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# San Diego mosque shooters left document revealing racist, neo-Nazi beliefs

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***Content warning: This article contains graphic language and information about youth radicalization and self-harm. Reader discretion is advised.***

Seven years after a neo-Nazi executed 51 worshippers at a mosque in New Zealand, two teenagers — seeking to follow in his footsteps — killed three people at a mosque in San Diego, California, on May 18. Then, they turned their guns on themselves.

Cain Clark, 17, and Caleb Vazquez, 18, whom law enforcement officials identified as the shooters, detailed their racist and political motivations for their attack on the Islamic Center of San Diego in a 75-page document, “The New Crusade.” The document is divided into two parts, each written by one of the shooters. It calls for “the destruction of our current political system” and “an all-out race war.”

The teenagers cited a deep range of white supremacist influences tied to acts of terrorism and extreme violence. They praised Brenton Tarrant — whose 2019 mosque attack constituted the deadliest act of terrorism in New Zealand’s history.<sup>[1]</sup> Describing themselves as “The Sons of Tarrant,” Vazquez and Clark quoted Tarrant and called him “our biggest inspiration.”

The teenagers devoted a large portion of the document to an anti-Black screed. They also expressed a deep familiarity with the misogynistic incel movements, according to the document and social media posts that Hatewatch reviewed.<sup>[2]</sup>

Authorities have not verified the authenticity of the document, though it has been widely reported as attributed to the killers.<sup>[3]</sup> A livestream of the attack circulating on social media appears to show two teenagers storming a mosque before shooting themselves.

The overarching theme in Vazquez and Clark’s document is the “great replacement” — the same conspiracy theory that motivated Tarrant’s attack in New Zealand.<sup>[4]</sup> Conspiracy theorists believe that nonwhite people and immigrants are systematically and purposely “replacing” white people. Like most within the white power movement, Vazquez and Clark blamed Jewish people for orchestrating this conspiracy. They see other groups — Black people, Muslims, Latinx people, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people and women — as participants in their scheme.

Their screed suggests the teenagers targeted a mosque because they believed Muslim people were “invaders” in the United States. “I don’t hate Muslims, at least not really. What I do hate is the religion of Islam itself and what I hate more than that is seeing them here, invading my country,” Vazquez wrote. “They must be isolated and exterminated,” Cain argued in his portion of the document.

## **Attack comes at time of increased extremism and Islamophobia**

The attack on the Islamic Center of San Diego comes at a time of rising far-right extremism, Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment, much of it coming from government officials.

In their document, the shooters referenced specific racist conspiracy theories that have been promoted by the White House. For example, in a section titled “Mass Immigration and its

Consequences,” they repeated the claim — originally made in a video created by a far-right livestreamer in December 2025, and reposted and praised by Vice President JD Vance on X — that Somali immigrants in Minnesota are defrauding the government out of millions of dollars.<sup>[5]</sup> In the document written by Vazquez and Clark, Vazquez cited the alleged fraud as evidence that immigrants commit a disproportionate amount of crime (the opposite is true) and “DO. NOT. F...ING. BELONG. HERE.”<sup>[6]</sup>

The attack also comes amid a swell of Islamophobia in the United States following conflicts in the Middle East.<sup>[7]</sup> The Council on American-Islamic Relations concluded in its annual report that “2025 became a climate in which Muslim civic participation carried heightened risk not seen since 9/11.”<sup>[8]</sup>

Rampant anti-Muslim fearmongering has come from federal elected officials. Members of Congress have introduced nearly half a dozen bills opposing so-called “Sharia law” within the past year. In December 2025, U.S. Reps. Keith Self and Chip Roy announced the creation of the Sharia-Free America Caucus. In April, Self wrote on X that the caucus had 65 members. “DEFEND THE WEST,” he wrote.<sup>[9]</sup>

In March, U.S. Rep. Randy Fine posted on X, “We need more Islamophobia, not less. Fear of Islam is natural.” The same month, Rep. Brandon Gill stated that “Importing Islam will annihilate America as we know it.”<sup>[10]</sup> Sen. Tommy Tuberville consistently criticizes “Radical Islam,” which he calls “INCOMPATIBLE with our Western values.”<sup>[11]</sup>

The shooters expressed similar sentiments, writing that “Islam is in every way incompatible and hostile to western countries.”

