



Founding Fathers of the Modern American Neo-Nazi Movement: The Impacts and Legacies of Louis Beam, William Luther Pierce, and James Mason

Jon Lewis and Haroro J. Ingram
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University 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20006
<https://www.extremism.gwu.edu>

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Introduction

This study analyzes the leadership style, impact, and enduring legacies of three crucial leaders in the white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements: Louis Beam, William Luther Pierce, and James Mason. It examines the interplay of leadership traits, significant events in the life narratives of the leader, and the legacies of these three key pioneers towards two aims. First, our analysis draws on the CIP Leadership Framework and charismatic leadership studies to assess the respective leadership roles of Beam, Pierce, and Mason. Second, it considers how the leadership traits and ideological impact of these leaders shaped contemporary far-right movements in the United States (U.S.), as well as how the legacies of these figures can be observed in the modern far-right landscape. Overall, we argue that the three leaders profiled herein cover the full leadership spectrum of the CIP framework and that each was both a product and exploiter of their life narratives in ways that fundamentally shaped their leadership style, impact, and legacy on the American far-right landscape.

This study begins by establishing the foundation for the conceptual framework through which the authors analyze the leadership and impact of Beam, Pierce, and Mason. It draws on the Ligon et al. CIP (Charismatic, Ideological, and Pragmatic) leadership model with its dual focus on leadership typologies and six life events that tend to characterize the life narratives of outstanding leaders. Our framework is further supplemented by a more nuanced conceptual grounding in charismatic leadership theory. It then features the three central case studies. These case studies seek to examine the respective backgrounds, leadership styles, influence, and lasting appeal of these American ideologues. It traces their life experiences, reviewing the totality of their contributions to their respective far-right milieus. In doing so, it examines their roles within specific right-wing movements as well as their roles as nodes that connected disparate elements of the modern far-right. This study concludes by drawing out key overarching findings that emerge from the preceding analysis. Specifically, it focuses on the enduring legacies of Beam, Pierce, and Mason by reflecting on how they have collectively impacted the evolution of violent far-right movements, and considers how the differences in the leadership types and life narratives have shaped that legacy. Finally, it offers policy insights and avenues for future research with respect to the modern far-right landscape and the role of charismatic leadership in prominent white supremacist movements active today.

Leadership Types, Life Narratives, and Charisma

A major focus of leadership studies is to distinguish between different types of leadership to understand how and why leaders emerge, particularly in relation to organizational and broader contextual factors. A variety of different factors may be used to distinguish between different ideal types of leadership, but the most important factor is arguably what characterizes the leader-follower relationship. After all, it is a mix of psychosocial, organizational, and strategic factors that fuse with how the leader presents themselves (the leader's image) and their message (the leader's narratives) that are crucial to forging leader-follower bonds. This study adopts a larger, top-down, leader-centric approach to understanding the leadership styles of three prominent figures in the American far-right milieu. In doing so, it promises to draw out important insights into those crucial bottom-up, contextual, and follower-centric factors that are vital for understanding the influence of such leaders.

This study is the second in a series of *Program on Extremism* papers that analyze the leadership of American violent extremists. The first study, titled *The Founding Fathers of American Jihad*, analyzed the leadership and influence of Americans Anwar al-Awlaki, Samir Khan, and Ahmad Abousamra. The study argued that “distinctions in leadership styles are reflective of the different personal attributes, backgrounds, and organizational contexts within which the individuals operated. Moreover, these differences in leadership characteristics shaped their respective impacts and legacies in ways that have important implications for the fields of research and practice.”¹ For conceptual and analytical consistency, this study applies the same conceptual framework by drawing on the Ligon et al. CIP (Charismatic, Ideological, and Pragmatic) framework and charismatic leadership studies.²

Case Study Application

The CIP model offers a comprehensive and versatile framework covering charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leadership ideal types. The authors distinguish between the three typologies by arguing that while the *pragmatic leader* tends to focus on short-term problems and immediate solutions, the other leadership types are visionaries with the charismatic leader offering “a passionate vision of a future radically different from present conditions.... if [followers] accept the leader's movement,” and the ideological leader tending to project “personal values and beliefs” to motivate followers and make

¹ Haroro J. Ingram and Jon Lewis, *The Founding Fathers of American Jihad: The Impacts and Legacies of Anwar al-Awlaki, Samir Khan, and Ahmad Abousamra* (Washington, D.C.: Program on Extremism, June 2021): 2, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/The%20Founding%20Fathers%20of%20American%20Jihad.pdf>.

² Gina Scott Ligon, Samuel T. Hunter, and Michael D. Mumford, “Development of outstanding leadership: A life narrative approach,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 19 (2008): 312-334.; Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968); Anne Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Edward Shils, “Charisma, Order, and Status,” *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 2 (1965): 199-213; Boas Shamir, “Charismatic Relationship: Alternative Explanations and Predictions,” *Leadership Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1991): 81-104; Shmuel Eisenstadt, “Charisma and Institution Building: Max Weber and Modern Sociology,” In *Power Trust and Meaning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995): 167-201; Alan Bryman, *Charisma and Leadership in Organizations* (London: Sage, 1999).

“belief-based” decisions.³ The result is a broadly adaptable model that allows for both analyses of the leadership type applied to a case study, as well as comparative analyses between different leaders and typologies. Indeed, the CIP framework is designed for analyzing how dynamics in personalized/socialized orientation, psychological traits, organizational contexts, propensity to violence, and life narratives shape a leader and their influence.⁴

This study also adopts the CIP framework’s focus on how life narratives can play both a directive and a vehicular function for a leader. Distinguishing between these two functions is important for appreciating its utility for this analysis. The directive function of life narratives refers to the “life lessons in episodic form used to define goals, causes, actions, and context in the present” while the vehicular function refers to life narratives being leveraged to “communicate personal understanding of their lives in reference to the current situation.”⁵ Drawing on Pillemer and McAdams, Ligon et al. identify six life events that they argue are crucial to the directive and vehicular functions of outstanding leader life narratives.⁶ These are originating events (beginning of a career or personal path), turning points (changes in life direction), anchoring events (establishing a belief system), analogous events (a present event that relates to the past), redemptive events (negative occurrences that later have a positive impact), and contaminating events (positive occurrences that later have a negative impact).⁷ Given that the role of life narrative analysis is designed to provide insights into the leader, how they understand themselves, and how they seek to project themselves to others, the case studies in this report focus on autobiographies or similar autobiographical representations (in full or part) provided by Beam, Pierce, and Mason.

The CIP framework provides a broad yet nuanced model for understanding different types of leadership, how they emerge and evolve, and their implications for the broader movement. The ‘life narratives’ component of the framework is particularly useful for identifying those events in a leader's life that shaped who they became, and that were leveraged by the leader to construct and project their image and narrative as a leader. The following section features the case studies of Beam, Pierce, and Mason via in-depth analyses of their lives and emergence as pioneering figures in America’s Neo-Nazi movement. Through the lens of the CIP framework’s leadership typologies and examination of directive and vehicular life events, our study seeks to not only understand the emergence and legacy of Beam, Pierce, and Mason but draw out broader implications for understanding and confronting the contemporary far-right movement.

³ Ligon, Hunter, and Mumford, “Development of outstanding leadership,” 313.

⁴ *Ibid*, 312-334; Gina Scott Ligon, Michael K. Logan, Douglas C. Derrick, *Malevolent charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leaders*, unpublished manuscript, (2021).

⁵ Ligon, Hunter, and Mumford, “Development of outstanding leadership,” 314.

⁶ David Pillemer, “Momentous events and the life story,” *Review of General Psychology* 5, no. 2 (2001): 123-134.; Dan McAdams, “The psychology of life stories,” *Review of General Psychology* 5, no. 2 (2001): 100-123.

⁷ Ligon, Hunter, and Mumford, “Development of outstanding leadership,” 315.

The Founding Fathers of the Modern American Neo-Nazi Movement

The purpose of the following case studies is to examine the lives, leadership, impact, and appeal of Louis Beam, William Luther Pierce, and James Mason. In doing so, it considers the similarities and differences between these three American white supremacists to identify lessons for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars. Within the white supremacist milieu in the U.S., these figures emerged as key ideological pillars for both their contemporaries and future generations. What emerges from an analysis of these individuals is that each existed as unique leaders within their elements of the white supremacist landscape - a reflection of both their personal backgrounds as well as their respective roles within some of the most prominent white supremacist groups and movements in the U.S.

Through their leadership in these organizations, the consumption of their oral and written propaganda, and the creation of myths around their key texts and concepts, each serves as a driver of white supremacist ideology in the U.S. to this day. In particular, Beam's popularization of leaderless resistance, Pierce's *Turner Diaries*, and Mason's *Siege* have been elevated into a pantheon by modern elements of the American white supremacist ecosystem, specifically within the strand of the movement that has embraced accelerationist, neo-fascist concepts. As such, tracing the narratives espoused by these figures serves to illuminate how the core tenets of American white supremacy evolved and intersected with a range of societal conditions and personal grievances. In doing so, this study will offer both a comprehensive profile of the lives of these three figures as well as an analytic assessment of the tangible impact of each on the modern white supremacist landscape.

Louis Beam - The Charismatic

This case study of Louis Beam offers an in-depth examination of his rise as one of the most influential figures in America's far-right movement. His leadership traits, impact, and legacy reflect the charismatic typology of the CIP framework. A war veteran, activist, and propagandist, the image that Beam portrays is of a committed soldier, organizer, and visionary of the movement whose storied career was and remains an inspiration for American white supremacists across the movement. As a propagandist who founded *The Seditonist* and championed the notion of leaderless resistance, Beam's message deeply influenced not just strategic and operational dynamics, but the cultural values within America's far-right movement. The trajectory of Beam's life and the narratives that he constructed about it played such a central role in how he projected himself as a leader and the substance of his message that it is necessary to delve deeply into it here.

Figure 1. Louis Beam during the Vietnam War. Photograph by 25th Aviation Battalion.



Early Life

Louis Ray Beam Jr. was born in Lufkin, Texas in 1946.⁸ The oldest of four children, Beam grew up “a child of the post-World War II segregationist south” in Lake Jackson, Texas.⁹ He attended an all-white school, and even as a child, he was “very much against blacks.”¹⁰ Beam reportedly claimed to have been a Ku Klux Klan member in the fourth grade, attempting to recruit like-minded classmates to the cause.¹¹ Beam volunteered for military service at the age of 19, ultimately spending 18 months in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. Beam largely served as a door gunner, operating a .50-caliber machine gun on helicopters during his deployment. Beam's casual racism was evident during his time in Vietnam, as he proudly hung a Confederate flag in his barracks and supported segregationist George Wallace.¹²

⁸ Laura Smith, “Lone Wolves Connected Online: A History of Modern White Supremacy,” *The New York Times*, published January 26, 2016, updated May 16, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/26/us/louis-beam-white-supremacy-internet.html>.

⁹ “Louis Beam,” *Anti-Defamation League* (2013): 1, <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/Louis-Beam.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Laura Smith, “Armed resistance, lone wolves, and media messaging: meet the godfather of the ‘alt-right,’” *Timeline*, 2017, <https://timeline.com/louis-beam-white-supremacy-history-20d028315d>.

¹² Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018): 26.

The development of Beam's racist worldview was likely influenced by his unit's experience in Vietnam. Beam's unit reportedly had a "troubled relationship" with local civilians while deployed in Vietnam, as some soldiers "made sport of throwing rocks at civilians, shooting them with slingshots, and pelting them with debris from passing vehicles."¹³ Members of Beam's unit would later note that they viewed all Vietnamese as "a zip, a gook, or animal" and that they viewed the Vietnamese individuals they encountered as subhuman, noting that "seeing a dead gook was no big deal."¹⁴ After the war, Beam would claim that his goal during his deployment was "wracking up 50 kills" and that he reveled in "the joys of killing your enemy."¹⁵

Beam's experience in Vietnam would provide the opening for his "us vs. them" mentality to crystalize, and he would return home prepared to seek out organized violent extremism. Beam would later tell an undercover reporter that the "mere fact that I had returned from Vietnam didn't mean the war was over. It was going on right here in the States...Over here, if you killed the enemy, you go to jail. Over there in Vietnam, if you killed the enemy, they give you a medal. I couldn't see the difference."¹⁶ Beam also viewed the Vietnam War as a catalyst for American decline, as he and tens of thousands of white G.I.s came back to a country that had changed and evolved in their absence.¹⁷

The Texas Klan

Beam returned from Vietnam in 1968 with a "Born to Lose" tattoo on his arm and was noticeably impacted by the anti-war protests he encountered upon his return, later stating that there "seems to be no end to it all...I wonder if stress can be defined as wanting to machine-gun all the people who sent us over there, along with the ones who spit on us when we returned?"¹⁸ He was "full of rage at 'communists' and the government," blaming the latter for his alleged exposure to Agent Orange, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁹ Upon his return, Beam initially joined the Texas chapter of the United Klans of America, a Klan organization led by Robert Shelton that was responsible for some of

Figure 2. Houston Klansman Louis Beam in full battle array. Photograph by Ron Laytner, Edit International.



¹³ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/louis-beam>.

¹⁶ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁸ "Louis Ray Beam Jr.: Racist Leader Headed For Downfall?" *Southern Poverty Law Center* (Summer 2002), <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2002/louis-ray-beam-jr-racist-leader-headed-downfall>.

¹⁹ Smith, "Armed resistance, lone wolves, and media messaging." ; "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

the most significant acts of violence against the Civil Rights Movement in this period.²⁰ Most infamously, members of the organization conducted a terrorist attack against the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 that killed four Black girls, injured more than a dozen others, and was described by Martin Luther King Jr. as “one of the most vicious and tragic crimes perpetrated against humanity.”²¹

In June 1971, Beam and three co-conspirators were indicted by a state grand jury in Houston on bombing charges, accused of dynamiting the local Pacifica radio station KPFT and pipe-bombing the headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party in Houston the year before.²² Beam was initially detained in 1970 with another Klansman, Jimmy Dale Hutto, when the pair was stopped while driving with their lights off near a local radio station after a bomb threat had been called in.²³ When they were stopped, Beam and Hutto were wearing “paramilitary garb, with several rifles, a bottle of gasoline, and a walkie-talkie.” However, they were released without charges.²⁴

Indicted alongside Beam in 1971 were Hutto, Paul William Moratto, and Peter Lout Jr. Beam and Moratto “described themselves as public relations men for the Ku Klux Klan,” and a Klan leader stated that Beam “was a member of the Klan’s bureau of investigation.”²⁵ Hutto had previously been arrested in February of 1971 with two other Klansmen while en route to California to bomb other radio stations owned by the Pacifica Foundation.²⁶ Beam’s charges were seemingly dropped, although the exact circumstances of the prosecution remain unclear - reports indicate one of the passengers with Hutto was an informant for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and that Moratto and Lout agreed to testify against Hutto at trial.²⁷ Beam would later brag that he and his fellow Klansmen got away with these crimes in part “because many police officers and firefighters took their side.”²⁸

²⁰ David Cunningham, *Klansville, U.S.A: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-era Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

²¹ David Krajicek, “Justice Story: Birmingham church bombing kills 4 innocent girls in racially motivated attack,” *NY Daily News*, September 1, 2013, <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/justice-story/justice-story-birmingham-church-bombing-article-1.1441568>.

²² Martin Waldron, “2 Bombings Laid to 4 in Houston,” *The New York Times*, June 12, 1971, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/06/12/archives/2-bombings-laid-to-4-in-houston-2-identified-as-klansmen-jury.html>.

²³ “Thorne Dreyer: The KKK in the News Again. And Back in Sixties Houston,” *The Rag Blog*, February 9, 2009, <http://theragblog.blogspot.com/2009/02/thorne-dreyer-kkk-in-news-again-and.html>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Waldron, “2 Bombings Laid to 4 in Houston.”

²⁶ Preston F. Kirk, “3 Suspected Klansmen Charged With Conspiring to Bomb 3 Radio Stations,” *San Bernardino County Sun*, January 17, 1971, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/23241963/3-suspected-klansmen-charged-withconspi/>.

²⁷ “Forty years ago: KPFT bombed off the air twice in its first year,” *Current*, October 12, 2010, <https://current.org/2010/10/forty-years-ago-kpft-bombed-off-the-air-twice-in-its-first-year/#:~:text=Pacifica%20Radio's%20KPFT%20in%20Houston,in%20a%20Houston%20Chronicle%20blog>.

²⁸ Lise Olsen, “The Fishermen and the Dragon’ Uncovers Racist Conflict In Galveston Bay History,” *Texas Observer*, August 8, 2022, <https://www.texasobserver.org/fishermen-dragon-kirk-wallace-johnson/>.

By 1976, Beam left Shelton's organization and shifted his allegiance to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, which had begun to embrace elements of overt neo-Nazism under David Duke.²⁹ This attempted revitalization of the Klan with a more overt antisemitic strand came in the aftermath of Duke's formation of the White Youth Alliance, a student group affiliated with the National Socialist White People's Party.³⁰ Duke later appointed Beam as Grand Titan (district leader) of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Texas.³¹

Figure 3. Louis Beam (left) inspects his security forces in advance of a rally against Vietnamese fishermen in Texas on February 14, 1981. Photograph by Ed Kolenovsky, Associated Press.



Beam's charisma played a central role in his growing popularity and rise to prominence in his early years with the Klan. As Belew notes, Beam "was a charismatic speaker and a persuasive writer who emphasized fiery rhetoric and explicit racism."³² He used this charisma to advance a new public image for the Klan, giving "witty talk-show interviews wearing a suit and tie, claiming to be not a racist but 'racialist,' and advocating separatism rather than violence."³³

Camp Puller

In 1977, Beam used a Texas Veterans Land Board grant to purchase fifty acres of swampland outside Houston which he used to create Camp Puller, a training camp dedicated to training his fellow Klansmen to become soldiers.³⁴ Beam also cultivated links between the Klan and the growing population of young, disillusioned service members, actively working to recruit Klan members from nearby Fort Hood.³⁵ As Beam established a formal Klan presence in the area, training camps like Camp Puller were quickly populated by like-minded "soldiers and veterans recruited from around Fort Hood."³⁶

²⁹ "David Duke," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/david-duke>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Louis Beam," *Anti-Defamation League*, 2; "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

³² Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 26.

³³ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁴ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 33; "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

³⁵ "Louis Ray Beam Jr.: Racist Leader Headed For Downfall?"

³⁶ Richard A. Serrano, "Does Hate Have A Home In Military? Armed Services Under Scrutiny To Determine Whether They Allow Extremist Groups To Thrive," *Los Angeles Times*, February 20, 1996, <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/1996/feb/20/does-hate-have-a-home-in-military-armed-services/>.

In a brazen display of this increasingly close relationship, Beam and Duke were escorted by Klansmen from Fort Hood wearing fatigues and carrying their rifles during a Klan rally in Euless, Texas.³⁷

Beam used the media coverage of Camp Puller to simultaneously attempt to soften the Klan's image while promoting racist and xenophobic narratives - stating that they "did not mean to train anyone to promote racial warfare," but that "it is realistic to assume it could happen" and that by training their members how to protect themselves, they were ensuring "there will be no Pearl Harbors for the white people of this country."³⁸ Beam would deny that Camp Puller was a KKK camp, although he admitted that Klan members were among those who would train there and that there were three paramilitary camps run by the Texas Klan geared towards preparing for an "aggressive attack" on the "enemies" of the U.S.³⁹

Klan paramilitary camps like Puller attempted to duplicate the indoctrination of military boot camps, seeking to "remake recruits and inculcate a disposition toward violence."⁴⁰ Beam told a reporter that children as young as eight had been trained at these camps, even claiming that he would like to start training them at six.⁴¹ He said he believed that "young white boys" were capable of handling being taught the basics of survival and weaponry at that age, that the camps were "no worse than the Boy Scouts," and instead of playing baseball or football "they are learning to survive."⁴² Indeed, by 1980, Camp Puller would receive significant attention after Klansmen used the facility to instruct a group of high-school-age Explorer Scouts "on strangulation, decapitation using a machete, hijacking airplanes, and firing semiautomatic weapons."⁴³

One individual who received paramilitary training at Beam's Camp Puller was Ronald Bishop, head of the Michigan Klan. Two months after his time at Camp Puller, Bishop would be arrested in Michigan for attempting to commit a racially-motivated murder. According to reports, Bishop and other Klan members first attempted to murder a Black man, George Lester Stewart, in the parking lot outside a bar in Detroit, Michigan.⁴⁴ When the attack in the parking lot failed to injure Stewart, the perpetrators would later shoot into his residence with automatic weapons in another failed attempt to kill him.⁴⁵

³⁷ "Louis Ray Beam Jr.: Racist Leader Headed For Downfall?"

³⁸ "Klansman Backs Survival Camps That Teach Warfare to Children," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1980, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1980/12/01/111317046.html?pageNumber=32>.

³⁹ Robert M. Press, "Why the law is slow to check paramilitary training," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 25, 1981, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1981/0325/032548.html>.

⁴⁰ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 36.

⁴¹ Press, "Why the law is slow to check paramilitary training. "; "Klansman Backs Survival Camps That Teach Warfare to Children."

⁴² "Klansman Backs Survival Camps That Teach Warfare to Children."

⁴³ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 39.

