



Written by [Beverly K. Eakman](#) on November 21, 2011

White House Shooting Suspect Sparks Anti-Christian Diatribes

Experts say an assassin typically would know the glass was bulletproof. In addition, the President and first lady Michelle Obama [were traveling](#) in California and Hawaii, headed for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit — a trip planned well in advance. Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez, it seems, drove some 2,400 miles with no plan, and did no reconnaissance once in Washington.



The one indication of planning was a warning video, shot by an Idaho State University student named Ramon Bailey at the would-be assassin's request, with the intention of having it sent to Oprah Winfrey. In the video (released a week following the shooting, November 18, on KBOI, an Idaho television station), Ortega-Hernandez is wearing a crucifix, claiming to be "the modern day Jesus Christ that you all have been waiting for." The self-described Jesus "look-alike" [added](#) that he had "never felt so sure that I was sent here by God to lead the world to Zion" (synonym for *Jerusalem*). Oddly, Ortega-Hernandez did not appear to be aware that the Jesus of the Bible never advocated or committed a single violent act but, rather, admonished his followers to love their enemies. Bailey found Ortega-Hernandez's comments so disturbing that he neither edited nor submitted the video to Oprah, but apparently held onto it, just in case something happened.

Something did. Evidence recovered from the disabled vehicle he abandoned in the courtyard at the National Institute of Peace near the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge heading into Virginia was [later linked to Ortega-Hernandez](#). He was apprehended without incident by Pennsylvania State Police in Indiana, Pennsylvania, thanks to hotel employees who recognized him from photos circulated, and charged on November 17 with attempting to assassinate President Obama.

An Oscar-worthy performance or the impulsive madness of a lunatic?



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Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez: Who is he? Apparently, he is a U.S. citizen of Mexican descent. His father owns a Mexican restaurant in Idaho Falls, Idaho. The family denies Oscar had been diagnosed with mental illness, but admitted being worried when he left for Utah and didn't return. They reported him missing on October 31. According to Associated Press reports, [Ortega has an arrest record](#) in three states, but so far has not been linked to any radical organizations, U.S. Park Police say.

But it didn't take long for long-time columnists with major media credentials to draw a more sinister conclusion from the incident and pass it along — suggesting that Republicans, in general, and conservative Christians in particular, are dangerous and mentally ill.

A troubling trend is emerging in an ongoing effort to link Republicans and conservatives of all stripes to deranged personality types. Representative of this view and poster boy of the movement is author/columnist, John Foster "Chip" Berlet, a radical writer-activist and frequent contributor to [left-wing extremist publications](#). Berlet is senior analyst at Political Research Associates (PRA). He co-authored *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (Guilford, 2000), and has given interviews (with resulting credibility) on ABC's *Nightline*, NBC's *Today Show*, and CBS.

Berlet was a founding member of the U.S.-Albania Friendship Association and chose to continue his membership even after it was overtaken by Stalinists. One of the most questionable links Chip Berlet possesses is his membership in the [Chicago Area Friends of Albania](#). (Ironic in light of Berlet's accusations because the world's most notorious killers were atheist socialist/communists: Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Mao, Pol Pot, etc.)

In late 2003, Berlet drew heavy criticism for an article he penned about conservative activist David Horowitz's Center for the Study of Popular Culture (CSPC). It was published by the left-leaning Southern Poverty Law Center. Berlet's article claimed to demonstrate that "right wing foundations and think tanks ... support efforts to make bigoted and discredited ideas respectable." He outlined strategies to defeat the Christian Right as principal author of the controversial [Dominionism series](#). He helped establish such pejoratives as "Christer," "Theocon," "Dominionist," and "religious supremacist" to ridicule and marginalize conservative Christian viewpoints, the implication always being that the individual suffers from a "deranged personality." Among his writings: *'Christian Warriors': Who Are the Hutaree Militia and Where Did They Come From?* and *Dances with Devils: How Apocalyptic and Millennialist Themes Influence Right Wing Scapegoating and Conspiracism*.

