



News

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EXTREMIST INFO

Born: 1951

Location: Sherwood, N.D.

Ideology: [Neo-Nazi](#)

About Craig Cobb

Craig Cobb is best known for his botched effort to transform the tiny hamlet of Leith, N.D., into an Aryan stronghold, a secret campaign which ultimately landed him in jail and, in 2014, on four years of probation while tethered to a monitoring device. An itinerant neo-Nazi who joined a whole variety of racist groups over the decades and even operated from Estonia for a time, Cobb became known as an especially vicious character who posted horrific videos of things like Russian neo-Nazis beheading immigrants on his Podblanc video-sharing site. But his failed campaign in Leith, along with his submitting to a DNA test that publicly revealed that his genes were 14% sub-Saharan African, made him a national laughing stock, even among many of those white supremacists who had earlier supported him. In addition, after furiously threatening a number of Leith residents at gunpoint in the aftermath of the DNA test, he pleaded guilty to one count of felony terrorizing and five of misdemeanor menacing and was placed on four years' probation.

In His Own Words:

“Rosa Parks was a shitskin communist. I’m here to celebrate her death.”

—October 2005, at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, where the civil rights icon’s body lay in state

“I plan on staying and ... and bring[ing] more people to Leith. I would love to see the white nationalist flag flying in town. ... Welfare dependency is breeding killers and

violent subhumans. People need to love their race and their own people.”

—August 23, 2013, quoted in the *Grand Forks Herald*

“Hey, fuck you with your double-talk Christian shit, man. You act like a man. You go up there and tell the rest of them to comport themselves with some goddamned dignity. ... You fucking kike, Jew cocksucker.”

—Nov. 16, 2013, videotaped rant against a resident while “patrolling” the streets of Leith

“I’d like to be left alone. I consider myself retired [from white nationalism]. It’s the people of North Dakota who have decided I can’t have a quiet, peaceful existence.”

—July 3, 2014, quoted by The Associated Press

Background:

Craig Cobb grew up in Boston, the son of a businessman and a teacher. After high school, he joined the military and then moved to Edmonton, Canada, for five years. Little is known about Cobb’s early employment history.

Cobb left Canada in the early 1970s and moved to Hawaii, a racially diverse state where he first surfaced as an active white supremacist and anti-Semite. He joined the Church of the Creator (later renamed the World Church of the Creator and then The Creativity Movement), which primarily attracted racist skinheads known for their frequent criminal violence. As a “church,” it preached that whites were the superior race, the true gods, and that progress for human beings hinged on white domination of others. The group pilloried Christians, Jews and all non-whites, among others. During his more than two decades in Hawaii, Cobb also worked as a cab driver. (He even told a Bemidji, Minn., newspaper in 2013 that Barack Obama had been one of his passengers and had said he was not born in Hawaii.)

In 2003, Cobb relocated to friendlier (which is to say, whiter) environs, the small town of Frost, W.V., not far from the headquarters of the National Alliance, which was then still the country's dominant neo-Nazi group. He opened a grocery store and a business called Gray's Store, Aryan Autographs and 14 Words, L.L.C. (The "14 Words," coined by the late white supremacist terrorist David Lane, are a famous catchphrase on the radical right: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children.") Cobb wasn't too successful as a conventional businessman, probably because he opened just a couple of hours a day, painted the sides of his shop with the website addresses of hate groups, and pushed material about white supremacy on his customers.

Instead of taking care of business, he was busy raising his profile in the hate community. Three years after U.S. District Court Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow ruled against the World Church of the Creator in a trademark infringement suit in 2000, group leader Matthew Hale was arrested for soliciting Lefkow's murder. He was convicted and sentenced to 40 years in prison, where he remains today. In retaliation, Cobb published the judge's home address and a map to the location on the Internet. He also posted pictures of Lefkow's husband and children on Stormfront, the world's largest white supremacist website. Two years after that, in 2005, Lefkow's husband and mother were murdered inside her Chicago house. As it turned out, however, the killer had nothing to do with white supremacy, but was aggrieved over Lefkow's ruling in another case.