⁴⁴ "GTD ID: 198008040008," *Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism*, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=198008040008>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Bishop and three of his fellow Klansmen were subsequently arrested and pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate the civil rights of Stewart and another Black man they had previously attempted to murder.⁴⁶

From Camp Puller, Beam also led the newly-formed Texas Emergency Reserve, which became a de-facto paramilitary arm of the Texas Klan.⁴⁷ Formed by Klan associate Robert Sisente, the group was controlled by Beam, who by then had been named Grand Dragon of the Texas Klan.⁴⁸ Beam also created the Klan Border Watch, which formalized ad-hoc actions undertaken several years prior by California Klan member and fellow white supremacist ideologue Thomas Metzger.⁴⁹ Just as Beam had planted his Klan flag near Fort Hood, Metzger had instituted an aggressive recruitment campaign near Camp Pendleton in Southern California.⁵⁰ Metzger began instituting patrols meant to travel from Texas to the Pacific Ocean in a caravan that would report suspicious people to the Border Patrol.⁵¹ Beam and Metzger framed these activities as merely choosing to enforce the laws which “our government officials refuse to enforce” themselves.⁵² In arguing that the Klan was simply acting as vigilantes in furtherance of state laws, the pair intentionally established a framing that placed the Klan in the position of a quasi-official extension of law enforcement officials.

Metzger boasted of leading 500 volunteers from four states, and his Klan patrols garnered media attention in large numbers - with media members often outnumbering the Klansmen significantly.⁵³

Figure 4. Louis Beam (far left) leads a funeral procession for a fellow Klansman in Dallas, 1980. Photograph by Harold Waters, Associated Press.



⁴⁶ “Government wants stiff sentences for Klansmen,” *UPI*, January 1, 1981, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/01/01/Government-wants-stiff-sentences-for-Klansmen/4295347173200/>.

⁴⁷ Glenn Frankel, “Guerrilla-Style Training of KKK Alleged in 7 States,” *Washington Post*, October 24, 1980, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/10/24/guerrilla-style-training-of-kkk-alleged-in-7-states/b862b3dd-59c9-4f35-b46c-ee849900fb2b/>.

⁴⁸ “Memorandum Opinion and Order,” *Vietnamese Fishermen’s Ass’n v. KNIGHTS, ETC.*, 543 F. Supp. 198 (S.D. Tex. 1982), *JUSTIA US LAW*, June 9, 1982, <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/543/198/1460786/>; “Louis Beam,” *Anti-Defamation League*.

⁴⁹ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 38.

⁵⁰ Susy Buchanan and David Holthouse, “The Franchise,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2015/franchise>.

⁵¹ Buchanan and Holthouse, “The Franchise.”

⁵² Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 38.

⁵³ Buchanan and Holthouse, “The Franchise.”

While Beam publicized incidents in which the Klan Border Watch caught and (illegally) detained undocumented immigrants in South Texas, it ultimately was little more than a publicity stunt. However, as Belew notes, these intimidation tactics had an outsized impact, with newspapers from Mexico to Nicaragua constructing the Klan Border Watch as an all-seeing entity, reporting on stories of private Klan airplanes surveilling the border and rampant violence and rape by Klansmen against undocumented immigrants.⁵⁴

While Beam's training camp at Camp Puller and his leadership of Klan entities had the immediate goal of imminent violence against minorities, a more strategic, long-term vision remained Beam's guiding principle: preparation for an inevitable race war. In Beam's view, the heights of the Cold War, replete with the seemingly constant threat of nuclear strikes in the heart of America, presented an opportunity. In this scenario, Beam envisioned that his paramilitary group would be able to exploit the ensuing chaos by quickly taking control of Texas and creating a white ethnostate. Beam posited, his white supremacist forces would "set up our own state here and announce that all non-whites have 24 hours to leave."⁵⁵ For those who failed to heed this warning, or who did not take the threats seriously, Beam declared that the solution would be to simply "exterminate a lot of them the first time around."⁵⁶

Beam's War Comes Home – The Klan in Seadrift

Beam and his organization would soon find a flashpoint far closer to home through which to incite racial violence. A simmering regional feud between Texas fishermen and Vietnamese refugees in the coastal town of Seadrift, Texas had long been a powder keg driven by xenophobia and economic competition and finally came to a head in August of 1979.⁵⁷ The initial spark for the August incident came on June 29 of that year, when a local fisherman, Billy Joe Aplin, had a confrontation with a Vietnamese crabbing boat that had placed crabbing pots near his own. Aplin "drove him off," and his wife would later report that six Vietnamese boats returned shortly after, at which point they "circled around us, ramming and bumping us."⁵⁸ Two suspects were arrested, and although Aplin did not press charges, he remained "still plenty mad about the incident."⁵⁹

In early August, Aplin saw several Vietnamese individuals beginning to launch their boat and believed he recognized them as being involved in the June incident. Aplin approached the individuals, and a violent struggle ensued. Aplin drew his knife and slashed one individual in the chest before being shot

⁵⁴ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 38.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Molly Iwins, "Killing Sharpens Texas Feud on Vietnamese Fishing," *The New York Times*, August 9, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/08/09/archives/killing-sharpens-texas-feud-on-vietnamese-fishing-edgy-since.html>.

⁵⁸ Iwins, "Killing Sharpens Texas Feud on Vietnamese Fishing."

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

several times, dying later that night at the hospital.⁶⁰ One of the individuals involved in the struggle, Chinh Van Nguyen, was arrested that night and subsequently charged as an accomplice in the killing. A second individual, Sau Van Nguyen, turned himself in several days later and was charged with murder.⁶¹

The local response to this incident was swift: three Vietnamese crabbing boats were burned that same night, a firebomb was thrown against a Vietnamese family's trailer, and three residents were arrested while attempting to plant explosive devices at a local crab processing plant that employed Vietnamese workers.⁶² After the shooting, one of Aplin's brothers would tell reporters that "I tell you, the American people have got to know what these Vietnamese are like before the Government brings in any more of them. We want American to know how vicious these people are."⁶³

News reports from the incident also feature quotes from Aplin's family in which they claim that Viet Cong lurked among the Vietnamese refugees in Seadrift.⁶⁴ Anger towards the Vietnamese population in Seadrift, and Texas writ large, continued into 1980 as the first Vietnamese individuals in the area earned their citizenship.⁶⁵ The violence that occurred in the wake of Aplin's shooting quickly resurfaced as intermittent harassment and death threats were reported in towns along the Gulf Coast: a group of Vietnamese fishermen were hit with beer bottles while walking home from the docks, and another was shot in the leg walking across a dock without permission.⁶⁶

These incidents did not exist in a vacuum as Klan and neo-Nazi groups redoubled their efforts to demonize Vietnamese refugees and cause further friction between them and local (largely white) fishermen in towns across the country. The year before the events in Seadrift, for example, a state legislator in Florida accused the Vietnamese of "raping the waters."⁶⁷ White supremacist groups published writings accusing the "boat people" of bringing tuberculosis and malaria into the U.S., with their propaganda explicitly linking the Vietnamese refugee population to the threat of sexual violence.⁶⁸ Specifically, they connected a "widely circulated story of four Vietnamese refugees found guilty of the abduction and gang rape of seven white women in Orange County, California," embracing the oft-used white supremacist narrative of the imminent threat to white women from minorities and men of color.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ "How white nationalists in Texas terrorized refugees after the Vietnam War," *NPR*, August 1, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/08/01/1114451029/how-white-nationalists-in-texas-terrorized-refugees-after-the-vietnam-war>.

⁶¹ Iwins, "Killing Sharpens Texas Feud on Vietnamese Fishing."

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 41.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶⁷ Iwins, "Killing Sharpens Texas Feud on Vietnamese Fishing."

⁶⁸ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 43.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

One Texas Klan Grand Titan would tell a local reporter that “Galveston Bay is just like a fine woman, if you rape her, she’s never good anymore.”⁷⁰

Gene Fisher, the vanguard of the anti-Vietnamese campaign in Galveston Bay and founder of the American Fishermen’s Association, routinely described the Vietnamese population as “parasites.” At the outset of the 1980 shrimping season in Texas, Fisher found himself at the negotiating table with a Justice Department mediator and Nam Văn Nguyễn, a former colonel in the South Vietnamese military who became the

president of the Vietnamese Fishermen’s Association after escaping Vietnam and resettling in the Houston area.⁷¹ An uneasy temporary peace was brokered, as Nam agreed the Vietnamese fishermen would not build any new boats and would attempt to abide by the unwritten laws of Galveston Bay, with the total number of boats limited to those docked at the time of the agreement: “seventy for the Whites, fifty-five for the Vietnamese.”⁷²

However, when new Vietnamese fishermen moved into the area in late 1980 and began building a new boat, tensions rose once again in the early days of January 1981. Once word of this new boat construction reached Fisher, he confronted Nam, stating, “I don’t like them building more boats just like that, they’re gonna get burnt...”⁷³ Days later, a Vietnamese shrimper received a similar threat from a white resident while docking his boat. The shrimper left his boat to call Nam Văn Nguyễn and reported the threat, returning to his boat only to find it stripped of everything valuable “including his nets and CB radio equipment.”⁷⁴ That same week, a Vietnamese-run shrimping boat had its fuel line cut and was set on fire while docked in Seabrook, Texas.

Figure 5. Louis Beam, Grand Dragon of the Texas Realm of the Knights of the Klu Klux Klan, sets fire to a boat labeled "Viet-Cong" during a rally for the white Texas Gulf fisherman in Santa Fe, Texas, on February 14, 1981. Photograph by Bettmann/Getty Images.



⁷⁰ Leon Daniel, “Klansmen vs. Viet refugees on Galveston Bay,” *UPI*, June 11, 1981, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/06/11/Klansmen-vs-Viet-refugees-on-Galveston-Bay/7758361080000/>; William K. Stevens, “Peace Returns to the Home of Shrimp Fishermen and Astronauts; The Talk of Seabrook,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 1981, <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/06/27/us/peace-returns-home-shrimp-fishermen-astronauts-talk-seabrook.html>.

⁷¹ Kirk Wallace Johnson, “When Vietnamese Fishermen Went to War With the Klan in Texas,” *Daily Beast*, August 22, 2022, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/when-vietnamese-fishermen-went-to-war-with-the-klan-in-texas>.

⁷² Johnson, “When Vietnamese Fishermen Went to War With the Klan in Texas.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Johnson, “When Vietnamese Fishermen Went to War With the Klan in Texas.”

The next day, a second fire was set on a Vietnamese-owned boat in the neighboring coastal town of Kemah, Texas.⁷⁵ The responding officers noted that it appeared “to be a racial incident” and “believed white fishermen were responsible for the fire, and that both local and Louisiana Klansmen were involved.”⁷⁶ Undercover law enforcement officers were stationed near the docks the following night and reported to the FBI that at 4:30 that morning, four white men in a truck stopped near the site of the second fire and put on Klan robes. The group stood at the docks for twenty minutes, before removing their robes and leaving the area.⁷⁷

Figure 6. Vietnamese effigy hung on Klan boat. Photograph by John R. Van Beekum.



Beam and his Texas Klansmen had been attempting to intervene in the Galveston Bay conflict since 1979, viewing it as the perfect opportunity to ignite a string of racially-motivated violence. Beam would repeat the rhetorical argument he first introduced when he launched the Klan Border Watch, claiming that he and the white fishermen both hoped the government would arbitrate in their favor. Only in the absence of concrete action from the government, Beam claimed, did the fisherman turn to the Klan to pursue more aggressive action.⁷⁸ Eager to capitalize on this unrest and position the Klan as the defender of the white race, Beam quickly responded to requests from white fishermen to bring the full force of the Texas Klan to bear against the Vietnamese refugees.

In February 1981, between 300 and 400 people attended a Klan rally in Sante Fe, Texas, at which Beam burned a small rowboat with “*U.S.S. Viet Cong*” painted across the side.⁷⁹ Beam later claimed he had done so “in order to demonstrate the correct method for destroying a boat by arson.”⁸⁰ Rally attendees included a group of white fisherman from the Gulf, as well as more than a dozen uniformed members of the Texas Emergency Reserve - the paramilitary arm of the Texas Klan.⁸¹ Beam declared that they were going to have to take back their country “the way our founding fathers got it - with blood, blood, blood.”⁸² It was also during this campaign that Beam is said to have originated what would become a common phrase across the far-right for years to come: “Where ballots fail, bullets will

⁷⁵ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 45.

⁷⁶ Johnson, “When Vietnamese Fishermen Went to War With the Klan in Texas.”

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 46.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Andrew Chin, “The KKK and Vietnamese Fishermen,” *University of North Carolina School of Law*, <http://www.unclaw.com/chin/scholarship/fishermen.htm>.

⁸² “Louis Ray Beam Jr.: Racist Leader Headed For Downfall?”

prevail.”⁸³ At the rally, the Klan announced that the government “had until May 15—the first day of shrimping season—to get the Vietnamese fishermen out of the Gulf.”⁸⁴

The public relationship between the Klan and the local white fishermen further deepened in the aftermath of Beam’s February 1981 rally. Beam invited those present to participate in their training camps, stating that “The Ku Klux Klan is more than willing to select out of the ranks of American fishermen some of your more hardy souls and send them through our training camps. And when you come out of that, they’ll be ready for the Vietnamese.”⁸⁵ Gene Fisher indicated that this invitation was well-received, and reported to *The Los Angeles Times* that “fifty-two white fishermen planned to take survival and weapons training from the Klan.”⁸⁶ In the weeks that followed, crosses were burned in the yards of Vietnamese refugees and their supporters, and the owner of a marina where Vietnamese boats had docked “was threatened and received Klan cards in his mailbox.”⁸⁷

In March 1981, Klansmen conducted an armed boat patrol in the waters near Seabrook, Texas. Participants of this “boat parade” wore their Klan robes, carried long rifles, and one even dressed in military fatigues. An effigy of a lynched Vietnamese refugee was hung on the back of the boat, and Klansmen brought “a small-bore field cannon” adorned with a Confederate flag onto the boat.⁸⁸ The group stopped frequently during their patrol to display their weapons and make threatening gestures to Vietnamese fishermen and their families on the nearby docks.⁸⁹

In response to these activities, the Vietnamese Fishermen’s Association brought a civil suit against the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in the Southern District of Texas in April of 1981. Also named as defendants were Louis Beam - in both his personal capacity and for his role as Grand Dragon for the Texas Klan - as well as Eugene Fisher and the American Fisherman’s Coalition.⁹⁰ The Vietnamese Fishermen’s Association sought injunctive relief from violations of rights protected by federal and state statutes, as well as the U.S. Constitution.⁹¹

The judge presiding over the case, Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, was the first African American in Texas and the third African American woman in the nation to serve in the federal judiciary. Upon learning this,

⁸³ “Louis Beam,” *Anti-Defamation League*.; This narrative, that there is no political solution through which individuals can achieve their goals and that they therefore had to take matters into their own hands, has become a core theme within white supremacist and accelerationist movements. See, for example, Matthew Kriner, Meghan Conroy and Yasmine Ashwal, “Understanding Accelerationist Narratives: ‘There Is No Political Solution,’” *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, September 2, 2021, <https://gnet-research.org/2021/09/02/understanding-accelerationist-narratives-there-is-no-political-solution/>.

⁸⁴ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 46.

⁸⁵ Chin, “The KKK and Vietnamese Fishermen.”

⁸⁶ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 47.

⁸⁷ “Louis Ray Beam Jr.: Racist Leader Headed For Downfall?”

⁸⁸ Johnson, “When Vietnamese Fishermen Went to War With the Klan in Texas.”

⁸⁹ Chin, “The KKK and Vietnamese Fishermen.”

⁹⁰ “Memorandum Opinion and Order,” *Vietnamese Fishermen’s Ass’n v. KNIGHTS, ETC.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Beam asked McDonald to disqualify herself for bias, referring to her as a “Negress” and citing the prejudice of “your people against the Klansmen.”⁹² Judge McDonald would later reveal that she and her family had received death threats and one-way tickets to Africa during the case.⁹³

In May, the court granted a preliminary injunction with respect to specific claims, and in 1982 the court enforced the state’s anti-militia law to “permanently enjoin the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and its paramilitary unit, the Texas Emergency Reserve, from associating as a private military or paramilitary organization, carrying on military or paramilitary training, and parading in public with firearms.”⁹⁴ As a result, Beam’s group was forced to halt its intimidation campaign in the Gulf and shut down its paramilitary training camps.⁹⁵

Figure 7. Armed Klan members on patrol. Photograph courtesy of the Southern Poverty Law Center.



A Movement in Flux

Civil suits like the one brought against the Klan by the Vietnamese Fishermen’s Association had slowly begun to chip away at the strength of the organization. The fear of civil litigation “made Klan groups leery of organizing into chapters, naming officers and expanding across state lines.”⁹⁶ Coupled with internal struggles over money and power that defined many prominent right-wing groups in this period, the Klan saw a reduction in popularity in the early 1980s.⁹⁷ Into this vacuum stepped a host of emerging violent extremist movements that attracted disillusioned Klansmen and young white supremacists searching for a new era alternative to their father’s Klan. By contrast to nascent revolutionary terrorist groups, the Klan looked “plodding, cowardly, even foolish...outdated and out-of touch, all talk and no action.”⁹⁸

⁹² Chin, “The KKK and Vietnamese Fishermen.”

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Mary B. McCord, “Dispelling the Myth of the Second Amendment,” *Brennan Center*, June 29, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/dispelling-myth-second-amendment>.

⁹⁵ “Louis Beam,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

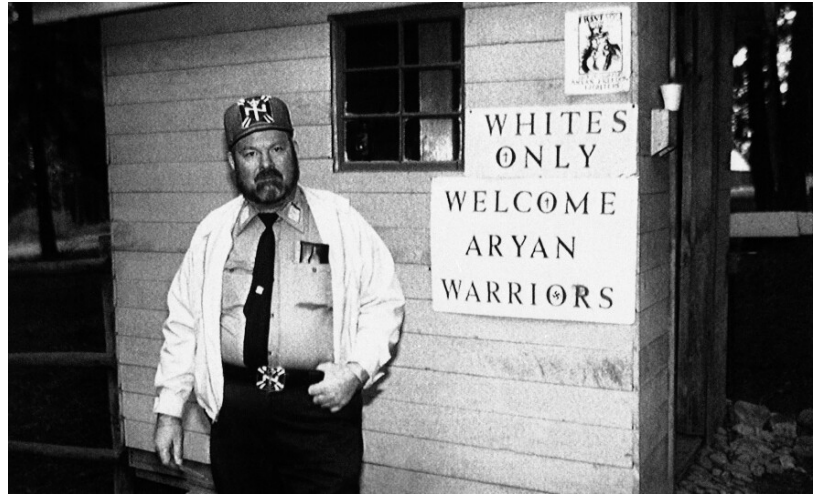
⁹⁶ Richard Baudouin, “Will the Terror Continue?: The Klan at the Turn of the Century,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 2011, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep27205.8.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5e8e1d29493b0ef722a432bdfd0029a4&ab_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1.

⁹⁷ Baudouin, “Will the Terror Continue?”

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

This shift also intersected with an evolution of Beam's worldview, which seemingly occurred while Beam was still leading Klan mobilization in Texas. He began embracing more diverse elements that had intersected with the white supremacist landscape. For instance, Beam began engaging with Odinism, a religious movement that combined Norse mythology with Christian symbolism.⁹⁹ Odinism "found a natural fit with modern white supremacists" in the 1970s and 1980s, just as it had with Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁰⁰ As Odinism's influence began to seep into prominent white supremacist movements, it also found common ground with another ideology rooted in antisemitic narratives: Christian Identity.

Figure 8. The main entrance to the Aryan Nations Church in Hayden Lake, Idaho. Photograph by Gary Stewart, Associated Press.



Christian Identity traces its roots back to the "discovery" of the Americas, which "fueled speculation about biblical history, specifically the destiny of the so-called ten lost tribes of Israel."¹⁰¹ 19th-century religious thinkers in Great Britain coalesced around the belief that whites of European descent were the true descendants of these "lost tribes," that the Jewish people are Satanic offspring of Eve and the Serpent and that all non-whites are "mud peoples" created before Adam and Eve.¹⁰² As Christian Identity arrived on American shores, it intersected with a wave of antisemitism sweeping the nation - and by the 1930s, the antisemitic strand within the movement had become its ideological center. By the 1960s and 1970s, prominent Christian Identity adherents like Wesley Swift had spread the movement across the American far-right, seeding the Identity ideology into segregationist, white supremacist, and neo-Nazi movements throughout the country.¹⁰³ Beam was one of several prominent Klan leaders during this time to adopt not only elements of Odinism but Christian Identity as well.

This ideological evolution led Beam to Richard Butler, leader of Aryan Nations. Beam traveled to Butler's Idaho compound in 1981, and Butler would attend Beam's Galveston Klan Rally later that year,

This ideological evolution led Beam to Richard Butler, leader of Aryan Nations. Beam traveled to Butler's Idaho compound in 1981, and Butler would attend Beam's Galveston Klan Rally later that year,

⁹⁹ Stuart Wexler, *America's Secret Jihad: The Hidden History of Religious Terrorism in the United States* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² "Christian Identity," *Anti-Defamation League*, February 5, 2017, https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/christian-identity?gclid=CjwKCAiAs8acBhA1EiwAgRFdwzmmNr5lJiSD6K4KlleUL3gQzrbXvUPexho4T05UHpuUVIZ2Vg1TFRoCIJYQAvD_BwE.

