

Church of True Israel's "The Gathering"

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Church of True Israel – Background and Beliefs

The Church of True Israel (CTI) began in 1996; however, it did not become much of a presence in the racist community until 2000. In 2000, Aryan Nations was slapped with a \$6.3 million judgment that sent many white supremacists running for cover. For years, factions within the white supremacist movement had criticized Richard Butler for how he ran Aryan Nations. After seeing one of the movement's patriarchs lose everything in a lawsuit, some of Butler's disciples decided to cut ties with him and start their own groups. One hate group that benefited from this was CTI.

Polson's Charles Mangels was the driving force behind CTI's formation in 1996. Mangels had been a longtime Aryan Nations activist. He spoke at Aryan Nations events and was listed throughout the 1990s as Aryan Nations' Montana State Leader. For a while, Mangels was even listed as an Aryan Nations ambassador. In 1996, Mangels drafted CTI's constitution establishing its leadership structure and goals.

CTI's core ideology, Christian Identity, is the same racist theology that drives Aryan Nations. Through a racist interpretation of the Bible, Christian Identity teaches that Jews are the literal offspring of Satan, and people of color are sub-human "mud people."

As racists began looking for new homes following the judgment against Aryan Nations, CTI was appealing, because it was not dependent on a single person for leadership. Instead, it was led by a "Council of Senior Prelates," which was made up of Mangels and other founding members. CTI documents claimed most Identity churches fail, because they are based around one leader who runs it like a "dictatorship," and "all Church income and property becomes [the leader's] absolute domain." The documents also stated followers must accept this structure or form another church.

Butler didn't view CTI's statements as a critique of the overall movement, but took them as a personal attack. On the Aryan Nations website, Butler posted a letter accusing CTI of finding the "faults of each one working to spread the WORD [Identity]." He also blasted the racists who were leaving Aryan Nations for CTI as "pretending to be the inner core" of Aryan Nations and fleeing like "capon chickens." He mocked their belief that they had founded a "'True' Church that would be safe from attack and bad press."

The Original Activists

Along with Mangels, many of CTI's members were previously active with Aryan Nations. Some of the CTI activists include:

- John Miller was a pastor for Aryan Nations throughout the 1980s and 1990s. He was a vocal supporter of Aryan Nations' plan to convert five Northwest states into an Aryan homeland. He frequently held cross burnings at his farm in Idaho. In the 1990s, he moved to Plains, Montana.
- Stanley McCollum was active in Aryan Nations and also was a member of National Council of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. He has also served as the Grand Wizard of the Klan in Alabama. He was a featured speaker at the 1996 Aryan World Congress where he was listed as Aryan Nations staff.
- John Burke served as the Aryan Nations security chief in the mid-1990s.
- The late Chuck Howarth was a founding CTI member. He was a Colorado Klan leader in the mid-1980s. He served jail time for possessing and selling bombs that police claimed were made to kill federal judges and blow up IRS offices. He moved to Montana in 1987 and frequently wrote letters-to-the-editor supporting John Trochmann and the Militia of Montana. He died in September 2000.
- Ed Dosh has been affiliated with the Noxon-based Militia of Montana (MOM) throughout the 1990s. In fact, he used to work the gun show circuit with MOM.

The Current CTI Situation

When CTI was founded, its headquarters was based in Noxon. Over time, the headquarters shifted to a post office box in Hayden, Idaho, where it remains. Even with its contact information listed in Idaho, the true catalyst behind CTI right now is James Dillavou, who relocated to Missoula from the Midwest. All of the correspondence for CTI's upcoming "The Gathering" has been run through a post office box in Missoula.

In 2002, Dillavou announced that CTI wanted to buy 20-40 acres of land somewhere in the Rocky Mountains to build its own compound. This announcement came before he moved to Montana. CTI hoped the compound would have a shooting range and a motel. Dillavou announced that CTI was taking in donations to help in purchasing the land, which he said would eventually be open to use by other racist organizations or racists who wanted somewhere to vacation.

"The Gathering"

CTI scheduled its upcoming event "The Gathering" for the same weekend (July 16-18) as Aryan Nations' annual World Congress. Based on the bad blood between CTI and Aryan Nations, this doesn't appear to be a coincidence. Even though CTI has existed since 1996, "The Gathering" is its first attempt at holding a large, public racist meeting. It is also not a coincidence that this type of event for CTI is happening in Montana after James Dillavou moved to Missoula. Out of the

known CTI activists, Dillavou has the most energy to pull off such an event. “The Gathering” is definitely CTI’s coming out party and an attempt to cement a role in the white supremacist movement and Identity circles.

Held near St. Regis, CTI is advertising the event as “A new Beginning” for the Identity movement. The advertised list of speakers is long and filled with Identity “pastors.” There are a couple of speakers of interest. Of particular interest is that the Militia of Montana (MOM) is listed a group who will have a spokesperson present. For years, MOM’s John Trochmann has denied his group is racist, although Aryan Nations’ Richard Butler has said Trochmann participated at Aryan Nations’ events and in Identity Bible studies. MOM actually developed out of another organization, United Citizens for Justice. United Citizens for Justice was formed in response to Randy Weaver’s standoff with authorities at Ruby Ridge in Idaho. Trochmann’s co-founder of the group was Chris Temple, a self-proclaimed neo-Nazi. Many leading Identity figures were also affiliated with the group. By appearing at “The Gathering,” Trochmann and MOM may be returning to their racist roots.

Another speaker of interest is Thom Robb, a Ku Klux Klan leader from Arkansas and an Identity “pastor.” Robb has been a past speaker at Aryan Nations gatherings and has also spoken at rallies denying the Holocaust. Although he has attempted to make the Klan more friendly to the mainstream by advocating that the KKK take part in civic-minded projects like the “adopt a highway program,” his racist and anti-Semitic beliefs are never far behind. He once stated, “I hate Jews. I hate race-mixing Jews. We’ve let Antichrist Jews into our country, and we’ve been cursed with abortion, inflation, homosexuality and the threat of war...[Christian] Identity breaks the power Jewry has over America.”

Other speakers listed by CTI include:

- Pastor VS Herrell – Christian Separatist Church Society (Tennessee)
- Pastor Mark Downey – Kinsmen Redeemer Ministries (Washington)
- Pastor Morris Gullett – Church of the Sons of YHVH (Louisiana)
- Pastor Don Campbell – Covenant Church of Yahweh (Minnesota)

CTI says there are many other speakers planned. However, according to CTI, their names are not being released for security and “livelihood reasons.”

What Does “The Gathering” Mean for Montanans

The danger posed to Montanans by CTI isn’t just its overt racism. Right now, there is somewhat of a vacuum in the state when it comes to hate groups that CTI may be trying to fill. The local Church of the Creator chapter has lost members and watched the leader at the national level, Matt Hale, convicted on charges of trying to have a federal judge killed. Skinheads in Billings were convicted on federal hate crimes charges. Aryan Nations has never fully recovered from the large civil judgment against it. CTI may be hoping to tap into some of these faltering racist networks to set up shop in Montana. With CTI’s stated goal of acquiring land for its own

compound, Montana could find itself shackled with the same racist burden that has plagued Northern Idaho for decades.