

**Not in Our World**  
A Perspective of Community Organizing  
Against Hate

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with M.J. Bryant\*\*

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I. INTRODUCTION

On Sept. 11, 2001, Americans were brutalized by an undeniable statement of hatred that made an indelible impression on not just its thousands of

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victims, but on the consciousness of the whole world. The terrorist attacks that toppled the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, and destroyed part of the Pentagon Building in Washington D.C., defiled symbols of American enterprise and military might, and robbed us of any complacency we felt as a nation immune to attack.

As we reel in the wake of the carnage and loss of precious life, we are slowly coming to know the extent of hatred that has festered for generations among certain extremist factions in the Middle East, and elsewhere. We have largely been ignorant of those who regard Americans as the spawn of Satan, and who have corrupted Islam and the Koran to justify these beliefs.

We have been even more oblivious to the role our national policies and practices may have played in fostering resentment and hostility among people at the mercy of this, the greatest of nations. We have been jolted from our mystification and forced to face hatred at its most destructive. The ensuing fallout of this deep-seated rage is ongoing, and we are poised for its inevitable ramifications.

Perhaps an even greater challenge, however, is the less blatant, but even more subtle and insidious presence of bigotry and racism among us that perpetuates hatred on a daily basis, and that poses a dangerous threat to the very fabric of our society from within. Few of us want to recognize the intrinsic prejudice that fosters the persecution of people because of their skin color, ancestry, beliefs, gender, or sexual preference. Yet our only hope to abolish this blight is to be awake enough to face it, and courageous enough to combine with others to confront it.

During the 1980s, a rash of vehement racism and anti-Semitic activity erupted in North Idaho. Yet caring individuals in the community united to confront those forces of intolerance, and made a positive difference. I was both participant and witness to this phenomenon that not only empowered a community, but modeled methods of social change for others through the organization of its leaders, constituency groups, institutions, advocates and volunteers to implement intervention.

## II. PERSISTENT INEQUITY

*All men would be necessarily equal, if they were without needs.*

Voltaire

The journey to a society free from hate and oppression was begun when this country was founded. It continues to this day. There have been more steps taken forward than backward, as evidenced by the progress of the abolishment of slavery, women's suffrage, the gains of the civil rights movement, restitution for the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the apology by the faith communities for the genocide of the native peoples, equal rights amendments regarding gender and sexual orientation, a societal

commitment to curb spousal abuse, the enactment of laws against hate crimes, and more.

However, the journey is not complete. In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson appointed The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders to study race relations in the United States. It concluded that “the country was moving toward two societies: one black, one white; separate and unequal.”<sup>1</sup> A similar commission appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1998, described a somewhat different United States: a nation more united along racial lines, but one where “discrimination is still a fact of life.”<sup>2</sup>

Time has affirmed the findings of those commissions, as the American dream continues to elude many. Economic disparity is undeniable, as thirty percent of African Americans and Hispanics live in poverty, compared to twelve percent of whites. Unemployment is twice as high for the black population, and pay is half as much.<sup>3</sup> During the twentieth century, legislation outlawed discrimination and segregation, yet stereotypes and social inequity persist.

### III. RACE HATE AND VIOLENCE

*Race hate isn't human nature; race hate is the abandonment of human nature.* Orson Welles

These social conditions create an atmosphere that simmers with an undercurrent of frustration and resentment among the haves and have-nots, and occasionally erupts into violence. For example, the Southern Poverty Law Center cites that every hour someone in America commits a hate crime; every day, eight blacks, three whites, three gays, three Jews, and one Latino become victims of such crimes; every week, a cross is burned somewhere in America.<sup>4</sup>

At times, the news media give faces to victims of the most abhorrent crimes of this nature, as in June 1998, when we came to know of the 49 year old disabled black man who was accosted while walking home from his niece's bridal shower in Jasper, Texas. Three white men slit his throat, then tied him to the back of their pickup truck and dragged him for miles along a road until he was dismembered and decapitated. In October of the same year, a 21-year-old

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1. NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION, REPORT ON CIVIL DISORDERS (1968).

2. PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY BOARD, THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE ON RACE: ONE AMERICA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: FORGING A NEW FUTURE (1998).

3. SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER, THE INTELLIGENCE PROJECT: WHAT'S NEW, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intelligenceproject/twtfh-intro.html> (last visited Nov. 29, 2001).

4. *Id.*

University of Wyoming student named Matthew Shepard was beaten, tied to a fence in the middle of the night and left to die outside of Laramie by two young men who attacked him because he was gay.

In August 1999, self-proclaimed white supremacist Buford Furrow shocked us when he walked into a Los Angeles area Jewish Community Center and opened fire on a daycare, shooting a receptionist, a teenage female employee, and three little boys. An hour later, Furrow killed a Philippine-American U.S. Postal Worker because he did not appear to be white *and* because he worked for the government. Most recently, hundreds of hate crimes have been perpetrated in virtually each state in our union against those who appear to be Muslim or of Arab descent in retaliation for the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11. A Sikh man who was born in India was gunned down while working in the gas station he owned in Mesa, Arizona. An Egyptian grocery store owner was shot to death in San Gabriel, Calif. Both were allegedly killed because they had dark skin and appeared to be Middle Eastern.

These and the thousands of other hate crimes reported to law enforcement each year terrorize their victims. The many more that go unreported fester below society's radar and threaten to further divide our nation's people and incite those who already feel subjugated and devalued.

#### IV. WHITE NATIONALISM

*The world is white no longer, and it will never be white again.*

James Baldwin

The malevolent presence of a growing white nationalism further hinders the journey to extinguish hate. This view, often very subtle, holds that this country and its culture is built on white values and a belief that the country is best served when those values are dominant. This ideological prism views all non-white members of society as aliens.

