



*In Defense of Democracy & Civil Rights*

# COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

P. O. Box 21266 • SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98111-3266 • (206) 233-9775

PORTLAND (503) 281-5823 • FAX (503) 281-8673 • E-MAIL: chdpdx@aol.com

## NORTHWEST UPDATE

September 15, 1998

**1. CHD AT UAW CIVIL RIGHTS SEMINAR:** CHD research director Robert Crawford conducted four workshops on "Domestic Terrorist Groups" at the Fifteenth International Civil Rights Seminar of the United Auto Workers held August 30 to September 4 at the Walter & May Reuther UAW Family Education Center in Black Lake, Michigan. The workshops presented an overview of the white supremacist movement and discussion of the broader impact of organized hate groups on American society.

Attended by some 300 trade unionists and civil rights activists, the event featured speakers on a number of labor and civil rights issues. They included UAW President Stephen P. Yokich, AFL-CIO executive vice president Linda Chavez-Thompson, Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, UAW vice-president Elizabeth Bunn and Norm Hill, president of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute. The 1998 *UAW Civil Rights Department Annual Report* by Director Joe Davis expresses the commitment to civil rights and workers' rights exemplified by the gathering and echoed by many of the speakers and attendees:

"In the past 50 years, we in the Labor and Civil Rights Community have taken major strides forward. In addition to outlawing both racial segregation and discrimination in federally funded activities, the Civil Right Act of 1964 bans employment discrimination. Affirmative action has helped move us toward employment equality. The trade union movement has aided millions of workers of all races in achieving decent wages and conditions...

Yet, we know that the struggle continues... While it appears that real gains are within reach we cannot sit on our laurels. The long awaited progress in many key areas will not come about on its own. We must continue to press our case for worker and civil rights in our union halls, workplaces and communities, especially as we see the affront to current civil rights laws and the assault on affirmative action where state initiatives have been introduced in 26 state legislatures...

UAW Local Union Civil Rights Committees perform an invaluable service by educating, mobilizing and assisting our members in the fight against all forms of discrimination. We must continue working with our many allies in the civil rights community to build on the gains we have made over the past 50 years. We must persist in our struggle to help make America a better place to live and work."

**2. CHD AT NEVADA MEMORIAL:** On August 29, CHD staffer Noah Chandler participated in an Anti-Racist Action (ARA) march and rally in Las Vegas, Nevada. The event was organized by the Las Vegas chapter of ARA to honor two ARA activists from the area who were murdered in July. Daniel Shersty, 20, and Lin Newborn, 25, were fatally shot and their bodies were dumped in the desert. Both were also members of the anti-racist skinhead group Unity Skins and were well known for being both vocal and active in their anti-racist beliefs. Newborn, known as "Spit" to his friends, had been known to approach racist skinheads peacefully, to try to convince them to abandon racism.

A break in the case was made on Sept. 9 with the arrest of John Edward Butler, 26, on two charges of murder with a weapon in connection to the murders of Shersty and Newborn. Butler has been in jail for nearly two months, having been arrested in July on charges of possession of a controlled substance, possession of a stolen vehicle and violating his parole (Butler had previously been convicted of burglary) by possessing a concealed weapon. According to Las Vegas police, a "culmination of information" including eyewitness accounts and ballistics evidence led to Butler's arrest.

Witnesses reported seeing Butler and two others driving from the murder scene the morning of the murders. The license plate number of the car was traced to the family of 22 year-old Melissa Jane Hack, Butler's girlfriend, while police told reporters that they believe Hack and Joseph Justin, 19, were in the vehicle with Butler. Though no further arrests have been made police also told reporters that "We know that there were more people involved than just Butler."

