



Domestic Extremism and Mass Violence Taskforce

MEETING MINUTES

FRIDAY 5/9/2025

1. Welcome (9:00 – 9:15)

- Staff welcomed the Task Force members and members of the public to the May 9 Domestic Extremism and Mass Violence Task Force meeting. 18 of 28 members were in attendance, establishing quorum. See roster below.
- Staff reviewed the agenda. Sharonne N moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by Seth L.
- Staff reviewed meeting minutes from the previous Task Force meeting on Friday, March 14, 2025. Sharonne N moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Adriana S.
- Staff announced that 41 written public comments were received by 5pm Thursday, May 8, and had been distributed to Task Force members before the meeting. Staff noted that the public comment portal will remain open for one week after the meeting, and close next Friday, May 16 at 5pm. Additional comments received will be distributed to the Task Force after the portal closes.

2. Community-Based and Public Health Approaches to Combat Extremism and Mass Violence (9:15 – 9:55)

Bill Braniff, Executive Director of the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), and former director of DHS's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3), provided a presentation about what it means to have a community-based and public health approach to addressing and preventing extremism and mass violence. Bill emphasized the need to treat hate crimes as seriously as terrorism, adopt non-punitive public health strategies, and base violence prevention on evidence. Now with PERIL, he remains committed to supporting these efforts in Washington State.

He outlined three key challenges public health approaches address:

- Volume of violence – a 2000% increase in mass casualty plots, school shootings, and hate crimes.
- Unpredictable harm – individual struggles may lead to suicide, school violence, or hate crimes.
- Structural gaps – criminal justice tools can only act after a threat arises; 60% of domestic extremist plots succeed.

Braniff described multi-level, evidence-based prevention strategies, including DUCC (a digital literacy curriculum), pre-bunking videos (24% success rate in challenging hate content), and behavioral threat assessments (1,172 cases, 93.5% resolved with supportive services).

He highlighted the cost-effectiveness of prevention—\$6,900 per case versus much higher costs of criminal justice and mass violence—and urged continued state-level investment as federal resources shift elsewhere. He closed by commending Washington’s leadership and recommending local hiring of former CP3 staff to sustain progress.

Bill and the Task Force members then engaged in a discussion. The group discussed the following:

- Monitoring white supremacist movements and the importance of addressing them through long-term cultural and public health strategies;
- The challenge of measuring prevention success and the need to focus on improvements in risk and protective factors;
- Safeguarding civil rights in early intervention programs through privacy protections and ethical oversight;
- The rise of antisemitism on college campuses and its connection to broader hate-based narratives;
- And the value of strength-based, community-focused approaches that support resilience, inclusion, and long-term safety.

3. Break (10:15 – 10:20)

4. Extremism Case Study (10:20- 10:55)

Cynthia Miller-Idriss, Founding Director of the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), walked through case studies with the Task Force on instances of extremism. Through the case studies, the group identified the risk factors and protective factors present, the warning signs that extremist or violent behavior was being exhibited, and what the infection points were. The group then discussed how primary and secondary prevention methods rooted in public health could have worked together to address and prevent these cases from occurring. Prevention methods discussed were mental health support for trauma, tools and initiatives to help build resiliency to recruitment tactics, and ways to address false narratives.

Key discussion highlights included:

- Challenges in classifying extremist and vigilante groups with overlapping ideologies.
- The rise of online grooming and desensitization, particularly among youth, due to violent digital content.
- Balancing civil liberties with early intervention and non-punitive prevention approaches.
- Importance of media literacy, positive identity development for young men, and upstream community resilience.
- Reaffirmation that lawful protest remains protected, with prevention focused on violence, not beliefs.

See Appendix A for the case study and presentation slides.

5. Task Force Administration (10:55-11:25)

Staff gave an update on the state budget and the priorities of the Attorney General in relation to the task force. Funding for this group was added to both the House and Senate budgets and is currently awaiting the Governor’s signature. If signed, the Task Force will continue its work

through the 2025–2027 biennium, with a new policy analyst to be hired to support its operations.

Staff provided a summary of what will be included in the preliminary report due to the Legislature and the Governor by June 1, 2026. The report will be publicly available on the Task Force’s website at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/domestic-extremism-and-mass-violence-task-force> once it has been submitted to the Legislature and the Governor. The preliminary report **will not contain any recommendations**, and will be purely educational in nature, summarizing topics that the Task Force received presentations on at the January, March, and May 2025 meetings so that readers of the report have a better understanding of domestic extremism, mass violence, and what community-based and public health frameworks are. The report will also include information about how extremism has shown up throughout time in Washington state, data on mass shootings, and summaries of the task force meetings from November 2024-May 2025.

Staff gave a quick update on subcommittee formation. Subcommittees have been structured to focus on the four components of prevention within a public health approach: primordial, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Task Force members will be assigned to subcommittees based on capacity, interest, and expertise. Staff are working on assignments and scheduling the first subcommittee meetings in the coming months.

Staff facilitated a discussion to finalize the Task Force’s charter. Staff first walked the Task Force through a small number of proposed changes to the charter:

- Adding a subsection called “operating principals” to Section I of the charter with the purpose of making the group’s mandate and intentions clear while recognizing concerns from the public that the group might designate individuals or organizations as extremist, conduct surveillance, or investigate instances of extremism or mass violence.
- Adding a set of “community norms” to Section III of the charter with the purpose of having a set of agreements to adhere to for conversations and discussions among Task Force members during meetings.

Task Force members discussed the proposed charter and agreed to table the vote to finalize the charter until the September meeting. The group decided that the draft charter, as currently written, will remain the working draft for further consideration. No vote was taken.