¹⁰³ For more on Wesley Swift and his role within the Christian Identity Movement, see "Christian Identity's New Role On The Extreme Right," *Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism*, 2021, <https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/ctec/ctec-publications/christian-identities-new-role-extreme-right>.

announcing Beam's new role as ambassador at large for Aryan Nations.¹⁰⁴ By that summer, Beam had announced his resignation as Texas Grand Dragon, and within a year, Beam and other revolutionary white supremacists, including Thomas Metzger, were leaving the Klan in droves and joining groups like Richard Butler's Aryan Nations.¹⁰⁵ As Beam was disassociating himself from Duke's Klan in the aftermath of the civil suit in Texas, he moved to Butler's compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho, beginning a long relationship that would have profound impacts on the white supremacist movement for years to come.¹⁰⁶

The reshuffling of major figures in the white supremacist landscape served to situate figures like Beam and Metzger as central nodes in the network, allowing them to gain outsized influence on both the ideological and strategic direction of the movement writ large. Aryan Nations began selling tapes of Beam's antisemitic radio broadcasts and speeches, attempting to capitalize on his charisma to appeal to a broad audience of potential recruits.¹⁰⁷ This mutually beneficial partnership saw Aryan Nations leverage their growing reputation in the white supremacist space to promote Beam's vision for a revolutionary movement prepared for a race war. Beam took steps to expand the group's prison outreach, laying the foundation for what would become a thriving white supremacist milieu inside the U.S. federal prison system.¹⁰⁸

By 1984, Beam and Aryan Nations had launched Aryan Liberty Net, the "premiere cyberspace venue for white supremacy."¹⁰⁹ Beam socialized the idea of a computer network as early as 1983, and in an article discussing the concept the year after, Beam stated: "It may very well be that American know-how has provided the technology which will allow those who love this country to save it from an ill-deserved fate."¹¹⁰ In another article entitled "Announcing Aryan Nations/Ku Klux Klan Computer Net," Beam celebrated their accomplishment, noting that "at last, those who love God and their Race and strive to serve their Nation will be utilizing some of the advanced technology available heretofore only to those in the ZOG (Zionist Occupational Government) government and others who have sought the destruction of the Aryan people."¹¹¹ While early innovators like George Dietz and his Liberty Bell Net preceded Beam's Aryan Liberty Net, the reach of Beam's network provided him with one of the most significant online propaganda operations by white supremacists.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.; "Louis Ray Beam Jr.: Racist Leader Headed For Downfall?"

¹⁰⁵ "Louis Beam," *Anti-Defamation League*.

¹⁰⁶ "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹⁰⁷ "Louis Beam," *Anti-Defamation League*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Laura Smith, "In the early 1980s, white supremacist groups were early adopters (and masters) of the internet." *Timeline*, 2017, <https://timeline.com/white-supremacist-early-internet-5e91676eb847>.

¹¹⁰ Berlet, "When Hate went Online."

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Chip Berlet, "When Hate went Online," adapted from a paper, April 2001, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.552.239&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.; Tim Miller, "The Electronic

The Aryan Liberty Net provided an introductory message to the user which heralded the fact that “all of the great minds of the patriotic Christian movement” would be “linked together and joined into one computer.” Though using this network, the message noted that “any patriot in the country” would be able to “call up and access...all the years of combined experience available to the movement.” The message concluded by stating “you are on line with the Aryan Nations Brain Trust. It is here to serve the folk.”¹¹³ The bulletin board also provided listings of “race enemies,” including “a list of the locations of all regional offices of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’Rith.”¹¹⁴ It also featured explicit incitement to violence with an assassination “point system” that awarded scores based on the significance of victims: killing a president was worth one full point, national religious leaders were worth one-third of a point, and federal marshals merited one-tenth of a point.¹¹⁵

The Aryan Liberty Net also contained various subsections with titles including “Notice to All Aryans,” “Essays of a Klansman,” “Nation is Race,” and “Morris Dees Queer.”¹¹⁶ One sub-heading illustrated the connections and reach of the partnership between Beam and Butler. In a heading “Under the Mountain,” one of the most prominent racist figures in the nation, Robert Miles, issued a rallying cry that alluded to one of the most notorious and prominent white supremacist terrorist groups of its era - The Order, also known as the Silent Brotherhood or Brüder Schweigen:¹¹⁷

We, the older and less active spokesmen for the folk and faith, are being replaced by the young lions. These dragons of God have no time for pamphlets, for speeches, for gatherings. They know their role. They know their duty. They are the armed party which is being born out of the inability of white male youths to be heard. They are the products of the failure of this satanic, anti-white federal monstrosity to listen to more peaceful voices, such as our own. We called for the dog federals to let our people go! We called for the government in Le Cesspool Grande to let us be apart from their social experiments and their mongrelism, but to no avail. And now, as we had warned, now come the Icemen! Out of the north, out of the frozen lands, once again the giants gather.¹¹⁸

Fringe,” *The Washington Post*, July 14, 1985, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/magazine/1985/07/14/the-electronic-fringe/17955294-9c94-4b5d-99e4-9af799b45eae/>.

¹¹³ Berlet, “When Hate went Online.”

¹¹⁴ Kevin Flynn and Gary Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood: Inside America’s Racist Underground* (New York: The Free Press, 1989): 156.

¹¹⁵ “Louis Beam,” *Anti-Defamation League*.

¹¹⁶ Berlet, “When Hate went Online.”; Morris Dees is the co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which was a key actor in the civil suit against Beam’s Texas Klan in the 1970’s. This action began the beginning of a “personal hatred that Beam would harbor for decades.” See: “Louis Beam,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹¹⁷ “Former KKK leader Robert Miles dead at 67,” *UPI*, August 18, 1992, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1992/08/18/Former-KKK-leader-Robert-Miles-dead-at-67/7854714110400/>.

¹¹⁸ Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 10-11.

The Order

While the internal dynamics of Beam's relationship with The Order remains an open question, the evidence makes clear that Beam and Aryan Nations shared membership, reading materials, and an underlying core ideology with The Order. As The Order's leader, Robert Mathews, and his men were purchasing weapons suitable for their campaign of assassinations and robberies, they were simultaneously shopping for computers that would allow them to "link by modem" to Beam's Aryan Liberty Net.¹¹⁹ Indeed, even the Aryan Liberty Net's system sign-off message: "One Nation - One Race - One God - 33/5" displayed a coded message to supporters of the Order.¹²⁰

In 1983 -1984, as Beam was establishing himself as a charismatic figure within Aryan Nations, The Order engaged in a string of bank and armored car robberies to finance their planned revolution against the U.S. government, sharing proceeds with sympathetic entities, including Aryan Nations, as well as white supremacist groups like William Luther Pierce's National Alliance and Frazier Glenn Miller's White Patriot Party.¹²¹ The group started small, beginning with the October 1983 robbery of an X-rated video store in Spokane, Washington which netted only \$369.10.¹²² By July 1984, however, the group conducted their most profitable robbery, stealing \$3.8 million from an armored car near Ukiah, California.¹²³ While the increasingly brazen robberies would ultimately lead to federal charges against the group, The Order's most infamous act would be the assassination of Jewish radio talk show host Alan Berg outside his home in June of 1984.¹²⁴ Trial evidence would reveal that the group had a kill list that included Henry Kissinger, Morris Dees, and the top executives of the three major television networks. Testimony from one of the members of The Order also detailed that Order members referred to all nonwhites as "mud people" and swore an oath to eliminate the group's enemies, namely individuals "of Jewish race and white traitors who were cohorts" with "Jews in trying to destroy our race."¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 156.

¹²⁰ Berlet, "When Hate went Online."; According to Miles, "33 is the name of the Order. Never anything else. Never speak of it to anyone who is not a member by any other name. Never write of it in any other manner. Computerize its name by converting the initials to 33...The Order is...now one hundred and seventeen years old. It has already passed through four stages in its life. IT has concluded the Fourth Era of its existence. It stands on the threshold of a new era, the Fifth Era." Thus, the code for the Fifth era of White supremacist resistance equality in the U.S. is 33/5.

¹²¹ "2 Linked To Aryan Groups Plead Guilty in Plot," *The New York Times*, February 5, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/02/05/us/2-linked-to-aryan-groups-plead-guilty-in-plot.html>.; After robbing \$3600 from Washington Mutual Savings Bank in Spokane, Washington, members of The Order "sent \$200 of it in a money order to Bob Miles" and "dropped \$100 more in a collection plate at Aryan Nations." Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 130.

¹²² Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 104.

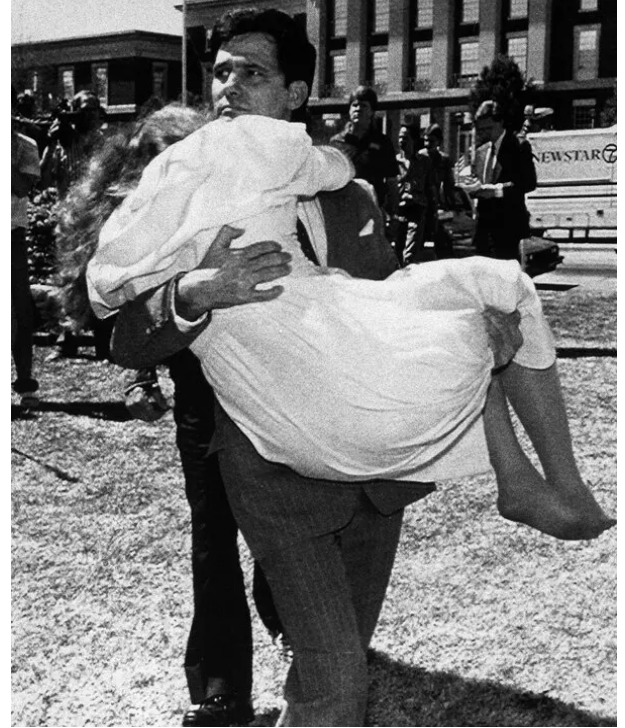
¹²³ *Ibid*, 247.

¹²⁴ Andrew H. Malcolm, "Outspoken Talk Show Host Slain Outside Denver Home," *The New York Times*, June 20, 1984, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/06/20/us/outspoken-talk-show-host-slain-outside-denver-home.html>.

¹²⁵ "Death List Names Given to U.S. Jury," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1985, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1985/09/17/008997.html?pageNumber=19>.

Mathews disseminated a document to his followers which detailed the proposed leadership hierarchy of The Order in the event of a successful white supremacist revolution, and listed Louis Beam as the future civilian leader of the “Western district” of America.¹²⁶ Beam’s 1983 book *Essays by a Klansman* appealed to Mathews who distributed it to members of The Order alongside William Luther Pierce’s *The Turner Diaries*.¹²⁷ *Essays by a Klansman*, published by Aryan Nations, was dedicated to “those yet unknown patriots, who are even now preparing to strike at the enemies of God, our race and our nation.”¹²⁸ It was a call to action for a “White Racial Nation,” telling the reader that “the time is past for talk. We are either going to take our country back from the illegal Washington government, which now controls it, or else resign ourselves to the fate of becoming slaves...we must begin the preparations necessary to retrieve our country from the hands of the enemy which now controls it. It should be plain to everyone what is needed: knives, guns, and courage.”¹²⁹ In yet another effort by Beam to inspire readers to bring about the race war, his book included another “point system for Aryan warriorhood,” like the one featured on Aryan Liberty Net, that assigned values to certain killings and criminal acts.¹³⁰

Figure 9. Louis Beam carries his wife, Sheila, away from the federal courthouse in For Smith, Arkansas, after he was acquitted on sedition charges, April 8, 1988. Photograph by Danny Johnston, Associated Press.



Fort Smith Trial & Disengagement from Organized Hate

In early 1987, Beam fled the U.S. for Mexico, fearing that he was facing imminent arrest.¹³¹ This fear proved accurate, as Beam was indicted along with 13 other prominent white supremacist leaders in the U.S. for seditious conspiracy to overthrow the government.¹³² Beam was then added to the FBI’s Most

¹²⁶ “Louis Ray Beam Jr.: Racist Leader Headed For Downfall?”

¹²⁷ Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood: Inside America’s Racist Underground*, 93.

¹²⁸ “Louis Beam,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹²⁹ Beam, Louis R. *Essays by a Klansman: being a compendium of Ku Klux Klan ideology, organization methods, history, tactics, and opinions, with interpolations by the author* (Hayden Lake: A.K.I.A. Publication, 1983): 17, https://archive.org/details/EssaysByAKlansmanBeingACompendiumOfKuKluxKlanIdeology/page/n17/mode/2up?view=the_ate.; Beam, *Essays by a Klansman*, 17.

¹³⁰ Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood: Inside America’s Racist Underground*, 93.

¹³¹ “Louis Beam,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Wanted Fugitive List and apprehended shortly after in Guadalajara, Mexico in November of 1987.¹³³ During the arrest, Beam's wife opened fire on the apprehending officers, critically injuring a Mexican police officer.¹³⁴

The roots of this investigation initially focused on the criminal actions of The Order based on evidence recovered by law enforcement after Mathews was killed in a shootout with federal agents in December 1984.¹³⁵ After Mathews' death, prosecutors pursued a racketeering case against the remaining members of The Order, and a federal grand jury in Seattle indicted 24 members on various racketeering and conspiracy charges, alleging 67 separate crimes. 23 of the 24 pleaded guilty or were convicted, while the 24th was sentenced to life without parole in Missouri for killing a state trooper in a routine traffic stop days after the indictment was filed.¹³⁶ The U.S. government would go on to charge more than 75 individuals within the white supremacist and Christian Identity movements, pursuing similar racketeering charges against members of the Christian Identity group, The Covenant, The Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, which also had significant ties to Aryan Nations.¹³⁷

In these cases, the U.S. government had a near-perfect conviction record that laid the foundation for the audacious and sweeping indictment of Beam and thirteen other key figures in the white supremacist movement in 1987. The indictment and subsequent trial in Fort Smith, Arkansas, would become one of the landmark domestic terrorism court cases of the modern era. Prosecutors alleged this sprawling plot to overthrow the government was hatched at the Aryan Nations 1983 Aryan World Congress. At trial, prosecutors "presented physical evidence including stolen military weapons, extensive armament, and more."¹³⁸ Witnesses testified that "the movement had declared a race war that targeted both civilians and the federal government."¹³⁹

After a whirlwind trial, an all-white jury acquitted Beam and his co-defendants.¹⁴⁰ Significantly, Belew highlights the "charismatic testimony" of white power leaders like Beam at the trial in appealing to the all-white jury.¹⁴¹ Beam's comments during the trial once again latched onto familiar rhetorical devices, including "deeply rooted and powerful rhetoric about protecting white female bodies" and his service in the Vietnam War.¹⁴²

¹³³ "414. Louis Ray Beam, Jr.," *FBI Most Wanted*, https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/topten/topten-history/hires_images/FBI-414-LouisRayBeamJr.jpg/view.

¹³⁴ "414. Louis Ray Beam, Jr.," *FBI Most Wanted*.

¹³⁵ Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 385.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*; Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 157.

¹³⁹ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 157.

¹⁴⁰ Bill Simmons, "Defendants All Acquitted in Seditious Trial," *AP News*, April 8, 1988, <https://apnews.com/article/604c50e36bd020ac70be35445b12d059>.

¹⁴¹ Belew, *Bring the War Home*: 182.

¹⁴² *Ibid* 157.

Perhaps Beam's most notable moment from the trial came after the acquittal was announced. Beam spoke to reporters outside the courthouse in the shadow of a Confederate memorial, declaring "to hell with the federal government." He claimed he was "out of the movement" now, and that from this date forward, "I'm just going to write books and raise blond-headed children."¹⁴³ In the same breath, however, he made clear that his views on the "Zionist Occupational Government" were alive and well, stating "I think ZOG has suffered a terrible defeat here today... I think everyone saw through the charade and saw that I was simply being punished for being a vociferous and outspoken opponent of ZOG."¹⁴⁴

Leaderless Resistance

By all accounts, the conclusion of the Fort Smith trial signaled the end of a formal, active relationship between Beam and the organized white supremacist milieu in the U.S. However, Beam's most significant ideological and strategic contribution to the far-right extremist landscape in the U.S. would gain prominence after the acquittal: the concept of "leaderless resistance." In the aftermath of the Fort Smith sedition trial, Beam launched a quarterly racist magazine titled *The Seditonist* — after federal officials had failed to convict him of that crime.¹⁴⁵ Beam initially authored a paper titled "Leaderless Resistance" in 1983, and later published it in *The Seditonist* in 1992. While this idea was central to Beam's strategic vision for the movement, from Camp Puller to The Order, Beam's renewed fame within the movement as a "leading radical theorist" led to increased attention to the nuances of the idea of leaderless resistance.¹⁴⁶ Once the article appeared online, "its reach increased exponentially," finding its way to a new generation of would-be domestic terrorists, including Timothy McVeigh who would take Beam's lessons to heart in the plotting and execution of the Oklahoma City Bombing three years later.¹⁴⁷ McVeigh's defense lawyer claimed that McVeigh had read Beam's paper, and that "clearly Louis Beam was someone that was very important to him."¹⁴⁸

Beam's revised article on leaderless resistance became a seminal document in the white supremacist community, serving to lay the groundwork for the strategic posture of the movement for years to come. Recognizing that organized groups or associations opened the white supremacist community to prosecution or "suppression," Beam set out the pathway for future generations of revolutionary white supremacists in the U.S. The "cell system," conceptualized as the most apt alternative to the "pyramid" type organizational structures that had characterized white supremacist groups to this point, became the structure *de jure* of the modern white supremacist. In Beam's proposed model, Leaderless

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 183.

¹⁴⁴ Simmons, "Defendants All Acquitted in Sedition Trial."

¹⁴⁵ "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.; Louis R. Beam, *The Seditonist* (Austin, 1988), <https://www.worldcat.org/title/793917038>.

¹⁴⁶ Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹⁴⁷ Laura Smith, "Lone Wolves Connected Online: A History of Modern White Supremacy."

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

Resistance was the ideal design through which to defeat state tyranny through “phantom cells” connected through information distribution, not the formal issuing of orders.¹⁴⁹ “Very small or even one man cells of resistance” would be the mechanism of choice, designed to circumvent the domestic law enforcement apparatus which had so nearly crippled the organized white supremacist movements at Fort Smith.¹⁵⁰

While Beam remained in his role as ambassador at large for Aryan Nations, there is little evidence that he retained a meaningful role in the operations of the organization.¹⁵¹ He made an appearance at a news briefing by the FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) during the Branch Davidian standoff in Waco in 1993, and was arrested after being disruptive and refusing to leave.¹⁵² As Aryan Nations itself faded into obscurity following a crippling civil judgment in 2000, so did any lingering vestiges of Beam’s activities in this space.¹⁵³ Beam appears to have largely disengaged from any active role in the movement itself.¹⁵⁴ Even though he has not given a public speech since 1996, Beam is still regarded as “a central figure in the white power movement today.”¹⁵⁵ Beam’s article and its underlying concepts have served to enshrine his legacy within the white supremacist landscape which has embraced his leaderless resistance strategy as a guiding principle through which to achieve its goals.

Figure 10. Louis Beam is escorted away from a 1993 Branch Davidian news briefing with the FBI and ATF in Waco, Texas. Officials said Beam was disruptive in a briefing the week before and was asked not to return. Photograph by Associated Press.



¹⁴⁹ This trend neatly mirrors the strategies advocated for by jihadist ideologue Abu Musab al-Suri, which would gain popularity in the movement during the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. Gina Scott Ligon, Samuel T. Hunter, and Michael D. Mumford, “Development of outstanding leadership: A life narrative approach,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 19 (2008): 312-334. See, for example: Petter Nesser, “Research Note: Single Actor Terrorism: Scope, Characteristics and Explanations,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6 No. 6 (December 2012), 61-73. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26296894>.; J.M. Berger, “The Strategy of Violent White Supremacy is Evolving,” *The Atlantic*, August 7, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/08/the-new-strategy-of-violent-white-supremacy/595648/>.; Brynjar Lia, “Al-Suri’s Doctrines for Decentralized Jihadi Training – Part 1,” *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, February 21, 2007. <https://jamestown.org/program/al-suris-doctrines-for-decentralized-jihadi-training-part-1/>.

¹⁵⁰ Louis Beam, “Leaderless Resistance,” *Sedition* 12, February 1992, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~satran/Ford%2006/Wk%202-1%20Terrorism%20Networks%20leaderless-resistance.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ “Louis Beam,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹⁵² Laura Smith, “Lone Wolves Connected Online: A History of Modern White Supremacy,”

¹⁵³ “Louis Beam,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Laura Smith, “Lone Wolves Connected Online: A History of Modern White Supremacy.”

Directive & Vehicular Life Events

Table 1. Outline of key formative events in the life of Louis Beam that impacted his evolution as a leader in the American far-right landscape.