In the fall of 2003, Cobb was invited to the National Alliance's invitation-only "leadership conference," considered an exclusive and important event on the white supremacist calendar. Later, he soon became an avid distributor of *The Aryan Alternative*, a white supremacist periodical published by neo-Nazi Alex Linder, founder of the virulently racist website Vanguard News Network. Videos posts to the

Internet show Cobb distributing the hate periodical in at least a dozen states, along with the District of Columbia. He is shown in cars packed with the newsletters, tossing them in front of houses, and giving them to passersby.

Cobb also acted on his view that you've got to teach hate early in life. During his years in West Virginia, he volunteered to help distribute CDs of racist "hatecore" music to elementary, middle and high school students outside their schools. The distribution was the core of "Project Schoolyard," a nationwide propaganda campaign launched by Panzerfaust, a white power music label, that aimed to bring more young people into the white supremacist movement.

But Cobb wanted to do more. After receiving an inheritance in 2005, he moved to Tallinn, Estonia, an overwhelmingly white area of Eastern Europe with a substantial history of fascist movements. With the kind of bombastic flourish that typified him, he announced the opening of an "International Office of White Diaspora" meant to bring U.S. and British whites to white-dominated European countries. The announcement came to nothing, however.

The Internet enabled Cobb to gain more substantial traction in spreading anti-Semitic, anti-gay and racist propaganda. In 2007, he founded Podblanc, a major video-sharing website that he touted as an alternative to YouTube (pilloried by Cobb as "JewTube"). With more than 1,000 channels directed by different registered users, it became a go-to outlet for white nationalists. One popular but horrific video shows Russian neo-Nazis beheading and shooting Asian immigrants. Others show the torture of orthodox Jews and non-whites randomly selected on public streets. He also posted how-to guides for homemade explosives and combat handgun training, and detailed security measures at three California synagogues. For inspiration, Cobb's site provided an audio recording of *The Turner Diaries*, the notorious race-

war fantasy novel that helped inspire the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, among many other atrocities.

Some people not only drank Cobb's toxic brew but took it to heart. For example, a Boston-area white supremacist named Keith Luke later said he decided to murder blacks, Latinos and Jews after reading about "the demise of the white race" on Podblanc. Luke was convicted of murdering a man and a woman, and raping and critically wounding another woman, in Brockton, Mass., the day after Barack Obama was inaugurated in January 2009. Luke told police that had he not been arrested after the double murder, he planned to go on to kill as many Jews as possible later the same day, at a local synagogue's bingo night.

In Estonia, however, the authorities were tiring of Cobb's online vitriol. In 2009, he was tried and found guilty of endangering public security, public order, public safety, moral standards and health. He was banned from the country for 10 years.

Cobb moved to Vancouver early in 2010, but he once again blundered by choosing a haven that lacked the vigorous free speech protections seen in the U.S. As a result, in June of that year, he was arrested on suspicion of promoting hatred while using a computer at a Vancouver public library. Cobb, who has said he has dual U.S./Canadian citizenship, managed to flee the country after he was released from custody pending approval of the charge by a provincial attorney general.

Cobb soon resurfaced in Kalispell, Mont., where a handful of other white supremacists already were making a weak effort to create a "Pioneer Little Europe," a whites-only enclave populated by racists. Cobb soon was showing a Holocaust-denial film at the Kalispell public library and distributing literature on public sidewalks that was labeled "teaching information" but contained such lines as

“Nothing will change until the jews [sic] are killed.” Meanwhile, Canadian authorities issued a warrant for his arrest after he failed to appear on the hate crime charge in that country. Cobb responded by taunting Canadian police in a January 2011 blog entry: “You can find me in the orange easy chair near the elevator” at the Flathead County Library in Kalispell, he wrote.

But the wandering neo-Nazi didn’t stay in the library long. Instead, he began to dream of creating his own Pioneer Little Europe. In 2011, he headed to rural North Dakota to find work. Soon, he began to quietly buy ramshackle properties in the Leith area, about 70 miles southwest of Bismarck, S.D., and within a year, he had amassed more than a dozen. In 2012, he announced his heretofore secret project on the neo-Nazi Vanguard News Network (VNN) online forum, saying he hoped to create an all-white bastion of neo-Nazis and white supremacists in Leith, which the latest census found had a mere 16 residents, and rename the town “Cobbsville.” “This is an open invitation to all WN [white nationalists] to come and settle in this town,” he wrote on the VNN site. Cobb touted the great employment prospects, with North Dakota’s economy booming after the discovery of oil. But when the Southern Poverty Law Center and the *Bismarck Tribune* made his plans public to a much broader audience in 2013, all hell broke loose.