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Butler is reported to have been involved in neo-Nazi skinhead activity in Las Vegas and to have been an associate of Johnny Bangerter, a Utah neo-Nazi skinhead leader now in prison on firearms convictions. (*Las Vegas Sun*, September 10; *Las Vegas Review Journal*, September 10)

The memorial rally attracted national attention and was attended by close to 100 anti-racist activists from Arizona, Ohio, California, Oregon, Washington, Canada and elsewhere. The day ended with a peaceful yet spirited march through the neighborhood of a neo-Nazi skinhead group. Newborn left a young son, for whom a trust fund is set up. To donate to the trust fund or for more information on ARA and the case, visit the ARA web site at <http://www.aranet.org>. (*Las Vegas Sun*, August 28; ARA web site)

**3. CHD AT CSTI TRAINING:** CHD research director Robert Crawford presented on the anti-Indian movement at the July 30-August 2 Community Strategic Training Initiative sponsored by the Western States Center at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. Crawford's presentation was part of a panel on anti-Indian activity and the rights of Indian people which included Shelly Means of Honor Our Neighbors Origins and Rights, Janet Robideau of Indian People's Action and Eric Ward of the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment. The panel presentation discussed the treaty and sovereignty rights of Indian people, the efforts of property rights and other right-wing activists to overturn Indian sovereignty, recent congressional attacks on treaty rights, the poverty and discrimination faced by Indians both on and off reservations, and how human rights activists can support the rights of Indian people and tribes.

**4. GRITZ OFFERS SERVICES IN HUNT FOR RUDOLPH:** Repeating the pattern seen in the 1992 stand-off between racist Randy Weaver and federal marshals, far right leader James "Bo" Gritz has offered his services to federal agents searching for Eric Rudolph, the North Carolina man sought in connection with the January bombing of a Birmingham, Alabama abortion clinic and murder of an off-duty police officer. In mid-August, Gritz and a team of 40 volunteers began searching the woods of western North Carolina for evidence of Rudolph's whereabouts. While FBI spokespersons criticized Gritz's effort as "a dangerous endeavor" and stated that there was no agreement to give Gritz the \$1 million reward money if Rudolph surrenders, Woody Enderson of the Southeast Bomb Task Force-the team of federal and state law officers engaged in the search-stated that the Task Force would not interfere with Gritz.

As also seen during the 1992 stand-off, Gritz's attempt to cast himself as a mediator has won favorable coverage from the media. A Reuters article by Knight Chamberlain repeated uncritically Gritz's claim to have disavowed the "racism and anti-Semitism preached by some of the most violent anti-government groups." Gritz has in fact written that Jews control the Federal Reserve Bank and voiced the racist notions of citizenship that define the Christian Patriot movement. Gritz has also positioned himself to play a support role in Rudolph's trial, telling reporters that should he receive reward money he will give it to Rudolph's family to pay for his legal defense. (CNN, August 17, August 14; Reuters, August 15)

The search for Rudolph has revealed the support for anti-abortion violence that allows tacit alliances between Christian Right anti-abortion foes and white supremacist activists like Rudolph. Rev. Conrad Kimbrough, the pastor of St. Williams' Catholic Church in Murphy, North Carolina, said of those who might aid Rudolph in avoiding capture, "If a person's intention is to prevent [Rudolph] from being killed they may be right... I doubt he [Rudolph] will be found to be an unprincipled killer." Kimbrough continued that the nurse wounded in the Birmingham bombing deserves no support because "she has been instrumental in killing babies." (Associated Press, July 21)

**5. NORTH CAROLINA CLINICS THE TARGET OF ARSON:** On September 9 two Fayetteville, North Carolina abortion clinics were targeted with arson. A molotov cocktail was thrown onto the roof of the Hallmark Clinic in downtown Fayetteville, causing smoke and water damage inside the clinic. About an hour later a small fire burned the back door of the Carolina Women's Clinic. No one was injured in either arson. (Associated Press, September 8)

**6. ROUND-UP ON RACIST VIOLENCE, VANDALISM, INTIMIDATION:** Robert Todd Elton of Greenwood, Louisiana, pleaded guilty August 30 to the May 1998 arson of the Gainesville Church of God in Christ, a predominantly black church. Elton and Timothy John Wright, who pleaded guilty in July, could receive up to 40 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine. The 50 year old church was burned to the ground, leaving only its front wall. (Associated Press, August 31)

On July 31 the Temple Solael in West Hill, California and the Temple Ahavat Shalom in Northridge, California were vandalized with graffiti bearing the web address of William Pierce's National Alliance. In late July residents of the Los Angeles Valley communities including Agoura, Glendale and Santa Clarita found National Alliance leaflets in the mailboxes and in boxes of food at grocery stores. (*Los Angeles Times*, September 4)