Louis Beam – Key Formative Life Events
Beam’s dehumanizing experiences with the Vietnamese population during the Vietnam War entrenched his racist, ‘us vs. them’ mentality, explaining that “over here, if you killed the enemy, you go to jail. Over there in Vietnam, if you killed the enemy, they give you a medal. I couldn’t see the difference.”
While Beam’s early years with the Klan served to introduce him to organized white supremacy, the Klan’s legal woes created a cognitive opening for Beam to explore new movements such as Aryan Nations, as well as more varied ideological elements like Odinism and Christian Identity.
Beam’s deepening relationship with Aryan Nations crystallized his revolutionary worldview which he expressed in his 1984 book, <i>Essays of a Klansman</i> . “The time is past for talk. We are either going to take our country back from the illegal Washington government, which now controls it, or else resign ourselves to the fate of becoming slaves...we must begin the preparations necessary to retrieve our country from the hands of the enemy which now controls it.”
Beam’s arrest and prosecution in the Fort Smith sedition trial shook his faith in the organized white supremacist movement, bringing about a dramatic separation from active involvement and his post-acquittal comments that he was “out of the movement” and committed to returning home to “write books and raise blond-headed children.”

The trajectory of Beam’s life and its formative events depicted in Table 1 highlight the degree to which Beam leveraged narratives to construct his image as a charismatic leader. Beam emerges as a charismatic figure who not only garnered significant appeal due to his skills as a communicator to rally and incite the movement but also for his active role as an astute organizer. It was arguably the fusion of Beam’s personal attributes, skills, and experiences across America’s ideologically diverse white supremacist milieu that lay the foundations for his eventual disengagement as an active operational member and his embrace of strategic writing. In this way, Beam is broadly similar to the warrior-scholar archetype that emerges in other violent extremist contexts.

The purpose of this case study was to explore Beam’s life, leadership, and legacy on America’s far-right. Understood through the lens of the CIP framework, Beam is a charismatic leader who projected the image of a man who committed his life to the far-right movement, renowned as a foot-soldier, organizer, and visionary whose calls for leaderless resistance resonate to this day across the ideologically varied movement. Beam epitomizes the ‘do as I do’ sentiment of the warrior-scholar type of militant leader who fuses words and actions into one. Beam leveraged the story of his life, particularly

the directive and vehicular events identified in the case study, to reinforce the appeal of his image and the credibility of his message in the minds of his acolytes. If Beam is the charismatic ‘warrior-scholar’ of America’s Neo-Nazi movement, then Pierce is the intellectual and ideologue.

William Luther Pierce - The Ideologue

The Turner Diaries is one of the most influential texts in the modern American far-right milieu. In many ways, it is to America's far-right what Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones* was to jihadists. Through the lens of the CIP framework, the author of *The Turner Diaries*, William Luther Pierce, emerges as the quintessential ideologue type who is a legendary figure in America's far-right. An ascetic physics professor later described by his supporters as perhaps "the world's most influential White separatist," Pierce spent his life traversing America's far-right as a propagandist willing to seek out any platform and exploit any opportunity to maximize the reach and impact of his message.¹⁵⁶ As captured in the CIP framework, the trajectory of Pierce's life contains crucial life events which fundamentally shaped the leader that he became but were also exploited to help construct his image and message.

Early Life

William Luther Pierce was born in 1933 in Atlanta, Georgia. A descendant of the aristocracy of the Old South, his mother's family included the former Governor of Alabama and the Attorney General of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War.¹⁵⁷ His father was killed in a car accident in 1943, and the family later moved to Dallas, Texas. Accounts of Pierce's childhood paint a picture of a Southern household steeped in segregationist ideals with "older relatives who treated a black servant like a virtual slave."¹⁵⁸ Casual antisemitism also seems to have permeated the Pierce family, as Pierce recounted being told by his mother that his grandmother

Figure 11. Pierce in a high school military academy uniform. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



¹⁵⁶ ¹⁵⁶ "William Pierce," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/william-pierce>.; Kevin Alfred Strom and Malcolm P. Shiel, "William Pierce: Preparing the Way, part 1," *National Vanguard*, September 11, 2015, <https://nationalvanguard.org/2015/09/william-pierce-preparing-the-way-part-1/>.; David Cay Johnston, "William Pierce, 69, Neo-Nazi-Leader, Dies," *The New York Times*, July 24, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/24/us/william-pierce-69-neo-nazi-leader-dies.html>.

¹⁵⁷ Robert S. Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds: An Up-Close Portrait of White Nationalist William Pierce* (originally published in 2001, republished in 2018), 42, <https://ia601007.us.archive.org/2/items/FameOfADeadMansDeedsRobertS.Griffin/Fame%20of%20a%20Dead%20Man%27s%20Deeds%20-%20Robert%20S.%20Griffin.pdf>. Many of the quotes attributed to Pierce, as well as discussions of Pierce's contemporaneous thinking related to specific events described in this section, are drawn from, among other sources, Griffin's biography of Pierce. While the factual basis for these statements is accepted as a source through which to assess Pierce's own views on particular issues, it has been widely recognized that Griffin's biographical work is tinged by the author's own opinions of Pierce. Described as "fawning," the self-published work largely accepts Pierce's ideological self-identification and interpretation of events at face value. See: Martin A. Lee, "Vermont Academic Writes Fawning Biography of Late Neo-Nazi Leader William Pierce," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, September 20, 2002, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2002/vermont-academic-writes-fawning-biography-late-neo-nazi-leader-william-pierce>.

¹⁵⁸ "William Pierce," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

had re-married “a Jew who had moved to Montgomery from New York City” who Pierce’s mother detested, feeling as though he was “pushing the family even further outside the pale of upper-tier white society.”¹⁵⁹

Pierce attended the Allen Military Academy in Bryan, Texas before securing a bachelor’s degree in physics from Rice University in Houston.¹⁶⁰ He credited his time in military school with pushing him away from Christianity, finding it “inaccessible.”¹⁶¹ After a brief stint working in an oil field, Pierce went on to work at Los Alamos National Laboratory before entering graduate school, earning a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1962. From there, Pierce became an assistant professor at Oregon State University, teaching physics from 1962-1965.¹⁶² According to Pierce, he did not begin to truly form his ideological or political views until after he received his Ph.D. It was at this juncture that Pierce’s white supremacy gained overt primacy in his professional life as he reportedly became increasingly preoccupied with what he saw as the “racial erosion” of American society.¹⁶³ Pierce’s description of the early years of his life illustrates the degree to which race dictated his worldview:

When I was growing up...I lived in a white America. When I went downtown to the big department stores and office buildings and so on, the faces were white. And that wasn't just true in the places I grew up. It was the same thing in New York City or Los Angeles. For instance, in Los Angeles today, the infrastructure was been taken over by mestizos. The people who do the manual labor and much of the clerical work, and all of the waitresses and waiters and taxi drivers and bus drivers and garbage collectors and street repair crews – they are all Mexicans. How can you convey what it was like then to someone who was born in the mid-'60s and would be now in his mid-thirties. It would have been around 1975 before he would have noticed very much about what was happening around him, and by that time things had already begun to change greatly. I've even suggested to younger people that they go to the library and look at an issue of Life magazine from the '40s. I tell them to look at the group scenes – on the streets, or at sports events, or at political rallies, and so on. You don't see minorities.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Robert S. Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*.

¹⁶⁰ “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹⁶¹ Robert S. Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*.

¹⁶² J.M. Berger, *The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism's Deadly Bible*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague (September 2016), <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2016/09/ICCT-Berger-The-Turner-Legacy-September2016-2.pdf> ; Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*.; “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹⁶³ Brad Whitsel, “The Turner Diaries and Cosmotheism: William Pierce’s Theology,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 1, no. 2 (April 1998): 183-197, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1525/nr.1998.1.2.183.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ac241be9b0c3267a75976b7e73e43bc22&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1.

¹⁶⁴ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, 49.

While teaching at Oregon State, Pierce grew disillusioned with the “politically correct atmosphere” within the university environment, feeling as though it was preventing an honest dialogue on race.¹⁶⁵ During his time at Oregon State, Pierce joined the John Birch Society. Conceived as a grassroots campaign against communist infiltration and takeover of the U.S. government, the John Birch Society attracted thousands of Americans with the theme “less government and more individual responsibility.”¹⁶⁶ A 1963 study by the California Senate Factfinding Subcommittee on Un-American Activities found the John Birch Society to be a “Right, anti-Communist, fundamentalist organization,” concluding that, by and large, the society was primarily a community-based group organizing to spread the “truth about the Communist menace.”¹⁶⁷ However, a more conspiratorial anti-government strand was also a recognized component of the Society by those across the political spectrum. In a 1965 article in the *Arizona Republic*, a Republican politician in Tucson characterized the members of the John Birch Society into three groups, “eighty percent are dedicated, patriotic and frightened Americans; more than 19 percent are nuts whose brains and judgment are warped; and the remaining people frighten me to death.”¹⁶⁸

Turn to National Socialism

While Pierce joined the John Birch Society due to their anti-communist message, he quickly grew disenchanted with what he viewed as an unwillingness from the group to deal with the issues he viewed as crucial:

They were against the civil rights revolution, but they wouldn't deal with it on a racial basis. They approached it from the angle of communist agitators stirring up the Negroes, as they were called in those years. It's true that communism was an important part of the civil rights movement; the communists did latch onto it. But the fundamental significance of the civil rights activity was racial not political. But when I brought that up to the Birch Society people, they wouldn't go near it. "If the Birchers were going to stress the communist aspect of the civil rights movement, why were they unwilling to look at exactly who these communists were? Why don't we deal with the fact that so often these people are Jews? How can you make sense of communism without understanding the Jewish role in it from Karl Marx on through? The Bolshevik revolution in Russia would never have gotten off the ground if it hadn't been for the Jews. And if you look at the communists and their supporters in this country, they are primarily Jews. Why, I asked them, are the columnists in the newspapers who are sympathetic to the civil rights agenda so often

¹⁶⁵ Whitsel, “The Turner Diaries and Cosmotheism.”

¹⁶⁶ Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 20.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 21.

¹⁶⁸ Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 22.

Jewish? The head of the NAACP had always been a Jew. It is obvious that if the Jews withdrew their support the civil-rights movement would collapse.¹⁶⁹

While still teaching at Oregon State, Pierce began to seek out more extreme alternatives to the John Birch Society. Pierce attributed a 1962 news clip of American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell with his own embrace of national socialism, noting that he subsequently wrote Rockwell a letter and received a response of a dozen handwritten pages. Pierce would later meet Rockwell in Washington, D.C. in 1964 which propelled his ideological fervor to new heights, and placed him on the path to significance within the white supremacist movement for years to come.

By 1965, Pierce had left his position in academia to pursue radical solutions to America's race problem, and "to devote himself to the service of his people."¹⁷⁰ This service, to Pierce, was necessitated by what he viewed as the loss of a "racial basis" or "blood basis" for society.¹⁷¹ He took a job as a senior research associate physicist at Pratt & Whitney Advanced Materials Research and Development Laboratory, claiming they offered better pay which he intended to use to finance his writing.¹⁷² Records from the FBI on Pierce include an interview with a colleague from Pratt & Whitney who described Pierce as a "first-class physicist," but a "real loner."¹⁷³ FBI interviews with colleagues note that, while Pierce was careful to not display overt antisemitic feelings, he made at least one notable racist comment during his brief employment. In the aftermath of a wild-cat strike in May 1966, Pierce observed a photograph of picketers pushing cars back from entering the plant, pointed to a Black man in the photograph, and said "That is some great specimen of American Manhood."¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, 102.

¹⁷⁰ John Sutherland, "Gospels of hate that slip through the net," *Guardian*, April 3, 2000, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/apr/03/race.mcveigh>.

¹⁷¹ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, 49. This loss of what Pierce described as a "racial basis" has served as a cornerstone for the white supremacist movement in the United States, which has manifested in the embrace of racist, nativist, and antisemitic conspiracy theories. See, for example: Matthew Kriner, Meghan Conroy, Alex Newhouse and Jonathan Lewis, "Understanding Accelerationist Narratives: The Great Replacement Theory," *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, May 30, 2022, <https://gnet-research.org/2022/05/30/understanding-accelerationist-narratives-the-great-replacement-theory/>; "The Great Replacement: An Explainer," *Anti-Defamation League*, April 19, 2021, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/great-replacement-explainer>; "The Racist 'Great Replacement' Conspiracy Theory Explained," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, May 17, 2022, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/05/17/racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-explained>; Mark Potok, "Exposing The Tanton Network: The Bigoted Anti-Immigrant Movement," *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right*, August 4, 2021, <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2021/08/04/exposing-the-tanton-network-the-bigoted-anti-immigrant-movement/>; Sebastian Normandin and Sean A. Valles, "How a network of conservationists and population control activists created the contemporary US anti-immigration movement," *Endeavour* 39 (2015): 95-105. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0160932715200622>.

¹⁷² Will Blythe, "The Guru of White Hate," *Rolling Stone*, June 8, 2000, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/guru-white-hate-william-pierce-timothy-mcveigh-831091/>.

¹⁷³ "William Luther Pierce," *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Release, 23, https://archive.org/details/foia_Pierce_William_L.-HQ-1/page/n23/mode/1up?view=theater.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

A Propagandist Rises

Within a year of joining Pratt & Whitney, Pierce left to join Rockwell's American Nazi Party. According to colleagues, Pierce took a vacation in the summer of 1966 and failed to return to work as expected. He claimed he had attended a meeting in Virginia which had delayed his return, and while the FBI report does not explicitly name Rockwell, the American Nazi Party was headquartered in Arlington, Virginia.¹⁷⁵ Pierce explained that he had been spending "six hours a night" on a new literary effort and wanted to pursue writing on a full-time basis.¹⁷⁶ He stated that "he and a few friends" were working on

setting up a national socialist magazine, and that "George Lincoln Rockwell is a friend of mine and we are going to print it on his press."¹⁷⁷ In comments to employees at Pratt & Whitney, Pierce implied that the magazine would be affiliated with the American Nazi Party and that it was "the wave of the future."¹⁷⁸ Pierce would later claim he originally formulated the idea after finding "all these wonderful books about race and demographics" at the Yale University library which he realized "hadn't been checked out in thirty years."¹⁷⁹ In his view, this journal, *National Socialist World*, would offer the chance to centralize and mainstream national socialist and racist literature which could be disseminated across the American Nazi Party.¹⁸⁰

Pierce's deepening relationship with Rockwell in this period was of particular interest to law enforcement. The FBI "recognized Pierce's leadership potential" even before he assumed an influential role within the white supremacist movement, detailing Pierce's talent "for writing political propaganda as early as 1966."¹⁸¹ Information obtained by the FBI in 1967 highlights Pierce's "close association with George Lincoln Rockwell," noting that Pierce was "most highly regarded by him." While at this early juncture, Pierce did not hold an overt leadership capacity within the American Nazi Party, but the FBI

Figure 12. George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi Party, shakes his fist during his speech at Drake University in early 1967. Photograph by Bettmann/Getty Images.



¹⁷⁵ "William Luther Pierce," 24.; Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, 104.

¹⁷⁶ "William Luther Pierce," 24.

¹⁷⁷ "William Luther Pierce," 24.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, 122.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Wexler, *America's Secret Jihad*.

noted that “his impact with that organization is important, if only by his background.”¹⁸² As Stuart Wexler describes, “much misery and political violence owes itself to Pierce eventually reaching his potential.”¹⁸³ By 1967, Rockwell rebranded his American Nazi Party as the National Socialist White People’s Party (NSWPP), a transition that Pierce credits to his influence. Pierce claims that he told Rockwell that “this American Nazi Party thing was a circus, not a political party; it doesn’t sound real.”¹⁸⁴ Within a year, however, Rockwell would be assassinated - an act that would serve as another significant moment in Pierce’s personal journey. Rockwell was shot and killed in August 1967 outside of a laundromat in Arlington, Virginia by a former member of the American Nazi Party who Rockwell had expelled for Bolshevik leanings.¹⁸⁵ Pierce, the FBI assessed, became the custodian of Rockwell’s ashes, and Matthias Koehl, a staunch neo-Nazi and Rockwell’s second in command, would assume a leadership role of the NSWPP with internecine conflicts on the horizon.¹⁸⁶ Pierce would later claim that he “never had an official position in Rockwell’s organization...had never even been a member” but that in the aftermath of Rockwell’s assassination, he made the decision to become a member of the party to “help Koehl keep things going.”¹⁸⁷

In addition to continuing to edit the *National Socialist World*, Pierce’s propaganda efforts for the NSWPP in this period took the form of weekly “White Power” telephone messages and ideological sermons which Pierce would edit, record, and disseminate to spread the message of the NSWPP. Several notable iterations of these messages were preserved and highlight the crystallization of both Pierce’s worldview and his continued influence on the messaging of the organization between 1968-1969. Common themes emerge throughout these weekly messages of a nation teetering on the brink of a violent revolution, with the threat posed by minorities and Jews growing by the day. Interspersed throughout Pierce’s messages were veiled or direct calls for violence against these groups, as well as the government which he framed as being controlled by shadowy forces intent on destroying the vision for a white America held by NSWPP and its supporters.¹⁸⁸

A July 1968 White Power message claimed that “the real vital issues facing us as a people today are all racial issues,” while in an August 1968 message, Pierce bemoaned “a world in which our government adopts an official policy of hostility toward the white governments in Rhodesia and South Africa and ships arms to the black cannibals trying to destroy those two nations.”¹⁸⁹ Pierce’s message on

¹⁸² “William Luther Pierce,” 24.

¹⁸³ Wexler, *America’s Secret Jihad*.

¹⁸⁴ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man’s Deeds*, 132.

¹⁸⁵ “Killer of American Nazi Chief Paroled,” *St. Joseph News-Press*, August 23, 1975. <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=d0tkAAAAIABAJ&sjid=9nQNAAAAIABAJ&dq=john-patler%20stormtrooper%20-wikipedia&pg=862%2C4544453>.

¹⁸⁶ “William Luther Pierce,” 43.

¹⁸⁷ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man’s Deeds*, 132-133.

¹⁸⁸ “William Luther Pierce,” *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Release, https://archive.org/details/foia_Pierce_William_L.-HQ-1/page/n23/mode/1up?view=theater.

¹⁸⁹ “William Luther Pierce,” 78.

September 5, 1968 focused on the dangers of the government “which has sold out to minority pressure groups,” and that “is continuing in its attempts to disarm white citizens, leaving them defenseless in the face of black attacks.” Pierce lamented that the government’s actions meant “the average white person is unable to obtain some of the most effective and modern weapons for dealing with rampaging blacks.”¹⁹⁰ Pierce used the White Power messages to position the NSWPP as a bastion for the white race, claiming that “as a special service to the white public, the National Socialist White People’s Party has located stocks of Negro controlled equipment normally available only to policemen and the military. These Negro controlled devices include special purpose riot guns and chemical mace.”¹⁹¹

Pierce, much like Louis Beam, latched onto the Vietnam War to perpetuate his own narratives around the direction of the country and the failures of the government. On October 7, 1968, White Power message, Pierce announced:

More than 28,000 American fighting men have been killed by the Viet Cong to date. Hundreds more are being killed by the communists every week and yet, in our Nation’s Capitol, a red vermin like the Jew, Jerry Rubin, arrogantly parades the streets and in the halls of Congress carrying a Viet Cong flag...Our law makers are so intimidated by the liberal clique which controls the American press. They are so afraid of being called fascists or racist or witch hunters that Jewish Viet Cong supporters like Rubin...are able to make a mockery of the United States Congress. It’s about time for some drastic changes in our government.¹⁹²

Numerous White Power messages in January 1969 served as a platform for Pierce to lament the decline of his idealistic white America, and the replacement of this vision with a multicultural, liberal society. Pierce announced that “America is sick unto death and the name of our sickness is democratic liberalism,” and that the “enormously powerful and well-organized Jews in this country” controlled the politicians within it. He declared that “only in a whole white America can we carry out a genuine program for the betterment of our people,” and that “the first objective in our party program is a white America. That means an America without black or Jews. An America in which our children and grandchildren will play and go to school with other white children.”¹⁹³

Pierce’s White Power messages made clear that he envisioned no peaceful resolution to these intractable issues. He emphasized in January 1969 that his listeners must “clearly understand that there is only one effective way to deal with the rampaging black on our campuses and in our cities and that is to kill them.” In February 1969, Pierce’s message made this even more explicit, claiming that “now it

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 78-79.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 79.

¹⁹² *Ibid* .80.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 81-82.

is now longer possible to avoid violence and bloodshed on a massive scale. We are in the first stages of a genuine race war. In the months and years ahead, its intensity will exceed anything we have yet seen. Race war, however, is a small price to pay if, through this means, we can safeguard the future of our race if, through race war, we can eliminate the menace of race mixing.”¹⁹⁴

On April 9, 1970, Pierce, in his role as an information officer for the National Socialist White People’s Party, spoke to a group of 450 students at the University of Scranton. Pierce, by then 36, was described as “tall, lanky and baby faced...sporting noticeably thick lenses in his glasses.”¹⁹⁵ Reporting from the Scranton Tribune noted Pierce “became lost a number of times in his own circumlocution as he evaded direct answers to questions.” In his remarks, described by reporters as “a low-key, unemotional pitch for racism and white supremacy,” Pierce declared that the U.S. “is weak, decadent, rotten, corrupt” and led by a President “who should be dragged out of the office and shot.”¹⁹⁶ He announced “the time is now for revolution” to bring about a new world “race-centered rather than ego centered” in which “each generation becomes another step in an endless road from the sub-human animal to the super man.”¹⁹⁷ When pressed on how the NSWPP intended to “get rid of the blacks and Jews,” Pierce relayed his plans “may come to machineguns and Molotov cocktails, but it must be done...we invite you to join us.”¹⁹⁸

Organizational Split

That year, however, Pierce would leave the NSWPP. Pierce would later claim that his decision to stay on with NSWPP in this period was a mistake and that he should have quit and gone his own way after Rockwell’s assassination. He had released three issues of the *National Socialist World* magazine prior to the murder and would release three more before the rift within NSWPP would splinter the organization’s leadership.¹⁹⁹ Pierce described a series of disagreements between himself, Rockwell’s successor Matthias Koehl, and Robert Lloyd that came to a head in June of 1970. Pierce claims Koehl “had gotten it into his head that Lloyd and I were plotting a coup to take over the organization and run it our way.”²⁰⁰ Both Pierce and Lloyd would leave the NSWPP, and shortly after, Pierce would discontinue his *National Socialist World* journal.

