



The Blindness of Bigotry A gunman's deadly rampage shows how wrong he was

BY DAVID VON DREHLE/KANSAS CITY

THE VICTIMS WERE ALL CHRISTIANS IN THE Passover-eve rampage at two Jewish institutions near here. This is significant—but some reflection is needed to see what it means.

The background: a virulent anti-Semite and white supremacist named Frazier Glenn Cross, a.k.a. Glenn Miller, 73, was arrested and charged with murder after allegedly shooting three people and terrorizing many others at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City and the nearby Village Shalom assisted-living facility. Cross, who could face the death penalty if convicted, is expected to be charged with hate crimes as well.

The accused is a noisy bigot from way back. In the 1980s he led a KKK organization and founded the White Patriot Party. His activities earned him a stint in federal prison, but until the April 13 attack, he was not known to have crossed the line from bullying and bloviating to bloodshed.

Cross shouted "Heil, Hitler!" from the back of a police car after his arrest for killing Reat Griffin Underwood, 14, a Boy Scout who loved to sing, and the boy's grandfather, William Corporon, an admired physician. Members of a thriving United Methodist

congregation, the victims were shot in the JCC parking lot. Terri LaManno, an occupational therapist and Roman Catholic, was killed at Village Shalom, where she was visiting her mother.

Make no mistake: the crime was no more senseless and the killer no more wretched simply because he killed the very people he imagined to be his own.

What Cross's error shows is that even the most race-obsessed and tribe-conscious person imaginable—after a lifetime spent aggravating differences—could not tell one person from another when he left his cocoon of resentment. In the real world, we are mostly alike. While Cross nursed the idea that genes divide us, he proved himself wrong in the end. Shotgun poised, he couldn't tell who was who or which was which.

Reat, on the other hand, understood everything. Not long ago, the teenager went to the DMV for a learner's permit, and he marked YES on the organ-donation form. He knew that humanity translates across races, genders, faiths and nationalities. A big heart like his could beat in nearly any chest. In life and in death, the boy proved the bigot wrong.