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Republican candidates received donations from white supremacist

By David Brown

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Several Republican presidential candidates received significant donations from a leading white supremacist who helped inspire Dylann Roof, the person accused of killing nine people in Charleston, South Carolina, last week.

According to an exposé in the *Guardian* newspaper, Earl Holt, the president of the Council of Conservative Citizens (CofCC), which calls for opposition to “all efforts to mix the races of mankind,” gave \$65,000 to Republican campaigns over the past few years, including the current presidential candidates Ted Cruz, Rand Paul and Rick Santorum.

Roof cited the CofCC web site in his manifesto as crucial to his own development as a white supremacist. Roof describes his development as a white supremacist after being “truly awakened” by the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin, which he saw as an act of self-defense on the part of the shooter, George Zimmerman.

The manifesto states, “It was obvious that Zimmerman was in the right, but more importantly this prompted me to type in the words ‘black on white crime’ into Google, and I have never been the same since that day.” His search took him to the CofCC web site and its hysterical denunciations of “brutal black on white murders.”

In an online statement, Holt responded by saying, “The CofCC is hardly responsible for the actions of this deranged individual merely because he gleaned accurate information from our website.”

The Cruz campaign announced that it would return the \$8,500 that Holt has given to the candidate since 2012. The Paul and Santorum campaigns announced that they would donate to charity the \$1,750 and \$1,500 Holt had given them, respectively.

The ties between groups like the CofCC and sections of the Republican Party is a dirty secret of American politics.

Other Republican politicians that have received money from Holt over the years include Mitt Romney for his 2012 presidential campaign, Senators Tom Cotton and Jeff Flake, and Representatives Steve King and Michele Bachmann. High-ranking members of the Republican Party have also been speakers at rallies and conferences called by the CofCC since its founding in 1985.

Trent Lott, the former senator and majority leader, spoke at a 1992 conference, declaring that the organization stood “for the right principles and the right philosophy.” According to a 2004 report in *Intelligence Report*, at least 38 elected officials spoke at meetings of the white supremacist group between 2000 and 2004.

Although the number of politicians publicly attending CofCC rallies has diminished since the 2004 revelations, state and local officials still occasionally attend, including the then-chairman of the Carroll County Democratic Party in Mississippi, Bill Lord, in 2013.

In 2013, the current South Carolina governor, Nikki Haley, appointed a member of the CofCC, Roan Quintana, to co-chair her re-election campaign. Connections extend beyond the CofCC. The current House majority whip, Steve Scalise, notably spoke at a white-nationalist and neo-Nazi conference in 2002 that was led by ex-Ku Klux Klan grand wizard David Duke.

The ties between sections of the Republican Party and white supremacist groups go back to the Republican strategy of winning the segregationist vote away from the Democrats, who had been the stronghold of the southern elite before and after the Civil War. Following the first steps toward federal desegregation, the Republican Party adopted the long-time political methods of Southern Democrats, and many of the determined segregationists like long-time senator of South Carolina Strom Thurmond switched party affiliation to Republican at the time.

In the decades since desegregation, the continued involvement of white supremacists in the US government has been an open secret. When these ties erupt in a scandal, it is quickly buried by the news media and hushed up by Democrats and Republicans alike.