

Kansas Hate Crime Didn't Emerge From a Vacuum

When you look at the image of Frazier Glenn Cross, aka Glenn Miller, the shooter who cold-bloodedly murdered three Christians in a bloody eve-of-Passover spree at two Jewish community buildings in Overland Park, Kan., what do you see?

I'll tell you what I see. The dead-eyed stare, the pasty, blotched skin and lousy teeth, the unkempt facial hair—this is exactly the kind of face we associate with anti-Semitic and racist thuggery. In the 20th century, Cross could have been a concentration camp guard, wearing his ignorant, vulgar sneer as he shoved his Jewish victims into a gas chamber, screaming barely literate, anti-Semitic epithets along the way.

As we mourn the dead and agonize over the fact that security at Jewish institutions becomes more vulnerable when Jewish holidays draw near, we comfort ourselves by saying that such exemplary specimens of the “master race” as Cross are a rarity. Neo-Nazis are at the fringe of the fringe, most of them don't have the guts to go beyond harassing their enemies on social networks, and the odd individuals who do engage in violence unfortunately have easy access to guns. What this means is that Jews and other minorities have to occasionally shoulder atrocities like the one in Kansas. It absolutely does not mean that America is an anti-Semitic country or that such attacks are a prelude to greater persecution.

One might add that the wider community's reaction to the Overland Park murders showcased a humble, hard-working, tolerant America at its best. We suffer and we pull through—just as we pulled through the shootings at Jewish community centers in Los Angeles in 1999 and Seattle in 2006. Just as French Jews pulled through the 2012 murders by an Islamist of a rabbi and three beautiful children at a Jewish

school in Toulouse. Just as Jews in Israel overcame the enormous pain that accompanied the Palestinian bombing of a Passover seder, which claimed the lives of 30 people, at a Netanya hotel in 2002.

But something is missing. By overly focusing on punks like Frazier Cross, there's a danger that we ignore those elements in our broader culture that sustain and inspire them.

Look at some of the posts that Cross left on various neo-Nazi and white supremacist bulletin boards, and you'll see what I mean. Amidst his hate-drenched rants against Jews, he warmly recommended an article by "Jew journalist" Max Blumenthal, whom he complimented for exposing Israel's "attempt ... to buy the presidential election for the neo-con, war-mongering republican establishment ... the k*kes simply do not trust a lame-duck black president with the name Hussein." (Incidentally, it's not unheard of for Nazis to recommend certain Jewish authors—Hitler himself reportedly described Otto Weininger, a Viennese Jewish philosopher who lambasted the modern "Jewish" era, as a rare example of a Jew he admired.)

It's not an accident that today's Nazis are attracted to left-wing, viscerally anti-Zionist writers like Blumenthal. Both share the view that the so-called "Israel lobby" drove the U.S. into foreign wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both believe that politicians kowtow to Jewish interests because they fear the costs of not doing so. And both are convinced that the type of "Jewish supremacism" practiced in Israel makes a nonsense of American Jewish appeals for tolerance and understanding.

Two years ago, Blumenthal mocked the Department of Homeland Security for describing Jews as a community facing "special risks."

"It's clear what's going on here," Blumenthal said, in a nod

toward undue Jewish political influence. He has also actively promoted the idea that Judaism itself is a hateful religion, a slander propounded by his Israeli collaborator, Yossi Gurvitz, who has stated that “rabbinical Judaism is a Judaism that hates humans.” On Twitter, meanwhile, Blumenthal has used his own account to retweet the rantings of one David Benedetti, who taunted a Jewish user with Holocaust imagery, saying, “Your grandmother also made a nice lampshade.”

Now that the Kansas atrocity underlines that Jews do, in fact, face serious risks, Blumenthal has shifted tack, writing on the anti-Semitic website Mondoweiss on the alleged similarities between Frazier Cross’ Nazi ideology and Zionism. Elsewhere on the same website, which receives part of its funding from conservative businessman Ron Unz, another contributor, Annie Robbins, wondered aloud whether Kansas was an Israeli conspiracy.

Why does any of this matter? Left-wing anti-Zionists are increasingly regarded as acceptable company in the intellectual mainstream. Blumenthal has, for example, recently addressed the New America Foundation, a leading liberal think-tank in Washington, D.C., which was apparently unperturbed by his flock of Nazi admirers or by the fact that he was the subject of a flattering profile on Press TV, the official mouthpiece of the Iranian regime.

How much longer will we buy into the ludicrous idea that Blumenthal carries no responsibility for the way his screeds are interpreted? Similarly, when we read leading political scientist Stephen Walt, co-author of the miserable book *The Israel Lobby*, telling *Haaretz* that 9/11 was Israel’s fault, why do we continue to view his discourse as more sophisticated than the bigots who parrot him?

People like Frazier Cross don’t emerge from a vacuum. They are enabled by the same deadly ideas about Jews and Israel that have become so fashionable in parts of the media and academia.

In the wake of the hate crime in Kansas, it's time to start highlighting those links.

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