“They’ll assert dominance and lay claim to the land by loudly and obnoxiously praying in our streets,” they wrote of Muslim people, “demanding Sharia law, only voting for their own in positions of power, being violent as any s...skin and attacking others often in the name of Islam.”

## **Shooters wore patches of defunct neo-Nazi group**

The shooters were inspired by leaders and figureheads associated with the now defunct neo-Nazi group Atomwaffen Division, according to their social media posts that Hatewatch

reviewed. In a video of the attack, one appeared to wear a patch bearing the group's logo — a black-and-white radiation trefoil on a shield.

Members of Atomwaffen Division, which was founded in 2015 and disbanded in 2020, have been tied to multiple murders and other acts of violence. Atomwaffen Division subscribed to a tactic known as white power accelerationism.<sup>[12]</sup> Neo-Nazis, white nationalists and other extremists who embrace accelerationism see acts of racist violence and terrorism as a sole means of ushering in a whites-only state. Both teenagers identified as accelerationists in their document.

The livestream doesn't appear to be the first time one of the attackers wore paraphernalia associated with the group. In a TikTok video belonging to "Flecktarn\_Crusader," a young man wearing a skull mask and camouflage jacket bearing an Atomwaffen Division patch posted a video of himself dancing to pop music.

In their document outlining their reason for the attack, Vazquez listed "Flecktarn\_Crusader" and "shmerg trvecel" as some of his online usernames. The TikTok user "Flecktarn\_Crusader" described themselves in a cached version of their bio as "Formerly Shmerg\_Trvecel."

The account was removed from the platform after the attack. TikTok didn't respond to a request for comment.

In the document, Clark and Vazquez praised Atomwaffen Division co-founder Brandon Russell and the group's chief ideologue, James Mason.<sup>[13]</sup> Vazquez said he was a "huge fan" of Russell, who is serving a 20-year prison sentence for conspiring to attack energy facilities near Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>[14]</sup>

Of Mason, who advised and worked with Atomwaffen Division, Vazquez said that he "provided me with the backbone for my entire ideology and belief system."<sup>[15]</sup> Vazquez and Clark both recommended *Siege*, a collection of newsletters that Mason authored in the 1980s and later turned into a book. Members of Atomwaffen Division once called *Siege* their "Bible."<sup>[16]</sup>

## Shooters drew inspiration from neo-Nazi terrorism network

Clark and Vazquez also appear to have drawn significant inspiration from a decentralized network that promoted white supremacist terrorism known as the “Terrorgram Collective,” according to the document they published online and social media accounts tied to them.

The “Terrorgram Collective” is a loose network of content creators, primarily on the social media app Telegram.

“The number one goal of this New Crusade is to restart and bring back the momentum that Saint Tarrant had started, to convince many other would be Saints that the time is now, and mostly important to kick start the race war,” Vazquez wrote.

Neo-Nazi accelerationists celebrate racist killers as “saints.”

Vazquez, in a later section of their document, credited Tarrant with bringing “forth a new age of White Terror.” This framing, which depicts Tarrant as leading a new generation of racist killers, appears to be lifted from a documentary that “Terrorgram” produced and distributed in 2022. Titled *White Terror*, it glorifies over 100 acts of white supremacist terrorism, using graphic footage from many of the attacks.

*White Terror*, according to federal prosecutors, was created by Dallas Humber and Matthew Allison.<sup>[17]</sup> The pair were charged with soliciting hate crimes, soliciting the murder of federal officials and conspiring to provide material support to terrorists. Humber is servicing 30 years in prison.<sup>[18]</sup> Allison’s case is ongoing, per court documents.