White nationalism shows itself, for example, in the anti-immigrant attitude that in many cases denigrates immigrants from south of the border, but not those from Canada or Europe. It manifests itself in "English Only" laws, which render significant portions of our population mute, and in the movement to eradicate affirmative-action programs. It is evident in the gentrification of populations throughout the land. This white flight from urban areas of diverse racial representation to rural and suburban areas of white dominated population assumes the camouflage of the desire for a life free of rampant crime and stifling crowds. The contemporary practice of cooperative condominiums and housing communities whose policies require that prospective residents be "voted in" ensures that many minorities will be kept out.

White nationalism reveals itself in seemingly legitimate organizations that

espouse a return to “traditional American values.” This cloaks an agenda to rescind many of the rights and significant progressive strides of women, and those with alternative sexual preferences, as well as to marginalize and subjugate racial minorities in order to maintain and perpetuate white dominance. Some politicians openly or covertly embrace this doctrine, and numerous organizations perpetuate this stultifying ideology in their policies and practices.

Whether hate is made manifest in the form of blatant violence, or more subtly expressed through political or ideological tenets such as white nationalism, we are all infected and diminished by its presence. Though it may seem innocuous at times when it lies seemingly dormant, it is a divisive force to be faced, not denied.

#### V. HATE GROUPS IN OUR MIDST

*Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.* Blaise Pascal

In the year 2000, The Southern Poverty Law Center tracked the existence of over 600 hate groups in the United States. These include factions identified as the Klan, Neo-Nazi, Racist Skinhead, Christian Identity, Neo-Confederate, and Black Separatist. The ideologies of several of these groups overlap and embrace whatever convoluted ideas suit their common penchant for an idyllic *whites only* society.

The Christian Identity movement is a distinctly American hybrid of mythical, political, and religious beliefs that emerged in the 1940s and now claims 20,000 to 30,000 followers. The common thread among these groups who often identify themselves as “churches” ascribes that whites (Aryans) are the true Israelites of the Old Testament and that Jews are literally descendants of Satan. All non-whites are thought to be the offspring of pre-Adamic races, which are distinctly separate from Caucasians since Adam and Eve were the first true “white” people. They consider any intermingling of the races as mongrelization. Furthermore they believe that Armageddon is imminent and will manifest as a race war between whites and non-whites.<sup>5</sup>

It is evident that many members of Christian Identity movements are doing their part to incite such a confrontation and are not averse to using violent methods to do so. According to J. Gordon Melton, a nationally recognized chronicler of religions in America, “Identity is a religion by sociopaths, for sociopaths. It turns their sickness into virtue.”<sup>6</sup> I became

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5. RICHARD ABANES, *AMERICAN MILITIAS: REBELLION, RACISM, AND RELIGION* 154-68 (1996).

6. JAMES COATES, *ARMED AND DANGEROUS* 92 (2d ed. 1995) (quoting J. Gordon

intimately acquainted with one such group and an unwitting target of its venomous philosophy.

In 1974, Richard Butler, leader of the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, Aryan Nations, set up his compound on twenty acres of rural land outside the community of Hayden Lake, in North Idaho, and the region became the destination point for a violent group of racists. Butler's bastion was an armed camp—replete with a tower where guards kept a wary eye and ready gun for any uninvited infiltrators. His followers endured communal living, engaged in military maneuvers, and consumed a steady diet of twisted scripture and endless hate rhetoric.

A rash of bigotry and anti-Semitic activities sprang up in the surrounding region. It manifested in the form of graffiti, racist posters on businesses, swastikas painted on churches, hate literature mailings, harassment, threats, audio clips of Hitler ranting on telephone answering machines, and assaults on minority individuals and multi-racial families in the community.

## VI. COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AGAINST HATE

*Ideas have to be wedded to action.* Henry Miller

By the late 1970s the formerly sleepy little lake-side city of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and its surrounding rural and wilderness areas were plagued by Butler's bigots, whose antics became increasingly menacing with time. What was once perceived as a rag-tag group of extremists too benign to be taken seriously became recognized as a force whose pernicious attitudes and behavior would only persist and, therefore, could no longer be ignored.

To address the problem, various community representatives united to form the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations ("KCTFHR") in 1981, including the Chamber of Commerce director and officials from the city of Coeur d'Alene, a County Under-Sheriff, professors from North Idaho College, a school district official, homemakers, business people, area pastors, and minority members of the community. The Task Force moved quickly to raise awareness of the growing problem of racist and anti-Semitic activity in the area, as well as to lend support to victims of harassment and to provide constructive alternative responses to destructive acts.

In 1983 and 1984, after several years of relative calm, a new wave of violence broke out. Several of those indoctrinated and trained by Richard Butler formed a splinter group known as "The Order" (or The Silent Brotherhood). Under the leadership of Robert Mathews, various members

went on a crime spree of terrorism fueled by the ideology and methods expressed in William Pierce's book, "The Turner Diaries." In an effort to start an insurrection to overthrow the "Jew-ridden" government and to persecute all race-traitors and institutions that support the system, the faithful bombed a synagogue in Boise, murdered talk show host Alan Berg in Denver, robbed several banks and armored cars, and perpetrated various other crimes of chaos.

Eventually, in December 1984, Robert Mathews died in a burning house on Whidbey Island, Wash., after a standoff with FBI agents. Twenty-three other members of The Order were subsequently convicted of crimes ranging from murder, armed robbery, counterfeiting, conspiracy to overthrow the government, and other charges, which garnered each prison terms ranging from 40 to 100 years.