According to Pierce, he felt that the shortcoming of his journal and the NSWPP writ large was the limited number of Americans who self-identified as National Socialists. Pierce claimed that he “was certain there were many people around who didn't think of themselves as National Socialists who were

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 83.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 59.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 52-59.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 59.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁹ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, 133.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 135.

concerned about the same degenerative trends in politics and demographics” as he was, and he wanted to find them and bring them into the fold.²⁰¹ This ideation led Pierce to the National Youth Alliance, the precursor to what would become the organizational throughline for Pierce’s extremist ideology - National Alliance.

The National Youth Alliance (NYA), founded by Willis Carto, was itself born out of an earlier Carto-run group, Youth for Wallace, which supported segregationist Governor George Wallace’s candidacy for president in the 1968 Presidential Election. Pierce’s own biographical claims suggest he first became aware of the National Youth Alliance when he saw a television interview with the group’s chairman, Lou Byers.²⁰² The FBI succinctly summarized the NYA’s ideology as “the preservation of ‘Western’ culture and the eradication of Zionist influences from American life.”²⁰³ In this vein, Carto had established a publishing house, Noontide Press, within the National Youth Alliance and used it to promote the work of prominent fascists of that era such as Francis Parker Yockey.²⁰⁴ Pierce saw the National Youth Alliance as a useful vehicle to promote his worldview, assessing that the group could be re-focused from its opposition to the 1960s counterculture towards a true National Socialist incubator.

Pierce claimed, however, that by the time of arrival, the National Youth Alliance was functionally “stone dead.”²⁰⁵ He reportedly told Byers he wanted to take over the NYA and operate it as his own organization, and claimed he received Byers’ blessing to do so. Pierce largely avoids the subject of his relationship with Carto in his own telling of events, although other sources suggest the pair “had a major falling out” by 1971, with Carto accusing Pierce of stealing a mailing list “belonging to Carto’s anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby organization.”²⁰⁶ An October 1971 news article notes that Pierce was “indicted in Superior Court the previous day on charges of receiving stolen property” which was identified as the Liberty Lobby mailing list, comprised of over 24,000 names. The article goes on to describe claims that Pierce “used the mailing list to send ‘poison pen’ letters to its own adherents criticizing the heads of Liberty Lobby.”²⁰⁷

As a result, by 1971 the National Youth Alliance, much like the NSWPP, would splinter with Carto taking a faction and renaming it Youth Action.²⁰⁸ Pierce would remain in control of the NYA and continue to use this platform to lead the editing of a NYA tabloid newspaper, titled “Attack!” and an internal newsletter, “Action.” These publications, much like Pierces’ *National Socialist World* and *White Power*

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 136.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 136.

²⁰³ “William Luther Pierce,” 178.

²⁰⁴ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man’s Deeds*, 137.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 138.

²⁰⁶ William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²⁰⁷ “William Luther Pierce,” 167.

²⁰⁸ Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), <https://uncpress.org/book/9780807846384/religion-and-the-racist-right/>.

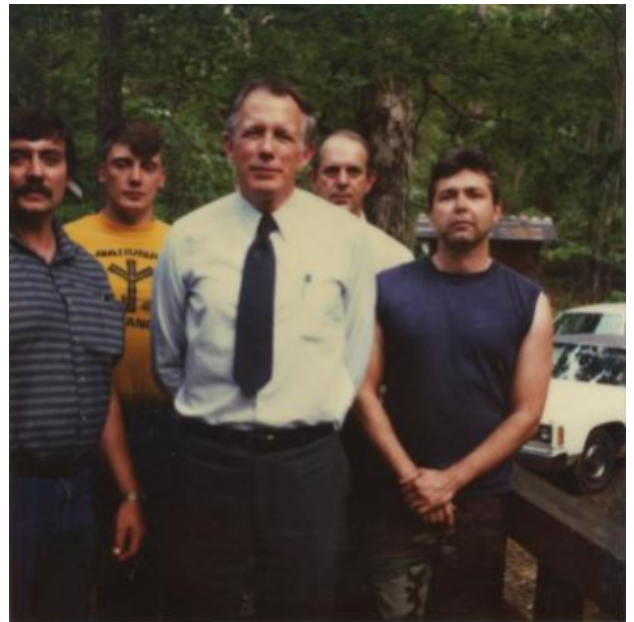
messages, centered around his vision of an impending race war and the collapse of the current system. For example, a Summer 1970 issue of “Attack!” claimed that it was no longer possible to cure “the System” by constitutional means and suggested the ultimate possibility of violent revolution. It went on to state that NYA had the responsibility for accepting a leading position in coming revolutionary developments.²⁰⁹

Pierce wrote a series of articles for publication within “Attack!” entitled “Revolutionary Notes” which “purported to instruct readers how to build, deploy, and detonate simple incendiary and explosive devices.”²¹⁰ At the same time, an informant claimed that Pierce, who had been educated as a physicist, was able to obtain “the chemicals needed to experiment with the devices and techniques described in ‘Attack!’.”²¹¹ An FBI investigation assessed that Pierce used a fictitious entity known as ECO Labs to place 13 orders for such equipment and chemicals between November 1971 and March 1972 including at least one which included potassium chlorate, a restricted item and explosive precursor.²¹² It is unclear what further steps, if any, the FBI took concerning Pierce’s chemical purchases, but no public evidence suggests Pierce was the subject of further investigation related to this matter.

In February 1972, Pierce attended an event at the University Center at George Washington University where he was confronted by a group of hecklers as he attempted to discuss the merits of the NYA. Media reports suggest Pierce engaged in a heated back-and-forth with the hecklers, at one point turning to an antagonist and remarking “You think you’re a pretty smart kike, don’t you?”²¹³ Pierce was then pelted with “a barrage of eggs” as well as a stink bomb, and the event was canceled.²¹⁴

By 1974, Pierce would reorganize the National Youth Alliance as the National Alliance, removing the previous age limit of 30. Pierce’s organization adopted the slogans “Free Men Are Not Equal” and “Equal Men Are

Figure 13. William Luther Pierce with members of the National Alliance at the compound in Mill Point, West Virginia. Photograph from the archive of Kelvin Pierce.



²⁰⁹ “William Luther Pierce,” 168.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 198.

²¹¹ *Ibid*.

²¹² *Ibid*. These records also note that, while the 12 other orders did not display any restricted items, the proper combination of several chemicals received in these orders could be potentially dangerous.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 183.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*.

Not Free.”²¹⁵ He envisioned the National Alliance as “the racial Vanguard party that leads whites to revolutionary racial victory.”²¹⁶ For Pierce, there was no avenue for a gradual seizure of power through traditional political processes. The race war had arrived, and the National Alliance would lead the white masses - the “lemmings,” as they viewed them - to victory. This victory, Pierce assessed, could only come after a period of ethnic cleansing that he referred to as a “temporary unpleasantness” which would bring about the seizure of state power and the creation of all-white nations.²¹⁷ Pierce ultimately renamed the internal newsletter “Action” to “National Alliance Bulletin,” and the magazine “Attack!” to “National Vanguard,” replacing “red headlines and exhortations to action” with “sober analyses” of politics in an effort to present a more serious public image.²¹⁸

In 1978, Pierce’s National Alliance published *Which Way Western Man?* which had a profound impact on white supremacist groups across the country. Pierce’s allies in The Order were struck by the antisemitic arguments put forth by the book’s author, William Gayley Simpson. Robert Mathews, in particular, was drawn to the “heavily footnoted and exhaustively documented justification for eugenics, segregation, and Jewish deportation.”²¹⁹ Mathews felt National Alliance was “a more intellectual outlet than the right wing typically offered” after he read about Pierce’s group in *Instauration*, a right-wing publication in Florida, in 1980.²²⁰ *Which Way Western Man?* was reviewed in Pierce’s “Attack!” by Revilo P. Oliver, one of the founding members of the John Birch Society who, much like Louis Beam, would find the society at odds with his overt racism. Oliver was recorded as discussing his feeling that the thought of the “vaporizing” of the Jews was a “beatific vision.”²²¹

This review would lead to a meeting between Oliver and Pierce, and the beginning of another consequential relationship in the development of Pierce’s vision. In Pierce’s telling, his meeting with Oliver centered around what he viewed to be the central issue for the movement in this period: spreading the message. The individuals Pierce was targeting, Oliver told him, “those toward the bottom or on the margins of society with less stake in the existing arrangements and less to lose” simply were not reading the dense non-fiction material that Pierce and National Alliance were generating.²²² Oliver

²¹⁵ “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²¹⁶ Travis Morris, *Dark Ideas: How Neo-Nazi and Violent Jihadi Ideologues Shaped Modern Terrorism* (Lexington Books: London, 2017): 35, https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=g-LXDQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA43&dq=%22Louis+Beam%22&ots=_hcFj5i2Fg&sig=dPieRJDQPdUztzuUS_eNpt3WDzA#v=onepage&q&f=false.

²¹⁷ “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²¹⁸ “William Pierce: A Political History,” *Southern Poverty Law Center, WayBack Machine Internet Archive*, 1999, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070713115133/http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?sid=232>.; “National Alliance,” *Anti-Defamation League*, February 6, 2017, <https://www.adl.org/resources/profile/national-alliance>.

²¹⁹ Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 81.

²²⁰ *Ibid*.

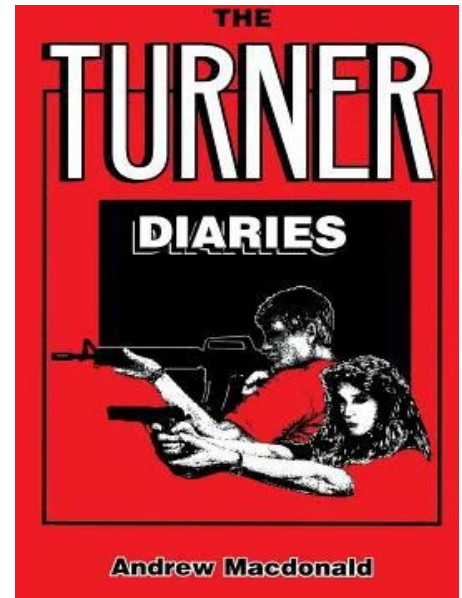
²²¹ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man’s Deeds*, 155.

²²² *Ibid*, 165-166.

suggested that Pierce focus on fiction, “particularly light, action-filled recreational fiction.”²²³ He mailed Pierce a copy of a book published by the John Birch Society, *The John Franklin Letters*.

Published pseudonymously, *The John Franklin Letters* includes a preface from a fictional Harley Ogdon. Ogdon informs the reader that these letters tell the story of a fictional world in which America collapses due to Communist infiltration, only to be saved through a violent revolution by the Rangers, an underground patriotic military force formed by Franklin.²²⁴ While no author was positively identified, Pierce’s biographer asserts that the author was none other than Oliver, and excerpts from the *Letters* highlight the elements of racism and antisemitism that were central to Oliver’s worldview.²²⁵ *The John Franklin Letters* describes a fictional U.S. in which “one third of the nation’s crime is committed by Negroes, mostly in Northern cities,” and a “hate literature law” passed by a Jewish senator “prevents what is considered to be unfair propaganda against minority groups.”²²⁶ The book’s antagonist appears in the form of the New World Order and “world governments” which are part of a “world-wide people’s democratic government” conspiring to subvert America’s sovereignty.²²⁷ Pierce’s meeting with Oliver and his introduction to *The John Franklin Letters* would serve as inspiration for Pierce’s magnum opus, *The Turner Diaries*.

Figure 14. Cover of *The Turner Diaries*. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



The Turner Diaries and Hunter

The *Diaries*, which would later become known as “the bible of the racist right,” was published in 1978 by Pierce under the pseudonym Andrew MacDonald.²²⁸ Pierce first serialized *The Turner Diaries* in his National Alliance publication, “Attack!”²²⁹ The National Alliance boasted that the book was a “Blueprint,” and a “Handbook for White Victory.”²³⁰ *Turner Diaries* is written as a “found document” which chronicles the events of “the Great Revolution” through the eyes of Earl Turner.

²²³ *Ibid*, 165.

²²⁴ *Ibid*.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 166.

²²⁶ *The John Franklin Letters* (New York: Free Enterprise Publications, 1959), <https://archive.org/details/the-john-franklin-letters>.

²²⁷ *Ibid*.

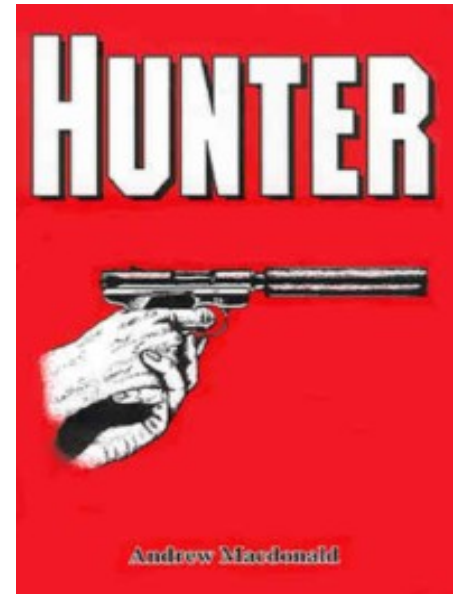
²²⁸ Berger, *The Turner Legacy*; “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*; Seyward Darby and Jonathon Kelso, “The father, the son, and the racist spirit: being raised by a white supremacist,” *The Guardian*, March 31, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/31/william-luther-pierce-white-supremacist-son-kelvin-pierce>.

²²⁹ Berger, *The Turner Legacy*.

²³⁰ “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

Turner describes the U.S. as one controlled by “an anti-white, anti-gun U.S. government that continually puts more restrictions on its citizens.”²³¹ As the situation deteriorates, Turner’s diary describes a life that is becoming “more and more Jewish.”²³² Once the government bans private gun ownership, Turner joins a white supremacist cell known only as “The Organization” which begins to carry out revolutionary terrorism against “The System.” Throughout the narrative of *The Turner Diaries*, Pierce details a campaign of assassinations against non-white leaders before the group turns to “race traitors.”²³³ Turner describes the group’s efforts to use violence to collapse the system, offering the reader step-by-step instructions for every facet of this process, from how to “how to store and conceal weapons caches to secure communications to the construction of bombs.”²³⁴ One notable element of the *Diaries* comes as The Organization plots its first major attack, the bombing of the FBI headquarters. The novel provides the reader with granular information on the cell’s use of an improvised truck bomb constructed with ammonium nitrate – a target and weapon choice mirrored in Timothy McVeigh’s bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in 1995. As the conflict continues, white supremacists take control of California and carry out the “The Day of the Rope” in which they engage in mass lynchings of journalists, politicians, and women in interracial relationships.²³⁵ The *Diaries* comes to an end as Turner is given a suicide mission by The Organization, crashing a plane with a nuclear weapon into the Pentagon. The epilogue notes that Turner’s attack allowed The Organization to take control of the U.S. and establish a white ethnostate.

Figure 15. Cover of *Hunter*. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Pierce's 1989 sequel to *The Diaries*, *Hunter*, is another novel centered on the glorification of graphic racial violence. *Hunter* tells the story of Oscar Yeager, a Vietnam War veteran turned drive-by killer who tries to cleanse America of its "sickness" by murdering interracial couples and eventually "working his way up" to assassinating Jews.²³⁶ Pierce dedicated *Hunter* to Joseph Paul Franklin who confessed to killing as many as 18 individuals between 1977 and 1980 in an attempt to start a race war. Pierce

²³¹ Berger, *The Turner Legacy*.; “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²³² Berger, *The Turner Legacy*.; William Luther Pierce, *The Turner Diaries*, National Vanguard, 1978, Chapter 9.

²³³ Berger, *The Turner Legacy*.; Joseph Stabile, *From Reconstruction to the Day of the Rope: The Evolution and Persistence of Assassination as a Tool of White Supremacist Terror* (Washington, D.C.: Program on Extremism, November 2022). <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/Stabile-%20PoE%20Final%20Report%2011-18-22%20FINAL%20WEBSITE.pdf>.

²³⁴ Berger, *The Turner Legacy*.

²³⁵ “Day of the Rope,” *Anti-Defamation League*. <https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/day-rope>.

²³⁶ *Explosion of Hate: The Growing Danger of the National Alliance*, Anti-Defamation League, originally published in 2000, republished in 2012, <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/combating-hate/Explosion-of-Hate.pdf>.

uses the novel to praise Franklin as "the Lone Hunter, who saw his duty as a White man and did what a responsible son of his race must do."²³⁷ While *Hunter* would not gain the same following as *The Turner Diaries*, it undoubtedly served as a notable extremist text due to Pierce's lasting appeal.

Growth of National Alliance and its Transnational Networks

Pierce spent the formative years of the National Alliance holding weekly meetings near Washington, D.C. in an effort to attract more followers to the cause. At the same time, he was "formulating a philosophy that became the basis of what he called 'Cosmotheism,' a racist religion that stresses the superiority of the white race and the unity of the white race with nature."²³⁸ In 1985, Pierce relocated the National Alliance from Arlington, Virginia, to a 346-acre farm in Mill Point, West Virginia, which he bought for \$95,000 in cash.²³⁹

He named this compound the Cosmotheist Church, with many speculating that Pierce created the church in a "last-ditch effort on his part to avoid paying taxes."²⁴⁰ Years earlier, Pierce had sought to acquire tax-exempt status for the National Alliance, claiming the organization was educational. The I.R.S. denied the application, although Pierce would successfully secure federal, state, and local tax-exempt status, with limited state exemptions for 60 acres and buildings on the property used exclusively for "religious purposes."²⁴¹ Given the timing of Pierce's purchase, there was a widespread belief that "at least some of the money used for the purchase had come from the proceeds of bank and armored-car robberies committed by The Order."²⁴²

By 1998, the National Alliance was described as America's preeminent neo-Nazi organization, with a reported 22 chapters in 14 states.²⁴³ In 1999, Pierce incorporated Resistance Records LLC, paying \$250,000 to acquire the white power music label's compact disc catalog, inventory, mailing list, and publishing arm.²⁴⁴ Pierce had been supporting the record company since its inception in 1993, and this acquisition furthered Pierce's goal of diversifying the National Alliance's public output while fulfilling Pierce's goal of appealing to a younger generation of potential recruits.²⁴⁵

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ "William Pierce," *Anti-Defamation League*, *WayBack Machine Internet Archive*, https://web.archive.org/web/20130116145156/http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/Pierce.asp?LEARN_Cat=Extremism&LEARN_SubCat=Extremism_in_America&xpicked=2&item=wp.

²⁴⁰ "William Pierce," *Anti-Defamation League*.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ "The Voices of Radical Radio," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, September 15, 1998, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/1998/voices-radical-radio>.

²⁴⁴ "National Alliance Leader William Pierce Hopes to Acquire Hate Label, Resistance Records," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, December 15, 1999, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/1999/national-alliance-leader-william-pierce-hopes-acquire-hate-label-resistance-records>.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

National Alliance had previously launched an “amateurish comic” called *The Adventures of White Will* that was “met with derision among its intended audience when it was released in the early 1990s.”²⁴⁶ The acquisition of Resistance Records, however, gave Pierce a chance to once again attempt to conduct outreach to a demographic he long viewed as a key target, as he described in a March 1995 edition of his American Dissident Voices radio show. He stated that “what we have to do is encourage in every way we can the growth of the racially conscious portion of the Skinhead community...we have to give young people back their sense of identity.”²⁴⁷

That same year, Pierce also purchased Nordland Records, a Swedish white power music company, that he folded into Resistance Records to double the company’s inventory.²⁴⁸ In the first issue of the revived *Resistance* magazine in 1999, Pierce wrote that Resistance Records would be producing and distributing music that “speaks directly to the soul of our people. It will be the music of our people’s renewal and rebirth ... It will be music of defiance and rage against the enemies of our people.”²⁴⁹ By this point, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, “Resistance came to dominate the white power music scene and also became the biggest moneymaker in the NA empire.”²⁵⁰

The turn of the century also witnessed Pierce leading National Alliance efforts to strengthen the ties between “racial nationalists” in the U.S. and Europe. In *Resistance*, Pierce wrote that “the revolution we’re building in America is also being built by others in every country in Europe...Sharing our music is a way to do that.”²⁵¹ In 2000, Pierce established connections with a young German neo-Nazi, Hendrik Möbus, a National Socialist Black Metal musician who had previously been convicted of murdering a 14-year-old in the former East Germany. After leaving prison, Möbus violated probation and fled to the U.S., traveling to West Virginia and becoming a staff writer for *Resistance*.²⁵² Three months later, he was

Figure 16. Pierce at a 1999 National Alliance meeting in Hillsboro, West Virginia. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ “William Pierce,” *Anti-Defamation League*.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²⁵¹ “William Pierce,” *Anti-Defamation League*.

