

Land of Hate and Fury

[Jack Davies](#) investigates the insidious nature of far-right hate group Britain First

Tuesday 19 January 2016



Image: britainfirst.org

To those of you who have not yet heard of Britain First, there are three key things which essentially summarise the fledgling far-right political party: they're becoming immensely popular on Facebook, they consider themselves supremely patriotic, and they really, really don't like Muslims - but this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Before writing this article, I had heard of Britain First, who describe themselves as a "patriotic political party", but I had always dismissed them as something of a fad, thinking their support would dwindle over time just as the BNP has over the last decade. I never realised just how dangerous and indoctrinating their extreme brand of Islamophobia was before I finally took a scan of their Facebook page.

What I found was nothing short of shocking: a slurry of hateful, offensive posts litter their timeline. Amid this, they sandwich a number of posts praising the British Armed Forces in what appears to be a thinly-veiled attempt to disguise their incisive racism as patriotism.

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As I continued to scan through their deluge of hostile posts, I was shocked time and time again by the content: quotes from infamous racist and former Conservative MP Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, branding their political opposites (particularly Jeremy Corbyn) as "treacherous swine", calling for Britain to close its doors to the Syrian refugees who they view as either benefit scroungers or Jihadis,

seemingly depending on whatever day of the week it is.

There are even posts calling for supporters to join the “Britain First Armed Forces Division”. I do not even want to consider what the “division” concerns itself with, and one can only hope that it’s as hollow and pathetic as it sounds.

The group itself was set up in 2011 as an offshoot of the British National Party by Jim Dowson, a far-right activist and former leading figure in the BNP. However, even Dowson left the increasingly-fascist group in 2014 after members began taking part in what they dubbed as “mosque invasions” whereby groups of individuals “stormed” various mosques around the country, deliberately riling Muslim worshippers inside by inviting them to “reject the false prophet Muhammad” and handing out copies of the Bible.

Their ability to shock and surprise with their predominantly blind ignorance knows no bounds. Coupled with their “mosque invasions” are what they have dubbed “Christian Patrols”. One such patrol which took place in East London was recorded by Britain First and a video of it posted to their Facebook page.

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In it, one “patroller” comments “we’re in Brick Lane in East London, a predominantly Muslim road, and we’ve had lots of hostility so far”. This, as they march in an overwhelmingly militaristic fashion, brandishing a large, white cross in a not dissimilar style to those used by the Ku Klux Klan, chanting “Britain First” and handing out Bible booklets.

The most shocking factor is that it was happening directly outside the homes and businesses of Muslim people, thus deliberately tailored to intimidate people on the grounds of their faith. The fact that they were surprised at this being met by hostility is perhaps only testament to the deluded nature of their beliefs. That said, perhaps we should not be surprised at such delusion from a group that has described global warming as “non-existent” and “a load of Socialist dribble”.

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In a transition that moves them even further into the extreme grounds of right-wing politics, Britain First is now led by Paul Golding, a former amateur boxer and member of the neo-Nazi National Front. He also intends to run in this year’s London Mayoral Election. Now, obviously, there’s more chance of the Chuckle Brothers staging a last-ditch election campaign and winning than there is of Golding becoming Mayor of London; he once turned up at a service on Remembrance Sunday drunk and sporting a pair of women’s knickers upon his misinformed, vacuous head.

Thankfully, I have enough faith in the voting population of the UK to be certain that only a miniscule percentage of people will be hoodwinked by these fascist bigots. But then, there is one particularly stark fact that perhaps suggests Britain First could be slightly more dangerous than the more rational onlookers might presume: they have more likes on Facebook than Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats combined, equating to almost 1.2 million people.



Image: britainfirst.org

Likes on Facebook do of course not necessarily mean votes, and it's fair to assume that a large proportion of these "likes" will be from people who do not actually agree with Britain First's ideology, but have only liked the page in order to keep up-to-date with their stream of obscene and often hilarious posts. However, a look in the comments sections of their posts reveals that thousands upon thousands of people actually do agree with their extreme ideas – and the more people who agree with them and share their posts, the more support they will attract.

What stands out is the way in which Britain First orchestrate their social media operations to draw people in; in this respect the organisation is remarkably intelligently run. Amid the eyebrow-raising posts, the page regularly posts links to articles on its own website. These articles can range from scare-mongering about immigrants to the UK potentially being criminals or terrorists, to blaming immigration for forcing down the wages of British workers.

These points often appeal to popular opinion; people read a one-sided article on their website about how influxes of non-British workers drive wages down across the economy, feel disillusioned with immigration and end up liking Britain First's page. The Facebook page is particularly prolific, posting up to 50 times a day. Once an individual has liked the page, they will be bombarded with a barrage of posts varying in their levels of racism and Islamophobia. And perhaps the more posts they see, the more people find that they begin to agree with them.

