

# HATE CRIME IN THE AMERICAN RADICAL RIGHT

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This paper will examine the development of hate crime in the context of the American Radical Right. It will review the representation and interpretation of hate crime within the American Radical Right. The composition of the Radical Right includes the traditional extreme and far right on the periphery of American politics; White Separatists, Nazi's, neo-Nazis, White Nationalists, Christian Identity and other groups normally looked at in the context of White Supremacy (Dobratz 2000). The nature of classification presents difficulties for not only the Radical Right but also for hate crime and its manifestations. In the context of the political arena there is no agreed response to the movement appears to change through time, for individual groups and factions (Ridgeway 1995). At the present time, the interpretation and conceptualisation of hate crime has far reaching implications about public and political interpretations to certain crimes and the implications for American society.

Despite the nuances of specific categorisation some interesting points do arise which require discussion with regard to the existence of hate crime and its origins. Hate crime has come to the fore recently with high profile cases on both sides of the Atlantic. In the UK, the Stephen Lawrence case and the Brick Lane Bombings and in the USA the prosecution of Tom Metzger by the Southern Poverty Law Centre and the actions taken against the Aryan Nations are recent examples (Langer 2003). If hate crime is defined as crimes against the person on the basis of bias, through race, ethnicity or culture then American history provides numerous examples. The nature of hate crime tends to suppose race is the basis of hate crime, with a white-black divide between

perpetrators and victims. This is more assumption than truth, there is an array of difference between the suppositions of theory and the actuality of hate, with black-white violence, raising questions about the nature of criminal justice and racism in America.

However, hate crime has always existed in some form in the culture and society of the United States (Petrosino 1999). In the ante-bellum period when slaves were brutalised, the lynching that became such a feature of early America, and the nameless victims in the great cultural divide of American society. Where hate crime begins a metamorphosis into a new theory is in 1960's America. From the murder of NAACP secretary Medgar Evers in 1963 by a lone assassin to the 1964 murder of the three civil rights activists James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner in Alabama. There is however an essential aspect in the development of hate crime. Firstly its relationship to the political ideology in White Nationalist circles of 'leaderless resistance' and secondly how it is in fact developing into hate terrorism. Hate crime has now become a much larger issue politically in America and other democracies, with heightened awareness and fears of the threat posed. There is a subtle dividing line between hate crime and hate terrorism, indeed the modus operandi of leaderless resistance meets the criteria of both (Beam 1992). The point when hate crime becomes hate terrorism, or should be classified as a mode of leaderless resistance is open to debate.

If the 1997 bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal building by Timothy McVeigh is seen as a principle example of leaderless resistance, through its almost complete replication of the bombing of the Federal Building in the book *The Turner Diaries* (MacDonald 1977), written by William Pierce under the pseudonym Andrew MacDonald. It could in fact also be classified as hate terrorism; it would appear that the main differentiation between hate terrorism and formal leaderless resistance is merely philosophical, both have a general political pretext and goal which differs

from isolated hate crimes. The murders by Joseph Franklin which apparently inspired Pierce to write the sequel to *The Turner Diaries*, *Hunter* (MacDonald 1989) can be referred to as hate crimes and also as the lone wolf form of leaderless resistance, but it is regarded as crime rather than terrorism. This distinction is finite, but important since although it highlights the ambiguity in how hate crimes or political acts of violence are categorized, it shows the transfer from one to another, which can rapidly lead to an escalation. Recently policy transfer has provided a key resource across the Atlantic to deal with hate crime, and provide a criminal justice response (Newburn, 2002). The benefits of this are that lessons are learnt from the implementation of law enforcement strategy. However, what is not readily identified or discernable is the propensity for policy transfer in the White Nationalist community between hate crime/hate terrorism and leaderless resistance.

This new awareness of hate crime, and the criminal justice training to deal with it also creates divisions and strata amongst offenders. Whereas in the past, particularly from the 1960's onward, acts that would now be termed hate crimes were committed by a small band of extremists on the periphery. Franklin was a dedicated extremist with a specific political philosophy and unwavering in its application, very much following the model envisaged by right wing texts of the 'lone wolf' predator, seeking revenge against liberal society (MacDonald 1998). More recently hate crime has with the exception of a few high profile cases amounted to low level incidents, which occur with alarming frequency. Hate Watch, run by the Southern Poverty Law Centre reports increasing numbers of incidents which vary in level and propensity for public safety. However, what becomes increasing evident from the ongoing reports is the difference in the perpetrators of these incidents. The individuals unlike their high profile predecessors are not cornerstones politically or indeed necessarily involved in political activities. Much of the Radical Right works on a precedent of racial consciousness and awareness, politically and through group contact (Ridegway 1995).