²⁵² David A Vise, “Fugitive Neo-Nazi From Germany Is Captured in W.Va.,” *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2000, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2000/08/29/fugitive-neo-nazi-from-germany-is-captured-in-wva/ad02f94b-1d1a-4f46-b06e-3a0d158a1015/>.; Stephen Braun, “Entry of Foreign Extremists Into the U.S. Raises Concerns,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 28, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-sep-28-mn-28113-story.html>.

arrested by U.S. Marshals near the National Alliance headquarters and quickly “became a cause célèbre for the National Alliance, which raised money for his defense and held rallies...to demand that the United States government grant him political asylum”²⁵³ That same year, with Möbus's help, Pierce purchased a stake in Cymophane Records, a National Socialist Black Metal music company - part of what Pierce described in an American Dissident Voices broadcast as a sustained effort to “establish new outlets in Europe for [Pierce's] records.”²⁵⁴

Möbus was merely the tip of the iceberg with respect to Pierce’s efforts to cultivate ties to the global white supremacist movement. Over the years, it was reported that Pierce built close ties between the National Alliance and the British

National Party, a racist, anti-minority, neo-Fascist party in Great Britain, and the German National Democratic Party (NPD), an ultra-right-wing nationalist party in Germany.²⁵⁵ Pierce made numerous trips to Germany in this period to attend NPD events and invited NPD members to National Alliance headquarters in West Virginia. He also attended an international conference of white nationalists in Greece, joining racist leaders from more than a dozen countries and boasting that the National Alliance attracted international members from across Europe.²⁵⁶

As National Alliance entered the 21st century, Pierce was described as “the courtly elder statesman and undisputed intellectual godfather of the white-supremacist movement.”²⁵⁷ Admired for his ideological heft by both “teenage skinheads and such veteran rabble-rousers as David Duke,” Pierce’s prominence in the movement was unquestioned.²⁵⁸ Duke would describe him as “a brilliant writer, a true political dissident,” and bragged that the pair “take turns being named the most dangerous man by the Anti-Defamation League.”²⁵⁹ Pierce’s National Alliance was, by 2000, arguably the most prominent

Figure 17. January 4, 2000, William Pierce, founder of the White Power group, National Alliance, is shown in Hillsboro, West Virginia. Photograph by Michael Willimason, The Washington Post via Getty Images.



²⁵³ “William Pierce,” *Anti-Defamation League*.; “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²⁵⁴ “William Pierce,” *Anti-Defamation League*.

²⁵⁵ “National Alliance,” *Anti-Defamation League*.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Reports further suggest that on one of his trips to Europe, Pierce supplied a computer and funds to the British neo-Nazi paramilitary group, Combat 18. See: “William Pierce: A Political History.”

²⁵⁷ Blythe, “The Guru of White Hate.”

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

white supremacist organization in the U.S., driven both by Pierce’s fortitude and the decline of competing groups.

Pierce made his last public speech on April 20, 2002, on the anniversary of Adolf Hitler’s birthday. At one of the National Alliance’s leadership conferences, he spoke about the importance of continuing to build the Alliance as a professional organization and spoke disdainfully about the remainder of the organized white supremacist landscape. Pierce died of kidney failure several months later, shortly after being diagnosed with cancer.²⁶⁰ Pierce’s death would precede a period of upheaval for the white supremacist movement, and of significant change for the National Alliance. As with many of the groups that Pierce participated in during his lifetime, National Alliance would soon undergo drastic organizational decline in the early 2000s, and by 2005 was reportedly “barely functioning” after a split in its ranks.²⁶¹

Directive & Vehicular Life Events

Table 2. Outline of key formative events in the life of William Luther Pierce that impacted his evolution as a leader in the American far-right landscape.

William Luther Pierce - Key Formative Life Events
After finishing his Ph.D., Pierce grew fixated with what he saw as the “racial erosion” of American society and the restrictive “politically correct atmosphere” he found within life at a university.
Pierce grew disenchanted with the John Birch Society due to what he viewed as an unwillingness from the group to deal with the issues of race, complaining that “they were against the civil rights revolution, but they wouldn’t deal with it on a racial basis.”
Pierce’s meeting with George Lincoln Rockwell led to a close friendship between the two, with Pierce developing a “close association” with him and ultimately leaving his job and joining Rockwell’s American Nazi Party.
The splintering of the NSWPP would serve as a temporary setback for Pierce, but it would ultimately lead him to gain control of the National Alliance and allow him to attempt to craft “the racial Vanguard party that leads whites to revolutionary racial victory.”

Pierce is the quintessential ideologue and a lifelong propagandist constantly seeking out the people, organizations, and platforms that would maximize the reach and impact of his message. The narrow

²⁶⁰ David Cay Johnston, “William Pierce, 69, Neo-Nazi Leader, Dies,” *The New York Times*, July 24, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/24/us/william-pierce-69-neo-nazi-leader-dies.html>.; “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²⁶¹ “National Alliance,” *Anti-Defamation League*.

organizational dynamics that Pierce influenced during his lifetime are dwarfed by the impact of his writing. His seminal work, *The Turner Diaries*, remains one of the most notable texts within the modern white supremacist milieu, and the concepts distilled within his novel serve as key mobilizing factors for a new generation of white supremacists. Pierce provided the blueprint for the modern Neo-Nazi movement and, as this case study has shown, his ideas have influenced the perpetrators of some of the deadliest terrorist attacks on American soil. If Pierce is the brains of America's far-right, then James Mason is its heart.

James Mason - The Pragmatist

The final case study in this report focuses on James Mason and, like the other case studies, it engages in an exhaustive analysis of his life, his emergence as a leader, and his impact on America's far-right. While Mason emerges as a pragmatist type according to the CIP framework, he is a particularly interesting case because his leadership style arguably evolves into a more hybridized pragmatist-ideologue form. This is largely due to Mason's relatively recent resurrection as a key figure in the far-right thanks to the influence of his text *Siege*. Mason is also significant for the purposes of this study because during his early life he floated around the movement influenced by a hodgepodge of figures and ideas, including the previously analyzed Pierce. His re-emergence as an elder statesman of a new generation of Neo-nazis is testimony to the directive and vehicular life events that shaped Mason's leadership and legacy.

Early Life

James Mason, who would later become known as the "Godfather of Fascist Terrorism," was born in Chillicothe, Ohio in 1952.²⁶² In 1966, at the age of 14, Mason joined George Lincoln Rockwell and the American Nazi Party.²⁶³ He had found the party's address in 1964, in a book titled *Extremism USA*, writing to the party and joining their youth section.²⁶⁴ According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Mason's violent ideations shone through from an early age - facing disciplinary problems at school in 1968, he planned to murder the principal and other school staff in retaliation. However, he placed a phone call to the headquarters of the American Nazi Party, then rebranded to the National Socialist White People's Party, and spoke to staff member William Luther Pierce who advised Mason to instead travel to the party's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.²⁶⁵

There are broad similarities in the life trajectories of Mason and William Luther Pierce which are worth exploring at this juncture. Pierce was two decades Mason's senior and played a significant role in Mason's early introductions to the white supremacist movement. As the narrative case studies will explore, Mason displayed many of the same characteristics as Pierce for much of his formative years, and the pair intersected throughout the 1960s and 1970s, sharing membership in the American Nazi Party, as well as its next iteration, the National Socialist White People's Party. Mason's life narrative diverts from the time of his departure from the NSWPP and embrace of the occult elements of national socialism and the decline of organized groups like Pierce's National Alliance, demonstrating Mason's relatively unique position: as a bridge between the old guard of George Lincoln Rockwell, William Luther Pierce, and Joseph Tommasi, and the new generation of American national socialists.

²⁶² Bethan Johnson and Matthew Feldman, *Siege Culture After Siege: Anatomy of a Neo-Nazi Terrorist Doctrine*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague (July 2021) <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2021/07/siege-culture-neo-nazi-terrorist-doctrine.pdf>.

²⁶³ "James Mason," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Tommasi's Influence

Upon turning 18 in 1970, Mason would become a full-fledged National Socialist White People's Party member, returning to Chillicothe, Ohio.²⁶⁶ However, George Lincoln Rockwell's assassination in 1967 splintered the NSWPP. Matthias Koehl lacked Rockwell's charisma and quickly alienated a significant portion of the party members. Mason's mentor William Luther Pierce would leave the NSWPP, as would Joseph Tommasi. It was Tommasi, not Pierce, who Mason would ultimately follow and whose singular focus on outright terrorism would become a defining feature of Mason's ideology for years to come. Mason reportedly first met Tommasi at the NSWPP First Congress Rally in 1969 which led to a "close rapport" and regular correspondence between the two men. Mason was reportedly "fascinated by Tommasi's charisma; and the intense, revolutionary zealotness that punctuated his character."²⁶⁷

Figure 19. NSLF Propaganda Leaflet. Photograph courtesy of the Southern Poverty Law Center.



Figure 19. NSLF Propaganda Leaflet. Photograph courtesy of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Tommasi was a young Los Angeles-area neo-Nazi organizer who emerged as a key figure with the NSWPP, and with Pierce's behind-the-scenes encouragement, founded the National Socialist Liberation Front (NSLF) in 1969.²⁶⁸ Still in his teens when he began this effort, Tommasi originally envisioned the NSLF as a youth auxiliary of the NSWPP. The group's activities were minimal until 1973 or 1974 when Tommasi was "unceremoniously booted out" of the NSWPP by Koehl who cited "un-National Socialist behavior" of "smoking marijuana in party headquarters, entertaining young women within those hallowed precincts, leading unauthorized armed-paramilitary maneuvers, and, it was rumored, misusing the scant party funds."²⁶⁹ Reports further suggest that, despite Tommasi's youth, Koehl began to view him as a



²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ James Mason, *Siege* (Ironmarch.org, 2015): 20.

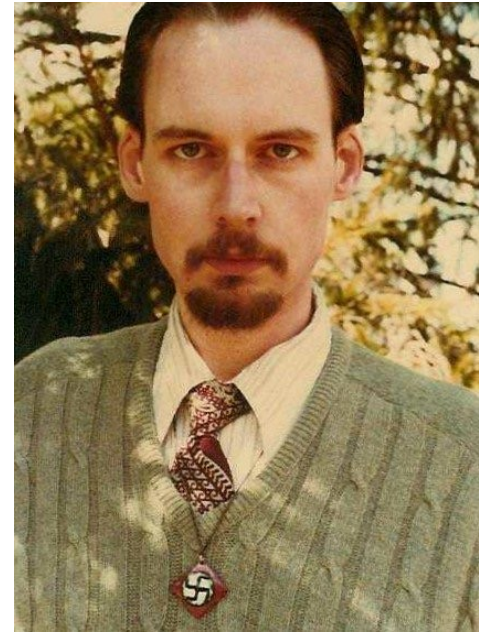
²⁶⁸ Jeffrey S. Kaplan, *Encyclopedia of White Power: A Sourcebook on the Radical Racist Right* (New York: Altamira Press, 2000): 302.

²⁶⁹ Kaplan, *Encyclopedia of White Power*, 302.

potential rival for leadership - as he had with Pierce and Lloyd - and removed him from the organization to avoid a power struggle.²⁷⁰

While Koehl continued his attempts to mainstream national socialism, Tommasi and the NSLF took a far more direct approach: calling for an armed guerrilla struggle against the “Jewish power structure” of the U.S.²⁷¹ NSLF posters and leaflets produced by Tommasi claimed: “The future belongs to the few of us still willing to get our hands dirty” as well as an image of a cocked gun with the words “Political Terror: It’s the only thing they understand.” Previewing Mason’s accelerationist worldview, Tommasi sought chaos and the destabilization of the functioning law and order of society to allow the NSLF to attack the “System.”²⁷² NSLF armaments guidelines included an arsenal that would allow the would-be underground revolutionary terrorist cell to execute its goals: magnum shotguns, 45-caliber automatic pistols, and military assault rifles.²⁷³

Figure 20. A young James Mason. Photograph by Eugene Antifa.



Tommasi played a significant role in Mason’s early ideological development in this period, made apparent by the reverence with which Mason describes Tommasi in his later writings. Mason would refer to Tommasi’s 1974 “Political Terror” leaflet as a “work of the most incredible genius,” and go as far as to describe Tommasi and his tactics as “the closest comparison to Hitler’s methodology to date.”²⁷⁴ Indeed, Mason’s description of the core of Tommasi’s tactics foreshadows his own revival of the accelerationist concept, noting that “Tommasi was among many revolutionists who knew that if a revolution were ever sparked in this country, it would be done by one, lone incident that had all the dimensions necessary to catch fire and spread in all directions at once. It is the missing factor. It is why the times we are living in are the roughest because nothing, that is nothing dramatic and widespread, is happening that is truly revolutionary.”²⁷⁵

Mason would formally follow Tommasi to the NSLF in 1976 after more than 10 years with the NSWPP. Prior to this, however, Mason would have his first run-in with the American legal system. In 1975, Mason

²⁷⁰ “Atomwaffen and the Siege Parallax: How One Neo-Nazi’s Life’s Work is Fueling a Younger Generation,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/02/22/atomwaffen-and-siege-parallax-how-one-neo-nazi%E2%80%99s-life%E2%80%99s-work-fueling-younger-generation>.

²⁷¹ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2002): 18-19.

²⁷² Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 18-19.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Mason, *Siege*, 35-48.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

and neo-Nazi Greg Hurles were arrested and charged with spraying several Black teenagers with mace in the parking lot of a Dairy Queen in Ohio. Mason was convicted of assault and sentenced to six months “in a Cincinnati workhouse.”²⁷⁶ However, the Spring 1976 edition of “The Ohio National Socialist” - which listed Mason as the editor, Hurles as the organizer, and billed itself as “the official newsletter of the National Socialist Movement” - struck a defiant tone as sentences were handed down. The newsletter claimed that, because of procedural errors in the sentencing process, “both comrades were not confined simultaneously. Organization continued. The effect was that of an insidious gas seeping under a door vainly slammed shut.”²⁷⁷ By the time of Mason’s release, his mentor Tommasi would be dead, shot by an NSWPP party member outside the group’s headquarters in El Monte, California.²⁷⁸ In an emotional farewell to Tommasi years later, Mason would write that “it were now as if Tommasi never went away. He’d have admired Oklahoma City. ‘Pray for Victory and not an end to slaughter.’”²⁷⁹

Figure 21. Cover of Satanic Mass Record. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



As the NSLF crumbled after Tommasi’s death, Mason “abandoned the strategy of building a legal, public neo-Nazi party, and instead became interested in strategies of leaderless resistance and the possibilities that widespread social collapse could offer.”²⁸⁰ He had editorial control of the group’s newsletter, *Siege*, and attempted to pick up what Tommasi had abruptly left off, spinning off a new entity - the National Socialist Movement (N.S.M.). The preface to the newer editions of the *Siege* text describes the N.S.M. venture as “a kind of propaganda experiment and kindle a conglomerate federation between heretofore uncooperative National Socialist and KKK leadership pools, while subtly injecting this pan-Aryan echelon with profuse N.S.M. militancy.”²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ “James Mason,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²⁷⁷ Robert F. Brannen, “The Business of Revolution,” *The Ohio National Socialist* 16 (Spring 1976), <https://ia800108.us.archive.org/15/items/NationalSocialistBulletinSpring1976No.16/National%20Socialist%20Bulletin%20-%20Spring%201976%20-%20No.%2016.pdf>.

²⁷⁸ “Atomwaffen and the Siege Parallax.”

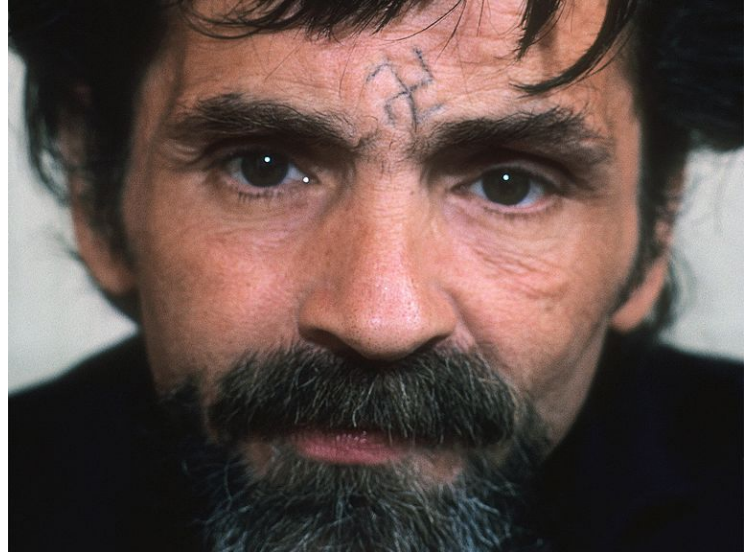
²⁷⁹ Jeffrey Kaplan, The post-war paths of occult national socialism: From Rockwell and Madole to Manson. *Patterns of Prejudice* 35. No. 3. July 2001. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240517747_The_post-war_paths_of_occult_national_socialism_From_Rockwell_and_Madole_to_Manson.

²⁸⁰ “James Mason,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²⁸¹ Mason, *Siege*, 21.

However, even by Mason's own account, his "one-man band" of the N.S.M. was quickly adrift and foundering.²⁸² And, while Mason reserves some of his highest praise for Tommasi - who he declares to be the individual "who first set this Movement on a completely revolutionary course" - Mason began to search outside of the movement for ideological revitalization.²⁸³ Just as Tommasi's embrace of leaderless resistance and the collapse of the system drew Mason into the NSLF, it was a far more well-known and infamous individual who would crystallize Mason's worldview in the years that followed: Charles Manson.

Figure 22. Charles Manson in his cell at California Medical Facility in Vacaville, 1982. Photograph by Neil Leifer, Getty Images.



Manson's Influence

Manson's relationship with the occult elements of national socialism marks a notable instance in which his pragmatism and adaptive ideology are on display. Mason notes that his interest in the occult took root as early as the 1960s when he purchased a copy of Anton LaVey's, *The Satanic Mass*, from a member of the American Nazi Party in 1969 which he had "cherished ever since."²⁸⁴ As he grew disillusioned with the white supremacist movement's lack of direction in the late 1970s, Mason would begin to search outside the movement for a charismatic figure to place at the center of his revolutionary ideology.

Charles Manson and the Manson family are best known for the Tate-LaBianca murders in which seven people were murdered in August of 1969.²⁸⁵ The propaganda of the deed undoubtedly appealed to Mason who would later describe with reverence Manson's murderous rampage in 1969, noting that "while we were watching out 'below', Manson saw the threat from 'above' and acted."²⁸⁶ Mason would later write that Manson was "probably the farthest ahead of his time, for having done in fact many of the things outlined in the highly futuristic - but nonetheless straightdown-the-line - Turner Diaries."²⁸⁷

²⁸² Kaplan, *Encyclopedia of White Power*, 195.

²⁸³ James Mason, *Siege*, vol. XI, no. 7 (July 1982).

²⁸⁴ Kaplan, "The post-war paths of occult national socialism."

²⁸⁵ Aja Romano, "The Manson Family murders, and their complicated legacy, explained," *Vox*, August 7, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2019/8/7/20695284/charles-manson-family-what-is-helter-skelter-explained>.

²⁸⁶ James Mason, *Siege*, vol. XIV, no. 4 (April 1985).

²⁸⁷ Mason, *Siege*, vol. XI, no. 7.

It was Manson's "Helter Skelter," his apocalyptic prophecy of an impending race war, that seemingly held primacy to Mason. To create his vision for "Helter Skelter," Manson drew a twisted sense of inspiration from the Beatles' *White Album*, drawing parallels between the song "Helter Skelter" and the ninth chapter of the Book of Revelation "which tells of a hellish bottomless pit opening up in the world, and a plague of anthropomorphic locusts with long hair coming to torture the unfaithful until an angel blows a trumpet to God."²⁸⁸ In court proceedings, Manson would later offer his explanation for "Helter Skelter," claiming that it "means confusion, literally."²⁸⁹ He would go on to state that "the music speaks to you every day, but you are too deaf, dumb and blind to even listen to the music.... It is not my conspiracy. It is not my music. I hear what it relates. It says 'Rise.' It says 'Kill.' Why blame it on me? I didn't write the music."²⁹⁰

To Manson, "Helter Skelter" and similar ideas drawn from his own interpretation of other songs on the *White Album* became the driving element for his belief that a race war was imminent in the 1960s as he observed growing racial tension across the country.²⁹¹ Manson grew increasingly frustrated throughout the summer of 1969, as the race war failed to materialize. Through his murderous actions, Manson believed he would be able to serve as the catalyst for "Helter Skelter," reportedly telling another member of the Manson family "Blackie never did anything without whitey showin' him how...Helter Skelter is coming down. But it looks like we're gonna have to show blackie how to do it."²⁹²

To Mason, the "Helter Skelter" of Manson represented one simple concept: revolution. Not merely a revolution of ideas and speeches, but a revolution of direct actions. Mason would claim that Manson "is revolutionary, one of us, and they HATE him and FEAR him for it," declaring that "Manson represents the great divide between those persons who imagine there still are choices to be made casually on the basis of Establishment mores and those who have a profound, individual sense of 'no going back'. I believe it is this - and not the abstract idea of "realism" - that is the great sustainer and inner-flame of all true revolutionaries."²⁹³

²⁸⁸ Kory Grow, "Charles Manson: How Cult Leader's Twisted Beatles Obsession Inspired Family Murders," *Rolling Stone*, August 9, 2019, <https://www.rollingstone.com/feature/charles-manson-how-cult-leaders-twisted-beatles-obsession-inspired-family-murders-107176/>.