The home of the grandmother of two interracial children was the target of a cross-burning August 31 in Carlton, Michigan. The ground in front of the cross-burning was also burned in the shape of a swastika. The cross-burning came two days after a visit to Diane Lizynef's home of an African-American friend of her daughter. Lizynef, who is white, reported that about six teens in her neighborhood have used racial slurs against family members. She told reporters, "It doesn't intimidate me. It makes me angry." (*Detroit News*, September 2)

**7. NORTHWEST RACIST VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION:** Matthew R. Young was arrested in mid-July and charged with three counts of arson in connection with the burning of a Southeast Portland, Oregon apartment building. Young, who according to police was across the street in another apartment at the time of the fire, told reporters that the fire was a hate crime. The fire caused \$195,000 damage to the apartment. Young was held on \$150,00 bail and faces a sentence of 90 months with no parole. (*Oregonian*, July 16)

On July 31, a Japanese female, who is an economics graduate student in Eugene, Oregon, was spat on, struck in the head and kicked by a white male, Steven Wesley Hunt. Hunt also yelled racial slurs at the woman, including, "Your genetics should be erased." The woman did not suffer any serious injuries. Hunt has been charged with racial intimidation, assault, harassment and disorderly conduct. (*Register-Guard*, August 4)

On August 1, organizers of the annual Destiny City International Festival and Parade discovered racist graffiti spray-painted on the grounds of Peoples Park in Tacoma, where the festival is held. A local business that served as a co-sponsor of the festivities was also vandalized. The incident is being investigated as a hate crime. (*News Tribune*, August 1)

"Ku Klux Klan" was carved into picnic tables at the Westgate Park in north Spokane. The carvings appeared at the same time that an African-American woman began working there with the city parks and recreation services. The tables were removed but someone quickly carved the same message twice more on the remaining tables. About 100 members from the surrounding community of Northwest Terrace gathered in the park on July 2, to speak out against the hate crime. (*Spokesman Review*, July 3)

In May and June several churches in Woodburn, Oregon were the target of hate-related vandalism. In late May the First Presbyterian Church, the Church of the Nazarene and the Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ were vandalized. According to police, the words "white power" and "KKK" were scrawled on the walls of the Apostolic Church. In June the Immanuel Lutheran Church was targeted with a swastika on its outer wall. In the latter case, two boys, ages 8 and 13, were charged with vandalism (*Independent*, July 1).

**8. BUSINESS SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION TO INITIATIVE 200:** As the anti-affirmative action Initiative 200 campaign in Washington state nears its end, business has donated to both sides of the issue. While many business leaders are not taking public sides, those that have thrown their support behind the initiative include former Boeing executives Frank Shrontz and Dean Thornton (\$500 each); Microsoft program director Tom Isenberg (\$5,000) and Chief Operating Officer Bob Herbold (\$1,850); retired Nordstrom CEO John Nordstrom; investor M. Lamont Beam; Bellevue Square developer Kemper Freeman; former Paccar CEO Charles Pigott; and Kirkland businessman John Alberti (\$5,000).

Corporate opponents of the anti-affirmative action initiative include the Boeing Company (\$50,000); U.S. Bank and Hewlett Packard (\$5,000 each); Seattle businessman Samuel Stroum (\$5,000), Seattle developer Jon Runstad and wife Judy (\$10,000); Starbucks CEO Howard Shultz and wife Sheri (\$10,000); Costco (\$25,000); Eddie Bauer President and CEO Rick Fersch and businessman Kenneth Alhadef (\$28,000). The *Seattle Times* has also run full page ads urging readers to vote against the initiative.

