

# Economic, social woes provide brew for hate

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tion, foreign business owners or affirmative action can actually veil racist attitudes, Halpern acknowledged.

In addition, Halpern told the *Courier*, "There is a new tolerance for intolerance."

"People praise freedom of expression, no matter what form the expression takes," he continued. Consequently, he added, "Bigots are being turned into heroes of the First Amendment."

Another development that has helped spur the growth of hate groups is the rise of the Christian Identity Church, Webb said.

"The Identity Church movement has twisted Christianity out of shape," Webb said. "The Identity doctrine has permeated the whole white supremacist movement. This has contributed to a radicalization of the white supremacist movement."

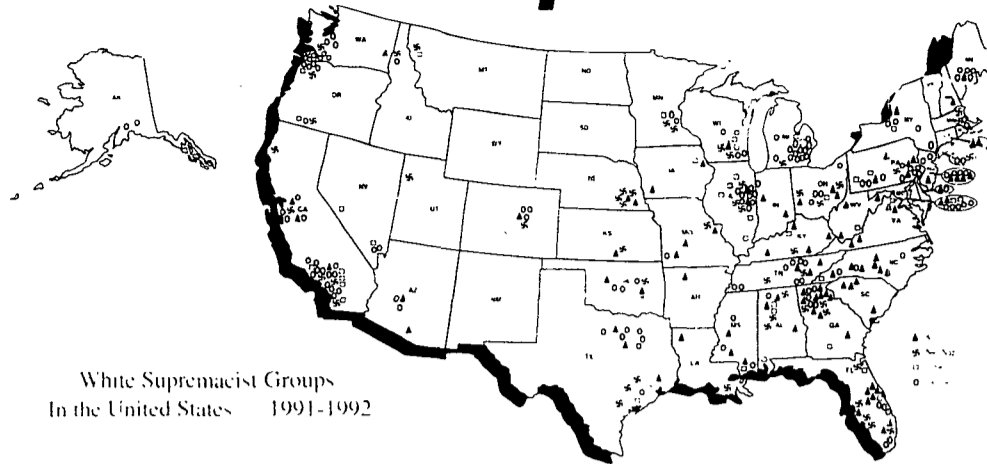
According to a 1990 study by the Presbyterian Church, *Hate Crime in America*, the Christian Identity movement "portends and glorifies in violence directed against enemies of white people."

As summarized by the report, the Christian Identity movement claims that Northern Europeans are the descendants of the 10 lost tribes of Israel — and that the name "Saxon" is derived from "Isaac's sons." Thus Identity followers believe those of Saxon ethnic origin are the true children of Israel, the Chosen people.

Meanwhile, under Christian Identity beliefs, the Jewish people are described as a mixed-blood race who were the enemies of Jesus.

"It is a doctrine that basically considers Jews as the children of the devil, and nonwhites as subhumans," Webb noted.

In an October, 1991, report, the ADL concluded, "Identity gives the extremists of the far right a false and sanctimonious belief that Christianity underlies their violence, anti-Semitism and racism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mainstream Christian-



White Supremacist Groups  
In the United States 1991-1992

ity views Identity as twisted and warped, a perversion — not a reflection — of the faith. In 1987 the National Council of Churches repudiated the Identity movement."

Nevertheless, Webb observed, hundreds of small churches — including the Church of Jesus Christ in Northern Idaho, and the various Church of the Creator congregations — are associated with the Christian Identity Church. These small churches organize retreats and summer camps, and have produced radio and cable television programs, Webb noted.

In addition to these churches, Webb said, a number of groups are associated with the Christian Identity movement. Among them was the group that has attempted to establish the commune in Auburn, he said.

The Christian Identity movement poses a threat because it provides a way for the different groups to work together, Webb warned. Currently, he explained, hate groups frequently battle each other and remain divided. But the Identity movement has the potential to draw them together, he said.

"We would all really be in trouble if these groups could work together," Webb warned.

Indeed, some such interaction already is taking place, Webb reported. A number of the neo-Nazi and Christian Identity groups are now recruiting skinheads to join their ranks.

A further development among the hate groups is that many are attempt-

ing to downplay violence, Webb said.

"There is a new image they are trying to present," Webb noted. "They claim they do not hate. They say they are not violent."