The crime and violence of The Order triggered renewed interest in the white-supremacist epidemic as well as in our own Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, which strengthened its commitment to challenge bigotry and hate crimes at the grassroots level. As then pastor of St. Pius X Catholic Church in Coeur d'Alene, and elected Chairperson of the Task Force, I was determined to contribute a fresh approach and renewed vigor to the cause. We quickly restructured the organization, composed of an Executive Council, which oversaw a number of standing committees involved with community response, education, law enforcement, victim support, legislation, and a speaker's bureau.

A decision was made to answer the Aryan Nations' hatred with a positive message. The working motto became, "Saying 'yes' to justice is the best way to say 'no' to racism." This emphasis broadened the scope and direction of the Task Force, which formerly focused on responding to the destructive tactics of the Aryan Nations. The challenge called for proactive measures to build a community that not only respected diversity but that refused to provide fuel for the racist extremism of the Aryan Nations and other hate groups.

## VII. PUBLIC AWARENESS EVENTS

*To be awake is to be alive.* Henry David Thoreau

Raising public awareness became the primary goal of our organization. The Task Force became a visible entity at community events such as the annual County Fair, where members staffed a booth, and at the Fourth of July parade in Coeur d'Alene, which featured a float we sponsored. We also appeared at other gatherings that provided opportunities to model our message of inclusion.

In September of 1985, the KCTFHR took on its most ambitious effort to date. North Idaho College, a public community college located in Coeur

d'Alene, cosponsored an on-site symposium titled, "Racism: Prejudice and Progress." Under the direction of Political Science professor and Task Force member Tony Stewart, the weeklong event investigated the issue of racism from the Jewish, Black, Native, Mexican and Asian American perspectives. An impressive list of participants headed by keynote speaker and former Georgia Senator Julian Bond, and including former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Julian Nava and Idaho Governor John Evans, attracted large crowds and extensive media coverage.

North Idaho College produced seven weekly television programs taped at the symposium, which were broadcast throughout the Pacific Northwest and parts of Canada on several public television stations. As a result of the gathering, subsequent media exposure and numerous events spawned from our efforts, the Task Force became well known locally and regionally as North Idaho's voice on issues of race and diversity.

In January 1986, the KCTFHR coordinated plans for a major local celebration marking the first national holiday commemorating the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Idaho, however, failed to officially recognize such a holiday until 1990.) Through the leadership of Doug Creswell, a Task Force member and coordinator of personnel and instructional programs at the Coeur d'Alene School District, students watched a series of presentations on Dr. King, and on the issues of racism, respect and equality. The district recognized Jan. 20 as an official holiday, suspended classes, and encouraged students and staff to attend activities and programs sponsored by the Task Force. College students were released from their classes and employees of the City of Coeur d'Alene were freed from their duties to take part in the mid-day celebration.

Once again, North Idaho College opened its campus beside Lake Coeur d'Alene and hosted the day's festivities, which proved the largest commemoration of its kind in Idaho. I was honored to deliver the keynote address to a crowd of over 1,000 and opened a celebration that included patriotic readings, speeches, music and remembrances of Dr. King and his living message. The media carried highlights of the celebration to an extended audience, with live coverage provided by both local radio stations and video broadcasts carried on three television stations in nearby Spokane, Wash., and to the national networks of ABC, CBS, and NBC.

The Task Force has since continued to sponsor the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday celebration annually, encouraging the participation of students and community members of all ages, races and persuasions to affirm his dream of unity and freedom for all.

## VIII. REVELATION ANSWERS DEGRADATION

*Some people who exist sparingly on the mean side of the hill are threatened by those who also live in the shadows but who celebrate the light.* Maya Angelou

In the summer of 1986, Richard Butler and his Church of Jesus Christ Christian followers announced plans to host the annual Aryan Congress at the Hayden Lake compound. The event was to be held over three days in mid-July. Butler touted an expected attendance of several hundred racists and Neo-Nazi sympathizers from around the country. In response, the KCTFHR proposed a Human Rights Celebration to be held, simultaneously, in the Coeur d'Alene City Park on Saturday, July 12, 1986. Our organizers hoped to gather a crowd to dwarf the size of the Aryan Congress, and to rally the solidarity of the people of the Northwest in opposition not only to the white supremacists, but to racism and race-hate violence in general.

A plan was devised to contact all of the cities and counties in the five Northwestern states and invite them to submit a statement reaffirming their commitment to the human rights principles of their state constitutions, as well as to the Constitution of the United States. As a result, some 200 cities and counties responded with statements, which were displayed on a regional map during the celebration to indicate that through their elected representatives, the people of the Northwest were collectively saying "no" to hate and violence.

The Human Rights Celebration was a successful gathering, which drew a huge crowd and attention that far eclipsed that of the Aryan Congress. Local and national radio, television, and print media reporters were there in force to spotlight a community united to honor the value of all of humanity. I delivered a keynote address, while Idaho Governor John Evans and others urged for action over apathy when confronted with the insidious forms of bigotry—both blatant and subtle—that can erode a human landscape enriched by the colors and textures of diversity.

The event featured music, dancing, drumming and storytelling by members of the region's Coeur d'Alene Indians, and wide-ranging ethnic offerings attended by well over 1,000 people. It served as fertile ground and a gathering point for networking among like-minded, socially conscious individuals and organizations throughout the Northwest.

As several neo-Nazis showed up to glare at the assembled crowd, hundreds more gathered at Butler's compound miles to the north. As they plotted to claim Washington, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Wyoming as their *whites only* homeland, the Task Force entertained the idea of forming a five-state human rights coalition, enlisting the aid of corporations, agencies, educators, and churches to unite in common cause against prejudice.

As a result of the human rights rally, a different trend took place in, and around, North Idaho. The community became infused with a new energy, which defined itself as less reactive, but more competent and proactive against the malignant forces of bigotry. Ours was a belief in tolerance and inclusion over intolerance and exclusion.