²⁸⁹ Grow, "Charles Manson."

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Ashton Kingdon, "You Won't Find Shelter in this Helter Skelter: An Analysis of the Relationship between Charles Manson and Accelerationist Propaganda," *Accelerationism Research Consortium*, <https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/you-wont-find-shelter-in-this-helter-skelter>.

²⁹² Paul Watkins and Guillermo Soledad, *My Life with Charles Manson* (Bantam Books, 1979): Chapter 15.; Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders*, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994).

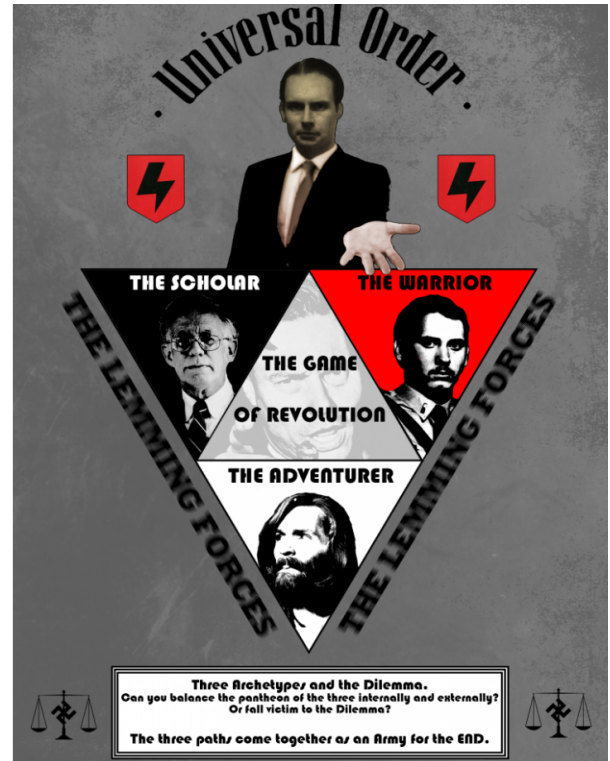
²⁹³ Mason, *Siege*, 228.; Mason, *Siege*, vol. XI, no. 6 (June 1982).

Mason would reportedly make contact with two imprisoned female members of the Manson family in 1980, and this correspondence ultimately led to Mason being put in contact with Manson himself - who by then was incarcerated and serving a life sentence.²⁹⁴ Mason, it is believed, quickly grew to view Manson as a “supreme template for a white supremacist revolution.”²⁹⁵ He would later attribute this decision, at least in part, to his desire to explore the more esoteric elements of these ideologies, noting that “especially in connection with the current Manson connection, that there was the element of the forbidden, or the rebellious, involved there, and to me at that time [during his teen years] Commander Rockwell and certainly the image of Adolf Hitler embodied the furthest extreme of that. And so that just pulled me in like a magnet.”²⁹⁶

The Universal Order

In 1982, Mason would take one of the most significant steps in his ideological evolution, severing himself from the core of the white supremacist movement through the formation of the Universal Order. Mason devoted significant portions of his 1981 and 1982 editions of his *Siege* newsletter introducing the reader to the concepts of the Universal Order and Manson, beginning a process of placing Manson and his ideology within his pantheon of revolutionary idols. He declared in 1981 that “The One Truth” had come to be known as National Socialism by Adolf Hitler in 1919, and that “today, under a different setting it might be called Universal Order.”²⁹⁷ He reports that he shared texts of George Lincoln Rockwell with a member of the Manson Family, and that she commented that “where Rockwell stops, Manson begins.”²⁹⁸ Mason used *Siege* to foreshadow his growing disconnect with the traditional white supremacist movement in this period, noting that “of the two groups - ours and Manson's - theirs is the more current and up-to-date. Psychologically and in coming to grips mentally with the nature of the situation, they are way ahead of us.”²⁹⁹

Figure 23. Universal Order graphic, feature Mason, Manson, Tommasi, and Pierce. Photograph courtesy of the Southern Poverty Law Center.



²⁹⁴ “Atomwaffen and the Siege Parallax.”

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Mason, *Siege*, vol. X, no. 9 (1985).

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

The “apocalyptic messianism” of Manson is matched in its appeal to Mason perhaps only by the rhetorical detachment between the apocalyptic intent of the murders and the murders themselves.³⁰⁰ Indeed, to Mason and his Universal Order adherents, the acts of violence were ultimately of little consequence, with Mason even reckoning that “with regard to the eight-month old fetus Tate [one of the victims of the Manson family murders] was carrying, it was, after all, a Jew.”³⁰¹ Mason introduces the Universal Order in a November 1982 edition of *Siege*, attempting to frame it as an extension of the strategic vision of ideologues like William Pierce in *The Turner Diaries*, writing that:

In the fabulous book, *The Turner Diaries*, mention is made of "The Book" which revolutionized the "Organization" from some pitiful thing such as we see today into that which did indeed go on to smash the System and erect a White State, not only in North America but in the entire world. Even according to *Turner Diaries* calculations, "The Book" has yet to be written. So it is with Universal Order - nothing is written. I am handicapped by this in that all I can do for the present is offer my impressions and observations and wait for the day when a complete revelation is offered. I am aware that things of this nature are in the works at present though I'd be foolish to try to place any time-table on their appearance.

If I were to be asked what Universal Order is, I'd have to respond in language and terms as familiar and easily understood as possible even though they may not be entirely fitting. For those among my former affiliates, I would say without reservation that it is everything National Socialism is and much, much more. It is geared to the present conditions. It is as dynamic as - maybe more so than - National Socialism because its true leader is alive, a contemporary of all of us. It is uniquely "American" and it is NOW. It has no links whatsoever with Conservatism or the Right Wing (or the Left, for that matter). It largely disarms the Enemy because he doesn't know what to expect of it or how to deal with it. It has fascination and appeal to YOUTH.³⁰²

Despite Mason’s fanatical embrace of Manson in this period, his exuberance was largely met with skepticism within the white supremacist movement writ large. The Universal Order which Mason had launched and lauded was described as enjoying “only a relative handful of adherents and hangers-on in the United States and Europe” and referenced by both experts and supporters as a “state of mind” movement rather than an organization with a membership *per se*.³⁰³ The Universal Order remained an entity largely relegated to Mason’s own mind, appearing frequently in his writings within *Siege*, but failing to reach a broader subset of the movement.

³⁰⁰ Kaplan, “The post-war paths of occult national socialism.”

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, 432.

³⁰² Mason, *Siege*, vol. XI, no. 11 (1982).

³⁰³ Kaplan, “The post-war paths of occult national socialism.”

This was largely attributed to Mason's elevation of Charles Manson which encountered "significant criticism among the fighters of the skinhead movement" in this period who were largely "young men who for the most part were not born until after the sensational capture and trial of the Manson family."³⁰⁴ Indeed, after Mason used the pages of the neo-Nazi *Resistance* magazine to advocate for Manson's leadership in this space, the reaction was so overwhelming that the magazine's editor "George Eric Hawthorne presented in the next issue a full-fledged debate on the proposition from two of his magazine's readers"³⁰⁵ As the movement's rejection of Manson and the Universal Order grew, so did Mason's certainty in the righteousness of his beliefs - and his repudiation of the movement he declared to be "in a mess."³⁰⁶ In 1983, Mason wrote:

The most extensive background in the U.S. Nazi Movement serves only as a partially adequate stepping stone to an understanding of Universal Order. Those who so foolishly state that Charles Manson is "hardly NS material" are like unto those of a modern-day Methodist or Presbyterian Church - with all their dogma and "social consciousness"- who wouldn't allow the actual Jesus of Nazareth into their buildings for being in violation of prevailing hair and dress codes. And what would they then term "NS material"? Why, of course, some type mainly suitable for a small role in a Hollywood "docu-drama" - a parody of real National Socialism! But I refuse to concede the Movement to these types even though they maybe in preponderance. Hitler had his problems with them and so did Rockwell. They are the "fringers", the coattail-hangers who gravitate toward the strong in hopes some of it might rub off onto them. The trouble is, instead of the association doing them any good, they by their presence, only tend to short circuit the good works of others.³⁰⁷

While the 1980's witnessed the birth of the revolutionary terrorist cells called for in Mason's *Siege*, the movement as a whole seemed to largely disregard Mason in this period. Entities like Robert Mathews' The Order took inspiration from traditional ideologues instead like William Luther Pierce, rejecting or ignoring Manson's fringe influences. Mason ceased publication of *Siege* in 1986, and even as the movement passed him by, he managed to retain a small but passionate following within the white power and neo-folk music scenes, attracting supporters such as Boyd Rice and Michael Moynihan.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ Mason, *Siege*, vol. XII, no. 3 (March 1983).

³⁰⁷ Mason, *Siege*, vol. XII, no. 3.

³⁰⁸ "James Mason," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

Mason: Pedophile & Accelerationist Thought Leader

By 1988, however, Mason had begun to attract law enforcement attention, not for his revolutionary neo-Nazi beliefs or calls for violence against the system, but for his interest in underage girls.³⁰⁹ His residence in Ohio was raided in both 1988 and 1991, during which police seized “pornographic materials of a 15-year-old girl.”³¹⁰ Mason pleaded guilty in 1992 to two misdemeanor counts of illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented material.³¹¹ Mason faced legal issues once again in Colorado in 1993 and 1994, where he was arrested on two counts of sexual exploitation of a minor. While the charges were later dropped, Mason was quickly arrested again in May of 1994 after “he threatened two people with a firearm: his ex-girlfriend, who was then 16 years old, and a Latino man she had been dating.”³¹² Mason was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison for felony menacing and remained incarcerated through 1999.³¹³

Figure 24. Colorado Department of Corrections photo of James Mason. Photograph courtesy of the Colorado Department of Corrections.



By all public accounts, in the years that followed, Mason largely faded into obscurity. However, efforts by Mason’s allies to popularize *Siege* in the 1990s were continuing to bear fruit: Michael Moynihan originally released *Siege* through his publishing house, Storm Books, garnering significant attention.³¹⁴ Reporting is scarce on Mason’s actions or the degree of his active relationship with the neo-Nazi movement throughout the 2000s, but by the 2010s, *Siege* began to experience a revival within the new generation of would-be terrorists. At the time, Mason was described as a “dried up, has-been neo-Nazi” who was living in a government-subsidized apartment in Denver and picking up meals from a city-run center for homeless and hungry seniors.³¹⁵ However, the embrace of revolutionary, accelerationist white terror cells by the dominant strand of the white supremacist movement elevated Mason to a

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Anna Schechter and Rich Schapiro, “Influential neo-Nazi eats at soup kitchens, lives in government housing,” *NBC*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/influential-neo-nazi-eats-soup-kitchens-lives-government-housing-n1091681>.

position he had long yearned for - the ideological godfather of a movement committed to bringing “Helter Skelter” to the American homeland.

The revitalization of *Siege*, driven largely by the neo-fascist Iron March forum and the rise of accelerationist movements such as Atomwaffen Division, saw Mason and his ideas return to the forefront. Iron March, an online forum that was operational between 2011 and 2017, served as “the incubator and eventually the primary organizational platform for the transnational neo-fascist accelerationist terrorist network.”³¹⁶ As Atomwaffen Division emerged as a decentralized, online cell operating in the U.S., Mason’s *Siege* was required reading for new recruits.³¹⁷ Furthermore, Atomwaffen Division adapted elements of *Siege* Culture into its visual propaganda, featuring “hyper-violent imagery and Nazi iconography, and slogans promote revolutionary upheaval, genocide, and fascist governance.”³¹⁸

This branding strategy had a dual purpose: to draw in a generation of young, online extremists while also “attempting to incite fear and uncertainty in outside observers.”³¹⁹

Mason embraced his newfound fame, viewing his young adherents as the following he felt he had deserved for decades. By 2017, a teenage member of Atomwaffen Division based in Colorado developed a friendship with Mason. Key figures within Atomwaffen Division began making trips to Mason’s residence in Denver, Colorado, framing it as a near-religious pilgrimage to meet with the creator of *Siege* Culture.³²⁰ This list included John Cameron Denton, who would later be sentenced to 41 months in prison for coordinating a swatting conspiracy “targeting journalists, a Virginia university, a former U.S. Cabinet member, a historic African American church, an Islamic Center in Arlington, Texas, and members of various minority groups and communities across the United States.”³²¹ Another

Figure 25. Mason posing in his home with a member of Atomwaffen Division. Photograph courtesy of the Southern Poverty Law Center.



³¹⁶ H.E. Upchurch, “The Iron March Forum and the Evolution of the “Skull Mask” Neo-Fascist Network,” CTC Sentinel 14, No. 10 (2021), <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-iron-march-forum-and-the-evolution-of-the-skull-mask-neo-fascist-network/>.

³¹⁷ Alex Newhouse, “The Threat Is the Network: The Multi-Node Structure of Neo-Fascist Accelerationism,” CTC Sentinel 14, No. 5 (2021), <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-threat-is-the-network-the-multi-node-structure-of-neo-fascist-accelerationism/>.

³¹⁸ Alex Newhouse, “The Threat Is the Network: The Multi-Node Structure of Neo-Fascist Accelerationism.”

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ “Former Atomwaffen Division Leader Sentenced for Swatting Conspiracy,” *U.S. Department of Justice Press Release*, May 4, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edva/pr/former-atomwaffen-division-leader-sentenced-swatting-conspiracy.>; A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston, and Jake Hanrahan, “Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student,” *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/atomwaffen-division-inside-white-hate-group>.

Mason visitor was Samuel Woodward, who would be accused of killing 19-year-old Jewish sophomore Blaze Bernstein in 2018 because he was gay.³²²

As Atomwaffen Division faced increasing law enforcement scrutiny and members of the network were arrested in 2019 and 2020, Mason released a press statement on behalf of the group. He claimed that he “was approached by members of the group known as Atomwaffen Division with the request that I make the official announcement of that group's disbanding, effective at once.”³²³ Mason bemoaned the law enforcement actions, stating that “over the course of past weeks and months, the level and degree of federal infiltration and the numerous arrests stemming from that have so severely hampered the group's ability to function as a group that it would be pointless to even pretend that anything resembling organizational activity could continue.”³²⁴ He would also pointedly declare that “anything found on the internet henceforth claiming to be or bearing the mark of Atomwaffen Division” was, in fact, not a legitimate representation of the group and should be viewed as imposters.³²⁵

As the overt elements of Atomwaffen Division largely disappeared from the public view, Mason continued his efforts to groom the next generation of Siege Culture adherents. In June of 2021, the Government of Canada placed four new terrorist entities on its Criminal Code list, including James Mason.³²⁶ Despite this, reports suggest that Mason has retained a core element of Atomwaffen Division supporters and has guided their rebranding into National Socialist Order.³²⁷ It remains to be seen the extent to which Mason will retain an active role in the operational activities of this network and its successors, but the influence of *Siege* on this movement is unquestioned.

The renewed appeal of James Mason's *Siege* within the modern incarnation of the modern neo-fascist milieu has elevated him to near-mythical status. Even though Mason's *Siege* did not enjoy the contemporary following that Pierce's *Turner Diaries* did, the modern revitalization of *Siege* into a distinct subculture within the neo-Nazi movement means that Mason likely exists today as the most important living American white supremacist. Mason enjoys a relatively unique position as both an ideological mentor and operational participant within the modern movement. Mason's status within the movement has allowed him to lead “most of the tactical, strategic, and rhetorical basis for the operations of the

³²² Thompson, Winston, and Hanrahan, “Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student.”

³²³ Ben Makuch, “Audio Recording Claims Neo-Nazi Terror Group Is Disbanding,” *VICE*, March 24, 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qjdnam/audio-recording-claims-neo-nazi-terror-group-is-disbanding>.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ “Government of Canada lists four new terrorist entities,” *Public Safety Canada Press Release*, June 25, 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2021/06/government-of-canada-lists-four-new-terrorist-entities.html>.

³²⁷ “Atomwaffen Division/National Socialist Order,” *Stanford Center for International Security and Cooperation*, last updated August 2022, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/atomwaffen-division>.

skull mask network” as it has mobilized offline in the form of the decentralized terrorist networks of Atomwaffen Division and National Socialist Order.³²⁸

Directive & Vehicular Life Events

Table 3. Outline of key formative events in the life of James Mason that impacted his evolution as a leader in the American far-right landscape.

James Mason - Key Formative Life Events
A 14-year-old Mason makes a chance phone call to the headquarters of the National Socialist White People’s Party, speaking to William Luther Pierce and later traveling to the party’s headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.
George Lincoln Rockwell’s assassination and the subsequent splintering of the National Socialist White People’s Party, and in the subsequent vacuum, Mason was drawn to Joseph Tommasi. Mason was “fascinated by Tommasi’s charisma; and the intense, revolutionary zealotry that punctuated his character.” This would come to define Mason’s ideological worldview for years to come.
Mason connects with Charles Manson, finding himself drawn to “the element of the forbidden” in an individual he viewed as embodying the characteristics of other Mason idols like Rockwell and Hitler.
Mason’s steadfast embrace of Manson’s “Helter Skelter” and their Universal Order attracts “only a relative handful of adherents and hangers-on in the United States and Europe.” His writings in <i>Siege</i> are largely ignored by his contemporaries, who were drawn to the more conventional elements of the ideology offered by individuals like Pierce. However, Mason’s writings and views would later become the driving force for the modern neo-Nazi movement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this section was to present the three case studies of Beam, Pierce, and Mason. It applied the CIP framework to argue that these leaders spanned all three typologies. Beam was a charismatic figure who involved himself in every aspect of America’s far-right in a storied career as a fighter, organizer, and author. On the other hand, Pierce is the movement’s intellectual ideologue whose ideas have been crucial in shaping the culture, ethos, and strategic thinking of generations of militants across the ideologically diverse landscape. Mason emerges as a hybrid pragmatist-ideologue whose early career was spent building on the legacy of his predecessors but now, thanks to a late resurgence, is building new spheres of influence and legacies. From these three case studies can be drawn important lessons not only for understanding the rise and impact of these three crucial figures in modern

³²⁸ Shadnia, Newhouse, Kriner, and Bradley, *Militant Acceleration Coalitions*.

American neo-Nazism but more broadly for understanding the movement and developing more nuanced policy responses. It is important to now focus on the impacts and enduring legacies of these three founding fathers of the far-right in America

Impact and Enduring Legacy

It is important to consider some of the overarching lessons which emerge from the examples of Louis Beam, William Luther Pierce, and James Mason. Analyzing the life narratives of these individuals provides a unique lens through which to understand their legacies within the evolution of white supremacist terrorism in the U.S. Perhaps the most pertinent for both researchers and policymakers relate to leadership, organizational context and strategic drivers, and the evolution of the white supremacist milieu. For all their broad similarities, Beam, Pierce, and Mason emerged as three distinct figures in the white supremacist landscape. The CIP Framework offers a useful lens through which to explore some of their most important distinguishing features.³²⁹ Indeed the three emerge as fitting typecasts of the CIP Framework's three forms of outstanding leadership: Charismatic, Ideological, and Pragmatic.³³⁰

Beam's Impact & Legacy

Louis Beam, the Charismatic, lacks the clear central ideological text within the white supremacist movement that define the lives and narratives of contemporary figures like William Luther Pierce and James Mason. However, Beam's charismatic persona elevated his status in the movement, enabling his popularization of leaderless resistance and the cementing of his legacy. When examining the context in which Beam grew to become one of the most prominent leaders within the white supremacist movement, it is Beam's charisma that most clearly sets him apart. Indeed, Beam, much like George Lincoln Rockwell or Thomas Metzger, functioned as a fiery extension of the rage of the movement. Beam's life narrative is replete with instances of his charisma, from his prominent role played in the conflict between local Texas fishermen and the Vietnamese population to his defense at the Fort Smith sedition trial.

Brought about largely as a response to government efforts to disrupt organized violent extremist organizations, the decline in white supremacist groups such as the Klan, Aryan Nations, and National Alliance in the 1980s and 1990s coincided with a marked absence of prominent leaders emerging from this ecosystem. The cracks in the facade of the organized white supremacist movement were numerous, perhaps none more notable than that caused by the death of George Lincoln Rockwell which is described as having "left a vacuum from which the highly fragmented national socialist world never recovered."³³¹ Even the most prominent organizations of the era were not immune to these challenges. While Mason would write glowingly on the significance of William Pierce and his National Alliance, saying in a 1983 edition of *Siege*, "whose name and organization carries more weight in Movement circles today than Dr. William Pierce and the National Alliance?", the reality of the decades to come

³²⁹ Ligon, Hunter, and Mumford, "Development of outstanding leadership," 312-334.; Ligon, Logan, and Derrick, *Malevolent charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leaders*.