Berlet's particular bias against Christianity might never have come up in the context of Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez, except that Berlet [wrote a week after the incident](#):

The alleged shooter charged with attempting to assassinate President Obama, Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez, apparently thinks our Commander in Chief is an agent of Satan in an End Times war.... I warned about the possibility of the demonization of Obama leading to more violence in a book chapter published in 2010 "The Roots of Anti-Obama Rhetoric." Many individuals who act out in violence in the early stages of a demonization campaign are struggling with emotional or psychological issues. Their choice of target, however, indicates a larger group of individuals are weighing the need for action "before time runs out—the classic apocalyptic timetable." Below is a slightly revised version of what I wrote:

Read on:

A September 2009 poll in New Jersey found that 14% of Republicans believed that President Obama was the Antichrist — Satan's agent in the End Times according to one reading of the



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Bible's Book of Revelation. Another 15% thought it might be possible.

The results across political allegiances, however, were also troubling; with 8% of respondents statewide saying they thought Obama was the Antichrist and 13% stating they "aren't sure"....

According to the pollster, these are "eye popping numbers" ("Extremism in New Jersey," 2009). The mobilization of apocalyptic expectation among Christian Evangelicals in the United States has been shown to be an effective mobilization strategy by the Christian Right and allies in the Republican Party (Boyer, 1992; Fuller 1995). This is especially true among fundamentalists (Barron, 1992; Mason, 2002; Berlet, 2008). This millenarian mood is spread from religious into secular communities, often through conspiracy theories

Berlet routinely praises commentators who find an excuse to stigmatize conservative ideas by alleging that Christian leaders "incite violence" and that [their views are tantamount to "hate speech,"](#) necessitating an advertising boycott if not outright government sanctions. Such charges have "grown legs" through repetition and has found legitimacy — in the form of officially sanctioned, government-funded studies.

Take, for example, a study by the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Science Foundation, funded by U.S. taxpayers at a price tag of \$1.2 million: It announced on August 1, 2003, that adherents to conventional moral principles and limited government are mentally disturbed. These NIMH-NSF scholars — from the Universities of Maryland, California at Berkeley, and Stanford — attributed notions about morality and individualism to "dogmatism" and "uncertainty avoidance." Social conservatives, in particular, were said to suffer from "mental rigidity," a condition which, the researchers asserted, is probably hard-wired and associated with such indicators for mental illness as "decreased cognitive function, lowered self-esteem, fear, anger, pessimism, disgust, and contempt" (study title: "Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition," *Psychological Bulletin* 129(3): 339-375, found online [here](#)).

Such studies by household-name entities have helped establish the idea that "firm religious belief" is a "marker" for mental illness — a concept first promoted in October 1945 by psychologist Brock Chisholm. In a speech sponsored by the William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation and delivered in Washington D.C., at a World Federation for Mental Health conference, [Chisholm said](#) that children needed "freedom from morality" with an "eventual eradication of right and wrong." Traditional, religious upbringing, he argued, was making children sick. By the 1970s, "value-neutral" parenting and teaching became an extension of this argument. Today, Christianity, its standards, and its icons are under fire from all directions.

Moreover, not much beyond his various run-ins with the law is known about White House shooting suspect Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez. But his rants about the anti-Christ appear to be serving to augment the Christians-are-deranged message in an election year — and possibly beyond.

Beverly K. Eakman began her career as a teacher in 1968-1974. She left to become a science writer for a NASA contractor, and became editor-in-chief of NASA's newspaper in Houston. She later served as a speechwriter and research-writer for the director of Voice of America and two other federal agencies, including the U.S. Dept. of Justice and the late Chief Justice Warren E. Burger. She has since penned six books and scores of feature articles and op-eds covering education policy (including two award winners), data-trafficking, science, privacy, mental-health, and political strategy. Her detailed bio,



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