A protest rally against Cobb’s designs organized by concerned local residents drew several hundred participants in September of that year. But by that time, Cobb already had sold properties (for \$1 each) to Tom Metzger, the virulently racist leader of White Aryan Resistance, and Alex Linder, who runs the VNN site. Cobb also said he’d donated buildings to the National Socialist Movement, then the largest neo-Nazi group in the U.S. He was fired from his job with a local road-paving contractor shortly after the rally. But that didn’t dampen his enthusiasm for his Leith project. In a photo of Leith posted on VNN, Cobb was shown standing in a grassy lot that he

said he planned to turn into a park in honor of Adolf Hitler. He also wrote on VNN that he planned to amend Leith's ordinances to allow discrimination against minorities and leftist journalists.

As the story of Cobb's attempted takeover of Leith became national news — including a front-page story in *The New York Times* — the propagandist for a pure-white America made an incredibly ill-advised move. Cobb agreed to submit to a DNA test of his genetic background and have the results revealed on a live episode of NBC's "The Trish Goddard Show," whose host is a black woman. The results were predictable for anyone whose family has been in America for a few generations: To Cobb's stunned disbelief, Goddard opened the envelope, to the delight of her studio audience and millions of others, to reveal that Cobb's genes were 14% sub-Saharan African — which is to say, black.

A few days later, still burning with his very public humiliation, Cobb and one of his young followers, Kynan Dutton, conducted an armed "patrol" on the streets of Leith after he returned from his New York TV date to find his house daubed with anti-racist slogans. In a cell phone video shot by Dutton's girlfriend and proudly posted online, the pair are shown marching through town with long guns, stopping vehicles and threatening and cursing residents. Dutton, 29, wears combat fatigues, but Cobb appears in an outfit composed of jeans, a windbreaker, white socks and sandals, not exactly the uniform of the Aryan movement. The white nationalist website *Occidental Dissent* posted the video under its "humor" tag and, a few months later, a story on the neo-Nazi website *The Daily Stormer* conceded, "He really did make a bad impression."

Within days of the incident, Cobb and Dutton were charged with seven felony counts of terrorizing. Cobb stayed in jail for more than three months because he couldn't

make bail, offering at one point to leave the state or even the country if only the authorities would drop the charges. There were no takers. He even staged a hunger strike in jail, but that only earned him a trip to the state mental hospital for a psychiatric evaluation. Finally, on Feb. 27, 2014, Cobb pleaded guilty to one count of felony terrorizing and five counts of misdemeanor menacing in a plea deal that gave him four years of supervised probation.

The deal, which meant no further jail time for Cobb, didn't please all Leith residents, but it did signal the end of the Leith saga. Today, Cobb no longer owns any buildings in Leith. He deeded six properties back to the town at no charge and sold off a few others. Three are still owned by other white supremacists, but they have shown little inclination to take up where Cobb left off.

Things did not improve for Cobb in the aftermath. His application to serve his probation in Missouri, where he said he wanted to care for his 90-year-old mother, was denied, with Missouri officials saying he'd had scant contact with his mother for the last four decades. In retaliation, he posted information about several of those officials. In addition, the FBI seized his computers. In any event, Cobb was allowed to live anywhere in North Dakota except in the Leith area, but was ordered to wear a global positioning tether that informs authorities of his whereabouts at all times. In July 2014, he paid \$1,084 in back taxes to purchase an empty house in Sherwood, about 180 miles north of Leith and hard on the Canadian border, where he says he intends to remain.

Cobb announced after leaving jail that he was "retired" from white nationalism. But he continued to write to racist websites, and posted hundreds of times to WhiteNation.com, a racist forum. A Bismarck television station reported in July 2014 that Cobb, who never seems to stay out of trouble for long, was under investigation

for violating the terms of his probation by posting on the racist forum.

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