An equally important outcome was the new reflection of North Idaho portrayed to the world through the extensive local and national media coverage of the celebration. We were no longer viewed as a passive haven for white supremacists but as conscience-driven members of a society willing to unite and mobilize for the cause of justice and human rights.

Our new vitality and psychological shift from focusing on the negative to creating the positive was not lost on Reverend Butler and his followers. He was incensed at the community's ability to rally in droves and steal the thunder of his week long Aryan Congress. He intensified his campaign of hate rhetoric against the citizens of Coeur d'Alene, the KCTFHR, and against me, by name. As both Catholic Priest, and vocal Chair of the Task Force, I became a prime target and lightning rod for the supremacists, whose bastardized belief in the scripture sanctioned violence.

#### IX. HATE COMES TO CALL

*Nothing in the world is more dangerous than a sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.* Martin Luther King Jr.

Some of Butler's followers put his words into action as I sat talking on the phone to a friend the night of Sept. 15, 1986. As the pastor of St. Pius X, I lived in a home next to the Church and prided myself in my openness and accessibility. Unlike most, I rarely, if ever, closed my curtains at night. So it was that I sat in full view, providing an easy target for two white supremacists poised to throw a pipe bomb through the glass of my window with full intent to murder me where I sat. At the last moment, one man convinced the other to place the bomb directly outside my back door instead.

The blast was deafening, and the resultant destruction to much of my house was indescribable. Had I been anywhere near my kitchen or bedroom, I would have been badly injured or killed. The philosophy of *purposeful naivete*, which had governed my reactions to these hate-mongers, was suddenly challenged. I came face to face with my own mortality and no longer doubted the militant resolve and twisted convictions of the supremacists who were determined to intimidate, and even eliminate, those who opposed their beliefs.

The community rallied in support, and ten days after the bombing of my house over 600 local citizens came together as a show of solidarity for me, the Task Force, and our mission. Also in attendance were Idaho Governor John

Evans, Coeur d'Alene Mayor Ray Stone and representatives from the offices of the Congressmen and Senators of Idaho.

Within days of this gathering, Aryan Nations members detonated three more pipe bombs at the Federal Building, outside a luggage store, and in a restaurant parking lot within the city of Coeur d'Alene. No one was physically injured in these attacks, but the psychological effect on the community was profound. Four perpetrators of these events were eventually arrested and sentenced for their crimes.

As is so often the case in times of adversity, the community became further united behind the Task Force and its mission to dispel ignorance and embrace diversity. The Coeur d'Alene Board of Realtors and other business and educational organizations exemplified a renewed vitality and adopted the use of a logo, which demonstrated the region's acceptance and respect for all people. A proactive momentum reclaimed the identity of a community formerly perceived as an indifferent haven of white supremacy.

#### X. COALITION BUILDING

*Nothing is built on stone; all is built on sand, but we must build as if the sand were stone.* Jorge Luis Borges

Aware that violent hate groups were focusing on rural areas that were often weak in resources and leadership, Tony Stewart and I recognized the need to reach beyond our local region and to unite with other communities in an effort to address the threat of religious and racial harassment and violence in the Pacific Northwest. Therefore, the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations recruited Bob Hughes, a representative of the Community Relations Service in the U.S. Department of Justice, to facilitate a steering committee made up of people from the five Northwestern states to discuss the challenge of racism and bigotry in our midst. Members of state and local governments, law enforcement, minority groups, faith communities, and human rights activists convened in Portland, Ore., Spokane, and Seattle, Wash., and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, during the winter of 1986-87.

The Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment ("NWCAMH") resulted from those deliberations, and adopted by-laws, becoming a nonprofit organization under the auspices of the state of Idaho in April of 1987. Soon after, I was appointed President of the Board of Directors, assisted by volunteers under the steerage of Governor appointees from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. The NWCAMH patterned itself after the KCTFHR, yet it focused more specifically on mobilization of communities at the grassroots level.

The NWCAMH facilitated the first of its annual conferences in Coeur d'Alene, with participants from Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and

Wyoming, in the fall of 1987.

In 1988, I resigned my duties as pastor of St. Pius X Church in Coeur d'Alene. My new adventure involved a move to Seattle, where I worked out of my apartment to raise funds for the fledgling NWCAMH and to develop the organization as conceived by the Board of Directors. Its ultimate ideal was to promote absolute racial and civil harmony throughout society. Yet, a more concise focus was our commitment to address discrimination, which manifests as aggression and hate-violence. Our intent was to provide knowledge and resources to community organizations to promote awareness, assist victims, build a moral barrier against that destructive force, and to answer oppression and aggression with peaceful strategies and compassionate action.

One of the most unique characteristics and dominant strengths of the NWCAMH was, and continues to be, its diverse membership. Initially, representatives from civic, religious, governmental, civil rights organizations, and law enforcement agencies participated. This came to include groups concerned with countering gender and sexual orientation bigotry, as well as student body associations, labor unions, and those from the private sector who had a vested interest in the betterment of their community.

For example, many from the business sector who might not have been otherwise concerned with human rights issues thought it prudent to be allied with the NWCAMH. They were savvy enough to know what the taint of racism can do to a community, and they joined in the cause to avert any negative climate that would hurt business. Eventually, we expanded beyond organizational membership to include individuals without group affiliation.

Raising the level of awareness person by person, community by community through research, education and organization became the primary strategy of the Coalition. Initially, our core task was to define the overt and covert natures of bias crimes and to involve the public, law enforcement agencies, and legislators, to work in tandem to stunt its growth.

