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THE FACE OF EVIL

Holocaust Museum shooter part of an extensive, loosely-federated hate movement



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By Julius (Jay) Wachtel. It was only a matter of time until a new wacko joined Timothy McVeigh, Richard Butler, Matthew Hale and William Pierce in the racist hall of fame. On June 10, 2009 [James W. von Brunn](#), 88, approached the main entrance of the [U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum](#). [Officer Stephen Tyrone Johns](#), 39, helpfully opened the glass door. Von Brunn stepped inside, pulled a .22 rifle from his coat and fired. Johns, a six-year veteran, fell mortally wounded. His colleagues instantly reacted, the explosive sounds of their return fire ricocheting inside the cavernous building and sending visitors scurrying for cover. Von Brunn was struck in the head and at this writing remains in critical condition.



Although von Brunn isn't a household name in extremist circles he is known to Federal law enforcement. In 1981 he [burst into the Federal Reserve](#) packing a revolver and sawed-off shotgun inside a trench coat. Intending to "arrest" the Fed's members for violating the Constitution, America's self-anointed savior was captured without incident in the room next to where the Board was meeting. He served six and one-half years in Federal prison. (To read his grandiose account of what happened [click here](#).)

Von Brunn's homepage and [biography](#) (links are to archived versions) describe him as a decorated WW-II Navy man. There's a letter of reference from the late [Rear Admiral John G. Crommelin](#), another far-right zealot, who fawned that von Brunn "deserves the gratitude and assistance of every White Christian citizen of these United States." While imprisoned von Brunn wrote a plea to the Secretary of the Navy in

which he accused the Fed of furthering a Marxist/Jewish conspiracy to subjugate the chosen race. He never got a response.

Von Brunn's inspiration is a [white supremacist ideology](#) that dates back to the founding of the Ku Klux Klan. At its core is the conviction that by natural law European Christians are the master race, but that our government has been co-opted by rich Jews, blacks, immigrants and mongrels to whose whims everyone else must cater. In effect, von Brunn and his ilk aren't bigots: they're *victims*.

Adherents of this hateful philosophy have taken different paths to resistance. Some, including the neo-Nazi [Aryan Nations](#), Waco's messianic [Branch Davidians](#) and the similarly oriented [Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord \(CSA\)](#) built compounds where members and their families lived apart from conventional society. Inevitably, their activities brought them into conflict with authorities. In the early 1980's members of an Aryan Nations splinter group known as "[The Order](#)" staged a series of bank robberies, culminating in a wild shootout with the FBI. In 1998 Aryan Nations security guard [Buford Furrow](#) went on a spree, wounding several persons at a Jewish center and killing an Asian letter carrier. A racial harassment lawsuit ultimately led to the organization's bankruptcy and the sale of their property.

During the 1980's the Branch Davidians, in Texas, and the CSA, in Arkansas, acquired large quantities of illegal weapons and waited for the apocalypse. Federal agents neutralized the CSA in a 1985 raid that passed without major incident. However, a 1993 attempt to replicate that success with the Branch Davidians led to the shooting death of four ATF agents. Eighty-two members of the sect, including twenty children, later died in a fire that the Feds insist was purposely set by the sect.

After that tragedy authorities took a more measured approach. Three years later, in perhaps the last standoff of any size, twenty members of a tax-resistance group called the "[Montana Freeman](#)" holed up in their compound for nearly three months while dodging Federal tax and fraud warrants. Instead of sending in SWAT teams the FBI quietly waited them out, and in the end all peacefully surrendered.

Supremacist groups have remained mostly quiet during the past decade. That's not to say that everything's been rosy. Since [Timothy McVeigh's](#) murderous 1995 attack on the Oklahoma City Federal Building, which cost 168 innocent lives, deranged, gun-wielding loners with a victimhood complex have staged a number of mini-massacres at malls, universities and other public places. Most recently, three Pittsburgh (Penn.) police officers were killed and a fourth was wounded by a fanatic who complained about "the Obama gun ban that's on the way."

With the election of a black liberal as President, observers from the [left](#) and, surprisingly, a famous TV news anchor from the [right](#) have expressed concern that overheated conservative rhetoric has legitimized hate, energized the radical fringe and set the stage for even more mayhem.



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Coming on the heels of the [murder of a physician](#) at a Kansas abortion clinic, von Brunn's murderous act is raising new fears that a resurgence of extremist violence is in the works. We'll soon know whether that's true.