Some of the more recent perpetrators have nothing more than a rudimentary immersion into the politics of radicalism and white nationalism.

This presents one important problem which arises in response to these developments; the perpetrators are branded as hate criminals before being exposed to the core of the movement. If this became a scaling process, their crimes could only escalate further once they are exposed to the movement's rhetoric, and texts advocating explicit violence ([www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)). The developments in the criminal justice responses have reached a level now where awareness is at its highest level ever, in recognizing and dealing with exponents of hate. The perpetrators although outwardly racially motivated have racial imperatives as a pretext rather than as a primary motivation. With the division between crime and terrorism rapidly diminishing there are opportunities for the perpetrators of hate crime to make the transition to hate terrorism. Thus hate crime and hate terrorism rather than being two different aspects, will have a fluidity of movement, becoming a transitory process of political evolution. For the perpetrator the political immersion and personal development could proceed in tandem with the escalation to becoming a fully fledged terrorist (Flynn & Gerhardt 1990).

The journey from political activist to terrorist is tenuous. However, charting the movement from racist to hate criminal or terrorist is more readily identifiable. Aside from the two examples already mentioned, Joseph Franklin and Timothy McVeigh, one of the most influential terrorists in White Nationalist circles has been Bob Matthews, whose legacy and stature has grown since his death (Kaplan 2000). These three provide a veritable triple pronged case study of the movement's possible directions and focus. There are therefore three variables 1) the party activist who through frustration and ineptitude of party politics indulges in violence and crime before escalating to murder, 2) the racially aware protagonist who with little direct contact is motivated towards terrorism, 3) the dedicated racist and activist whose activities

escalate to becoming a revolutionary. These variables correspond to the protagonists mentioned, Franklin, McVeigh and Matthews. There is a pyramid of ideology which link these, primarily the theories of leaderless resistance, the spiritual leadership provided by George Lincoln Rockwell and the legacy inherited by William Pierce (Griffin 2001). This highlights the fluidity of movement in the White Nationalist Community between individuals and the ideological core. The ideological umbrella provided by leaderless resistance is a core provider of ammunition for White Nationalists (Ridgeway 1995).

This raises quite natural questions which must be addressed, how the factors relate to hate crime, principally the variables, leaderless resistance, Rockwell and Pierce? These are the shaping factors which determine the chain of events between the individual, hate crime, its implications and legacy. Hate crime must be regarded as a means of categorization to tag and elevate in importance certain crimes. Whether this is relevant or justifiable has already been discussed by other scholars, who have questioned the validity of it as a topic (Cogan 2002). This is very much a political question, the criminal justice responses, infer that somehow hate crime is more of a priority or important than other non hate related crimes. Despite the questions which surround its validity, it assists in highlighting some of the essences of the movement in a readily identifiable fashion. Although the method of categorization helps to maintain a focus on specific events within the radical right whether hate related crime or terrorism, it belittles the fact that along with the fluidity mentioned between the two it is a political collage of overlapping theories and events which meet all criteria at some points. This shows the weaknesses in the methods of categorization, but is not an insurmountable problem (Craig 2001). Notwithstanding the weaknesses in the use of political tags as long as the weaknesses are fully understood and interpreted accurately there is no reason why these can not be utilized when analyzing hate crime, hate terrorism and leaderless resistance in the White Nationalist Community.

