



SPLC
Southern Poverty
Law Center

DONATE

Follow SPLC



FIGHTING HATE // TEACHING TOLERANCE // SEEKING JUSTICE

MAY 12, 2018

Weekend Read // Issue 79

Good morning.

A copy of *Mein Kampf*. A photo of Timothy McVeigh. A North Korean flag over the couch. An American flag for a doormat. And over the kitchen table, a banner for the hate group Atomwaffen Division.

The four young men who shared this apartment in Florida got there by way of the internet.

It started with video games. That led to 4chan, which led to the [Daily Stormer](#), a neo-Nazi website so extreme its followers recently bombarded a Jewish woman and her family with [hundreds of threats](#) like, “Put your uppity slut wife Tanya back in her cage, you rat-faced kike. ... Day of the rope soon for your entire family.”

But [Brandon Russell](#) and [Devon Arthurs](#) didn’t meet and decide to become roommates until they both wound up in a live chat sponsored by the [American Freedom Party](#), a white nationalist hate group. They quickly became “inseparable,” as [Janet Reitman recounts for Rolling Stone](#):

Brandon treated Devon almost like his pet, leaving him \$20 each morning, but also, at times, withholding his money, or food, as a form of discipline. “I think it was a power trip for Brandon,” one acquaintance says. “It was a really toxic friendship,” says another.

Before long, Russell announced he was forming a hate group of his own. In 2015 he unveiled the [Atomwaffen Division \(AWD\)](#), a neo-Nazi outfit designed to operate like a white supremacist terror cell.

That's how he met Jeremy Himmelman and Andrew Oneschuk, two teenagers from Boston who would join Russell and Arthurs in their Florida apartment as part of a twisted relationship that sometimes prompted Himmelman and Oneschuk to call Russell "Daddy."

Less than two years later, police would find Russell "hysterical and screaming" after he discovered the teens' bodies in the apartment they all shared — murdered, police say, by Arthurs.

[Reitman narrates for *Rolling Stone*](#) the collision course that led the four young men to each other and to what she calls a "senseless double murder" that "exposed the rise of an organized fascist youth movement in the United States."

But Himmelman and Oneschuk's murders in May 2017 wouldn't be the last linked to AWD. Before the end of the year, another man associated with AWD, [Nicholas Giampa](#), would be charged with killing his girlfriend's parents in Virginia. They had been trying to keep him away from their daughter.

Barely a month later, in January of this year, another reported member of AWD, [Samuel Woodward](#), was charged with the murder of a gay, Jewish man named Blaze Bernstein, who was found in a shallow grave, his body marred by at least 20 stab wounds.

The so-called "alt-right," as our Hatewatch staff wrote earlier this year, is [killing people](#).

For many potentially violent young extremists, the path to radicalization is chilling for its banality. It may start with video games, memes and chatrooms. And that's no accident.

"When I'm trying to change the way people think about things," said Daily Stormer founder [Andrew Anglin](#), "it doesn't make sense to target anyone but young people."

In fact, even Russell, AWD's founder, "surrounded himself with teenagers," [Reitman writes](#), as an "intentional" way to "recruit the youngest national socialists he could find."

"I think Brandon could have believed anything as long as it got him followers," Himmelman's girlfriend told Reitman. "He knows what people want to engage with, and he mirrors it. He's really good at manipulating people."

He's not the only one. As our [Hatewatch staff reports](#):

The white, male grievance culture that the leaders of the alt-right are incubating has already inspired more than 40 deaths and left more than 60 people injured. And unfortunately, the alt-right seems likely to inspire more.

And, as we've seen in the past, we likely won't seem them coming.

After all, as Arthurs himself [told police after they arrested him](#), "I'm not what people would expect to be the face of terror. I'm just a normal guy like anyone else."

The Editors

P.S. Here are a few other pieces we think are valuable this week:

[Taking children from their parents is a form of state terror](#) by Masha Gessen for *The New Yorker*

[What happens when we forget?](#) by Lance Warren for *Facing South*

[The creeping spectre of white genocide](#) by Rosa Lyster for *The Outline*

[William Barber takes on poverty and race in the age of Trump](#) by Jelani Cobb for *The New Yorker*

[Read our latest newsletter.](#)

This email was sent to pamelagrow@gmail.com. To update your email address or other account information, please reply to this email and let us know.

Send an E-Card

*Become a Partner
for the Future*

*Become a Friend
of the Center*

*Read the
Hatewatch Blog*

Take advantage of corporate matching gift opportunities. Find out if **your employer will match your donation** to the SPLC today.

Was this message forwarded to you? [Sign up to receive SPLC updates.](#)

[Update Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#) | Copyright 2018

DONATE

Follow SPLC



Southern Poverty Law Center
[400 Washington Avenue](#)
[Montgomery, AL 36104](#)
334.956.8200 // splcenter.org