Many of the white supremacists that Vazquez and Clark cited in their document also appear in *White Terror*. These include Timothy McVeigh, the perpetrator of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing; Robert Jay Mathews, the founder of the neo-Nazi terrorist group The Order; Dylann Roof, the perpetrator of a 2015 mass murder at a Black church in South Carolina; and James Huberty, who murdered 21 people at a San Diego McDonald’s in the 1980s.<sup>[19]</sup>

*White Terror*, like Vazquez and Clark, placed Tarrant on a pedestal, calling his actions “groundbreaking and impactful” and credited him for propelling “Terrorgram’s” accelerationist tactics “into mainstream discourse.” Humber, who narrated the documentary, refers to perpetrators of several mass shootings following Tarrant as his “disciples.”<sup>[20]</sup> These include attacks throughout 2019 in the United States, Germany and Norway, where perpetrators targeted synagogues, mosques and a Walmart. *White Terror* also calls Payton Gendron, who murdered 10 people at a Buffalo, New York, supermarket in May 2022, Tarrant’s “fifth disciple.”<sup>[21]</sup>

In addition, Vazquez and Clark cited books popular with white power accelerationists. These include *The Turner Diaries*, a dystopian novel that the founder of the National Alliance, William Luther Pierce, authored in 1978.<sup>[22]</sup> The book, which inspired McVeigh, describes a violent revolution in which nonwhite people and “race traitors” are hanged in the streets on “the day of the rope.” The pair also recommends *Harassment Architecture*, which former Breitbart writer Mike Mahoney self-published in 2019 under the pen name “Mike Ma.” *Harassment Architecture* includes specific appeals to bringing about “the collapse” of society.<sup>[23]</sup>

## Writings promoted anti-Black and misogynist incel talking points

Vazquez and Clark embraced a range of racist and hateful beliefs and conspiracies. They devoted some of the longest sections of their screed to the gross denigration of Black people, resurrecting centuries-old race science to argue that Black people are less intelligent than white people, sexually promiscuous and “animalistic.” “Blacks as you probably know, are incredibly violent,” Vazquez wrote, insisting “a lot of problems of the negro race stem from their genetic inferiority” and “infectious and destructive” culture. They also alleged that there is a widespread Black-on-white crime problem in the United States — the same conspiracy theory that motivated Roof to murder Black churchgoers in 2015.<sup>[24]</sup> The pair argue that killing Black people would be “an overall benefit to this world.”

Elsewhere, they argue that LGBTQ+ people are responsible for rising “degeneracy”; that Muslims “are violent and like to prey on women and children”; and that “[e]very problem in the modern world can be connected to the Jews.” They call Jewish people “the universal enemy” and the “children of Satan, bringing evil across the world.”

They each identify Black people and Muslims as “bioweapons” that Jewish people are using to replace the white race. They also point to movements for LGBTQ+ rights and feminism as Jewish plots designed to lower birthrates, break down the traditional family and destroy Western civilization.

Both teenagers — but especially Vazquez — appeared to be active in the misogynist incel (“involuntary celibate”) online community. Each glorifies Elliot Rodger, a self-defined incel who killed six and injured 14 others in a misogynistic terror attack in 2014. Vazquez praised

violence against women, writing that “simply existing as a woman is unforgivable, and so truly a righteous retribution is needed. The Incel Saints knew this well.”

Vazquez used dehumanizing terms for women popular in misogynistic incel communities throughout his screed, including “foid” — shorthand for “female humanoid.” Both claimed to be of short stature and said it was a major insecurity. Vazquez said he believed people treated him as “subhuman” because of his height and called being short “a torturous humiliation ritual.”

Vazquez wrote that he became involved with the incel community in 2022. Hatewatch identified a user named “Flecktarn Crusader” — one of the usernames Vazquez said he used — on a prominent incel forum. The account was created on Oct. 2, 2025, and said the user last visited the site on Jan. 8, 2026. “Flecktarn Crusader” commented on a handful of posts telling another user how to self-harm with a kitchen knife, raged about “foids” and expressed frustration over his height.

The white power and incel movements deeply overlap, and both have inspired acts of mass violence.

*Jeff Tischauser and Elias-John Fernandez-Aubert contributed research.*

*Harms associated with extremist radicalization are preventable. For guidance on how to prevent youth radicalization, tools for intervening and ways to support those targeted, visit [splcenter.org/peril](https://splcenter.org/peril) and [perilresearch.com](https://perilresearch.com). For tailored support through the Southern Poverty Law Center and PERIL’s CARE Program, reach out to [care@splcenter.org](mailto:care@splcenter.org) or access [trauma-informed resources here](#).*

*Image at top: The Islamic Center of San Diego is pictured on May 19, 2026, the day after a shooting at the center left three dead. (Credit: K.C. Alfred/The San Diego Union-Tribune via Getty)*

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