It is important at this point to specify exactly what each term embodies and represents to both the individuals and the criminal justice system. Hate crime terminology is created through legislation, with hate terrorism as the natural accompanying factor for acts of terrorism. This contrasts completely with leaderless resistance which despite originating as an American government response to counter insurgency in Korea was utilized as an organizational model by American extremists (Beam, 1992). Once modified by American extremists Louis Beam and William Pierce, leaderless resistance became an effective option to fringe political groups (Griffin 2001). Leaderless resistance has two distinct sections, firstly where individuals work in cells, or secondly individual action frequently referred to as 'lone wolf' where people of a similar goal and orientation work independently towards a common goal. Although this is a method employed by groups out with the auspices of the White Nationalist Community such as animal rights campaigners. In the White Nationalist context this refers to lone assassins as opposed to a formal leaderless resistance cell structure, with four to six people operating independently under a common political mantle. The difficulty arises when trying to ascertain if actions are in fact leaderless resistance especially those under the lone wolf criteria. Recent reports of hate crime incidents, the lack of a precedent of leaderless resistance means, most hate based crimes are unlikely to be categorized as leaderless resistance. The political implications of this and the existence of any form of leaderless resistance are speculative.

The distinction will arise if the current perpetrators of hate crimes begin to evolve politically, or move into a more radical environment of political rhetoric, which can not be legislated for (Schafer 2002). Since many of the crimes now reported as hate crimes are not committed by politically active individuals who have an ideological awareness of the movement's philosophy at more than a rudimentary level. Much will depend on the individual impact on individuals, branded as hate criminals. Although speculative, it could potentially be the trigger mechanism which leads them into a

quadrangle of extremist violence which they can not escape from. All of the individual protagonists discussed underwent their own specific and insurmountable personal battle to reach the point where they resorted to violent measures. Amongst the Radical Right one of the most pronounced problems encountered is the lack of racial awareness amongst the American public. Though hate crime legislation and branding is designed to combat hate based crimes and allow a dedicated response, through the wide use of these measures they could inadvertently trigger a higher level of racial awareness amongst the perpetrators and the public, than previously existed.

Hate crime in the American Radical Right has in many respects come from the political shadows, William Pierce makes mention of the enforcement of hate crimes in his futuristic text 'The Turner Diaries' with the law enforcement officers being reminiscent of George Orwell's thought police in his novel Nineteen Eighty Four. Although it is not quite so dramatic, for American White Nationalism and political periphery it does present serious problems, and questions regarding freedom of speech. In the right wing texts hate crimes and the criminal justice system is representative of the politically correct liberal society run amok (MacDonald 1995, MacDonald 1998). Although at the moment there is no sign of changes to freedom of expression in the United States, the raft of prosecutions in the American Radical Right has provided a conduit of impending doom, and judgment (Langer 2003). Though the political and legislative pendulum is swinging in the direction of ever tighter controls on the provocateurs of hate, it has the disadvantage of disseminating the organizations to even smaller factions or lone members rather than merely containment. Inevitably any democracy will have to decide how best to deal with organizations and individuals advocating their destruction. However, the method employed is creating many of the issues encountered.

The dialogue presented by hate based crimes opens an opportunity for analysis and understanding, since it allows a multifaceted approach from different

disciplines to assess the impact and possible implications of both the crimes and legislation. The relationship between hate based crime and hate terrorism for the Radical Right and assessing how best the leaderless resistance model can be used to attribute possible developing factors, utilizing the knowledge gained from examples, which can be compared to corresponding research.

In conclusion there is potentially a fluidity of movement between hate crime and hate terrorism, driven partly through the use of terminology and secondly through the use of an ideological stimulus to justify the philosophical foundations of extremism. The use of hate crime and hate terrorism both create ambiguity when utilizing the leaderless resistance model to categorize and understand the implications of race-hate activities and violence. Despite the inherent difficulties in labeling hate crimes, the leaderless resistance mode of operation can still be referred to as hate crime. Due to the political auspices it could be more productive to refer to these activities as hate terrorism, with hate crime becoming a subsection along with leaderless resistance, dealing with crimes and the model of operation used to achieve the goals. It would appear from present literature and ongoing developments within the Radical Right that the criminal justice responses are stifling the issue of hate crime. There would also seem to be a prevalent change in the perpetrators of these actions which could have far reaching implications for extremism in the future and the criminal justice system. This could involve a marginalization of hate crime, due to the rapid escalation in hate related activities, and a potential for hate crime perpetrators out with the movement to become harbingers of hate who are ideologically aware after exposure to extremist literature and culture. Indeed there is the potential for further racial stratification, with hate crime legislation provoking a means of racial identity.

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