6. Next Steps & Closing (11:25 – 11:30)

Staff reminded the group that subcommittees will be meeting at least two times before the next Task Force meeting. The next Task Force meeting will be on Friday, September 12, 2025. Staff reminded the Task Force that a copy of the preliminary report will be sent once the report has been submitted to the Legislature and Governor. The Task Force adjourned 2 minutes early at 11:28 AM.

Name	Organization	Present?
Adrianna S	UTOPIA Washington	Y
Amber W	Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	Excused
Dyneeca V	Freedom Project	Y

Draft pending approval by task force

Faaluaina P	Asia Pacific Cultural Center	Excused
Hardeep R	Khalsa Gurmat Center	Y
Jay G	WIDEN; Gairson Law, LLC	Y
Juan P	Unidos of Snohomish County	Y
Karen S	Muslims for Community Action and Support	Excused
Karl E	Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho	Y
Kate B	Western States Center	Y
Keara K	Jewish Family Service	Y
Leslie C	Washington Coalition for Police Accountability	Y
Liz M	Peace & Justice Action League	Y
Luis M	Snohomish Citizens for Human Rights	Excused
Mark C	Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office	Y
Mary H	Thurston County Auditor	Excused
Mercedes S	Cedar River Clinics	Excused
Miri B	Parents 4 Peace	Y
Morgan M	ADL Center on Extremism	Y
Nathan W	Washington State Department of Health	Y
PENDING	Washington State Fusion Center	Excused
Richard "Ric" B	Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs	Excused
Roger K	Projects for a Civil Society	Y
Sarah W	CoLab for Community and Behavioral Health Policy Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences University of Washington	Excused
Seth L	PERIL: the Polarization & Extremism Research and Innovation Lab	Y
Sharonne N	Equity in Education Coalition	Y
Stacey M	WA State Emergency Management	Y
William H	Center For Children & Youth Justice	Excused

Extremism Case Studies: Radicalization Drivers, Off- ramping & Prevention

Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss

Case Study #1 Daniel Gallant (neo-Nazi)

*images from Extreme Dialogue's educational materials



"The first time I met Skinheads, racist Skinheads, I was 18 and back on the street living homeless. I was smoking a joint with a guy. We were walking down the road, there was two other guys walking in the other direction. They were Skinheads, they knew the guy I was talking with. We stood there and got high together..."

Push/Pull factors

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences/personal trauma:** domestic violence & beatings at home
- **Emotional needs:** Daniel explains he felt isolated, was extremely angry, felt a need to belong and wanted a sense of identity, and had a sense of self-importance. Also strong sense of moral/political injustice, black/white thinking
- **Recruitment:** charismatic leaders/recruiters; used tactics that affirm identity and keep people in the group, stop people from thinking they might be wrong (i.e., actively recruiting others to the group); following doctrine and ideology with a faith that this will lead to a bigger goal (i.e., headed toward a 'war')
- **Violence valorized and acts as channel for anger & rage:** extremist group gave Daniel a "legitimate" channel for his anger and justified violence against others as worthy
- **Ideological radicalization:** scapegoating of Jewish community, labeling and blaming others as responsible for own challenges; isolated from others who challenge ideas (like-minded), deliberate disassociation from those who think differently

Daniel Gallant



“You needed to become violent in order to not become prey. You’re predator or prey.... It was a binary like that.”

Case Study #2: Daniel McGowan (Earth Liberation Front/ELF)

- McGowan served 7 years in federal prison from involvement in multiple arsons through the Earth Liberation Front (ELF)—incl terrorism enhancement charge
- ELF (founded 1992) is an environmental activist organization that uses economic sabotage (arson, vandalism, etc) as a protest tactic, claiming millions of \$\$ in property damage
- Uses strategy of 'leaderless resistance' eventually dubbed "eco-terrorism"
- Active in Pacific Northwest in 1990s & 2000s



Daniel McGowan



"When you're screaming at the top of your lungs and no one hears you, what are you supposed to do?"

Push/Pull factors



- **Frustration with movement:** growing sense that non-violent protest was not effective, not fast enough, not getting the results
- **Valorizing violence:** gradually came to see violence as justifiable revolutionary tactic and mode of resistance
- **“Waking up” to reality:** sense that blinders are off— examples like decade of non-violent activist protest at an Oregon horse slaughterhouse that was then burned to the ground in 1997 in one night by ELF affiliates. The company could not rebuild and because “they had accomplished what years of letterwriting and picketing had never been able to,” arson became a key tactic for the group.
- **Want to accelerate social change:** McGowan notes that most people have “**a very Pollyanna view of social change**” and urges people to understand that sabotage “can succeed” where other protests fail.

Other ideological cases

- Anti-government extremism (anarchist, antifascist, sovereign citizens, unlawful militias etc): Ruby Ridge, Waco, boogaloo, Michigan Wolverines, Oathkeepers, etc.)
- Misogynist incels (involuntary celibates)– Leeds cross-bow attack in April 2025, Santa Monica sorority attack, Florida yoga studio
- Nihilist Violent Extremism (NVE)- arrests of 764 group leaders in April 2025
- Western supremacist (Proud Boys)
- Conspiracy-fueled violent extremism (Qanon violence etc, Pizzagate example)
- Others

Off-Ramping & Violence Prevention

What might have helped?

Public health prevention approaches:

Could have provided:

- Mental health support for ACE and trauma
- Help build skepticism about recruitment tactics
- Address false narratives (scapegoating, utility of violence)
- Alternatives to desire for belonging, purpose, efficacy

Would have needed:

- Trusted caregiver knowledge, confidence, and willingness to intervene
- Informed local experts who can prebunk and counter false ideas
- Strategies to reject violence and channel anger and frustration into safer, more productive paths

Thank you & Questions

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