#### XI. BIAS CRIMES UNMASKED

*The mind of a bigot is like the pupil of the eye. The more light you shine on it, the more it will contract.* Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

Many of us have become inured to the ubiquitous presence of everyday racism and prejudice in our society. We are not awakened to our denial or passive acceptance of this blight until it erupts into violence worthy of portrayal in the media. Criminal acts that are motivated by a bias on the part of the offender against a particular group to which the victim belongs are classified as bias crimes (popularly referred to as *hate crimes*). These include violent crimes against people precisely because of their race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation, and can manifest in the form of

taunting, slurs, vandalism, arson, intimidation, and physical assault. Since bias crimes are motivated by rage toward entire groups of individuals, they are particularly incendiary in nature. Such blatant acts of brutality can incite vast numbers of an entire community toward irrational emotionalism and retaliation.

Recognizing the destructive potential of prejudice, the NWCAMH worked toward educating institutions and the public, to empower communities to preempt or confront harassment and violence. We vigorously encouraged the enactment of bias crimes legislation, and we did our part to ensure the implementation of such laws. The Coalition monitored the activities of hate groups and provided information and training to law enforcement agencies, affecting the prosecution of perpetrators and protection of victims.

Sensitive to the inequity and oftentimes devaluing of women in a male-dominated world, the Coalition worked to promote the inclusion of gender-bias crimes in the Malicious Harassment Laws of the five Northwestern states. It combined forces with The Northwest Women's Law Center, Ms. Foundation For Women, and others to produce a booklet titled, *Gender-Bias Crimes: A Legislative Resource Manual*.

Bias-crime legislation has been adopted in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Colorado. Wyoming and several other states in the union have yet to follow suit. The Hate Crimes Statistics Act was passed on the Federal level in 1990, and it requires the Department of Justice to compile data and to publish an annual report on bias-crime incidents and victimization. Yet lack of participation by all of the states and under-reporting among those that do can only produce anemic numbers and a partial portrait that fails to reflect the grim truth. Justice advocates continue to push for uniform adoption of hate-crimes legislation nationwide, and to establish clear, concise definitions and implementation standards to alleviate the misinterpretation and variation that now exists from state to state.

## XII. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

*Since we cannot change reality, let us change the eyes which see reality.* Nikos Kazantzakis

A primary focus of the NCAMH was the task of disseminating information to promote public awareness of the endemic specter of prejudice and racism that often erupts into violence. One method, which established a networking link of relevant resources, was a quarterly newsletter titled *The Northwest Beacon*, which we sent to thousands of individuals throughout the region. The mailing defined and reported bias-crime incidents and statistics, how to prevent or confront them, and provided detailed upcoming human rights gatherings and events. Social and political institutions received a

separate publication that included tips on community organizing, practical administration, effective fundraising, ways of rallying public and private support, utilizing the media, maintaining security, and ways of implementing creative educational projects.

The NWCAMH collaborated with several human rights entities to create publications such as *The Northwest Imperative*, which was produced by the Coalition for Human Dignity. This provided a first-of-its-kind, in-depth look at white supremacy and right-wing extremist groups in the Northwest.

The Coalition also sponsored an educational project, which was researched and co-written by two graduate students from the Univ. of Washington. Paula Morelli and Michael Spencer studied the utilization of antibigotry policies and programs within school curricula, and reported its extent of effectiveness throughout Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming.

The power of the media to reach the greatest number of people in a community, and beyond, provided frequent opportunities for The NWCAMH to convey its message. An ambitious media project titled *Let's Fight the Fear Together*, was established as a public awareness tool that utilized print, radio, and television media to broadcast anti-racism and pro-diversity messages throughout the region. This method of educational outreach had the power and potential to touch people who might normally have been beyond our range of hearing.

The NWCAMH arranged an annual conference at various locales throughout the Northwest, featuring leaders in the human-rights movement as well as justice advocates. It drew members of religious, racial, minority, gender, sexual preference groups, and other people of conscience concerned with the betterment of humanity. Attendees gathered from all across the nation to network and tap the knowledge of others, to better learn effective ways of combating bigotry and violence in their communities. Forums, as well as youth and adult summits, were regularly conducted to discuss pertinent issues and strategies. Educational symposiums generated formal papers, which were compiled into booklets and served as valuable resources among constituents of the NWCAMH.

Educating communities and assisting victims of bias crimes commanded a pooling of relevant research and resources beyond our Coalition, which included tapping the rich reserve of already established organizations renowned for their fight against racism and prejudice. It utilized those of the Southern Poverty Law Center (whose *Ten Ways to Fight Hate* are printed at the end of this article), The Anti-Defamation League, The Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Center for Democratic Renewal and others. In addition to lending invaluable information and knowledge, these organizations, through their past and present efforts, provide models of moral courage and continue to inspire those of us who believe in the concept of justice for all.

## XIII. STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

*We can build on foundations anywhere if they are well and firmly laid.*

Ivy-Compton-Burnett

Once, the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment was seen as a novice in the realm of human rights activism. Yet by nature of the strength of its multilateral alliances and membership, it grew to become a formidable force in the fight against hate-violence in the Northwest and beyond. Others looked to the NWCAMH as a wellspring of resources, as well as for leadership, and guidance with community action.

Eventually, the NWCAMH expanded to include Colorado, which established a satellite office in Denver. Over 200 organizations became members of the Coalition, including The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, The Ada County Human Rights Task Force in Boise, The Montana Association of Churches, The Upper Columbia River Human Rights Task Force in Washington, The National Education Association, Jobs Plus, The Okanogan National Forest (a Federal Agency), and The Green River Community College in Western Washington. Our scope and sphere of influence prompted us to include individuals and institutions from outside the six Northwestern states, eventually bringing us to approximately 600 associate members.

By the late 1990s, the NWCAMH sponsored and supported more than a hundred different human rights coalitions, both in rural and metropolitan areas throughout the region. We were also influential in providing a model for community organizing and in creating infrastructures to combat hate in communities nationwide.