The Washington State Labor Council has donated \$7,500 to oppose the initiative. (*The Olympian*, July 16; *Seattle Times*, September 1)

**9. NEW CHAIRMAN FOR OREGON CHRISTIAN COALITION:** The Oregon state chapter of the Christian Coalition recently named Mark Youngren the group's new Chairman. Youngren, a Portland based businessman, replaces present chair Lou Beres, who will remain on board as the Executive Director. The Christian Coalition in Oregon claims 20,000 members. They have most recently worked with the Oregon Citizens Alliance in attempting to put a measure on the state ballot seeking to ban second- and third-trimester abortions. As it continues its efforts to "cast a wider net," the Christian Coalition claims to seek an ally in the National Organization for Women (generally a nemesis of the Coalition) to oppose pornography. (*Oregonian*, July 26)

**10. RACIST CANDIDATE FOR U.S. SENATE IN WASHINGTON:** Robert T. Medley, a onetime GOP precinct committee officer who advocates a "Back to Africa" plan for blacks, has announced his plan to run as a Democrat

for the U.S. Senate seat of Patty Murray (D-WA). Medley is reported to advocate a "40 acres and a camel" program in which "Anybody of any race that wants to return to Africa, we would provide the means to do so." Asked if this included Irish Americans who wish to return to Ireland, Medley told reporters, "Why would we have that?... People of my and your history are not fighting the system of who and what we are... The people in my national group have slowly been turning over the country to the non-white population." Medley also supports barring women from combat roles in the military and says that "I would stop all immigration except white people." The Democratic Party is not supporting his candidacy (*Central Kitsap Reporter*, August 19).

**11. NORTHWEST COALITION AGAINST MALICIOUS HARASSMENT CONFERENCE:** The Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment (NWCAMH) will hold its annual conference October 16-18 in Eugene, Oregon. The conference, titled "A Vision of Freedom: Organizing for Justice in the Northwest," will feature Myrlie Evers-Williams, Lance Hill of the Southern Institute for Research and Education and Dolores Huerta, secretary-treasurer of the United Farmworkers of America. The conference will also feature 30 workshops on hate groups and bigoted organizing. Contact NWCAMH: (206) 233-9136 or ncamh@aol.com.

**12. FIRST ANNUAL SOUTHERN CATALYST CONFERENCE:** The Southern Catalyst Network will hold the first annual Catalyst Regional Training Conference October 30-31 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The conference will provide training to community organizers and citizen activists working to counter bigotry in the Deep South. Workshop topics at the conference will include fund-raising techniques, interracial coalition building, bridging differences through dialogue, working with faith communities and strategic planning. Those interested in attending can contact the Southern Institute for Education and Research/Southern Catalyst Network at MR Box 1692, 31 McAlister Dr., New Orleans, LA 70118-5555.

**13. CENTER FOR NEW COMMUNITY BUILDING DEMOCRACY CONFERENCE:** The Center for New Community (CNC) will host its annual Building Democracy Conference November 13-14 in Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Cornel West will give the keynote presentation. Leonard Zeskind of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights will also give a keynote presentation. The conference will feature workshops by CHD Research Director Robert Crawford, CNC's Devin Burghart, author Russ Bellant, Zoltan Grossman and Debbi McNutt of the Midwest Treaty Network, Marlene Hines of the Mountain States Network Against Bigotry, Mark Potok of Klanwatch and Floyd Cochran, the former Aryan Nations leader who now leads the Education and Vigilance Network, among others. Center for New Community: 6429 W. North Avenue, Suite 101; Oak Park, IL 60302; (708) 848-0327.

**14. MONTANA HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK CONFERENCE:** The Montana Human Rights Network will hold its annual conference, titled "Youth Make the Difference: Building a Diverse Human Rights Network," will be held Oct. 16-17 in Great Falls, Montana. The conference is being held in conjunction with Pride!'s third annual "Reaching Beyond Fear" conference and will focus on youth issues and organizing. The conference will feature a speaking appearance by Dr. James Saucedo, director of the Multicultural Center at California State University as well as a representative of the American Friends Service Committee's Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Youth Project. The conference is for both adults and young people. MHRN: P.O. Box 1222; Helena, MT 59624; (406) 442-5506.

••• The CHD Research Department prefers incident reports, newspaper clippings, event write-ups, questions and comments to be e-mailed to [chdpdx@aol.com](mailto:chdpdx@aol.com). Alternatively you can mail such items to the address below or call us either in Portland or Seattle at the numbers listed below. CHD Research staff rely upon such information to fill out much of the Northwest Update and we appreciate your contributions. •••