelling horror stories of individual crimes. One of the first things the Trump Administration did was implement the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE) program, which Miller wanted to use to elevate anti-immigrant stories in the media. Several DHS officials pushed back, telling Miller that VOICE was meant to support victims and their families — not demonize immigrants. Miller has also reportedly pushed ICE officials to include personal details about detained immigrants in press releases, even though it would completely ignore due process and privacy rights.

## **Xenophobia as Electoral Strategy**

"Stress [the] symbolic importance of immigration," Miller wrote to Breitbart editors in March 2015 about Marco Rubio's 2016 presidential bid. It is hard to miss the xenophobic undertones in this single directive from Miller, centering on Rubio's Hispanic immigrant heritage. Miller was fixated on attacking Rubio's presidential bid and pushed Breitbart to write xenophobic attacks against him under the guise of news. In an email with the subject line "language," Miller wrote, "Rubio is an extremist who wants unlimited immigration, the American people are moderate and want to hit pause after the deluge." Here are a few more examples of how Miller wrote about Rubio, from the leaked emails:

- "Just a reminder that Rubio's bill would have legalized tens of thousands of the most dangerous criminal aliens, including gang members, sex offenders, and those with multiple criminal convictions."
- "#rubiosnewamericancentury" – referring to a Breitbart story about an undocumented man who was accused of raping a 64-year-old woman and beating her to death with a hammer.
- "Also, a good chance to re-use that [activist Sara] Blackwell quote about Rubio being a liar. He invents facts to hurt Americans, seems to be the trend."

Rubio was in Miller's sights because of his participation in the 2013 "Gang of Eight" immigration bill. Miller became so focused on Rubio that McHugh even wrote Miller to thank him after Rubio dropped out of the presidential race.

Miller used anti-immigrant strategies to pull candidates like Rubio down — while promoting Trump as a xenophobic leader. As McHugh put it: "My editors were expecting me to take white nationalist material from Stephen Miller and put it into News stories in order to boost the campaign of Donald Trump," she told CNN.

Presumably, Miller took Trump's unlikely victory in 2016 as a major sign that his xenophobic electoral strategy worked, and put it forward as the operating principle for the 2018 midterms. In an interview with Breitbart in May 2018, Miller clearly outlined the White House and Republican midterm political strategy for the year, saying, "the Democratic party is at grave risk of completely marginalizing itself from the American voters by continuing to lean into" pro-immigrant positions. Miller made it clear that the Republican strategy for the cycle would be to try and squeeze Democrats by fear-mongering against immigrants.

However, by this time, the logic behind the anti-immigrant strategy was already looking flawed. In 2017 in Virginia, Republican gubernatorial candidate Ed Gillespie ran on an ugly, xenophobic campaign, which backfired. In 2018, Miller's strategy failed again, with voters widely rejecting his anti-immigrant message and giving the Democrats their biggest electoral victory since Watergate. In 2019, xenophobia as an electoral strategy was *again* defeated, with Democrats winning governor's races in Kentucky and Louisiana.

Nevertheless, Miller has retained Trump's ear, and their campaign has already shown that they will try their divide and distract strategy once again in 2020.