

Link Exposed Between Charleston Killer And Haters' Convention In Russia

Indirect ties have been unearthed between confessed Charleston killer Dylann Roof and a recent conference of right-wing activists in Russia.

Jared Taylor and Sam Dickson, members of the white-supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens that is said to have inspired Roof before he opened fire on black churchgoers in South Carolina, attended the St. Petersburg conference of Russian and Western far-right leaders in March, **Buzzfeed reports**.

The March gathering, organized by the nationalist Rodina Party, **was attended** by around 150 far-right leaders from the United States, Russia, and Western Europe, including politicians linked to neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic views. They criticized Western governments for their stances on the conflict in Ukraine and praised Moscow's attempts to promote "traditional values."

The forum was widely criticized inside and outside of Russia.

Taylor and Dickson told BuzzFeed News at the time that they "don't understand" why they were invited, saying it was a "bizarre lineup."

But they nevertheless attended the conference, where Taylor was quoted as having spoken of "alien traditions" of nonwhites and "the United States...committing suicide" by promoting diversity as opposed to Christianity.

The Council of Conservative Citizens, which describes itself as "the only serious nationwide activist group that sticks up for white rights," was thrust into the public eye after reports that Roof cited the group in his online manifesto.



Dylann Roof

In an interview with ABC News, Taylor said the group categorically condemns the Charleston attack, which killed nine congregants at a landmark black church, but added, "that doesn't mean his motives weren't entirely legitimate."

Roof wrote online that the 2012 death in Florida of black teenager Trayvon Martin at the hands of vigilante George Zimmerman and the outrage that followed prompted him to research "black on white crime." This led him to a **website by the Council of Conservative Citizens** which had "pages upon pages of these brutal black on White murders."

Russia has appeared eager to deepen ties with European far-right parties amid its ongoing standoff with the West over the crisis in eastern Ukraine.

In May, an **international forum** titled Donbass: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow and held in the unrecognized Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) drew members of Europe's pro-Russian political fringe as well as a representative from Syriza, the radical leftist party that has ruled in Greece since running on an antiestablishment platform, and more mainstream figures.

Russian nationalist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin was invited to a Texas college campus by Preston Wigginton, a Texas white supremacist with ties to Russian ultranationalists, to give an online lecture in April titled American Liberalism Must Be Destroyed. The United States imposed sanctions on Dugin in March for his role in an organization that recruited individuals to fight on behalf of Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

"We condemn Dugin's xenophobic worldview and are surprised that a U.S. university would provide a venue for his hate speech," Andrij Dobriansky, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Congress Committee of Americans, **told RFE/RL**.