The White House recognized the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment as a *Promising Practices* in 1998. And as its director, I received honors from both the Community Relations Service as well as the American Civil Liberties Union and numerous other organizations for the Coalition's work to effect positive cultural change.

To strengthen its foundation and networking capabilities, in 1999 the NWCAMH merged with *The Coalition for Human Dignity*, a non-profit research organization that had been operating in the Northwest for ten years. The new alliance formed *The Northwest Coalition for Human Dignity* ("NWCHD"). Convinced that such organizations benefit from a transition in leadership periodically, I stepped down after ten years as director of the Northwest Coalition. The NWCHD continues to build on its old and new identity as a strong leadership force for change, both regionally and nationally.

## XIV. THE COMPOUND CRUMBLES

*As for me, I know of nothing else but miracles.* Walt Whitman

After twenty years, The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, which spawned the NWCAMH, has continued to fight the remnants of racism and hatred in and around North Idaho. It cosponsored the International Human Rights Conference: *Empowering Women*, in 1993, attended by 900 delegates and 65 presenters from across the nation. It still celebrates the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, and it hosts an annual human rights banquet, airs educational television programs, sponsors celebrations and community awareness activities, and promotes a diversity curriculum in schools.

An effective fundraising technique in July 1998, garnered national attention for the Task Force as it managed, once again, to offset the negativity of Richard Butler and his contingent of white supremacists. To counter an Aryan Nations march through the streets of downtown Coeur d'Alene, the KCTFHR staged a *Lemons to Lemonade Campaign*, in which supporters pledged a self-determined amount of money for every minute that Butler and his marchers were on the streets. As the result, \$35,000 was raised to assist the Task Force and other human rights organizations.

Years of efforts by the KCTFHR have eroded the power of hate groups in the region, and it most recently played a pivotal role in bankrupting Richard Butler and destroying the fortress of racism that was the Aryan Nations compound at Hayden Lake. The death blow came in the form of a successfully prosecuted civil suit brought against Richard Butler after two men, acting as his security agents, assaulted a woman and her teenage son, on a road near the compound.

As Vicky Keenan and her son Jason drove along Rimrock Road in rural North Idaho one July evening in 1999, they stopped to pick up something that had fallen from the car. Mindless of their proximity to the perimeter of the Aryan Nations compound, they were startled by the approach of a speeding pickup truck with two armed men in fatigues leaning over the cab. As the Keenans quickly drove off, the pickup followed, and the men shot holes into their vehicle along the way. Eventually, a bullet punctured one of the rear tires, causing the car to careen into a ditch. Butler's thugs pulled the Keenans from their car and assaulted them with the butts of their guns (one of which was a semi-automatic rifle). The men pulled Vicky's hair, bruised her ribs, and threatened to kill her and Jason. The sight of an approaching car interrupted the assault, at which time the supremacist guards warned the two to keep quiet about the incident, gave the Nazi salute, and departed.

Prior to this, Butler had been slippery enough to avoid prosecution for

numerous incidents of intimidation. Yet the reporting of this crime by its terrified victims brought a different and unexpected result. Believing that Richard Butler was accountable for the actions of his security guards, I and other Task Force members urged the prosecution of this assault to the fullest. Coeur d'Alene attorney Norm Gissel agreed to represent the Keenans against their Neo-Nazi attackers. He recruited Morris Dees, the renowned civil rights attorney from the Southern Poverty Law Center, to help prosecute the case in August of 2000.

Justice advocates and people of conscience everywhere were gratified by the decision of the civil court jury on Sept. 7, 2000. Richard Butler was deemed responsible for the violence of his minions, and the Keenans were awarded a \$6.3 million judgment, which effectively bankrupted the Aryan Nations organization. The twenty-acre compound in the north woods was sold at a Sheriff's auction to a philanthropist who demolished all the buildings on the property, thus destroying any evidence of its hate-filled history.

Though the elderly Richard Butler still resides in a house in North Idaho (purchased for him by a sympathetic supremacist), his realm of influence has diminished, and his activities, as well as those of his followers, have been seriously curtailed. Though Butler's beliefs persist, stripping him of his communal camp was a great source of pride for the KCTFHR and for all those who cared deeply, and worked toward extinguishing, his destructive influence. The Aryan Nations compound provided refuge to an army of ignorant souls desperate to belong, souls eager to assuage their impotence at the shy end of a gun while they learned to despise and intimidate those whose skin color or beliefs differ from their own.

It is no more, yet the community and the KCTFHR remain vigilant, and determined, to smother any sprouting seeds of hatred among them. Those who gravitate to the area in hopes of finding a people complacent to bigotry find, instead, people mobilized against it—an ever-evolving community that proudly embraces diversity.

#### XV. NOT IN OUR TOWN

*You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face . . . You must do the thing you cannot do.* Eleanor Roosevelt

Another inspiring example of community members who confronted similar challenges and successfully rallied to quell a rash of hate crimes in their area took place in Billings, Mont., in 1993.

Similar to North Idaho, Montana became home to a myriad of hard-core extremist groups during the 1980s. The Ku Klux Klan and a band of Skinheads became a visible presence in and around Billings, a town of

approximately 80,000 with an overwhelmingly Caucasian populace. Fewer than 500 black people lived in the area, while Hispanics and Native Americans (combined) comprised around 7 percent of the population.

Racist and blatantly anti-Semitic activity plagued the community in the early 1990s, and the 50 Jewish families that lived in the area became frequent targets of the hate-mongers. Synagogues, and even Jewish cemeteries, were defiled by racist graffiti and vandalism. The general public was inundated with hate literature mailings and fliers in their driveways. People of color were roughed-up, taunted and intimidated regularly, as were those known to have same-sex preferences. It was obvious that the racists were partial only to whites who did not appear to deviate from what they perceived to be the norm, while anyone else was fair game for intimidation and exclusion.

