

CASE STUDY

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, SHOOTING

On the evening of June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old white male, entered the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church is one of the oldest black churches in the United States; the church was founded in 1816. After participating in the prayer services with the other members for over an hour, Roof started venting against African-Americans and then opened fire on the members. He killed nine people, including the senior pastor; the victims ranged in age from 26 to 87 years of age.¹

After a United States Department of Justice investigation, Roof was indicted on 33 federal hate crime charges. Further investigation revealed Roof's website, which contained numerous photographs of him posing with flags and emblems affiliated with white supremacy. Roof also included a manifesto that outlined his beliefs about race, of which a small portion is provided below:

"To take a saying from a film, 'I see all this stuff going on, and I don't see anyone doing anything about it. And it pisses me off.' To take a saying from my favorite film, 'Even if my life is worth less than a speck of dirt, I want to use it for the good of society.'

"I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston

because it is most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me."

"Unfortunately at the time of writing I am in a great hurry and some of my best thoughts, actually many of them have been to be left out and lost forever. But I believe enough great White minds are out there already."

"Please forgive any typos, I didn't have time to check it."²

On December 15, 2016 a jury convicted Dylann Roof on all 33 federal charges. Subsequently, the jury will decide whether to sentence him to the death penalty.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Why was this considered a hate crime?
2. What makes this crime different than other types of crimes involving mass shootings?
3. Should Dylann Roof receive the death penalty?

We will address these questions at the end of this chapter.

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