³³⁰ *Ibid*, 313.

³³¹ Kaplan, "The post-war paths of occult national socialism."

was far different.³³² Beam's compatriot, Thomas Metzger, would ultimately leave his own California Klan group in 1983, forming what would become known as White Aryan Resistance (WAR). As became the trend in domestic white supremacist movements, the loose-knit organization "had no membership initiation or rosters, and no uniforms."³³³ This was also the case within Joseph Tommasi's NSLF, which Mason held up as the ideal for revolutionary violence. The NSLF ultimately only "had four persons who carried out the illegal activities. The remainder, the majority, weren't that much different from the N.S.W.P.P. [National Socialist White People's Party] members except they were a lot more forward thinking."³³⁴

Beam's path within the far-right environment helped to inform his own ideological and strategic evolution. Having witnessed the decline of the Klan in the aftermath of crippling civil suits, Beam's embrace of a broader range of ideologies such as Odinism and Christian Identity mirrored his organizational shift towards Aryan Nations. Further, Beam's affiliation with Aryan Nations and their broader network of decentralized, revolutionary white extremist groups like The Order can also be seen as a significant factor in his adoption of leaderless resistance. By all accounts, however, Beam's experiences in the Fort Smith sedition trial served to cement his worldview, while driving him away from meaningful active engagement with the organizations that he spent two decades leading.

Pierce's Impact & Legacy

William Luther Pierce represents a pure Ideologue within the CIP Framework.³³⁵ Described as "culturally out of sync" with the youth movement by the 1990s, Pierce's key contribution to the white supremacist movement, both during his life and well after his death, was his role in shaping an effective and coherent ideology that would come to define the movement. Few grasped the nuances of the shifting ideological landscape in this period as effectively as Pierce who was singularly focused on creating the monolithic white supremacist organization which could carry the movement forward through uncertain times. Pierce's life narrative makes clear that he lacked the charismatic appeal of his peers, described as bookish and well-written but a poor public speaker, with his recorded diatribes often reported as paling in comparison to his written propaganda. Even his biographer, whose profile is replete with fawning descriptions of Pierce's brilliance and vision, describes how Pierce's persona changed as he began recording one of his radio broadcasts - going from being "mature, sober, and rather kindly to, at least to my ears, loud, strident, and marginal sounding."³³⁶ His biographer concludes,

³³² James Mason, *Siege*, vol. XII, no. 8 (1983).

³³³ "Tom Metzger," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/tom-metzger>.

³³⁴ Kaplan, "The post-war paths of occult national socialism."

³³⁵ Ligon, Hunter, and Mumford, "Development of outstanding leadership," 313.

³³⁶ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, 143.

after listening to Pierce stumble over his prepared words while holding a script a few inches from his face that “Pierce’s radio shows read better than they sound.”³³⁷

Pierce’s legacy as an Ideologue is not dissimilar to that of the ‘Propagandist’ role of Samir Khan that was profiled in the first *Program on Extremism* report on charismatic violent extremist leadership.³³⁸ Pierce, much like Khan, may lack the charisma and emotional appeal which defines the posthumous legacy of his peers, but his role in advancing the white supremacist ideology is unquestioned. His proficient utilization of newsletters, magazines, and radio broadcasts, as well as his adaptive use of emerging technologies, quickly positioned Pierce as a thought leader and propelled the movement forward. Pierce’s life narratives, much like Beam’s, are useful context for understanding his development as a leader. His entry into the movement, spurred on by a charismatic leader in the form of George Lincoln Rockwell, would seemingly influence his rigid approach as an Ideologue. Unlike Beam and Mason, who both adopted an adaptive and flexible organizational model responsive to the shifting landscape, Pierce was dedicated to crafting a dominant white supremacist organization. Even as he used *The Turner Diaries* and *Hunter* to advocate for readers to rise up and begin a violent revolution against the system, Pierce was focused on creating an organizational structure with himself at the head. From the American Nazi Party and National Socialist White People’s Party to the National Youth Alliance and ultimately his National Alliance, Pierce viewed Rockwell’s ‘one-man leadership’ as the ideal model through which to advance his goals.

Mason’s Impact & Legacy

Finally, Mason exemplifies the Pragmatic, functional, problem-based leader within the Ligon et al. CIP framework. The distinction between pragmatic and ideological leaders within the CIP Framework is particularly noteworthy: “Pragmatic leaders exhibit flexibility in adapting strategies when faced with incoming feedback that a particular strategy is not working. This is sharply contrasted by ideological styles, which appear to be more committed to their initial action plans and resistant to redirection.”³³⁹ Indeed, as Pierce remained committed to his original path of a singular hierarchical organization, Mason charted a more flexible and adaptive course, embracing fringe concepts and figures like Manson even at the cost of his reputation and prominence within the movement.

While the distinction between Pierce and Mason is perhaps more marginal than that of Beam to the pair, key differences do emerge largely because of Pierce’s death at the turn of the century and Beam’s withdrawal from active participation in the white supremacist movement. These factors, along with the decline in meaningful leadership as well as organized groups across the landscape, have left Mason as the lone remaining pillar - the final active ideological nexus point between the old guard and the new.

³³⁷ Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man’s Deeds*, 143.

³³⁸ Haroro J. Ingram and Jon Lewis, *The Founding Fathers of American Jihad*.

³³⁹ Ligon, Hunter, and Mumford, “Development of outstanding leadership: A life narrative approach,” 313.

Where Mason deviates from Pierce is largely observed in the years following Pierce's death in 2002, as Mason focused on immediate revolutionary solutions to the intractable problems that faced the movement. Mason's impact is observed in his lasting role not only as an ideologue and propagandist but as a pragmatic living symbol and active elder role model within the modern neo-fascist milieu.

America's White Supremacist Movement

At this juncture, it is worth exploring the degree to which Beam, Pierce, and Mason, each as exemplifiers of the CIP framework, tangibly impacted the white supremacist movement. Each of these actors played significant roles in the evolution of the white supremacist movement in the U.S., and their impact and enduring legacies, from leaderless resistance to the revolutionary appeal of *The Turner Diaries* and the phenomenon of *Siege* and Siege Culture, exist as key pillars which have come to define the movement today.

As detailed throughout this study, Beam "played a key role in shaping revolutionary racist movements in the U.S. during the three decades following the Vietnam War as one of its principal theorists and strategists."³⁴⁰ His popularization of leaderless resistance as a conceptual framework for revolutionary cell-based violence has played an outsized role in the embrace of this theory by modern neo-fascist movements such as Atomwaffen Division and The Base, as well as a host of so-called "lone actor" domestic terrorists. The actions of Beam's contemporaries highlight the increasing prominence of this trend in the years from the Fort Smith sedition trial through the present day. Many of the organized elements of the white supremacist landscape would wither in the years that followed Beam's acquittal, succumbing to infighting, financial challenges, and federal pressure. Even as Louis Beam faded from public view, the leaderless resistance concept that he popularized in this timeframe would grow to become the tactic of choice for white supremacist actors seeking to commit acts of revolutionary violence.

Pierce's legacy is enshrined within *The Turner Diaries*, which has been described as "the most important single work of white nationalist propaganda in the English language."³⁴¹ Perhaps the clearest example of *The Turner Diaries'* lasting significance is the deadliest act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history - the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. When Timothy McVeigh was pulled over in his yellow 1977 Mercury Marquis an hour after committing one of the most infamous domestic terrorist attacks in history, police searched the vehicle and found "an envelope containing about a dozen documents, among them a copy of the Declaration of Independence and a quotation from John Locke copied in McVeigh's handwriting."³⁴² Glued onto one of the pages in the envelope was a photocopied excerpt of *The Turner Diaries* with a passage highlighted that read,

³⁴⁰ "Louis Beam," *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

³⁴¹ Berger, *The Turner Legacy*.

³⁴² Wexler, *America's Secret Jihad*, 276.

“The real value of all our attacks today lies in the psychological impact, not in the immediate casualties.”³⁴³ Evidence indicates McVeigh placed numerous calls to Pierce’s National Alliance in the weeks before the bombing, but only received the answering machine. Experts speculate that this suggested a “hint of desperation on the part of McVeigh, like someone looking for last-minute help on a job that may have been over his head.”³⁴⁴ In response to the Oklahoma City bombing, Pierce lauded the attack and promised more violence to come.³⁴⁵ He claimed that “terrorism is a nasty business. Most of its victims are innocent people...but terrorism is a form of warfare, and in war most of the victims are noncombatants.”³⁴⁶

While McVeigh stands apart as a uniquely deadly real-world manifestation of Pierce’s *Diaries*, he is merely one of many adherents of the vision enshrined within the book who have sought to bring the events within it to life. As detailed in both Beam and Pierce’s case narratives, the birth of The Order intersected with a revival in white supremacist revolutionary terrorism largely inspired by *The Turner Diaries*. Indeed, as Robert Mathews was recruiting potential members to The Order, he made clear that his group was patterned after the fictional Order that features prominently within *The Turner Diaries*. Mathews described it “like in that book we all like to read, it’s ‘the Order.’ We just want to be a nameless, white underground.”³⁴⁷ When Mathews initiated new recruits into his white supremacist terror cell, he “discussed the plot of *The Turner Diaries* and handed out copies to anyone who hadn’t read it yet.” Indeed, Earl Turner’s first diary entry functions neatly as a summation of Mathews’ goals for The Order: “September 16, 1991. Today it finally began! After all these years of talking—and nothing but talking—we have finally taken our first action. We are at war with the System, and it is no longer a war of words.”³⁴⁸ When Mathews died during a standoff with the FBI in 1984, Pierce eulogized his fallen comrade, claiming that Mathews “took us from name-calling to bloodletting.”³⁴⁹

Finally, the modern white supremacist movement can hardly be analyzed without considering Mason and Siege Culture. The Pragmatic life narratives which left Mason on the outside of the core white supremacist movement in the 1980s and 1990s have become the status quo for the movement today. Just as Mason was inspired by Tommasi’s NSLF and Manson’s “Helter Skelter,” his *Siege* became a guiding text for Atomwaffen Division and the broader “Skull Mask” neo-fascist movement, whose members followed Mason and his text “like a bible.”³⁵⁰ Perhaps Mason’s most significant impact can be observed through *Siege*’s embrace of revolutionary, lone-actor terrorism designed to collapse the

³⁴³ Wexler, *America’s Secret Jihad*, 277.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid* 305.

³⁴⁵ Belew, *Bring the War Home*, 230.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁴⁷ Flynn and Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood*, 140.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid* 94.

³⁴⁹ “William Pierce,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

³⁵⁰ Jacob Ware, *Siege: The Atomwaffen Division and Rising Far-Right Terrorism in the United States*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague. July 2019, <https://www.icct.nl/sites/default/files/import/publication/ICCT-Ware-Siege-July2019.pdf>.

system. Siege Culture has intersected with resurgent, decentralized white supremacist networks that have emerged in the 21st century. These networks, which have embraced Beam's leaderless resistance and Pierce's *Turner Diaries*, have centered their ideological and strategic vision using *Siege with Mason* as a living ideologue to guide the process. Unlike Beam, who has seemingly been disengaged from the movement for decades, and Pierce, who died shortly after the turn of the century, Mason's story is still being written. However, Mason's pragmatism has left an unmistakable, enduring legacy that has defined the modern American neo-Nazi milieu.

Policymaker & Practitioner Recommendations

The analysis within this study has important implications for practitioners and policymakers. While exploring the marked differences in leadership styles, the findings within each of the case studies provide a clear picture of the significance of charismatic leadership on the domestic violent extremist landscape. In an extremist ecosystem replete with infighting and organizational collapse, the three individuals profiled in this study utilized their distinct leadership qualities to shape the contours of the modern American white supremacist milieu. Through their roles as leaders and prominent members of far-right movements – including the Klan, Aryan Nations, American Nazi Party, National Socialist White People’s Party, and National Alliance - each Beam, Pierce, and Mason distilled strategic, ideological, or operational elements into key tenants that have been absorbed and replicated by the predominant strand of the modern neo-fascist movement.

This study highlights another key consideration: the degree to which individual “outstanding leaders” can have an outsized influence on not merely their contemporaries, but on future generations of violent extremists. Indeed, Beam’s charismatic call for leaderless, cell-based revolutionary terrorism was quickly answered not only by actors like McVeigh but decades later by networks who adhere to the accelerationist goal of collapsing the system. The movement which has most embraced this, the “Skull Mask” neo-fascist movement, exists as one of the deadliest and most active networks of modern domestic violent extremists today. It is also one which is also inexorably connected to both Pierce and Mason, having been ideologically shaped by *The Turner Diaries* and *Siege*. Even on a more granular ideological level, individual concepts and ideological tenets absorbed by this movement can be traced to historical decisions by these leaders. Pierce, for example, introduced esoteric Hitlerism into the English-speaking white supremacist milieu through the translation and publication of Savitri Devi’s 1958 book *The Lightning and the Sun*.³⁵¹ Not only did this cement its enduring legacy within the modern neo-Nazi movement, but strengthened the personal connections between Pierce, Devi, and a network of transnational, English-language neo-Nazis that was quickly developing in the aftermath of World War II.

There are broader lessons for policymakers and practitioners that emerge from this study, many of which are also shared with the first report in this series, *The Founding Fathers of American Jihad*. Two are particularly pertinent. First, this study highlights the importance of distinguishing between different types of leaders and the implications for leader-follower relationships, organizational dynamics, and counterstrategies. Beam, Pierce, and Mason have a lot in common, but it is their differences as authority figures that have had ripple effects for their impacts and legacies. Policymakers and practitioners, especially law enforcement and counterterrorism officials, will often have opportunities to degrade the

³⁵¹ “Savitri Devi: The mystical fascist being resurrected by the alt-right,” *BBC*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-41757047>. ; Pierce would also note that he read Oswald Spengler, whose work on the decline of the West has similarly become popular reading among right-wing extremists.; Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man’s Deeds*, 71.

appeal of violent extremist leaders, if not within their direct followers, then more broadly amongst communities of potential support.

Second, policymakers and practitioners need to be cautious about how they respond to and seek to counter the influence of charismatic leaders. It is a recurring theme in the life story of charismatic figures that their appeal has inevitably spiked after being targeted by law enforcement and other counterterrorism officials. This is not to argue that leaders who are identified as generating their authority via charismatic bonds should be avoided, far from it. Rather, law enforcement and counterterrorism officials need to carefully plan how they seek to prevent or counter the leader's appeal, being conscious of how their actions may be exploited by the leader and/or their followers. For example, how the charismatic figure is described by officials publicly needs to take steps to avoid their words being manipulated to amplify the leader, reinforce their image, or fuel their narratives.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the leadership style, impact, and enduring legacies of three leaders in the white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements: Louis Beam, William Luther Pierce, and James Mason. In doing so, it reviewed the significance of leadership traits, life events in the life narratives of the leader, and the legacies of these three key figures within America's far-right. Central to the study is the role of each of these leaders in shaping far-right movements in the U.S. and beyond. Overall, this study finds that the three leaders cover the full leadership spectrum of the CIP framework and that each was both a product and exploiter of their life narratives in ways that fundamentally shaped their leadership style, impact, and legacy on the far-right. These leaders stand apart from their peers due to both their prominence as active members of their respective movements and their enduring legacy in the modern white supremacist landscape.

Building on previous *Program on Extremism* research that analyzes the leadership of American violent extremists, this study was purposely broad in scope to lay a foundation for more narrowly focused analysis in the future. Three areas of future research are particularly noteworthy. First, a more robust application of the CIP framework to the universe of American far-right actors would provide a comprehensive model through which to understand the evolution of this complex landscape. While Beam, Pierce, and Mason undoubtedly stand apart from many of their peers, a fulsome scoping of far-right domestic actors could be utilized to inform more expansive research on the subject.

Second, significantly more research is needed on the relationship between the 'historical' and modern strands of the far-right domestic landscape. Too often, these elements are viewed as largely disconnected, and while some efforts have been made by scholars to trace the throughlines, these instances are often few and far between. As this study has underscored, the modern manifestation of the American far-right movement is a product of decades of rhetoric and violence by many of the organizations and actors detailed throughout these case studies. Research that explores these nuances more completely would allow for a broader understanding of the dynamics of the threat.

Third, further release of primary source documents and supporting evidence would provide a more comprehensive corpus through which to analyze the key actors in the American far-right. Indeed, even elements of the life narrative of some of the most prominent actors within this study are reliant on limited sourcing or public reporting. While there is necessary caution to be taken when approaching sources such as a quasi-autobiographical work like *Siege* (in the case of Mason), or biased biographical storytelling in the case of William Pierce, these texts have inherent value. However, in far too many cases within the universe of American far-right actors, there is a dearth of reliable primary source documents which can be utilized to trace the life narratives in a way sufficient for the CIP model.

Leadership Vacuum?

The importance of the distinct elements of leadership (Charismatic, Ideological, and Pragmatic) serves as the central thread of this study. With that in mind, an additional consideration is worth detailing for policymakers - the realities of the modern white supremacist movement as one largely without a new era of charismatic, ideological, or pragmatic leaders. Ironically, Beam's most significant contribution to the white supremacist milieu has left the movement bereft of any real guiding force. There exists no Beam-style charismatic figure, no monolithic one-man National Alliance-style organization, and no new seminal ideological text to build on Pierce's vision in the *Diaries*. Even Mason's elder statesman role within Atomwaffen Division and its successor movements is largely an isolated instance of personal connectivity between the leadership of the Fort Smith-era white supremacist groups and the disparate collection of movements operating in their place today. In the absence of any true leaders in the mold of these CIP figures profiled in this study, these movements have been forced to turn to cheap facsimiles like Atomwaffen Division's Brandon Russell, Rinaldo Nazzaro of The Base, and Robert Rundo as the founder of the Rise Above Movement. Each of these actors has attempted either to recreate the charismatic nature of past generations of leaders like Beam or Rockwell, or to drive forward a new wave of revolutionary propaganda. Each enjoyed some degree of success in inspiring a new wave of cell-based violent extremists, although there has been little evidence to suggest that any have positioned themselves as true successors to the previous generation of CIP leaders in terms of impact or enduring legacy.

While this can be attributed to a host of factors, the impact of the broader ideological stagnation of the white supremacist movement cannot be discounted. The fascist mythmaking of the 21st century has largely left behind the physical battlefield for the digital one, abandoning the street fights for blood and soil to call for the rejection of modernity online. As a result, the fascist core of American white supremacy has failed to evolve from its antecedents. The very same aesthetics that characterized the Third Reich - the glorified tales of a pure Aryan bloodline, the warrior ethos which connected the German Nazi to the romanticized ideals of Greek and Roman mythology - remain the core propaganda themes for the modern neo-Nazi. However, the environment in which they exist cannot be more different: instead of bringing about a Fourth Reich, today's American neo-Nazi has little realistic hope of bringing about a white ethnostate, and instead exists in a disparate and decentralized online community that can only yearn for an apocryphal version of 'tradition.'

Finally, and perhaps most pertinently, this leaderless trend can largely be attributed to the modern realities of domestic violent extremism – specifically, racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism - in the U.S. The individuals within this network have formed a bottom-up ideological nexus centered on a singular desire to groom a new generation of terrorists. This network has coalesced around a shared accelerationist ideology driven by a shared embrace of revolutionary violence and idolization of figures like James Mason and Charles Manson. As a result, the neo-fascist movement that has

embodied Siege Culture exists today as something beyond what Mason originally envisioned in the pages of *Siege*, functioning now as a shared aesthetic and propaganda mechanism.

What has emerged is a decentralized, online milieu of neo-Nazis who exist largely independent of the organized, hierarchical groups that defined the lives of Beam, Pierce, and Mason. While the absence of a central force or singular “outstanding leader” as defined by Ligon et al. has undoubtedly weakened the organizational strength of the movement, the loosely connected cell structure within this broader network has served as a relatively effective tool to counter law enforcement disruption efforts. Even as individual nodes in this network are arrested, the underlying movement remains resilient with the core texts, narratives, and grievances continuing to serve as “mobilizing concepts” for like-minded actors.³⁵² Crucially, the movement has adopted the combined tenants put forward by Beam, Pierce, and Mason, with recent lone actor attacks such as those in Pittsburgh, Poway, El Paso, and Buffalo serving as a real-world manifestation of Beam’s leaderless resistance against such targets as those laid out in Pierce’s *Turner Diaries*, often with the revolutionary accelerationist goals as outlined within Mason’s *Siege*.

This study examined the lives, leadership, impact, and appeal of Louis Beam, William Luther Pierce, and James Mason. In doing so, it assessed both the similarities and differences between these three American white supremacists, exploring how each grew into unique manifestations of the CIP model. Within the white supremacist milieu in the U.S., these figures emerged as key ideological pillars for both their contemporaries and future generations. And, based on the evidence set forth in this study, it is likely that their influence will be felt for years to come.

³⁵² Cynthia Miller-Idriss and Brian Hughes, “Blurry Ideologies and Strange Coalitions: The Evolving Landscape of Domestic Extremism,” *Lawfare*, December 19, 2021. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/blurry-ideologies-and-strange-coalitions-evolving-landscape-domestic-extremism>.

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