

## [CYBER RACISM]

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### RACISM MOVES ONLINE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

*White supremacists use the Internet to advance their agenda globally, threat to young web users may be different than simple 'recruitment,' addressing the problem challenging*

Today, racism has moved online and it is global. This new phenomenon of 'cyber racism' has grown at the same time that the United States has elected its first African American president. Stormfront, one of the biggest portals for cyber racism, has over 125,000 registered members, and has steadily grown since the election of President Obama.

This new cyber racism is not what you may think. One of the longest continually published sites on the web is [www.martinlutherking.org](http://www.martinlutherking.org), which appears to be a tribute site to Dr. King. In fact, the site is hosted by white supremacist Don Black. And, there is a global discussion about the site, and Dr. King's legacy, hosted at Stormfront (also run by Black). The King site is what Jessie Daniels refers to as a "cloaked site" in her new book about this, called *Cyber Racism* (Rowman & Littlefield 2009). "In many ways, the cloaked sites are more of a threat than the overt racism because they undermine the value of racial equality." In the book, Daniels includes interviews with teens as they surfed the web and encountered cloaked sites. What she found was striking: even web savvy teens can be fooled by the sites. The problem, she argues, is not "recruitment," but changing young people's minds about the value of racial equality. While surfing another cloaked site that extolled the supposed "benefits of slavery," one of the young people in Daniels' study said, "yeah, well, I guess there's two sides to everything." Daniels explains, "It's not that this young person is going to be 'recruited' into membership in a white supremacist organization, but she might be confused about the reality of slavery as a brutal, dehumanizing institution. That's something we should be concerned about."

There are ways to address the problem. These include holding Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to their Terms of Service (TOS) agreements. Most have a clause that prohibits hate speech. This becomes more complicated in a globally networked world.

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Jessie Daniels, please e-mail Jessie at [jdaniels@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:jdaniels@hunter.cuny.edu), or send a text or call: 212.920.5689.