Indeed, Thom Robb, grand wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and head of the Identity-oriented Church of Jesus Christ, said in a March, 1985, *Newsweek* magazine interview: "Today we see the evil is coming out of the government. To go out and shoot a Negro is foolish. It's not the Negro in the alley who's responsible for what's wrong with this country. It's the traitors in Washington."

Thus, rather than overtly promoting racism, Webb continued, the groups attempt to tap into concerns about crime, welfare, affirmative action programs, secular humanism, government policies and immigration.

As part of this new thrust, white supremacists are urging group members to avoid using racial slurs and "to proclaim that, 'We don't hate blacks, we just love whites,'" Halpern said.

Supremacists are even beginning to move into the political mainstream, Halpern said, pointing to the campaigns of David Duke — a former KKK

grand knight — in Louisiana.

"He may not have been winning elections, but he has been coming close," Halpern observed.

Although hate groups are on the rise, they are also coming under increasing attack, Halpern reported.

In 1990, the U.S. Congress passed the Hate Crime Statistics Act, which requires law-enforcement officials to be trained in methods of identifying and responding to bias-related crimes. The act also requires the FBI to compile hate-crime statistics, which Halpern said will help raise public awareness of the extent of hate crime in the United States.

Meanwhile, Halpern said, hate groups are coming under attack in the courts.

"Some hate groups have experienced situations where they are being held civilly liable in court for the violent actions of their members," he noted.

Thus in 1990, Tom Metzger, his son John Metzger, and the organization they head, White Aryan Resistance, were held liable for \$12.5 million in judgments in connection with the 1988 murder of an Ethiopian student by skinheads in Portland, Ore.

And the United Klans of America organization dissolved in 1987 after a \$7.5 million judgment in connection with the 1981 killing of a black man in Mobile, Ala., by UKA members.

Despite such successes, Webb noted that the numbers of hate crimes, hate groups, and hate-group members continue to rise.

"It's a sobering reminder that civic leaders and our schools must do their part to create an atmosphere in which these groups will not flourish," he warned.

## Auburn police uncover neo-Nazis

AUBURN — Auburn police responding Sept. 14, 1992, to a shooting incident made a startling discovery.

While searching the Grover Street apartment of Keith Ernest, the man accused of the shooting, police investigators discovered weapons and literature on white supremacism.

Ernest claimed to the media that he was the local leader of the Philadelphia-based United States of America Nationalist Party, a neo-Nazi group promoting hatred of Blacks and Jews. Further, Ernest and other party members revealed that they hoped to establish a white-supremacist commune in Cayuga County.

Tensions escalated Oct. 7 when a second neo-Nazi group, the Yonkers-based Catholic Defense League, entered the fray. William Donovan, leader of the CDL and its political wing, the National Front Party, alleged that Ernest had been beaten by guards in the Cayuga County jail.

In an Oct. 8 article, the *Auburn Citizen* quoted Donovan as saying, "Auburn is going to pay dearly for this. The cops, the mayor, the whites in Auburn, they'll definitely pay."

As detailed in an Oct. 13 article in the *Citizen*, Donovan described members of the Catholic Defense League as church-going Catholics. The *Citizen* reported that Donovan claimed many CDL members support Masses conducted in Latin and are "Vatican I Catholics."

Attempts by the *Catholic Courier*

to reach Donovan Nov. 3 to confirm published news reports were unsuccessful. A recorded message from the telephone company stated that the number had been temporarily disconnected.

Meanwhile, calls to the United States of America Nationalist Party were unanswered.

Official church reaction to Donovan's reported claims was firm.

"The Catholic Defense League has no standing at all and no endorsement from the Rochester diocese and the Catholic Church downstate," declared Father George R. Norton, spokesman for the Diocese of Rochester. "Their talk about racism and anti-Semitism is contrary to the whole concept of Christianity."

Indeed, on March 27, 1987, the Administrative Board of the U.S. Catholic Conference issued a statement declaring, "We state unequivocally that Catholics who join the Ku Klux Klan or any other organizations that actively promote racism act in violation of Catholic teaching."

Ernest was arraigned Nov. 5 on 11 counts in connection with the Sept. 14 shooting. A parole violator, he is being held in the county jail without bail pending trial.

And in a Nov. 5 interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Raymond Wood, Auburn's assistant chief of police, said that to his knowledge Ernest and his fiancée were the only members of the neo-Nazi group remaining in the Auburn area.

— Lee Strong

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