

## Stop Firing the Innocent: America needs a reckoning over racism.

Punishing people who did not do anything wrong harms that important cause.

By Yascha Mounk - Abridged from The Atlantic

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What happened to Emmanuel Cafferty is an especially egregious example. At the end of a long shift mapping underground utility lines, he was on his way home, his left hand casually hanging out the window of the white pickup truck issued to him by the San Diego Gas & Electric company. When he came to a halt at a traffic light, another driver flipped him off. Then, Cafferty told me a few days ago, the other driver began to act even more strangely. He flashed what looked to Cafferty like an “okay” hand gesture and started cussing him out. When the light turned green, Cafferty drove off, hoping to put an end to the disconcerting encounter.

But when Cafferty reached another red light, the man, now holding a cellphone camera, was there again. “Do it! Do it!” he shouted. Unsure what to do, Cafferty copied the gesture the other driver kept making. The man appeared to take a video, or perhaps a photo.

Two hours later, Cafferty got a call from his supervisor, who told him that somebody had seen Cafferty making a white-supremacist hand gesture, and had posted photographic evidence on Twitter. (Likely unbeknownst to most Americans, the alt-right has appropriated a version of the “okay” symbol for their own purposes because it looks like the initials for “white power”; this is the symbol the man accused Cafferty of making when his hand was dangling out of his truck.) Dozens of people were now calling the company to demand Cafferty’s dismissal.

By the end of the call, Cafferty had been suspended without pay. By the end of the day, his colleagues had come by his house to pick up the company truck. By the following Monday, he was out of a job.

[See full article on The Atlantic website.](#)