Gradually, this is how Britain First indoctrinate people who don't really hold any racist or fascist views into thinking in the same way as them. Eventually, anything foreign or remotely "un-British" becomes a target for hatred.

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Furthermore, they never miss an opportunity to capitalise on major news events, which they can twist to garner support for their own cause. This is an integral part of the way they gain supporters, because major news events that paint immigrants or Islam in a negative light, such as the attacks in Paris in November last year, give them facts to root their loathing in.

Our world's fragile situation, regarding the multitude of terrorist attacks and spread of ISIS, has provided an ideal breeding ground for such extreme politics to gain momentum and, as Britain First would argue, a degree of validity.

For example, when a post condemns Islam and calls for the deportation of immigrants or the closing of borders to refugees, and people point out that Britain First are being heartless or unfair, the group can then refer to the fact that Islamic extremists were responsible for aforementioned terrorist attacks, and state blindly that this justifies their hateful stance on the entire Islamic faith.

They find it far too easy to blame the many real-world problems that this country suffers, from low wages, to housing shortages, to the sometimes lacklustre care of war veterans, entirely on immigration. What's more, because these issues are ones which affect a great number of people in Britain, the group is able to exploit them and gain many disillusioned supporters who want to find something to blame for these problems and something to direct their anger at.



Image: Unicef

Immigration is a controversial topic in general, and Britain First occasionally make the odd valid point, even if they do express them in a terrible fashion. But there is never any acknowledgement of the very many positives that immigration also brings to Britain, Muslim immigrants included. For instance, Muslim refugees from Syria and Iraq helping Britons affected by the floods over the Christmas period was never recognised by Britain First. Nor is there ever any consideration that the problems they all attribute to being caused by immigration might actually be the result of other factors.

The group affords a lot of attention to what they perceive as a Muslim paedophile epidemic, citing the discoveries of Asian paedophile rings in the likes of Bradford and Rochdale as evidence. This is another example of Britain First cleverly manipulating news stories to their own advantage in vilifying Muslims; they know how emotive a subject child abuse is among the public, and any connections that can be made between Islam and paedophilia only allows the hate group to gain more support.

I wanted to see for myself just how much Britain First's anti-Islam agenda is believed in by their supporters. To do so, I set up two false Facebook accounts: one as a white, British man with a photo of myself as the profile picture, under the name of Tony Collins, and the other as a British Muslim man named Mohammed Alam with a generic Arabic symbol as the profile picture.



Image: britainfirst.org

With these two accounts, I then proceeded to comment on a series of posts on the Britain First Facebook page. The comments I made were identical in content, differing only in their wording in order to see how people reacted to the different accounts under which the comments were made.

For example, on a status Britain First had posted calling for the British government to stop all aid for Syrian refugees, I commented using both accounts that the refugees did not deserve to be punished for the actions of a small number of terrorists who have destroyed their homes.

Both comments were met with disapproval from Britain First's supporters. However, a handful of supporters were so incensed that a Muslim man had supposedly commented in support of refugees that

they decided to directly message the Mohammad Alam account with their views. One such individual messaged the following (please note, the anonymous messenger's spelling mistakes have been corrected for ease of reading): "fuck off Islam is responsible for all the hate in the world right now!"

“
0.003 per cent of the Islamic population is responsible for these crimes
”

I replied using Alam's account: "I don't think you can possibly say this is true. 0.003 per cent of the Islamic population is responsible for these crimes. The vast, vast majority of the Muslim faith resents ISIS and what they represent."

The response was, shockingly, as follows: "It is, look at the refugees coming over here to attack Europe. Won't be long before they get us if we keep letting the scum in, they want to destroy the West with refugee armies. Islam is based on evil to destroy the West."

I think the alarming nature of such blind ignorance and hatred is apparent without me commenting further on the content of the messages Mohammad Alam's account received.

The attitude of the group itself also became apparent as I continued to comment on their posts using the two accounts. Invariably, the comments would be removed after short intervals of time, demonstrating a determination to disallow anyone from disagreeing with their opinions.



Image: britainfirst.org

In an act of obvious prejudice, Britain First then proceeded to block the Muslim account from commenting, sharing, or interacting with any more of their posts, but did not block the account of a white, British man from doing so. If their hateful agenda was not crystal clear to me before this, it was now. Britain First declined to comment on the matter when asked.

Hilariously, the group's solution to prevent being branded as racists is to completely deny that racism exists whatsoever. They have publicly branded racism as a "made-up word" on their website and refuse to "recognise the validity" of it as a concept.

