

REAWAKEN AMERICA TOUR OVERVIEW

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This overview of the Reawaken America Tour event in Batavia focuses on six major themes, followed by suggestions of what we can do. More detailed descriptions and reflections can be found in coming weeks at <https://jimmyreader.blog>, but this brief report might be helpful.

Christian Nationalism

- The tour recruits people who are part of a Christian Nationalist movement - a merger of Christian faith, based on the “biblical worldview” of this movement, with the politics of “the New Right” that has captured control of the GOP. The goal from its inception in the 1970s has been to gain political power focused on governing according to traditional, even reactionary, ideas of “freedom, faith, and family.”
- This political/religious movement is well-funded and highly-organized from local offices to the highest levels of government. The organizers (Clay Clark and Michael Flynn) use these events to raise funds and recruit people to accomplish their goals.
- The event was a combination of Pentecostal revival, infomercials and vendors, and speakers and celebrities from a communications network supported by this movement, including podcasts, videos, websites, films, books, conferences, and events like these. The network is a closed-loop or “echo chamber” where most of the people get all their information about what’s true.

Binary worldview

- In this movement, everything is binary - right/wrong, good/evil, us/them - with no room for nuance and options and the possibility of different perspectives.
- Speakers refer constantly to a nebulous “they” as the threat and the enemy, which underlies the conspiracies. “They” are against us - trying to stop us - wanting to control us - deny our freedoms - take away our rights - destroy “our” country.

Conspiracies and lies

- The formal title of this tour is now “The Great Reawakening vs. The Great Reset.” - A 2010 book on economics and social/political changes coined the term. In 2020 the founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Klaus Schwab, co-authored a book with that name about how COVID-19 was changing everything and provided an opportunity to “reset” how we work together to create a more resilient, sustainable world. Somehow that has become a conspiracy theory about how the WEF and Schwab and “the global elite” are trying to control the world through various nefarious means. ... This actually was a major focus of many of the presentations and speakers.
- Many other conspiracies (all inter-related) share one common theme - “trust no one from the outside” - mainstream media, the government, politicians, researchers, scientists, etc. ... You can only believe what we tell you. (One of several cult-like characteristics of this event)
- Eric Trump, Michael Flynn, Kash Patel, Mike Lindell, and Clay Clark headlined this event and, along with many other speakers, used the same false narratives of the “stolen” 2020 election, ongoing election fraud (by Democrats), and now the “politicizing” and “weaponizing” of the DOJ and the FBI (e.g. the FBI “raid” on Mar-a-Lago) to stir up the receptive crowd. Shouts of affirmation, applause, even standing ovations was the consistent response from the audience.

Demonizing the other / Hate

- Words like “evil” and “demonic” were used throughout the event by multiple speakers, referring to President Biden, to LGBTQ people, to “the government,” to the unspecified “them.”
- Organizers resist the charge that their events stir up fear and hate wherever they go. When speakers, however, constantly use the language of hate – evil, demonic – and call for “enemies” to be destroyed, that is the result.
- This event builds on a narrative of evil and enemies – a narrative that people in the audience hear and watch all the time on sites like Rumble (<https://rumble.com/>), One America News Network (<https://www.oann.com/>), Alex Jones’ Infowar (<https://www.infowars.com/>), and The Glenn Beck Program (<https://www.glennbeck.com/st/podcast>).

Enemies to be destroyed - violence

- The event organizers also deny that violence follows their events. To be fair, there was no violence, or hint of physical violence, at the event (other than bodyguards and armed security). I did not hear any speaker urge people to riot or join a militia or use guns against anyone.
- When a constant theme of speakers, however, is that “they are coming for us, and we have to be ready” and “our enemies must be destroyed before they destroy us,” some people will inevitably hear that as a call to take violent action against enemies.

Reclaiming “Christian America” - white supremacy

- Speakers and audience alike mock any charge of white supremacy being a characteristic of their events and the movement. Their response: when one third of the speakers are Black, how can that be true? About 95% of the audience was white, however. Some speakers used Martin Luther King, Jr.’s words to ridicule any thought of racism on their part – “not the color of their skin, but the content of their character.” And one speaker (a white man) used Frederick Douglass’ 4th of July speech to claim that today’s Republicans are the ones who live up to his ideals for this country. This covert racism betrays their denials.
- White male supremacy – often Christian supremacy - dominates the history of the U.S. The clarion call of this movement (and this event) to return to our heritage of a Christian America is a call to return to that supremacy (as if we ever left it). Public and proud white supremacy may be more common in specific, smaller militant groups within this movement, but the whole movement is rooted in a desire to “return” to a time when white Christian males were supreme, and their power embedded in the law.
- The foundation for this movement includes an unquestioned belief in the “exceptionalism” of this nation, chosen by God with founders who were Christian (with a similar biblical worldview as theirs, in their understanding). This nation, they believe, must be governed by Christians (or their subset of the religion), under “biblical law,” if we are to survive. – That is their language and one driving force of the movement.

What we can do

1. Learn their language and worldview

- a. Dialogue, to be effective, requires knowledge of the other person’s language and how they understand the world. We can argue, but not converse, and we can never find common ground without doing this.

- b. This movement is more than 50 years old, with leaders and funders who created a network of “think tanks” and foundations to provide its leadership. Leaders under the age of 40 may have been educated at home and in their colleges and law schools, being “groomed” to control government at every level of our nation. The event itself, represents only one fairly small group within the larger movement, and we must not be distracted by focusing entirely on that.

2. Challenge everything

- a. The movement’s language and worldview and their claims of facts and truth must all be consistently challenged publicly and privately. Many people “in the middle” will just accept what they hear someone say on the news, in a video or podcast, in books on sale at Wal-Mart (for instance). We must be prepared to challenge it all.
- b. Our challenge must not be simple argument. We need to craft questions to ask that require thought, that cannot be answered yes or no. In our challenges, we must also seek to understand and to appeal to them for mutual understanding.

3. Appeal to common values

- a. We do share some common values – freedom, faith, family. Those are core values for this movement. However, they most often mean something different than we do when they use these words. We must understand the meaning they give to such values as a first step, and also craft clear statements of the meaning we give to these words and values.
- b. Reason and logic only “work” if we can agree on our premises. If the premises are themselves irreconcilable, our work becomes almost impossible. For instance, if “freedom” is a matter only of individual responsibility (“I’m not responsible for what my ancestors did”), then freedom has a different meaning for those of us who believe in community and shared responsibility. Clarifying our premises before we engage is a necessary step.

4. Organize for action

- a. The new right movement, of which Christian Nationalism is an important part, has been organizing for 50 years and has a web of activists in place at every level of legislative, judicial, and executive government. Let this quote inspire us:
I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.
(Edward Everett Hale)
- b. The more we learn about how they are organized, with their goals and methods, the better we can anticipate their actions and be ready to challenge them.

5. Tell stories

- a. Movements are built on narratives and the stories of people who inspire others to live into that narrative. We can craft the narratives we share and tell stories of people who inspire.
- b. People in the Christian Nationalist/New Right movement have a network where the narrative and the stories are repeated constantly – on video, in podcasts, and in writing. The networks we use for story-telling, not just news and facts, can use the same tools to inspire people to action.