

Colorado mass murderer is grandson of coup-supporting Republican California assembly member

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The 22-year-old man charged in Saturday's mass murder at the Club Q, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, is the grandson of outgoing Republican California assembly member Randy Voepel, multiple news outlets confirmed Monday morning.

Social media posts on Voepel's accounts confirm the Republican politician is a supporter of fascistic ex-President Donald Trump. On January 20, 2017, Voepel tweeted a photo of himself wearing a red "Make California Great Again" hat and wrote: "Let us not only #MAGA, but Make California Great Again! Grateful to be representing my district in the State Assembly. #Inauguration."

Nearly four years later, after Trump and his Republican allies tried to overthrow the election, Voepel again reiterated his support for Trump. In an interview with the *San Diego Union-Tribune* on January 9, three days after the attack on Congress which injured hundreds of people and resulted in the deaths of at least five, Voepel favorably compared the fascist coup attempt to the Revolution of 1776.

"This is Lexington and Concord. First shots fired against tyranny," Voepel told the paper. "Tyranny will follow in the aftermath of the Biden swear-in on January 20th." After Voepel's comments drew anger from constituents and calls for him to be expelled from the state assembly, he attempted to clarify his comments by telling the *San Diego Union-Tribune*: "The left has their crazies and the right has their crazies, and I don't support either one."

Like other Republicans, Voepel has centered his right-wing rhetoric on his support for the police, military and guns. In August 2017, Voepel hosted a "Second Amendment Awareness" event and in July of that same year, he favorably retweeted a court decision which blocked a California law that would have banned magazines that hold more than 10 bullets.

Police have claimed that Saturday's shooter/Voepel's grandson had at least six magazines on his person, in addition to the AR-15-style rifle, body armor and a pistol.

Prior to being elected to the assembly in 2016, Voepel had been for 16 years the mayor of Santee, California, a suburb of San Diego with a population of roughly 60,000. Voepel's daughter Laura Voepel is the mother of the gunman, Anderson Lee Aldrich, 22.

Social media posts reviewed by the *Independent* confirm that Laura frequently referred to the Republican politician as her "Dad" and encouraged him to "keep up the good work."

As was reported yesterday, this was not Aldrich's first run-in with the police. As a 21 year old he was arrested last summer after he threatened to kill his grandmother Pam Pullen and her husband, with whom he had been living.

The *Daily Mail* reported on Monday that in contrast to the police statement of events, after he threatened to kill his grandma, which prompted a call to the police and Anderson to flee, Laura helped hide her son from the police in the house she was renting.

The *Daily Mail* reported that Laura Voepel's landlord, Leslie Bowman, and not Laura, was the person who called police on Anderson. Leslie told the paper she called the police after Laura told her that she was going to have her son stay with her for awhile because "people" were looking for him.

"I was not OK with him hiding out in my house from the police, Bowman told the *Daily Mail*. "I then called police and within three minutes, an officer called me back and said they were looking for him," she told the paper.

According to footage on a Ring door camera acquired by the *Daily Mail*, after Anderson arrived at his mom's residence, Laura left and shortly thereafter her son donned police SWAT-type gear.

As police arrived outside the residence to arrest him, Anderson began broadcasting from his mother's Facebook account from inside the residence.

"This is your boy, I've got the f*cking sh*theads outside. F*cking sh*theads got their f*cking rifles out. If they breach I'm [going to] blow it to holy hell. Come on in boys, let's

f*cking see it!” Aldrich yelled.

Despite being charged with multiple crimes that day, none of them were ever adjudicated and therefore would not appear on a criminal background check. It is unclear as of this writing how much influence Aldrich’s grandfather had on local prosecutors in ensuring his daughter’s son was not charged with a crime.

Because Aldrich was never prosecuted for a crime, CNN has confirmed he legally purchased the two firearms, an AR-15-style rifle and a pistol that were used in Saturday’s shootings. CNN did not confirm with law enforcement sources exactly when the firearms were purchased.

While he has yet to be formally charged for Saturday’s killings, Aldrich is currently being held on five counts of murder and five counts of committing a “bias-motivated crime,” according to court records that have been sealed. He remains hospitalized as of this writing.

Police have identified the deceased as Kelly Loving, Daniel Aston, Derrick Rump, Ashley Paugh and Raymond Green Vance.

In a statement Sunday, the Vance family said that 22-year-old Raymond was in town visiting his girlfriend and that the long-time couple had decided to visit Club Q for the first time Saturday night.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Sabrina Aston, mother of 28-year-old transgender man Daniel Aston, said her son worked as a bartender at Club Q for two years, and that he was “always happy and silly.”

Aston noted that her son was murdered on the night the club was honoring the Transgender Day of Remembrance, November 20, which is held every year to commemorate violence suffered by transgender people.

“They were doing, like, a celebration of life for those people that had died,” she said. “And instead, they lost their lives.”

On Monday, the *New York Times* reported that the unarmed man who stopped the massacre shortly after it began was Richard M. Fierro, a former US Army officer who was in the club with his wife, daughter and friends to watch the drag show.

Fierro told the *Times* that he “went into combat mode” and charged Aldrich, pulling him down by his body armor. Once on top of the large man, Fierro said he saw that Aldrich had a handgun, which he grabbed from him and used to pummel him in the head.

“I grabbed the gun out of his hand and just started hitting him in the head, over and over,” Fierro recalled. Helping him to subdue Aldrich were other clubgoers, including a drag dancer who stomped on Aldrich with her high heels.

Fierro told the *Times* that once the police arrived, Aldrich was no longer resisting and that he was worried that he had

accidentally killed him. The police, instead of providing medical attention to Fierro, whose selfless actions saved the lives of an untold number of people, handcuffed him and put him in the back of a police cruiser.

Fierro told the *Times* the police detained him for over an hour in the back of the cruiser. He recalled screaming and pleading to be let out so that he could ascertain the fate of his family. At the time, Fierro did not know if any of them had been injured in the shooting.

While a motive for Aldrich’s rampage has yet to be revealed by the police, Mayor John Suthers, in an interview Monday morning with KRDO 13, the ABC affiliate in Colorado Springs, repeated that he thought the killings had the “trappings of a hate crime.”

Aldrich began shooting inside the gay nightclub shortly before midnight Saturday night, killing at least five people and injuring over a dozen more. At least 13 people remain hospitalized with significant injuries, according to hospital representatives.

In his interview Monday, Suthers said that 19 people were currently, or had been, treated for gunshot wounds and another 6 people were treated for injuries suffered while trying to escape the club during the massacre.

Since Suthers became mayor of seven years ago, there have been four mass shootings in Colorado Springs. In his interview with KRDO 13, Suthers could provide no explanation for the frequency of mass shootings in Colorado Springs, or throughout the United States. He refused to make any connection between daily Republican rhetoric and violent incitement against LGBTQ persons and instead claimed the killings needed to be viewed as an “individual” mental health problem.



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