Naturally the group has also garnered much criticism. One such critic is Gareth Arnoult, who set up the

Britain First parody page known as Britain Furst, which focuses on mocking and thereby devaluing Britain First's offensive posts.

"About a year and a half ago, I saw Britain First's Facebook page, and I laughed because I thought it was a super-serious parody" he says of the first time he noticed the extreme party. "Then I saw more of the posts that they do and I thought 'oh shit, this is real' and I wanted to take the piss out of them."

Arnoult's "piss-taking" quickly gathered momentum, which has seen his page Britain Furst gain almost 200,000 followers who share the page's mantra of laughing at the ludicrousness of Britain First's claims.

This is the core of Arnoult's attitude towards Britain First; he sees them as "impotent" and "entirely unelectable" because of the completely over-the-top nature of their posts. However, he does recognise that Britain First perhaps serve more of a purpose than we give them credit for.

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I do regularly receive death threats

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“I used to really detest them. Now I think what they do is actually really important, because I think, in doing what they are doing, they're basically showing how silly a lot of the arguments against immigration and Islam are. It serves a very powerful purpose to remind the country and the rest of the world that we actually don't want to be like that and don't want to think like that.”

Nevertheless, he still has plenty of reason to detest Britain First, considering the way its supporters react to him and his parodying of the group. "I do regularly receive death threats," he admits, but they usually lack any degree of substance. "One guy kept telling me if he ever saw me, he'd kill me" he tells me. "I lost patience with it all, gave him my home address and told him what times I'd be in, and he never even replied."

What is clear from this, as well as from the reactions I received in my Facebook experiment, is that while the threats Arnoult received lacked any substance, people are still so taken with Britain First and their ideas that they are willing to verbally assault anyone who disagrees with them.

Ultimately though, I thoroughly advocate anything which, like Arnoult's Britain Furst page, sets out to undermine Britain First's extreme views and laugh at the ignorant ways they express them. Their anti-Islam, extreme right-wing stance has become almost in vogue in a society that has seen so much extremism in recent years, and Britain First have abused this to appeal to a select group of small-minded people. The best way to limit their impact is to laugh at them, painting their incisive hatred as the misinformed nonsense that it is.



9 comments

Lesley

19 Jan '16 at 10:28 pm

I was under the impression that Britain First was in fact set up as a spoof - only to find to their horror that it was taken seriously by the very people they set out to lampoon.

[▲ Report](#)

Chris Elliott

19 Jan '16 at 10:35 pm

Have you checked out Revelation TV? They are on Sky channel 581. This mob broadcast mostly from Spain and are the most reactionary Evangelical/'Christian' Zionist bunch I've come across. Day after day

they broadcast the TV equivalent of 'Britain First'. Hatred against Gays, Muslims, Socialists and anyone who does not support their twisted version of 'Christianity'. My favourite is a fellow called Simon Barrett. A man so fuelled with hatred that anyone daring to question Israel's actions against innocent civilians is accused of being a 'Jew Hater'. Check 'em out. They are the BNP with a crucifix.

[▲ Report](#)

Simon

22 Jan '16 at 1:36 pm

Wow, that last comment really does sum up this really valid and well written article.

[▲ Report](#)

Cal

22 Jan '16 at 11:02 pm

I used to think like the author - I went through uni at York pretty happy go lucky. Then on the 26th August 2014 it was revealed in the Jay Report that 1400 kiddies had been tortured and raped by 'predominantly Pakistani men' in Rotherham. My tolerant views completely changed from that day onwards.

[▲ Report](#)

Jim

25 Jan '16 at 9:54 pm

They didn't teach cognitive skills at York, then?

[▲ Report](#)

Maneater

24 Mar '16 at 10:57 pm

That's how I came to hate men. I heard a group of predominantly men, raped a load of school girls and well, now I hate men. I wouldn't even let one in my house! My tolerant views have changed, even the priest isn't welcome and I've quit church.

[▲ Report](#)

Gareth O'Neill

26 Jan '16 at 10:06 pm

What's very confusing is that most of these people were anti-Semitic before and now seem to have teamed-up with the Zionist-Evangelist crazies in the USA. It seems to have happened gradually and without notice; a bit like how the American right-wing now love Gadaffi and Putin

[▲ Report](#)

Anonymous

10 Feb '16 at 2:43 am

Look i deplore any kids being abused , whether it was by a ring of pakistani males (muslim) or British males Jimmy Saville (Also Christian) Lord Jenner (Jewish friend of Israel)...paedophiles are united by their sick perversions. not their religious affiliations.

[▲ Report](#)

Ahmed the Shopkeeper

30 Mar '17 at 1:05 pm

As the saying goes, "Ars* holes come in ALL different shapes, sizes & colours."

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