

The true believer

According to white supremacist Peter Tefft, Charlottesville was only a beginning.

By [James Calvin Schaap](#)

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“Peter Tefft, my son, is not welcome at our family gatherings any longer. I pray my prodigal son will renounce his hateful beliefs and return home. . . . We do not, never have, and never will, accept his twisted worldview.”

So said a man named Pearce Tefft, of Fargo, North Dakota, when asked about his son Peter, who was identified as one of the men who took part in the Charlottesville protests last weekend, one of those who gathered to insist on the special rights of white people.

When the story first broke last night, I thought Dad's bitterness a bit over-the-top. I mean, we're talking about his own child, his son. To tear the kid out of the family, just like that, seemed not only ill-tempered, rash, but wrong. The father in the biblical story let the prodigal son be, let him go, let him sleep with the swine. He never tossed the kid out.

And then I saw [Peter Tefft in a local TV interview](#), and I couldn't help notice the shining eyes of a true believer, couldn't help hear a dozen memorized answers in the clever wordplay he employed to disavow being a racist since his only goal is to advance the cause of the beleaguered white race.

According to Peter Tefft, the men and women who met in Charlottesville last weekend under "Unite the Right" banner were the only real Americans in the city, the ones doing nothing more than innocently exercising their right to free speech. The police, the National Guard, and of course those who opposed the march were the real enemy of the people, even communists, standing as they did in opposition to free speech. Nazis were the heroes, in case you missed it, the KKK the red-

blooded American people. He smiled as he said it, not as if he's hiding anything but because he's that blessedly sure of his guiding light.

Charlottesville, he maintained, was only a beginning. What happened last weekend is going to fuel his cause—the defense of white people—because once the lawsuit is filed, it'll handle the fundraising for years. That's why he claims Charlottesville is the beginning of brand new era in American civil rights, a time when white people make a stand for their cultural values, which is to say, I suppose, his cultural values.

The confidence in his rhetoric is scary, as is what he sees in his skinhead crystal ball. He glows when he describes what he sees. That shine in his eyes arises from a conviction that's so strong it obscures reason. He's a true believer, and, like all of them, he has moved well beyond doubt, even and most especially of himself and the ideas that ferment in his mind and imagination.

What distinguishes true believers is that kind of undying confidence. The only thing they doubt is doubt itself. Really, if you want to see what happened to Germany with the rise of Hitler, all you need to do is look into the flaming eyes of Peter Tefft, who is, as we speak, planning yet another rally right there in Fargo. He expects hundreds to come out.

Last night I thought his father rash. Today I don't think I'd want his son home either.

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