

## **Renaming and additional changes to the collection formerly known as Understanding Hate in America**

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April 12, 2021

Reveal Digital has been engaged in a process to unpack the difficult issues that come along with making available the culturally charged content in the collection formerly named [Understanding Hate in America](#). Working with an eight member Advisory Panel of librarians and scholars, all with experience tackling the complexities of preserving hard history; many ITHAKA staff closely engaged with this collection's issues; and numerous scholars and librarians, we've now arrived at a decision on the first important change—a new name: Documenting White Supremacy and its Opponents in the 1920s (DWSO).

Why these words? Let's break it down:

The deep engagement across the ITHAKA organization with the difficult issues in this collection kicked off this process. In this process, we received feedback pointing to a critical need to more directly indicate what is in the collection. The former title did not indicate what the reader will see when entering the collection, and the word *hate* refers to an emotion, rather than the organized white supremacy of the era and the opposition to it that the collection contains. The word 'understanding' suggested that the collection itself offers an interpretive framework of some kind, when in fact, it is an archival, documentary endeavor. In its subtitle, the word 'nationalism' could refer to any number of aspects of intellectual history, rather than, again, organized white supremacy.

Ultimately, DWSO is an archival collection of historical newspapers from the 1920s. The collection is at its core, a documentary project, preserving primary sources about a kind of organized white supremacy in a discrete era. The time-bound signifier—1920s—and “documenting” will indicate to scholars that the collection isn't an interpretive framework or about the social history of hatred generally. As a scholar with experience

in digital archives about the Black experience stated, “I love the use of the word documenting because it bares the truth of how this archive seeks to display the materials.”

The word “opponents” points to the materials in the collection that center on the voices of those who resisted white supremacy at the time and those victimized by it. The collection contains, as stated by a scholar from the UK who studies the KKK in this era, the “vitriolic rubbish” published by these groups—and it also contains materials published by groups and communities actively resisting white supremacy. The materials show how those victimized by white supremacy at the time organized to form resilient and resistant communities.

This critical name change surfaced after slow, methodical, iterative feedback gathering. Incorporating the initial feedback from Advisory Panel members, a rough draft list of brainstormed new titles was circulated. This Panel, along with 18 faculty and librarians interviewed for this project and the 15-member Reveal Digital Executive Committee provided three rounds of revisions. Upon arriving at a final choice we obtained unanimous support for the name Documenting White Supremacy and Its Opponents in the 1920s from the Advisory Panel.

Beyond the title the Advisory Panel concluded that we can continue to make the collection available. The value of the documentary evidence contained in this collection is very high, and erasure of this evidence is not the right outcome. As one senior scholar of color shared, “If we avoid talking about it, we’ll end up with a bigger problem of forgetting.” As a result, they recommended that Reveal Digital continue publishing the collection ***with a condition***: A form of mediated access is required for the white supremacist material in this collection, to mitigate the potential harm of exposing the material to those who will feel dehumanized by it, and the risks of inadvertently exposing those materials to those with white supremacist leanings. Ultimately, those materials cannot be made available separated from contextual information. As a result,

Reveal Digital will continue to provide access to this collection only to funding libraries, until we determine the nature of the mediated access.

To do this, Reveal Digital must take further key steps. First, we must work to reframe and re-contextualize the materials. It must be reframed to center voices of communities that organized against white supremacy. More context is needed: about the newspapers themselves, about the history of newspaper publishing and media at the time, and strategies opponents used to organize. Rather than providing an interpretive framework, this re-contextualizing will add more descriptive information and make clear the intentions behind making this material available—to prevent erasure of hard history.

We intend to hire an outside expert for a paid fellowship who will keep conducting outreach in the scholarly community. The reframing and re-contextualizing that the collection will undergo will be scholar-led. In this community engagement, we will tackle the difficult question: How can the values of open access, and how it can overcome the inequities of access, square with mitigating harm? Expert input will drive this process, ultimately helping us learn more about balancing the need for access with the potential risks, including negative impacts on individuals.

The work ahead is significant. Patience, consideration, and empathy are essential to move forward. It will be slow—and that's ok. And as [Matthew Willis's JSTOR Daily piece](#) reminds us, there are many stories of resistance to white supremacy that need to be revealed. The work ahead will be to give scholars the power to use the uncovered archival evidence in this collection to center these voices of opposition and resistance—to use it to carry on the work of dismantling white supremacy.