

PAINT THE WORLD WHITE

Like most ideas, the origin story of The Wash was always told as if it were a virgin birth. Pure inspiration. Divine revelation, even. In reality, it was probably a mongrelisation of many different observations and impulses I'd had over the first four decades of my life. The moment that sticks out in my memory and thus makes it into the public relations material is of me in the shower on what I think was a Sunday afternoon when I was doing nothing in particular. I had a bad habit of biting into the skin around my fingernails, of burying the edge of my canine into the fleshy bumps of cuticle at the base of the nail. I tried peeling a piece of dried skin, tenderised by the warm water, and pulled a little too far. A stream of red¹ interrupted the ubiquitousness of my skin and of the shower tray and of the steam that filled the bathroom. Perhaps due to my otherwise dazed relaxation, the red streak and accompanying pain felt like a fission in the fabric of reality. I scaled up the fractal and came to a simple conclusion:

To resolve the split, to heal the divisions, one must purge the variance. Wipe the blot.

Cleanliness is Godliness.

The more I thought about this, the more the benefits became apparent. Global warming, for example, was a major political issue in the early years of the century. Contemporary research pointed to the idea that simply painting all the rooftops white, thus reflecting the sun's light away from the Earth, would negate the effects of global warming. It may seem like an inelegant solution in hindsight, but at the time the Earth's rising temperature seemed like an insoluble cataclysm.

We were desperate.

So I started by whitening my house and my garden. Then my dog (this was quite novel, even controversial in those days). I managed to convince some neighbours to partake in the venture. I began writing about it online. I figured people were suckers for minimalist aesthetics, so I took a shot at convincing the local council that a wider application of this project on public and private buildings would put our small town of Goerling on the map. It might seem like a foregone conclusion now, but I couldn't believe that they had bought it. And, by buying into it, they sparked something beyond anything we could have imagined.

At this point, I feel it incumbent upon me to clarify the misconception that I was the one who began the #WhitelsRight viral campaign. As the movement gained momentum, other movements and sub-movements began to appropriate our increasing popularity. Pretty soon, people began applying the logic of "wipe the blot" to areas other than just infrastructural aesthetics.

Pre-Wash, I remember my then fourteen-year-old niece coming home with a pair of MeNA VertOculars. The kids ate up the idea of showing off their latest set of snake eyes or tiger-striped skin to their peers, but the idea of anthro-aesthetics didn't sit too comfortably with our generation. Liveable sculpture, made possible by innovations in one-way smart graphene, followed aesthetic changes in standards of beauty. Animal sculpture began to accompany its neoclassical

counterpart as humanity's confidence swelled in response to our playfully hacking and re-writing the very source code of mother nature.

The #WhitelsRight movement gathered momentum and began to inform public policy. Companies like MeNA and uGene began offering up once-taboo genethnic services as standard. Although there was some active resistance, what struck me was how effective the marketing was in convincing non-whites to willingly line up to become white. For many, including myself, this is when the Wash (or "The Great Phenocide", depending on your political leanings) truly began. Why did the corporations not promote it the other way around? Perhaps because the number of non-white customers was greater? The conspiracy theorists will say it's part of a hidden agenda on the part of the elites, but it doesn't make sense that those in power who thrive on taking advantage of petty differences to distract the masses would just let go of their trump card. When it comes to capitalism, though, the only God that is worshipped is the bottom line. This ought to remain our guiding light.

The movement to preserve disappearing genetic phenotypes didn't last too long. The rate at which they were dropping out of the biosphere, and the uncontrollable complexity of the process, meant that "concerned citizens" simply didn't have the infrastructure to maintain it; nor did the big six firms have the incentive to support them. As far as they were concerned, preservation meant more overheads and they couldn't see how it would benefit their shareholders in the long term. Ultimately, washing had long since become an accepted good by the mainstream. Even among phenotype archivists, the idea of opposing it was considered an extremist view.

The young me could never imagine Chief Minister Nicholas Ferris proposing The Wash in any serious capacity. Yet here we were on the precipice of changing the face of the planet. Every organism, every blade of grass, every remaining human being who wasn't already washed would be washed. The real breakthrough, however, was Chandra Shah PDR. OBE's famous albaphyl innovation. For the first time, we didn't have to worry about a rogue gardener mowing over a patch of washed grass, scarring it with pigmentum like my cut in the shower.

Science had done it again.

The most important part of The Wash was in its neutralising the chromatist agenda. With no point of reference, they were unable to overturn nearly a century of washing. The example of placing a frog in hot water springs to mind. The temperature increased so gradually that the chromatists didn't have a chance to organise and react until it was too late for them. Fortunately, their regressive theories will remain just that: theories.

Waking up in my palatial compound nestled into the Cereus Ranges remains a gleeful, daily reminder of my success. A life of anonymity as a plebeian accountant with a weekend hobby have been transformed into a near-messianic existence. Yes, the rumours are true; like a hunter using a tiger's skin as a throw rug, I have a red table and chair as a constant reminder of my conquest.

Outside my window lies an even greater satisfaction. Despite being unable to discern where the mountains end and the whitened atmosphere begins (which once exhibited various chroma due to

the way light reflected and refracted through pre-skyformed atmospheric particles), what can be discerned are the mountainous works of neoclassical sculpture that celebrate humankind conquering the world. The greatest of these is, of course, Antarctica's iconic Magno Atlas complex. I have read reasons speculating upon my choosing against residing there myself. Some have attributed an elitist motivation to the choice, but the simple truth is that I need space to think original thoughts. Such as the thought that started with a spurious connection to combatting climate change ending with these capstone innovations in terraforming technologies that have not only transformed this planet but present the possibility of expanding our civilisation into the farthest reaches of our universe.

I try not to let emotions like pride pollute my mind. I had no control over being the right person with the right idea at the right time. However, I can say with pride that ours will be the last generation to remember what an imperfect pigmentum world looked like. Future generations will look back on ours as the one that saw the eagle emerge through the mist, ready to feast on our liver, and decide that this would be the day Prometheus would break free of his chains, wrestle the eagle to the ground, and use its wings to fly to Mount Olympus on a mission to purge it. Future generations will know only a world – and perhaps even an entire universe – unstained.

Pure.

Right.

White.

– Axl Höche

¹ The farthest right on a UV chart, red was the pre-albacyte pigmentum of blood and was often associated with passion and rage.