Several human rights organizations quickly responded to this cruelty, including the Billings Coalition for Human Rights (“BCHR”). It recognized the wide scope of hate crimes as those that affect *all* of humanity—not just those who identify with a race, ethnicity, gender, belief system, or sexual preference.

In December of 1993, Tammie Schnitzer, who co-chaired the BCHR, returned home from a meeting to find that a racist had thrown a cinder block through her 5-year-old son’s bedroom window, which had been decorated with Star of David decals and a menorah in honor of Hanukkah. Though Isaac was not in his room at the time, he, his 2-year-old sister, and his dad, Brian, were traumatized by the attack.

*The Billings Gazette* featured the Schnitzer’s story two days later. Several Christian Churches responded by encouraging Sunday School children to draw menorahs, which were photocopied and distributed to their congregations. In a show of support for the Jewish community, the menorahs appeared in the windows of hundreds of Christian households. Days later *The Billings Gazette* took the bold step of publishing a full-page picture of a menorah to be cut out and displayed throughout the community. Suddenly, the Jewish symbols sprang up all over town. One local business went so far as to place a message on a billboard, proclaiming: “Not in Our Town! No Hate, No Violence. Peace on Earth.”

This incited a new wave of harassment and violence from the Klan and the Skinheads as they smashed windows all over town, fired bullets into schools and churches, and made threatening phone calls to residents and businesses. But, as the racist activity intensified, the menorahs multiplied, until as many as 6000 were displayed throughout the town, and remained there well into the New Year. Confronted by a town united against them, the racists backed down. The hate literature disappeared, the vandalism and anonymous calls stopped. Overwhelmed with the sheer number of their targets, even their all-consuming hatred was anemic in the face of humanity.

This effort to thwart the forces of racism came to be known as the *Not In*

*Our Town* campaign, and it has been a model for communities everywhere. It spawned a television documentary and continues to inspire through organizing projects, action kits, and curriculum guides for use throughout the nation.

Residents of Billings ignored their differences in blood and belief and banned together as one people united against hate. Through compassionate action, they collectively and powerfully said “no” to intolerance, intimidation, and violence. Their efforts exemplify the best of human nature answering the worst.

The BCHR was supported in its efforts by the Montana Human Rights Network (“MHRN”), whose thrust was to monitor radical, right-wing movements in the area, and to challenge that agenda through education and organization.

The MHRN continues to confront the threat of subtle forces of bigotry in its community. Members are affronted by the dangerous philosophy of the racist right, patriot groups, and the religious right, who all share a disdain for the democratic process and seek to limit the rights of *some* to participate fully in society. This movement is particularly insidious as it seeks to impose its narrow worldview by claiming heaven’s endorsement for followers’ stilted social and political beliefs. Activities and rhetoric cloaked in this seemingly noble ideology continue to fool many who are blinded by the banner of a benevolent but intolerant God. The use of computers and short-wave radio to circulate propaganda around the world add to this ominous threat. This pervasive movement to mainstream extremism calls upon the steadfast perseverance and sustained commitment of the members of the MHRN, and of the community at large, to continue working against the infiltration of intolerance in their town, and beyond.

#### XVI. THE VISION OF NEW COMMUNITY

*Intolerance, discourtesy, and harshness are taboo in all good society  
and are surely contrary to the spirit of democracy.*

Mohandas K. Gandhi

Another dynamic entity committed to addressing social, economic, and racial justice problems is the Center for New Community (“CNC”) in Chicago, Ill. It is a faith-based organization intent on combining the forces of congregations, parishes, organizations, and communities to realize the vision of a society devoid of bigotry and intolerance. The CNC relies on the faith and good will of individuals in the religious, civic, educational, labor, business, and government sectors to counter hate and to nurture a just and beloved community that embraces a new spirit of democracy.

Keenly aware of insidious efforts of far-right, anti-democratic groups that

foster intolerance and exclusion, the CNC works incessantly to address this danger in the Midwest and elsewhere. Through education and training, the Center for New Community builds regional networks, and it equips community leaders to effectively respond to racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, anti-immigration movements and other forms of bigotry. It monitors and confronts public policy issues while working with national and international organizations to promote civil rights, and it holds an annual *Building Democracy Conference*.

The CNC assumes the moral obligation of nurturing relationships that lead to strengthening the sinews of community. It dares to pave the way for future generations to realize the dream of a world where the dignity of all individuals is affirmed and the diversity of all of life is celebrated.

#### XVII. COMPELLING SOCIAL CHANGE

*All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing.* Edmund Burke

The first step toward effecting positive social change is to admit that a problem exists, yet many want to avert their eyes from a shameful truth: that we are immersed in a culture of prejudice and racism. The 21st Century does not, yet, see justice for all, but still carries the cross of exclusion and persecution of many. It is distasteful to face our lack of mental and spiritual evolution and to admit that endemic in our culture is the ludicrous notion that skin color determines the value or inferiority of a human being. Add to that those who disdain any person, set of beliefs, or lifestyle that differs from their own, and virulent seeds of hatred fester at society's feet.

When this fear and ignorance manifests in the form of hate groups in a community, silence and apathy equal tragic complicity. In order to thwart the destructive forces of intolerance, action can begin with one individual who heeds the voice within, but commands two—and more—to unite in common purpose against that evil. Without people of conscience who rise to the challenge of betterment, who act with compassion to embrace their brothers and sisters of all colors and persuasions, a community is diminished and potentially deprived of the inevitable enrichment that diversity provides.

In this primal conflict, I have always believed goodness to be the more formidable contender. The power of mobilizing against hate makes activists of victims and helps to build a firewall of awareness to ensure a fortified response in the future. Thousands of people in the Northwest answered the call to alter the course of hatred, and they enhanced their local landscape through purposeful action. Numerous organizations have followed their example to effect similar change throughout the nation. A cohesive community that stands up to the bully of bigotry can win any battle and erode

the resolve of similar contingents that follow.

In light of the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, the challenge to resist the forces of hatred is more poignant than ever. We have been given a crash-course in the potential destructiveness of extremist attitudes and irrational antipathy, yet we must resist the temptation to perceive the malevolence as existing solely apart from us, and beyond our borders. If we adopt an “us versus them” mentality, we are denying humanity as one entity, intertwined. We are, then, blind to our own potential for evil, and risk the danger of becoming as venomous as those we objectify.

Realizing the vision of a society that says “no” to prejudice, inequity, bigotry and persecution, and “yes” to acceptance, inclusion, equality and diversity, seems a daunting, but not impossible, task. Nothing is beyond the reach of those who care. The journey begins within individuals who realize that all people are more alike than different. Yet it is precisely the nuances of variation that add interest and dimension to the human canvas.

When we enlist our own humanity in combination with others, we make an indelible impression on *all* of humanity, and we uplift our world in the process. To ensure and enhance our survival, it is not only noble, but necessary, to act upon the voice within.<sup>7</sup>

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7. In addition to materials cited in text, please see the following for general background on the subjects of racism and hate in the United States: TOM ALIBRANDI WITH BILL WASSMUTH, *HATE IS MY NEIGHBOR* (1999); RAPHAEL S. EZEKIEL, *THE RACIST MIND* (1995); ANDREW HACKER, *TWO NATIONS: BLACK AND WHITE, SEPARATE, HOSTILE, UNEQUAL* (1992); THOMAS MARTINEZ WITH JOHN GUNTHER, *BROTHERHOOD OF MURDER* (1988); ANDY OAKLEY, “88”: AN UNDERCOVER NEWS REPORTER’S EXPOSE OF AMERICAN NAZIS AND THE KU KLUX KLAN (1987); JAMES WALLER, *FACE TO FACE: THE CHANGING STATE OF RACISM ACROSS AMERICA* (1998); JAMES WALLER, *PREJUDICE ACROSS AMERICA* (2000).

## XVIII. TEN WAYS TO FIGHT HATE

1. ACT. Do something. In the face of hatred, apathy will be interpreted as acceptance—by the haters, the public, and worse, the victim. Decency must be exercised, too. If it isn't, hate invariably persists.
2. UNITE. Call a friend or coworker. Organize a group of allies from churches, schools, clubs, and other civic sources. Create a diverse coalition. Include children, police, and other media. Gather ideas from everyone, and get everyone involved.
3. SUPPORT THE VICTIMS. Hate-crime victims are especially vulnerable, fearful and alone. Let them know you care. Surround them with people they feel comfortable with. If you are a victim, report every incident and ask for help.
4. DO YOUR HOMEWORK. Determine if a hate group is involved and research its symbols and agenda. Seek advice from anti-hate organizations. Accurate information can then be spread to the community.
5. CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE. Do NOT attend a hate rally. Find another outlet for anger and frustration and people's desire to do something. Hold a unity rally or parade. Find a news hook, like a "hate-free zone."
6. SPEAK UP. You too, have First Amendment rights. Hate must be exposed and denounced. Buy an ad. Help news organizations achieve balance and depth. Do not debate hate-mongers in conflict-driven talk shows.
7. LOBBY LEADERS. Persuade politicians, business and community leaders to take a stand against hate. Early action creates a positive reputation for the community, while unanswered hate will eventually, be bad for business.
8. LOOK LONG RANGE. Create a "bias response" team. Hold annual events, such as a parade or culture fair, to celebrate your community's diversity and harmony. Build something the community needs. Create a Web site.
9. TEACH TOLERANCE. Bias is learned early, usually at home. But children from different cultures can be influenced by school programs and curricula. Sponsor an "I have a dream" contest. Target youths who may be tempted by skinheads or other hate groups.
10. DIG DEEPER. Look into issues that divide us: economic inequality, immigration, homosexuality. Work against discrimination in housing, employment, education. Look inside yourself for prejudices and stereotypes.

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## XIX. ORGANIZATIONS/SITES OF INTEREST

**Anti-Defamation League**

Pacific Northwest Region  
(206) 448-5349  
www.seattle@adl.org

**Prejudice and Violence**

31 South Green Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
(410) 328-5170

**Center for Democratic  
Renewal**

P.O. Box 50469  
Atlanta, GA 30302  
(404) 221-0025  
www.cdr.org

**Northwest Coalition for  
Human Dignity**

P.O. Box 21428  
Seattle, WA 98111-3428  
(206) 762-5627  
www.nwchd@nwchd.org

**Center for New Community**

P.O. Box 346066  
Chicago, IL 60634  
(708) 848-0319  
www.newcomm.org

**Reach Center**

180 Nickerson St., Ste. 212  
Seattle, WA 98109  
(206) 284-8584

**HateWatch, Inc.**

44 School St. #317  
Boston, MA 02108  
www.hatewatch.org

**Simon Wiesenthal Center**

1399 South Roxbury  
Los Angeles, CA 90035  
www.wiesenthal.com

**Kootenai County Task Force  
on Human Relations**

1424 East Sherman Ave. Ste. 100  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814-4045  
(208) 667-9574  
www.idahohumanrights.org

**Southern Poverty Law Center**

400 Washington Ave.  
Montgomery, AL 36104  
(334) 956-8200  
www.splc.org

**Montana Human Rights  
Network**

P.O. Box 1222  
Helena, MT 59624  
www.network@mhrn.org

**National Institute Against**